

BRIEF HISTORY OF 1820 MAP
of
YORK COUNTY

Surveyed by Gordon Moore, 1820

Used in Mill's Atlas of 1825

In 1682, there were three proprietary colonies in South Carolina - Colleton, Berkeley, and Craven, all in the Low Country. Later, these proprietary colonies, as early as 1706, were divided into parishes.

By 1769, settlers had moved into most of the "Up-Country" and the province was divided into seven circuit districts: The Ninety-Six District, the Camden District, the Cheraws District, the Georgetown District, the Orangeburg District, the Charleston District, and the Beaufort District. The northwestern part of the province (embracing roughly the present counties of Greenville, Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens) was Cherokee Indian territory.

During the "Up-Country" pioneer period, roughly from 1740 to 1800, there was much controversy between the "low-country" and the "back country". The wealthy, aristocratic, planters of the tidal basin, were rather staunchly entrenched in control of government and unwilling to share representation in the Legislative Council with the "pioneers" of the Up-Country. Neither were they very interested in providing orderly government through the establishment of local courts. In fact, during that time no courts existed outside of Charleston. For their protection from the criminal element of the frontier, the frustrated settlers formed a semblance of local government by organizing themselves into a militia called "The Regulators". Finally, in 1785, with the Up-Country expanding so rapidly, an Act was passed setting up counties with local courts.

What is now York County was cut off from the old Camden District in 1785, along with the counties of Chester, Lancaster, Fairfield, Richland, and Clarendon. The remainder of the old Camden District was first known as Claremont County. In 1791, 1798, and 1902, respectively, the boundaries of the counties of Kershaw, Sumter, and Lee Counties were established. From the Old Camden District, roughly speaking, the present counties of York, Chester, Lancaster, Fairfield, Richland, Kershaw, Clarendon, Sumter, and Lee were formed.

For the first time, the Up-Country had representation in the Legislature. Alexander Love, a member of the delegation from the newly created County, introduced a resolution in the Legislature and succeeded in having it named York County in honor of his old home in York, Pennsylvania, and his ancestral home in York, England.

This was the beginning of the "courthouse towns" and, as the 1820 map indicates, Yorkville is designated as "Yorkville Courthouse". A commission, of which Colonel William Bratton was a member, had been appointed in 1786 to select a site and build a Court House at some suitable location in the County. The little village, believed to have been originally known as "Fergus Cross Roads" (at the intersection of what is now Liberty and Congress Streets), being the most populous in the County and also centrally located, was chosen as the most suitable site for the new Court House. About 1786, Yorkville was formally laid out in lots and established.

Many of the "Courthouse Towns" are remembered for their court houses, jails, and other public buildings which were designed by Robert Mills, who lived in Columbia from 1820 to 1830, during which time he served officially as State Architect. Mills is believed to be the first American-born architect. From 1836 to 1851, Mills, a friend of Thomas Jefferson, was the official architect of public buildings for the United States Government. That appointment was made by President Andrew Jackson. Some of Mills best known designs include the Washington Monument, the Bunker Hill Monument in Boston, the Treasury Building, and the old general Post Office Building in Washington.

The second building to occupy the present court house site in York was designed by Robert Mills and built in the early 1820's. He also designed the Wilson Building, now occupied by Faith Realty Company, as the "gaol" or county jail.

The first sheriff of York County was James Hawthorne, who was very active in this area during The Revolutionary era. His mother and two sisters having been killed by Indians on the frontier, he came to Yorkville, learned the blacksmith trade, and married Mary Neel, the daughter of Colonel Thomas Neel. He was Lieutenant Colonel in Colonel William's Hills regiment, and leader of the regiment at the Battle of Kings Mountain, due to the fact that Colonel Hill was incapacitated because of a former injury. He later removed from Yorkville to Lexington, Kentucky where he died at age 59.

The boundaries of the counties established in 1785 were not very closely defined and in the early 1800's, they were officially surveyed. The York District (County) was first surveyed by Gordon Moore in 1820. The South Carolina General Assembly commissioned Robert Mills to compile surveys of all the districts (counties) and Moore's 1820 survey of York County, with improvements, was used in the Mills Atlas of 1825. The map which you have bought is a reproduction of this original map of York County.

In 1826, Robert Mills followed up the Atlas with a sequel, his Statistics of South Carolina, which was dedicated to his native state with these words:

"I love Thee next to heaven above,
Lord of my fathers: Thee I love;
And rail the slanderers as they will,
With all thy faults, I love thee still."

NOTE:

The Bicentennial Committee of York is pleased to make this map available to you at a minimum cost and hopes that you will find it interesting and consider it valuable. The information in this brief history was compiled from several sources, and while we feel that it is reasonably accurate, we realize that there may well be errors. We wish that we might have had the time to research more thoroughly and hope that you will be tolerant of any errors.

City of York Bicentennial Committee
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