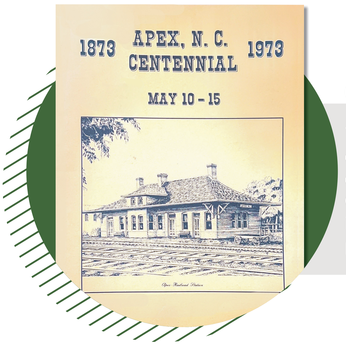
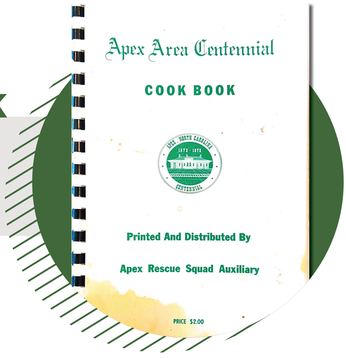
Town of Apex
Centennial Celebration

In 1973, the Town of Apex had a population of 2,200 people and was 1.97 square miles. This celebration honored 100 years of Apex history with 6 days of activities from May 10th to May 15th, 1973.



CENTENNIAL BOOK & COIN

The Centennial book was a 48-page publication that displayed pieces of Apex history, different members of the community including clubs, employees, and churches, and recognized the Centennial Steering Committee. The commemorative Centennial coin was produced as an item to purchase and featured pieces of Apex's identity in both past and present through images like farming, tobacco, and industry.

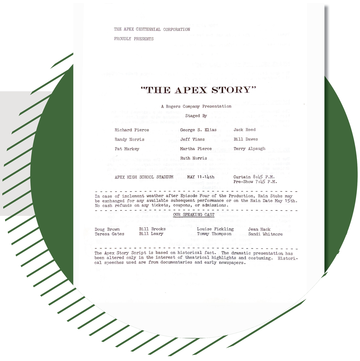


APEX AREA CENTENNIAL COOKBOOK

The Apex Area Centennial Cookbook was printed and distributed by the Apex Rescue Squad Auxiliary. The volunteer Rescue Squad, which was created in 1971, produced the books in hopes they would be passed down to future generations.

MEMBERSHIP SHARES

Provided in the form of a Mayor-signed certificate, the Membership Share was a gesture of appreciation to those who participated in the Centennial celebration.



THE APEX STORY

The Apex Story script was based on historical facts and performed at the Apex High School football stadium from May 11 through 14, 1973. It was a dramatic presentation that highlighted historic speeches from documentaries and early newspapers.

DRESS ETIQUETTE

Community members young and old celebrated the Centennial by wearing 1870s attire. Many small groups formed for the celebration week and took portraits in the 1870s dress.

1973 VAULT

A time capsule was buried in The Depot (220 N. Salem St) garden containing items in glass jars (for preservation) to be opened 100 years later.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Men throughout the Apex community were encouraged to participate in the celebration week by growing facial hair. Those that grew facial hair were recognized as celebration ambassadors and received a certificate for being a "Brother of the Brush" which commemorated their participation.

This banner is one of 10 exhibits about Apex History.

Do you want to see the full gallery? Scan QR code with your smartphone.

Town of Apex
Indigenous Peoples' History

*Much of indigenous peoples' history and, specifically, American Indian history, is untold. This record of history serves as a reminder that the American Indian people and their stories are "**silent no more.**"*

AMERICAN INDIANS INHABITED WAKE COUNTY

Up until the 1700s, the Tuscarora tribe lived in Wake County and along the rivers and waterways of eastern North Carolina.

AFTER THE TUSCARORA WAR

The Tuscarora War, which is considered the bloodiest colonial war in North Carolina, took place from 1711 to 1715. Following the war, the Tuscarora people were forced out of their North Carolina villages. Fleeing for their lives, many of the tribe's people were displaced throughout the eastern United States, with larger groups forming in West Virginia and New York.

TUSCARORA TRIBESMEN RETURN TO WAKE COUNTY

In the 1840s, Tuscarora tribesmen returned to North Carolina and lived in the New Hill area.

TUSCARORA TRIBESMAN STARTS A BUSINESS

In the 1840s, Thomas Stewart, a Tuscarora tribesman, owned land and built a Saloon on what is now Old US Highway 1 and Smithfield Road. At that time, he was able to both own the land and operate the business because community members assumed he was white, based on his appearance.

