

Editor's Column

Last week I came across some interesting statistics on Madison County that tell a lot about how we are living, and what direction we seem to be moving in. The Center for Improving Mountain Living, at Western Carolina University, has collected these numbers, as they do each year for 28 western North Carolina counties.

The population level of Madison County seems to have "bottomed out" finally, after declining for 10 years between 1960 and 1970. It is now listed as 17,200, virtually the same as it was in 1960. Of these people, nearly 4,000 are under 15 years old and about the same number are over 55.

The most recent population figures for the three principal towns are given as 640 for Hot Springs, 1,880 for Mars Hill, and 1,070 for Marshall. Each town has grown since 1970; Hot Springs by 2 percent, Mars Hill by 15.8 percent, and Marshall by 9 percent.

A breakdown of industrial employment by place of work reveals the following: 750 workers in manufacturing; 690 in government; 390 in various services; 380 in trade; 150 in finance, insurance and real estate; 130 in transportation, communications, and utilities; and 20 in construction.

One apparent distortion of the report is in the total unemployment rate, which is given as 4.7 percent in 1977. This figure is almost surely too low, ignoring the many Madison residents who have never chosen to register for unemployment benefits and also these whose unemployment benefits have been terminated.

Of the total number of people employed in the county, 6,060 are wage and salary earners, while 1,100 are listed as farmers - down 17.3 percent from 1976.

In total personal income, Madison County does fairly well. The total has grown from \$30 million in 1969 to \$68 million in 1977. Based on 1972 as an index year of 100, Madison County's total income grew to 182.3 in 1977, compared with 164.6 for all of Western North Carolina.

For individuals, this means that per capita personal income has grown from, \$1,809 in 1969 to \$3,943 in 1977 (this includes every person in the county working or not).

Housing shows one of the most rapid changes of any economic indicator. Mobile homes lead this category in growth, with the number increasing 494 percent between 1960 and 1970, from 52 to 309. Year-round, one-unit houses increased 8.3 percent, from 4,626 to 5,009. At the same time, the people living in this units have spread out for more elbow room. The population per occupied unit has dropped 12.8 percent, from 3.6 to 3.1.

The report also includes a number of other economic indicators, including retail sales (up moderately since 1972), new and expanded industry (substantial increases when Deringer and Micro Switch moved in the early 1970s), and property tax levies (up substantially in the last decade).

The report makes dry reading for those who don't enjoy going through numbers and charts, but it is rare for so much basic data about Madison County to be found in one place. And only by knowing facts like these can we decide what we as a county should be doing for ourselves in the future.



AN UNUSUAL VISITOR came to Madison last week from faraway Ecuador. He was Gonsalo Bustamante, a representative of the Southern Development Program of that country. Southern Ecuador is the poorest part of the country, and Gonsalo's job is to try to improve the economic lot of the mostly rural population. Part of the region is mountainous (2,500 to 10,000 feet), inhabited mostly by small, subsistence-level farmers growing plots of corn, beans, sugar cane, yucca, potatoes and tomatoes. Gonsalo is trying to encourage them to use better farming practices (contour plowing, fertilizing, crop rotation) and to cooperate in growing cash crops on larger plots than they can handle individually. The extension service in Madison County is offering similar advice to local farmers, encouraging the growth of strawberries, tomatoes, and ornamentals as cash crops. Gonsalo's agency is also trying to develop local craft cooperatives, helping the considerable local talent make and sell textiles, dresses and other clothing. "The biggest problem in this region," he said, "are the very strong middlemen, who take most of the profits and the lack of good markets."

Erosion Control Workshop

Land and water are both necessary ingredients in the environment. Protecting land and water from erosion and sedimentation is important to prevent loss of valuable topsoil and degradation of the water quality in streams and lakes.

A workshop on erosion and sedimentation control will be held Sept. 21, 9 a.m. to noon, in the lecture auditorium of Asheville-Buncombe Technical College.

Sponsored by the local chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Land-of-Sky Regional Council, the workshop is plan-

ned especially for local contractors, developers, consultants, elected officials, and other interested individuals.

Speakers include Harlan Britt of the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources and Community Development, and Richard Connor of the U.S. Army.

The workshop is one of the events of the third annual French Broad River Week (Sept. 16-22). There is no charge to attend. However, advance registration is requested. To register or receive more information, please contact Sherrie Montgomery at the Land-of-Sky Regional Council, (704) 254-8131.

Miss George Named To Farm Post

Dr. T.C. Blalock, director of the N.C. Agricultural Extension Service, and O.M. York, chairman of the Rutherford

County Board of Commissioners, announced this week the appointment of Rebecca George as assistant home economics agent in Rutherford County.

