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**INVENTORY OF HISTORICAL STOPS ALONG  
YADKIN RIVER GREENWAY  
CANDIDATES FOR WAYSIDE EXHIBITS  
AND INTERPRETIVE DISPLAYS**

- 1. **SMOOT PARK ENCAMPMENT SITE** (Located-near canoe launching ramp in Smoot park)  
 --Site was location of encampment of Overmountain Patriot militia force under Col. Benjamin Cleveland and Joseph Winston on September 26, 1780. The Wilkes-Surry Partisan unit marched to meet the main force of the Patriots Army at Quaker Meadows, located near Freedom High School in present day Morganton. From the rendezvous point, the patriot force followed the British Loyalist force in South Carolina where they engaged and defeated Colonial Patrick Ferguson's army at the Battle of Kings Mountain on October 7, 1780.

Interpretive Sign could go near the Smoot Park Encampment Park

- 2. **MULBERRY FIELDS** (Location-Near Present Wilkesboro including the mainstreet along the river bottom)

A Moravian surveying party passed through the area in 1752, and documented that a Cherokee Indian village stood in the old fields. The Cherokee translation for Mulberry Fields is "Keowee." Keowee was often used by the Cherokees as a place name during the Colonial Period. During the Revolutionary War, the Mulberry Fields area was a common mustering site for the Wilkes County Militia. The Mulberry Meeting House was a common meeting place to discuss local government issues of the day.

Mulberry Fields became Wilkesboro in 1800 when the town was laid out by William Lenoir. Lenoir refused to allow the town to be named after himself. Later following his death, the next town up the road was named for Lenoir.

Interpretive sign could go anywhere along the greenway near Wilkesboro.

- 3. **TORY OAK SITE** (Location- Behind the Old Courthouse in downtown Wilkesboro)

A brick enclosure now marks the spot where once stood a majestic Oak tree. During the American Revolutionary War, at least five Tories (British Loyalist) were hanged, under the command of Col. Benjamin Cleveland. The hangings were a part of the story of intense civil conflict which took place during the Southern Campaign of the war. A small Oak Sapling has been placed as a living memorial.

Interpretive sign should go near the Tory Oak.

Old Wilkes, Inc.  
Joan Baity

#### 4. CHRISTOPHER GIST

In 1750 Christopher Gist established his home on the north side of the Yadkin about one mile west of the present town of Wilkesboro. Gist, the first white man to settle in what is now Wilkes County, maintained a friendly contact with the Cherokee Indians. He was one of the most distinguished Indian scouts and surveyors of his day. Gist was twice credited with saving the life of Col. George Washington and showed Daniel Boone the way to Kentucky.

Gist had three sons, one of whom was Nathaniel. Nathaniel married an Indian girl named Wurteh, a sister of the great Indian Chiefs, Old Tassel and Doublehead. They were the parents of Sequoyah, the famous genius who invented the Cherokee alphabet.

#### 5. HOME OF CAPTAIN ROBERT CLEVELAND (located-behind the Old Wilkes jail in Wilkesboro)

The restored log house was relocated from the Purlear Community from the original Homesite of Robert Cleveland, the brother of Col. Benjamin Cleveland. Robert was a Captain under Col. Ben in the Battle of Kings Mountain. In addition, Robert saved Col. Ben's life when he conducted a raid against the Torys who had captured the Colonel in 1781 along the New River. The eighteenth century home is the oldest standing house in Wilkes County. The building is now operated and open to the public by Old Wilkes, Inc.

Interpretive sign near the Cleveland House

#### 6. OLD WILKES JAIL MUSEUM (located behind the old Wilkes County courthouse)

The third Wilkes County jail was built in 1860 and used until 1915. Union soldiers were held in the jail during the Civil War as well as the infamous "Tom Dooley", who was hung in 1868 for the murder of Laura Foster. The museum is now restored and opened to the public weekdays.

7. **OAKLAND** (area now Wilkes Regional Hospital)

The birthplace of General James B. Gordon, known as Oakland, stretched hundreds of yards south to the Yadkin, east to the Reddies River, and west toward rising hills. Gordon was educated in the common schools and academies of this section and at Emory and Henry College. He engaged in mercantile business and was one of the most successful men in the country in his day. Gordon always took a lively interest in politics and he became the leader of his party in Wilkes County. In 1850 he was elected to represent the county in the lower house of the General Assembly.

At the outbreak of the Civil War Gordon was one of the first to answer the call, serving in the battles at Manasses, Gettsburg, Culpepper, Jack's Shop, Brandy Station, the battle at Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Petersburg, Appomattox, Hatterstown, and at Brook Church where Gen. Gordon received his mortal wound on May 12, 1864 and died six days later. He is buried in the Episcopal Church cemetery in Wilkesboro.

8. **ST. PAUL'S ESPICOPAL** (Located on the hill overlooking Wilkesboro and the lovely Yadkin Valley)

Built in 1848 by a B. Dameron, the church was consecrated on July 8, 1849 by Bishop Ives. Many prominent leaders attended this church and are buried in the cemetery. The cemetery also contains the grave of Dr. James Calloway one of the first doctors in Wilkes County, and Brig. General James B. Gordon as well as Rev. Richard W. Barber who served the church for 45 years.

Inscribed on the bell is "Gwyn and Carlson, Wilkesboro, NC. 1849."

9. **BLACK HOUSE** ( This location is near where the present postoffice stands in North Wilkesboro.)

On the heights overlooking the Yadkin, the people living in the vicinity of Mulberry Fields, in the 1760's, built a fort known as the "Black House." When the Cherokees burned this fort, it was immediately replaced by the "Red House."