THE FORMATION OF FRIENDSHIP

In the late 1840s, four groups gathered as pioneers of peace to create a community of kindness and common understanding. Those four groups included American Indians, previously enslaved people of color, free people of color, and white (Quaker) community members. The formation of the Friendship community was facilitated by Thomas Stewart, a Tuscarora tribesman. His peace pipe was the ceremonial symbol of their unity.

ESTABLISHMENT OF FIRST AMERICAN INDIAN CHURCH

In 1865, Mount Zion Baptist Church was established as the first American Indian church in the Apex area to meet in a permanent structure. The church, located at 2617 Mt Zion Church Road, also served as a school and educated local youth. Reverend Thomas Morrison (pictured to the right) was one of the early Pastors of the church.

FIRST RECOGNIZED AMERICAN INDIAN BUSINESS

In 1918, AF (Force) Stewart became the first recognized American Indian to own and operate a business in the Apex area. He owned two small businesses, Stewart Blacksmith Shop and Stewart Grocery on Route 1, Old Fayetteville Road, which is now New Hill Holleman Road.

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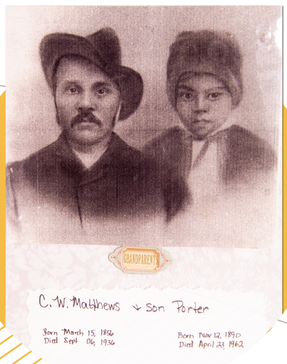
Town of Apex
Black History

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BLACK CHURCHES

The first Black church, Christian Home Christian Church, was established in 1866 under a brush arbor. Other Black churches were established in the following years. Contributing to Apex's growth and economy, their members came into town to purchase food, clothing, and other necessities.



BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES

In the 1880s, Columbo Whalen (C.W.) Matthews was the first Black man to build and own a business in Apex. The building, located in downtown Apex at 119 N. Salem Street, was rented to local white business owners. At that time, C.W. Matthews could not legally enter the front door of his own building. He instead had to collect rent in the back alleyway.

APEX SCHOOLS

In the 1880s, Apex Normal and Collegiate Institute was established as the only known private school for Black students. From 1923 to 1932, three Rosenwald Schools opened in the areas of Apex, Friendship, and New Hill through the national Rosenwald Fund and local contributions. The Rosenwald School concept was created through a partnership with Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald.

Their shared ideals resulted in nearly 5,000 schools opening across the United States to create better lives for Black youth through education and resources. In the 1950s, the Friendship and New Hill Rosenwald schools closed and students from both schools then attended the Apex Rosenwald School, which later became Apex Consolidated.

BLACK COMMUNITIES

There were many Black farming communities surrounding Apex. The communities consisted of privately-owned farms and tenant farms. They were generally formed around a church family and were close-knit in nature. Communities included Friendship, Green Level, New Hill, Low End, White Oak, Whops, and many more.

BLACK HISTORY IN GOVERNMENT

The Town of Apex has benefited greatly from the contributions and service from Black staff members and elected officials. James Herbert Matthews Sr., a Black electrician, received a special commendation in 1966 from the Town Commissioners. Other influential staff members include the first Black Town Clerk, Donna Hosch, who organized the first Black History Celebration, the Town's first Black Town Manager, Catherine (Katy) Crosby, and the first Black Police Chief, Jason Armstrong.

Elected officials have also played a significant role in the diversity of the Apex community. Clarice Atwater and Nicole Dozier both served multiple terms, and both held office as Mayor Pro Tempore. In 2019, history was made again as Jacques Gilbert was elected the first Black Mayor in the Town's history.

APEX
1873
NORTH CAROLINA

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Town of Apex
Hispanic History

HISPANIC MINISTRIES LAUNCH

One ministry that consistently serves the Hispanic community is Fiesta Cristiana. Started in 2008 during an exceptionally challenging economic time, Apex United Methodist Church (UMC) hired Pastor José Luis Villaseñor to serve the Hispanic/Latino community in Apex and the greater Triangle area. By 2010, the church was recognized as a "faith community" by the UMC of North Carolina and began weekly services in Spanish.

