

# Queen Charlotte

Charlotte is named for Queen Charlotte Sophia, wife of King George III, ruler of Great Britain from 1760 to 1820. Mecklenburg County, in which the City of Charlotte is located, is named for Mecklenburg-Strelitz, a duchy in northeastern Germany where Charlotte was born in 1744.

The princess was 17 years old when she married the king in 1761. George, who had only been king for a year, was 24.

The king and queen had 15 children—six daughters and nine sons. Two of her sons, George IV and William IV, later governed as kings of England. Queen Victoria, who ruled England longer than any other monarch, was Queen Charlotte’s granddaughter. Queen Charlotte is the great-great-great-great grandmother of Queen Elizabeth II, Britain’s current monarch.

Queen Charlotte was described as a small woman, “easy, genteel, and agreeable.” She played the harpsichord and loved gardening. According to one legend, it was Queen Charlotte who introduced the Christmas tree to England, bringing the custom from her native Germany. She had several pet dogs. One of her favorites was named “Presto.”

A statue of Queen Charlotte, holding her crown aloft, greets visitors in front of the terminal build-

ing at Charlotte/Douglas International Airport. It is the work of Raymond Kaskey, who also created the four statues at Independence Square in uptown Charlotte. Another statue, by sculptor Graham Weathers, is located in front of the International Trade Center at College and Fifth

Streets. An oil portrait of Queen Charlotte in her coronation gown, by the 18th century artist Allan Ramsay, flanked by a matching portrait of King George, is displayed at Charlotte’s Mint Museum of Art. A representation of Queen Charlotte’s coronation crown is used as a city emblem and appears on the city flag.



QUEEN CHARLOTTE, c. 1762, from a portrait by Allan Ramsay, courtesy of the Mint Museum of Art.

Why was the city named for Queen Charlotte? Although North Carolina was a royal colony, most of Charlotte’s early inhabitants were of Scotch-Irish or German descent. Many believe the name was chosen to

gain favor with the king. Or perhaps the early settlers were simply enchanted with the young German princess, whose regal wedding occurred only a year before Mecklenburg County was created.

Queen Charlotte died in 1818 at the age of 74. But her memory lives on in the city that bears her name. Because of her, the City of Charlotte today is known as “The Queen City.”