

MAJOR A. J. McKINNON.

Typical of Robeson's Captains of Industry Who Have Achieved Wealth and Distinction. Father of Cantaloupe Culture in Robeson.

From Robeson County Edition News and Observer.

Many men have achieved distinction and amassed wealth in Robeson county as the result of intelligent industry, and in no instance has the reward come more worthily than to A. J. McKinnon, of Maxton, pioneer trader, successful business manager, manufacturer and capitalist. He has lived life with five dollars as an estate, came to Maxton, where he was to receive a salary of \$100 per annum with board and lodging, and the first year demonstrated the strength of the fiber he was made of, for at the end of the year he had saved \$67 of the \$100. Today he is one of the first men of Robeson county and his section of the State, and it is not exaggerating to assert that he has been of service to his community, to the county, to the degree that he has been successful in his various enterprises. The story of no man better illustrates the Robeson county spirit, and "Sandy" McKinnon is typical of the true Robesonian. The narrative of his life in Maxton is a history of the town.

A. J. McKinnon was born in that part of Richmond county

crop was the nucleus of the immense cantaloupe industry of Robeson county. Mr. McKinnon also experimented with asparagus, from which he obtained splendid results. His neighbors profited by his experience, the most excellent benefit from it being the improvement in farming methods. The greatest boon that trucking has brought to Robeson county has been the introduction of better farming principles and their application and modern farm tools. Dating from the cantaloupe experiment in '98 the land has been prepared more intelligently, farming has become intensified, improved implements have been innovated, more and better fertilizers have been used, until the Maxton area, so far as farming goes, is as advanced as any land in this or any other State. The soil is still susceptible of improvement and the farmers are building it up year by year, each season revealing its yet greater productivity.

Mr. McKinnon has been prominently identified with almost every enterprise in Maxton ever since the town has had an enter-

has purchased them as low as ten cents a bushel. This year they brought 50 and 55 cents. At that time not more than 8,000 bales of cotton were raised in the county, and a very little in a radius of five miles around Maxton. Maxton cotton buyers this season have bought 50,000 bales, and the actual receipts of the town of the cotton bought from wagons has passed the 16,000 mark and will probably exceed 20,000 bales. Then not more than a quarter bale was raised to the acre; now a man in the Maxton vicinity is considered a poor farmer if he produces less than a bale of cotton to the acre, while some get two bales and there have been claims of three bales from one acre. Through McKinnon Currie & Co. better stock has been introduced on the farms, and with better stock came better implements. Mr. McKinnon was the first to bring a hay press and a manure spreader to the community. Now the old methods and tools have become antiquated. In the item of two-horse plows alone, thirty are used today where one was used ten years ago. Mr. McKinnon conducts a less extensive farm than formerly because of the multiplicity of his interests. He is now running 200 acres, a ten-horse farm, and McKinnon, Currie & Company operate a 20-horse farm. He introduced to truckers of Robeson county the famous Rockyford cantaloupe seed, and between 50 and 80 cars of these 'loupes are shipped from Maxton each season. Maxton also ships between 100 and 300 cars of watermelons.

The Southern Exchange Co. manufactures line poles, cross-arms, cooperage material and fertilizers. It handles and finds an outlet for all juniper poles, and through its New York connections finds an outlet for a considerable amount of lumber. The company has had analyses of the soils of this immediate section made and manufactures fertilizers for them.

Four years ago Mr. McKinnon with some associates bought the Alma Lumber Company and he has been president of it from that date. This concern manufactures everything used in the construction of a house that is made from pine timber. It gives steady employment to from 75 to 100 men, the average daily payroll being \$90. The capacity of the plant is 35,000 feet per day. During the panic the company operated on full time. It has sufficient buildings to accommodate all its help and has never experienced any difficulty with its labor. The company conducts an excellent store, which is patronized liberally. Its railroad, standard gauge, handles freight for the accommodation of the public, and there is a possibility of its being extended to Rowland. Alma, where the plant is situated, is located on the Lumber river and the Seaboard Air Line Railway. The A. J. McKinnon Co. handles cotton and farm products. It is the result of many years in the cotton buying business, its growth a decade ago necessitating the organization of a stock company. It also handles automobiles. It may be remarked that Mr. McKinnon was the first person in Maxton to buy an automobile.

Mr. McKinnon is secretary of Carolina College and a member of the board of trustees since its organization. It was due chiefly to his efforts, enthusiasm and influence that the college was located in Maxton. He is one of its most liberal supporters, has expended considerable energies in establishing and building it and believes it will be one of the greatest forces in the life of his community and section. There is no stronger friend of education in the State than he.

