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Fire Rages While Cyclonic Winds Howl

Home of J. W. O'Neal Burned Tuesday Afternoon During the Height of One of the Most Furious Gales on Record—Smithfield Firemen Come to the Rescue and Flames Are Conquered After Long and Stubborn Fight.

What came near being and what could easily have been the worst fire hazard in Selma's history took place here last Tuesday afternoon during the height of one of the worst March gales and equinoctial storms on record. While howling winds swept clouds of dust through the elements and flying debris, slamming doors and blinding windows bespoke the fury of the elements and while deep in our human breasts lingered a heaviness not to be explained or expressed, the alarm signal at the town hall began to ring repeatedly and when no one seemed to respond from the Mayor's office Mr. H. H. Lowry picked up the telephone receiver in the office of the Johnstorian-Sun to inquire of the central office if there was any trouble, to be told that J. W. O'Neal's home was on fire, but by this time someone else had answered the alarm and proceeded to turn on the siren which intensified the gloom already hanging over a storm-swept community.

The firemen were soon on the scene and on their way to the scene of conflagration, where they were soon joined by the Smithfield firemen who had been called into service because of the foreseen hazards which could quickly result from an angry blaze on such a stormy day. Several streams of water were soon shooting across the roof and through the windows of the burning building while horrifying belches of smoke and leaping flames of fire swept upward and were beaten down by the fury of the wind. For a time nerve tension reached a high peak lest the flames should ground themselves and stretch across to adjoining buildings, but by heroic work of the firemen and the aid of the metal roof on the burning building the flames were kept down to a remarkably low pitch. Had the building been covered with wooden shingles instead of metal, there is no doubt but that Selma's youth could have had a fire story to relate to their children and grandchildren that would keep sleep from their eyes until late at night. With such a gush of wind bearing down and swirling through the streets and alleys wooden shingles would have blown for blocks carrying a flame of fire and with such a condition this story would have painted an entirely different picture of the fire here last Tuesday afternoon.

The upstairs part of the house is practically burned up and all furniture with it, but the fire did not do so much damage to the downstairs story, however there was so much water used in extinguishing the flames that all of the furniture on the first floor was practically ruined.

We have not heard an estimate of the loss given, but it is said to be heavy. We understand that the property was insured but that the policy may have lapsed only a short time ago, but cannot verify this as a fact.

Mr. O'Neal is one of the oldest men in Selma, if not the oldest, and he and his daughter, Miss Dora O'Neal, lived together.

SELMA BAPTIST CHURCH.

Services at the Selma Baptist church next Sunday, March 27th, will be at 11:00 a. m., and 7:30 p. m. These services will be in observance of Easter.

At the morning service the pastor will speak on the Resurrection of our Lord. It will be the purpose to give in this message conclusive evidence, based upon the Scriptures, that Christ arose from the dead. The subject for the night service will be "The Appearances of Jesus after the Resurrection." There were perhaps many more of these appearances than are usually pointed out. The special music will be in keeping with the sermon.

An all-day Vocal Union will be conducted at the Lizzie Mill Chapel next Sunday, March 27th.

Fire Destroys Big Banner Warehouse

Smithfield's Largest and Oldest Tobacco Warehouse Went Up in Smoke Shortly After Midnight Sunday Morning. Loss Placed At Around \$25,000.00.

The Selma Fire fighters got a call to go to Smithfield between one and two o'clock Sunday morning when it was discovered that the Big Banner Warehouse was engulfed in flames. But the fire departments of Smithfield and Selma were soon on the job, but the fire had gotten such headway that little could be done towards saving the warehouse and they soon found that they had all they could do to prevent the spread of the flames to adjoining buildings.

The fire originated in the back of the building, where a large quantity of cotton belonging to Capt. H. L. Skinner, proprietor of the warehouse, was stored, and burned towards the front of the building. In less time than 10 minutes after the fire was discovered, the entire building was in flames.

Harvey Creech, a local warehouseman, had a narrow escape when he broke through the front of the building and attempted to put the fire out, which appeared to be confined entirely to the rear of the warehouse. A side window was broken out while Creech was on the inside fighting the flames, and this caused a draft which fanned the flames forward.

The Smithfield Baptist church, located in front of the burning building, was ignited during the blaze. Almost at the same time it was discovered that the residences of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh A. Ragsdale, Mrs. Archie Strickland and the home of Charlie Hodge, negro, were on fire caused by the intense heat and sparks. Some damage was also done to the Austin building, occupied by the Tucker Furniture Co., of Raleigh. The Smithfield fire station was damaged by smoke and heat.

