

A Brief Profile of Charlotte

Location

Charlotte is located in the southern Piedmont region of North Carolina, just a few miles from the border between North and South Carolina. The Blue Ridge Mountains are about 100 miles to the west. The Atlantic Ocean is about 200 miles to the east.

History

Charlotte's first white settlers arrived about 1748. The community was officially incorporated on December 7, 1768.

The early settlers were mainly of Scots-Irish and German descent, and many came from the states of Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland. They built their new settlement around the intersection of two great Indian trading paths. That intersection, now known as Independence Square, is the center of uptown Charlotte.

Charlotte is sometimes called "The Queen City" because it was named for Queen Charlotte. She was the wife of King George III, who ruled England at the time Charlotte was incorporated. Charlotte is the county seat of Mecklenburg County. The county is named for Mecklenburg-Strelitz, the area of Germany where Queen Charlotte was born.

Many people who settled in Charlotte became unhappy with British rule. It is said that on May 20, 1775, a group of leading citizens met in a wooden courthouse at the center of Charlotte, drew up the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, and sent a copy of it to the Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia. Some people question whether the event actually happened, because the original minutes of the meeting were lost in a fire. However, other copies of the record survive, and the date, May 20, 1775, appears on the North Carolina state flag.

During the Revolutionary War, resistance by local patriots caused British General Cornwallis to call Mecklenburg a "Hornets' Nest." Today, the hornets' nest is a symbol for Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

Business and Industry

In 1799 gold was discovered near Charlotte, and the area became a center of gold mining before the California Gold Rush. Several mines were located within blocks of present-day uptown Charlotte. A branch of the U.S. Mint was established in Charlotte, and banking became an important industry. Today, Charlotte is the nation's second-largest financial center, after New York City.

Following the Civil War, many textile mills were built around Charlotte, and through the middle of the 20th century textiles played a major role in the region's economy. With Charlotte's central location between many major cities of the Northeast, Midwest and the South, transportation is another important industry. Other major employers in the Charlotte area include health care, education, government agencies and energy companies.

Government

Charlotte's government consists of a mayor and an eleven-member City Council who are elected to two-year terms. The mayor and council pass laws and make policy decisions. Day-to-day operations of the city are headed by a city manager, who is appointed by the City Council.

Mecklenburg County is governed by a nine-member Board of County Commissioners.

Education

A single school system, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, operates all of the public schools in Mecklenburg County. The county is home to several well-known institutions of higher learning, including Davidson College, Johnson C. Smith University, Johnson and Wales University, Queens University, and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Pfeiffer University has a satellite campus in Charlotte. Central Piedmont Community College offers vocational training and awards two-year degrees.

Sports

Charlotte is home to the NFL Carolina Panthers, who play in the 73,000-seat Bank of America Stadium in the heart of the Queen City, as well as the NBA Charlotte Bobcats, the Charlotte Checkers of the East Coast Hockey League and the Charlotte Knights AAA baseball team.

Auto racing is another "major league" sport in Charlotte. Lowe's Motor Speedway is one of the best known and most important stops on the NASCAR racing circuit. Charlotte is the home of the NASCAR Hall of Fame.

The U. S. National Whitewater Center, opened in 2007, is host to U. S. Olympic whitewater trials as well as whitewater rafting and kayaking adventures for individuals.

Population

Charlotte is the largest city in North Carolina. In 2008, the estimated population within the city limits was 687,456. The countywide population, including Charlotte, was estimated at 890,515. The population of the metro area was estimated at 1.7 million.

Climate

Charlotte enjoys a mild climate. Normal temperatures in January range from a high of 50 degrees to a low of 31. In July the normal high is 88, with a low of 69. Average annual precipitation is 43.1 inches.