

Historic Cornelius

1 **The Stough-Cornelius Mill** (below left) opened in the 1890's where Food Lion & Town Hall are located today. Founded by J.B. Cornelius & R.J. Stough, the mill employed 230 people in 1923. A typical adult mill worker logged 12 hours a day, 5 days a week, plus 6 hours on Saturdays. Skilled workers earned \$28 a week & unskilled workers \$11. The mill was later purchased by the IX Company & then Reeves Brothers. The mill was demolished in 1997. Reeves Brothers developed the plant now known as FXI (corner of Bailey Road & Hwy.115).



THEN

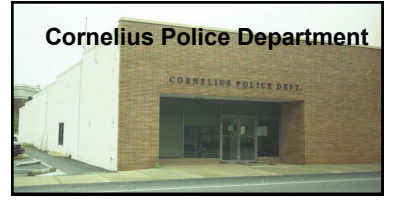


NOW

2 **N. Main @ Catawba** had a much different look in the early 20th century. **Guion Drugs** was located on the NW corner, as well as the **Police Station**. Several other stores were located in this strip, including the **Bank of Cornelius**. The Bank of Cornelius was the only bank in the area that did not close its doors during the great depression!



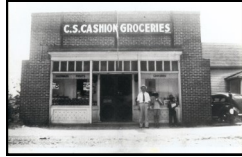
Deweese Sandwich shop building now located behind Howell & Sons on N. Main @ Davidson St.



3 The **"Tree of Knowledge"** was a large Oak tree that was the local gathering spot for sharing news. It was conveniently located between the 2 mills, on the southwestern corner of Catawba Avenue & Main Street.



4 **Cashion's** The first **Cashion's Grocery Store** was located in what is now a paint store (bottom left, 21224 Catawba). It later moved further east on Catawba to where Walgreens is now located. After closing this location, which then became Lowes Foods, Cashion's opened in its current location at the corner of Catawba Ave. & Main St.



5 A **Town Hall** and Police Department were once located in the building on the left, which was expanded over time (photo to the right) & simultaneously housed Town Hall, the police and fire departments. When the current Town Hall building was completed in 1999, the police department moved to N. Main Street (former 1st Union building seen in #2 above) before moving to its current location.



6 Read about the **Gem Yarn Mill** on the back of this brochure.

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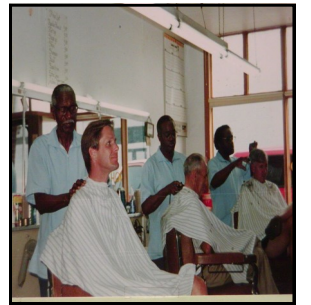
A **cotton gin** (above right) was built in the early 1900's, just north of the Gem Yarn Mill but was demolished in 2021. It was set back off Catawba Avenue southeast of Potts Barber shop. Cotton farmers would take their cotton laden horse drawn wagons to the gin, often lining up along what is now Catawba Avenue awaiting their turn to weigh cotton. To the left of the gin was a **cotton warehouse** (above left), which burned many years ago.

The Farmer's Company, a Ralston Purina dealership, ground feed there (which was sold out of the Ralston Purina plant in Charlotte) and sold seeds, tires, and other supplies needed to run a farm. It had shareholders and paid dividends yearly.



8 **Potts Barber Shop**

Young Wilson Potts once worked for Blakely's Barber Shop (previously located on Brick Row). He later bought the business, changed the name to Potts Barber Shop & moved the business to its current location, a locally designated historic landmark.



The **Smith Store**, 21320 Catawba, was owned by Jacob Smith who gave land which led to the development of Smithville.



Brand Name Consignment (21304 Catawba) was once home to **Puckett's** store.

21300 Catawba was once the home & office of **Doc Washam**, town doctor for more than 50 years!



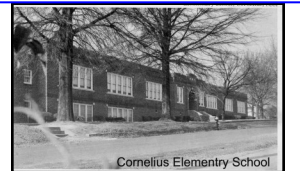
9 **Cornelius Library**

The library has been in 4 different locations since it was established in the 1920's. It started in a location near Potts Barber Shop on Catawba, sharing the same building with Town Hall! It moved to the location of Puckett's Grocery Store (no longer exists) before moving to 21228 Catawba in 1956 where it stayed for more than 40 years. It moved to its current location at 19800 Washam Street in 1999.



