

WORKED AT GREEN PARK HOTEL

Tells Of Being Steward At Blowing Rock 57 Years Ago

By NANCY ALEXANDER

Roby Gilbert has tucked a passel o' living into his 83 years. Wiry as a willow with and keen as a hawk, he's of the day when kith, kin and even strangers were supposed to light and sit a spell.

One who's set many a fine table, he's bred of the home-spun fiber of hillfolks, evident from his galluses to his hearty smile. Rubbing a hand across his iron-gray hair, he sits back and recalls days when folks had to scratch for a living.

A resident of Hickory, he's a native of Boone, but has lived in Lenoir, Morganton, and Lincolnton. He's seen the Blue Ridge country unravel from horse and buggy gait into the fast-traveling pace of today. Straight off the reel he can pull facts and figures from his storehouse of memories.

"I was raised five miles east of Boone on the Brown's Chapel Rd. My parents were A. C. Gilbert and my mother, Lucy Brown Gilbert. First time I was ever in Boone I went with my father to take a load of oats to old Dr. Council. His office was where the Daniel Boone Hotel is now. There were two old wooden hotels there—Coffey's and Blackburn's.

"I was six years old the first time I was in Blowing Rock and the old Green Park Hotel where I worked later was there then.

"I went to a country school near where I lived, sat on a slab bench, wrote on a slate and just about froze in the winter.

"When I was 18 I went in the army—was stationed at Fort Monroe, Va., Washington, D. C., and Fort Beard, New Mexico. I was in the parade in Washington when Teddy Roosevelt was inaugurated president March 4, 1905. It was a rough windy and cold day. My goodness alive, how bad it was!

"I met my wife Jessie Edmisten when I got out of the army in 1905. We've been married 53 years.

"In the spring of 1906 Rick Harper, the manager, asked me about taking a job as steward at Green Park Hotel. I told him I didn't know anything about such work. He asked, 'You can learn, can't you?'

"So I worked there from 1905 until 1909. Folks came up the mountain from the two o'clock train in Lenoir by hack and surrey—took 'em 'til about night to get there. They came from everywhere just like they do now.

"The hotel belonged to Finley and George Harper, Hugh Gwyn, and a Bisener fellow from Charlotte.

"Other hotels were the Blowing Rock Hotel, the Watauga Hotel and the King and Gray Hotel.

"The water for Green Park was piped from a spring on the mountain. There were two springs near the hotel, one on either side. Folks used to come just to see and drink from 'em. That was the best water in the world, clear and cold. Everybody drank from one gourd. I keep a gourd in my car now. Water tastes better out of it. One of the springs flowed into

the Atlantic and one into the Pacific or Gulf of Mexico. I think both springs are covered up now. The Blowing Rock was free to anyone who wanted to go out and see it.

"The highest priced room was \$15, including three meals a day. The chef, Willie Williams from Columbia, S. C. was the best cook I ever ate after. I'd get with him each morning and plan the meals. I engaged fresh vegetables from the mountain folks and they brought them in by the wagon load. If we ran short I got out a horse and buggy and found some. I bought beef from Will Craig—a hindquarter for 10c and a fore-quarter for 7c and mutton, any kind, for 10c. Eggs were 12 to 15 cents a dozen, and butter, 12 to 15 cents a pound.

"We kept our meat in the ice house, insulated with sawdust, in the basement. The ice was cut from frozen ponds in the winter and hauled by wagon to the hotel where it lasted all summer.

"The hotel had its own cows for milking and a man to milk 'em.

"From the cream we made ice cream, turning it in old-fashioned freezers.

"A large range that burned wood was used for cooking. There was no coal in those days. On chilly days the bell-boys kept wood fires going in all the guests' rooms.

"Martha Johnson of Hickory cooked all the cakes, puddings and pies and baked all the bread, loaves and all. There weren't any bakeries then.

"The hotel had a ballroom where we had dances every night. There was an orchestra who were all foreigners.

"In 1910 I operated the toll gate for the Lenoir-Blowing Rock Turnpike Company. Mr. Finley Harper was head of the organization. We charged 25c for a two-horse wagon 20c for a one-horse wagon; 10c for a horseback rider; and \$1.00 for automobiles. There were a lot of folks who tried to beat their way through. They'd laugh at you, too, if they did.

"Tom Coffey kept the gate 'way before I did—about 75 years ago.

