

Reuben C. Bland, Notorious Father, Dies Monday Night

Funeral for Old County Native Held in Robersonville Tuesday

Reuben Columbus Bland, father of thirty-four children, is dead, his death at the home of a daughter in Wilson County last Monday night marking the end of a colorful career which was high-lighted by a personal visit to the late President Calvin Coolidge in the White House the latter part of 1926. In ill health for several years, the renowned father was thought to be getting along about as "well as usual" by the many members of the clan in this county when they learned he had died suddenly. Funeral services were held in Robersonville Tuesday afternoon, and burial was in the family plot on the Billie Roebuck farm.

The son of the late Jack and Penny Haislip Bland, he was born on the Oak Grove Highway, now incorporated as a part of the town of Robersonville, on June 7, 1855. His parents were born in this county also, his father near Cross Roads Church, and his mother near Hamilton. He was one of eight children.

The old gentleman's life was an hectic one. At the tender age of seven years old he left home and started working for his "vittles" and clothes, he used to say. He continued at that task until the close of the Civil War, and from that day almost to his death he lived from pillar to post, contributing little and expecting little out of life. At the age of 19 he married his first wife, Julie Cornum, who bore him fifteen children and who died about 1894 from childbirth. A year or so later he was married to Laura Boyette who had attended the Oxford Orphanage school six or seven years and who was working at a Robersonville hotel when he courted and married her. They were married by a Methodist minister in Williamston. Nineteen children were born to this union. And with that record the old man started gaining recognition. Carl Goerch, the publicist that he is, picked Reuben Columbus up and set out to Washington—without the children. In the nation's capital he was received by President Coolidge, one report stating that the President looked upon him with amazement. It was also reported that it was impossible to say who got the most out of the trip, the father, Goerch, or the late J. K. Hoyt, a third party on the trip. Mr. Hoyt signaled the old man out to strangers on street cars, on the streets and in public gatherings as the father of the largest family in the United States.

The newspaper gang picked the old man up when he left the White House. His picture appeared in the press over the country, and news reel men, coming down to see for themselves, placed the old codger and his clan in the theatre "shorts". A varied reaction was heard. The late W. O. Saunders referred to his record as one of a pocosin bull. He was dubbed, "the most famous papa of them all," "king of papas," "the illustrious and notorious Reuben Bland," just to mention a few of the titles.

Possessed of a jovial character, he led a carefree life. He was a great "fiddler" and attended every fiddler's convention in a radius of 25 miles before age began to exact its toll. His playing and clog dancing, supported by that fatherly record, enabled him to cop prizes valued at \$20 or more at a single show. Soon after Roosevelt was inaugurated, hatered crept into the old man's heart because he could not get a pension. In more recent years he got on the pension list possibly because of his pathetic status in life rather than because of his record. Several years ago he was asked to give the names of his children, but he couldn't remember them.

Only once in his life did he attempt to settle down and then "the mortgage" got him. He bought forty-seven acres of land in Grand Branch, a few miles from Robersonville, for \$100. Building a four-room house, he carried his second wife there as a bride. A mortgage to secure a \$300 grocery account was finally foreclosed and the old man was moving here and there again, spending some time in Pitt and some time in Martin. He worked for Godfrey Whitfield three or four years, Ricky Smith three years, Stanley Brown one or two years, Al Everett six or eight years, Simon Everett six years, rented a farm from Mirth Woolford for five years, just to offer a brief summary of the old man's travels from pillar to post.

His two wives and twenty children preceded him to the grave. In addition to his fourteen children who live in five counties in two states, he leaves about 100 grandchildren and about sixty great-grandchildren in several parts of the country.

Department Called To Woods Fire Near Grammar School

Reported to have started from a trash pile, fire burned a small wooded area just back of the grammar school building here yesterday at 12:25. Called to the scene, members of the volunteer fire department checked the fire and no great damage to the woods resulted.

Court Handles Criminal Cases Without One Going To Jury

The Martin County Superior Court established a new record, or at least equalled any record that may have been chalked up in past years, when it handled fourteen criminal cases without a single one of them reaching the petit jury. It was an embarrassing situation the defense counsel and the defendants found themselves in when they tried to tear down the prosecution. Jurymen were called and the cases were started in the best of faith, but before very much evidence could be offered in nearly every case, the defense cracked—and the defendants were submitted guilty to one charge or another.

