

HARRELLSVILLE HAS BEEN THE HOME OF MANY NOTABLES — (Continued from Page 2)

1919 1939
20 Years Of Service

A Record Of Dependability, and Progressive Service To The Auto Owners of This Section



Sessoms Brothers Garage

PLYMOUTH - DODGE
Sales and Service

Complete Rebuilding and Repair Service for All Makes of Cars

FULL STOCK OF PARTS

We have been privileged to grow and develop with Ahoskie.

We attribute the steady advancement of this firm to the strict policy of rendering complete service to the autoist. from the sales of the highest values in new and used cars to the most minute detail of service. Our stock of parts is complete, our service department is manned by experts of many years of experience and equipped with the most modern tools; in connection we operate Ahoskie's largest and most centrally located filling station — THE CENTRAL — where bumper-to-bumper service is available to our customers and the public. Too, it has always been our policy to see that every customer of Sessoms Brothers receives full value for every dollar spent. This has meant making friends of old customers and attracting new ones.

We are proud to have been privileged to serve the people of this territory for 20 years and take part in the progress made during this period. It is our wish that the coming years mark the ripening of old friendships, the making of new.

During Sessoms Brothers' twenty years in Ahoskie the advancement of this institution has been consistent with the growth of Ahoskie, the development of the Roanoke-Chowan area and the progress of the automobile industry.

As a pioneer in the automobile business in this territory and among the business firms of Ahoskie, this concern has seen and taken part in the rapid development both the industry and the town have experienced. And Sessoms Brothers has advanced steadily with the current of progress, until today with its modern buildings and complete garage-equipment it is counted the largest as well as one of the oldest automobile concerns in Hertford County.

houses were overturned and much livestock was killed. With this exception, I am unable to learn of any other major catastrophe ever to come to this section emanated by the forces of nature. About sixty years ago the business part of the village was largely burned up, and about twenty-five years ago about one-third of it was again destroyed by fire. This caused considerable financial loss, but since no lives were lost, thanks to a kind Providence, these could not be classed as major catastrophes.

Since this article is written in conjunction with the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the town of Ahoskie, sponsored by the *Hertford County Herald*, it seems eminently fitting that it should contain a record of the part Harrellsville citizens have played in the development of Ahoskie. The most cordial relations have always existed between Harrellsville and Ahoskie. Harrellsville has always taken pride in the progressiveness and growth of its younger, but husky, neighbor.

In the early days of Ahoskie, in 1901, Messrs. J. T. and J. A. Williams of Harrellsville leased the big Branning Mill and bought the Branning store in Ahoskie. They operated the mill for about five years and the store for many years. Mr. J. T. Williams was the first president of the Bank of Ahoskie when it was organized in 1905. Mr. J. A. Williams moved from Harrellsville to Ahoskie in 1901 and he still resides there.

Mr. Raleigh J. Baker and family moved from Harrellsville to Ahoskie in the fall of 1906. Mr. Baker was one of Ahoskie's real pioneers. The town at that time was still a village, but it had possibilities and Mr. Baker was quick to recognize them. He engaged in the life insurance and real estate business and made a success of it. He had for his advertising slogans *Keep Your Eye on Ahoskie* and *Watch Ahoskie Grow*. People did keep their eyes on Ahoskie and they watched it grow. But soon they were not content to simply watch it grow; they began to move in and helped it grow. Mr. Baker's oldest son, Pembroke, engaged in the mercantile business with J. R. Garrett soon after moving to Ahoskie, under the name of Garrett & Baker. Pembroke Baker subsequently moved to Suffolk, Virginia, where he is now located. Talmage Baker, the younger son, soon engaged in the oil distributing business in Ahoskie. He is still in that business and owns several other enterprises.

Mr. H. S. Basnight, after making a success in the lumber business and farming in Harrellsville, moved with his family from Harrellsville to Ahoskie in 1916. Still retaining some of his farming interests in Harrellsville, he invested heavily in Ahoskie real estate and headed many enterprises. He and his son, Howard, established a large wholesale house in Ahoskie. Since Mr. Basnight's death, Howard has been carrying on the enterprises left by his father and establishing others for himself. He now heads the large wholesale concern that bears his name.

Mr. E. M. Wooten, an old Harrellsville resident, moved to Ahoskie in 1910. For many years, while living in Harrellsville, Mr. Wooten traveled for the P. Lorillard Company, with whom he held a responsible position. After moving to Ahoskie he went into the hotel and furniture business. He is now retired and still living in Ahoskie.

Roberts H. Jernigan moved from Harrellsville to Ahoskie in 1916. About a year and a half previous, while still living in Harrellsville, he married the daughter of J. R. Garrett. After moving to Ahoskie he entered the mercantile business with Mr. Garrett under the firm name of Garrett & Jernigan. He later retired from the mercantile business and spent his time looking after his farming and real estate business. He was appointed postmaster of Ahoskie September 26, 1933, which position he now holds.

