

Elkin Twenty Years Ago

By GRADY BURGESS

(Note: In this little sketch of Elkin I shall not assume to be altogether accurate in all of my statements, for I shall write mostly from memory and for that reason cannot give assurance that all of my statements are correct. However, if anyone shall see any mistake of any importance and wish to correct it, I will appreciate it.)

CHAPTER I

Elkin twenty years ago was quite a different town from what it now is. In fact, if some of the younger residents were to wake up some morning and find it just as it was twenty years ago, they would think that they had moved to the country. For at that time Elkin had no paved streets, and but very little paved sidewalks. And there were no street lights after 11:00 o'clock, for all of the electric lights of the town were put out at that time and did not come on until 5:00 o'clock the next morning.

But let me take you over beyond Jonesville and bring you into town as a lad of ten or twelve years of age would have entered the town twenty years ago.

First of all he would have his eyes wide open looking for the first automobile to be seen, for they were so rare as to attract quite a lot of attention at that time with their fuses and dust, dodging here and there among the wagons, buggies and ox teams. (For there were more ox teams then than there were automobiles.) And on busy days he would find the streets full of buggies, hacks and surreys filled with folks dressed in their finest attire going to or from town. Then there were the wagons loaded with tan bark, crosses, farm produce and herbs of many kinds. And in the tobacco season a great line of wagons loaded with to-

bacco going to the local market. Also there were bulging loads of mountain cabbage, potatoes and wool, with here and there a load of young pigs squealing their protest at going to market at so tender an age.

And as the lad of twelve would be trying to take in all of this jostling show before him he would have pointed out to him, if he had not already seen them, as he rode down through Jonesville, such things as ginseng yards where the herb was grown under the many half-latticed and queer looking sheds, owned and operated by Frank Carter and M. W. Evans. Then he would have pointed out to him the old hotel building which used to serve Jonesville as a hotel, then the old tobacco factory building, and perhaps the Brown-Grier Iron Works before he would reach the newly erected steel bridge that spanned the Yadkin river at that time. And thus he was introduced to Elkin twenty years ago.

STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

Now, let me describe to you a little more in detail, the streets and sidewalks. The only kind of improvements the streets had at that time was a coating of loose crushed stone put down, which was called macadam. And this only extended from a point near the home of Mr. J. H. Tharpe, on Gwyn Avenue, to the business section of town; thence out Main Street west across the creek bridge, and up West Main street to about the home of Mr. R. L. Harris. There was also a sidewalk on one side of the street throughout this course. Then there was macadam up Church Street a part of the way and down East Main street to the intersection of Gwyn Avenue. And paved walks before the stores and up to the school house, and to the woolen mill, just about completed the towns improvements in the way of streets and sidewalks. Elk Spur street and North Bridge street, were but poorly graded roads. South Bridge street was some better, with improvements extending to the river bridge. However, Elk Spur street had a board walk from the creek up about half-way to the top of the hill and a crushed tan bark and gravel walk the remainder of the way. Surry Avenue had a paved walk a part of the way.

ROADS

The roads leading into Elkin twenty years ago were such as have been in use since the introduction of horse-drawn vehicles. They were not surveyed or graded, but were laid out in as nearly a straight line as possible from one place to another with little regard for hills, if the teams could only pull the loads up them. This method caused many steep places on the hills that would wash out into gullies that were sometimes deep enough to tip a wagon over. Then in the level places there were great mud holes that were almost deep and large enough to swim in, and these were often filled with large rocks to give them a "solid bottom", and what a bottom it was! You would think that you were riding down the railroad on the cross ties, if you were to go through one of them. And these roads were kept up with a kind of "workings" that consisted of men going along them and shoveling dirt off the banks into the deepest holes and gullies, piling rocks and other material into the mud holes and cutting water sheds or ditches to turn the water out of the road.

And few were the bridges in use at that time. All streams were forded except a few, such as the Yadkin river and the Elkin creek, and these were forded in some places. But not here at Elkin.

AUTOMOBILES

Twenty years ago you could get your car with or without a top, and the top usually came at extra cost. And as for coupes and sedans, they were unheard of in Elkin. But what need did anyone have for a closed car, for they could only travel in the best of good weather with the roads that existed at that time. And if you wanted to travel at night you, might have to buy some kerosene before you left home, for you had to use that in your tail light and dash lights. The headlights were carbide lights mostly, but even some of them were oil lamps. No, there were no electric lights on automobiles then, for they had neither electric generator nor batteries. I need not tell you now that they had no self-starters. All cars were cranked then, and some of them were cranked on the side of the contraption. Some were of the old high wheel type, and some had the steering wheel on the right side with the gear-shift levers on the running board. The fenders were leveled off at the front and back in place of being rounded to fit the contour of the wheels, and there were usually rods running from the side of the radiator to the windshield to brace it against the wind. And they were badly needed, when Madam Lizzie reached the tremendous speed of 30 miles an hour! Yes, and Lizzie was even driven into the shed in the fall of the year, her wheels jacked-up and her tires taken off, and there she remained until the roads dried up in the spring. And

