

John Joseph Bruner Editor And Publisher

BY L. S. MOORE

John Joseph Bruner, the subject of this sketch, was born in Rowan County on the Yadkin River about seven miles from Salisbury. He was the only son of Henry Bruner, a gunsmith by trade, and the third generation of the name—the first Heinrich having immigrated to America in 1731 with John Jacob Bruner, presumably his father, as he was then a mere lad of less than sixteen years of age. Whether or not the trade of gunsmith was handed down from father to son is not positively known, but a few of the Bruner flint lock rifles are still in existence and are evidently the work of Henry, the father of the Henry named above. From wills dated 1769 and 1803 respectively, it is known however, that they were landowners and men of substance.

On September 29th, 1814, Henry Bruner married Edith, youngest daughter of Col. West Harris of Montgomery County and his wife, Edith Ledbetter of Anson. Col. Harris was a native North Carolinian, but his father, West Harris, Sr., came from Isle of Wight County, Virginia, and was first a citizen of Granville County, North Carolina, "serving there as vestryman of St. John's Parish in 1746, and in 1756 he is one who long refused to qualify as a Justice of the peace." Subsequently he settled with his family in that section now known as Montgomery County. The history of this family is of interest, as it covers a period of more than two hundred and seventy-five years, going back to the first settlement of the country. The ancestor of the North Carolina branch was one Thomas Harris, the date of whose will, as recorded in Isle of Wight County, Virginia, is October 9th, 1688, and that of his son, Edward, dated March 25th, 1734. Both father and son leave land granted them by Patent to their posterity. West Harris, Sr., was the son of Edward and father of Col. West Harris, who "on the breaking out of hostilities with the mother country, enlisted in the North Carolina Line of the Continental Army—9th Regiment—as Lieutenant, and notwithstanding his youth, by patriotism, zeal and intrepidity was advanced before the end of the war to the rank of Colonel. After the peace he represented his fellow citizens for a number of years in the General Assembly of the State. And such was the confidence of the people in his probity and intelligence, that any office in their gift was at his command. In the private walks of life he was equally esteemed: he was benevolent to the poor, and honorable in all his dealings with the world." (*Western Carolinian* August 7th, 1826). He died July 19th, 1826, aged sixty-nine years and was laid to rest in the private burial grounds on his estate near the mouth of Beaverdam Creek.

Here for more than a century had rested the bodies of members of the Harris families, but owing to the fact that when the big dam on the Yadkin near Badin, then under construction—1916—was finished and the waters turned on, practically submerging ten thousand acres of land, this among others, would become the bed of a vast body of water. In consequence thereof, steps were at once taken by descendants to exhume the remains.

During his life Mr. Bruner had seen personally to the care of this sacred spot and had made provisions for its upkeep after his demise, hence it was deemed but fitting that the ashes of his beloved dead should lie with his in the old English Cemetery, there to await the Resurrection Morn.

The exhuming of these remains, of which seven in number were brought to Salisbury, goes back into the history of the family in North Carolina nearly two hundred years, the eldest being West Harris, Sr., born August 13th, 1715, died May 14th, 1795.

To Henry Bruner and Edith, his wife, two children were born, Salina Williamson, first and only daughter, August 4th, 1815, and John Joseph, March 12th, 1817. When the latter was a little over two years old, his father died and his mother with her two children returned to her father's residence in Montgomery.

In 1825 John Joseph came to Salisbury, under the care of his uncle, the Hon. Charles Fisher, father of Col. Chas. F. Fisher who fell at the Battle of Bull Run. His first year in Salisbury was spent in attending the school taught by Henry Allemand and was about all the schooling of a regular style he ever received, the remainder of his education being of a practical kind, gleaned at the case and press of a printing office.

When nine years of age, he entered the printing office of the "*Western Carolinian*," then under the editorial

control of the Hon. Philo White, late of Whitestown, N. Y. In 1830, the "*Carolinian*" passed into the hands of the Hon. Burton Craige, and then into the hands of Maj. John Beard, late of Florida. Mr. Bruner continuing in the office until 1836. In 1839, M. C. Pendleton of Salisbury and Mr. Bruner purchased the "*Watchman*," a Whig and anti-nullification paper, established in July, 1832, by Hamilton C. Jones, Esq., to support Gen. Andrew Jackson and combat the nullification movement of that time, started in South Carolina under the inspiration of John C. Calhoun and other distinguished statesmen of the Commonwealth. Under the above firm name the paper was continued for three years, at the end of which time the junior partner withdrew for the purpose of collecting a considerable amount due the firm and paying off accumulated debts. This was accomplished in the course of eighteen months, during which time the paper was continued under the management of Mr. Pendleton as editor and proprietor.