The faith community continued to gain support and resources to support the growing congregation and community. Fiesta Cristiana now has a Family Resource Center, which provides food, financial assistance, parenting classes, tutoring, and referral services to community members.

HISPANIC-OWNED BUSINESSES

Hispanic-owned small businesses in Apex include beauty salons, car repair shops, supermarkets, and restaurants. Tacos Mexico, the first Hispanic-owned business in Apex, which opened in the early 2000s, opened to fill a void in western Wake County with Mexican cuisine. Owner Antonio Romero started the business as a food truck to bring tacos and Mexican flavors and quickly grew it into the restaurant it is today at 209 E. Williams Street.

Compare Foods, which opened in 2013, also opened to fill a void for the Hispanic community. Originally offering mainly Mexican products, their inventory has grown to now include selections from Peru, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, and more. Members of the Hispanic community are able to find foods and products that represent moments from the countries they feel connected to.

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Based on the 2021 American Community Survey, 6% of the Apex population is Hispanic or Latino. Fifteen countries of origin are represented in the Apex community, including Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, and more with the largest populations originating in Mexico and Puerto Rico.

APEX LATINO ARTS FESTIVAL

The inaugural Apex Latino Arts Festival, held in 2010, aimed to highlight local Latino arts and culture and to promote opportunities for common understanding with the community. Each year, the Festival includes a food tasting culinary event, children's arts and crafts workshops, traditional piñata breaking ceremonies, Latin American dance and music performances, and an arts and crafts bazaar.

The event is organized by a group of dedicated volunteers that work in conjunction with Fiesta Cristiana and the Town of Apex. This annual festival brings people together while affirming Hispanic/Latino arts and culture.

HISPANIC COMMUNITY TRADITIONS

The Hispanic community celebrates and cherishes traditions with family and fellow community members. One example of a beloved tradition is Las Posadas, hosted in December each year. Las Posadas, which is based on a Biblical story, commemorates the journey of Mary and Joseph in search of lodging for the birth of Jesus.

For more than 10 years, Iglesia Fiesta Cristiana has hosted this tradition and celebrates with food, piñatas, caroling, and a processional walk down Salem Street in downtown Apex. Each year, the event hosts nearly 200 people from different cultural backgrounds.

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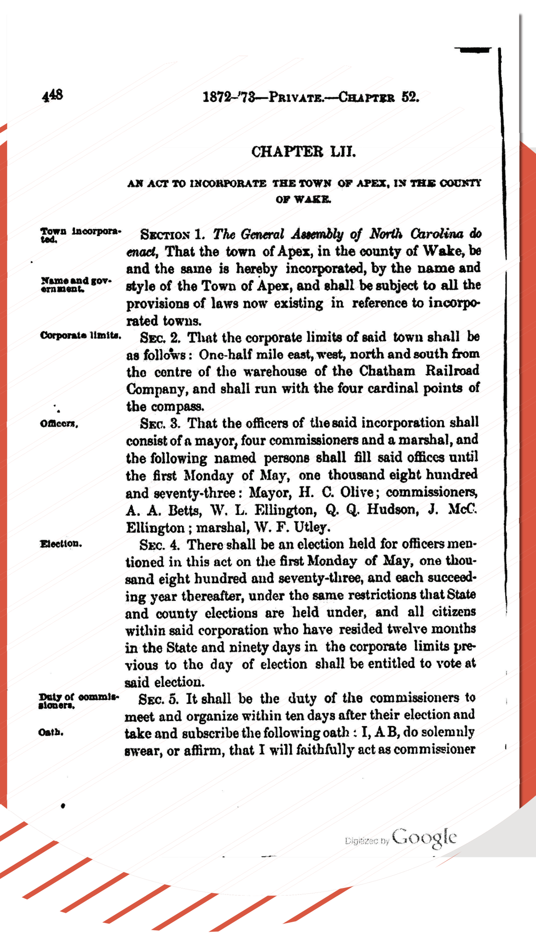
Town of Apex
Government History

Apex was once a small community on the outskirts of North Carolina's capital city. Now a place all its own, Apex is a bustling town that lives up to its slogan, "The Peak of Good Living."



448 1872-'73—PRIVATE.—CHAPTER 52.

CHAPTER LII.

AN ACT TO INCORPORATE THE TOWN OF APEX, IN THE COUNTY OF WAKE.

