

# FORT MILL TIMES

JUNE 2006

## How India Hook Road in Rock Hill got its name

**By Louise Pettus Fort Mill Times**

*(Published June 2006)*

Ever wonder how one of the major roads in Rock Hill, India Hook Road, got its name?

Beginning at the junction of Cherry Road and Oakland Avenue, one corner of the Winthrop University campus, India Hook Road meanders eastward to the Catawba River and the India Hook Dam and power station. The name has been around so long that its origins seem to have been lost. Certainly the name was already in use at the time of the American Revolution. An early history of the Revolution written by Dr. Joseph Johnson, "Tradition and Reminiscences, Chiefly of the American Revolution in the South," makes reference to the forces of Lord Cornwallis and Gen. Thomas Sumter being in the "India Hook Hills" at the Catawba River.

Alexander Faris' June 2, 1813, plat for land leased from the Catawba Indians shows "India Hook Branch." Old maps and plats indicate that at India Hook shoals there was a spur of land coming off the east bank of the river that was shaped roughly like a hook. An unabridged dictionary refers to "India ink" as originally being red (that is, in the 18th Century a red pigment imported from India that was used to make red ink). This seems to be the most likely explanation for the derivation of the term India Hook.

The India Hook shoals were destined to become the site of the first electric power plant on the Catawba River.

The dam was begun May 4, 1900, and the project was completed Jan. 15, 1904. The depth of the dam was eight feet at the top and 35 feet at the bottom. The length was about one-quarter mile. Sixty-thousand cubic yards of masonry, including 400 railroad carloads of cement, went into the dam. The average number of workmen on the project was 500, and the cost was about \$1 million.

The first contracts made by Catawba Power Co. included Fort Mill Manufacturing Co. (800 hp).

In November 1904, Fort Mill homes received electric power – the first town in the area to do so. Capt. Samuel E. White, president of the Fort Mill Manufacturing Co., underwrote the cost of the electric poles and the wiring.

“The Catawba Index” issue of Feb. 5, 1887, said “Went north into India Hook, roads wet and muddy. When I arrived at the site of the Old India Hook schoolhouse a pleasant and charming site greeted my eyes. The old dilapidated schoolhouse that has stood there for so many years is still standing, but at a distance from the new house. I saw a neat, tasteful, new frame building. ...well-ceiled and well-lighted with glass windows, and the room made warm and comfortable with a wood stove . . . material bought of the school fund and the neighbors and friends built the house. ...Material cost about \$125, everything else donated.”

The schoolhouse described above was, in the early 1900s, one of the model rural schools where Winthrop College sent practice teachers.

*Louise Pettus is a renowned local historian. “Fort Mill History” is sponsored each month by the Fort Mill Downtown Association. Check them out on the Web at [www.fortmilledowntown.com](http://www.fortmilledowntown.com).*