Bismarck Scull was born in Harrellsville and lived here all his life until he and his family moved to Ahoskie in 1928. Scull was elected sheriff of Hertford County in 1917 while living in Harrellsville, but moved to Ahoskie during one of his later terms of office. The Sculls have always been identified with Harrellsville from the town's earliest history. Bismarck Scull was a genial and popular man. He died in Ahoskie January 27, 1933, while still holding the office of sheriff.

Two young men from the Evans Town section of Harrellsville cast their lots in Ahoskie several years ago—Wooten Odom and E. R. Evans. Odom has made a success in the tobacco warehouse business. Having operated one of the larger warehouses, he has done much to promote and stabilize the Ahoskie tobacco market. Evans has been in various enterprises and has accumulated large real estate holdings in Ahoskie. Others, too, have moved from Harrellsville to Ahoskie to grow up with the town.

Now back to Harrellsville again. Politically, Harrellsville has traditionally held to the tenets of the Democratic Party. This party long years ago was found to be the true friend of the South. In the dark days of reconstruction following the Civil War and from time to time up to the turn of the century the people of Harrellsville protested vigorously against any coercion by corrupt politicians and defended to the limit any encroachments upon their civil rights. Thus our forefathers did their part in preserving a noble race and contributing to a higher civilization.

Religiously, Harrellsville has always held strictly to the Protestant faith. We have two denominations here, the Baptist and the Methodist, with the Baptists predominating. The Methodist denomination, however, is much older. The Methodist Church was established here about a hundred and twenty-five years ago. The first church building was located near the present site of the steel highway bridge, two miles from Harrellsville. The second was located back of the lot on which the present Bank of Harrellsville stands. The present Methodist Church was built about sixty years ago. The Baptist Church was established here in 1875. The old academy building, referred to in another paragraph, was first used for a place of worship until the present church was built a year later, in 1876. There is no spirit of rivalry between the two churches. Baptists enjoy going to the Methodist Church and Methodists enjoy going to the Baptist Church. Both churches, over the years, have had many fine and able pastors and both are doing most excellent work.

The Bank of Harrellsville was established here in 1912, with the late John O. Askew, Sr., as its first president, and Sumner A. Ives its first cashier. Throughout the years since its founding this bank has given continuous service to its many customers and friends. The bank building has just received a new brick and stucco front and renovations have been made to its interior.

The Harrellsville school is an institution of importance. Its physical equipment consists of a large brick building, a large wood building and a large metal building. This latter building is used for a gymnasium. The total number of students enrolled is 258, of which 70 are in the high school. The faculty is composed of nine. Five busses are used to convey the students to and from school. At present the principal is S. R. Moore, Jr., and the assistant principal, W. J. Nichols.

Let us now say something about the river traffic which was so traditional in this part of the country that it helped mould the lives of the people along the shores. For many, many years the steamboats were the only means of transportation of freight and passengers. The boats plied the wide, silvery Chowan and the deep, winding Wicaccoon. Mt. Pleasant Wharf is on the Chowan River, four miles from Harrellsville, and Tar Landing, the Harrellsville landing, is on Wicaccoon Creek, three quarters of a mile north of the village. The landing of the steamers at their wharves was always accompanied by a flutter of excitement. The boats seemed like the great connecting links with the big outside world. One old steamboat, the *Keystone*, was the best known and best beloved of all steamers. She must have been made of honest material and must have been navigated skillfully, for she made regular trips to Harrellsville for over forty years. To the river folk, the sound of no other whistle was quite so musical and the name of no other steamer was quite so synonymous with strength and dependability. When the whistle sounded far down the stream the small boys of the village would often go down to the landing to witness her arrival. They would watch for the first appearance of her pilot house and smoke stack through the trees as she swung around the bend.

Let us now see with the eyes of a small boy. Soon, with mighty billows of foam from her bow, she would heave into full sight in all

John O. Askew, II

The son of John O. Askew, I, who was born October 11, 1813, and died in 1878, "a man of wealth and high character," according to Winborne's History of Hertford County. The subject of this sketch spent all his life at Harrellsville and himself accumulated quite a large estate. He married Miss Mollie Valentine, who died June 6, 1938. Four children survive: Mrs. Herbert Britton, Norfolk, Va.; Miss Lillian Askew, John O., III, and Grady D. Askew, all of Harrellsville. John O. Askew, II, died October 14, 1924.



her majesty. As she drew up to the wharf a deck hand would throw out the landing line and the bravest of the brave among the boys would grasp the mighty hawser and fasten it to a pile, glad to have some part in landing this monster of the deep. Soon would be heard the rumble of the trucks passing over the gang plank, pushed by perspiring Negro deck hands unloading her assorted cargo and taking aboard the products of the farms.