Town incorporated. SECTION 1. *The General Assembly of North Carolina do enact,* That the town of Apex, in the county of Wake, be and the same is hereby incorporated, by the name and style of the Town of Apex, and shall be subject to all the provisions of laws now existing in reference to incorporated towns.

Name and government.

Corporate limits. SEC. 2. That the corporate limits of said town shall be as follows: One-half mile east, west, north and south from the centre of the warehouse of the Chatham Railroad Company, and shall run with the four cardinal points of the compass.

Officers. SEC. 3. That the officers of the said incorporation shall consist of a mayor, four commissioners and a marshal, and the following named persons shall fill said offices until the first Monday of May, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-three: Mayor, H. C. Olive; commissioners, A. A. Betts, W. L. Ellington, Q. Q. Hudson, J. McC. Ellington; marshal, W. F. Utley.

Election. SEC. 4. There shall be an election held for officers mentioned in this act on the first Monday of May, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-three, and each succeeding year thereafter, under the same restrictions that State and county elections are held under, and all citizens within said corporation who have resided twelve months in the State and ninety days in the corporate limits previous to the day of election shall be entitled to vote at said election.

Duty of commissioners. SEC. 5. It shall be the duty of the commissioners to meet and organize within ten days after their election and

Oath. take and subscribe the following oath: I, A B, do solemnly swear, or affirm, that I will faithfully act as commissioner

Digitized by Google

ACT TO INCORPORATE: FEBRUARY 28, 1873

On February 28, 1873, the North Carolina General Assembly passed "An Act to Incorporate the Town of Apex", officially establishing Apex as a municipality. The name "Apex" was selected in part to reflect its geographical position – the highest point – along a 30-mile section of the Chatham Railroad. The town at that time was one square mile, and around 300 residents called Apex home.

Prior to the town's formal incorporation, the downtown area was referred to as "Log Pond". The unique name was based on a small body of water filled with logs where steam engines would replenish their water supply on the way to Raleigh after climbing to the "peak" on the railroad.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST TOWN HALL

Apex's first Town Hall building, located at 237 N. Salem Street, was created as a true center of town government with political, judicial, economic, and cultural services. The building was constructed in 1912 and cost $7,500. It housed public safety, the mayor's office, a jail, courtroom, open market and trading center, and an opera house. Today, that facility still serves the Apex community, operating as The Halle Cultural Arts Center.

OPERATIONS INCREASE TO MEET GROWING POPULATION

1917 marked a significant moment for Town leadership as they worked to bring electricity to the town through the creation of the Electric Utilities Department. Apex was a pioneer by offering this amenity, since many similar communities were waiting for private electricity to grow and spread past the few areas in Raleigh that offered electricity to homes and businesses.

The 1950 US Census counted just over 1,000 residents in Apex. As the town's population grew, additional services were provided by town staff to facilitate a greater quality of life. Not only did the population increase, but Apex's geographic footprint also grew for the first time in 1960 with two annexations into the town's corporate limits.

By 1970, the population had doubled to over 2,000, and more space was needed for the growing staff to support operations. A bond referendum was held to borrow $600,000 for the construction of a larger town hall facility at 205 Saunders Street that would house several town departments.

NEW FORM OF GOVERNMENT IS ADOPTED

Until the 1980s, Town departments operated separately, under the purview of the Board of Commissioners. In 1985, the Town's charter was amended to adopt the council-manager form of government, which combines the strong political leadership of elected officials with the strong managerial experience of an appointed manager or administrator. Approximately 100 employees worked for the Town at that time. The charter was also later changed to rename the governing body from 'Board of Commissioners' to 'Town Council'.

PRESENT-DAY TOWN HALL CAMPUS IS CONSTRUCTED

From 1990 to 2000, Apex's population jumped from 5,000 residents to 20,000 residents. Again, meeting the need for expanded services and staff, the third (and current) Town Hall building was opened to the public in 2001. The address was assigned as 73 Hunter Street, with the '73' serving as an homage to the town's year of incorporation. Opened in that same year was the Apex Community Center, located next door to Town Hall. In 2021, the Senior Center was constructed on Town Hall campus.

The former Town Hall located at 205 Saunders Street was demolished, then rebuilt in 2010, in the same location that the Police Department stands today.

