

# The Warren Record

Published Every Thursday By  
Record Printing Company  
P.O. Box 70 - Warrenton, N.C. 27589  
BIGNALL JONES, Editor

Member North Carolina Press Association  
ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER AT THE POST OFFICE  
IN WARRENTON, NORTH CAROLINA UNDER THE LAWS OF CONGRESS  
Post Office # 2874 - Paid At Warrenton, N.C.  
Subscription Rates: **ONE YEAR \$9.00 SIX MONTHS \$4.00**  
**SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** **LOCAL \$1.00 PER COPY**  
**ONE YEAR \$7.00**  
**SIX MONTHS \$4.00**

## Propriety Questioned

Citizens of Warrenton can rightfully question the propriety, if not the legality, of an attempt earlier this month to withhold from public view certain town expenditures.

During a hastily called meeting which followed an executive session, the board agreed to set the salary for the town manager at a figure of \$16,000, provided an expected federal grant is received next month. The minutes of the meeting show only that the town manager would be paid a salary of \$14,000 per year.

What some might view as a gentlemen's agreement to guarantee the town manager the salary authorized by the current year's budget, others might view as a less than honorable move to keep the public unaware of what goes on at town hall.

What is truly disturbing to us is that the action taken by the town board came during a meeting at which no representative of the public was present. One wonders in how many other instances secret sessions have been held to conduct the public's business privately.

Despite voiced concerns of several commissioners over the number of executive and called sessions of the town board, the tendency toward these sessions does not seem to be diminishing.

During the past 12 months, the town board had an inordinate number of sessions in which the public was excluded or uninvited. If the records maintained by the town are as incomplete and as obviously misleading as the ones pertaining to the meeting of July 11, one can only speculate as to what really went on during those sessions.

Minutes of the board show that an executive session was held on July 12, 1976; a called meeting was held on July 19, 1976; an executive session was held on August 9, 1976; a called meeting was held on August 30, 1976; a called meeting was held on September 8, 1976; an executive session was held on December 13, 1976; an executive meeting was held on January 10 of this year; an executive session was held on February 14 of this year; an executive session was held on

## Hail The Crape Myrtle

**The Smithfield Herald**  
One of the consoling feats of Mother Nature this astoundingly hot summer is the beautiful pinkish-red blossom of the crape myrtle tree.

There are some beautiful specimens of this plant throughout Johnston County this July.

The Sanford Herald reminded us the other day that the crape myrtle was advocated for the South years ago by Clarence Poe, the late editor of the Progressive Farmer magazine. The crape myrtle is a native of India, so it is impervious to drought and heat and also less susceptible to insect attacks than other Southern shrubs.

Years ago there was a proposal to make the crape myrtle Smithfield's official town tree. That idea surely has merit, for the crape myrtle abounds throughout town this summer. (Smithfield's stately oaks, however, might have a legitimate protest if we did single out the crape myrtle above all other trees.)

Smithfield is, nevertheless, going to have a "Crape Myrtle Street." The Community Appearance Commission is promoting the planting of crape

myrtles along Bridge Street eastward from the Neuse River. One of these days this street will be the town's July showplace.

Let us enjoy the beauty of the crape myrtle. For it reminds us that life can continue to thrive despite mid-summer temperatures above 100 degrees.

March 14 of this year, an executive session was held on April 18 of this year, a called meeting was held on May 2 of this year, a called executive session was held on May 24 of this year, followed by a second called meeting on the same date to authorize sale of town equipment, an executive session was held on June 14 of this year, and finally, a called meeting was held on June 21 of this year to hear comments on the budget, and since the budget involved personnel, it was suggested that this meeting at one point be closed to the public. Fortunately, that suggestion was not followed.

With a penchant for privacy such as suggested by town board action during the past year, it is small wonder that the press and the public were not welcome when the controversial question of the town manager's salary was decided.

Almost eight years ago the town board ordered that the town publish in the newspaper a financial statement twice yearly. This was done twice, then inexplicably abandoned. It's probably just as well that no financial statement reflecting the latest secret action of the board will be forthcoming. It is difficult to see how the public accounting and the private provisions of salary could be reconciled in any truthful financial statement.

During the last session of the General Assembly, a bill to expand the open meeting provisions of the General Statutes met vigorous opposition from the N. C. League of Municipalities. In light of the increasing trend of town officials toward blocking the public's right to know, it is small wonder.

It can be argued that the Board of Town Commissioners of Warrenton has a legal right to conduct certain business in executive session. What has happened is that this right has been abused, and the spirit of the law has been broken. The matter of letting the people know how their money is spent is as much a matter of propriety as legality, and the citizens of Warrenton seem to have been shortchanged on both counts.

