

## Unusual Case Heard In The Recorder's Court Last Monday

### Judge H. O. Peel Calls Four Cases During Short Session

Little activity in the crime world in this section was reflected in the size of the Martin County Recorder's court docket last Monday when only four cases were scheduled for the attention of Judge H. O. Peel and Solicitor Elphonsa Johnson. The session lasted only a short time although a case involving an alleged violation of the motor vehicle laws lasted for quite a while. There were few people in the courtroom for the proceedings other than the defendants and their attorney representatives.

An unusual case was heard during the session. Tom and William Taylor and Edgar Whalen, young white boys of Poplar Point, were faced with the serious charge of placing barricades on a public road in that district. Tearing down personal property, including several United States letter boxes, the boys are said to have placed a number of barricades across a dirt road in Poplar Point Township. Several of the barricades were made of wire and tobacco cloth ripped from a farmer's tobacco plant bed. Others were constructed with stumps, poles, reports stating that travel was impossible over a two-mile course.

Entering pleas of guilty, the three boys were fined \$50 each and taxed with one-third of the case costs, the judge ruling that unless the fines were paid, the defendants were to go to the roads for a period of three months. Tom Taylor got out under bond with a promise to pay in the fall and barely missed a trip to the roads. The other two defendants were carried to Northampton County to serve time. Admitting that "pure meanness" prompted the dangerous acts, the boys were quoted as saying that they had been drinking just prior to barricading the road.

Phillip Swain, the young Washington county man who was booked for violating the State motor vehicle laws, pleaded not guilty, but he was adjudged guilty by the court. Judge Peel fined him \$50 and taxed him with the case cost, but later continued the action under prayer for judgment. Swain maintains he was driving out of Kelvin Grove farmyard, near Williamston, that he may have driven partly on the hard surface but turned off and was struck several feet from the concrete by a car driven by Simon Gardner. It was alleged by the prosecution that Swain had applied for, but had not received a license to operate a motor vehicle. Gardner, a defendant in the same case, made a motion at the conclusion of the State evidence that the action against him be nolprossed. The motion was granted.

The case charging F. S. Harrell with selling cotton alleged to have been mortgaged, was continued until March 20.

## Local Man Caught In Windsor Storm

Driving home from Edenton last Tuesday evening, Rhodes Bunch, employee of the Roberson Slaughter House here, was caught in the middle of the storm that swept that section.

Mr. Bunch saw the lightning flash and felt a heavy wind blowing against his car but continued to drive until the tornado struck in full force. "I soon lost control of the car, and almost in a second's time my car was picked up and blown into the woods," he said. "When the glass started breaking, I fell to the floor and opened the door of the car. Before I could crawl out, the wind blew me further into the woods," he added. When the wind subsided, Mr. Bunch said he heard people groaning and a baby crying. After rendering what service he could there, Mr. Bunch continued to Williamston where he was treated for shock. His car was damaged to the extent of about \$50.

"It was an experience I will never forget, and one that left me addled and dazed for several hours," he said.

## Mercury Climbing After A Nose Dive Wednesday

After a nose dive that reached the low twenties here Wednesday night the mercury started climbing here today. The cold snap was the most severe felt here this winter, and possibly damaged plant life to some extent.

## COMBINE PARTNERSHIPS FOR OPERATION OF WAREHOUSES HERE



Pictured above is the operating personnel for the Roanoke-Dixie and New Carolina leaf tobacco warehouses here this coming season, the combining of the two warehouse groups giving the Williamston Market one of the strongest sales organizations in the country. Reading, left to right, they are Messrs. Jimmie Taylor and S. C. Griffin, operators of the Roanoke-Dixie last season, and Arlie T. Belch, Sylvester B. Lilley and Johnnie Gurkin, operators of the New Carolina and the Planters Warehouses in 1938.

## Get More Evidence in Lilley Murder Mystery

### PNEUMONIA

March is the month for pneumonia. Most cases of pneumonia follow "flu," or upper respiratory infections, fatigue and similar conditions which lower the body resistance against infectious diseases. The health department advises you to guard against these diseases and their complications, and to consult your family physician to prevent pneumonia.

## Governor Johnston Tells Of Marriages And Cold Weather

### Thomas Hunter, Owner of Town Site, Married In Year 1796

Writing under date of December 25, 1796, Former Governor Sam Johnston who made his home here from 1793 to about 1800, tells about the cold weather and recalls the marriage of Thomas Hunter, the man who once owned the land upon which Williamston is now located, to Miss Betsey House. The letter, addressed to his brother-in-law, United States Supreme Court Justice James Iredell, also deals with a critical time in the history of the young Republic.