Mr. McKinnon married Miss McKinney, the only daughter of Capt. H. R. McKinney, of a most excellent family. His home has been blessed with five children, three daughters and two sons. He has a son at Trinity College and a daughter at Randolph Macon, in Virginia. His residence is one of the handsomest in Eastern Carolina.

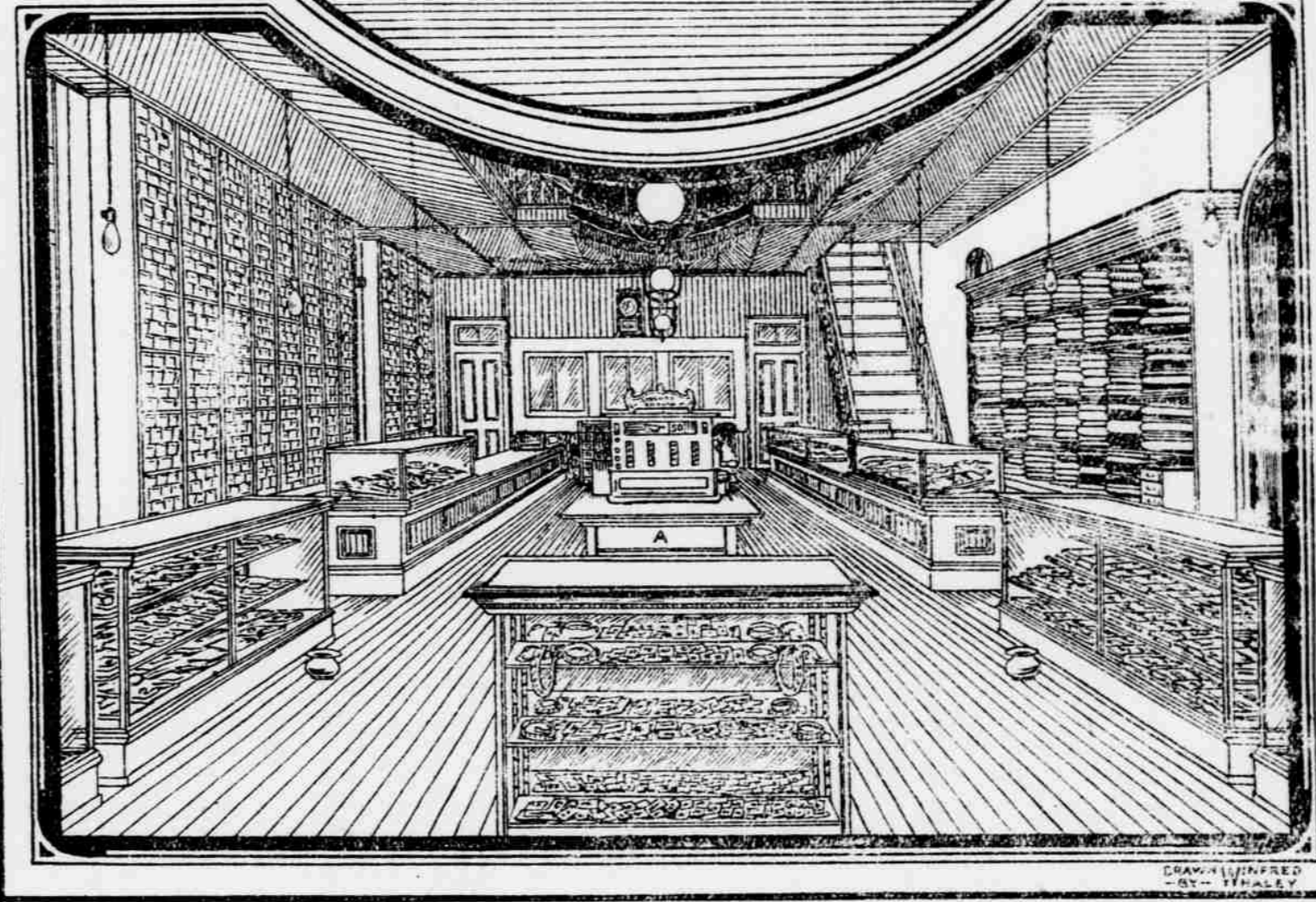
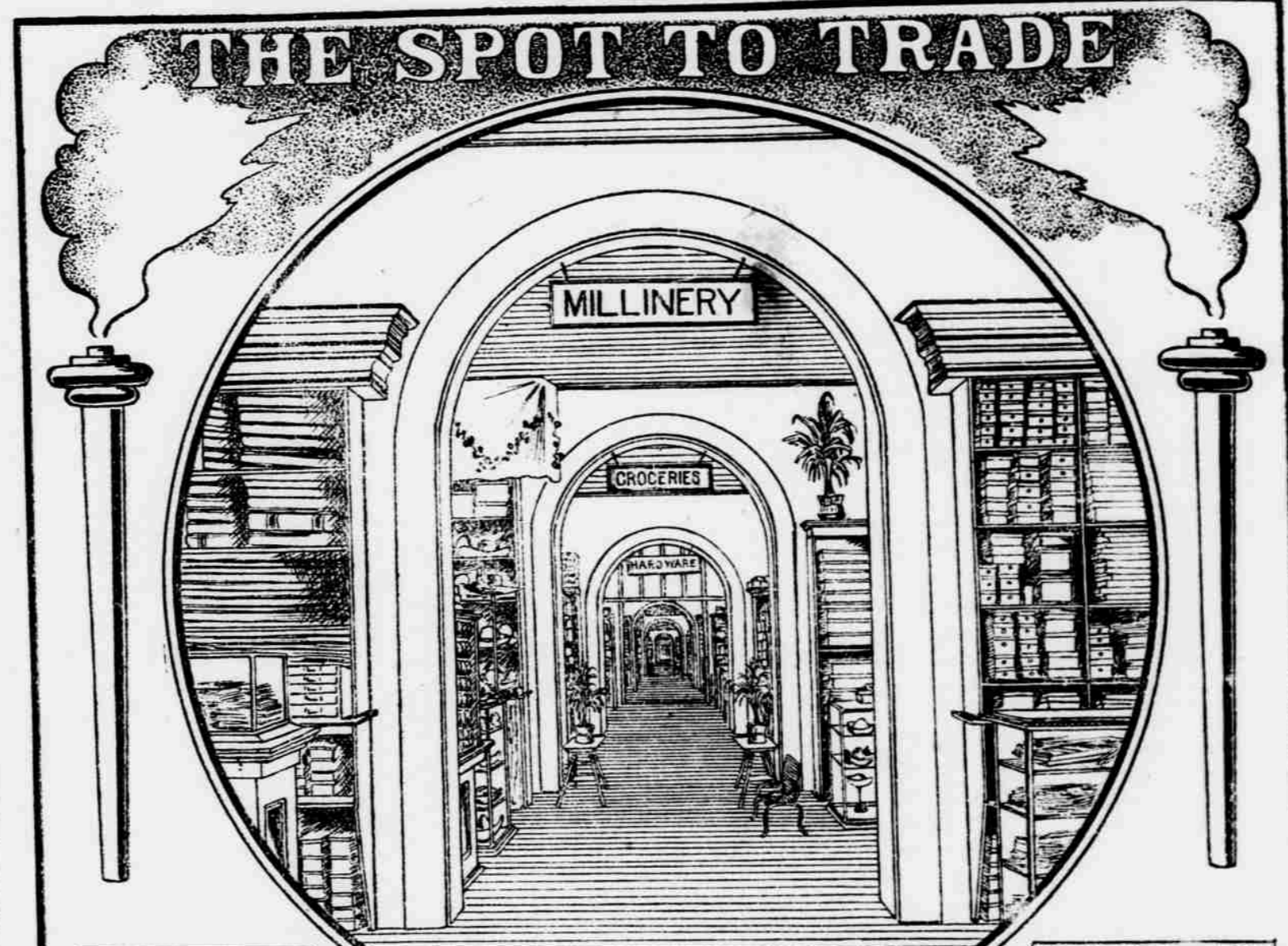
Mr. McKinnon is a member of the Methodist church, and for a number of years has been chairman of the board of stewards.

