

The Pinehurst Outlook.

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AN ANCIENT MILL.

Erected in 1813 by James Ray,
a Noted Gunsmith.

His Dwelling Built in 1818 Contains Many
Relics of ye Olden Time.

A Picturesque Old Place to which our Vil-
lagers Make Frequent Trips.

The region about Pinehurst is rich in relics of ye olden time. Some of the country people still reside beneath the roof that sheltered their forefathers a hundred years or more ago, and the old looms, spinning wheels, and tools of various kinds, which in those days were made more for wear than for beauty, are still to be found in daily use in many of the old homesteads. The houses were made of logs of the native pine, some of them squared, but a large portion just as they were cut in the forest and merely having the limbs lopped off and the notches cut to hold the ends together. That this wood is nearly indestructible is evidenced by the sound condition of the logs in scores of these old dwellings which have been exposed to the elements for about a century.

The steam railroad is a comparatively modern intruder in this peaceful country, and the relic hunter has as yet failed to despoil these homes of their ancient treasures, many of which were brought from over the sea by the first settlers when they emigrated from Scotland. Many of the people still have plaids that were worn by an old grandsire who was a member of a Scottish clan, and the possessors take great pride in exhibiting them. Numerous other relics connected with the history of this state are also to be found, and a person who is at all interested in the antique cannot fail to derive a great deal of pleasure from visits to the homes of these hospitable people.

One of the most popular of the many walks and drives about Pinehurst is over the road to Mr. H. A. McKenzie's home and the pond and mill close by. This is one of the most picturesque places in this vicinity and has an interesting history dating back nearly one hundred years. Scores of our villagers make frequent trips to the quaint old mill with its moss-covered timbers and restless water wheel, and the kodak is often called upon to preserve the choice bits of scenery as reminders of a pleasant visit.

Mr. McKenzie's place is about two miles from Pinehurst in a northwesterly direction, and is reached by a good road leading from the gate at the northeast

corner of our village. There is also a path used by the country people that is somewhat shorter. The way leads through the woods of pine and oak, over slightly rolling ground, past the Pinehurst lake, and as the soil is always dry our townspeople find a walk in this direction very enjoyable. After traveling about one and one-half miles the visitor finds himself on the crest of a small hill, with the pond and old mill at his feet, while just beyond the stream and on the top of a knoll is the McKenzie homestead. Descending the hill the old dam is soon reached, along the top of which is a path, and the sluiceway is crossed by a narrow foot bridge of plank back of the mill.

The carriage road runs along the low ground just below the dam and the teams cross the stream by a ford. Alongside the road is another foot path, the wet places being crossed by a bridge composed of a single log hewn flat on top and having a light hand rail to steady the pedestrian and prevent him from falling into the stream. This style of bridge, called a foot log, is very much used in the country about our village, and in some cases the logs are raised three or four feet above the water or mud and the hand rail is generally missing. We fancy that some of our city maidens would think twice before attempting to cross such a structure, especially as some of these bridges extend over swamps a hundred yards wide, and oftentimes the logs are none too securely fixed, but the country lassies think nothing of skipping along these elevated paths.

What is now the McKenzie homestead was first settled by James Ray, a noted machinist and gunsmith, who was known throughout the state for the excellence of his workmanship.

"A gunsmith was he, and a 'son of a gun'—
Though that last trite remark be taken in fun,
As meaning that he was a typical man
Of the state where corn liquor abounds."

Mr. Ray came to this section when a young man and first lived with his sister and her husband, a Mr. Black, whose cabin was located some distance from the mill site. At that time the country about here was a wilderness covered with a dense growth of hard pine, and settlers were few and far between. The most of the land belonged to the state and Mr. Ray soon entered several large tracts, among them being the lot on which the homestead and mill now stand.

The first dam and mill at this place were erected by him in 1813, and the water wheel, a kind of wooden turbine, furnished the power to run a grist mill, cotton gin and such primitive machinery as he used in manufacturing guns, axes and other tools. His gun and blacksmith shop was placed close by the mill.