10. **FIRST DEPOT** (located at the foot of Kensington Heights Hill, near where the present depot stands)

The new Town of North Wilkesboro, on June 16, 1887, voted 2,895 for and 59 against building a railroad. The railroad was completed by September 1890 and the first depot was built.

The arrival of the train made North Wilkesboro a busy little town.

11. **COVERED BRIDGE ON THE REDDIES RIVER**

A covered bridge went across the Reddies River on D Street in North Wilkesboro. The bridge was washed away in the 1916 flood, found intact, taken apart and brought back to the site and reconstructed. Its final fate came with the 1940 flood when it was completely destroyed.

12. **1940 FLOOD**

The 1940 flood resulted largely from sudden and extended cloudbursts along the crest of the Blue Ridge and descending into the hollows and valleys below between the two Wilkesboro's; drowning 8 people and destroying at least 150 homes. The tannery of International Shoe Company, formerly the Smoot Tannery, was destroyed. The Home Chair Company was enveloped in water and fire broke out destroying the building. Loss of lumber by P.E. Brwon, Genio Cardwell, Wilkesboro Manufacturing Company, Oak Furniture Company and others ran into millions of dollars. Property loss was conservatively estimated \$5,000,000. To this should be added the loss of wages from closing the factories. Train service was cut off because of damage to track, trestles and bridges.

The 1940 flood hastened the enactment of a law by Congress appropriating 8 1/2 million dollars to erect a flood control dam across the Yadkin four miles West of Wilkesboro. Construction began in September, 1960.

13. **THE FLUME** (The flume ended in North Wilkesboro along the Reddies River between where Revco and Robby's Army Store are located.)

The flume was built in the early 1900's by the Giant Lumber Co. and was built in order for the lumber, which was planed at sawmills along its route from trees cut in the mountains, to be sent to the newly founded town of North Wilkesboro. The flume followed the body of water called the Reddies River, was constructed of wood in a trough-like manner and the lumber floated through this contraption by means of a constant flow of water in the trough. The milled planks were nailed together before placing them in the flume and when the lumber reached its destination, in North Wilkesboro, the nails were drawn from the lumber and returned to the various sawmills along the route to be used for the next batch that was sent down. About 100,000 feet of lumber and 50,000 pounds of tan bark could be handled in a day.

#### 14. THE BUZZARD ROOST

In the early days of Wilkes County, the bottoms along the Yadkin and Reddies River, at the junction of the rivers, was heavily timbered with tall cedars. The buzzards of all the adjacent counties would gather there to roost in those cedars. So it became known as the "buzzard roost." The bottoms were cleared by John Finley and were so productive the name, "buzzard roost." was very appropriate, and as long as Mr. Finley lived, the bottoms were known as "John Finley's buzzard roost."

#### 15. LOVERS LEAP

About a mile west of Wilkesboro there is a precipice that overhangs the south side of the Yadkin River which is known as "Lovers' Leap." Tradition has it that many years ago when there were but few white people in this country, a young Indian fell in love with a native Squaw and they were engaged to be married. The father of the Indian girl refused to give her up, and she and her lover consented to end their lives by leaping from the cliff into the river, which they did. Ever since the place has been known as "Lover's Leap."

#### 16. WILKESBORO PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church, established in 1837, is the oldest congregation of this denomination in twenty-one western North Carolina counties. Built in 1849-1850, the well-preserved structure is one of a few which remain from the pre-Civil War development period in Wilkesboro.

#### 17. GOVERNOR MONFORD STOKES (homeplace, Morne Rouge, stood at Brown's Ford, four miles west of Wilkesboro on the north side of the Yadkin River)

Monford Stokes came to Wilkes in the late 1790's and married Rachel Montgomery on January 6, 1796. Stokes served as Clerk for the State Senate, for a number of years, and was elected to serve a seat in the U.S. Senate but refused to accept. The second time he was elected he accepted and served in that branch of the National Legislative until 1823, when he voluntarily retired.

After his retirement from the United States Senate, Stokes wanted to lead the life of a private citizen on his Morne Rouge plantation, but the people again called him into service and in 1826 elected him to the State Senate. In 1829 and 1830 he was elected to the House of Commons. In 1830 he was elected Governor of North Carolina, but resigned in 1831 to accept the appointment from President Jackson as Indian Agent in Arkansas, where he lived until his death in 1842 at Fort Gibson.

## 18. STONEMAN'S RAID (Near Cub Creek Park)

Stoneman's troops left Boone, after burning down the local jailhouse, killing 9 people, and capturing 69 more and entered Wilkesboro on March 29, 1865.

Divided into two groups, Gillem's troops angled northeastward, parallel to the Yadkin River, toward Wilkesboro (roughly on the line of today's Hwy. 268). Traveling without incident, they reached Holman's Ford on the Yadkin River late in the afternoon of March 29. They experienced their only real problem when they arrived at Holman's Ford. Recent rains had caused the Yadkin to overflow its banks. Thus, even as the Federals crossed the ford, the rising waters swept away an artillery piece and some valuable ammunition.

When the wing of the army under Stoneman's command reached Cub creek it was too high to ford so he pitched his tent on the hill this side of the creek. For several days about twenty-five thousand men camped on this site, during which time his soldiers were plundering and burning.

The people in the county were left in a desolate condition. Many families were left entirely without provisions. With their houses and barns burned, the men were nearly all in army, robbers abundant in the county, and it was with difficulty that starvation was averted.