

# Text Of Address Given By British Official At 200th Anniversary Of Chowan Court House

Following is the text of an address here Sunday by William M. Drower, first secretary, British Embassy. The occasion was the 200th anniversary of Chowan County Court House.

My wife and I feel greatly privileged to have been permitted to take part with you in these celebrations and in particular in the 200th anniversary of the Chowan County Court House.

Speaking in a strange city is usually slightly intimidating, however, charming and courteous one's hosts may be. That parody of Longfellow echoes: I shot an arrow into the air, I don't know how it fell, or where. But strangely enough at

my journey's end I found it again in the neck of a friend.

but the tour of Edenton has special hospitality compounding your traditional kindness. Coming to Edenton on this friendly and heartwarming occasion, with the Stars and Stripes and Union Jack side by side, one has the sense of a very special celebration. With its courtly charm, delightful hospitality and gay, nostalgic rustling costumes it makes one wonder how in the world one could have avoided coming before to such an attractive target. I would be wrong if I did not tell you here and now that Constance and I have firmly sworn to come again and bring our

daughter.

This is, of course, an occasion of particular significance as the flags of our two beloved countries fluttering proudly together can amply testify. We both pay homage today to common principles firmly held to common ideals. And these things are enshrined in these stones and shingles and beams.

Your distinguished Mayor, in an admirable address last night, stressed that this city has no museum, though you have one which we have been privileged to visit. Everything has the vitality of today; your houses are maintained, not restored or rescued, rather they are guarded and cherished. Is it not to be deplored that the handiwork of our forefathers think parts of Europe are much to blame in this respect, are carefully stripped of humanity, catalogued in fossilized—made into museums, archeological morgues?

This magnificent Chowan Court House before us is no fossil. It breathes vitality and purpose. Architecturally, you have in it a building which meets the three classical interiors of commodity, firmness and delight.

Here it is, set among houses which stand in ordered lives like independent bourgeois. There is nothing of vulgarity or of straining after effect. Sir Christopher Wren, the architect of Saint Paul's Cathedral in London, would, I believe, have felt especially in sympathy with its conception. It was he who wrote:

"Architecture has its political uses. Public buildings being the ornament of a country, it establishes a nation, draws people and commerce, makes the people love their native country."

John Ruskin commented that if the design of a building be originally bad, the only virtue it might ever possess would be that of antiquity. Sometimes it is hard to feel that Europeans do not impose on their visitors when they show them buildings of immense age which alas were originally ugly and remain so in perpetuity. It

is a kind of fraud perpetrated on the well-disposed. But Mr. Ruskin, with his Victorian love of Venice and the pointed arch would never have approved of anything so practical and simple as this court house. One is reminded of the two cockneys in a concert hall.

One of the ladies of this distinguished company has suggested with wit and scholarship that the Chowan County Court House offers a unique symbolism to us of the continuity between the past and the present.

Certainly the government which erected this court house was a British colonial government and the law which was to be practised was British law. It is not without significance that North Carolina was one of the last two states to ratify the Constitution, on the ground that it did not include a Bill of Rights; you felt with us that Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights were the bedrock of justice, and you were not content until a Bill of Rights had been framed within the first ten amendments to the Constitution. So both our countries thus share a great constitutional tradition—that a citizen is entitled to judgment from his peers irrespective of the politics of the moment. May we continue to be preserved from the Alice of Wonderland type of so-called Peoples' Courts, where the rule is nearly always "Sentence first and verdict after." Are not such courts the hallmark of the abominable tyranny of Hitler and Stalin?

Law has been administered in this building. History has been made here. But not merely legal history. Also, within its sturdy walls, the pageant of Edenton's social life has unfolded through these centuries. How many trimly ankles have not waltzed on the gleaming spring floor—how many promises and rendezvous have not been made in the candlelight?

Built in 1767—the year of the Townshend duties which you considered taxation without representa-

tion.

Already then, rumbling and flashing like an approaching storm, the decisive struggle of the next decade could be heard. You—in company, let us not forget, with many liberal voices in England—were already coming to the belief that the rusty rigidity of a mercantilist system must go and be replaced by something which we have now in fact recognized in the British Commonwealth of Nations—the system where self-governing communities have their equal economic rights.

Don't be too hard on Lord North and his friends. They did their best. They simply didn't know how to tackle a new and complex situation which defied their experience of how to run an empire. Our young daughter, at school in Washington, D. C., has a textbook in which it all looks so easy. The good guys are good and the bad guys have, if not black hats, red uniforms.

Perhaps it is a pity that it is felt necessary to make issues so clear cut, when they seldom are in real life. You might like to know that so far as bias is concerned, most school textbooks in England are lavish in praise of George Washington; in contrast, poor King George III and his ministers get a thin time. No doubt somewhere in the United States there is a history book which says one nice thing about that honest, not over-endowed and dreadfully long-lived Hanoverian monarch. Perhaps one day when we shall get a common history book for the English speaking peoples. Let us have our legends by all means, but let us recognize them as such.

It has always been difficult for one nation to take the measure of another; to gauge accurately whether

the other is on the way up or whether it is going to the dogs. It seems to have been particularly hard in respect of my country. when you beat us so gallantly at Yorktown most countries in Europe were firmly of the opinion that England's sun had irrevocably set. King Frederick of Prussia believed that, so did Catherine of Russia and the Hapsburg Emperor. Napoleon can, therefore, be somewhat exonerated from having, not long after, grossly underestimated his opponent. Hitler made the same mistake, though it is less easy to excuse his miscalculations since some were so enormous and so horrible. But such assessments, however wrong, have certainly been encouraged by the predictions of impending calamity so frequently made by our own famous figures.