Miss George, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William G. George, is a recent graduate of Mars Hill College with a bachelor of science degree in home economics.

Miss George, who began her duties in Rutherford County on Sept. 4, replaces Denise Greene, who is teaching home

economics at Chase High School, according to G.E. Bidix-Jr., county extension chairman.

Miss George will have 4-H

Club responsibilities and she will share some of the adult home economics work with Eugenia Ware.

Miss George is a native of Mars Hill and was an outstanding 4-H Club member in Madison County. She will reside in Forest City.



REBECCA GEORGE

Baled Tobacco Deadline September 28

Burley tobacco growers who are interested in marketing baled leaf during sales days this year will have through Sept. 28 to sign up at the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service Office.

W.B. Zink, executive director of the Madison ASCS, notes that there are four changes in the programs for 1979:

—Each producer will be guaranteed price support on 1,500 pounds or 20 percent of his farm marketing quota, whichever is larger, (instead of 5 percent last year).

—Any unwanted quota will be apportioned to producers desiring to sell more than 20 percent of the farm marketing quota from a state pool instead of a county pool.

—Sales of baled leaf will be held every day, instead of on five specified days, as last year.

—Individual bales in a lot must be identified.

If there are any questions regarding this procedure, for baled tobacco, producers should contact the ASCS Office.

Hospital News

Tisha Penland, 4-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Penland of Marshall, returned to her home Saturday from Memorial Mission Hospital where she spent several days receiving treatment for an eye injury.

Mrs. Bertha Marler has returned to her home in Marshall from Memorial Mission Hospital where she was a patient for several days.

Ernest Sawyer of Mars Hill, is a patient in St. Joseph's Hospital where he has undergone surgery.

Dwight Ledford, 12-year-old son of Mrs. Cindy Ledford of Route 7, is a patient in Memorial Mission Hospital where he underwent surgery Monday.

Ralph Chandler of Mars Hill is a patient at Oteen VA Hospital, where he is undergoing treatment for a detached retina.

Man Charged In Robbery At Betsy's Gap

A high-speed chase from Madison to Haywood counties ended in the arrest of a suspect on a breaking and entering charge Sunday.

Kenneth Trantham of the Hemphill section of Haywood County was charged with breaking into the home of Ervin Massey of the Betsy's Gap community in Madison County, Madison Sheriff E.Y. Ponder said.

Massey reported \$1,500 and a .22 caliber rifle were stolen from his house. The rifle and part of the ginseng was recovered, Ponder said.

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FIRST FLOOR SECOND FLOOR

Heard And Seen...

By POP

I didn't see the Erwin-Madison football game last Friday night at Erwin but the 20-0 defeat of the Patriots had its bright spots... it was again the defense which was outstanding while holding the strong Erwin Warriors to one touchdown in the first three quarters before yielding two TD's in the final period. Actually, the outcome of the game was not decided until 11:07 minutes was left when the Warriors iced the game. The Warriors rushed for 290 yards up and down the field but could only cross the goal line three times. Mike Hensley's punting average of 43 yards on 4 kicks was also a bright spot. This Friday the Patriots travel to Edneyville and I'm expecting the Patriots to bring back a victory.

Most every day I walk down to Roberts Pharmacy between 11 a.m. and noon for my usual cheeseburger or fish sandwich, and having a good time... for this reason it's a pretty good place to eat... and speaking of eating, I always enjoy going up on the bypass to Mary's Restaurant... not only is the food delicious but the "atmosphere" is always pleasant... Louise, always happy and full of witty remarks, Lettie, Annie and Mary Emma and, of course, Colon, keep things humming as well as the rest of the employees.

Deley, always pleasant, usually waits on

me and knows what I want. After doing this for so long I've grown accustomed to the others who eat there about this time each day. As a rule, Dot Reeves and I get there about the same time. Then back in the booths sit Peggy, "Tug", Helen, Altha, Elsie, Leta, Ruby, Agnes and other gals... and, of course, Ruby is always in the kitchen doing her chores and sometimes Faye is also working... they all seem to be happy

During this week's observance of "French Broad River Week", we are all proud of the great interest and efforts made in making the French Broad more attractive - and clean. Much work has already been accomplished in clearing the banks of the river, making the river more visible to motorists between Marshall and Asheville. The brush and trees have grown back quite a bit but the scene is much better than in former years. As this week is being observed, however, let's be sure that those who are enjoying the river be very careful... especially if they are riding Kayaks, rafts, or boats.

The new sidewalks in Marshall are rapidly taking shape, especially on the courthouse side of Main Street. Work has been started on the other side of the street this week and before long both sides on Main Street and the two Bridge Streets will have new, smooth sidewalks.



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