

YOUR WILMINGTON TODAY

Study Of Past Mistakes Used To Chart Future

Wilmington, from every reliable indication, is today on the threshold of prosperous and sound economic growth unparalleled in its long history.

By KEN R. NOBLE, Staff Writer

A community's economic machinery knows no such thing as a standstill. Its wheels must go one way or another—forward or backward.

No more striking proof of this thesis exists than in the record of Wilmington during the decade and a-half following the end of World War I—a 15-year-period that saw a city potentially North Carolina's largest and most prosperous fall by the wayside in the competition for the life-blood of any community: the wage-earner's dollar.

It has been argued, but not convincingly, that the nationwide depression paralyzed Wilmington's economic growth.

The record of other North Carolina cities, and other cities throughout the entire South, give lie to the argument. Witness the phenomenal growth of Charlotte, of Greensboro, and the whole Piedmont sector.

Why did Wilmington slip back, and back and back until it took on an air of a dying community? Why did a city—once the largest in the state and with potentialities unmatched by any other community in North Carolina—decline to virtual stagnation?

To learn the answers—and they

are many—to this perplexing, and challenging question, a small group of Wilmington businessmen three years ago began to do some fact-finding. The object of that fact-finding was to make certain that what happened to their community a quarter of a century ago, after the first World War, wouldn't happen again when World War II came to an end.

What these men discovered was interesting. And alarming; alarming because of the startling parallel existing despite the lapse of 25 years. Wilmington, in the midst of unprecedented prosperity in 1944, was in almost exactly the same position it found itself, economically, in 1920!

Its banks were loaded with

money—war-brought money; money accumulated in savings for want of other outlets. Money to be spent. But where and how? Money-Filled Banks

In the first year or two following World War I, when war-accumulated cash began to seek investment fields, where did it go? Much of it went to New York and the stock exchange. There it merged with millions and then billions that poured in from around the country to become a part of the dizzy speculative era that ended in October, 1929.

That portion of it which remained at home—and a goodly sum did remain at home—drifted off in deflated real estate values and day-to-day living expenses when the depression struck its hardest in the early Thirties.

Not much good did Wilmington's millions in war-time wages and profits do the community.

These sobering facts were deeply impressed upon the group of Wilmington men who, in 1944, comprised the City-County Planning board appointed by the City council and the Board of County commissioners under an Enabling act introduced by J. E. L. Wade in the State senate in 1943.

Composed of C. D. Hogue, chairman, H. A. Marks, W. E. Curtis, C. B. Parmele, W. R. Lane, Addison Hewlett, A. C. Nichols, J. G. Thornton and Hargrove Bellamy, the group began to think of post-war Wilmington even while thousands of dollars in World War II wages and profits were pouring into the banks and building and loans every day.

Could it happen again? Hadn't people learned a lesson? Maybe. But that was leaving it to chance. And chance has a habit of leaving a lot of sorry bag-holders.

The decision was made, in its rough outlines, that steps must be

taken to prevent a repetition of the debacle of the Twenties and Thirties.

And out of that decision grew a small organization: The Wilmington Associates. Nothing formal, and nothing complicated. Its ranks were open to any business or professional man who professed an interest in his community. The initial meeting, called by Mr. Hogue, was attended by 28 men, each a successful business or professional man, and each financially able to back up his convictions with a substantial check if the right formula could be found.

One Common Bond

This group had one thing in common—one bond that was to hold it together and see the idea take tangible form: that if Wilmington were to avoid the mistakes it and its citizens made after World War I, the corrective measures would have to start right here at home. Translated into still simpler language, if the money Wilmingtonians had accumulated during the war was to mean anything to the community, the bulk of it had to remain here and be put to work in the economic arteries of the community.

How to do it? And who was to do it?

The Associates were convinced that the future welfare of the community lay in development of its economic resources. But what resources did the community possess?

First, by virtue of the war boom which brought thousands of newcomers to work at the shipyards and on military reservations hereabouts, the city had acquired, through federal agencies, a tremendous amount of low-cost public housing. Interpreted in economic terms, low-cost housing means well-sheltered employees, something every modern employer, in individual or corporation, wants today.

Secondly, nature has blessed Wilmington with a temperate climate—the sort of a climate where heating bills don't eat up a sizeable hunk of take-home pay, and the kind of climate where a man, if he's so inclined, can spend his leisure hours, or a part of them, growing table vegetables and maybe have a few chickens. Its all very economic. And very simple.

Thirdly, Wilmington has, for all of its geographical isolation in relation to other trade centers of North and South Carolina, excellent transportation facilities. There's the river with its ocean-going ships; there are two major railroads; there is a network of fine highways linking the city with north, south and west. And, again thanks to the federal government in this coming Air Age, there's the Blumenthal airport, largest and one of the finest airfields in America.

Fourth, the war-brought industries had trained a tremendous pool of skilled labor, the majority of which lives within a 50-mile radius of Wilmington.

Those are resources. Those are the resources Wilmington had—and has—to offer industry.

Community Resources Taking stock of the community's resources, the Wilmington Associates set out to learn if anyone would be interested. The first inquiry was conducted by the Tide Water Power company, through its industrial division. One trip to the New York area produced several promising leads. Harriss Newman, attorney, and currently serving on the city council, found other leads.

There were plenty of firms and plenty of businessmen who heard the story and who became interested. Their reaction was something on this order: "Yes, I'm interested. I want to

move out of the industry-congested North, and I've been considering the South. But what can you offer me in the way of a plant? In the way of floor space?"

The answer had to be "Nothing."

Wilmington, being a city essentially engaged in distribution and, to some extent, in agriculture, had no factory buildings, no large inclosed spaces to house even the smaller industries which could produce here.