were the tales told on winter evenings as customers would gather about the stoves in the stores, about their adventures in the big mud holes and of getting stuck in creeks, etc. It was an all-day affair to go to Winston-Salem on a shopping trip, for the trip each way usually took from four to five hours. And if you wanted to blow your horn to let the folks know that you had gotten back into town you would have to press a rubber bulb or work a lever on the klaxon to make the sound.

AIRPLANES

There were none here. Elkin had not seen its first airplane twenty years ago.

TRAINS

In 1914 Elkin had six trains daily. There were four passenger trains and two freights. The first one of the day was a passenger train east bound from North Wilkesboro that carried only passengers, mail and baggage, and arrived about 8:00 a. m. This was followed by an east bound freight. Then the next one was at noon, carrying passengers, baggage, mail and express, and was west bound. This was our first west bound train of the day. This same train returned going east at 3:00 in the afternoon. And then came a west bound freight. And then at 7:00 p. m. the first train of the morning came back up from Winston-Salem, and was called the "Shoo-fly". This late train was quite an attraction at that time when it was winter and the days were short, for its head light was the brightest light to be seen anywhere and could be seen for a long way as it would come up the track and steam into the station among the waiting crowds. Almost all travel was by train then, and usually a score or more of people would alight from or go aboard each one.

The arrival of each train was awaited with much interest, and large crowds would gather to greet the passengers and to see anything of interest that might happen. And the two passenger trains that ran on Sundays were special attractions and drew the largest crowds of any. Also there were a few special trains, or excursions, and these were made up of half a dozen or more coaches. At one time they were so full that standing room was at a premium. Imagine it!

The old Elkin & Alleghany Railway was in operation then and made one round trip to Doughton daily. It had two passenger coaches and carried quite a number of passengers too, besides carrying mail, express, baggage and freight. Many were the cars of cross ties, tan bark, lumber and beef cattle that this short line brought from the mountains into Elkin. And the cars would also smell of mountain apples, potatoes, cabbage and many other things grown in the mountains.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Thru Capital Keyholes

By Bess Hinton Silver

HEADS MAY FALL—Don't let anybody tell you that reorganization of the State Revenue Department has been completed. Even as you read this the Motor Vehicle Bureau is undergoing a thorough over-hauling and it is entirely possible that some of the hired help may get the gate. All this is being kept as quiet as possible because most all employes can pull political strings and bring on a miniature war. Daily press dispatches that reorganization of the Revenue Department was finished were evidently inspired. If they had read "about finished" they would have been more correct since the Motor Vehicle Bureau is the last unit to feel the axe that Dr. M. C. S. Noble, Assistant Commissioner, is wielding with an approving nod from Commissioner A. J. Maxwell and Governor Ehringhaus.

HAS CONFIDENCE—The grapevine reports that Representative Tara C. Bowie, the "cut-'em-to-the-bone" leader of the 1933 House of Representatives, is telling it about among his friends up in his native county of Ashe that the reason the Raleigh news writers do not mention him in speculation on who will be the next Governor of North Carolina is because they know he would be nominated and elected if he decided to run. Raleigh news writers give other explanations. The vocative Tam is said to favor installation of radio facilities in the House of Representatives to broadcast his and "other important" speeches.

HAS HIS TROUBLES—One of North Carolina's two baby Congressmen, Harold D. Cooley, of the Fourth District, is having his troubles over his patronage. Many constituents are up in arms over his appointment of a woman Hoovercrat at Randleman, Randolph County, and Selma dyed-in-the-wool Democrats complain in that he is about to appoint another Hoovercrat as postmaster of that Johnston County town. Like getting married, when a man's elected his troubles begin.

POWER RATES—The State Utilities Commission is getting all set to cut power and electric light rates on the Carolina Power and Light system in Western North Carolina, where the federal government's TVA rates are causing utilities headaches. No relief is in prospect for Eastern North Carolina from the C. P. & L. at present. In fact, it may be months before the western reduction is effective but it's in the cards.

YOU MAY GET STUCK—Don't

get the idea that your Uncle Samuel is going to pay for knocking down the bumps and filling up the mud-holes in your road if you live off the primary State highway system. Federal-aid funds are limited to 10 per cent of the State's roads and you may live along one of the other 90 per cent. And if the next Legislature gets its hooks on more than the \$1,000,000 that is now being taken out of motorists' pockets to pay bills instead of building roads federal aid will be cut one-third under provisions of the federal statute. On top of that cities and towns are demanding that the State maintain streets in the highway system. Between diversion, loss of federal funds and upkeep of streets it looks like the farmer is in danger of losing what now parades in dust in the summer and mud in the winter as a road.