Mrs. Archie Strickland, an aged widow, whose home was fired by the burning warehouse, was painfully injured while directing the removal of the furniture from her house. She was accidentally struck down when a bureau was being removed from the burning house. Mrs. Strickland was carried to the Johnston County Hospital for treatment. She suffered a broken shoulder.

The Banner Warehouse was owned by Capt. H. L. Skinner, and is said to be covered by insurance. A truck and an automobile were also destroyed in the fire.

The loss is estimated at around \$25,000.

Smithfield News.

Smithfield, March 22.—A negro, named Lee Love, about 30 years old, was arrested and jailed today by Policemen C. R. Cable and E. A. Johnson, on a charge of house-breaking. He is said to have admitted that he broke into the home of Mr. Carson Thornton in Bentonville township last week. He had been arrested here two or three times before and is said to have served two road sentences on larceny charges.

Number of young people got a severe shaking up on Highway No. 10 between Smithfield and Raleigh last Thursday morning when a car driven by Mrs. Tilden Honeycutt was overturned. In the car with Mrs. Honeycutt were Misses Mary Elizabeth Wellons, Gladys Johnson, Corinne Ellington, and Corbin Young, of Smithfield, and Miss Mabel Barnes, of Clayton.

A negro, named J. D. Simpson, gave Policeman E. A. Johnson a lively race last Sunday morning about 6 o'clock. The negro was carrying a half gallon jar of whiskey on Bridge Street, and when the policeman halted him, he dashed and ran to the river and fell into a gully about 10 feet deep, where both he and his liquor were captured. He was given a hearing in Mayor J. D. Underwood's court and bound over to the Recorder's court where he was tried to-day and fined \$10 and cost.

Equinoctial Storms Take Heavy Toll

Toll in Human Lives May Exceed 300 Killed and Thousands of Cripples and Otherwise Injured While Property Damage Will Probably Mount Into Millions of Dollars. Felt in This State.

When the United States Weather Bureau announced Monday morning that a large storm area was forming over the State of Oklahoma, no one dreamed that this storm was so quickly to assume the vast proportions of great intensity that it did within the next few hours. The barometer steadily dropped and the cloud belt continued to spread like a tank of water turned loose in an open space. The warm humid air from the Gulf soon began the formation of violent thunder storms which developed into roaring tornadoes which dropped down here and there leveling vast regions of forests, and scattering farm buildings and vast city structures like they were mere toys in the path of super-giants. Lives were snuffed out, cattle, hogs and other livestock were blown away while telephone and telegraph communication was seriously interrupted as swaying poles toppled before the fury of the elements.

Alabama seems to have suffered the greatest toll where a number of twisters struck during the late afternoon Monday and Monday night. Many tragic pranks are reported to have been played by the terrific winds. Relief agencies are busy trying to get a check up of the dead and wounded, while hospitals and other public community buildings are crowded with victims of the series of storms.

Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky all suffered heavy losses from various storms and tornadoes Monday night and early Tuesday morning.

Rescue parties following up the deeds of the storm report some intensely tragic scenes. The camera is brought into play and a few of the snap-shots taken reads as follows: Seventy-five dwelling sprayed over the country-side as if scattered by a giant broom. The body of a farmer impaled on a barbed wire fence, torn almost to pieces by the fury of the wind. A crying father, with a weeping babe in arms, walking heart-broken down a road in search of his wife. The nude body of a woman, lying in the front yard of what had been her home. The body of a six-months-old infant, blown half a mile into a creek, where it drowned if it hadn't been killed en route. A stove in a tree. In one county a huge section one mile wide and six miles long was cut as smoothly as if a huge scythe had passed over it. In one community of ten houses all of these were completely blown away and all but one of the families had been obliterated. The sole survivor was the sheriff of the county who was left to tell the story.

These and many other gruesome stories are being told through the findings of press reporters and relief workers. There is no telling what some of these people experienced before they were finally engulfed in the jaws of death.

While Selma and North Carolina was remarkably free from the hazards of the tornado there was plenty of evidence that a great commotion was going on in the elements. Early Tuesday evening as the sky became overcast and as the sun lowered into the deepening clouds to the westward, a gentle breeze began to pull in from the southeast with an ever-increasing force until its fury was heard among the tree tops and over the wire lines. It was not hard for the average weather prognosticator to realize that there was an unrest in the elements which might prove devastating as lightning flashes were seen emitting through the dark nimbus clouds to the west while cumulus clouds swept across the face of the approaching disturbance where distant peals of thunder bore the semblance of the fading cries of a giant commotion coming from the depths of some far-away cavern. As one of the thunder squalls would pass over the wind would dip down in threatening madness, but the shower would soon move on to be closely followed by another at various intervals of the night and until early dawn when the rain area passed on to the northward and eastward.