"Will Holzshouser had the first truck that used the turnpike. It had solid tires and in rainy weather it slipped so he couldn't drive it. He hauled merchandise to his store at Blowing Rock. B. C. Cannon drove the truck for him.

"Mostly hacks, surreys, buggies, and covered wagons used the road then; but there were a few cars, mostly Model-T's.

"I also carried the mail to Blowing Rock from Lenoir. I used a surrey. Sometimes I'd mire up axle deep and sometimes it would take me 12 hours to make the trip, not getting there until two in the morning. But I never missed a day.

"In the spring of 1919 I hauled the first tank wagon of gasoline to Boone. Used mules at first and then had a pair of big white horses. There weren't any service stations then, just pumps at garages. I remember taking gas to Ed Shipley's and

Bynum Taylor's garage."

After he was promoted to salesman, Mr. Gilbert and his family lived in Lenoir, Morganton and Lincolnton. In 1929 they moved to Hickory where he opened a wholesale plant for the Shell Oil Company. Retiring in 1945, he didn't remain idle long. For a time he was manager of the Hickory Moose Club and then was employed by the ABC stores for two years.

Most winters since 1952 he and his wife have spent in Florida.

They have a son Alfred Gilbert and a daughter Virginia (Mrs. Ray) Icenhour of Hickory and a granddaughter Nillah Gilbert Porter.

About Your Home

Let the decorating and furnishing of your home reflect your own personality. The main factors to consider is you — your personality, your needs and your means. If you give thought to your decoration and furnishing it will add greatly to your pleasure and comfort.

Color is probably the most important decorative element. The colors referred to as "warm" are those containing red, yellow and orange. Decorators say that the "warm colors" tend to stimulate a feeling of intimacy. But when over-used, they make you restless. These colors move toward you and make rooms seem smaller.

The cool colors are blue, green violet and others predominated by blue. These cool colors give a feeling of serenity to a room. If over-used, they can be depressing. Furniture is important. For pressing. Cool colors seem to move away from you, creating a feeling of spaciousness.

some people it is hard to decide between conventional and modern. If you have one type and want another but can't afford a mind that beautiful results are achieved with combinations.

In most cases, one style should predominate with the other used more-or-less for accent. Every object in a room should serve some purpose and have a function. Added beauty is always a legitimate function.

Light and the way it is handled can make or break a room. You need not be unreasonable.

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Diverted Acreage May Be Grazed

Diverted acreage under the Feed Grain and Wheat Stabilization Programs may be grazed effective October 1. This is a month sooner than had been planned originally. The reason for the change was to permit producers to plan fall and winter operations more effectively, and to alleviate, to some extent, the shortage of forage in areas containing spotty drought conditions. 250 farmers in Watauga County have diverted land from corn production and will be eligible to graze the land they had set aside on/and after the date of October 1.

British aid is sought in watch on Castro.

Fair's Community Exhibits Vie For Premiums

The Community Development Division of the Dixie Classic Fair, scheduled for October 8-12 in Winston-Salem, offers a total of \$1,200 in cash premiums for exhibits. Nell Bolton, Fair manager, recently pointed out that there are only two exhibit booths left. Final date for entries is Wednesday, September 18.

Eligibility Competition is open to any organized community, subordinate Grange, or community Farm Bureau in the eleven counties of the Northwest North Carolina Development Association. The exhibits are to portray some phase of the objectives that have been or are being carried out this year.

The community selects its own theme as long as it is consistent with some phase of the objectives. It is expected, Bolton added, that the community will not use materials or objects used in prior exhibits.

Objectives In making the announcement, Bolton also cited the objectives of the Community Development Division to encourage and stimulate rural families to work together in organized groups to:

1. Increase per capita income by bettering farming practices, expanding enterprises, adding new enterprises, and developing industrial resources and opportunities;
2. Better home and family living through home improve-

ments and conveniences, better home management, and better family relations;

3. Improve community institutions and services.

4. Bring youth into the community program.

Advisory Committee Mrs. Doris B. Potter of North Wilkesboro is Chairman of the Advisory Committee. Co-chairman is Robert Campbell of Winston-Salem. Mrs. Forrest Harmon, also of Winston-Salem, is superintendent.

Mrs. Asa Reese, of Reese, is Chairman for the Watauga County group serving on the Advisory Committee. Other members are: Mr. Clint Cornett, of Reese; and Jerry Adams, Boone.

LATIN AID HIGH
President Kennedy's plan for helping Latin American nations, The Alliance for Progress, has cost United States taxpayers \$2,500,000,000 so far.

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