In 1843 Mr. Bruner was married to Miss Mary Ann Kincaid, a daughter of Thomas Kincaid, Esq. The mother of Mrs. Bruner was Clarissa Harlowe Brandon, daughter of Col. James Brandon of Revolutionary fame, close kinsman of Matthew Brandon and the Lockes. Col. Brandon was the son of Wm. Brandon who settled in Thyrira as early as 1752, and whose wife was Miss Ann Cathey of that region, then known as Cathey's Settlement. For nearly a century the name of Brandon was noted all through the Yadkin and Catawba Valleys.

It has been conspicuous in the fights of Ramsour's Mill, Charlotte, King's Mountain, Cowpens and Cowan's Ford. It is said that in some emergency during the Revolution, Col. Francis Locke raised a strong company of minute men, composed mainly of Brandons and Lockes. They came originally from England, settled in Pennsylvania, are found early in Virginia and are among the first immigrants to this section, one date going back to 1730.

Having married, Mr. Bruner prepared for his life work by re-purchasing the "*Watchman*" in partnership with Sam'l W. James in 1844. After six successful years this partnership was dissolved and Mr. Bruner, becoming sole owner and editor, continued to publish it until the spring of 1865, when Stoneman's raiders took possession while here on the 12th and 13th of April, and after printing an army sheet, turned the office upside down, wrecked the principal press and destroyed all they could. Upon the arrival of the Federal Army after the surrender, the commander took possession of it, detailed printers from the army to gather up type enough to print a daily news slip and held possession until about the 4th of July, when they turned over the shattered establishment to the owner.

Three years later, Lewis Hanes, Esq., of Lexington, purchased an interest in the paper and it was called the "*Watchman and the Old North State*." Ill health caused Mr. Bruner to retire from business for a couple of years, but his mission was to conduct a paper, so in 1871 he re-purchased it, and thereafter it made its regular appearance weekly until his death. At this date the "*Watchman*" was the oldest newspaper and Mr. Bruner the oldest editor in North Carolina. He was one of the few remaining links binding the ante-bellum journalist with those of the present day. The history of Mr. Bruner's editorial life is a history of the progress of the state. He was contemporary with Edward J. Hale, Ex-Governor Holden, Wm. J. Yates and others of the old editors. When he began the publication of the "*Watchman*," there was not a daily newspaper or a railroad in the State. In 1849 the "*Watchman*" advertised the "Great Western Stage Line" which left Salisbury at 5 o'clock A. M. one day and arrived at Asheville at 8 P. M. on the following day. The advertisement under the cut of an old-fashioned stage coach read: "For speed could not be surpassed." At the time of his death no one living in Salisbury and few elsewhere in the State had such an extensive personal acquaintance and knowledge of men and events in the early years of the last century. He sat under the preaching of every pastor of the Presbyterian Church since its organization—Dr. Freeman, Mr. Rankin, Mr. Espy, Dr. Sparrow, Mr. Frontis (by whom he was married), Mr. Baker, and Rev. Dr. Rumples, who was his pastor and friend for more than thirty years. He was a scholar in the Sunday School under its first superintendent and was afterwards a teacher and superintendent himself. The Hon. Philo White, his

early guardian and kinsman was a high-toned gentleman of the Presbyterian faith and so impressed himself upon his youthful ward that he chose him as his model, emulated his example and held his memory in cherished veneration to the end of his life. At seventeen years of age Mr. Bruner joined the Presbyterian Church of Salisbury, and in 1846 he was ordained a ruling elder and continued to serve in that capacity through the remainder of his life. Ever active and useful in its ecclesiastical courts his opinions were often sought and always received with deference and respect. The family altar was established in his household and he reared his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. His marriage was abundantly blessed by a faithful, diligent and affectionate wife, who bore him twelve children, seven of whom preceded him to rest.