The following letter by Johnston to Iredell is another in the series released by Mr. W. H. Biggs, local man, for publication:

My Dear Sir— Nothing can be more insolent than Adet's Appeal to the people of the United States against their Government, in his note to the Secretary of the State; and nothing more extraordinary than the conclusion, where he informs them that, through the Directory have determined to act in direct violation of an express article of the Treaty, that no "rupture" is contemplated with the United States. If Congress does not exert itself with spirit in support of the honor and authority of Government, I shall tremble for the event, and I am not without very painful apprehensions in that respect. \* \* \* Since the commencement of this severe season, several weddings have been consummated in this neighborhood. Mr. Keyes of Washington to Miss Sally Bryan, Dr. Picott of Plymouth to Miss Hannah Bogg, and last night Thomas Hunter, Esq., to the amiable Miss Betsey House; and it is thought that if the mercury continues below the freezing point a few days longer, there will be several others.

## Mrs. Hattie Knox Dies Near Hassell

Mrs. Hattie Knox, 43 years old, died at her home near Hassell yesterday afternoon following an illness of short duration. She suffered a stroke of paralysis just a short time ago.

Funeral services are being conducted this afternoon from the late home by Rev. James Purvis. Interment will follow in the Knox family plot in Robersonville Township.

**Escapes Injury**  
L. L. McCles, Goldsboro man, escaped uninjured when his car turned over near Robersonville yesterday

## Warrant Charging Joe Johnson With Murder Is Pending

### Recent Facts Uncovered By Sheriff Connect Man With Case

Uncovering damaging evidence bit by bit, Martin County officers are said to be about ready to formally charge Joe Johnson, local colored man, with the brutal murder of Paul Lilley, white filling station operator, near here on Christmas Eve morning. No warrant has been procured in the case, however, officers withholding certain information until Johnson recovers sufficiently from a rifle ball wound to permit his transfer from a Washington hospital to the county jail here within the next day or two.

Johnson, about thirty years old, now stands charged with breaking into and robbing the filling station of C. B. Allen on the Hamilton road in Poplar Point Township early last Saturday morning. After offering numerous versions and strongly denying time and again the actual robbery of the station, Johnson is said to have finally admitted the robbery of the Hamilton road filling station. Stories told by him and his indirect questioning of officers in connection with the Lilley case leave little doubt in the minds of Sheriff C. B. Roebuck and others as to the man's connection with the Lilley murder.

The rifle with which Johnson accidentally shot himself after robbing the filling station has been definitely identified as the one stolen from the Lilley filling station about fifteen days before the murder. It has not been divulged how Johnson came in possession of the weapon, and officers have not reported on the progress made in matching the bullet found in the murdered man's head with one fired from the rifle. Surgeons at the hospital state that it is not advisable to attempt the removal of the bullet now in Johnson's shoulder, but since the jacket of the bullet was left in the rifle barrel, officers state they are able to get another for comparison.

Johnson is said to be getting along very well, and is expected home from the hospital shortly.

## Past Masters Get Masonic Emblems

Past Masters of the Skewarkey lodge were recognized at a special program featuring ladies' night and climaxing an attendance contest in the Woman's Club hall here last Tuesday evening. Past Masters' jewels were presented by Mr. R. A. Lucas, of Plymouth, to Past Masters Luther M. Peel, N. C. Green, W. H. Booker and V. J. Spivey. Messrs. N. K. Harrison, J. C. Anderson and Milton J. Moyer, past masters, were unable to attend the meeting and the jewels will be awarded them at a future meeting.

Bad weather and sickness limited the attendance which was smaller than at previous similar events. During the past several years, the Skewarkey Masons have conducted attendance contests, the winners enjoying a supper at the expense of the contest losers.

## Freak Stories Told By Storm Victims

Pathetic and almost unbelievable stories survived the tragic storm that struck near Windsor last Tuesday evening. Told by the victims themselves, the stories are not without foundation, for, after one views the storm path and learns that living things came out of it alive, he can well believe anything.

Ignoring a slight leg injury and while his wife lay injured in the hospital, S. J. Sanderlin raked the ruins of his home shortly after the break of day Wednesday, and he paused long enough to tell two or three freak stories he personally knew about.

"I had \$3.60 in my watch pocket. The storm blew all of it out of my pocket except \$1," he said. "Cross the road a short distance, there was a woman who had been confined with paralysis for nearly twelve months. The tornado picked her and the bed up and carried them almost 100 yards without injury to her."