The jurymen were there and ready to serve the defendants with a complete trial, but seeing little cause for prolonging the agony the defendants

threw up their hands and made ready to accept what was coming to them. When Judge W. C. Harris, of Raleigh, opened the term last Monday and saw the docket he was of the opinion that the trials would last a greater part of the week. He ordered extra jurymen summoned, but the fifteen talesmen remained idle along with the regular jury during the greater part of the two days.

Two divorce cases were decided by the jury, but one of them was handled informally without the jurors leaving their seats, the other holding the jury less than five minutes. Issues in one civil case were handled, the jury allowing Miss Marjorie Bunting \$315 in her \$340 suit against the Town of Robersonville for injuries allegedly received in an automobile accident on a Robersonville street last October.

Assemblyman In Final Review of Legislature

COMMENDABLE

Commenting on the recent legislative act providing a permanent grand jury for Martin County, Judge Harris said this week that it was commendable on the part of those who are interested in better government. "It is a forward step in good government in this county," the jurist said in open court.

A permanent grand jury, according to the jurist, is a good thing in that it enables the jurymen to better know the facts and see that recommendations are carried out.

The new system becomes effective next fall when nine men will be drawn for a year's service, the other nine to serve six months. At the end of the latter period, the jurymen will be drawn for a year's service.

Expecting Increased Aid For Agriculture In New Development

Added Purchases Under Lend-Lease Bill and Parity Price Increase Are Likely

New developments under the lend-lease bill and in connection with the parity payment program are likely to result in increased aid for American agriculture. While boom prices are not expected, it is fairly certain that the government does not plan to stand idly by while industry and labor forge further ahead in the nation's economy.

A movement was started in the Senate Agriculture Committee this week to add \$238,000,000 to the \$212,000,000 already approved by the House for parity payments which will run the agricultural program cost including soil conservation payments to almost a billion dollars. Action to increase the parity payments was taken after a proposal to advance loans to 80 per cent of parity had gained little headway in administration circles. Quite a few Senators, including Republicans, have announced their willingness to support the bill in the face of defense benefits accruing to industry and labor.

Other development holding some hope for agriculture is linked with the lease-lend bill.

From the gigantic seven-billion-dollar fund to finance the lease-lend program, \$50,000,000 will be earmarked for the disposal of tobacco. Disappearance of the 1939 crop at least is hoped for by Defense Commission officials as a result of these aid-Britain fund, which include also a near-marking of \$100,000,000 for surplus cotton disposal.

Great secrecy has surrounded the details of the manner in which the huge appropriation is to be expended on the ground that a breakdown into specific items would provide information of assistance to the dictators. Defense Commission officials agree, however, that no harm would result from the disclosure of the agriculture earmarkings.

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FARM FORUM

The Martin County Farm Bureau's fourth forum will be held in the agricultural building next Monday evening at 7:30 o'clock when E. V. Vestal, swine specialist of the North Carolina Extension Service, will discuss swine sanitation. The specialist will also review the market outlook for hogs, and conduct an open forum.

Mr. Vestal's address topic is a timely one, and all farmers whether they are members of the Farm Bureau or not are urged to hear him.

Brought To Set New Record With Job Appointments

Two Million Dollars Annually For Surfacing Secondary Roads Provided

By CLARENCE W. GRIFFIN
Martin County Assemblyman

The 1941 session of the General Assembly was one of the shortest sessions that has been held in many years. Probably no session in recent years has been quite as harmonious as the one which just ended. I think it can also be said that there has been no session which has followed the wishes of the governor closer than the last session.

There were several important accomplishments which, I think, characterize this session. Practically every state department was reorganized materially. The Unemployment Compensation Commission, the Education Department, the Highway Department, and some phases of the Revenue Department were drastically changed during the recent session. This will enable Governor Broughton to have at his command the greatest number of appointments of any governor in history. The Unemployment Compensation Commission will be administered by a director and a seven-man commission, which commission will be paid on a per diem basis. This will cause a saving in the cost of administration of this department. All of the different branches of our Education Department will now be combined, under the new set-up, under a 15-man commission and the superintendent of public instruction. This will prevent some of the over-lapping of jurisdiction and power which the present set-up has produced. The Highway Commission will be composed of men whose appointments will run concurrently with that of the governors and thereby centralize the responsibility for the administration of our Highway System on our Chief Executive.

