

Historical

Historic Lincoln County

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Born of the American Revolution in 1779, Lincoln County was named for General Benjamin Lincoln, who was subsequently selected by General George Washington to accept the British sword of surrender at Yorktown, Virginia in 1781. Throughout its long and storied existence, the county has played an important role in the history and development of North Carolina. For more than two hundred years, many of her citizens have distinguished themselves in state and national affairs.

Approximately 309 square miles in size, Lincoln County is blessed with magnificent natural beauty and diversity. Geographically, the county can be divided into three separate, distinct regions. Lake Norman, a part of the historic Catawba River and the largest manmade lake in North Carolina forms the eastern boundary of the county. Lincolnton, the venerable seat of government and the only incorporated municipality in the county, anchors the central region. In the rural western portion of Lincoln County, the majestic mountains of North Carolina begin to rise.

Throughout the scenic landscape of Lincoln County, there is an abundance of sites that bear testimony to the glorious history that has been written by the county and her people. Some of the most significant sites are hereinafter described.

Lincolnton and Environs

Historic Downtown Lincolnton: Incorporated in 1785, Lincolnton is the second oldest incorporated city in North Carolina west of the Catawba River. Its tree-lined streets, particularly West Main Street and South Aspen Street, boast of a number of historic homes constructed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Six historic churches in the downtown area are listed on the National Register. Standing in the heart of the city, the imposing Lincoln County Courthouse is a Greek Revival masterpiece that was completed in 1923.



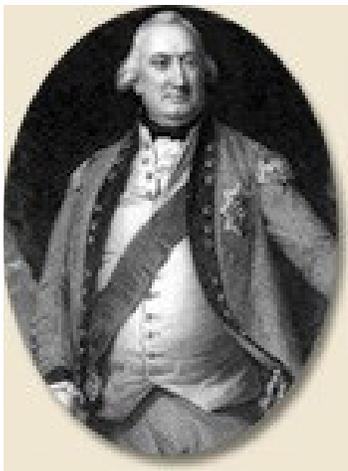
Lincoln Cultural Center: (East Main Street) Housed in the former First Baptist Church building, this facility houses the various cultural arts groups in the county. Located here is the Lincoln County Museum of History, which chronicles and showcases the story of the county from its beginning.

St. Lukes' Episcopal Church and Cemetery: (North Cedar Street) The interior woodworking in this historic church (Organized in 1842) is magnificent. Among the many historic personages buried in the adjacent cemetery are Major General Stephen Dodson Ramseur, who was killed at the age of 27 at the Battle of Cedar Creek (Virginia) in 1864, and William A. Hoke, who served as Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court.

Lincolnton and Environs (continued)

Pleasant Retreat Academy/UDC Memorial Hall: (Corner of East Pine Street and North Academy) Constructed in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, this large two-story brick building is the oldest extant public building in Lincoln County. Established by the leading citizens of Lincolnton, Pleasant Retreat Academy educated many young men who became eminent American statesmen and military leaders. Among these were: William Alexander Graham, governor of North Carolina, U.S. Senator, and Secretary of the Navy; Hoke Smith, governor of Georgia, U.S. Senator, and Secretary of the Interior; James Pinckney Henderson, ambassador to Europe for the Republic of Texas and the first governor of Texas; Major General Robert F. Hoke; Major General Stephen Dodson Ramseur; and Brigadier General Robert D. Johnston.

Michael Hoke House: (Chestnut Street) Constructed around 1832 by Michael Hoke (a dynamic young statesman and attorney), this large two-story frame house was the birthplace of Robert F. Hoke (1837-1912), the youngest major general in the Confederate Army, and Dr. Michael Hoke, the physician known as "the father of modern orthopedic surgery."



Ramsour's Mill Battleground: (off North Aspen Street and Skip Lawing Drive) Monuments and a mass grave site mark the ground where the important Revolutionary War battle was fought between Whigs and Tories on the morning of June 20, 1780. The Patriot victory here was a prelude to the subsequent American triumph at nearby Kings Mountain, the turning point of the American fight for independence.

Site of Schenck-Warlick Mill: (near intersection of US 321 and NC 150) In 1813, the first cotton mill south of the Potomac River was constructed here. Thus, Lincolnton became the birthplace of the southern textile industry.

Lincolnton and Environs

Magnolia Grove: (Magnolia Grove Road) This Federal-style brick mansion was built in 1824 by David Smith, whose wife, Elizabeth, was the daughter of the Reverend John Gottfried Arndt (the first Lutheran minister ordained in North Carolina). At this site, the first county courthouse and jail were constructed.

Ingleside: (NC 73) Constructed in 1817 for Daniel Forney, a member of Congress, this brick masterpiece is one of the finest antebellum Federal-style mansions in North Carolina. Benjamin Latrobe, the architect of the Capital Building, is said to have drawn the plans for Ingleside. It was at this site that Lord Charles Cornwallis camped the British army in January 1781 during his chase of Nathanael Greene and Daniel Morgan.

Vesuvius: (Vesuvius Furnace Road) The original portion of this Federal-style mansion was constructed in 1792, making it the oldest existing dwelling in the county. Joseph Graham, a young hero of the Revolutionary War, built the house as a centerpiece of his plantation here. Graham was one of the pioneers of the iron making industry that flourished in Lincoln County from 1790 until the War Between the States. Near the mansion is the site of Vesuvius Furnace, one of the many iron furnaces that once dotted the landscape of eastern Lincoln County. Governor William Alexander Graham, the son of Joseph Graham, was born on the plantation.

Lincolnton and Environs (continued)

Machpelah Presbyterian Church and Cemetery: (intersection of Old Plank Road and Brevard Place Road) Erected in 1848, the brick church building no longer houses an active congregation. Its first minister was Dr. Robert Hall Morrison, the first president of Davidson College and the father-in-law of three Confederate generals - Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, Daniel Harvey Hill, and Rufus Barringer. Dr. Hall is buried in the adjacent cemetery, which predates the church. Among the other notable graves in the cemetery is that of Joseph Graham.



Rock Springs Campground: (Campground Road off NC 16) Moves to its current site in 1830, this campground represents the oldest camp meeting organized in North Carolina. Daniel Asbury, the famous Methodist circuit-rider, established Rock Springs in 1792. At the center of the campground stands the massive hand-hewn arbor, which seats more than one thousand persons.

Site of the Battle of Cowans Ford: (NC 73 at the Cowans Ford Dam overlook) Here on the morning of February 1, 1781, Patriots from the Lincoln and surrounding counties delayed the crossing of the Catawba River by Cornwallis and the British army and provided General Nathanael Greene and his ragged American army the badly-needed time to escape and to plan the miraculous retreat across North Carolina that came to a climax six weeks later at Guilford Courthouse.

For more information on the history of and historical sites in Lincoln County, please contact:

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