

Story Of Duplin Is Typical

By RICHARD H. BYRD.
While other North Carolinians grow beards, stage parades and celebrate generally 100th birthdays, the people of Duplin quietly and proudly up the ante a hundred years and prepare to pay tribute to their 200-year-old county.

On September 22-24, "The Duplin Story," written by Sam Byrd, will be presented.

The action of the pageant will revolve around the historical highlights of Duplin, both past and present, recreating significant moments in the county's past and tying them in with its present-day life.

The bicentennial celebration will serve a double purpose: first as a dramatic tribute to Duplin's history and, second, as a source of funds for the construction of a central county auditorium and gymnasium.

Duplin's history is typical, its people the small-town and farm folks seen every day, everywhere throughout North Carolina. All through the county is officially only 200 years old, the first chapter in its history was written 214 years ago.

In 1735, a London merchant, Henry McCulloch, appeared before George I's Board of Trade and asked for grants of land in the Colonial Province of North Carolina. His request was recognized and the grants made, on the condition that McCulloch and the other settlers enter and settle as much as possible of more than a million acres on the headwaters of the Neuse, Pee Dee, Northwest, Northeast and Cape Fear rivers.

Finally the McCulloch company was formed in 1736, 400 Scotch-Irish and Swiss immigrants landed at Wilmington on the Cape Fear. By boat and wagon they pushed northward along the river toward the McCulloch tract on its northeast branch.

Once a bluff overlooking the river they pitched camp, naming it Sarecta (now Sarecta). The surrounding country soon became known as "Goshen" named by the settlers in likeness of the Biblical "land of plenty".

In 1738 McCulloch followed his company to Sarecta, made his headquarters there and laid out a town. This town soon became a leading center of activity in Duplin, being strategically located on the Northeast, on whose waters native products of pitch, turpentine, lumber, and farm goods could be floated down to the Cape Fear and on to Wilmington.

The territory when first settled was the northern half of New Hanover County, but in 1749 was incorporated by Act of the Colonial Assembly into a separate "County of

Duplin and St. Gabriel Parish" being named for Henry Hay, Lord Duplin, members of the English Board of Trade and personal friend of McCulloch.

In 1784 the western part of Duplin was divided and a new county formed, named Sampson in honor of John Sampson, leading citizen of that region.

Golden Grove was chosen as Duplin County Seat and a courthouse erected there in 1785. The town was laid out in 1818 and named Kenansville for James Kenan, past member of the House of Commons and delegate to the North Carolina Provincial Congresses, "Liberty Hall," as the Kenan home was called, soon became the social center of the new county seat and many lavish affairs were conducted in its halls.

The old house stands today barred and rundown, a mute reminder of its past glory. The name Kenan still lives, however, and is familiar to all North Carolinians. A tribute to the family stands today in the form of beautiful Kenan Memorial Stadium, built at the University of North Carolina in 1927 as a gift of William Rand Kenan, Jr.

Also, in 1917, Mrs. Jessie Kenan Wise donated \$75,000 to be used for professorships at the University and again in 1932 gave \$24,000 to the University Emergency Student Loan Fund.

In addition, Mrs. Sarah Graham Kenan donated a total of \$55,000 for philosophy fellowships as an endowment for the Southern Historical Collection, and as a supplement to the Student Loan Fund.

Wrote Military History
The county and its military forces played a most important part in the Revolutionary War and the crisis leading up to it. The British rule had become increasingly distasteful to the colonies in the middle 18th century, and Duplin took up arms to protect the cause of independence.

The Stamp Act had recently been passed and was greeted with bitter opposition by the colonists. Opposing forces were formed in protest, and in 1765 Captain James Kenan led volunteer troops from Kenansville to Brunswick to prevent the levy of the stamp duties there.

A few years later, after the outbreak of the war, the Tory general, Donald McDonald, organized the 1600 Scotch Highlanders around Fayetteville (then Campbellton) and proceeded south to join other British forces at Wilmington. The Duplin militia under the command of Kenan marched to Moore's Creek in Pender County to join Colonel James Moore, supreme commander of the patriot forces and in the bat-

"THE DUPLIN STORY" DANCE



Nancy and Audrey Alphine, daughters of Gilbert Alphine, Jr., president of the Duplin county Historical association, are shown above as they practiced their dance which they will do in pageant about the history of Duplin county, "The Duplin Story."

tle of Moore's Creek Bridge defeated the Highlanders, taking McDonald prisoner.

Kenan's Duplin militia again saw action in 1781 at Rockfish Creek, in the battle of Stono in Camden, South Carolina, and in the battle of Briar Creek near Savannah Georgia.

The annals of the Civil War also include action by the Kenans and Duplin troops. Thomas Kenan was appointed captain at the outbreak of the war and took command of the Duplin rifles, Confederate militia. In 1862 Kenan was made colonel in charge of the 43rd regiment of the North Carolina troops and was instrumental in routing Federal forces in Duplin.

