



Charlotte, North Carolina History

1755 - Founding a New City

Thomas Spratt and his family are believed to be the first settlers to drive a wagon through the rough backcountry of North Carolina. Between the Yadkin and Catawba rivers, they cross an Indian trading path. With them is Thomas Polk, who builds his home where these two roads meet. One day, this crossroads will be known as the Square. It will become the center of modern downtown Charlotte, and the streets will be known as Trade and Tryon.

1758 - Religion and Revolution

January, 1759 - Families who settle near each other hope to attract a preacher for their new communities. The outspoken Rev. Alexander Craighead moves from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to what will soon become Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. Craighead is active in the Independence Movement, which encourages worshippers to resist control by the British rulers.

1764 - Slave Trade

The first sale of a slave in Mecklenburg County is officially recorded. Prices are set in units of British currency, called pounds. The price paid for the African man is 75 pounds. Slaves are given new names by their masters. Some names, such as Joseph and Jacob, come from the Bible. Other names come from literature and history -- Romulus, Titus and Daphne. The slaves are not allowed to use their African names.

1766 - The First Mecklenburg County Courthouse

The First Courthouse was a log cabin, built on ten-foot tall brick pillars. This tradition of raising the courthouse or main town market building was borrowed from England, and provided an open space at the center of town that could be used for the selling of animals, produce and other goods. Additionally, in the center of the open space, a post was driven into the ground to mark the middle of town, from which distances to other towns, river fords, and other destinations could be measured.

1768 - Charlotte Chartered

December 3, 1768 - Charlotte is chartered, which means the new town will have a courthouse and a prison. The law establishing a town for holding court in Mecklenburg County was first passed at a session of the colonial Assembly. It was then sent on to the governor, who made it effective on December 3 of that year. Here is the full text of the law from the [State Records of North Carolina](#):

1770 - Designing a City

Surveyors mark off the locations of Charlotte's streets in a block pattern called a grid. The four sections defined by the crossing of Trade and Tryon streets will evolve into four areas, called wards. In years to come, each of the wards will change tremendously. Economic, racial and political issues will determine which buildings survive and which are destroyed.

March 6, 1773 - King's Power

King George III is still unhappy with the colonists and their desire for independence. On this day it is announced in New Bern that he has rejected a bill passed over two years previously that established a "seminary for learning" in Charlotte. When he revokes the charter for Queens College, he also takes away the right of Presbyterian ministers to perform marriages. There is increasing ill will toward Britain.

1780 - Mecklenburg Communities

With the Revolutionary War now over, citizens work hard for a better life in the growing Charlotte- Mecklenburg communities. Schools are established in Sugaw Creek, Rocky River, Poplar Tent, Steele Creek, Hopewell, Beatties Ford, Providence, Clear Creek and Charlottetown communities. Old-Field Schools

1780 - Nathanael Greene

October 12, 1780 - The people of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County continue to vex General Cornwallis. Skirmishes such as the Battle of the Bees just nine days earlier have shown the British commander that a military victory won't be easily won. Cornwallis calls this place a Hornet's Nest of rebellion, and leaves.

1786 - Charlotte

The population of Charlotte is 276. The city is home to a flour mill, saw mill, and rifle factory. Merchants, tailors, weavers and blacksmiths serve the growing community. About 9,000 people make their homes in Mecklenburg County. By the turn of the century, that number will more than double.

1792 - First Charlotte Post Office

A branch of the U.S. Postal Service is established in Charlotte. It is the first year that local officials take an oath to the U.S. government.

1829 - President Jackson

The boy who grew up near Charlotte becomes America's seventh president. People think highly of Andrew Jackson. He has been an outspoken lawyer, military hero, and senator. As president, he will make decisions both to limit the power of the federal government and to assert it forcefully in its proper sphere. Some of his actions will bring great hardship to the Indian tribes that live in the Carolinas and neighboring states.

