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When old timers recall the noise and excitement that once characterized Fourth of July observances in New Bern, they invariably think of Leon Cohen.

As emotional as he was shrewd, the wiry, bald-headed Jewish merchant had explosive qualities that made the sky rockets, firecrackers and Roman candles he peddled seem like ineffective duds.

In fact, we're convinced—in retrospect—that local kids got a bigger bang out of bargaining with Cohen for lower prices than they did setting a match to their purchased wares.

Certainly his upheavals, a fitting forerunner to the atomic power of a later day, were sufficiently dynamic to bring all the kids in town flocking to his cluttered store on Middle street.

Every sale had the same pattern and it not unlikely that Leon would have been woefully disappointed if the transaction had gone off smoothly and uneventfully.

A boy would come in and inquire about the price of this or that. Quick as a flash, the fidgety and fretful shopkeeper would haul the item from off a shelf or from under the counter, toss it on the showcase, and state the amount of remuneration he expected.

The kid would register indignation at the loftiness of the price, and start out of the store. Cohen would call him back, go into the preliminaries of his stack-blowing routine, and whack off a few cents.

Again the would-be purchaser would find fault with the price, and again he would pretend he was leaving. Leon would let out a yelp, clutch at the portion of his cranium where hair had long since departed, and jump up and down like a Jack-in-the-box that had forgotten how to put on brakes.

If there weren't too many other customers waiting, Cohen would haggle indefinitely—and his frenzy would mount with each passing moment. In the end, he always made the sale at a reduction—but not until he had given a marvelous performance.

As one of the village brats who prided themselves on pulling a fast deal on the merchant each time they entered the store, it never occurred to us that he might be making a profit or at least breaking even.

For all of his acting like a mad man on the loose, it is doubtful that his temper (real or feigned) ever swayed him from getting a fair return on his merchandise.

He managed to stay in business for years and years. Eventually, he retired and moved to Baltimore. Somehow, New Bern has never been the same since he closed shop and departed with a quietness and serenity that was hardly in keeping with the stormy business career that had made him a familiar figure to juveniles here.

Although we didn't get to see him, we understand that he was a recent visitor in our midst. Time—they say—has mellowed him remarkably. Neatly dressed and soft-spoken, he bore a little resemblance outwardly to the hectic man he once was.

Maybe Cohen never was as explosive as he appeared to be. The chances are he discovered that showmanship paid rich dividends, especially when you are dealing with a crop of youngsters who figured they were smarter than everybody else—and most especially smarter than Leon Cohen.

One of our favorite boyhood chums—Leon Mann—used to work for Cohen. It was his first job, and he'll tell you today that the Jewish merchant treated him kindly.

Years later, when Mann got married, it was in the midst of the depression. He didn't send out invitation to the wedding, and he



SOLVE THE MYSTERY—If you're a good detective, and getting along in years, you may be able to identify someone in this photograph. Officials of New Bern's public schools furnished us the picture, hoping to find out what class

from the distance past this is. Some of the members look impish enough to drive any teacher wild. Could one of them be you?

New Bern Lags in Camping Despite Nature's Blessings

New Bern, in its quest for plants and factories, had sadly overlooked North Carolina's multi-million dollar boys and girls camp industry.

This despite the fact that here, in land of enchanting waters, are natural advantages that other towns look upon with envy. Shakespeare or somebody else once said that familiarity breeds contempt, which explains in part why we have done so little with so much.

With the exception of Camp Croatan—a Boy Scout operation that took over the neglected remains of a Camp Ki-Ro that flourished a third of a century ago—we have folded our hands and let others capitalize on the understandable joy that youngsters get from vacationing in the great outdoors.

To fully realize how much we've missed the boat, we need only to consider the notable success of Camp Sea Gull, Camp Caroline and Camp Don Lee to the east of us in adjoining Pamlico county. These operations mean more financially to New Bern than we are aware of—certainly more than we deserve.

With all due respect to Pamlico county residents, they like New Bern have depended on others to provide most of the initiative for camp projects that cropped up in our area. However, it should be noted that gifts of land in Pamlico by citizens of that county helped

the cause in no small measure.

Camp Sea Gull, in particular, has been responsible for a heavy influx of visitors from near and distant points. For example, we had occasion to talk with four parents in a local restaurant this week who came from Richmond to enroll their children in the Sea Gull group.

Having seen to it that their youngsters were situated, they came back to New Bern, toured Tryon Palace and other historic spots, and spent two days and nights here.

Their case is no isolated instance. The same thing has happened repeatedly and will continue to happen. Thus, in spite of ourselves, we are reaping a reward from the efforts of others.

New Bern, of course, isn't by itself in neglecting the possibilities of cashing in legitimately on the ever-increasing desire and need for camps. Elsewhere in our Nature-blessed coast country, other communities are equally negligent in giving the matter serious consideration.

Although this particular discourse deals with the juvenile angle, it is not unreasonable to assume that thousands of adults would jump at the chance to do a bit of camping each summer, too, if facilities were available.

Citizens who live in western North Carolina, we hate to admit, seem to be far more alert than us in knowing a good thing when they see it. Hence, they have long since gone all out to establish not a few but literally hundreds of camps

in the Land of the Sky.

For example, there are more than 50 such camps with a 100-mile radius of Asheville. They range in size from large organizations with as many as 65 permanent buildings to camps purposely limited to small groups.

This is certainly a contributing factor in the attractions of millions of vacationists to the Asheville area each year. Admittedly, we don't have mountain peaks to lure outsiders. On the other hand, you won't find an ocean at Asheville's doorstep either, affording surf and sand and fishing that borders on the sensational.

We could well use someone with the get up and go of C. Walton Johnson, who is founder and director of Camp Sequoyah for Boys at Weaverville. A pioneer in summer camp development, he has been shrewd enough to do a detailed survey of North Carolina's camping picture, with assistance of other members of the Camp Directors Association.

His survey shows that annual gross receipts of the camps exceeds \$2,500,000, and that in addition, parents spend countless thousands of dollars annually by vacationing near their children.

More significant is the fact that many are so attracted that they purchase summer or permanent homes. Since such is the case, it can certainly be assumed that any industry that New Bern hopes to land would also be interested in the fact that we do or do not have ample facilities for campers. A town with ready recreation at hand

is apt to get industry's nod over competing towns—other attractions being equal.

"The facts and figures concerning the material and economic assets of these camps," says Johnson, "are greatly overshadowed by the cultural and character building assets."

Following this line of thought, he adds, "A good summer camp is primarily and distinctly an educational institution. It is an out-of-doors school, which educates boys and girls in the fine art of living at their best."

There is wide variety among the camps operating in the Old North State, and age groups extend from six to 18 years. Some have a single season of six weeks or eight weeks, others feature a series of two-week terms. Short sessions in early June or late August have been added to many programs.

Among some of the specialized camps that have done particularly well in a restricted field are the Transylvania Music Camp at Brevard, Camp Sky Ranch at Blowing Rock for physically-handicapped children, and Camp Cherryfield near Brevard for adults.

Development of summer camps in North Carolina began shortly before World War I, and has continued steadily since that time. However, the biggest growth in camps has been since World War II.

Those already in existence have expanded, while new ones are cropping up all over. All over, that is, except in our own region. Despite

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