

The Old Court House Speaks

(Continued from Page One) before he came again, if possible, there should arise a building of which Williamsburg could boast. Parson Earle, rector of St. Paul's Parish, public-spirited citizen that he was, sent my joints two feet square from his estate at Bandon, drawn by toiling oxen on wagons with solid wooden wheels over the fifteen miles of rough and perilous roads. From Cullen Pollock's swamp at Balgrae came the six huge pines, solid light-wood, from which my interior columns were hewn, and Mr. Hewes sent skilled craftsmen from his shipyard on the water front to fashion the dental blocks for my cornices and carve the panelling for the Council Chamber on my upper floor. From my mother country came the bricks for my walls, as attested by a receipt in the Museum in Mr. Corbin's house here, metal workers wrought by hand the spikes and locks, and the adze-marked surfaces of the wood are still crisp and clear where protected from the sun and rain of years, while the deep-worn undulations of my great stone steps bear silent witness to the passing centuries. When completed I was a far cry from the spreading branches of the great oak tree under which the first Assembly met at Nixonton in what is now Pasquotank County in 1665, as well as from the room where in 1708 the Assembly was held at Captain John Hecklefield's home in Perquimans, and how well the builders met the challenge of Colonel Byrd is best told by the thousands who visit me each year and proclaim that both in size, in architectural beauty and in my natural setting I fully equal if I do not far surpass my compatriot built three years later and now standing on Duke of Gloucester Street in Williamsburg. And was I proud! Proud of the beauty and symmetry of my lines, of the strength and sturdiness of my construction, and proud of the people who had labored for me and of the trust imposed upon me to meet the responsibilities of the future as my more humble, but stout-hearted 'to-bacco barn' ancestor had done in the past.

'Twas a sad turn of fate, however, and grieves me still to think upon, when my old friend, Cullen Pollock, who had been one of the commissioners appointed for my construction, was brought to trial within my halls for sedition against the colony in the time of the Revolution and lodged in the old goal which still stands behind me, and from which Samuel Johnston, true and loyal friend, had him released and carried him to his home at "Hayes." I knew he was innocent of the charge and that his neutrality was being grossly exaggerated into active participation in seditious acts.

And, now, surely 'tis Sam Johnston I see, being rowed across the creek from "Hayes" to meet his friend,

Joseph Hewes, and Jimmy Iredell will soon be having the shutters taken down for the day from the Customs House across the street ere he, too, comes over to join Sam and Joe. My, my, what my old eyes have seen and my old ears have heard through these years, as well as the tales of wisdom, valor, bickering and duelling recounted to me from a more distant past. 'Twas on this very spot that Charles Eden, Royal Governor for whom the town is named, presided over the destiny of the Colony, and here that that swashbuckling pirate, Edward Teach, or Blackbeard, defied the laws of God and man; here also that Richard Everard and George Burrington, both Royal Governors, fought a famous duel, and when the bounds allotted to me comprised a full six acres, my broad lands afforded space for every phase of community life. For many years the bell in my old tower tolled a knell for the passing of members of the House of Hanover or pealed forth the joyous tidings of a royal birth, acknowledging allegiance as loyal subjects of Crown and Mother Country; through six conflicts the call to arms has resounded through my halls; I have known the inauguration of every President of these United States; President Monroe and governors from the time of Josiah Martin have spoken from my rostrum, a prince of the royal blood of England visited in Edenton and was entertained at a ball in my Assembly room while maids and matrons vied with each other in donning their most captivating gowns and practicing for long hours the proper way to make a graceful curtsy.

And then I heard a deep sigh which seemed to issue from the very heart of the old Court House. "Ah, Penelope, Penelope," it repeated the name with loving tenderness, "I ne'er shall look upon your like again. How well do I recall the day, 'when you and I were young, Nellie,' and you and all the fair ladies of Edenton assembled almost at my doorstep to hold your tea party and make your protest against the treatment of your mother country. And, yet, methinks your deed has resounded down the years, and should occasion arise, some other of your sex, inspired by the memory of the patriotic spirit which actuated you and your companions, would stand and speak out against tyranny and injustice. But, my dear, my dear, there's nae the charm to my old eyes to be found in bobby sox and bobbed hair that was inherent in hoop skirts and powdered coiffure, sheen of satin and frills of lace, under the soft glow of candle light. I'll take my feminine patriotism with glamour, if you please! Old fashioned am I, perhaps—but flexible and adjustable as well—and a bit amused sometimes when history repeats itself, for recently when that much berated or highly praised (as the case might be) governmental agency, the Office of Price Administration, was set up, I well bethought me of the law passed on this spot in 1746 establishing the lawful rates to be charged at taverns and ordinaries, and the verbal protests on the one hand or praise on the other which ensued.

than above rated, on complaint and proof thereof made before any two justices of ye peace within the said County, they shall forfeit their licenses and further be liable to the penalties by law prescribed.

Signed James Craven, Clerk. The dire influence of witchcraft touched the village when about 1705 a warrant was issued for one Sarah charging her with the practice of witchcraft and that she be haled into Court and made to indemnify the plaintiff in the sum of 200 pounds sterling for 'scandalous and malicious words and practices,' and also a certain Susannah and Martha, 'being led by ye instigation of ye devil did diabolically bewitch several of her Majesty's liege subjects against ye peace of our sovereign lady, ye queen; but the jury found no true bill against 'ye persons ignoramus.'

