

## DEVELOPING THE CATAWBA.

*The Charlotte Observer*  
Extensive Plans for Utilization of the Tremendous Water Power of the Catawba River. *May 16 1903*

The rumor has been persistently circulated in the city for the past several months that the Catawba Power company, of which Dr. Gill Wylie of New York is president, was making the most decided efforts to secure every water power along the Catawba river. Nothing definite looking toward the accomplishment of this end could be secured until a week or more ago, when Mr. W. S. Lee, acting in behalf of his company, acquired the sole and undisputed rights and properties of the Wateree River Electric company, situated seven miles west of Camden, and conceded to be one of the finest water powers in South Carolina. This property was purchased through the agency of Mr. S. Logan Lang of Camden, who acted in behalf of the proprietors, Mr. Frank M. Zemp, Mr. Eugene Zemp, Mr. Johnson of Camden, Mr. A. M. Lee of Charleston, Mr. W. C. Whitner of Rock Hill and a number of others. The price paid is said to have been between \$125,000 and \$150,000. This includes the water and property rights for four and one half miles up the stream and gives the Catawba company a power that is in the very centre of one of the largest manufacturing districts in South Carolina.

The Catawba river is the most favored of all streams that flow from the mountains into the Atlantic ocean, in that the flow of the water is more constant than that of any other stream. The fall near Camden is some 47 feet in a distance of five miles. Of this only about 33 feet is available for economical development. The average flow of the river at this point is something like 3,000 cubic feet per second, which should yield more than 8,000 horse power during the entire year. Should the plant be operated on the 12-hour per day basis, with sufficient development, the available horse power would be far greater, from 13,000 to 15,000 being the estimate. The central location of these falls makes of this power, in the hands of the Catawba company, a most desirable property. Camden, with its many manufacturing interests, is but seven miles distant. Columbia is 30 miles distant, Lancaster is distant 25 miles, Kershaw 16 miles; Sumter, Winnsboro and a number of other manufacturing cities are within reach. The close proximity to the growing markets makes of this property a most valuable investment.

This is in keeping with the designs of the Catawba people. The plant near Charlotte is expected to supply the necessary power for Gastonia, Rock Hill, Charlotte and other manu-

facturing centres that may be developed. The Camden power, to supply the cities named above, is situated some 70 miles down the river, below the Catawba Power company's present plant. This property is as yet undeveloped and will necessitate the expenditure of \$1,000,000 in order that every detail—the property cost, the building of the dam, the placing of machinery, lines, etc., may be completed. The projectors of the new plant have sufficiency of capital and this development is soon to be made.

There are five available powers along the Catawba, or Wateree, as the river is known in South Carolina. Mountain Island, Catawba Power company, Landsford, Camden or Wateree rapids and the Catawba falls. The Catawba company is now operating their plant near Fort Mill, they have recently acquired the Camden or Wateree power, the Catawba falls, said to be the largest and capable of the most economical development, is in the hands of the American Tobacco company, and it is understood on good authority that the Dukes are acting in connection with Dr. Gill Wylie in these operations. Having possession of the three largest and most suitably located powers, with unlimited capital at his command, Dr. Wylie and his associates may be said to have a corner on the river.

The Landsford property in the hands of Mr. Leroy Springs, is situated between the Catawba Power company and the Camden power. It is a question with the Catawba company as to whether they could advantageously handle this plant if secured, and so far no definite action has been taken. The same may be said of the Mountain Island property.

The acquirement of the Camden property, the designs of the Catawba Power company in the securing of all the desirable powers along the river, the authoritative support of the Dukes, are matters of considerable interest throughout this entire section. —Charlotte Observer.

## REMINISCENCES

# Find Power In Catawba

By H. E. C. (RED BUCK) BRYANT  
(R.F.D. No. 1, Matthews, N. C.)



Historians, faithful to the truth, will not forget two promoters who did much to make this section of the Carolinas what it is today with greater promises for the future.

They were Rev. Alexander Craighead, who came early, preaching freedom of conscience, and Dr. Gill Wylie, reared just over the line in South Carolina, who first undertook to harness the waters of a Southern river for power.

Mr. Craighead was forced out of Pennsylvania by representatives of the British and later left Virginia because of fear of blood-thirsty Indians after the defeat of General Braddock by the French and Indians.

He came, with members of his church from the Valley of Virginia to North Carolina where he could worship God as he saw fit, and became the first settled Presbyterian minister between the Yadkin and Catawba rivers. He was pastor of Rocky River and Sugaw Creek churches.

