



The NEW BERN MIRROR

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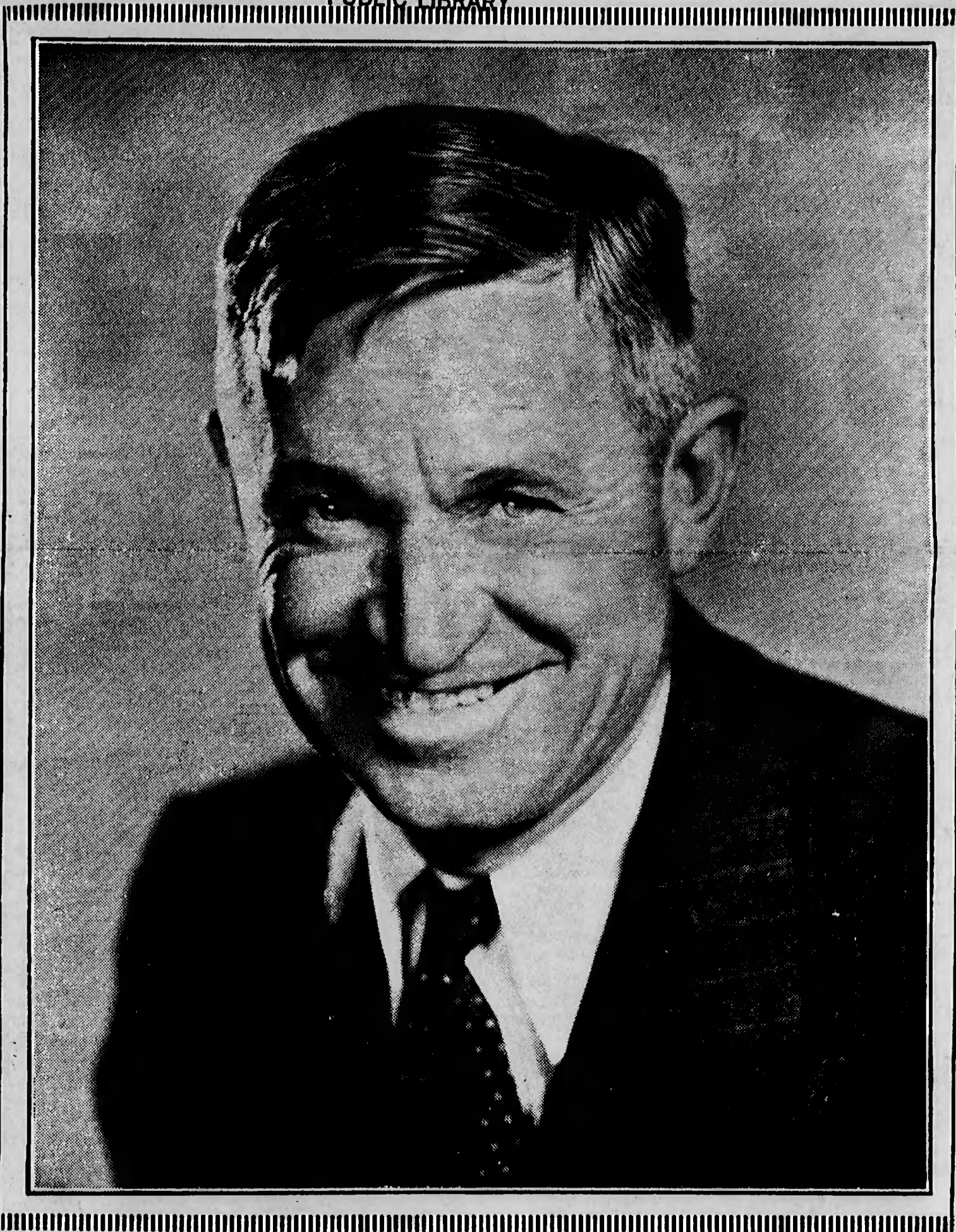
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Our thanks to S. M. (Sam) Jones for mailing us a column by Will Rogers, written as a follow up to an earlier column in which the famous humorist kidded Congress for granting New Bern a \$260,000 Post Office.

It was back in the days of the Great Depression, and Rogers had suggested that our home town Congressman, Charles L. Abernethy, Sr., pulled a fast one in getting such a huge (at that time) outlay of money for a city as small and inconspicuous as ours.

Will, killed with Wiley Post in a plane crash while the two were crossing Alaska, didn't live to see it, but eventually New Bern's combination Post Office, Federal Courthouse and Custom House actually proved inadequate for Uncle Sam's requirements.

Anyhow, the wisecracking columnist, whose most remembered words, "I never met a man I didn't like," are carved on his memorial stone, discovered after the first column appeared all over the world that an aroused New Bernian can be an exceedingly indignant critter.

"Well sir I like to be confused about a town or place, and ask about it," wrote Will. "For every guy that lives within coon dog sound will send in his historical version of the place.

"New Bern, N. C. (or is it just South Carolina?) Well I wrote a few weeks ago about em getting a Post Office costing \$260,000. Well that will house an awful lot of chain letters and oil prospectuses, and I figured the boys had had something on the Democrats in Washington, and reached in and got quite a whack of loot money.

"And I complimented their Congressman. I figured that he was a man that Al Capone could use some time. But now after cotton sacks full of mail, I find I have libelled New Bern. (Either North or South Carolina its an old historical town, and if I printed all these letters it would be more historical, for its got more different kinds of early history than Greta Garbo.)

"There is two things you musent stir up, one is a gentle looking old Jersey bull, and the other is a southern historian. Now I am not belittling em, for I come from below that corn pone and chitlin belt myself.

"But every one of us write our own history. If it sounds better the way we want it than the way it might have been why that don't stop us anymore than an amber light. So don't send me any more historical sketches of New Bern. All I want to know was it settled by Columbus and the Italians, Columbus and the Spaniards or Al Smith and Pocohontas.

"Governor William Tryon, who was called by my people (the Cherokees) "The wolf of Carolina," well if he mistreated the Cherokees he goes right in the dog house with Andrew Jackson with me. One historian says he took all the money and built a palace there. This looks like this old boy left some descendants there.

"Now lets see what the next

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HE KIDDED US—Back in 1933, Will Rogers gave New Bern world wide publicity (see Through The Looking Glass) when he mentioned our town briefly in one of his daily columns, and for good measure devoted a full Sunday column to a not so gentle spoofing of things dear to our heart. Hundreds of newspapers carried his flippant remarks about our first State Capital to countless millions of readers. A few New

Bernians didn't appreciate the much beloved humorist's wisecracks on this occasion, but like most of his writing it not only caused chuckles but punctured our vanity sufficiently to bring us down out of the clouds of self esteem. Certainly, if Will Rogers could needle kings and Presidents, and make them love it, singling us out was a compliment rather than an insult.