Frauds Are Charged In Bailey Election

Attorney For Pritchard Files An Amended Petition On Eve of Senate Hearing.

Washington, March 20.—Sweeping charges of fraud and irregularities throughout North Carolina in the 1930 senatorial election were made Saturday in an amended petition filed with the senate elections committee for George M. Pritchard of Asheville, contesting the election of Senator Josiah W. Bailey, Democrat.

Robert H. McNeill, attorney for Pritchard, disclosed tonight that specific instances of fraud were cited in upward of 40 counties, while irregularities were alleged in virtually every county in the state.

The election committee, of which Senator Shortridge, Republican, California, is chairman, expects to take up the contest at an executive session Tuesday.

Among the specific counts of fraud charged, McNeill said, were illegal absentee voting and registration, election workers at the polls and in some instances coercion of voters.

Among the counties named in the fraud charges, McNeill said were: Swain, Buncombe, Cherokee, Ashe, Brunswick, Polk, Macon, Rowan, Alleghany, Wake, Graham, Clay, Haywood, Rutherford, McDowell, Burke, Cleveland, Gaston, Lincoln, Catawba, Watauga, Cabarrus, Davie, Guilford, Davidson, Richmond, Forsyth and Surry.

McNeill said copies of the petition and charges had been served upon Senator Bailey and given to Chairman Shortridge for the committee.

NOTE: Another Associated press news item sent in from Washington on above date included in the list of counties in which fraud had been perpetrated in the 1930 election, Johnston, Sampson, Alleghany, Pender, Person, Onslow, Randolph, Stanley, Transylvania, Orange, Durham, Wayne and perhaps others.

Singing Convention At Lizzie Mill Chapel

There will be a Singing Convention held at the Selma Lizzie Mill Easter Sunday, with the following choirs represented:

Lizzie Mill choir.
Robert Pittman choir of Kenly.
Bob Thomas with his Johnson Union choir.

The singing will begin about 10:30 in the morning and continue until 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

Mr. J. E. Norket will be leader of the Lizzie Mill Choir.

Other choirs are invited to take part in this convention.
Public cordially invited.

Vann Smith of Marshville, route 2, Union county, will purchase no nitrogen fertilizer this season as all of his crops will be planted on lespeza sod.

Seed sweet potatoes have been bedded in preparation for the new crop in Currituck county.

As the day began to take on a little age the wind moved around a little farther westward and steadily grew in intensity until we found ourselves amidst one of the most severe gales that has hit this state in many a day. Although frequent showers had come during the night and early morning, by noon time the wind was blowing up sand and dust from the ground and carrying it high into the heavens which became partially overcast with a dust cloud that remains for the entire afternoon. The wind probably reached its greatest fury from 12:00 noon until about 4:00 in the afternoon when it gradually began to subside.

While the lower Gulf and South Atlantic States were being swept by thunder storms, gales and terrific tornadoes, the north and west-central States were experiencing one of the worst snowstorms of the entire winter, although temperatures did not drop excessively low.

During the height of the gale Tuesday afternoon Mr. J. W. O'Neal's large two-story home in Selma was reported to be on fire. The Selma firemen together with the aid of the Smithfield Fire Department, did some heroic work as the threatening flames would spout through the roof of this home as they were fanned by howling winds of almost cyclonic proportions.

Clues To Robberies Paint Bad Picture

Findings of Police Officers and Private Detectives Disclose Many Bold and Daring Robberies Which Are Coupled With Bootlegging and Bad Women.

For some time it has been evident that the hand of the underworld was at work in Johnston County on a large scale.

The removal of an iron safe from the store of N. B. Snipes in Selma a few weeks ago when this store was broken into and the safe, together with its contents consisting of considerable cash and valuables, were carried away. This was closely followed by another bold robbery at the store of Claude Beasley at Bentonville when the postoffice safe and other items of merchandise in the store were carried away. Then, coupled to this was the robbery of the postoffice at Wilson's Mills when \$50 in money and about \$150 worth of other valuables were carried away. About the same time a box car was broken into at Wilson's Mills station yard and several bags of flour was taken which was consigned to Clair Wilson at that place.

Then came the robbery of the R. C. Canaday Drug Store at Four Oaks early last Monday morning when an iron safe containing \$225 in money and other valuable papers were stolen, together with a number of hams of meat. We understand that the safe was later recovered somewhere in the country beyond Four Oaks. The safe had been broken open and the cash taken but the other papers were unharmed. A lot of narcotics were also taken from the Canaday Drug Store at the same time.