In those days there were no such things as cast steel axes, hatchets, hammers, etc., and the tools and various

kinds of iron work were all made by hand. The iron-worker was a great man in the community, and Mr. Ray's work was so well and favorably known that he was besieged with applicants to learn the business and often had ten or a dozen men at work at one time. He made hammers, hatchets, axes, augers, chisels, drawing knives,—in fact, all kinds of tools and ironwork, including nails—the process of making cut nails not having been invented at that time, and all the nails used were hand made.



MCKENZIE'S MILL.

But it was as a gunsmith that he was most widely known. At that time a gun was considered one of the necessities of life and was to be found in every household. Living in a forest abounding in wild animals the hardy pioneer depended largely on his rifle to protect his family and crops as well as to supply his larder with meat. Mr. Ray made the gun barrels from rods of steel. The outside was roughly shaped on the anvil and then finished on a stone that run by water power in the old mill. The boring of the barrel as well as the grooves that transformed it into a rifle were also done by hand and it must have taken an expert workman with the crude tools available to turn out the finished weapons whose accuracy is a matter of history. All metal implements made by Mr. Ray were stamped with his initials, and to have a "Ray" rifle was the ambition of all the young men in this part of the country. A few of these old guns are still in use, and it would be hard work to convince the owners that the old weapons will not shoot farther and straighter than any made by modern machinery.

The old gunsmith must have been a mechanical genius and his aim was always to do a job right, regardless of the amount of time it took. Among the many articles manufactured by him was a surveyor's compass of wood. It is said to be a fine instrument and was used in surveying most of the land in this section. It now belongs to a man living not far from our village and is still in use, the owner preferring it to one of modern make.

The grist mill was a place of great resort and farmers living many miles away brought their corn here to be ground into meal ready to be manufactured into

the corn bread that was and still is a staple article of food in this section. The cotton gin also was a great convenience, as most of the cloth used by the people was made by the women at home.

The first mill and dam were washed away by a freshet in 1826, and the loss was a severe one to the owner. Bad luck seemed to attend him after this. While chopping wood with an axe he had the misfortune to cut a bad gash in his leg below the knee, and although the wound healed outside it was continually breaking open, and he was unable to do much hard work afterward. He also lost a thumb by the explosion of a gun and so could not hold a hammer to work iron.

In spite of his trouble the old fellow did not lose heart, but made preparations for rebuilding the mill on a larger scale. Timber was hewn for the new buildings that he hoped to put up when he got better, but that time never came, and most of the lumber was consumed in forest fires. The mill site was not used again until Mr. McKenzie bought the place and erected the present structure in May, 1873. Part of the timber that Mr. Ray prepared was used by Mr. McKenzie in building his new mill and it is as sound today as when it was first cut. The old stones that ground the corn in the original mill are still in use about twenty miles away. They were quarried near here by Mr. Ray, who also shaped them ready for use.

The mill now standing is used only to grind corn, but Mr. McKenzie is making plans for a saw mill to be erected on the other side of the sluice, and the new building will also contain machinery for doing other kinds of work. The pond is of good size and there is considerable fall of water, and the power available is ample for running quite a good sized factory.

But a short distance beyond the mill is the McKenzie homestead, as it is now called. This is in a slightly location on high ground and commands a view in all directions. The dwelling is made of squared logs and was erected by Mr. Ray in 1818. It is a substantial, home-like structure, with a piazza on the front, and the timbers seem to be as sound as when the building was first put up.

"Now, Ray was the name of the bullder strong,
'X-Ray' he is a the date of this song;
But his work lives on, and may it live long,
'Till grim old age shall over it creep."

This house was considered a fine one in those days. It is very large for a log house, and contains several rooms. Although Mr. Ray commenced the building it was never finished by him and he only used it to live in during the summer months. Some of the doors and shutters were taken from an older building, and one of these old doors still in use was made before the Revolution and is in good condition yet. The house has been