'Tis dull times these days with never a sail upon the broad waters of Edenton Bay. Time was when the news of an incoming vessel brought all the village together to the wharves at the foot of the Court House green for the news of the outside world as well as for the excitement of seeing the cargo unloaded—cottons and silks, gold embroideries, musk, cinnamon and cloves, flowered taffetas and soosys, mahogany and wool. Within my walls is housed even now a treasured item brought here during the Revolution by Captain Russell in his sailing vessel, the chair presented by Lord Baltimore to the Masonic Lodge at Alexandria, Va., which our great General and President, George Washington, used when he presided over the meetings of the Masonic Order there, brought here for safe-keeping from the British when that lodge was suspended. And the self-same cannon which now serve as peaceful markers for the water front before me I saw unloaded from the 'Holy Heart of Jesus' which brought them here from France where they were purchased by Thomas Benbury and Robert Smith, Commissioners, for defense of this great port.

As I look out across the water I miss an old familiar friend who stood as a symbol of good cheer and bon voyage throughout the years—the old Dram Tree—within whose hollow trunk reposed a jug of rum from which the captain of each outgoing vessel to England and the Indies drank a toast to a safe and successful voyage and each incoming vessel paused within sight and sound of home to fill it up.

Again I seem to hear the foot-falls of the countless thousands who have crossed my threshold—the running feet of little children hastening to the Christmas parties held for many years in my Assembly Room. I like to look back upon those times when fun and merriment held sway, though I shudder at the memory of one occasion when a serious catastrophe caused by Santa Claus' beard catching fire was narrowly averted and Sir Nathaniel Duckenfield, come over from his plantation in Bertie, was the hero of the occasion. I hear, too, the lightsome, tripping feet of maiden and their beaux hurrying to take their places for the stately minuet, and perhaps those same eager feet at some later day on their way to secure a marriage license within the office of the Register; the dignified steps of statesmen—Christopher Gale, first Chief Justice of North Carolina; Samuel Johnston, outstanding leader of the Colony, first Senator from North Carolina, Judge and Governor; Joseph Hewes, Signer of the Declaration of Independence and Chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs, thus becoming in actuality the first Secretary of the Navy; James Iredell, Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States

under Washington; Hugh Williamson, Signer of the Constitution, Royal Governors of the days when we were under the King, Judges presiding over the High Court, the reluctant feet of the condemned led away to justice, the tottering feet of the aged and indigent coming to receive a dole, the martial tread of men in uniform—redcoats, and blue and buff, and khaki, and the dauntless steps of men in gray returned from war wearing defeat like a plumed helmet—and all the intermingling steps of the hordes that have passed in and out in the daily round of life's manifold duties.

And then, as the rising sun lightened the eastern sky the old Court House gave a sigh for the past, but its face caught the glow of another day and it settled back to repose with the consciousness that the tangible evidence of the heritage of our illustrious past made manifest to future generations in the preservation of its landmarks—that out of this might come the challenge and inspiration to posterity to hold high the torch and with integrity of purpose 'act well their part,' whether great or small, in the making of a better world with a lasting peace under God's guidance and protection.

"The long toil of the brave Is not lost in darkness, Neither hath counting the cost Fretted away the zeal of their hopes. Over the fruitful earth and athwart the seas Hath passed the light of noble deeds Unquenchable forever."

The old Court House slept again, and so did I.

'Twas a "Lusty Wind For Carolina" that brought Inglis Fletcher to "Raleigh's Eden" to make her home among the "Men of Albemarle" and give us renewed interest and a keener awareness of the priceless heritage of our past, and we look forward with eager anticipation to the time when with the restoration of the old Council Chamber in the Court House in Queen Anne's Town we may again

take our acknowledged place among the Colonial Capitals of America. "We are of those who hold the past in trust for the future."

Camp Meeting Ends Next Sunday Night

The Rev. Jesse McCloud, in charge of the Albemarle Camp Meeting being held at the south end of the Albemarle Sound bridge in Washington County, announced early this week that the camp meeting will come to a close next Sunday, when an all day service will be held. The guest speaker for the occasion will be the Rev. Carl Graves, a missionary from India. Dinner will be served on the grounds, and an invitation to attend is extended the public.

ANNUAL FIRE INSPECTION

Fire Chief R. K. Hall is this week making his annual fire inspection, devoting the early part of the week to the business section. The latter part of the week he will inspect the residential section.

Take Your Wife Out For a Night American Legion Hut Friday, Saturday, Sunday

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REMEMBER V. J. DAY? Just about two years ago, the war ended—remember? Everyone thought then that there would be plenty of materials and equipment of all kinds available immediately. That hasn't been the case with us. We haven't been able to obtain enough equipment to complete our expansion program, and we're still short. But in spite of this, we have installed more telephones than ever before in our history. We're proud of our record—and we're driving with all possible speed to keep up with the ever mounting demands for new service. NOR. & CAR. TEL. & TEL. CO.

Farm Bureau Membership Drive Progress Report Is Your Name Here? If Not, JOIN TODAY and Be On Our Next Week's Report!

Table listing members for Farm Bureau Membership Drive across four townships: First, Second, Third, and Fourth Township. Lists names and counts for each township.