

The NEW BERN

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The man who first said familiarity breeds contempt was an observant individual. So commonplace have space flights become that few New Bernians exhibited excitement Sunday when Apollo 10 headed for the moon.

It is safe to speculate the launching drew far less local television astronauts making the trip, but proof that earthlings have strong faith in the efficiency of the nation's lunar program.

Duke Ellington, whose 70th birthday was celebrated at the White House on April 29, is fondly remembered by folks in our town who have passed their own 50th milestone. His lasting fame was established a third of a century or more ago, when he composed *Solitude*, *Mood Indigo*, and our favorite, *Sophisticated Lady*.

It was hard to come by 75 cents in the Depression Thirties, but the younger crowd along the rippling Neuse and tranquil Trent saved up their nickels and dimes to buy every phonograph record the Duke made. Listening to his band on radio was as much a part of living as eating, sleeping and breathing.

Playing for Presidents is nothing new for Ellington. Truman, Ike and Johnson turned to him on numerous occasions to entertain notable visitors, including royalty, and he was never a disappointment.

For our part, we'll always be glad that Donald Smith, during his distinguished reign as New Bern High school's incomparable music director, had the NBHS choir feature the Duke's hauntingly beautiful melodies for what to us was the best Spring Concert ever produced by Smith.

Ellington, a deeply religious man, has leaned heavily toward sacred music in recent years. However, in addition to appearances before church groups he and his band are in heavy demand for night club and dance bookings.

The Duke doesn't need the money, he's well fixed, but he can't resist the lifelong urge to do magic things with a piano for people who appreciate his God given talents. He doesn't steer clear of the hinterlands either, as is evidenced by a recent string of one-nighters in Iowa and Indiana.

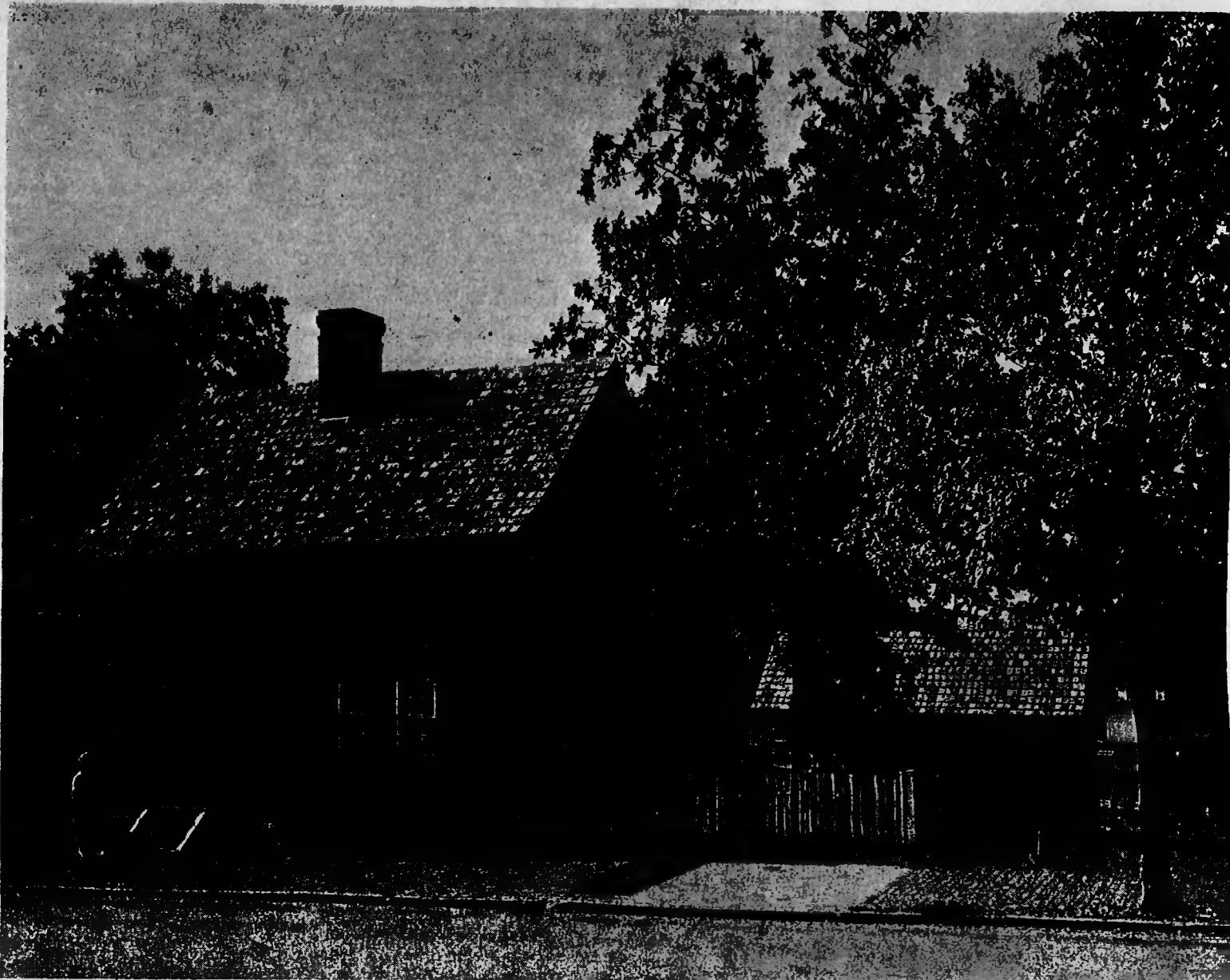
Ellington is tired, but for him retirement is unthinkable. Music as much as blood flows through his aging arteries, and nothing, not even his sell-out concerts at Carnegie Hall, is as close to his heart as a band stand, and a floor filled with happy couples.

On second thought, perhaps the sacred concerts are more satisfying to him. When first asked to play at San Francisco's Grace Cathedral, on September 16, 1965, he was fearful that it was out of his realm, and asked for time to "bolster up my eligibility."

Six months after he had been approached by church officials while holding fourth in a small waterfront nightclub, the Duke felt he was ready to try. That concert had as its theme the first four words of the Bible-- "In the beginning God."

Writing sacred music was a

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NEW BERNIANS WHO APPRECIATE HISTORIC CHARM
WILL FIND OLD SALEM WELL WORTH VISITING.