

The News-Journal

The Hoke County News - Established 1928

The Hoke County Journal - Established 1905

Volume LXXVII Number 34

RAEFORD, HOKE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

\$10 PER YEAR

25 CENTS

Thursday, December 12, 1985

Depot restoration project receives \$6,500 grant

By Ron Anderson

A grant which will assist in renovations of the Aberdeen-Rockfish Railroad Depot was awarded to the Raeford-Hoke Economic Development Commission last week.

The \$6,500 grant from Advancement, Inc. will enable the offices of the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development to move into the depot around the first of the year, according to Economic Developer, John C. Howard.

"We need money now at this

junction of the job," Howard said.

Part of the money will be used to construct a safety wall adjacent to the railroad tracks to satisfy an agreement made with Aberdeen-Rockfish Railroad when the railroad donated the depot to Raeford and Hoke County, Howard said.

Although the grant will assure occupancy of the depot "we still need additional community funds for the finishing touches," Howard said.

Howard estimates that an addi-

tional \$4,925 will be required to complete the \$43,975 project.

The depot project received about \$18,000 in contributions from local residents and businesses.

An additional \$13,000 was provided from the North Carolina Legislature's "pork barrel" funds.

Gerald Wright, who is a member of the Raeford-Hoke Economic Development Commission and also a board member of Advancement, Inc. is the creation of new jobs.

Since its creation in 1968, Advancement Inc., has funded over 51 projects in Hoke, Robeson, Bladen and Columbus counties, Wright said.

Those projects have led to the creation of 6,043 jobs with a potential of 8,542, according to Wright.

The corporation was originally funded with money from the National Office of Economic Opportunity and up until 1984 loans made by the corporation had to be approved by the Farmers Home

Administration (FmHA), Wright said.

Currently, the organization operates independently of FmHA. Wright said while the organization usually does not make outright grants for projects, "we made an exception within policy guidelines to fund the depot."

The exception was made because housing the Economic Development Commission, and the Chamber of Commerce in the depot will help to stimulate industry and create jobs in the area, Wright said.

"The bottom line is to create more jobs for the community," Wright said.

In the past, Advancement Inc. funded the Hillcrest water system, the North Raeford water system and has awarded a grant to the football stadium at Hoke High School.

Original Hoke County board members were W.T. Allen, Ralph Barnhardt and Ivery McNair.

Besides Wright, current board members are Ivery McNair, W.E. Carter, Steve Parker, John C. Howard and William T. Altman.

City worker jailed for stepson's death

A Hoke County man has been charged with murder in connection with the shooting death of his stepson in front of a food store Saturday night.

Sheriff David Barrington said officers found James Thomas Rickerds, 27, lying in front of David's Food Store on Davis Bridge Road at approximately 6:11 p.m.

"There appeared to be a gunshot wound to the upper chest," Barrington said.

Rickerds was transported to Cape Fear Valley Medical Center where he was pronounced dead on arrival by Dr. Joseph Dees.

Charged with the shooting, was Rickerds' stepfather, John Baxley Jr., 59.

There were several witnesses to the shooting, Barrington said.

Records say that both Baxley and Rickerds lived at Rt. 12, Box 616, Fayetteville.

The address is just inside the Hoke County line and is a short distance from the scene of the homicide, the sheriff said.

Rickerds was employed at Riley Crane and Equipment Company, in Raeford.

Baxley is employed by the City of Raeford as chief mechanic at the municipal garage.

Baxley was arrested at his home a short time after the shooting, Barrington said.

The sheriff said a small caliber weapon was located at Baxley's residence.

Baxley is being held without bond on an open murder charge in the Hoke County Jail.

Wet weather hurts Hoke soybean crop

Hoke County farmers are having difficulty harvesting soybeans this year and the problem will eventually hit them in the pocket-book, according to Hoke County Agricultural Extension Chairman Willie Featherstone Jr.

"We've got beans that should have been combined in September that are still in the ground," Featherstone said.

Featherstone says the problem has been an exceptionally moist autumn that has left fields too wet for combines.

"A lot of the beans are molding and are beginning to shatter," Featherstone said.

Damage to the beans means less money at the market place, according to Featherstone.

Beans will be examined at the market and prices will be discounted in relation to the amount of damage done, Featherstone said.

Farmers may check their beans by taking them out of the shell with a razor blade, the extension chairman said.

"If the bean still has a tan color inside, it's still good," Featherstone said.

Hoke County farmers plant approximately 28,000 acres of soybeans in a normal year with yields of approximately 22 bushels per acre.

Featherstone said he believes farmers will not be planting as many acres of beans in 1986.

Farmers are experiencing an additional problem due to the late bean harvest.

