

History of Cleveland County

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for the *Cleveland Star*, Shelby, NC

May 20, 1924

CLEVELAND STAR, SHELBY, N. C.

TUESDAY, MAY 20, 1924.

HISTORY OF FORMATION OF CLEVELAND COUNTY IN 1841 AND SHELBY'S BEGINNING

**Names of Men Who Had Something to Do With
Its Beginning. 150 Acres of Land Given for
Shelby Site by James Love in 1842. First
Court Bell Still in Use.**

(By Mrs. J. Frank Roberts, Shelby.)

The legislature of 1835 recommended that big counties be divided, because smaller counties were more convenient for the people.

Then the people of eastern Rutherford county and western Lincoln county called a meeting of the citizens to discuss the advisability of asking for a new county. Following is a copy of the proceedings of that meeting, which was published in the *Carolina Gazette* and preserved in a scrap book owned by Mrs. T. G. Borders.

"A numerous assemblage of the citizens of the lower part of Rutherford county and the upper part of Lincoln county convened at the dwelling house of Teator Beam on Thursday, September 22, 1836 for the purpose of consulting together upon the expediency of petitioning to the next general assembly for redress of their grievances so long endured by reason of the extent of territory composing the two

were the chief crops, very little cotton was raised.

The men made mats of the shoes from home-tanned leather, the women spun and wove the cloth, from wool, flax and cotton, to clothe their families and slaves. Most farmers had their own blacksmith shops and made the implements used.

The tobacco was packed in huge hogsheads, a bar passed through the center, shafts were fastened to the ends of this bar and the tobacco was rolled to Charleston. Although the roads were extremely rough and creeks to be forded the tobacco reached its destination in safety.

The early settlers of this section were Scotch-Irish and Germans who came from Pennsylvania and Virginia when those sections became too crowded for them.

Wheeler's history of North Carolina written in 1851 says of Cleveland county:

"Although a new county its revolu-

Durham was the grand chief and his law partner, Lee McAfee was grand cyclops.

After the war the patriotic spirit of the people was put to the test for when the men came home from the war they found destruction everywhere and had to begin at the bottom again to start the progressive movement of rebuilding almost every enterprise.

J. Z. Falls and Peter Baxter built the first cotton mill, it was at Double Shoals. A. R. Homesley built the first woolen mill on Muddy Fork.

Dr. Turner taught the first male school, started in 1870.

The county furnished a councilor of state, Columbus Mills, a state auditor, two judges, two congressmen and one solicitor. Its delegates to the constitutional convention were Dr. W. J. T. Miller, Dr. J. W. Tracy, David Beam, R. Swann and Plato Durham.

The United States dollar seems to have taken the place of Esperanto as the universal language.—*Little Rock Arkansas Gazette*.

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counties and the consequent remoteness from their respective court houses; whereupon the meeting was organized by appointing George Cabaniss, Esq., chairman and William Roberts secretary. On motion of Dr. W. J. T. Miller a committee of six from each county was appointed to take the subject into consideration, to-wit: John Neil, James S. Oates, John Roberts, Robert Falls, Joshua Beam and William Graham of the part Lincoln county. Samuel Bailey, Yancey Reisendine, Thomas Roberts, Isaac I. Irvin, George Cabaniss and William Covington for the county of Rutherford, who reported that the secretary prepare a petition to be presented to the citizens of said counties for their signature and that the same be laid before the ensuing general assembly praying that a new county be established. (Then followed the boundary lines asked for). Which report being unanimously concurred in, the proceedings were ordered to be published in the "Carolina Gazette" and the "Lincoln Transcript" for the space of 30 days.

George Cabaniss, Chairman.

William Roberts, Secretary October 6th, 1836.

This was the real beginning of the new county.

On January 11th 1841, Dr. W. J. T. Miller of Rutherford county introduced a bill in the legislature "to form a new county from part of Lincoln and part of Rutherford counties." By the assistance of Hon. Michael Hoke and John Bunyan of Lincoln county the bill passed the legislature. The new county to be named in honor of Col. Benjamin Cleveland of Wilkes county and the county seat in honor of Col Isaac Shelby, both of Revolutionary fame.

The first session of the county court was ordered to be held on the second Monday in March 1841 at the

tionary history is full of glowing incidents. It was on the heights of Kings Mountain which is partly in this county, that on the 7th of October 1780 brave mountaineers of this region attacked the British troops under Colonel Ferguson, routed them and slew him.

It was achieved by raw, undisciplined men, who never before were in battle, without any government officers or any authority from the government under which they lived and for which they fought, without pay, rations or ammunition, reward or the hope of reward."

In 1846 during the war with Mexico more men volunteered to go than were taken. I was unable to find out how many or who they were except Capt. Chris Love was in command when he marched away.

This spirit of patriotism was kept alive in their descendants who began at once to build up the county, first building churches with a school house near by, through the county; usually the pastor was the teacher.

The first free schools were taught in 1848.

Railroad bonds were voted in 1858 but the road was not completed to Shelby until 1873. Progress on all lines was being made when the war between the states began, and volunteers were called upon to defend the Confederacy. Of a population of 1,800 voters, 2,800 men answered the call. More men went from Cleveland county according to population, than from any other county in the state.

There were 800 members of the Ku Klux Klan in the county, the reasons for this organization in the county were partial courts, bad government and a political desire to defeat the Republicans by frightening the negroes away from the poles. Plato

court was ordered to be held on the second Monday in March 1841, at the house of William Weathers. This house was near the center of the county and at the muster ground where the militia regiments assembled.

The next meeting of court should be held in August, at this meeting the county officers were to be elected.

The justices who composed the first court were, Green B. Palmer, Burwell Bridges and Simon McCurry. They elected A. R. Homesly clerk, William H. Green register and Charles Blanton sheriff.

A committee of five men, A. Durham, E. Bryant, D. Gray, D. McDowell, J. Andrews, R. H. Burton, A. Mc. Corkle, H. Cansler and Eli Hoyle was appointed to select a site for the County seat, with instructions to locate it not more than four miles from Wilsons mineral spring, "justly celebrated for its excellent sulphur water and is much resorted to in the summer by invalids and votaries of pleasure." Wheeler History of N. C.

They were influenced to decide on the present site by a gift of 150 acres of land from Mr. James Love for the town to be located on.

"The court house and jail to be erected in accordance with the provisions of the act of the assembly establishing the county. * * * * And with the perfect undersanding that six one-acre lots be designated and set apart by the commissioners appointed to lay off the said town for purposes of religion and education, two of which are to be appropriate to the use of a male and female academy, the others for the use of such churches as may be permitted by the corporation of said town."

The lots which were designated for "business" were sold at auction and brought fabulous prices, the proceeds were turned into the town treasury. This was on the old "stage road" that was built in 1802 and the stage passed three times a week from Salisbury to Rutherfordton.

The first court house was built in 1842 and occupied in January 1843. It was built of logs and was used till 1874. The bell was given by Mr. Whitfield and is still in use.

As Charleston was the nearest market for farm products the farms were mostly small ones, the owners had only a few slaves. Corn and tobacco