

Keep Up With the Procession

(By BION H. BUTLER)

ONE of these days a lot of people are going to realize that they have walked too far behind the procession, for when they happen to take notice they will see that they have overlooked the growing desire for a bit of land in the Sandhills until it is too late. When this section known as the Sandhills was discovered it was not regarded as worth much, for not many people knew of it and in consequence it was not in demand. So a couple of dollars would buy an acre or two almost any place where sandy land could be found.

That was all right then. But in the course of time folks commenced to wander this way. They picked out a few acres of ground, paid a couple of dollars an acre for the selection, concealed the magnitude of their investments, for it was assumed that the more sandhill land a man had, the greater was his misfortune. My old friend John Buchan who died leaving a right good bunch of Sandhill stuff, used to tell of a man who traded some of the acreage some years ago for an ox. It appeared later that the ox was not much to boast of and a neighbor remarked that the man who had taken the ox in trade got the worst of the bargain. But the trader thought not, for as he said, "I shoved off on that fellow ten acres of land that he did not know was in the tract."

Folks commenced to move in and buy some of the stuff, and one day a big man from New York was looking over a tract not far from Pinehurst which was offered him for six dollars an acre. He looked it over carefully from one boundary to another, and then said that "This is either a d—n good time to buy this stuff or to sell it, and I haven't the faintest idea which." He did not buy. Since then that land has gone soaring. However, gradually the land kept coming up because people kept buying it, and every time a piece got into new hands it took a little harder prying to get it loose when a new buyer took a fancy to it. Then the orchard men began to cut out acreage, some for orchard and some for reserve for farm land for the hands employed on the orchards. Orchards spread and enlarged, and more ground went out of the market that way, and prices moved upward with every shift in ownership. Then came Fort Bragg and at one swoop sewed up about 125,000 acres of the land at the eastern end of the Sandhill belt. That was the biggest single sudden impulse given the price of land in this section, for while the fort refused to pay anything like the prices that people could have sold the land to private buyers for the big chunk cut out of the territory and the many buyers turned loose to hunt for land when the camp dispossessed the old holders there started prices on a riot. That hunt for land was the beginning of a revolution. About that same time tobacco farmers began to hunt for tobacco locations in the Sandhills and the multiplying inquiries opened the accelerator again. Prices for tobacco lands went up. All this time folks looking for acreage sites for winter homes in this desirable climate began to reach out for something that met their increasing wants, and there was another stimulus to prices.

The orchards broadened again, and about the same time Knollwood, Mid-Pines, the expansion at Weymouth Heights and the development in and around Pinehurst took on a new vigor. Faster than anybody realized prices were sweeping upward, and only a few understood that it was in response to a steady demand for a something limited in supply. To tell the truth, the majority of people do not even yet comprehend the situation of the Sandhills. Where fifteen years ago the villages were small and the intervening land was wild and unoccupied, today the villages, although still not large, have spread out over a much wider acreage and the lands between the villages have been put to useful purpose. A few years ago the hunter with his dogs, almost anywhere in the Sandhills could bag

(Continued on page 14)



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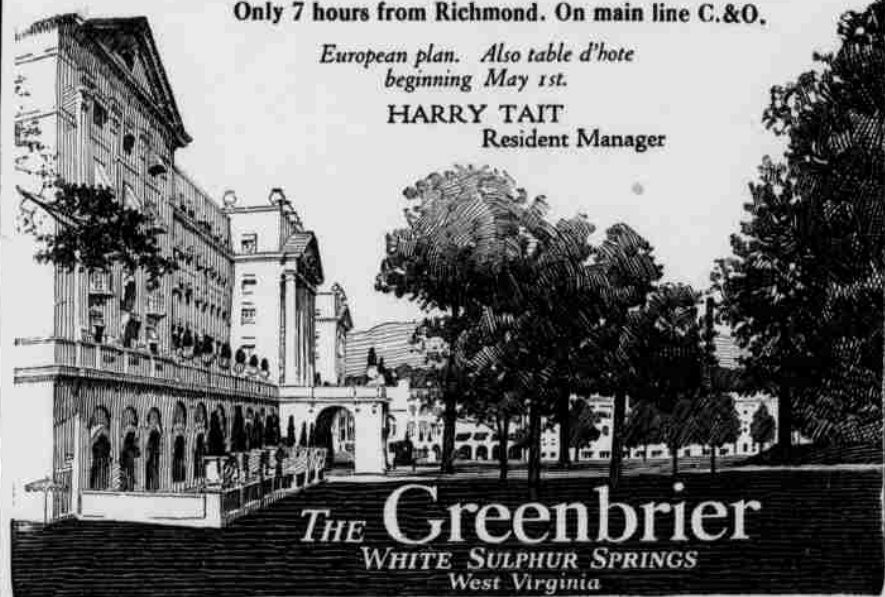
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