

Over Half Century of Progress Noted at West End in Business, Education, Churches

By SALLIE AUMAN

The opening of the branch of the Carolina Bank of Pinehurst at West End last week marked another step in the progress of the community.

It was around 1890 that the Page family of Aberdeen built a railroad to extend into the virgin long leaf timber and to haul the logs. The turpentine industry was on the decline and, at that time, there was scarcely a residence from Pinehurst to the Eagle Springs section. Oldtimers have been heard to tell how the entire country was covered with pine and the ground was matted with pine needles.

The story has been passed down through the years that the late Frank Page of Aberdeen brought a crew of workmen here on a flat-car with tools and built a depot about 30 feet by 40 feet, completing the building in one day. It was then that the west end of the railroad became the nucleus for West End, the town. It was in this building that the late M. C. McDonald, assisted for many years by the late Charles Ritter and Miss Janie Clark, operated a store, a depot, and the Post Office.

Lively Town

This must have been a rather lively little town because when the great fire of '98 swept through, there were 13 stores located between the present site of the Presbyterian Church and McDonald Brothers' Store. They were all burned except the drug store (operated by the late M. L. Morris and the late Dr. David Currie, father of Mrs. Victoria McKenzie and the Rev. Grover Currie) and the depot.

The drug store is still standing and is now the residence of Mrs. Z. B. Conrad. The depot was torn down in recent years to allow for expansion of the Sandhill Fur-

niture Corporation. In case the older citizens become a little smug toward the younger generation, those "stores" were chiefly bar rooms, patronized by the turpentine and timber employees.

Two men who influenced the growth of the town more than any others were the late J. B. VonCanon and M. C. McDonald. The VonCanons moved here from Randolph County in 1903 and with them were the Monroe Lewis family, Mrs. A. M. Oglesby, the Forest VonCanons, all the in-laws, with the Richardson nieces and nephews spending much time here. The family operated a shingle and cross arm mill and did extensive farming, including a peach orchard.

In 1927 Mr. VonCanon was reported to have sold 50 cars of peaches for \$1,000 per car. He paid his current debts, pulled up the orchard, and used \$10,000 to start a mill which was the nucleus for the present plant of the Sandhill Furniture Co., which is now the largest manufacturers of beds in the world. However, it was no luck that made the VonCanons successful in the furniture business, but rather the natural talent which they have. It was a nephew, the late Farley Lewis, father of Mrs. Clarence Patterson of Carthage, who built the beautiful pews in the Presbyterian Church. The exquisite baby cradle which Paul VonCanon made for his two-year-old son, Thomas, should be placed in a museum for its rare beauty and expert craftsmanship.

Year of Abundance

In 1911, the crops were more abundant than ever before or since as related by some of the oldtimers. J. B. VonCanon had corn which produced 126 bushels per acre. The news spread, and a real estate broker, J. B. Frix, of Charlotte, was believed to have been instrumental in causing many well-to-do families of the Mecklenburg County area to settle here. There were the three families of Cochran, the Wilsons, Donaldsons, Barnettes, Coxes, Jacksons, Junkers, and others. Broughton Mims recalls the excitement that was caused when a special train came from Charlotte loaded with W. P. Cochran's livestock, farm machinery, and household furniture. They built the present Hawley Poole home. J. B. Frix bought about 1,000 acres of land in the vicinity of Vineland School and divided it into small

lots. A bargain house in Charlotte used the plan to give a deed for a tract of land with the sale of merchandise. The map is still in the courthouse in Carthage, but the gullible customers were said to have had quite a bit of difficulty finding their land.

The highway crossed the railroad near the D. A. Patterson residence in those early years and again at the crossing at the Furniture plant.

Center of Activity

The center of activity was the depot where people gathered to meet the train as it went to Ashboro in the morning and returned in the afternoon. A hack or carriage from the Jackson Springs Hotel would meet their guests each day who arrived by train. Later, when the Pages purchased the hotel, they extended the railroad to Jackson Springs. The train would "back in" the five miles from the main track at West End. In those days the mineral water was proclaimed far and wide as a cure for all ones ailments.

Mrs. Archie Johnson (Mary VonCanon) and Mrs. A. G. McDuffie (Callie Lewis) would ride the train to and from Biscoe each day to attend high school. It was one of the few in the State and the teachers would plan their schedule in order for them to meet the train. Many recall the excitement when young and attractive Erma Cheek (Mrs. Quinton Smith) of Goldston stepped off the train to assume her duties as agent for the railroad.