The planting of small grain crops has been delayed because farmers have not been able to get the beans out of the fields.

Only 30% of the wheat and rye crop normally in the ground this time of year has been planted, Featherstone estimates.

DSS needs more agents for support collections

Hoke County needs additional child support agents to handle the county's current number of caseloads, members of the Board of Social Services were told during a recent meeting.

Child support Agent Mary Barefoot told board members two agents are currently handling 905 cases and between 25 and 30 cases are added each month.

Beginning January 1, the agents will also be required to handle medicare cases which will further increase their workloads, Barefoot said.

The Division of Social Services recommends a caseload size of 300-325 cases per agent.

Based on that statistic alone, the agency needs two additional agents, Barefoot said.

Social Service agents managed to collect \$101,179.37 during the summer months, Barefoot reported.

But she also said that arrearages

on collection cases amounted to over \$1 million.

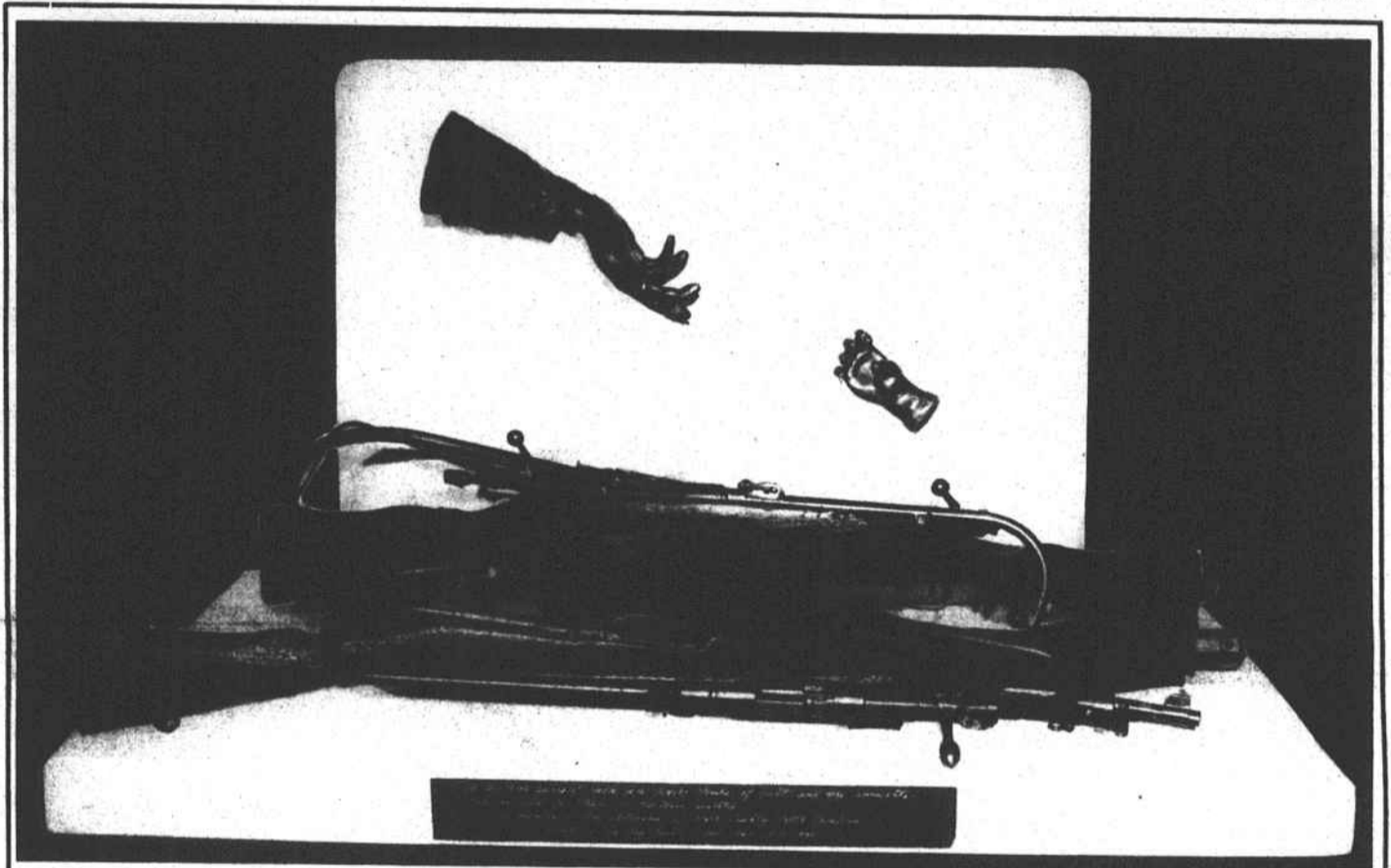
According to Barefoot, the failure to have time to work on location and enforcement means a loss in funds to the county in incentive payments.

