



The old W. R. Mills High School building, later a classroom building at Louisburg College, was the site of celebrations in 1929 and 1979 of the founding of Franklin County. From the Durwood Barbour Collection of North Carolina Postcards (P077), North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

Did You Know Franklin County Has a Song?

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According to Dr. Albert Ray Newsome, secretary of the North Carolina Historical Commission, Franklin County in 1929 became the first county in North Carolina to adopt a county song. An initiative of the Franklin County Historical Association, the song was chosen during the 150th anniversary year of the county's establishment.

The approach of the sesquicentennial of the creation of Franklin County in 1779 likely led a group of citizens to establish the Franklin County Historical Association. *The Franklin Times* reported on Friday, November 2, 1928, that organizers had met the previous Friday. They elected the following citizens to leadership positions: Mrs. Ben T. Holden, president; Dr. D. T. Smithwick, secretary and treasurer; Dr. S. P. Burt, E. J. Cheatham, and W. W. Green, vice-presidents; and Mrs. M. C. Pleasants,

Mrs. Walter Kearney, J. R. Collie, J. O. Pernell, Mrs. J. E. Malone, and J. T. Inscoe, members of the executive committee.

The association adopted a lofty mission. Members sought to spur the “collection, preservation, production and dissemination of the history of Franklin County.” In addition, they wished to mark places of historic interest and to foster “a healthy county and state pride in all things cultural among the rising generation.”

In 1929, the association sponsored a contest for “songs, suitable for school children and public gatherings.” Fred U. Wolfe, a native of South Carolina who had been teaching agriculture at Gold Sand High School for several years, submitted the winning entry, “Franklin.” *The Franklin Times* published the song in its edition of December 20, 1929:

FRANKLIN

(Tune – “Maryland”)

With loyalty we sing they praise,
Glory to thy honored name!
Our voices loud in tribute raise,
Making truth thy pow’r proclaim.
Thy past is marked with vict’ry bold;
Thy deeds today can ne’er be told,
And heroes brave shall e’er uphold
Franklin’s name forevermore.

We love thy rich and fruitful soil,
Wood, and stream, and thriving town.
We love the gift of daily toil,
Making men of true renown.
Thy church and school shall ever stand
To drive the darkness from our land—
A true and loyal, valiant band,
Sons of Franklin evermore.

A shrine of promise, pow’r and truth,
Lasting righteousness and peace,
A land of hope for toiling youth,
Yielding joys that never cease.
Let ev’ry son and daughter stay
The hand of vice that brings decay.
When duty’s voice we shall obey,
Franklin’s name shall live for aye.

It is not known how frequently the county song was sung in schools or at public gatherings, but it was not forgotten. On January 29, 1979, at a ceremony marking the bicentennial of the establishment of Franklin County, organizers led the audience at Louisburg College in singing "Franklin." Mrs. Beth Norris, wife of Louisburg College President J. Allen Norris, noted that Mr. Wolfe, who was retired and living in his home state, was aware that the song he had written fifty years earlier would be sung at the event.

Please acknowledge: some information found in George-Anne Willard, ed., Franklin County Sketchbook (Louisburg: Franklin County-Louisburg Bicentenary Committee, 1982).