I believe it can be said that education received as much consideration from the past session of the General Assembly as any session in previous years. Continuing contracts were insured for teachers, a 12th grade was partially provided for, and a ninth increment was added. I do not feel that the appropriations made for the twelfth grade were adequate, but they will probably be sufficient for the next two years, as several schools will doubtless not adopt the twelfth grade. The ninth increment was not anything new for the teachers, but was simply a restoration of a salary cut which the teachers received during the depression years. Probably one of the most far-reaching pieces of legislation passed was the retirement bill which provided security

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Prominent Minister Passes In Luray, Va.

Elder R. H. Pittman, prominent leader in the Primitive Baptist Church, and well known among the members of that faith in this county, died at his home in Luray, Va., last Friday. He was 65 years old, a native of Edgecombe County.

About 1923 he bought the Gospel Messenger from the late Elder Sylvester Hassell, of Williamston, and merged it with the Church Advocate. He has visited this section many times, attending the Kehukee Association.

About 1927 he was on a committee associated with Elder Sylvester Hassell and Elder J. C. Moore to hear the charges brought against Elder W. B. Harrington by certain members of Smithwicks Creek Church.

Elder Pittman was last here about two years ago, attending a meeting at Smithwicks Creek Church.

Germany Claims To Have Launched Its First Spring Drive

Furious Aerial Warfare Reported As Line-up in Balkans Takes Form Fast

Striking the most furious air blows against England since the war started and claiming the sinking of the first supplies moving into Britain since the passage of the lease-lend bill, Germany this week issued a bold warning that her spring attack has been launched, that increased and costly activities could be expected by the British and Greeks. The annihilation of the Italian army in Albania by the Greeks is now expected to hasten a German attack in that area, and possibly lessen the tension on invasion plans for England.

An extensive damage was reported in London this week when the city was subjected to the heaviest aerial attack of the war. Ten thousand bombs were dropped on the city in a single night, wrecking several hospitals and destroying many blocks in the residential sections.

While it is generally believed that Hitler planned no disturbance in the Balkan area, it now appears that he will be forced into action there. The British and Greek forces are now said to number approximately 800,000 men, and additional forces, fully equipped and with adequate supplies are moving in daily. One report states that Britain, Greece and Turkey are discussing the possibility of launching a surprise attack against Germany's forces in Bulgaria, and that all hope had not been abandoned for lining up Yugoslavia with Britain, Greece and Turkey.

Italy's stand in Albania is rapidly crumbling, and Mussolini's fate is being gradually sealed in East Africa, but the fascist leader was said to have begged Hitler to delay his attack until he could have no chance to battle the heroic Greeks.

While Germany is said to be renewing its attack on London and other English cities, extensive preparations are believed underway for an all-out attack on the Rumanian oil fields. A shortage of oil for Germany will possibly have a greater depressing effect on Germany than the bombing of manufacturing centers. Flying conditions should be perfect for such an assault within the next few days, reports say.

An unofficial report from Belgrade today state that the Yugoslavian cabinet was breaking up, that three had resigned because Germany had been permitted to move supplies across Yugoslavia. There is a possibility that the resignations will be hailed by the public and by the army, too.

Germany's latest air attack was directed against Plymouth, England, Hitler's publicity men claiming that large residential areas were destroyed and that several ships in the harbor had been damaged. The raid was quieted soon after the King and Queen had visited there.

Two German cruisers are said to be operating in the Atlantic, and it is thought that they were responsible for recent shipping losses suffered by Britain.

In this country the Senate is expected to get the seven billion dol-

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Pre-School Clinics In The School Here

A clinic for children who will enroll in the Williamston school for the first time next term will be held at the grammar school building on next Tuesday and Wednesday mornings beginning at 8:30. All children who are six years of age or who will be six years by October 1, 1941, will be brought to the clinic by their parents.

Principal D. N. Hix is urging parents to bring their children for examination and immunization in accordance with the following schedule:

Tuesday, March 25, 8:30, children residing outside of the town of Williamston.

Wednesday, March 26, 8:30, children residing in the town of Williamston.

Pre-school clinics have been well attended here in past years, and it is hoped that all parents with children to enter school for the first time next fall will bring them to the clinic.

COLD CASH

Martin County farmers participating in the soil conservation program are receiving another distribution of cold cash this week. The office of the county agent received 214 government checks representing 95 applications for soil conservation payments, and totaling \$18,093.95 for distribution to Martin County farmers.

To date, 1828 farmers have received or will have received within the next day or two a total of \$94,046.60 in soil conservation payments. Approximately two-thirds of the 1,500 applications filed by Martin farmers have been approved to date.