THREE RING CIRCUS—There wasn't half the scramble you might have imagined after reading press reports, for the \$4,000-a-year job on the Industrial Commission, set adrift by the resignation of Major Matt Allen. A lot of the boys got mentioned in the newspapers for the simple reason that news was dull and the average reporter lives by the old axiom that "names make news". The reporters had no idea who would get the job so they mentioned everybody they could think of who was eligible. They even included George Ross Pou, former prison head, who is generally supposed to be making twice the amount of the salary of the Industrial Commission job in his law practice in Raleigh.

DOES THIS MEAN WAR?—Former Senator-Governor Cameron Morrison in his speech to the embattled farmers at Swannanoa, among other things said "Public officials who voted against any of the President's agricultural relief program ought to be retired to private life." Senator Josiah William Bailey was the only member of the North Carolina delegation to cast a vote opposing the Agricultural Adjustment Act. No matter where he was aiming "Cam's" dart took effect on Senator Bailey's button and politicians are wondering if he will bestir himself to get Senator Bailey's scalp in the campaign of 1936. If "Cam" smears on the war paint "the fur will fly."

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS—You couldn't escape the greeting "Hello, Senator" received by Governor Ehringhaus at the Asheville convention of the County Commissioners. One guardian of county welfare waxed bold with the speech:

"This is our next Senator from the East; how about it Governor?" If the Governor knew "how about it" he didn't tell anybody but bestowed his Sunday-go-to-meeting smile in return for the compliment. Governors are that way.

BEATING THE BREAKS—If you recall Keyholes told you of the resignation of Major Matt H. Allen, as chairman of the State Industrial Commission, days in advance of the daily press. Some weeks ago Keyholes also told you the United States government was negotiating for the purchase of Lake Mattamuskeet, in Hyde County. Last week Uncle Sam bought the lake for a wild-fowl reserve. Just a couple of samples of how you may learn what is going to happen by reading Capital Keyholes in this newspaper.

DUM DUM BULLETS—Rumors from Chatham County, via "Colonel" Walter D. Siler that the State prison department is furnishing eagle-eyed guards with "dum dum" (soft-nosed) bullets are so much hooey. The State Department of Purchase and Contract has not received any requests for "dum dums" and has never purchased any of these "soft-noses." Thus does the bevo-colonel's rumor instead of the bullets explode.

HARDWORKING—Frank L. Dunlap, Assistant Director of the State Budget, and his right-hand man Bob Deyton, are among the "work-inges" men on Capitol Hill. Much of the squawking heard among employes during the reign of "Father" Burke in the Budget Bureau has subsided since Mr. Dunlap came up from Anson county to guard the State's purse-strings. A great many people would like to know what sort of "pacifier" Mr. Dunlap used on Attorney General Dennis G. Brummitt whose criticism of the Budget Bureau at one time reached the chronic stage.

GULLEY—When Herbert Gulley, who in addition to serving as Man-Friday for Senator Josiah Bailey is also something or other in the Federal Alcohol Tax Unit, went down to Elizabeth City to conduct liquor raids he ran afoul Editor W. O. Saunders, of the Elizabeth City Independent, who took Mr. Bailey's rod-and-staff for a neat buggy-ride. Editor Saunders' account of the raid would make your hair stand on end. He charged Gulley with forcible entrance without a warrant and of displaying quite a temper when asked by a landlord if he would pay for a door he crashed in. Other uncomplimentary remarks by Mr. Saunders are too near libel for repetition here.

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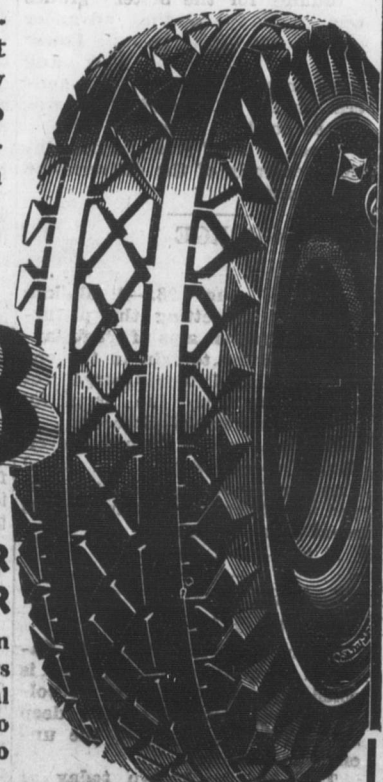


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