One family went out the back door to see what was making so much noise. When they turned around, their home was gone.

A Williamston boy, courting in the stricken area, went to visit his girl, walked up the steps and found no other sign of the house.

Sites were swept clean in most of the sixteen cases where the homes were demolished, and in one case it was impossible to tell that a home had ever been there, the tornado having carried away all timbers and bricks.

Farm animals were coated in mud from head to foot, one old mule possessing a ghostly appearance as he wandered in a dazed condition on the highway that night. Very few farm animals were killed, but every now and then an old hen would warble around the debris with most of her feathers picked out on one side and those on the other side left unruffled.

## E. J. Whitmire Joins Faculty At Jamesville

E. J. Whitmire, young man of Transylvania County, has succeeded J. C. Eubanks, as professor of vocational agriculture in the Jamesville school. Offered a place a few days ago, Professor Pruden declined to accept a position as assistant agent in another county.

Mr. Whitmire, a student at State College for the past several years, has just completed a course in practical teaching in the school at Seaboard, Northampton County.

## CONFLICT

Judge N. A. Sinclair, the jurist who gained public attention in the trial of notorious cases in this county in years gone by and who was slated to return and conduct the county's April term of Superior court, will not be here; Clerk of Court L. B. Wynne was advised yesterday.

On the emergency list now, Judge Sinclair was assigned the court when the regular jurist, Judge Everett C. Thompson, was scheduled to preside over a court session in another county. Now, according to a letter from the governor's office, there is a conflict in Judge Sinclair's duties and Judge Henry Grady, another emergency judge, is slated to hold the April court here.

Judge Sinclair's last visit in the county was made several years ago when he presided over the Smithwicks Creek Church case.

## Four Lose Lives and Many Hurt in Tornado

### Property Damage In Windsor Area Will Approximate \$65,000

### Storm, Early Tuesday Evening, Described As Section's Worst

Sweeping out of the west, a tornado swooped down upon the thriving little community of Green's Cross, near Windsor, at 6.40 o'clock last Tuesday evening, claimed four lives, injured or stunned four score persons and exacted a property damage estimated at \$65,000 to \$70,000. Today, individuals comprising twenty-one families, could hardly realize that the savings of a life time had been swept away in a scant few minutes as they searched the ruins to recover a remnant here and another there.

Coming out of a black cloud that formed in the west, the tornado struck about two miles north of the town of Windsor, and with the exception of a church community center it mowed down and reduced to kindling sixteen homes, and wrecked five others almost beyond repair. Thousands of trees, some of them measuring possibly eighteen inches or more in diameter, were twisted and bent as if they were no more than toothpicks. Thousands of people visited the stricken area that night, all day Wednesday and Thursday and today and they declared that the word accounts fell short in describing the extent of the storm damage.

Awe stricken, those first reaching the tragic scenes that stretched along the highway for a distance of nearly three miles, bent their first efforts toward pulling the victims from the scattered wreckage, and it was almost an hour later before the N. C. Highway Radio station here received and broadcast an emergency call. All patrolmen in the eastern section of the State were ordered to the stricken area for duty. Local doctors and nurses went there to lend what assistance they could to Windsor's hospital staff in caring for the injured that were brought there in school buses, cars

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## Truck Hits School Bus In The County

No one was hurt and very little damage was done when a Gaines Lumber Company truck crashed into a school bus on U. S. Highway No. 64 near Jamesville early yesterday morning. A rear corner of the school bus body was smashed, but there were not many children on the bus at the time and none at the point where the truck hit the school vehicle.

Stopping on the highway to pick up children, the bus was not in motion when the lumber truck rounded a curve and the driver, Bryant Reason, could not stop. Meeting the bus, Oscar Davenport had stopped for the children to get on, but when he saw the truck coming he turned to the dirt shoulder. Reason then turned to his left but he was so close on the bus that only the front part of his truck cleared it.

Patrolman W. S. Hunt is investigating the crash.

## FIRST HERRINGS

The first herrings of the season from the Roanoke this week when Fisherman Billie Keel and Francis Leggett tackled the swift current in the stream. "We fished only a short time, and after catching four fish the strong current broke our equipment and we were forced to quit."

Fishing activities were abandoned Wednesday and Thursday when the mercury dropped to a low point, but preparations are underway for opening the season in a big way soon.

## Illiteracy Is High In Employment Office Registrations Here

### Recent Survey Shows That Around 500 Have Very Little Education

Approximately 500 adults in Martin County are in the illiterate group—either of no education or less than third grade, who are registered with the N. C. State Employment service. Over 100 of these are white people—adults, men and women. A considerable number more exist in this county who are not registered with the employment service.

