

Riverwind History

What was here before?

Adapted from Jack Scollard's and Henry Sizemore's Research

The meaning of "Etowah" has been reviewed and referenced over time by scholars since the question first surfaced. Both the Henderson County Tourism Development Authority and a "History of Henderson County" reference state that the Cherokee Indians had a word "Itawa" that possibly meant "city" and also possibly was derived from "edible tree". Actually the Creek and Muskogee Indians lived in this part of Western North Carolina long before the Cherokee began moving into the area. Etowah, Itawa and Etalwa have no meaning in the modern Cherokee language. According to the Creek/Muskogee dictionary, written by professors Jack B. Martin and Margaret Maudin of the University of Oklahoma, Etowah is the Anglicization of the word, Etalwa, which today means "tribal town", but originally meant a major town that was the capital of a province. The Muskogee-Creek word, Etalwa, is derived from the Itza Maya and Itsate Creek word, E-tula, which means "principal town".

Ever since my son Andrew found an arrowhead in the field behind my house I have been wondering what it was like around here before Riverwind was built. After a few weeks of floundering around the Register of Deeds Office, the Hendersonville Library and the Henderson County Historical society I decided to put a geographic limit on the research. So we are going to try and find out as much as we can about the 700+ acres bounded on the west by the road now known as Etowah School Road, on the north by what is now called U.S. Route 64 and on the east and south by the French Broad River.

Big under taking, of course. But if I suggest that it is an on going effort that I'm not going to finish then we can always hope that some future resident will take up the investigations. The first thing I would like to do is identify all the land swapping deals involving the Riverwind land back to about 1985.

In October of 2001 the deal was closed at last. The Riverwind Homeowners Association became the real thing. Up to then the Association was a shadow entity within Oakwood Homes Corporation. In October however Oakwood turned over the entire common area including roads. We were on our own at last. Oakwood was the primary developer of Riverwind. They purchased our 74 acres from the TriWinds Corporation January 8, 2001 TriWinds was the original developer of the Riverwind property. They purchased the property from an individual named Ross M. Strickland October 6, 1989.

At this point it gets kind of interesting. Mr. Strickland owned the 74 acres for about 8 months. He purchased the property from Odell Owens Jr on January 20 1989. Mr. Owens purchased the property on the same day that he sold to Strickland. Owens bought the property from Lee Ensley January 20,1989. These 2 deeds are side by side in the Deed book. It appears that the Ensley sale may have been a bankruptcy.

Looking at the land transfers and the deeds concerning the area around and including Riverwind, it seems that Lee Ensley purchased a 323 acre tract from a man named O. G. Ramsey. The Riverwind 74 acres were part of this purchase, which by the way was another

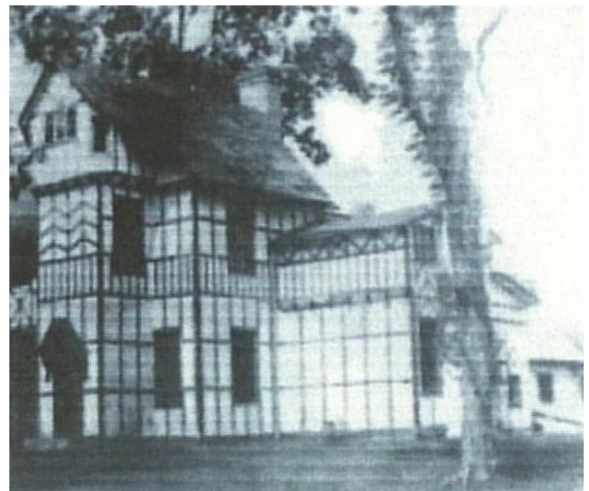
bankruptcy sale. This transaction occurred on September 1, 1986. Beyond this point things get very complicated. O. G. Ramsey acquired 6 different tracts from 3 individuals on August 1, 1975. These folks were Walter Neal, Nathan Philips, and H. M. Flack.

The property owned by Walter Neal was purchased from H. G. Smith on May 1, 1971. The property description indicates that this was a 151 acre parcel. The description also states that the parcel "surrounds a small school house lot". It is possible that this tract may have included the Riverwind 74 acres. Etowah Elementary School was established well before this time. It is unlikely that the Oak Forest School building was still standing but the school property remains part of the Oak Forest cemetery.

