

? 1908 statistics show depth of change

In 1908, the S.C. Department of Agriculture, Commerce and Immigration published a "Handbook of South Carolina" that was chock full of statistics on agriculture, manufacturing, education, transportation and commerce. Using the 1908 figures, it is amazing to see how much change has taken place.

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NEARBY HISTORY

The section on manufacturing reveals that in 1908, York County had 13 cotton mills, six of them in Rock Hill. Lancaster had only one mill, but Col. Leroy Springs liked to boast that it was the largest cotton mill in the world

under one roof. Chester had four mills, and Springs owned two of the four.

The only surviving textile manufacturer in the three counties is Springs Industries Inc., one of the largest textile companies in the world.

In 1908, there were only 10 high schools in South Carolina. York County had one of them. Bethany High School, with 75 students and five teachers, was coeducational. Bethany was operated by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Of the state's 10 high

schools, seven were church schools and six were for boys only. The number of high schools in South Carolina would increase dramatically with the passage of the High School Act of 1911.

In 1908, there were eight state-supported colleges, of which Winthrop Normal and Industrial College was one. Winthrop had 626 students enrolled in 1907, while the University of South Carolina had only 285 - but Winthrop was topped by Clemson Agricultural College with 673 and the Colored Normal, Industrial and Agricultural College (now S.C. State), which had 692 students and was coeducational. Clemson and USC were for men only.

Rock Hill also had Friendship College, a Baptist-sponsored college for black students. Friendship, founded in 1891, had 320 students in 1907.

The Lancaster Normal and Industrial College, founded in 1897 by the AME Zion church and no longer in existence, had 385 students.

While there were 21 four-year denominational colleges for whites in South Carolina, not one was located in York, Lancaster and Chester counties. The largest denominational college was Wofford, a Methodist school, with 562 students. The smallest of the still-existing colleges was the College of Charleston, with only 66 students.

Turning to the area of agriculture, the handbook has a chapter titled "World's Record and Other Noteworthy Crops." A surprising number of record-holders turn out to be farmers in York and Lancaster counties.

York County farmer E.D. Thompson raised a phenomenal four bales of cotton on 1 acre in 1897. Because so many doubted that it could be done, the handbook printed a lengthy account of exactly how Thompson prepared the soil, his compost ingredients, the seed, types of plows and depth plowed.

Col. John Wylie of Lancaster County in 1882 raised more than 209 bushels of oats an acre. The amount was so remarkable that a committee that investigated the crop filed their report with the clerk of court of Lancaster County.

In 1907, Col. John Crockett of Lancaster County raised 820 bushels of Irish potatoes on an acre.

In 1883, Capt. Lewis Grist of York County made 110 bushels of Early Rose Irish potatoes on one-eighth of an acre.

Col. William Hill, the "iron master" of York County, gathered 48 tons of red clover from 18 acres in the year 1801, a record that had not been beaten by 1907.

Of the 15 principal cities of South Carolina, Rock Hill was listed as the eighth largest, and

Chester was the ninth largest town in the state.

Rock Hill had 12,000 people in the 1900 census. Its major attraction was having a power plant that operated day and night. Besides Winthrop and five cotton mills, Rock Hill had the Rock Hill Buggy Co., which in 1907 had shipped buggies to every Southern state and to South Africa and New Zealand, as well.

Chester had a population of 8,000 in 1900. It boasted of having four railroad facilities: the Southern, the Seaboard, the Carolina and Northwestern and the Lancaster and Chester railroad. Besides cotton, Chester farmers shipped corn, oats, wheat, rye, watermelons, all kinds of berries, peaches, apples, pears, plums, cabbage, beans, peas, potatoes, squashes, cucumbers, grapes and other crops to out-of-state markets.

In 1907, the Southern Power Co. had completed construction of its large dam at Great Falls, and the town of Chester was looking forward to having the benefits of electricity.

And it was the arrival of electricity that most likely wrought more change on this area than anything else from 1908 to the present.

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