Today, his efforts for independence are beginning to be more highly appreciated.

Dr. Wylie, who became successful surgeon in New York, decided to do something about the waste of water in the Catawba river, than ran so near to his native home, and backed his judgment with his accumulated wealth.

He had roughgoing but now those acquainted with his plans and their success reverse his memory.

As the years go by Mr. Craighead and Dr. Wylie will continue to grow in the minds and hearts of intelligent people. Although in widely different fields and eras, they were great pioneers.

### IN THE YEAR 2000!

Credit to whom credit is due is often overlooked. I have seen some where in the public prints that a great London authority has predicted that by the year 2,000 Atlanta will be the greatest city in the world and Charlotte the next.

At the present rate of progress his prediction may come true.

A reason given for the promise that called forth that guess is that the people in the region covered are the kind that spell success.

Some days ago I had a letter from Mr. J. W. Fraser, well-known to textile men and engineers throughout the South, suggesting that I write a story of the efforts of Dr. Gill Wylie and his brother, Bob, who did so much for this region.

### WATCHED PLAN GROW

Mr. Fraser watched the Wylie plan develop. He saw it grow under the leadership of W. S. Lee.

Mr. D. A. Tompkins, another South Carolinian (Dr. Wylie was from Rock Hill) told me this story about Dr. Wylie:

J. B. (Buck) Duke, for years head of a great tobacco company that has made history with its products, while living in New York had an in-growing toe nail that gave him pain and concern. He went to Dr. Wylie, then a leading surgeon of that city, for treatment.

The doctor years before that had thought of a plan to harness the bold waters of his native state. He had actually expended a fortune on a dam he was having built near Fort Mill. Back then, facilities for building dams were not what they are now. Dr. Wylie went at it the hard way.

More men and not so much machinery were used. My recollection is that many workers lost their lives on the project. The Wylie funds, accumulated by able and persistent application to his profession, were running low. It began to look as if he might fail in his ambition for water power.

During his attention to the Duke toe he talked of his purpose and financial situation. He wondered if the great tobacco magnate could be interested. Mr. Duke asked if a few million dollars—eight I think Mr. Tompkins said—would help. Dr. Wylie said it would.

Now, as I recall it, that was the beginning of the J. B. Duke power development. It moved upward and onward from that accidental beginning. Mr. Duke saved Dr. Wylie's plan and carried it forward.

### W. S. LEE'S MARK

Charlotte people of my day can never forget W. S. Lee who put his heart and brawn in the power program.

"True it is," Mr. Fraser wrote to me, "the rivers are not as constant in flow as in your earlier days but they certainly gave the start to the power that created

the interest in what has become an important industry in North and South Carolina."

The original plant of the Catawba Power Company was completed by Mr. Lee about the first of 1904. It was then supplying light and power to Rock Hill and to one cotton mill there in April. That was when Mr. Fraser came to Charlotte to live.

"In the spring of 1905," said Mr. Fraser, "Mr. Lee explained what they hoped to do in the power game and asked me to join him. This was the opportunity I had spent nine years preparing for. My Westinghouse superior agreed that it was all right with them."

In the summer of 1904 an 11,000-volt line was completed to Fort Mill, Pineville and Charlotte. Mr. Fraser was installing the motors and generators at the Highland Park Mills and the motors at Fort Mill and Pineville for Westinghouse.

From that time on it was progressing without a letup.

"You know," said Mr. Fraser, "what a fine man was Dr. Gill Wylie! — considerate, friendly, generous, of a pioneering spirit.

"He had hard luck in trying to build the first dam. I was told that three contractors went broke, due to bad floods in which they lost locomotives, derricks and other equipment.

"He was impressed with the success W. S. Lee made on a dam in Georgia and secured him to complete the dam and power house—the original undertaking. Mr. Lee had the experience in river work needed.

"One had to be intimate with J. B. Duke to appreciate his exceptional ability. He had bigness and thoroughness in all his make-up. He was no back-slapper, but a considerate helper. He could ask more questions in five minutes than a man could answer in a month. He did a big job for North Carolina.

"Mr. Lee, and later, Mr. Burkholder, put confidence in their men and got back loyalty and unity. If there were any men in the old days that wouldn't give their shirts to either I did not know them. When everyone swears by his boss he must be all right.

"Mill men never asked for a letter of confirmation after they had a talk with Mr. Lee."

Charlotte came to know Mr. Lee well, and liked his fine character and qualities.