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LIFE

In Cleveland County's Early Days

By MAMIE JONES

April 7 - 1941

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Two hundred years ago the area comprising Cleveland county was not within the confines of any civilized community.

According to a statement in Griffin's "History of Old Tryon" it was a wild unsettled section, not governed by any civil law. Its occasional inhabitants were the Cherokee and Catawba Indians, who, at that time, had few—if any—permanent places of abode. They led wandering, roving lives, depending upon hunting and the almost negligible cultivation of small crops of Indian corn for subsistence.

"The Cherokee Indians were fond of the mountain region, and apparently occupied the territory from the present town of Asheville along the crest of the Blue Ridge westward in the state. The Catawbas occupied the territory centering around what is now Mecklenburg county. The Catawba River was the boundary line.

NEUTRAL HUNTING GROUND

"The two tribes, not overly friendly, probably met on many occasions on the field of battle. This section of Cleveland and Rutherford counties was apparently neutral hunting ground for both tribes."

There is evidence the Indians did set up temporary camps in this Cleveland county area.

Arrowheads and Indian relics found in this section give mute evidence that people using these implements must sometime have lived here.

At one time there was a small tribe of Indians living near Boiling Springs. There is evidence that for a period of time a small tribe lived six miles south of Shelby. It is possible that a small tribe lived near Buffalo Creek.

AN INDIAN MOUND?

On the Otho Cline farm on Buffalo Creek is what may have been an Indian Mound. To me it looks like a hillock in the meadow. Pat McBrayer and some others are strongly inclined to believe that it was at one time an Indian Mound.

Mr. McBrayer tells me that there was an Indian trail along the banks of Muddy Fork Creek, near the C. C. Roberts' home-place; thence along by Cleveland Springs (the Indians knew well the value of those sulphur waters); and the trail continued along by Flat Rock; thence by the Belmont Mill to Broad River.

On Flat Rock, before it was crushed into stone for our streets, there used to be what we called Indian pots hollowed out in the rock. I recall that there was also the print of an Indian shoe.

To keep our history straight

let's go back to the year 1729, when the King of England bought back from the Lords Proprietors the territory now known as North Carolina. Since that time the area we call Cleveland county, has been known under eight different names. In 1729, it was called Bath. In 1734, Bladen county was cut out of the western portion of Bath.

Anson county was cut out of the western portion of Bladen in 1748, and embraced all that territory from where the town of Lumberton now stands to the Mississippi River, including the present state of Tennessee. Anson county was bounded on the North by Virginia and on the South by South Carolina. Mecklenburg county was carved out of the western portion of Anson in 1762.

Six years later, when this section had begun to be sparsely settled, a bill was passed in the House of Commons as follows: "After April 10, 1769, the county of Mecklenburg shall be divided into two separate and distinct counties . . . by a line beginning at Earl Granville's where it crosses the Catawba River, and the said river to the South Carolina line . . . and all that part of the county lying to the westward of said dividing line shall be a dis-

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tinct county and parish; and shall be called Tryon county and St. Thomas parish."

William Tryon was governor of the colony at this time, and the county was named in his honor.

INDEFINITE BOUNDARIES

The above boundary lines are quite vague. It appears, however, that Tryon county was approximately forty miles wide from top to bottom; that it extended from the Catawba river on the east to the vicinity of Asheville on the west; and included what is now Cleveland, Lincoln, Rutherford, Gaston, and Polk counties, and parts of Catawba, Buncombe and McDowell. The major portion was uninhabited and much of it was claimed by the Cherokee Indians.

TRYON COUNTY COURTS

The first court of Tryon county, called the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, was set up by the Justices of the Peace at the home of Charles McLean in what is now Gaston county in April, 1769.

At the October session the sheriff reported 1226 taxable polls in the county. It is well to remember that at this time Lincoln and Rutherford were each fair sized communities.

George Blanton, one of the pioneers of whom I wrote last week, was appointed by the King as a Justice of Peace in November 1769. His name appears as one of the Justices attending Tryon county Court in 1770.

INDIAN UPRISING

In "Sherrill's Annals of Lincoln County" there is quoted a letter from George Lamkin, late sheriff of Tryon county, dated October 27, 1772, complaining of his inability to collect taxes. He says: "The Indians broke out and did drive all the county as lo as Buffalo Creek, 50 miles in. Sum few got into forts; sum went to Virginia; sum went to ye South, and sum down in this State to the amount by my list of 257 taxable persons. And now the Tory party has broke out, being ye upper part of said county. What feu was left after ye Indians is now gone, so it is impossible for your petitioner to make any collection."

At the meeting of the Court of Pleas and Quater Sessions in 1774, it was decided that the courthouse and jail should be built on the lands of Christian Mauney. Until such could be constructed (which was never done) the courts were held at the home of Mr. Mauney, located about nine miles from the present town of Lincolnton, near what is now Tryon school in Gaston county.

PRICE FIXING

Since there were necessarily many visitors at these court sessions, Inns or Ordinarys were built to take care of those who must (or did) attend court. There were no alphabetical agencies in those days but there was price-fixing, none-the-less.

The Ordinaries were allowed to charge four pence (that is, I think, just about four pennies) for lodging in good feather bed and clean sheets per night. For breakfast and supper the charge was three pence each. Dinner, with not less than two good dishes of meat, was a shilling. A quart of beer was four pence; brandy and whiskey toddy, per quart, was eight pence.