Native Of Hamilton Recalls Old Times

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Boyhood Recollections By T. F. Darden, Vice President Of Railroad

By THOS. F. DARDEN

It is difficult at this late date to recall incidents of any real value from a historical standpoint. Much water has passed over the dam since that time. All of the older generation of that day have gone to their reward, as have many of my contemporaries.

Hamilton at that time was a thriving community of four or five hundred people, with a background of substantial farmers. The transportation facilities consisted of boat lines on the Roanoke River to Norfolk and Baltimore, the principal one being the Roanoke, Norfolk and Baltimore Steamboat Company, in which the Biggs and Simmons families of Williamston had an interest. They did a flourishing business in carrying the produce of that section to market. A railroad was built through this section about 1885. Unfortunately it did not touch Hamilton, the nearest point being about six miles distant. This railroad no doubt had the effect of gradually taking business from the boat lines, which eventually disappeared from the river.

Public schools in those days were practically an unknown quantity. My total experience in public school was for a period of two months during one summer when I walked two miles to a school in the country. However, we were blessed with good private schools and after the primary grades, conducted by some estimable ladies, there was a school for older children conducted by Mr. Outterbridge, who was an elderly man and had taught Mr. Horner, who afterwards established the Horner Military Academy at Oxford, N. C. Mr. Outterbridge was a wonderful mathematician and I still feel indebted to him for the knowledge he imparted. Subsequently the Hamilton Academy was established and was conducted by Professor Duckett with a corps of four or five teachers.

The community was fortunate in having this excellent school and it drew pupils from many of the surrounding counties, a number of them being grown men.

The religious influences were not neglected. As I recall it the Methodist Church was the oldest and must have been built many years prior to 1870. There was a substantial Baptist Church with a large following, and in the surrounding section there were a number of churches of other denominations. The Episcopal Church was esatblished in 1868, the Rev. Thomas B. Haughton, of Williamston, being the Rector. The present church building was constructed in 1880. I prepared a paper giving a history of the development of the Episcopal Church in Hamilton and read it at a meeting in the church on October 24, 1937.

I recall the names of most of the families living there during my boyhood years: Cloman, Gladstone, Waldo, Sebrell, Jones, Slade, Salisbury, Sherrod, Gardner, Ward, Clark, Rhodes, Hooker, Crofton, Everett, Lamb, Long, Baker, Grimes, Pippin, Pritchard, Edmondson, Davenport, Hyman, Bryan, Robertson, Watts, Martin, Ewell, Hobbs, Purvis, Howell, Matthews, Boyle, Darden.

Among the substantial business houses were those of Mr. R. H. Everett, Mr. R. W. Salisbury, Mr. Archibald Sherrod, Slade, Jones & Company. The latter firm is still in existence under the name, I believe, of Slade-Rhodes & Co.; Bryan & Robertson, druggists, where I worked for three years and learned to telegraph. The telegraph line was a private one owned by Mr. Charles Lamb, then of Williamston. It was first constructed from Williamston to Hamilton and subsequently to Windsor. It may have extended in the other direction to Plymouth. I am not sure of this, however. Mr. Archibald Sherrod moved to High Point, N. C., and was one of the pioneers in the furniture business at that place. Mr. Robert Baker organized a pants factory. His son is now chairman of the board of the Blue Bell Overall Company, at Greensboro, N. C., and a very successful business man.

Dr. J. W. Sherrod and Dr. Watts were the first physicians I remember. Dr. Sherrod and his brother, William, were the most prosperous members of the community and owned a number of farms, not only in Martin but in adjacent counties. He was followed by Dr. Irving Clark and Dr. B. L. Long. Dr. Clark subsequently moved to Scotland Neck, where a number of his children still live.

During the period 1880 to 1885 Mr. Frank Hitch, of Suffolk, Va., built a large number mill and constructed a logging railroad to Tarboro. This road was also used as a public utility. A large quantity of timber was cut for many miles around. The product of the mill was shipped to eastern cities by steamer. One of the most thrilling experiences of my boyhood was a trip to Baltimore on Mr. Hitch's steamer.

There was a very close and cordial relationship with the people of Williamston, in many instances members of the same family living in both places. Mr. Wilson G. Lamb, a prominent citizen of Williamston, had two brothers in business in Hamilton and two of his sisters resided there for some time.

While all of my people have died or long since left Hamilton, all of my forbears are buried in the little Episcopal Churchyard and I am always glad to make a pilgrimage there when I have an opportunity.

LEADER

In his reminiscences of Hamilton, Mr. Thos. F. Darden, vice president of the A. C. L. Railroad Company, recalls that the late Stephen Outterbridge taught Horner, founder of Horner's school. Thus, it appears that the work of the Martin County educator has had a marked influence, either directly or indirectly, in the lives of men down through the years. Unfortunately, there is little known about Mr. Outterbridge, the pioneer in education in this county.

Snuff Is Making Big Comeback

Snuff comeback results from "no smoking" signs in war plants. Modern day users chew, not sniff, this substitute for combustible cigarettes, cigars and pipe tobacco. If first quarter snuff production gain holds, 1942 output will set an all time record of 45 million pounds, 4 million over previous (1929) peak.

Two Leaf Pioneers Still Living Here

Among the pioneers of the Williamston Tobacco Market, only two, Messrs. J. G. Staton and Warren H. Biggs, are living here now. Mr. Staton was the first warehouseman, and Mr. Biggs carried the first clip back in August, 1902. Most of the pioneers have passed on to their reward, but a few others live elsewhere now.

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Naturally, you are interested in securing the best values possible, so don't be satisfied until you have inspected our exclusive stock of men's, women's and children's fall wearing apparel. You'll find, most always, that our prices are lower but that never in any instance do we sacrifice quality to maintain our price reputation. So, when you are selling your tobacco in Williamston, visit our store. The children will need school clothes, such as coats, dresses and shoes; the women will need a fall hat, dress, coat, and a pair of shoes; and the men will need a new fall outfit, suits, shoes, etc. And our complete line of corduroy suits is just the thing for active boys and girls. So, stop by our store—the place to get what you want at the right price!

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