Following World War I, Archie Johnson operated a store across from the depot, with the post office upstairs in the building with the late Mrs. B. W. Pulliam (Ersely Lewis) serving as postmaster. The McDonalds did a large "time" business for farmers over a big area in the present building.

A beautiful sycamore tree grew in front of the Johnson store. A former proprietor of the store, Nelson Jones, father of Mrs. Thad Frye of Carthage, loved the tree so much that should one of his customers use the tree as a hitching post, he immediately untied the reins. Of course this made them unhappy and plenty of times they would trade elsewhere.

Ran Into Tree
Archie Johnson recalls that each morning leaves would fall

from the tree. As he had raked and tied them in a sheet one morning Hawley Poole, then the superintendent of the Maness orchard, drove by in his car, one of the few in this section, and for fun scattered the leaves. As he turned the car to leave, he glanced back over his shoulder to see Archie's reaction and ran into a tree. Archie lay down on the leaves and laughed while Mr. and Mrs. McDonald, Charles Ritter, and Miss Janie Clark rushed out to sympathize with Hawley. And what amazed them most was Archie's reaction! Hawley's Chevrolet was damaged \$27 worth.

The Methodist and Presbyterian congregations held worship services in the school building prior to the building of the Methodist Church in 1912 with J. B. VonCanon instrumental in its building. The Rev. W. H. Brown of Jackson Springs was one of the earliest preachers. It was in 1920 that the Presbyterian Church was built. That year enthusiasm was running high for baseball and M. C. McDonald had difficulty in receiving co-operation with the building. The Rev. Mr. Arrowood of Robbins, grandfather of Dr. R. M. McMillan of Southern Pines, conducted services during those years. Both churches are well equipped with homes for their full-time pastors and with educational facilities. The Baptists have also organized in recent years and have a full-time pastor and parsonage.

Colorful Figure

One of the most colorful figures during the early days was M. L. Morris, who was "the Law." He served as magistrate and con-

stable and was always alluded to as "Squire."

Byron Richardson, now Pinehurst postmaster, was one of the first people to buy a radio. He ordered it from Sears, Roebuck. Archie Johnson recalls that the first thing he remembers hearing, with the plugs in his ears, was that Warren G. Harding had been elected President of the United States.

In 1955 the first district was laid out and the citizens contributed toward the purchase of a firetruck. At the time, the Rev. Hogan Yancey, now of St. Petersburg, Fla.—who made the initial contribution for the truck—said the community not only needed fire protection, but it needed some property to hold co-operatively to tie the people in closer love for one another. Paul VonCanon, Hobson Tucker and Clyde Auman have served as members of the fire commission since its origin.

Leading Citizens

Youth is a community's greatest asset. For 31 years, J. F. Sinclair directed the youth as high school principal. Last year there were 40 young people from this school district who were enrolled in some field of higher education. Some of the local people who have served their fellow man outstandingly are David McLean who recently remained as a missionary in the Congo regardless of the danger. His family is on the way home. David was elected moderator of the new Presbyterian Synod in the Congo.

M. C. McDonald and J. B. VonCanon both served as County Commissioners. Hawley Poole has

represented the county for several terms in the General Assembly. He has served as a member of the State Board of Agriculture, and a director of the Carolina Bank.

Allan McDonald is a director of Moore Memorial Hospital. In the field of business, Fred VonCanon established the Sanford Furniture Company and also keeps an interest in the Sandhill Furniture Corporation.

In medicine, Dr. Clement Monroe is one of the founders of the Pinehurst Surgical Clinic and the McInnis brothers—John Thurman, and Blue—have a clinic in Oklahoma City, Okla.

In the field of education, Miss Mary Jo Davis is an instructor in piano at Hanover College in Indiana. Loyd Auman is district superintendent of the 71st School District in Cumberland County.

Glenn Auman has been cited for his excellency in coaching; numerous activities he has conducted in Hillsboro have been televised. James Gordon is superintendent of the consolidated county high school near Winchester, Va.

Among those who are serving the community today are: the Lions Club president, the Rev. George Houck; the Woman's Club president, Mrs. G. A. Munn; the Sandspur Club president, Mrs. Sammy McNeill; Fire Chief J. B. Barnette; P. T. A. President John Bost; the commander of the American Legion post, Woodrow Conrad; president of the Presbyterian Women, Miss Bert McCrummen; president of the Methodist Women, Mrs. M. J. Davis; School Board Chairman Paul VonCanon; and the Summer Recreation chairman, Mrs. Eob Youngblood.

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