

THE NEW BERN MIRROR

Published Every Friday at 111 King Street,
New Bern, N. C., by the Sole Owner

J. GASKILL McDANIEL Editor and Publisher

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

One Year \$2.50 Six Months \$1.25
Entered as second-class mail at New Bern April 4, 1958,
under the act of March 3, 1879.

NOW AS ALWAYS

Most of today's television commercials are the last word in absurdity. It is no credit to America's intelligence that millions of people take them seriously, but such gullibility is nothing new.

Long before TV or radio, the general public was easy to fool with a clever line of chatter. Every medicine show that visited New Bern did a rushing business, and what happened here was duplicated elsewhere in cities, towns and hamlets.

At that, the spieler who peddled snake oil from the not so glamorous surroundings of an improvised stage was a piker compared with the pitchmen who simply set up a tripod at the corner of Middle and Pollock streets.

Unlike the medicine show salesman, the sidewalk operator provided no free entertainment other than his own wisecracks. He started with nothing, so to speak, and saw to it that those who did business with him ended up with nothing.

Offhand, you might expect his customers to be the dumb and illiterate, and many of them did fall in that category. However, also swindled quite neatly were some of New Bern's leading citizens, including a number of businessmen who became obsessed with the notion that they could outsmart a gyp artist at his own game.

On one occasion, a particularly smooth manipulator arrived in New Bern under what would appear to be discouraging circumstances. It was mid-afternoon on a sultry summer day, and Middle and Pollock streets were all but deserted.

Undismayed, he stood up in the rumble seat of his yellow sports roadster and started waving a \$20 bill. There weren't too many \$20 bills floating around town in those days, so the two small boys stopped and gazed up at him in awe and astonishment.

Naturally, the pitchman knew he wasn't going to reap any money from the empty pockets of the deeply impressed urchins. However, they were in valuable to him as the first components of a crowd that quickly gathered from nowhere. Before you could have said, "Hello, sucker," he was surrounded by curious New Bernians ready to be had.

"Who will give me \$10 for this \$20 bill?" the stranger called out. A \$10 bill popped up out of the crowd, and the sale was completed in a matter of seconds. And, when the pitchman offered the \$10 spot for an investment of \$5, he had no trouble disposing of it.

Then the \$5 bill went for a dollar bill, the dollar for a half, and the half for a quarter. Continuing, the visiting philanthropist parted with the quarter for a dime, and tossed the dime into the crowd with a magnificent flourish.

By this time, shopkeepers were running to the scene like a hungry dog overtaking a ham bone. Everybody and his brother had forgotten about the oppressive heat. It wasn't too hot to get something for nothing while the getting was good, and the gold rush was on.

With perfect timing, the swindler started selling bars of soap for a half dollar, with a dollar bill attached. All the while he was talking up a storm. The more he wisecracked, the more soap he sold.

His supply of soap exhausted, he came up with a batch of lovely pocket watches that glistened with dazzling splendor in the beams of a most cooperative sun. The watches were worth fifty bucks apiece, he said, but this was an introductory offer and he had been authorized to sacrifice them at the ridiculously low price of just \$20.

Saving \$30 was even better than buying a \$20 bill for \$10, so the watches went like wildfire. Most of the purchasers already had a watch, but this was too good a chance to pass up. Besides, these watches that the stranger had were crammed full of jewels, and the case was a thing of splendor.

In the space of a half hour the swindler had cleaned up and cleared out. When last seen, he was headed across Neuse river bridge in that sleek yellow sports roadster. Left behind were the suckers, with watches that would turn green with the morrow and stop ticking forever.

Historical Gleanings

—By—

FRANCES B. CLAYPOOLE
and
ELIZABETH MOORE

PATENTS GRANTED BY STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA, CRAVEN COUNTY, NOW PAMLICO COUNTY

1782, Samuel Lawson, 50 acres on the East side of Goose Creek, beginning at James Brinson's line. Alexander Martin, Governor. P1.

1782, James Brinson, 300 acres on the East side of Upper Broad Creek, beginning at Solomon Edwards' post, near Goose Creek. Alexander Martin, Governor. P1.

1782, Joshua Fulcher, 400 acres on the East side of Beard's Creek, beginning at the head of Cedar Branch, to Pamlico Road. Alexander Martin, Governor. P1.

1782, John Carruthers, 250 acres on the East side of Wayne's Creek, beginning at West side of Long Point, and to an oak on the North side of Ditch Creek, to Swan Creek. Alexander Martin, Governor. P1.

1782, John Carruthers, 100 acres, beginning at the mouth of a small bay on the East side of Table of Pines on the North side of Bonner's Bay. Alexander Martin, Governor. P1.

1782, James Clayton, 500 acres on the sound, beginning to North of Dead Woman's Hammock at Chinquapin stake, the head of a small Bay South end of Solomon Leath, to the sound, along etc., to the beginning. Alexander Martin, Governor. P1.

1782, George Carpenter, 300 acres on East side of Dawson's Creek in the pocosin. Alexander Martin, Governor. P1.

1782, William Hall, 100 acres on the West side of Goose Creek, beginning at a pine on the North side of Balahack. Alexander Martin, Governor. P1.

1784, John Tillman, 840 acres on the North side of Bonner's Bay, beginning at the pasture fence at head of Coxes Creek, to an oak on Youpon Hammock, down the river to three live oaks on Round Hammock, to the head of Fishing Bay, to Cages Point at the mouth of Bay River, along the sound side to the mouth of Maw Bay, to the mouth of Maw Creek. Alexander Martin, Governor. P1.

1784, Maxamillian Fulsher, 350 acres on the South side of Bay River, beginning in Wharton's line, to Moor's Creek, right against the Chappel, up the creek, near Moor's line near the bridge. Alexander Martin, Governor. P1.

Village Verses

A SISTER'S LAMENT

Dad has his worries, and so does Mother,
But my biggest worry is a little brother;
He teases my dolls, and he pulls out their hair,
And he scatters my playthings everywhere.
When I want to read, he makes lots of noise—
An awful nuisance, I think, are boys;
When I skip rope, he's in the way,
And you should hear the things he'll say.
He's much to small to ride my bike,
Or do the other things I like;
And yet, each day from sun to sun
It seems he's sure to spoil my fun.
With him around, my life's a mess,
And still, this much I must confess:
Just like my dad, and just like my mother,
He owns my heart, my little brother.
—JGMCD.

1784, Jesse Fulsher, 80 acres on the South side of Bay River, joining the land where Draper lives, beginning at John Proctor's beginning tree a little below Little Flee Point. Alexander Martin, Governor. P1.

1785, Thomas Graves Fonvielle, 90 acres on the South side of Goose Creek, beginning corner of Furnifold Green's land. Richard Caswell, Governor. P2.

1786, John Carruthers, 200 acres on the North side of Lower Broad Creek, beginning dogwood Benjamin Whitaker's and Joshua Fulsher's corner on the East side of Spicer's Swamp. Richard Caswell, Governor. P2.

1786, John Beasley, 100 acres on West side of Goose Creek. Richard Caswell, Governor. P2.

1786, John Carruthers, 400 acres

on the South side of Bonner's Bay and East side of Wain's Creek, beginning at a lightwood stump at William Carruthers and John Carruthers and McCotter's corner, to Mall's Gut, that makes out of Wain's Creek, down said creek to a live oak at the mouth of said creek and Bonner's Bay. Richard Caswell, Governor. P2.

1786, William Clayton, 640 acres between Neuse and Bay Rivers on West side of Lower Broad Creek, beginning at Thomas Delamar's. Richard Caswell, Governor. P2.

(Continued on Page 5)

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