A special survey was recently completed by the state employment service, cooperating with designated workers of the WPA adult education program, to find out more about the extent and distribution of illiteracy in this county and section. A surprising number of grown people in this locality cannot read and write. The survey included only those people who had at some time or other registered with the employment service. Tyrrell County, the report shows, had slightly less than 200 illiterates, including both races, while Washington county had 280. In Hyde County 186 adults are registered with sub-standard or no education.

These figures represent employable adults, citizens who have registered for work and who either have no education or practically none. The figures for Beaufort County are not yet available, but will be within a few days.

## Scouts Entertain At Banquet Here

Boy Scouts from Jamesville, Robersonville and Williamston and their fathers and a few special friends had a rip-roaring good time at a father-son banquet held in the Woman's Club hall here last evening.

Delivering the main address of the evening, Dr. Thorne, of Rocky Mount, reviewed scouting and stressed the importance of the organization's activities among all youths. John Sigwald, eastern Carolina Scout executive, and his assistant, George Thomason, of Wilson, were present for the program.

The Scouts and their fathers enjoyed several games during the evening.

## Plans Go Forward For The Relief Of Bertie Homeless

### Several Organizations and Individuals Anxious To Aid Sufferers

Witnessing human misery and untold hardships visited upon their neighbors and friends across the river, Martin County people have and are hastily forming campaigns to carry aid to the victims of a tornado that rendered nearly 100 persons homeless, claimed the lives of at least three and injured large numbers, several seriously, near Windsor last Tuesday evening.

A united appeal in behalf of the victims is being issued by heads of various organizations, and while the response here and throughout the county will not offset the loss, it is expected to lighten the burden of those who, in a few minutes time, saw the savings of a lifetime vanish.

"There was a balance due of nearly \$1,000 on our home before the storm. This amount has to be paid before we can start even again," one of the tornado victims said, adding that he held little hope of ever repairing the loss in his lifetime. "But I want to do all I can to aid my children that they might complete the task," the father added, pointing to several little tots who yet do not realize the material loss that they, no doubt, will be called upon to help repair in years to come.

In directing appeals for aid that the victims might be rehabilitated, the heads of the various agencies explain that the need is great, that just a few miles from here can be found startling facts to support a generous response on the part of our people.

Rehabilitation work by the Red Cross will likely be handled from that organization's headquarters, and to supplement that work various organizations in this county are busy soliciting clothing and funds.

**Legion Auxiliary Drive**  
The first district Legion Auxiliary has set up a receiving station in Clark's Drug Store here for clothing and funds. The auxiliary will be glad to handle donations from anyone, and the officers have made arrangements to effect the distribution of money and clothes and any other articles the early part of next week. Mrs. J. D. Thrower and Miss Clyde Hassell will handle the task.

**Church Takes Action**  
The official board of the Sweet Home Church of Christ, in a special meeting Wednesday evening, organized a drive for funds and clothing. The drive got underway yesterday under the direction of Mr. Herbert Williams and the supplies are being delivered today to the victims in the Green's Cross Roads section of Bertie.

**Boy Scouts Active**  
The local Boy Scouts started a canvass of the town yesterday.

**Red Cross Call**  
A call for contributions was issued this morning by Harry Biggs, chairman of the Martin County unit of the American Red Cross.

**Individuals Offer Aid**  
Numerous individuals have already advanced personal sums to support the relief movement that is so badly needed, and others are urged to participate by contributing clothes, money and other useful articles either to the Red Cross chapters in this county, the legion auxiliary, the Sweet Home group or direct to the Red Cross or Mayor J. A. Pritchett, Windsor.

## Thousands Visit Storm Swept Area

Motivated by curiosity in most cases, thousands of people from the eastern section of this state and near-by Virginia districts have visited the storm-swept area near Windsor since last Tuesday evening. As many as 48 cars, their bumpers only inches apart, were counted at one time as the drivers drove aimlessly and slowly by the ruins scattered on both sides of the road for a distance of three miles.

Movie cameramen were on the job early Wednesday morning, and amateur photographers nearly exhausted the supply of films in a number of counties.

Newspapermen from the big dailies in this State and Virginia, as well as those representing the news-gathering agencies visited the stricken area in fairly large numbers. Radio station operators installed temporary broadcasting apparatus in front of the Windsor hospital, and in stark tragedy Bertie's capital came to life in a big way over night.