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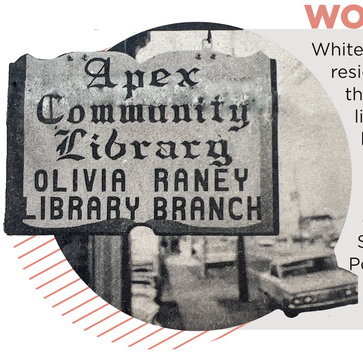
Town of Apex
Women's History

WOMEN VOTE IN A MUNICIPAL ELECTION FOR THE FIRST TIME

After the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, women in Apex could register to vote and participate in municipal elections for the first time. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 further expanded voting rights for all women by outlawing practices that created barriers for Black women to exercise their right to vote.

WOMEN IN EDUCATION

Apex women have a long-standing tradition of serving youth through education. The first Apex Public School, built in 1914, established a Ladies League to serve the needs of the students and school staff. Two well-known educators with long-standing tenures in Apex are Mildred Cooke and Jessie Ruth Cunningham. Both taught thousands of students and shaped the lives of countless families.



WOMEN ADVOCATE FOR LITERACY

White and Black women in Apex worked diligently to ensure the literacy of residents. In 1957, the Apex Public Library opened on South Salem Street through a federal grant with the help of Richard B. Harrison (Raleigh) librarian, Mollie Huston Lee. The Public Library, with Irene Stewart as librarian, served the Black residents of Apex with nearly 2,000 books.

In 1960, the Apex Women's Club established a modest library for white residents on North Salem Street with 250 books. In 1966, after much debate on location, the first desegregated library opened at 131 N. Salem Street with Rachel Lewter as head librarian. Long-time Apex resident Eva Perry passed away in 1986 and left a one million dollar gift to the Town of Apex to build a new library, which still stands today at 2100 Shepherds Vineyard Drive.

WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT

Women have served prominent roles in Apex local government throughout the last 150 years. Clarice Atwater was a pioneer for women in Apex government, serving as the Town's first female and Black elected official and Mayor Pro Tempore. Clarice was first appointed to the Board of Commissioners on March 10, 1981, which demonstrates the respected role she held within the Apex community. She was formally elected by voters to the Board later that year and served until her retirement in 1993. The Town's first female Town Manager, Catherine (Katy) Crosby (2021), continues that legacy of female leadership alongside many others in leadership roles.

Atwater Appointed First Black, Female Town Commissioner

Newly appointed Commissioner Clarice Atwater joined the Town Board last Tuesday night. Atwater (center) is flanked by Town Clerk Sonja Lumley and Commissioner Nolan Cooke.

The Apex Herald
Thursday, June 5, 2008
Peak of slogans

FINDING THE PERFECT TOWN SLOGAN

A slogan competition in 1975 yielded the phrase "The Peak of Good Living" submitted by then Town of Apex employee, Elva Maynard. The now trademarked slogan still rings true today, with many businesses and organizations creating their own version of the slogan to appeal to customers and community members. Residents and non-residents alike recognize and remember the slogan, which has become as emblematic of the town as its own name.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Prior to 1945, many women operated businesses within their homes or provided services / trades around the town. In 1945, Addie Pegram, who was the first female to graduate from the UNC School of Pharmacy and one of the first female pharmacists in North Carolina, opened Pegram's Pharmacy at 119 North Salem Street. Soon after, Apex Pharmacy opened under ownership of Margaret Perry at 100 N. Salem Street. Today Apex is home to many women-owned and women-led businesses in apparel, cosmetology, grocery, and other services.

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Town of Apex

History of Apex Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources

BEFORE FORMATION OF PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The first Town Hall, constructed in 1912, was the epicenter for residents and offered recreational amenities like silent movies and dances for the community of over 300 to enjoy. Before the Parks and Recreation department was established in 1987, the Town of Apex contracted a community member to organize youth athletics like football, basketball, and baseball on Saturdays at local schools including Apex High School, Apex Elementary School, and A.V. Baucom Elementary.

BOND REFERENDUM APPROVAL SHOWS RESIDENT SUPPORT FOR PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAMMING

In 1996, a six million dollar bond was approved by Apex voters. The bond funded construction and renovation of Apex Community Park, Jaycee Park, and other projects. The renovation of the Apex Community Park was a multiphase project which started with building additional fields near the Laura Duncan Road entrance. The bond served to enhance quality of life through new athletic and recreation opportunities via walking paths and more offerings in organized sports.