"We're anxious to put as many people under either voluntary agreements or court orders to pay child support," Director of Social Services Ken Witherspoon said during a recent interview.

"We have one of the better programs in the state, but we would like to collect from every father back what we have paid to support the children and mothers," Witherspoon said.

The director said that in the last 90-day period, 15 fathers were placed under orders to pay support for their children.

Witherspoon asked board members for their assistance in (See DSS, page 2A)



New monument

The Hoke County Veterans monument by sculptor Art Gore will soon be displayed in Raeford. Members of the county building and grounds committee are studying possible locations for the piece which is being donated by Boy Scout Troop 404. An inscription on the front of the

monument reads: "When the guns of war are forever tombs of rust, and the innocents have no need for arms." The monument will be Hoke County's first and is the Eagle Scout project of Hoke High students Josh and Jay Pate.

Morrison murder case remains on books

This December 22 will mark the second anniversary of the shooting death of William Daniel Morrison.

Morrison, who was a well-known businessman in Hoke County and a one-time candidate for the Raeford City Council, was murdered in his convenience store on Harris Avenue sometime between 7 p.m. and 9:25 p.m. in 1983, according to an investigation by the Raeford Police Department and the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI).

The case remains in the unsolved files of the Raeford Police Department.

Even with a \$10,000 reward, \$5,000 from the state and \$5,000 from the family, offered for infor-

mation leading to the arrest and conviction of the murderer, there have been few additional leads to turn up over the last two years.

"We've had just little bits and pieces which we've followed, but nothing conclusive has been turned up yet," Raeford Police Chief Leonard Wiggins said this week.

Wiggins said the case is still open, and as far as he knows, the rewards are still in effect.

According to previous reports, Danny Morrison, was found dead in his store, slumped near the cash register at 9:35 p.m. on December 22, 1983.

SBI agents and local police officers established the time of Morrison's death at 9:25 p.m.

Former reports indicate that no money was missing from the store, but law enforcement officers say the motive for the slaying was robbery.

Neither Morrison's wallet or store receipts of about \$1,600 were found disturbed after the shooting, the reports say.

Apparently, the 54-year-old store owner was shot four times.

Morrison had been working at the store about two and one-half hours when the shooting occurred, reports indicate.

A women cashier had been relieved by Morrison at about 7 p.m.

A gun which Morrison kept near the store's cash register was found

undisturbed, and reports say there was little sign of a struggle except for one broken jar of honey.

Witnesses near the store reported seeing at least one, maybe two black males in the store near the time Morrison was killed, but there were no actual eye witnesses to the shooting.

Also, there was a red car seen near the store around the time of the shooting.

Police searches for the car and two men reportedly seen inside the car have revealed nothing.

Road blocks set up at the intersection in front of the store turned up few clues.

The investigation is continuing, Wiggins said.

Downtown commission eyeing revamp goals

Revitalization efforts for downtown Raeford should be directed towards quickly obtainable goals, like planting trees, unified signs and better merchandising, members of the Downtown Revitalization Commission were told Monday night.

"Don't undertake efforts like burying utility lines. It is not cost effective," state Natural Resources and Community Development (NRCD) planner Jim Dougherty said.

Signs and logos can be used to build a new image for downtown Raeford and to advertise the district as one shopping area.

The downtown logo should be used on all parking signs, direc-

tion signs, in advertisements and on shopping bags, Dougherty said. Merchants and building owners should also be encouraged to repair and paint.

Incentive grants for part of the cost could be used to help the work to be completed, Dougherty said. Recent donations to the commission may give the group the funds needed to get started.

Commission members received a check for over \$600 from the Raeford Merchants Association to be used towards the revitalization effort.

The association also donated the funds to repair this year's Christmas decorations and to pro- (See RAEFORD, page 2A)



Inside today

Male nursing assistant Joel Heron listens to Joe Chestnutt's heartbeat during a recent visit to the Chestnutt residence. We take a look at the St. Joseph Home Health agency on page one of Section B in today's News-Journal.

Around Town

By Sam Morris

The weather over the weekend was cold. Winter arrived a few weeks ahead of schedule. It was a bad day Friday with the rain and the cold air. It has been nice Monday with the temperatures in the 60s. It is supposed to remain this way until Wednesday night. Then rain is forecast for that night.

The forecast for the weekend is for more cold air to come into the state and the temperatures will have a high of about 45°.

Christmas is about with us and most folks will be shopping for the next few days. Remember to lock up all your packages you leave in the car. It is best to put them in the (See AROUND, page 2A)