Ten Young Men Leave for Fort Bragg from Here Early Today

Martin County reported its first delinquent draftees early this morning when Willis Robert Crandall failed to report along with other draftees for service in the Army. Ben Bullock, the youthful volunteer who could not get his parents' permission to enter the service, and Crandall reduced the contingent to eight men, leaving the county two openings to be filled later. It is not certain that Crandall received his instructions, the draft board clerk stating that the orders were returned undelivered from a Norfolk address, and that possibly those instructions sent to his home address in Oak City did not reach him in time for him to report this morning. The young men leaving this morning at 6:55 were Julius Melvin Warren, Roy Avant Hinson, Wheeler Martin Ward, Woodrow Wilson Ray, James Elmer Stalls, Arthur Nicholson, James Rossel Silvertorne and James Claude Ambrose.

The Army will cast at least twenty men from this county next month, according to an official announce-

ment released by the draft board here yesterday. Ten colored men are to leave on April 1, and ten young white men are scheduled to leave on April 8th for Fort Bragg. It is possible that the number of white men will be slightly increased to include replacements.

Three volunteers came forward this week to reduce the actual draft call for white men to seven. Thomas LeRoy Taylor, Steven Elias Stevenson and Robert Bailey signed up with the draft board clerk, the first two doing so with the consent of their parents.

Next week, the county draft board will resume its classification work, the chairman, R. H. Goodman, announced today. A date for the meeting has not been fixed.

Four colored volunteers, James Davis, James Morris Ballance, William Cleve Bell and Lee Andrew Griffin, left for Fort Bragg last Wednesday morning in the best of spirits. One of the group, poking and laughing, stated that while he may be crying later, he was very happy for the present, at least.

Check Of Tax Books Will Be Started Soon

Equalization Board Moving Slowly With Its Valuation Task

Most of Yesterday Is Spent in Formulating Plans of Procedure

The real headache in Martin County's 1941 property revaluation is now troubling the county commissioners who are sitting as a board of equalization and review. Anxious to treat every property owner fairly, the authorities are experiencing difficulty in finding an acceptable solution or even a happy medium.

Hearing ninety-nine complaints during the first three days of this week, the commissioners yesterday went into an executive huddle to formulate a plan of procedure. A greater part of the day was spent discussing values assessed against town properties, possibly in Robersonville and Williamston and a few cases in Everetts. No official report on the activities yesterday has been released, but it is understood that some of the commissioners are of the opinion that valuations placed on a few homes in Robersonville should be reduced, and that values on a few homes in Williamston should be increased, the alterations to be handled on a limited scale, possibly. As far as it could be learned no final action has been taken in a single case, and it is quite likely that the authorities will continue with their task until some time next week. No meeting is slated for tomorrow.

An unofficial report stated that values placed on cleared lands were slightly out of harmony from one township to another. There was some mention of the possibility that a \$2 reduction per acre in Williamston would equalize the values in the particular township, but it was pointed out that such action would throw the values in some other townships out of line with those in Williamston when reduced. There was a fairly definite trend later in the day to increase cleared land values in certain districts by \$2 and hold Williamston to the figure determined by the assessors. This will effect a better equalization, it was reasoned by some members of the board, according to an unofficial report heard late yesterday afternoon.

Some of the complaints are meritorious, and the commissioners will handle those with comparative ease.

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Eight Prisoners Start Sentences

Sentenced to prison by Judge W. C. Harris in superior court here this week for terms ranging from four months to twenty-five years, eight Martin County men started "pulling time" in the various road camps and in State's Prison, Raleigh, Wednesday. The eight men combined were sentenced to serve a total of 520 months or a little more than 43 years provided, of course, the parole board does not take a hand.

Eddie Salsbury and Joe Thigpen both colored, entered the prison in Raleigh.

Frank Dunn, Joe Lanier Godard and Alton Lilley were transferred early that morning to a camp near Warrenton before relatives could reach here and bid them farewell. Lilley accepted his sentence without complaint, but Godard allowed that he had been "wronged."

Kenneth Moore, Charles B. Hardison and Henry Leon Wilson, all colored, were received by the prison camp in this county.

Superior Court In Recess After Trial Of Criminal Cases

Perjury Case Is Booked For Trial In County Court; Try Civil Cases Next Week

Completing the trial of criminal cases last Tuesday afternoon, the Martin County Superior Court recessed at the direction of Judge W. C. Harris, of Raleigh, until next Monday morning when a few civil cases will be called for trial.