It will be remembered that a few weeks ago several thousand wash rags were stolen from a box car parked on the Selma freight yards and later found in a ditch of water not far away.

All of the above and many more activities going on under cover have brought on a rigid investigation by the officers of the law with the assistance of private detectives representing the postoffice department and private interests, which have uncovered some astonishing operations by local residents who seem to have been engaged in carrying on their devilment on a large scale. Coupled with their thievery, it has developed that liquor and women have played a high hand in this campaign of corruption and criminal activities.

In an effort to identify someone in connection with the Four Oaks robbery Monday morning, some important clues have been run down which has brought a new revelation to our people. A Packard automobile with the title in the name of L. Johnson of Wilson, was investigated to find that this was a false representation, it is thought, as no such person could be found. This car was traced to the Pearce Garage in Selma where a storage room had been rented from the garage by Red Dixon for storing his car when it was not in use. Under the car, specially made compartments of zinc were discovered in which merchandise consisting of cigarettes, hosiery, automobile tubes, and two gallons of liquor were discovered. A ham was also in the car. Some of this merchandise answers the description of that stolen from the store at Bentonville. In the car also were tools of various kinds supposedly used for breaking safes and entering locked doors. Scars on the automobile indicated that some heavy object, probably an iron safe, had been transported on the bumper. Albert Earp and Arthur Cook have been arrested and are being held for further investigation. Other arrests were made Tuesday night and Wednesday in the efforts to round up a gang believed responsible for numerous robberies in this section. The new arrests include a reputed professional criminal.

A majority report favoring the bill was signed by two of the three members of the subcommittee which conducted extensive hearings. They were Senators Metcalf, Republican, Rhode Island, chairman, and Burkley, Democrat, Ohio, Senator Hatfield, Republican, West Virginia, dissented.

The majority said four per cent beer is not intoxicating and that the bill would decrease crime and unemployment, promote temperance, assist agriculture, benefit the national finances and be practical in operation.

Alamance county farmers are planting approximately 30,000 lbs. of comon and Kobe.

ell's criminal record discloses that he has organized several similar rings during his career, and the officers are confident that he is the ring leader.

The residence of John Mitchell, father of Major Mitchell, was raided immediately following the arrest of his son, and a quantity of stolen goods were found in his possession.

Following the identity of the car Mitchell was driving as that of Red Dixon, it became known that Dixon had fled with Red Stanley, of Four Oaks, another man with a criminal record, who is also thought to be implicated in the activities of the gang, and their arrest could not be made. Dixon's wife refused to permit the officers to search her home in spite of the fact that they were armed with a search warrant. Upon receiving the necessary authority from H. V. Rose, clerk of Superior court, they broke in the Dixon home and found a large quantity of stolen property. The homes of Bertha Barnett and Lelia Sherman were raided and in addition to stolen goods several cases of high explosives, such as used in safe cracking, were found. These two women were placed in jail along with Mitchell.

A safe belonging to Stanley and Dixon was found in the Mitchiner Grocery Store in Selma, and it was opened Wednesday night by an expert from Raleigh. Nothing of importance was found in the safe and it appeared to have been recently rifled. Officers believe that Dixon and Stanley had sufficient time to secure their private papers before they fled for a Northern State. Mitchiner's grocery store was also raided and a quantity of the stolen goods were found in his possession. He is said to have purchased them from Dixon, not knowing that they were stolen. No warrant has been sworn out for his arrest yet.

Two bolts of cloth and other articles of merchandise have been found at a packhouse of Kirby Hughes about two miles from Selma. These were carried to the sheriff's office where they were later identified as a part of the loot from Claude Beasley's store at Bentonville.

It is understood that up to this time there are something like 100 people involved in this investigation, either directly or indirectly, and new clues are developing daily.

Bill To Provide Beer Gets First Approval

Senate Subcommittee Approves Measure and Sends It to Full Committee For Vote—4 Per Cent Limit Set.

Washington, March 20.—A bill to permit 4 per cent beer reported favorably by a senate subcommittee Saturday with a majority contending it would "promote temperance and decrease crime" while a minority held it would "add to enforcement difficulties."

The action laid the issue before the full manufactures committee, which is expected soon to decide whether to report it to the senate.

The measure, sponsored by Senator Bingham, Republican, Connecticut, would amend the Volstead act to legalize the manufacture of beer containing not more than 4 per cent of alcohol by volume. It provides for sale only by brewers and dealers in the original package or case except that the beer might be served in bottles by "legitimate hotels and restaurants."

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