ADDITION OF "CULTURAL RESOURCES" TO DEPARTMENT NAME AND MISSION

In 1998, the Parks and Recreation Department changed its name to Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources. The name change spoke to the intention of the department, then and now, to create programming that mirrors the increased diversity of the Apex population over the years. The Cultural Resources piece of the department focuses on providing events, space, and programming for everyone and consistently seeks new ways to engage those that call Apex home.

COMMUNITY SHOWS SUPPORT FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

For over 25 years, two groups have been involved in community support and advocacy for the town's Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources efforts. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission consists of appointed Apex residents that review projects and policies. Citizens for Apex Parks (CAPS), is a 501(c)3 that promotes department projects to the community. Both groups contributed greatly to the voter approval of additional bond referendums in 2012 ($12 million) and 2017 ($48 million), further developing parks programming and construction.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PARKS PROJECTS

In 1999, Apex community members expressed a desire to create a unique playground for all ages and formed a committee of local neighborhood representatives to accomplish that goal. They worked with the Town to find a suitable site and, after many months of public engagement with residents and events at local schools, plans for an all-wood community-built playground at Kelly Road Park called Kidstowne were created.

Another community-inspired project, Rodgers Family Skate Plaza at Trackside, opened in 2015 to provide a safe and designated space for skaters and skateboarders. The amenity, located at Hunter Street Park, was the result of a collaborative effort between Apex youth, CAPS, Town officials, and Town staff.

LAND DEDICATIONS ASSIST IN PARK AND ADDITIONAL AMENITY DEVELOPMENT

Since 2001, parks, greenways, and indoor recreational amenities have often been developed through a land dedication ordinance. The ordinance is a special authorization enacted by the North Carolina General Assembly and grants the Town of Apex the ability to require residential developers to set aside land, pay a fee-in-lieu, or construct greenways or park facilities for public recreation. Fees paid are used to purchase land, develop park properties, and provide recreation and open space amenities for residents to enjoy.

FORMATION OF MASTER PLANS

In the early 2000s, the Town of Apex saw a need for long-range planning for Parks and Greenways, and dedicated staff time and resources to developing plans that would guide the next 10 years. The Town of Apex has adopted updated master plans to guide the focus and direction of the department, with substantial public input to identify areas of need and desired amenities.

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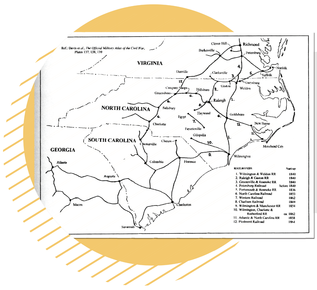
Town of Apex
Economic History



COMPLETION OF CHATHAM RAILROAD

In 1869, the Chatham Railroad was completed, and included a 30-mile track running from Haywood / Haw River to Raleigh. The railcars frequently transported turpentine, timber, farm products, and minerals to the capital city and beyond. During this time, the first Apex Depot was built to enhance commerce in Apex. This economic boost brought more people to Apex and kick-started the path to incorporation in 1873.

APEX GROWS INTO TOBACCO DISTRIBUTION HUB

From 1905 to 1907, three tobacco distribution warehouses opened in Apex - the Golden Leaf Tobacco Warehouse, Apex Planter's Warehouse, and Apex Farmer's Consolidated Tobacco Company. These three warehouses made Apex the standout leader for tobacco sales in Wake County.

COMPLETION OF DURHAM & SOUTHERN RAILROADS

1906 brought the completion of the Durham and Southern railroad, which spanned 50-miles from Dunn to Durham. This rail line often transported lumber, cotton, tobacco, and other raw materials to city markets. In Apex, the first Depot had burned in a fire and was replaced with a second Union Railroad Depot in 1914. With a new depot station and additional rail connections, Apex became the freight delivery hub of western Wake County and saw tremendous economic growth.

THE GREAT FIRE IN DOWNTOWN APEX

On June 12, 1911, an extensive late-night fire destroyed most of the wooden downtown buildings in Apex. But the Apex community quickly resolved to build again - this time with brick! The fire devastated many businesses and caused tremendous damage, but the labor behind the brick rebuild of downtown paid off, and many of the existing buildings still retain that same brick today.

