

School House



In 1904, a new school building, the Benson Graded High School, (known as the Dixie House) was constructed with ten rooms consisting of four classrooms, an auditorium, a library and a society room. In 1916, three hundred and fifty students transferred from the Dixie House to the new brick Benson High School located on Church Street. Today, the restored school

building houses the Town of Benson government offices, a courtroom, the W. J. Barefoot Auditorium and the Benson Area Chamber of Commerce.

Kitchen

Until the modern convenience of today's grocery stores, most families grew vegetables, hunted for game, raised chickens, and canned most all foods the family needed. Cooking took place in the fireplace before wood stoves came along. The kitchen room of the museum includes many early tools that Southern cooks used to churn butter, make mayonaise and sets of china common for the period.



Our Mission

To preserve the history and material culture of the Benson area for the educational benefit of our citizens and visitors; and to promote the understanding of and appreciation of our past through interpretation, pristine exhibits, programs and publication.

Who We are

Created in 1987, the museum is a department of the Town of Benson and operations are administered by a board of 15 directors, a Chairman of the Board and a curator appointed by the town Board of Commissioners.



HOURS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

Wednesday	1pm - 5pm
Thursday	9am - 1pm
Friday	1pm - 5pm
Saturday	9am - 3pm
Sunday - Tuesday	Closed

Admission - Free, donations accepted

102 W. Main St., Benson, NC 27504 | 919.894.1266
www.townofbenson.com

BENSON MUSEUM LOCAL HISTORY

FARMING, MERCHANTS, THE RAILROAD, & BASEBALL -

*defines
Benson's
heritage...*

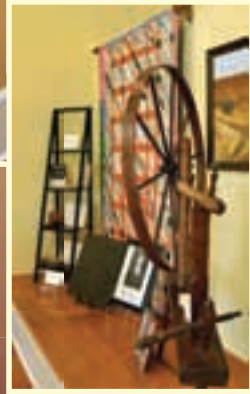


102 W. Main St., Benson, NC 27504
919.894.1266
www.townofbenson.com

History

The town of Benson derives its name from Alfred Monroe "Mim" Benson, a farmer who purchased a 402-acre tract of land in 1874 along the Smithfield-Fayetteville Road.

Benson owes its existence to the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad which was surveyed to pass through the town's present location in 1886. The town soon became an important commercial center for families farming in the areas around Elevation, Bentonville, Mingo Swamp, McGee's Crossroads, Blackman's Crossroads and Meadow.



Railroad Heritage

In 1886 the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad Company completed the north-south rail line conceived as a "short cut" between Wilson, N. C. and Florence, S. C. The new route, later to become the heart of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, would become a main line between New York and Florida, a route that would continually change the geographical, economic and cultural complexion of the entire county.

The museum has several artifacts from the Benson Railroad Depot such as telegraph equipment, desk and chair and uniform belonging to railroad employee.



Merchants

By 1890, Benson had a dozen merchants, among them Jacob Woodall, operator of a general store. The town had two cotton buyers, as cotton was growing steadily and had become a major source of income in the county. Several general stores supplied local farm families with dry goods such as sugar, salt, and flour. Farmers sometimes exchanged crops, chickens, and eggs for the supplies they needed for their families.



A merchant store has been recreated in the museum including scales, tin cans, flour sack material and much more.

Farming

In the mid-1850s, farming in the Benson area produced corn, wheat and oats, and 800 bales of cotton, but not enough tobacco to be mentioned in the agricultural census. Local farmers produced crops for the family's consumption and larger "plantations" also grew crops and goods for sale. The first cash crop was definitely timber with saw mills and turpentine distilleries being the first industries in the area.



The museum has a vast collection of farming tools and equipment on display.

Military

Artifacts and military history on the Benson area and the men that served our country are displayed from the Spanish-American War to the Civil War and through World War II.



Special Events

The first Mule Day Celebration was held in 1950 by founders Garland McLamb, Nowell Smith, and Willis McLamb who approached Lewis Lawrence, the first manager of the newly formed chamber with their idea. Their desire for the festival was to set aside a day to celebrate the mule. Benson was a well-known mule trading town with over a dozen mule stables. The first celebration drew a few hundred participants with mule pulling contests, tobacco spitting contests, and the "largest family" contest.



The oldest festival in the county began in 1921 as a treat for the town. Area church choirs met in an old tobacco warehouse to have a "sing." About 200 people heard two choirs that day.

Today, large audiences still gather the fourth weekend in June at the Benson Singing Grove on Main Street where gospel groups come to compete for trophies.