(Continued on page three)

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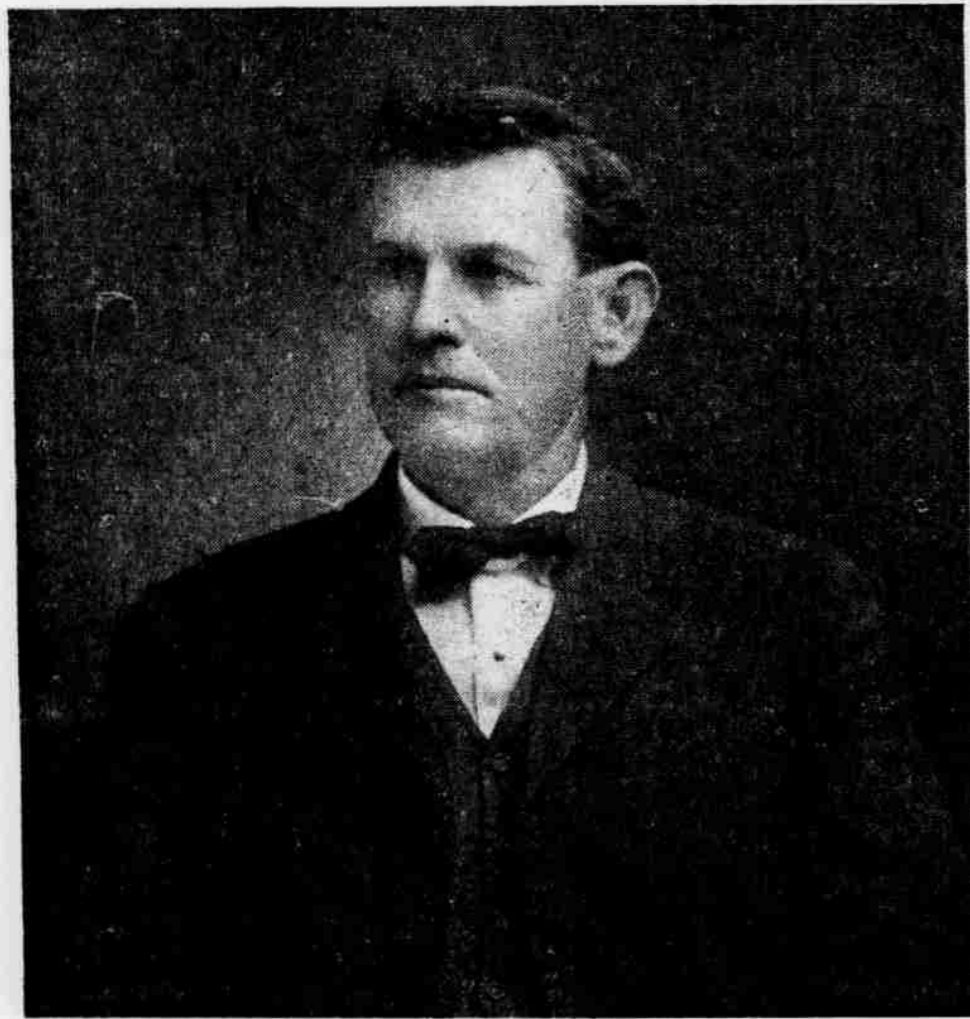
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MAJOR A. J. McKINNON.

which is now Scotland, four miles west of Laurinburg, in 1862. His father was a farmer and school teacher. He attended the public school. He was seven years old when his father died, and his mother died when he was twelve. He went to Marlborough county, South Carolina, to live with his uncle, remaining there until he was seventeen, when he came to Maxton to work in a store, continuing in this occupation until he attained his majority. Then he entered business on an independent basis, first dealing in horses in a small way and afterwards engaging in merchandising. The mercantile business did not suit him, so he developed the live stock industry, which paid well from the beginning. In 1890 he began to buy and sell cotton, handling it direct from the farmer to the manufacturer. This has been his principal business ever since. The two enterprises flourished and grew until 1900 they had reached such proportions as to necessitate his taking in associates to assist him in managing them and caring for their future development. All the while Mr. McKinnon was engaged in agricultural pursuits. He is the father of the cantaloupe industry in Robeson county. Today it has assumed immense proportions and is no inconsiderable factor in bringing wealth to the county. The first cantaloupes produced in the county were planted by Mr. McKinnon in 1898-'99. It was an experiment. He had sufficient interests to afford to take some risk, as his income was not totally dependent upon farming. The experiment was marvelously successful. The net returns from sixteen acres in cantaloupes was \$3,850. The net profit was \$3,000. Besides the 'loupes there was a ton of hay to the acre, which was worth \$300. This

prise to be identified with. He never aspired to political office, although many times solicited by friends to have his name on the Democratic ticket, but he has always been a tower of strength in his community, serving the town as both mayor and commissioner, when his wise counsels told for its improvement. When the Maxton graded school was chartered, being one of the first in the State, he was appointed to the school board, having served in this capacity ever since. He and his associates have made the school one of the best and most efficiently administered in North Carolina. He was vice-president and member of the executive committee of the Southern Cotton Growers' Association and has always been a friend to and a supporter of farmers' organizations.

Mr. McKinnon has large and varied interests. He is vice-president, treasurer and Southern manager of the Southern Exchange Company, of New York and Maxton; president of the Alma Lumber Company, which operates twelve miles of railroad, beginning at Alma, two miles east of Maxton, and running south toward Rowland; president of the A. J. McKinnon Company, president of the McKinnon Currie & Company; vice-president of the Bank of Maxton, vice-president of the Bonded Warehouse of Maxton, and he has other interests that contribute both to his own fortune and to the prosperity of the town.

There were about 200 people in Maxton, then called Shoe Heel, when Mr. McKinnon located in town. Then there were no large businesses in the community. The turpentine industry was then in the ascendency and was the dominant interest of this section. Cotton seed was then considered worthless, and Mr. McKinnon