Thus the Duke of Wellington on his deathbed prophesied certain disintegration and collapse for a doomed society. Even H. G. Wells, the prophet of a delightful and scientific-ly ordered New Order became finally convinced that we were done for. So we may be excused a certain cynicism about the value of such forecasting. Why, only three years ago, when we had special trouble with our balance of payments the story was that this time we had really had it. Our financial system, it was said, was rotten through and through; our workers spent all their time either on strike or drinking tea; our machines were out of date, our manufacturers effete and incompetent. The published figures of the last few months ought to have shown how off the mark these forecasts were. No

one nation has a monopoly of problems in the field of balance of payments. I need hardly say that we are well aware what the Samuel Jenkins technique of meeting international payments—"payment when convenient—it being understood that I am not to be pushed"—is hardly realistic in 1967.

The financial gnomes of Zurich are happy today. They have seen that we have already brought down our trading deficit to one-quarter of the 1964 figure and know that next year we hope not only to balance the books but to be in surplus.

More than our American cousins we depend on trade with the outside world. Let no one delude himself that Britain in 1967 lacks first-class competitive industrial power.

Before the second World

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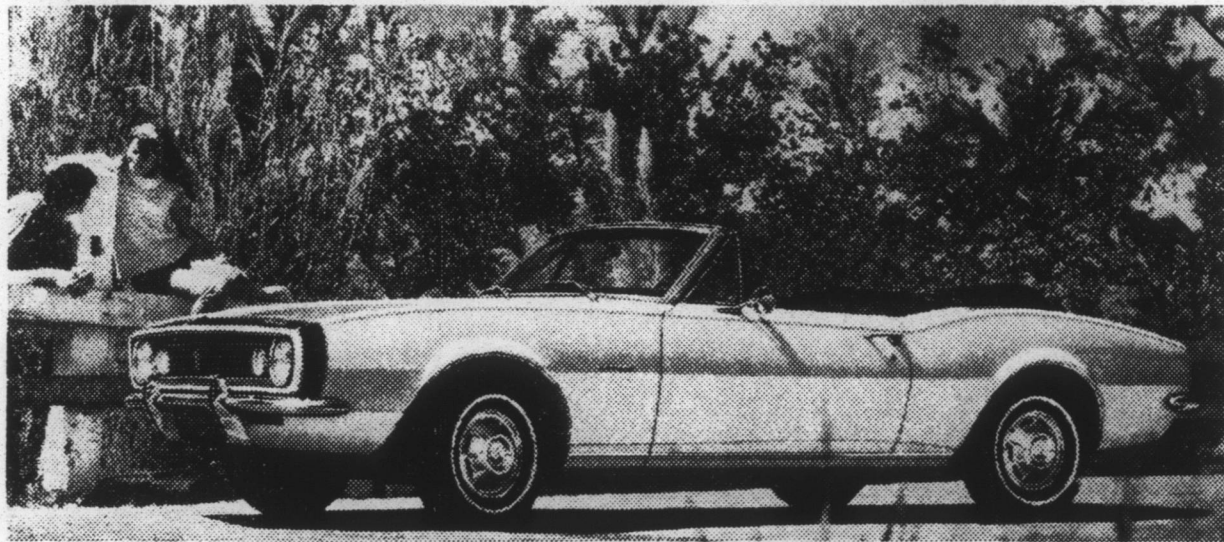
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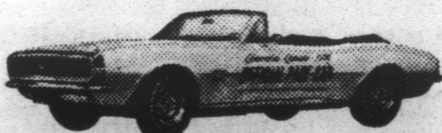


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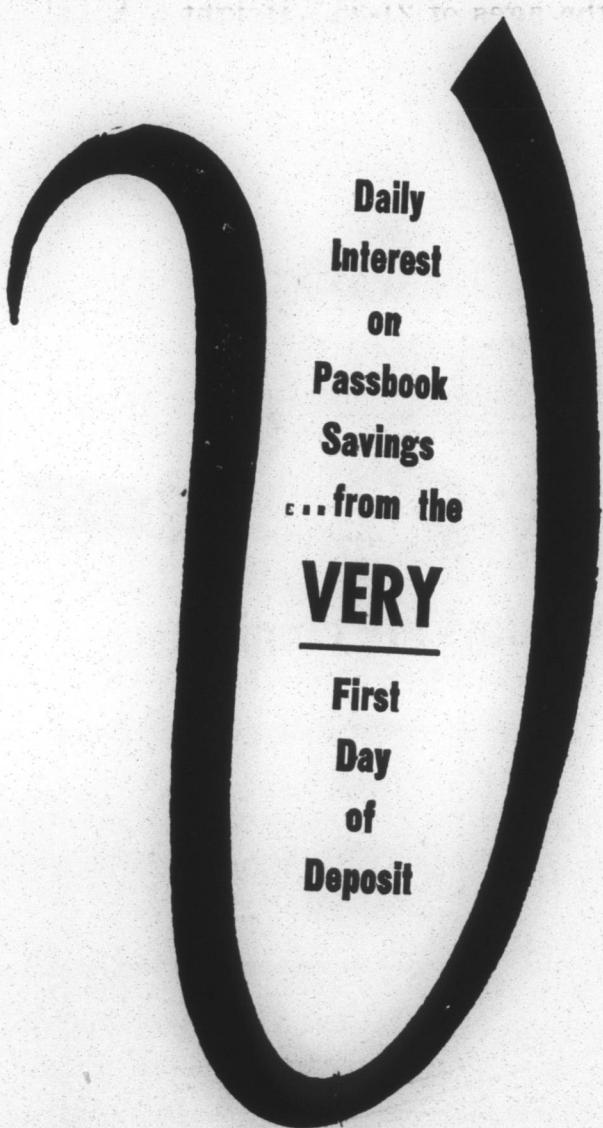
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