APEX FACES ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

Around 1922, the Apex tobacco market collapsed when a bacterial disease called Granville Wilt killed tobacco plants across the state. With less supply, farmers began transporting tobacco to more distant but better-paying markets after local attempts failed to create cooperative pricing. This downturn, combined with a statewide recession, caused economic turmoil and a population decline in Apex prior to the start of the Great Depression.

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK IS CREATED

In 1959, the Research Triangle Park was established through a nonprofit venture of academic, corporate and political visionaries with the goal to attract high-paying research and technology-based companies to the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area. The name "Triangle" stemmed from the University locations. Shortly after, construction began on the "new" US Highway 1 corridor which paved, literally, the way for manufacturing operations to come to the south side of Apex. The attractive employment opportunities of the area created a large demand for housing, and Apex evolved into an attractive community for personnel to live.

APEX TOWN COUNCIL VOTES TO INVEST IN APEX INFRASTRUCTURE

The 1990s saw a large population boom for Apex, which led Apex Town Council members to invest heavily in infrastructure improvements. Some of those improvements were the completion of the Cary-Apex water plant at Jordan Lake in 1993, the completion of two large sewer pumping stations in 1995, and the downtown streetscape beautification project in 1996.

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Town of Apex
Downtown History

Downtown Apex, often regarded as the crown jewel of town, is the area of Salem Street from Hunter Street to Highway 55. The area is home to unique restaurants, shops, and professional services. It stands today with many century-old buildings telling our small-town character story.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DOWNTOWN

In 1871, Daniel Mann established a general store and, in October, was approved for the store to become a Post Office franchise. After Apex's incorporation in 1873, Mayor Henry Calvin Olive built a new home for his family at 103 South Salem Street, which still stands today.

DOWNTOWN AS A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CENTER

Apex began as a one square mile town, with the downtown area as the social and economic center. Community members came downtown not only for groceries, clothing and farming needs, but also to socialize. One resident took it a step further by building her home, located at 316 North Salem Street, to face the downtown area rather than facing the road. Mrs. White, daughter of the Shepherd's Vineyard plantation owner, Reverend Patrick Dowd, loved people-watching in downtown from the view of her front porch.

ORIGINAL BUILDINGS ARE CONSTRUCTED

From 1901 to 1910 much of the downtown area was transformed into a commercial hub, with buildings lining the streets for the booming tobacco markets. In 1908, the first brick commercial building was constructed and was the key architectural influence for every structure that followed during the economic boom in the early 1900s. 1910 brought the construction of many homes near North Salem Street from Center Street to Hunter Street; many are still standing today.

FIRE DESTROYS ORIGINAL DOWNTOWN STRUCTURES

In February 1905, a large fire destroyed a large section of downtown that had wood-framed buildings. A fire in the summer of 1911, known as the Great Fire, destroyed most of the downtown. The Great Fire changed the thinking about materials used for construction, and resulted in all buildings being rebuilt in brick. Today, downtown Apex remains one of the few "intact" downtowns with buildings dating back to the early 1900s.

DOWNTOWN APEX APPROVED AS NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

In 1994, 83 properties, on approximately 48 acres in downtown Apex, were designated as a National Register Historic District. The district was expanded in 1995, 2002, and 2008 to incorporate the area now recognized as the historic district and includes buildings and structures on 172 properties. The downtown and surrounding neighborhood is considered one of the best examples of an intact turn-of-the-century railroad town in North Carolina. Any changes to existing structures or new construction in the area receives extensive review, ensuring that downtown Apex retains its historic character.

REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWN

In the late 1900s, downtown Apex had succumbed to a significant economic hardship, and many businesses closed their doors and boarded their windows. In an effort to revitalize downtown, Town leadership began a beatification process in 1996. This project included burying power lines and installing antique-style streetlights along the core area of North Salem Street.

PLANNING FOR DOWNTOWN APEX'S FUTURE

In 2019, Apex Town Council unanimously voted to adopt a Downtown Master Plan & Parking Study. The plan was the result of extensive public input and dedicated work by an engaged steering committee, and is intended to be the primary vision-setting and policy-directing strategy to lead the ongoing revitalization of downtown for the next 20 years.