10 **Cornelius Elementary School**

The school's origins can be traced back to 1885 when it was located near Mt. Zion United Methodist Church. In 1917 the school moved to Catawba Avenue. The original Catawba Avenue school building was later demolished & rebuilt as you see it today.



11 **Cornelius Presbyterian Church**

Church Street was named in honor of Cornelius Presbyterian Church located at 21209 Catawba, which was established in 1909. The Cornelius Historic Preservation Commission recognized the church in 2009 for its historical importance to the development of the Town of Cornelius.



12

The **Fidler House** was constructed in the early 1900's by local farmer W.C. Fidler & designated as a local historic landmark in 2007. The house remained in the Fidler family until 2005 and is an excellent example of craftsman-style bungalow homes that were popular during this period.



21112 Catawba

For more information on Cornelius' history, we invite you to visit *Heritage Hall* and the *History Room* located in *Town Hall*. Both are free and open to the public.

OTHER AREAS OF INTEREST

Mt. Zion United Methodist Church

Organized in 1827, Mt. Zion United Methodist Church is one of the oldest churches in the Town of Cornelius. In 1835, the congregation moved to its current location at the corner of Smith Road and Zion Avenue.



During the Civil War, the church grounds served as a Confederate muster site and later as the location of Confederate veterans reunions.

In 2009, the Historic Preservation Commission recognized Mt. Zion for its historical importance to the development of the Town of Cornelius.



In 2005, the original parsonage for the church was designated as a local historic landmark. It is currently a private residence.

6

Gem Yarn Mill



The Gem Yarn Mill, ca. 1905, is the only remaining mill in the Town of Cornelius. The mill was incorporated in 1907 and closed in 1962. When it opened, the mill employed 45 people. During the peak years (1941—1946) the mill employed 150 people. Raw cotton was processed here & turned into dyed yarns.

The Board of Directors included many well known family names: F. C. Sherrill, J. B. Cornelius, T. S. Williamson, P. A. Stough and R. J. Stough. A cotton gin was built just north of the mill facing Catawba. It was set back off of Catawba Avenue near Potts Barber shop. Cotton farmers would take their cotton laden horse drawn wagons to the gin, often lining up along what is now Catawba Avenue awaiting their turn.



Smithville



With the end of the Civil War, a community began to grow—Smithville. Due to the generosity and compassion of Jacob Smith, a farmer and owner of the Smith Store who was married to a descendent of the Potts family, black farmers and laborers were able to acquire land on the western side of town. This allowed many the opportunity to stay in Cornelius if they chose to do so. The Smithville Community is home to a former

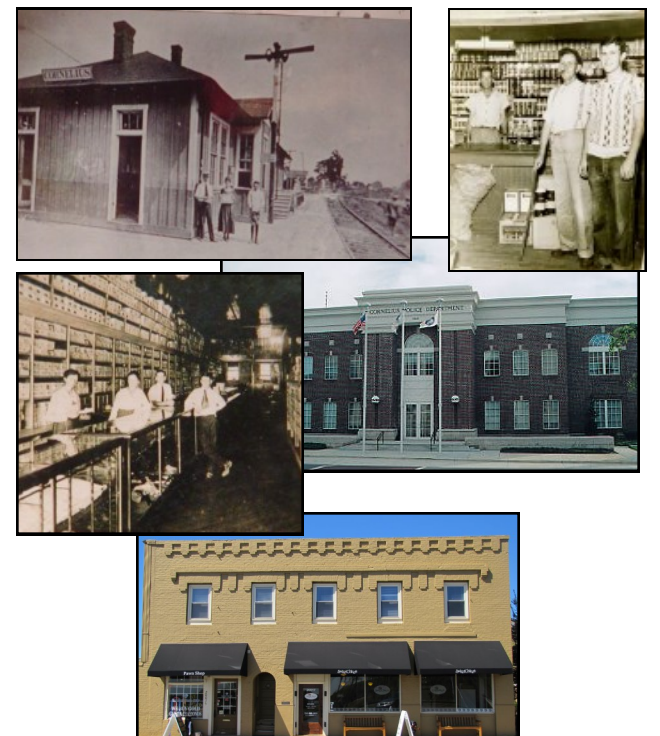
Rosenwald School (pictured above). The school was built in the early 1920's under the Rosenwald School Program, a program established to improve education for African Americans in the south. Booker T. Washington conceived the idea of a "hands-on self-help" approach to education which he called "industrial education" and teamed up with Julius Rosenwald, CEO of Sears, Roebuck and Company to build rural schools for the black community.

