Lewisville Historical Society
History of Lewisville, North Carolina

The area that became Lewisville, North Carolina, was a popular venue for the life of many Native American tribes, including the Suponi Indians, who researchers believe flourished near the Yadkin River. According to Frank Tursi in his book, <u>Winston-Salem; A History</u>, the tribe's name meant "flowing" or "gentle". Around 1 C.E., or around the time of the birth of Christ, these Native Americans began settling in the area that would become Lewisville, nestled in the bounty of the Yadkin River Valley. They thrived on the plentiful game animals, such as buffalo, deer, and elk. They named the river "Atkin" meaning "where the many cottonwoods grow." They earned their livelihood partly from rock fish traps built in the river, remnants of which exist today. Life in the fertile bottom lands near the river was good. The Indians not only feasted on a plentiful supply of fish and mussels, but began farming, raising beans, squash, and corn. By the early 1700s these gentle people were gone from the river banks.

In the middle 1700s, settlers from the north began arriving, when the Moravians of the Wachovia Tract opened up the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road to continue farther on its way south. Daniel Boone, who lived with his family on the other side of the river in the Bryan Settlement, blazed the Daniel Boone Trail in 1769 across the Shallow Ford, a link in the Great Wagon Road. The Shallow Ford, a wide shallow place in the Yadkin River, was instrumental in the creation of the settlement patterns in the area. As frontiersman camped alongside the Yadkin River waiting for the water level to lower so they could cross with their wagons, equipment, and families, many stayed to settle this area with its abundant wildlife and natural springs.

Around 1750, Colonel Joseph Williams, Indian fighter and Revolutionary War Hero from Hanover County, Virginia, acquired 8,000 acres of land and in the 1770s, built a sprawling plantation house, called Panther Creek. He raised 8 sons, many of whom took their place in local, state, and federal government: Robert, Adjutant General of North Carolina; Joseph, Jr., Clerk of Court for Surry County; Col. John, U.S. Senator from Tennessee and later appointed minister to Central America; Lewis, who was elected to Congress 14 times, serving 28 years without defeat. Many prominent people of the time dropped in for visits at Panther Creek Plantation, including Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, and Daniel Boone.

Around 1777, German settlers established a new church that was known locally as the The Old Dutch Meeting House. At that time, the area that would later become Lewisville was called "The German Settlement on the Yadkin." Many German family names, such as Dull, Hauser, Conrad, Leinbach/Lineback, and Pfaff still exist in the area. The church became Shiloh Lutheran Church, the oldest Lutheran Church in Forsyth County.

In 1781, General George Cornwallis was slowed down by having to wait to cross the Shallow Ford. This fact contributed to his eventual defeat and the victory of the new United States of America.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, frontier settlement continued. Waggoner's Chapel was established in the 1780s and became Concord United Methodist Church, the oldest Methodist Church in Forsyth County

The story of the founding of Lewisville can be said to have started in Friedland, a Moravian settlement on the edge of the Wachovia Tract. There, the families of John Phillip Nissen and Philip Laugenour lived. Philip Laugenour's son, Lewis Case Laugenour went to work as a young man for Nissen in his Wagon Works located in Waughtown. In 1849, he and three of his brothers left for the Gold Rush in 1849.   In 1857 Lewis Case Laugenour returned to North Carolina a rich man. He joined his Nissen friends west of the Wachovia Tract, near the Yadkin River. With his money, he bought 750 acres from John Conrad,"River John" Conrad's son, and he built a large brick house there in 1860. He offered land cheaply to any farmer who would grow corn and tobacco and so a town was born. The area became known as Lewisville in honor of the big man with the big heart. 1859 is the earliest date that can be established as the first use of "Lewisville" for this area. Lewis and his wife, Mary Elizabeth "Betty" Nissen Laugenour fostered the establishment of many historic churches, including the Lewisville Baptist Church, the Lewisville Methodist Church, and the New Hope AME Zion Church. They helped establish the Lewisville School, the oldest high school in the County.

 With his brother-in-law, George Elias Nissen, Lewis Laugenour ran the Laugenour and Nissen Sawmill, one of the largest business enterprises in the area during the 1800s. George Nissen also ran a grist mill in the Lewisville area, which in 1870, was the fourth largest industry in the Forsyth County. George Elias Nissen, who built a large house in Lewisville in ca. 1876, was a well-known early industrial pioneer in Forsyth County. After the death of his father, John Phillip Nissen, who began the Nissen Wagon Works in the Waughtown area near Salem in 1834, George took over the Wagon Works and operated it for 36 years (1874-1913).