Too, these emissaries seeking new business for their home community reported back another factor: A lot of Southern cities and towns had pretty much the same idea about attracting industries to their communities. And, in many instances, it was learned, part of the lure were promises of good buildings, low taxes and other inducements.

To meet this competition, and to insure that Wilmington would not be left at the post when the race began in earnest to attract Southern-minded industrialists, the Associates met again, this time to find out just how far the community wanted to go in the matter of providing factory buildings and floor space.

The talk stage was past. Industries wanted to come to Wilmington. The community's resources looked attractive to the far-sighted businessman who has learned the hard way in the past decade or two that his employees want more out of life than just a job.

But what would Wilmington offer?

To answer that, Wilmington Associates, never more than an informal discussion group, organized a state-chartered corporation, Industrial Properties Inc. Object: the initiative and where-with-all to provide suitable physical plants for reputable businesses or industries wanting to locate in Wilmington.

Tomorrow—How Industrial Properties, Inc., operates, and what it has accomplished thus far.

Ship Movements

IN PORT Freighters

Mary Pickersgill, from New York, at Wilmington Terminal Warehouse company loading tobacco, steel and other cargo for France, Cape Fear Shipping company agents.

George Sharswood, Liberty ship, from Hampton Roads, loading full cargo steel and pre-fabricated houses for France, Cape Fear Shipping company agents.

INWARD ROUND Tankers

Spottsylvania for Cape Fear terminal with cargo gasoline for Gulf Oil corporation. Due today.

Jacob Thompson for Cape Fear terminal with cargo kerosene and furnace oil for Republic Oil company. Due Feb. 5.

C. D. Watson for Cape Fear terminal with cargo gasoline and kerosene for Arkansas Oil company. Due Feb. 5.

SCHEDULED DEPARTURES Freighters

American Scout from docks of North Carolina Shipbuilding company for trial run today.

PAY INCREASED

GREENSBORO, Jan. 30.—(P)—Employees at the Greensboro plant of the Carter Fabrics corporation today stood to receive an aggregate total of approximately \$140,000 annually in increased pay as the result of a general 15 per cent wage increase announced here yesterday by W. J. Carter, corporation president.

HITLER BOMB PLOT KNOWN TO ALLIES

WASHINGTON, Jan. 30.—(P)—President Truman yesterday nominated Commodore Merlin O'Neill of Port Republic, Md., to be assistant commandant of the United States Coast Guard for a term of four years. The appointment carries the rank of rear admiral. O'Neill would succeed Rear Admiral L. T. Chalker whose term expired Jan. 1.

The president also sent to the senate the formal nomination of Wilson W. Wyatt, former Louisville Mayor and now housing expediter, to be national housing administrator.

EGG GRADING COURSE RALEIGH, Jan. 30.—(P)—A three-day grading course sponsored by the state department of agriculture and the N. C. State College Poultry division began today.

A German general told interrogators that the Vatican was informed indirectly by Adm. Wilhelm Canaris, chief of the German counter intelligence, through Papal offices in Vienna. Canaris later was executed by the Nazis.

Others reported to have known of the plot in advance included Field Marshal Baron Carl Gustaf Mannerheim of Finland, Marshal Pietro Badoglio of Italy, Gen. Andorka of Hungary and two De Gaullists who operated out of Budapest in the guise of Vichy government officers.

Mannerheim, Badoglio, Andorka and the two De Gaullists were named in one of the secret documents as members of a world wide anti-Hitler organization masterminded by Canaris.

DISCONTINUE USE

RALEIGH, Jan. 30.—(P)—Revenue commissioner Edwin Gill said today use of neck labels on malt beverage bottles as evidence of tax payments would be discontinued April 1, and tax crowns would be used instead.

NATIONAL AIRLINES

flies to NEW ORLEANS

10 hrs. 30 min.

For information and reservations call 2-2821.

Ticket Office: Blumenthal Airport

The Buccaneer Route

O'Neill Named Assistant Coast Guard Commandant

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SETTLE CLAIMS

RALEIGH, Jan. 30.—(P)—State OPA headquarters announced today that nine eastern North Carolina retail clothing stores had settled damage claims for over-ceiling charges to purchasers of wearing apparel by paying a total of \$1,363.42 to the U. S. treasury.

When a Cold Strikes Strike Back with OTC for COLD DISCOMFORTS Its Liquid - 35¢ Per Bottle

Quality Jewelry AND GIFTS B. GURR, Jeweler 264 N. Front St.

100 PROOF Liqueur SOUTHERN COMFORT SOUTHERN COMFORT CORPORATION, SAINT LOUIS 2, MO.

Ship Movements IN PORT Freighters Mary Pickersgill, from New York, at Wilmington Terminal Warehouse company loading tobacco, steel and other cargo for France, Cape Fear Shipping company agents.

SALE End of Month Clearance DRESSES \$5.00 Values To \$24.98 A Scoop in SUITS \$18.40 Only American ingenuity and production could produce suits of such outstanding quality and value as these.

Queen City Trailways 219 Cowan St. Wilmington, N. C. Announce New Schedule Effective February 1, 1946 Between Wilmington, Carolina Beach and Fort Fisher

E. O. M. CLEARANCE SWEATERS \$3.00 Regularly To \$6.98 We wind up the month of January with final clean sweep of our sweater stock. Cardigans and slip-overs, in assorted colors and sizes.

Legend: SL Short Loop KM Kures Beach Mail MF Daily except Saturday & Sunday LL Long Loop EDM Ethyl Dow Mail MS Daily except Sunday CM Carolina Beach Mail SY Shipyard Workers & others Boldface figures denote PM.

214 N. FRONT ST.