In 1863 the Federal 131st Kenansville, burned the Froeieck sword factory there, and proceeded to Warsaw, burning and pillaging as they went. The depot at Warsaw was destroyed, telegraph wires cut, railroad tracks torn up, and the town ransacked. Hearing of the raid, Confederate leaders rushed reinforcements to Duplin, only to find the Federals gone before them.

The educational advances made in Duplin date back to 1785 when the Grove Academy was founded in Kenansville by legislative grant "to fit young men for college, or to prepare them for the ordinary walks of life."

Many of Duplin's most famous

men attended the academy at one time or another. Captain W. J. Houston, Duplin Civil War hero, Senator F. M. Simmons, Vice-President William Rufus Kinz, and Congressman B. F. Grady are a few of those who received their first education at the old institution, which after operating off and on for 122 years, closed its doors for good in 1907.

Later in 1896 the James Sprunt Institute, Presbyterian school for girls, was established at Kenansville and operated as late as the middle 1920's. Hanna Moore Academy was organized in the Goshen community by plantation owners who wished to have a convenient school for their children.

Religion and public education have from the first been closely allied in Duplin, the first Presbyterian ministers acting as tutors for the neighborhood children during the week and preaching on Sunday. The first settlers, predominantly Presbyterian, held worship services first in the homes and later in meeting houses.

In 1742 the first organized Presbyterian congregation constructed a meeting house at Golden Grove in Kenansville. The building still stands and even today is one of Kenansville's leading churches.

Duplin is and has always been an agricultural region, with a 203-day growing season. The earlier farmers shipped their farm produce, pitch, turpentine, lumber and cattle down the Northeast to Wilmington. From clearing his land the farmer could soon gather great quantities of logs for lumber, meanwhile leaving his cattle to graze along the rich swamps and lowlands, and at the same time growing what crops were necessary for food and clothing and perhaps a small amount to trade for household luxuries.

William Dickson, clerk of court in 1810, had this to say about the land: "The Soil of these lands is proper for the Culture of Indian Corn, Peas, Potatoes and Cotton, also Wheat, Rye, and Oates, all of which it will produce without Manure."

Tobacco, now the county's leading money crop, was not grown until the 1840's, when W. J. Smith of Pearlall township introduced it to the county.

Sarecta in the early days was the meeting point of three main stage lines, one south to Wilmington, one east to New Bern, and another west to Fayetteville, the distance to these cities being almost equal. Those roads remained the most important routes in the county until the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad was built farther west prior to the Civil War. The new road (now the Atlantic Coast Line) was at that time of the longest railroads in the county and soon the commercial activity shifted westward from Kenansville and Sarecta to the new and convenient north-south line. Numerous towns sprang up along the road: Wallace, Teachers, Rose Hill, Magnolia, Warsaw, Faison, and Calypso. These communities flourished and now make up the leading trading centers of the county.

Strawberry Capital

Today Wallace is the most famous and most prosperous of all Duplin towns. It has become recognized as the largest single strawberry auction market in the world and each year stages its colorful Strawberry Festival. It has become a thriving tobacco market as well, with four large auction warehouses located there.

Warsaw, the county's largest town, has become a leading livestock market and lumber shipping point. Large quantities of pulpwood and logs are brought there and shipped by rail to various manufacturing centers. Although logging and lumber manufacturing is still the county's leading industry, the timber supply like that in most parts of the country has diminished within the last few years. The pine, cypress and gum once so plentiful have been cut or of the

THE AMERICAN WAY



Ronnie U.

swamps and pocosins which cover the county. Still, in 1946, some 42 sawmills in the county produced 16,425,000 feet of pine and hardwood lumber.

Faison, located on the ACL north of Warsaw, has developed into an important truck market where each year the farmers bring their pepper, corn, beans, cucumbers, and other produce to auction. The Cates Pickle Company has a plant nearby and buys great quantities of the produce that goes into the making of pickles and pickle products.

A relatively new crop has appeared in Duplin during the last several years. This crop is the blueberry, a plant similar to the huckleberry, native to Duplin. The blueberry plants are imported from nurseries in New Jersey and other fruit-growing states, and are transplanted in the damp rich soil which is favorable to their growth.

Several large farms have sprung up around Magnolia, where by modern methods large areas of the swampy woodland can be easily cleared and cultivated. More farms are being prepared and since the type of soil favorable to its growth

is widespread in the county, the blueberry has a good chance of becoming a leading money crop for many Duplin farmers.

So Duplin is today an old, proud county with a colorful and noble history. It can well be proud of the men it has produced: the Kenans, Gradys, Houstons, Faisons, men who have gone from the county to rise to national prominence.

Duplin can be equally proud of the men and women who have stayed with the land; for from the land has come Duplin's success and in the land lies the promise of its future.

The man who is to write the pageant portraying Duplin's history is well qualified to do it justice. Although he is not a Duplin native, he has lived on the very border of the county and has been in close contact with it and its people all his life.

The pageant is being written by Sam Byrd, of Mount Olive, who has received national recognition in the field of drama and literature. He is to direct its production and will take the leading role when the play opens on September 22.

Mr. Tobacco Grower

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