Mr. Bruner died after a lingering illness, March 23rd, 1890. His end was peace. As he gently passed away—so gently that it was difficult to tell when life ended and immortality began—a brother elder by his bedside repeated the lines,

"How blest the righteous when he dies!
When sinks a weary soul to rest;
How mildly beam the closing eye,
How gently leaves the expiring breath!"

His memory must ever shine out as one of the purest, sweetest, best elements of the past. His character was singularly beautiful and upright, and his life an unwritten sermon.

He was emphatically a self-made man. His learning he acquired by his own unaided efforts, his property he earned by the sweat of his brow and his reputation he achieved by prudence, wisdom and faithfulness in all the duties of life. By his paper he helped thousands of men to honorable and lucrative office, but he never helped himself.

After the war he adhered with unwavering fidelity to the Democratic party which he believed was the only hope and refuge of the true friends of liberty anywhere in America; and he never faltered in his allegiance to those principles which he believed every true Southern man should adhere to. Up to the very last he was unflinching and unwavering in his love for the South and in his adherence to the best ideals and traditions of the land of his nativity. At no time during his life did he ever "crook the pregnant hinges of the knee that thrift might follow fawning." In the very best sense of the word, he was a Southern gentleman of the Old School. The old South and the new was all one to him—the same old land, the same old people, the same old traditions—the land of Washington, of Jefferson, of Calhoun and Jackson, of Pettigrew and Fisher, of Graham and Craige, of Stonewall Jackson, of Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis.

He was honest and economical, always living within his means. He was not only honorable in financial matters, but the soul of candor and honesty in the expression of his opinions. He did not needlessly parade his convictions of men and things, but when he did express a judgment, it was an honest one. It is probable that he never consciously flattered a man in his life.

A man of great moral courage, he did not fear to face and oppose able and distinguished men if he thought they were wrong. Though never a neutral in politics, morals or religion, but having strong party affinities, he would still upon occasion throw off the trammels of party and speak forth his independent convictions. He did not obtrude himself upon public notice and was willing to take the lowest seat unless there was a call for his appearance. He dared more to satisfy his own conscience and please God, than to have honor among men.

The following from the pen of the late John S. Henderson is characteristic

Relieves Women's Pains

Here is an example of how Cardui has helped thousands of women: "I was very thin and pale," writes Mrs. F. H. Scott, of Roanoke, Va. "I suffered from weakness and a severe pain in my back. This pain unnerved me, and I did not feel like doing my work. I did not care to go places, and felt worn, tired, day after day. "My mother had taken Cardui, and on seeing my condition she advised me to try it. I have never regretted doing so. I took three bottles and it built me up. I gained in weight, my color was better and the pain left my back. I am stronger than I had been in some time."

Cardui, the purely vegetable medicine which so many women take and recommend, is sold by local druggists.

"Now that he is gone, he will be appreciated at his true worth, as one of this world's true noblemen. I knew Mr. Bruner all my life and I always admired and revered him. Sometimes I disagreed with him in opinion, but in doing so I always felt that possibly I might be wrong, knowing as I did that while he was slow in coming to a conclusion, when once his opinion was formed, he adhered to it with an undeviating and inflexible fixedness of purpose. He was a just man in all his dealings and conscientious and truthful always. In politics, he was always true to his convictions and to his party principals—but he was anything but a time-server. He had a perfect horror of duplicity. As an instance of this, I remember once, when I was in the Legislature, a petition had been forwarded to the Governor requesting the appointment of a certain man to an important public position. Mr. Bruner was importuned to sign the petition, and did so reluctantly, but being convinced that he had made a mistake and that the man was unworthy, he would not be satisfied until he had cleared his skirts of all responsibility in the matter. He notified the friends of the candidate that he wished to withdraw his signature from the petition. The reply was that it was too late, the petition had been sent to the Governor. He then wrote to me to call upon the Governor and ask him to erase his name from the list of petitioners. I complied with the request, and I now remember that the Governor was very courteous and made the erasure instantly with his own hand."