1835 - Nuggets to Coins

March 3, 1835 Charlotte is becoming the gold mining capital of the U.S. President Andrew Jackson signs the law authorizing Charlotte as a site for a branch of the U.S. Mint, so coins can be made here without transporting the gold to a Mint far away. Congress will allow \$50,000 to be spent for the site, building and machinery. Architect William Strickland will design the Classically-styled building on West Trade Street. Gold is now valued at \$20 per ounce. It will be worth nearly \$1600 per ounce, 80 times more, by the 2010s.

1838 - C is for Charlotte

March 27, 1838 - For the first time, coins are manufactured from Mecklenburg gold at the Charlotte Mint. A half-eagle is worth \$5.00; a quarter-eagle is worth \$2.50. Each gold piece is stamped with a C to show it was minted at Charlotte. In this one year, over \$100,000 worth of gold blocks, called bullion, will be received at the Mint on West Trade Street.

1864 - End of the Navy Yard

January 7, 1864 - An explosion causes a terrible fire at the Confederate Navy Yard in Charlotte. No one can determine how it happened. The navy yard is destroyed.

1869 - Keep the Presses Rolling

At least four newspapers were circulated during the Civil War era. Some were used to promote a particular idea or point of view, a practice called propaganda. Charlotteans now get their news from the Daily Charlotte Observer. It will be followed in 1886 by a competitor, the Charlotte Chronicle, and the old Observer will cease to exist. Industrialist D.A. Tompkins and editor J.P. Caldwell will buy the Chronicle in 1892 and change its name to the Daily Observer. It will evolve into the modern-day Charlotte Observer.

1877 - Craighead-Huntersville

March 9, 1877 - First called Craighead in honor of an early Mecklenburg patriot, today the town of Huntersville is incorporated. A catalogue boasts new schools, fresh air and climate of the town, and invites families to settle in Huntersville, where an acre of good land can be purchased for \$50.

1885 - Dr. Annie Alexander

A Charlotte woman died because she was too embarrassed to let a male doctor examine her. Dr. Annie Alexander returns to Charlotte to become the city's first female physician. She has just earned the highest score in her class on Maryland's medical exams. Dr. Alexander will practice medicine for an entire year before she earns \$2.00.

1887 - Professional Firefighters

Until now, firefighters in Charlotte have been volunteers. Two companies are white, one is black. Now, local elected lawmakers, called the City Council, create the town's first professional fire department. The four firemen who are hired each earn \$25 per month. Horse-drawn steam engine

1897 - Elizabeth Neighborhood

Other suburbs spring up around Charlotte's center city. Elizabeth is named for Ann Elizabeth Watts, whose husband was a Durham tobacco executive. Western Heights grows near the school that will one day become Johnson C. Smith University. Elizabeth College [1897 - Banking](#)

Industry Grows

Without money to build and expand their facilities, businesses cannot grow. The Charlotte National Bank opens this year. It will lend funds, called capital, to help businesses become strong and healthy. The Charlotte National Bank will join with Winston-Salem's Wachovia Loan and Trust Company in 1939. It will then be known as Wachovia Bank and Trust. [1903 - First Free Library](#)

January 31, 1903 - Since 1891, Charlotte's library has charged a subscription fee of 50 cents per month. Today, the city's first free library opens. Northern steel executive Andrew Carnegie has given Charlotte \$25,000 to start the library. The city must promise to provide \$2,500 each year to operate it. Carnegie also donates money for a separate library designated for black patrons. When a tax dispute arises in 1939, the Charlotte Public Library will be forced to close for one year. When it reopens, it will expand programs and services to continue the tradition of serving the educational and cultural needs of a growing community.