Proceedings in the criminal court not previously reported.

Raymond Powell, colored, charged with the murder of Willie Walter Mitchell, colored man in Oak City last August, was declared not guilty in a verdict directed by the court. When the case was being heard, Judge Harris detected evidence supporting a charge of resisting an officer, and an indictment was ordered. Powell was sentenced to the roads for 12 months, the term to begin June 1. Powell is at liberty under a \$300 bond. Judge Harris declared that resisting an officer was one thing he would not tolerate. Sam Powell, a second defendant in the case, continues at large, and the murder charge against him was continued.

A divorce was granted Mrs. Sammie Fleming Turner in her case against Amazon Turner. Uncontested, the suit was based on two years of separation.

In a lone civil case called to the attention of the court, the jury awarded Miss Marjorie Bunting \$315 in her \$340 suit against the Town of Robersonville. The plaintiff contended that she was injured in an accident in Robersonville on the night of October 15, when a car driven by Willie Lee Chesson ran into an unmarked trench or ditch dug across a street there. A \$10,000 damage suit was brought by Chesson against the town as a result of serious injury received in the same accident, is pending in the court.

Civil cases were calendared for trial on three days of next week, but the Wednesday schedule was moved up and combined with the Monday-Tuesday calendar and the indications now are that the court will adjourn for the term possibly next Tuesday. Unofficial reports state that several cases have been virtually compromised, and that one or two will be continued.

Warning witnesses against perjury in his charge Monday morning, Judge Harris, made it quite clear that he meant what he said when Mizelle Bellamy, colored, was ordered jailed. Bellamy was caught falsifying the evidence he offered in the carnal knowledge case against Kenneth Moore, Robersonville Negro. Bellamy, after telling Chief William Gray that he saw Moore fleeing from the scene of the alleged crime, told the court Tuesday that he did not see Moore. Called to account, Bellamy admitted that he had misrepresented the evidence offered the court, but went on to explain that a nephew of the defendant, Maurice Moore, had warned him not to tell about seeing Kenneth Moore running. Judge Harris directed that a warrant charging subordination or perjury be issued against Maurice Moore.

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FISHING DELAYED

Seine fishing, scheduled to get underway at Jamesville yesterday, was delayed by cold weather, reports from the plant this morning stating that the owner-operator, C. C. Fleming, planned to open the season next Monday, weather permitting. Equipment has been made ready for the opening, but it will take several hours to get the big net soaked and made ready for normal operations.

The cold weather earlier this week reduced catches with dip and drift nets to a low point, but the fish are expected to run in greater numbers now that warm weather is being felt in this section. Reports from the sound state that few fish have been caught there so far this season.

Grand Jury Submits Its Quarterly Report Tuesday Afternoon

Body Follows Instructions of Judge W. C. Harris To The Letter

Under the leadership of Foreman L. R. Everett, the March Martin County Grand Jury settled down to an active work Monday morning and had its report completed and ready for submission to the court early Tuesday afternoon. The call for a complete check of the tax books for non-listers was called for by the jury at the suggestion of Judge W. C. Harris, the action high-lighting the report. It was the first time as far as it could be learned that a Martin County grand jury took definite action against alleged tax dodgers.

The jury report, appearing over the signature of Foreman Everett, follows, in detail:

We, the Grand Jury of Martin County for the above mentioned Term of Superior Court, submit you our report as follows:

We have passed upon all bills of indictment presented to us.

We inspected the Jail, Sheriff's Office, Register of Deeds and Clerk of Court's Offices, and find them to be in good condition.

We visited the County Home and found conditions satisfactory. The roof leaks in spots which is causing the plaster to come off at such leaks and we recommend that the top be repaired, also the plastering, at once. It being possible that a large sheet of plastering could fall upon someone and injure them.

We talked with the Sheriff as to assistants and equipment; he states that he is satisfactorily equipped with help and material, for outside and office work. He also states that he has finger-printing equipment and uses it frequently. He states that his

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SECOND CALL

Red Cross officials are issuing a second call to all persons interested in aiding war victims in Britain to meet with Field Representative Leo Wilhelm in the county agricultural building next Tuesday evening at 7:30 o'clock.

County Chapter Chairman Harry A. Biggs appeals to all women's club members, members of the Red Cross and others interested in aiding a suffering people to attend the meeting.