Approximately 5,350 such schoolhouses were built across 15 southern states. North Carolina had the majority of the structures with more than 800 schools, 26 in Mecklenburg County alone. The large number of Rosenwald schools in Mecklenburg County is attributable to the County being a large cotton-growing region which remained strongly rural, despite the growth of the City of Charlotte at that time.

Historic Cornelius Walking Tour



Historic Preservation Committee



Lake Norman

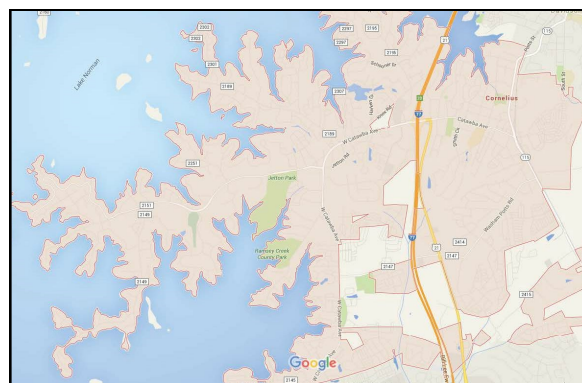
The damming of the Catawba River created Lake Norman and was as influential as the cotton industry to the Town's development and growth. In 1963 Duke Power created Lake Norman which provided the area with recreational opportunities and a source of hydroelectric power. The formation of Lake Norman also provided the area with choice lakeside property.

Cornelius continues to combine a small town atmosphere with grand homes along the shoreline of Lake Norman. The citizens can enjoy an array of recreational activities while only being minutes from the urban center of Charlotte which allow citizens to maintain a high quality of life.

Location

Located just a few miles north of Charlotte, NC, Cornelius is accessible by Interstate 77, N.C. 115, Hwy. 21, and Hwy. 73/West Catawba Avenue.

From Interstate 77, take exit 28 eastbound to reach Historic Cornelius.



Town of Cornelius
21445 Catawba Avenue
P.O. Box 399
Cornelius, NC 28031
(704) 896-2461
<http://www.cornelius.org/>

@TownofCornelius

Birth of Cornelius

The Town of Cornelius, the second youngest of Mecklenburg County's six incorporated towns, was founded in 1893 and incorporated in 1905. When incorporated, the town was a rural mill village with significant agricultural ties.

The history of the Town has been traced back to a dispute over cotton weighing. In the late 1800's, two thriving cotton firms located in Davidson disagreed on whether an official town cotton weigher should be appointed. After a heated election was held and legislation enacted, a town cotton weigher was hired and the firm which opposed the appointment decided to relocate much of its operations just south of the Davidson town limits.



Frequently after heavy rains, the road connecting Davidson and Cornelius would become impassible. The hill leading into Davidson would become so muddy that many cotton farmers found it safer and more convenient to conduct their business just south of Davidson. The success of the cotton purchasing business inspired the owners to construct a cotton mill where raw cotton could be converted into cloth. The owners of the cotton firm lacked the money to build a cotton mill and turned to Joseph B. Cornelius (1833-1914) for financial backing.

Originally locally known as 'Liverpool' due to the prominent cotton industry in England, the Town was named 'Cornelius' in honor of J.B. Cornelius.