## Quotes

**CAREER WOMAN?**  
Overheard: "She was my secretary before we were married. Now she's the treasurer." —Bob Goddard in St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Money is a good thing to have. It frees you from doing things you dislike. Since I dislike doing nearly everything, money is handy. —Groucho Marx.

Philosophy consists largely of one philosopher arguing that all others are jackasses. He usually proves it, and I should add that he also usually proves that he is one himself. —H. L. Mencken.

## Mostly Personal

# Local Fire Company Has Great History

By BIGNALL JONES

Don Stith, photographer for The Warren Record, recently became a member of the Warrenton City Fire Department, organized here more than a hundred years ago as the Warrenton Colored Volunteer Fire Department, one of the few such departments remaining in the state. A number of years ago someone brought me the front page of the Warrenton Gazette, issue of 1868, the date of which I can not remember.

This issue reported that on a recent night citizens of Warrenton had gathered in the courtroom at Warrenton to discuss the establishment of a fire company at Warrenton and that it was a point that two fire companies should be organized, a white company and a colored company. That is the only newspaper account I have seen of the organization of a volunteer fire company at Warrenton. When we came to Warrenton in 1909 there was only one company, a black company in the town. So we must suppose that the white company was never organized, or soon fell by the wayside.

McCarroll Aiston, the first Black Fire Chief in Warrenton, at least the first one here since 1900, has compiled a roster of the Warrenton Colored Volunteer Fire Department from 1868 to 1968, which would tend to show that the present company was organized in 1868. Firemen and officers were all black but were under the direction of a white fire chief. This position was held for many years by the late W. H. Burroughs. Walker Burwell was Fire Chief at the time of his untimely death, and I think that A. S. Johnson was the last fire chief before Mr. Aiston was named to this position.

Don Stith is a most enthusiastic fireman and spent his vacation attending a fire school at Louisburg, with other Warrenton firemen and returned with a picture of members of the North Carolina Fire Association attending a convention in Tarboro in 1954, which brought back memories of an extraordinarily fine group of former black citizens of Warren County. As a boy and young man I was impressed with the pride of these firemen in their work and with the trophies they won in competition with other "colored" firemen from over the state. We often printed the proceedings, and on many occasions it fell my lot to set the type on a linotype which I had learned to operate as a teenager. I set the constitution, the by-laws, and the beautiful firemen's burial ceremony.

In my old age I began to realize what a remarkable number of colored men have been residents of Warrenton, and have often wished that someone would write a history of black people in Warrenton and Warren County, many of which I was to know and to admire. The names of a surprising number of these are to be found in the roster of the Warrenton Colored Volunteer Fire Department. I marvel at the accomplishments of many of them.

Members of this fire company in 1868 were William A. Plummer, Haywood Arrington, Vick Falkner, Harry Green, John Hymon, Daniel Johnson, Weldon Montgomery, Jimmie Ransom, Fill Rogers, John S. Plummer, and Tom Thornton. These men must have been hardly more than boys in 1868 when they first became firemen, for some of them were active men here during my childhood and teenage years in Warrenton and were still active firemen.

John S. Plummer was quite a remarkable man, highly respected, a successful businessman, and the ancestor of two grandsons who have been distinguished actors. When we moved to Warrenton he and his family lived in the old Peter Davis Store Building, next to the

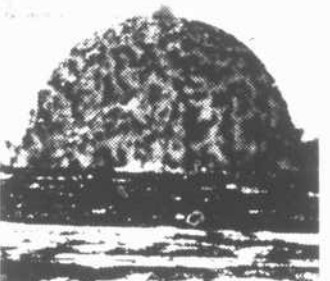
law office of Banzet and Banzet on Front Street, and was the town's iceman until Warrenton built a plant, storing the ice in the basement of his home. He also operated a livery stable on the large lot back of his home. At that time he was president of the North Carolina Colored Volunteer Fire Association, which it is logical to assume he helped organize. In later years his son, Baker Plummer was also to hold this position.

In 1868 Jimmie Ransom was also a member of the company. He and his brothers ran a carriage factory near the present site of the Warren Theatre. Here it is said that the coffin in which Annie Carter Lee was buried was made. A brother of Jimmie, John Ransom, was a member of the Board of Town Commissioners in the 1890's. In his later years Jimmie was an undertaker.

Another of the charter members was John Hymon, who was born a slave in 1840. This is likely the John Adams Hymon who was elected a member of Congress from 1875 to 1877.

In the roster of firemen from 1868 to 1899 the name of John Hymon is missing but the names of many other firemen here during my childhood are to be found. Among these were Peter Collins, recording and corresponding secretary of the company for many years. He was charged with having the minutes of the annual conventions printed and usually worked with us in this task year after year, and was a frequent visitor in this office. I also remember, perhaps from my days as a Boy Scout, that he was an excellent cook, particularly skilled in the preparation of Brunswick stew.