As time went on, many businesses were established in the area, including a trading post (E.H. Wright's Store), a blacksmith shop, and a tavern. There were two early mills: Edward Hughes' (1760) and Frederick Miller's (1798) Lewisville was a popular stopover for early farmers who were carrying goods to sell in Winston and Salem and had just crossed the Shallow Ford. Campgrounds popped up near the Shallow Ford and in the middle of Lewisville to accommodate the travelers. Many commented that "All roads lead to Lewisville." Crossing the river was treacherous by ford, so many ferries were established in the middle and late 1800s. Three notable ones were in the Lewisville area: Nading's, Conrad's, and Styers's. Many who ran a ferry also operated a mill on the river. Some mills operating in the area in the late 1800s were Eugene Conrad's, Richard Craft's, and Abe Styers'.   Business development continued on into the early 1900s. Nicholas Glen Williams, a great grandson of Col. Joseph Williams, established the William's Distillery in 1880 and began producing Old Nick Whiskey. This industry led to the establishment of the town of Williams when the N.C. General Assembly passed a law stating that a brewery or distillery could only operate in an incorporated town. Other early businesses included brick companies, lumber companies, sawmills, a furniture company, a tobacco company, and several grocery stores.

The post office in Lewisville was established on January 2, 1861. John H. Stoltz was the first postmaster. Philip Laugenour, the father of Lewis, served as the third postmaster from 1867 until his death in 1869. The post office was located in several different locations through the years, depending on which party was in power in Washington, D.C. Notably, the post office was located in Eugene H. Wright's store and trading post in the 1880s and 1890s.

There were six early schoolhouses, usually with one teacher in the late 1800s: Lewisville, Blackburn's, Grapevine, Black's, and Warner's. In the West Bend community, named after the

west bend of the Yadkin river, there were the West Bend School, Slater's, and the Howard-Brann School. The Lewisville Academy was established by the Methodist Conference of the Lewisville Circuit in 1901. Students came from many of the one room schoolhouses in the area, including Blacks, Grapevine, Blackburn, Lewisville, and Warner's. It became the Lewisville School in 1907, the oldest high school in the County. In 1890, the Masons, West Bend Lodge #434, established the West Bend Lodge and Academy. Students from the local one room schools began attending school at the Academy in the downstairs of the large two-story building.

In the mid 1930s, Ms Anna Ogburn built a large home in central Lewisville and called it Sunny Acres. This stately home included several acres of land. Ms Ogburn, a philanthropist from a wealthy tobacco family, brought orphans from the county orphanage out to Sunny Acres on the weekends and in the summers to enjoy the country. They helped her in her gardens, and she made sure they attended Sunday School and church. Later, the home was used as a Methodist Church Retreat, and still later, it was used as a community center for the growing town.

In 1945, as the men came home from World War II, the spirit of community began to grow even more. In July of that year, the Lewisville Civic Club was established and began publishing a newspaper, called <u>The Lewisville Citizen</u>. On December 2 of that year, the Lewisville School tragically burned. It was a watershed event for the community to lose their school. Many in the community realized there was a critical need for a fire department. Led by the Civic Club, the community raised money and the Lewisville Volunteer Fire Department was established in 1951, and a station building was built. Later, a Rescue Squad was established. The Civic Club made its mark early as a community leader establishing a local baseball league, partnering with other community groups to raise funds for the Fire Department and improvements in the community. The Club held events such as an Annual Carnival with the Parent Teachers Association, Horse Shows, and Fall Festivals. The Lewisville Home Extension Club had established a volunteer library in a small house near the Sunny Acres home in October 1945. They redoubled their efforts after the school was lost so the children of the town had access to library books and resources. Roads were paved for the first time. As the population grew, more faith communities emerged including Presbyterian, Moravian, Quaker, Pentacostal Holiness, and other denominations.

In 1970, a county public library branch was established. The Civic Club raised money and in 1978 built a community center for Lewisville. Then in 1991, in order to preserve the small town inviting atmosphere, the citizens, led by the Lewisville Civic Club, incorporated the town. This led to the establishment of sidewalks, a Town Square, several parks, a new Town Hall, a new Library building, and a regular schedule of recreational activities. Lewisville today is a quiet village with a good quality of life in which families thrive and young and old enjoy their lives. The community meets for many events at the Town Square including family picnics, outdoor theater productions, movies, music programs, an annual tree lighting and Christmas Parade, and a fireworks event. The town has many challenges ahead as it stretches and grows, but it stands out as a true gem in the crown of Forsyth County. Lewisville's over 250 years of proud heritage is a fitting base upon which to plan for a future filled with bright promise.