To a small boy, the captain of a steamboat was a mighty man. He was a man of authority. His voice was deep and sonorous and he was not to be trifled with. He wore his cap at a rakish angle and he smoked his pipe with nonchalance. He walked and talked with assurance. But at times the captain would show himself to be very human and would invite some of the boys to take a trip with him back to Franklin, Virginia. Whether these invitations were genuine or were given jokingly we never knew, but it is certain that no lad was ever brave enough to agree to accept the dubious invitation of the captain to visit that far away unknown land. When the steamer, after discharging her cargo, was ready to leave for the return trip a blast from her whistle was the summons to cast off the lines and draw in the gangplank. With her propeller churning up mighty whirlpools of muddy water, she would squirm around slowly in the narrow stream and then head down the creek, glide silently around the bend and disappear like a spirit departing for another world.

Yes, the steamboat days were memorable days. The whistles are now silenced, and the wharves are in a state of decay. A more modern means of transportation has come upon the scene. The boats have vanished from these rivers, perhaps never to return. But they served us faithfully for the better part of a century and our hats are off to the long, romantic era of the steamboats.

Two distinguished physicians born in Harrellsville are worthy of note in this sketch—Dr. Abner H. Askew and Dr. Jesse A. Powell. Dr. Askew graduated from the University of North Carolina and completed his medical training at the University of Pennsylvania. He practiced here for about thirty-five years until his death in 1905. Dr. Powell graduated from Baltimore College of Physicians and Surgeons and practiced here for about fifteen years until he left in 1924 for Edenton, where he is now located. Several other prominent doctors have located here from time to time, but the above two are especially mentioned because of their long service and because they are products of this community.

One of our State songs, *Hi! Fer Carolina!*, was written by Dr. William Bernard Harrell, the son of James and Martha McGuire Harrell, of Harrellsville. The words of the song were written by Dr. Harrell at the railroad station in Wilson, North Carolina, in 1861, while Southern troops were hurrying to join Lee's Army in Virginia. His wife, a talented musician, wrote the music to accompany the words. The song caught the public ear and almost immediately it was being sung on nearly every public and private occasion all over the State. Dr. Harrell was born December 17, 1823. He died in

Dunn, N. C., in 1906.

The first cotton mill and the first saw mill in Hertford County were established in Harrellsville. A Mr. Stephenson came here from the North before the Civil War and established the mills two miles southwest of the village in what is now known as the Stephenson Woods. Water power was used for the mills. Trained operators were brought from the North to operate the cotton spindles. These mills operated for several years until they were abandoned during the Civil War.

The people of this community for over a century have been easy going, complacent and self-contained, and the village, so far as growth and progressiveness are concerned, has remained almost static. But as I write this final paragraph a metamorphosis is taking place. At long last the town is putting on a touch of modernity. The stately elms, which have graced our streets for a century, have been removed to make way for the march of progress. The business houses have been moved back to give us a wider street. Electric street lights have been installed and concrete sidewalks with curb and gutters have been constructed.

With this I write FINIS.
Harrellsville, N. C.
March 23, 1939.

Hunter H. Taylor



One of the present-day leaders of the Harrellsville community and prominent in commercial circles and civic life of Hertford County. He has large property holdings in Harrellsville township and in the town of Ahoskie. He operates a mercantile business in Harrellsville. He is the son of the late Captain Hillary Taylor and Jane Evans Taylor.

EXPERIENCES OF A HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENT FROM 1928-1930 IN HERTFORD COUNTY, N. C.

By ANNIE C. BROUGHTON CLAPP

"Madam, the next stop is Ahoskie!" The Pullman porter awoke me from a lovely day dream that I was enjoying while I looked from the train window at the stretch of fields that seemed to be so very flat. It had rained the night before and the fields were covered with water in places, but it made a nice picture on a bright sunny day in the fall. I was thrilled over seeing a strange country but, most of all, I was thrilled with anticipations of seeing my childhood friend, Mary Ward Rose, her husband, and her little horte in Ahoskie. The destiny of my life was changed from what I had planned for it, as I stepped from that train that Sunday morning. A train schedule was a turning point in my life.

I was returning to my home in Alabama from Ithaca, N. Y., where I had gone to work on a master's degree in home economics. In

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50 Years Ago Only
King Winter Made Ice

Quality and Dependable Service

Now the delivery trucks of the Ahoskie Ahoskie Ice & Coal Company bring it to your door every day of the year.

There has been much progress in the past

50 years. This company has kept up with and been a part of this progress.

Ahoskie Ice & Coal Co.
L. S. Savage, Manager Ahoskie, N. C.