In the roster with Peter are many others whom I remember with pleasure, but space dictates that I mention them in another article.



**BALL OF FIRE** Eruptions such as this are observed by geologists of the United States Geological Survey at Kilauea, Hawaii.

# Security Tightened At Prison Camp

(Continued from page 1)

Whether state or town, the money normally comes from tax. One search effort last summer continued for over a week with full teams of personnel being paid.

The local unit of the Department of Correction has two cell blocks with a maximum capacity of 80 men. On Monday morning the unit held 73 men. It includes a cafeteria, officers' quarters (which includes the offices), a recreation area and a confinement area for punitive purposes.

The Warrenton unit employs a superintendent, lieutenant, five sergeants, two treatment personnel, a food supervisor and 14 correctional officers. The correctional officers, more commonly known as prison guards, work on shifts extending around the clock.

Prison officials reported that at least four correctional officers work within the fenced compound during a shift. This would mean that four men have the responsibility to oversee 73 prisoners, using Monday's figure as an example.

However, the correctional officers are not permitted to carry weapons into the compound area because of the dangers involved. Thus, they have no security for themselves or immediate retaliation for riots or other instances begun in the area. This also limits the security when a prisoner decides to scale the fence.

The General Statutes of North Carolina limit the correctional officers' response to an escape. The Statutes state that a misdemeanor prisoner cannot be fired upon while fleeing. When a prisoner jumps the fence the guards can only give warning to other personnel and the chase is on. Their chances of capturing the escapee while

Immediately following an inmate escape, all law enforcement officers as well as all prison officials, including off-duty correctional officers, are alerted. The men set up stations along 401 South of the city limits or along the Henderson-Warrenton highway. Local police patrol the west end of Warrenton or help the unit in other areas of town as needed.

This is very expensive. All correctional officers for Warren County as well as those from other neighboring units, must be paid. Off-duty correctional officers can add time spent in the search as duty time, thus giving them overtime — an extra day off. Auxiliary policemen are often needed in Warrenton to cover for the regular police on patrol.

The Department of Correction personnel are paid through the State while police are paid by the town.

fleeing the immediate area is limited by the rules governing the officials.

Scaling the fence is no easy task. The fence around the local unit is a ten foot high chain fence topped with about 18 inches of razor ribbon wire. This wire is stainless steel to prevent rust and is coiled in layers. To jump the fence an escapee must scale the ten-foot chain fence and get through the wire. Most of the escapees are cut painfully by the wire.

In the Friday, July 15, News and Observer, W. L. Kautzky, deputy state prisons director, in giving testimony on last year's fire at the McDowell prison, was quoted as saying, "the five people on duty at the McDowell prison at the time of the fire did not constitute adequate staffing under department guidelines."

McDowell and Warren units are basically the same type structures. If the deputy state prisons director believed that McDowell was understaffed with five men, then surely the local unit is understaffed with four men per shift.

The answer to the large number of escapes and the concern of the public seems to lie within the Department of Correction and the General Assembly. Laws made govern the unit and the Department has no choice but to follow the rules and work with monies allotted them.

Mitchell, who escaped last Thursday, in addition to two previous escapees, remains at large. Luck has been with the prison officials in recapturing the escaped prisoners. But with the unit so close to the town and numerous homes surrounding the facility, a desperate inmate may change the luck.

### "Not Another Accident"



Auto insurance costs have been increasing because accidents have been increasing, and auto repairs and injury awards are trending higher. The Warrenton Insurance Agency does offer a Safe Driver Discount to the driver with a three-year record of no moving traffic violations.

**INSURE** **BE SURE**

## WARRENTON INSURANCE AGENCY INC.

W. MONROE GARDNER, Pres.  
PHONE 277-3001 CABINETS BY BILLING

AUTO — HOME — BUSINESS — LIFE

# United Federal has the ways to increase your means.

Because United Federal has a savings plan to fit your exact needs. From passbook savings to an Individual Retirement Account. Plus every account is insured by the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation.

United Federal's strong and stable, too. We've been in business since 1902 and we've never missed an interest payment.

We've also quadrupled in the last five years. And we now have offices conveniently located in Rocky Mount, Louisburg, Raleigh, Cary, Greensboro and Charlotte.

So come to United Federal and open an account. It's a good way to save money.



116 South Franklin Street, Rocky Mount, 202 North Main Street, Louisburg, 4020 Wake Forest Road in Raleigh, across from Eastgate, 831 Kildare Farm Road, Cary, 2425 Randleman Road, Greensboro, 47 B. North Sharon Amity Road, Charlotte.

Member FDIC