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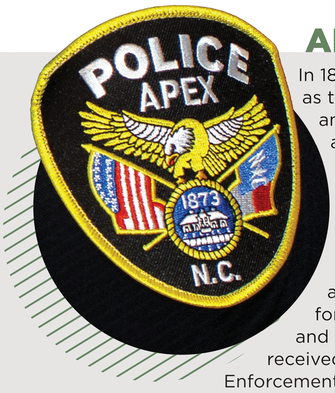
Town of Apex
Public Safety History

Public safety has taken many forms in Apex's history. Once primarily comprised of volunteers, the Town's fire and police services are now provided by paid departments, accounting for nearly 20% of the Town's operating budget each year.



APEX POLICE DEPARTMENT

In 1873, with the formal incorporation of Apex, the town appointed W. F. Utley as the first Town Marshal. He was charged with promoting justice, peace, and safety in the Apex jurisdiction. L. P. Olive was the first Police Chief, and began working for Apex in 1905. The department has experienced tremendous growth from its beginnings, moving from all volunteer officers under the direction of a paid Chief to now nearly 100 sworn police officer positions in the department.

The department has also enhanced their services to the public through the addition of a Community Policing Unit, a Special Response Team, and a Traffic Unit. Additionally, it has become more involved in task forces like the North Carolina Information Sharing and Analysis Center and Internet Crimes Against Children. In 2014, the Apex Police Department received Advanced Accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, a program that has become the primary method for an agency to voluntarily demonstrate their commitment to excellence in law enforcement.

The department started from humble beginnings, with a small office space for police at the old Town Hall on Salem Street. In 2000, the department moved into the Town Hall building then located on Saunders Street. Now in their current building at 205 Saunders Street, the Apex Police Department occupies a 34,000 square foot modern police facility, with substations in other areas of town.

APEX FIRE DEPARTMENT

Before the late 1930s, there was no 'official' fire department. Fire protection services consisted of anyone who came to help after hearing the fire alarm sound. The Town owned an American LaFrance fire truck and parked it outside of the old Town Hall on Salem Street, but the truck often had to be towed to a fire scene. By 1938, many residents had increasing concern over the lack of organized fire protection. In response, nineteen men chartered the Apex Volunteer Fire Department in 1939. The first fire apparatus was a $35 dump truck that was remodeled to become a hose truck. In 1954, the Apex Fire Department volunteers completed construction of a three-bay brick firehouse in downtown Apex, which is part of Station 1 today.

As the town grew, so did the need for increased fire services. In 1990, the Town created four paid positions – Captain, driver (Engineer), and two Firefighters. These four staff members worked during the week since most of the volunteers had day jobs. In 2002, the Apex Volunteer Fire Department merged with the Town of Apex, which had then expanded paid personnel to a Chief and 12 Firefighters.

The Fire Department offered the first cadet academy in 2009, and since has offered two additional cadet programs. Cadets are offered paid positions while they train to receive certifications in Firefighter I & II, basic EMT, and more.

Fire Stations have now been built in six areas of town to meet the needs of our growing community. In 2021, the Apex Fire Department received a Class 1 Fire Protection Classification, which placed the department in the highest rating category available and with the top 1% of fire departments in the nation for Public Protection Classification.

RESCUE SQUAD / EMERGENCY SERVICES

In 1971, the Apex Volunteer Rescue Squad was founded by thirteen members of the Apex Jaycees. The Rescue Squad used a donated 1956 Pontiac ambulance, and then a donated 1972 Chevy van, to answer calls. In their first year, the group answered 167 emergency calls. By 1977, the Rescue Squad was ready to hire the first full-time staff and received new tools to aid in rescue like the jaws of life, which expanded their capabilities in extrication and technical rescue.

Twenty years later in 1997, the Rescue Squad changed their name to Apex Emergency Medical Service, Inc. (Apex EMS) after rescue duties were transferred to the Apex Fire Department. By this time, Apex EMS was providing paramedic-level service to the community.

In 2010, Apex EMS merged with the Town of Apex, initially as part of the fire department, and, in 2011, became a separate town department. In 2018, Apex EMS ended operations as a municipal-based department, and Wake County EMS began providing service in Apex.