Because of the size of the area west of the river and east of School House road it is very difficult to reconstruct property lines from the "Legal Descriptions". These descriptions are really not useful in locating tracts today, particularly farmland. For example these descriptions might read something like " from the southwest corner of Mrs. Brown's farm west 4 rods to the Black Gum tree then south 100 rods to the locust fence post and the east to the big rock at the west back of the river".

Roy Allison, our neighbor across Etowah School Road was able to provide some information regarding what was here before Riverwind. Near the road where the Clubhouse Complex is now, there was Smith's dairy farm. A large silo for storing grain stood where Beechnut and Riverwind intersect. A large barn with a hayloft was located somewhere along the north side of Misty Lane. The barn burned down years ago when some young men drove a tractor into the barn and did not turn off the engine. The vertical exhaust stack set the hay on fire. Farther back, perhaps near Red Birch Court, there was a very successful produce farm. The really nice topsoil in the produce farm area was all moved to the south side of Riverwind Drive for fill.

The 1880s Juedwine house (known as "The Meadows") was located somewhere down in this area. Robert and Leah "Allison" McCall lived here until 1941. A cursory search of old deeds indicates that the McCall property was actually owned by Isaac & Virginia McCall who lived in Burk County. (A picture of the house is on the right)



The use of what is now Riverwind varied over the years. The Etowah area has always been rooted in agriculture and the property had several diverse uses. Back near Paisley Court, teenage boys use to "break" horses in one of the enclosed fields. At the end of Misty Lane near Etowah School Road was a working sawmill. Trees were cut from Jeter Mountain and placed on a wagon or floated down the French Broad River. Near the River Road bridge was a flat area where the logs gathered and were dragged by mules to the sawmill where they were cut into building timbers for homes and farm buildings. The Morgans and Logans lived across Etowah School Road and frequently helped work the farm and the sawmill until bankruptcy and "hard times" forced the sale of the property and equipment.

HISTORY OF ETOWAH SCHOOL

"Still sits the schoolhouse by the road a ragged beggar sunning."

Submitted by John and Nita Narkawicz

From "The Chief 1939"

The schoolhouse which Whittier immortalizes in "School Days" must have been similar to the old Hopewell School, that stood on the Gash homestead near the Etowah railway depot. Hopewell was similar to the majority of rural schools of that day. It was built of logs and was hardly as large as the average classroom of a modern school building. Besides the door there was no other source of light and air except a small opening in one end. On cold, disagreeable days it was necessary to close both the door and window, thus practically excluding air and light. The building was heated by a large fireplace. Desks such as are used today were unknown then. Instead, rough hewn logs split in half and set on stilts were used as seats. The blackboard was a small pine board blacked with lamp black. There was no other teaching device. However, each child had his own slate which was put to good use. The earliest facts about this old school date back to the late sixties. During this period a school term was three and one-half to four months. The school fund, raised by a tax on property, was often supplemented by subscriptions. At Hopewell, free board was regarded as a supplement to the teacher's salary. There was no limit to a school district, Anybody who desired and who was able to walk to school was enrolled. Many walked as far as four or five miles.

In the fall of 1871, Mr, James Wilson Morgan, a young man from Buncombe County, was engaged as teacher at Hopewell. His two predecessors had been run of,by obstreperous students, therefore, the school fund had accumulated and Mr, Morgan was given a four months term. The enrollment was well over a hundred, but many, lacking depth of purpose and a real thirst for knowledge, soon dropped out. However, the daily attendance was frequently high as ninety. The course of study consisted of the three "R's"; the blue-back speller being taught in connection with reading. Webster's Dictionary was regarded as an undisputed authority in vocabulary building. Usually, a child learned his ABC's at home and was ready for reading the first day. Certain prevailing customs of the old schools were an integral part of the Hopewell school. Every Friday afternoon each child was expected to

recite a "speech". Often these programs, to which parents were invited, included spelling bees and debates. The exhibition given by the pupils on the closing night was, perhaps, the most enjoyable occasion of the school year. These programs Consisted of speeches, dialogues, plays, songs, and violin and banjo music.

Unlike his predecessors. Mr. Morgan evidently gave the patrons of Hopewell good reason to "hope," and before another school year rolled around plans were under way for the removal of the school from Hopewell to a site approximately a mile nearer the river and which was to be known as Oak Forest School.