1911 - Myers Park

On 1220 acres of farmland southeast of downtown Charlotte, landscape architect John Nolen is at work. He designs a neighborhood of winding streets, much different from the downtown grid pattern, for a new area called Myers Park. At the same time, developer E.D. Latta brings the Olmstead Brothers of Boston to Charlotte. Famous for designing the White House grounds, these innovative architects will turn their talents to Dilworth, and create the curved avenues and side streets of Dilworth Roads East and West. Beginning of Myers Park

1911 - An Artist is Born

Critically acclaimed artist, Romare Bearden (1911-1988) was born in Charlotte on September 1911 in the house of his great-grandfather, Henry B. Kennedy, at 401 South Graham Street. His family later move to New York City and Bearden grew up midst the Harlem Renaissance. After studying in both New York and Paris, he launched a successful career as an artist. Bearden is most noted for reinventing the collage as an art form. His works are filled with scenes that capture Bearden's memories of Charlotte and his love for music.

1927 - Banking Grows

December 1, 1927 - A branch of the U.S. government's banking system, called the Federal Reserve, opens in Charlotte. Not only will the Reserve Bank bring prestige to the city, the money it supplies helps local banks grow stronger.

1954 - Ike Visits Charlotte

May 18, 1954 - More than 60,000 people crowd into Charlotte's Freedom Park to hear President Dwight Eisenhower speak. His visit is part of the annual Meck Dec Day commemoration. Choirs sing as citizens celebrate Mecklenburg's 1775 declaration of independence from British rule. President Eisenhower at Freedom Park

1956 - New Libraries

November 19, 1956 - The Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County boasts a new, modern facility on the North Tryon Street site of the old Carnegie Library. The expansion also includes branch libraries for the Mecklenburg towns of Huntersville, Cornelius, Davidson, Matthews and Pineville. While many buildings restrict by segregation where black people can go, Charlotte's library quietly accommodates black patrons. In 1961, the Brevard Street library that has served the black community since 1905 will close. Soon, laws will prohibit segregation.

1959 - Bishop Daddy Grace

September 13, 1959 - Thousands of worshipers from the eastern U.S. take to the streets as the Daddy Grace parade makes its way through Charlotte's largest black neighborhood, Second Ward. Always held on the second Sunday in September, the parade honors Bishop C.M. Sweet Daddy Grace, the founder of the United House of Prayer for All People. Many believers find salvation and come forward at the church's mass baptisms.

1961 - Mayor Brookshire

May 8, 1961 - Charlotte businessman and journalist Stanford R. Brookshire begins his first of four terms as mayor. He will lead Charlotte through desegregation and preside over the re-development of downtown. Brookshire will be recognized nationally for his efforts and will serve as an advisor to President Lyndon Johnson.

May 31, 1963 - A young, energetic black preacher named Martin Luther King, Jr. speaks in Charlotte to a gathering of six black high schools. Just 10 days earlier, Johnson C. Smith University students marched downtown to protest segregation, laws that separate people according to race. Black and white civic leaders responded to the protest by agreeing to have lunch together. Dr. King commends the solution that has begun to chip away at segregation in Charlotte's public places. His magnificent voice will fall silent less than five years later when he is murdered. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Discover Charlotte

On December 3, 1968, the City of Charlotte began a year-long celebration of the 200th anniversary of its chartering by the colonial assembly of North Carolina. As part of that celebration, the Chamber of Commerce sponsored a promotional film entitled "Discover Charlotte." The film featured the narration of CBS News correspondent and Charlotte native, Charles Kuralt, and music by local composer, Loonis McGlohon. The entire 53-minute film with color footage of life in Charlotte may be viewed at the website of the [North Carolina Digital Heritage Center](#).

1970 - City within a city

February 12, 1970 - Southpark opens on more than 100 acres of farmland southeast of downtown Charlotte. The new shopping mall greets 92,000 visitors its first day. Downtown stores will see a 25% drop in their sales the first year of Southpark's operation. The city's retail focus has begun to shift from away from its center city toward the suburbs. South Park Mall

1975 - President Ford in Charlotte

May 20, 1975 - President Gerald Ford draws a crowd estimated near 100,000 when he speaks at Charlotte's Freedom Park. He has come to help celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. Long a topic of controversy, some believe the Meck Dec never existed. Others swear their ancestors witnessed or signed the document that proclaimed freedom from Britain in 1775. Ford Greets Crowd of Thousands at Freedom Park