For more than half a century Mr. Bruner was at the head of the "*Watchman*." A bold and fearless advocate of the rights of the people, he wrote with great force and fidelity of expression, and always with conservatism and great good sense. The high-mindedness, the inflexible and universally recognized integrity of the man, added to his prudence and fine judgment, gave weight to his counsels and rendered him always an individual and an editor of influence. Of pronounced views and great decision of character, he was yet the most amiable, genial and kindly of men, at all times characterized by a degree of liberality and conservatism that won him respect and friendship even from those who might differ with him in matters of Church or State. With but one hope or purpose—to serve his people and State, faithfully and honestly—he steered his journal from year to year, from decade to decade, from the morning of one century almost to the morning of another, until he made himself and his paper honored landmarks not only of his own town, but throughout North Carolina. The editor of the "*Manufacturers' Record*" has said—"No other North Carolina journalist of earlier days had the prescience to see and the ability to set forth what the future of that State might be made because of its immense and varied natural resources. Living in the center of a natural district surrounded by vast forests and by fertile lands, Mr. Bruner saw that the State had within itself every needed natural material for the creation and continuance of diversified industries, and while a young editor he began to study these intelligently, and to give such publicity to them as his circulation permitted. Scrupulously hon-

est, he never permitted any statement to be made that he did not believe to be true, and so, in the course of years, the "*Carolina Watchman*" came to be widely recognized as a safe and accurate authority on all such subjects. Among all the Southern newspaper men whose acquaintance it has been my good fortune to make, none has seemed to me so near perfection in all that constitutes a true journalist and a true man as John Joseph Bruner." He recorded truthfully and without envy or prejudice the birth and downfall of political parties. He—inspired by a united effort to Americanize and weld together every section of this great union—grew eloquent in praise of wise and sagacious leaders, and he blotted with a tear the paper on which he wrote of sectional strife and discord. He chronicled with sober earnestness the birth of a new republic, and like other loyal sons of the South, raised his arm and pen in its defense. He watched with unfeigned interest its short and stormy career, and then wrote dispassionately of the furling of its blood stained banner. He was ever found fighting for what he believed to be the best interests of his people, and advocating such men and measures as seemed to him just and right. An old time Whig before the war, he aspired not to political preferment or position, but only to an honored stand in the ranks of a loyal and beneficent citizenship. Joining with the rank and file of the white men of the conquered South he was content to lend all his talent and energy in aiding them in the upbuilding of an impoverished section.

The greater portion of his compositions were editorials upon political or practical themes of a public nature. They were plain, pointed and intelligible. He did not pretend to the graces of rhetoric, though from constant reading his taste had developed in the line of transparent, simple style. He could distinguish bombast and fustian from pure English at a glance. But aside from his editorials, Mr. Bruner sometimes in leisure moments indulged in writing graceful little poems and essays which he did not publish but put into his drawer, there to

lie for years. These were evidently jotted down at a sitting and have not had the advantage of critical filing and resetting—and yet they indicate the possession of an imagination, which, had it been cultivated might have won him distinction in the world of letters. Blameless and exemplary in all the relations of life, a Christian gentleman, he met all the requirements of the highest citizenship, and what higher eulogy can any one hope to merit?

"The great work laid upon his three score years
Is done, and well done. If we drop
our tears
We mourn no blighted hope or
broken plan
With him whose life stands
rounded and approved
In the full growth and stature of
a man".

GRANDI MADE AMBASSADOR
Within 24 hours after displacement in a cabinet shakeup, Dino Grandi, for several years Italy's foreign minister, was appointed as Italian ambassador to Great Britain.



AVOID EYE STRAIN

Scientific tests have proved the vast difference between performance of tasks of individuals with or without properly fitted glasses. Let me assist you to health and efficiency work.

DR. N. C. LITTLE
Optometrist
107 1/2 South Main
(next to Ketchie's Barber Shop)
PHONE 1571-W

Carter & Trotter

SALISBURY, N. C.

Drugs

AT CUT RATE

"13 YEARS OF SERVICE TO
THE PEOPLE OF
SALISBURY"

A Service Institution

The cost of a funeral represents much more than the mere price of the casket. It includes the services of our trained, experienced personnel, every one of whom is carefully selected and schooled for the work he is to perform; the use of our complete modern establishment where every facility is provided for the funeral service and our up-to-date motor equipment.

What is more important, it secures the protection of a reliable service institution whose chief object is to guard the interest of its patrons.

Geo. C. Peeler Funeral Home

PHONE 108 DAY OR NIGHT
318 S. MAIN ST. SALISBURY, N. C.