Hopewell School

When time came to start the new year, Oak Forest was still under construction and a nearby cabin on the place of Watt Hadden was used as the school house for a few weeks. This was known as Watt's Cabin. Oak Forest was soon completed and the remaining school term was taught there. Mr. Morgan taught at Hopewell and Oak Forest for seven terms. The upward trend of the school here began with his coming as a teacher in 1871. The old schools, although greatly handicapped, were the foundations upon which the present schools have been built. The schools were enlarged as need demanded

Among the pupils taught by Mr. Morgan at Oak Forest was one who went there for his first school, and who has since then followed largely in Mr. Morgan footsteps. That pupil was the Supt. Of Public Instruction, R. G. Anders.

Oak Forest was used as a school site for about thirty years. For many years the equipment was similar to that used at Hopewell.

With the beginning of Governor Aycock's administration, a new day dawned for the public schools. His creed was that every child was entitled to a good school; every young man or young woman, who wishes it, to a good college. Soon a library was placed in the Etowah School and modern equipment began gradually to replace the old. The school term was increased to six months in 1917; it was increased to eight months in 1926.

Early in the century, Rev, M. A, Matheson, who had previously taught at Oak Forest, taught for two or three terms in the Methodist Church. Probably before 1910, a public school building was erected near the Methodist Church. This building was used until it was destroyed by fire in the spring of 1929. This was a grammar school and boys and girls went away to boarding schools for the high school course.

In 1928, a great forward step was taken in the educational system of Etowah, when the Horse Shoe, Rhymer, Pleasant Grove, Big Willow, and Boylston schools were consolidated with Etowah, and the present modern building on Etowah School Road was erected. Mr. Ralph W. Jones served efficiently as principal since opening of the high school.

In 1928-1929, while the new building was under construction, the high school classes were taught in the Baptist Church.

The Oak Forest School and Cemetery

The Oak Forest School (right) stood in the area between the Riverwind Small Clubhouse and the Etowah School Road (shown by the red X)

This land, and the land across Etowah School Road, known as the Oak Forest Cemetery, was donated by Samuel J. Lance (1804-1874) and his wife Martha Patsey Fletcher for the Oak Forest Cemetery on Etowah School Road and for the Oak Forest School across from the Cemetery.



OAK FOREST SCHOOL



An interesting story concerning this charitable act came to light recently. We are told that in these early days the residents in this area used the cemeteries at Beulah Baptist on Willow Road or Pleasant Grove Baptist on River Road. It was during this period that a child died on this side of the river but the child could not be buried because a flood prevented the crossing of the French Broad River. This event appears to have triggered Mr. and Mrs. Lance's donation and a cemetery was created.

Other interesting facts of this area.

We had a train wreck back in 1895. In those days the Brevard Hendersonville Railroad was built and had either just been finished or was still in production. A small train; engine tender and 2 or 3 cars fell into the French Broad River when the new railroad trestle collapsed. Nobody was hurt but it was very embarrassing probably.

During this same period an unusual venture was tried and failed. A Hendersonville entrepreneur came up with the idea that a steamboat on the French Broad would be a good idea. Here is a quote from a reference document.

"The Mountain Lily steamboat was constructed in 1881 to carry passengers and freight between the junction of the Oklawaha River and the French Broad River, to just east of Brevard, NC, a distance of some seventeen miles. The vessel was the central capital of the French Broad Steamboat Company, owned by Col. S.V. Pickens of Hendersonville. The steamboat was designed to link Brevard, Hendersonville and Asheville. The Mountain Lily was 90 feet long with two decks and staterooms to accommodate 100 passengers. On the maiden voyage it held some 100 people, friends of Pickens, but was never successful in showing a profit. The Company tried several other ventures with the steamboat, but all were unsuccessful. A flash flood in 1885 pulled the boat from the mooring at Banner Farm Road and it became mired on a sand bar near King's Bridge near the current Haywood Road in the 1880's. The boat was sold for salvage and her wood was used to build the Horseshoe Baptist Church and her bell was hung in the church belfry."



Here is a picture of the Mountain Lily, use your imagination and think about a steamboat whistle down on the river, in the back of Riverwind on the French Broad River.