

Published Mondays and Thursdays.

NORTH WILKESBORO, N. C. ANNIVERSARY EDITION \$1.50 IN THE STATE—\$2.00 OUT OF THE STATE

Historical Sketches Of Wilkes County By John Crouch

(Continued from page 3, Sec. 4)

played such talent and ability that his denomination soon promoted him to Presiding Elder. About 1890, at Newbern, N. C., he was elected Bishop, in which capacity he served his church and race until his death in 1899.

He was emigrant agent to California for about a year, before he was elected Bishop; with this exception his life was spent in the service of his church.

THE CLEVELAND OAK

The old oak tree that stands north of the court house and in front of the old I. T. Prevette residence is a relic of Revolutionary times when Colonel Cleveland was engaged in suppressing the Tories. Several Tories were hung to this tree by Cleveland and his associates. Among the number was Captain Riddle and two other Tories who had previously captured Cleveland at Old Field and would have killed him, doubtless, had it not been for the timely rescue by his brother, Captain Robert Cleveland. There were several other Tories hung to this tree. Coyle and Brown, two notorious horse thieves, were hung there with the clothes-line they had stolen from Maj. Wilfong and converted into halters to lead away the Wilfong's horses.

It is not known where nor in what manner the remains of the Tories were executed here were buried; but it is reasonable to suppose that they were not taken very far away and that no great pains were taken to inter them very securely. Dr. F. H. Gilreath recently found a joint of the spinal column of a human being in the lot back of I. S. Call & Co's store. It is thought that, that was a part of the remains of some one of the Tories executed by Cleveland, and doubtless the remains of all those Tories are scattered in the same locality.

RUFUS A. SPAINHOUR

By Frank B. Hendren
Rufus A. Spainhour was born in Burke county in 1839 and came to this county first in 1859 and entered New Hope Academy. He remained here, part of the time as pupil and part of the time as an assistant to his brother, who was principal of the academy, until the commencement of the war when he together with his brother and several of the pupils of the school enlisted in company B, First Regiment N. C. Troops. He served throughout the war. He was made quarter Master of his regiment.

Returning to his native county, Burke, after the war he engaged in teaching school for about two years, and again returned to Wilkes county and taught school at Oak Forest for about two years. He then bought out the late W. H. Reeves' mercantile business at that place and conducted it two years. He has been in the mercantile business ever since either at Moravian Falls or at Wilkesboro and is one of the most successful merchants and business men in the county. Being one of the most public-spirited and liberal men in the county he has done as much for the material and educational upbuilding of the county as any man who has ever lived in it. It was largely through his energy and influence that Moravian Falls Academy was built and maintained through so many years of conspicuous usefulness to this and many surrounding counties. He represented this county in the lower house of the General Assembly in 1880 and has held several other positions of trust and usefulness, being at present chairman of the County Board of Education.

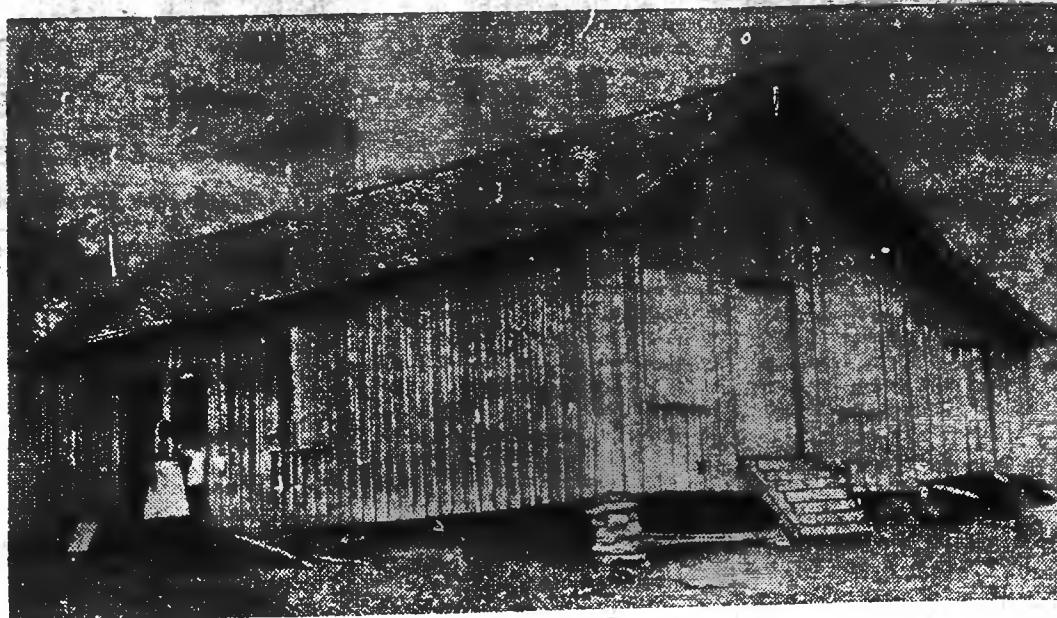
LOVER'S LEAP

About a mile west of Wilkesboro there is a precipice that overhangs the south side of the Yadkin river which is known as Lover's Leap. Tradition has it that many years ago when there were but few white people in this country, a young Indian fell in love with a native Squaw and were engaged to be married. The father of the Indian girl refused to give her up, and she and her lover consented to end their lives by leaping from the cliff into the river, which they did. Ever since the place has been known as Lover's Leap.

COURT HOUSES AND JAILS

Although it was decided by the committee appointed by the General Assembly in 1777 that the courthouse should be located

Views of North Wilkesboro's Postoffice Fifty Years Ago and Now



This is a picture of North Wilkesboro's first postoffice, which was also the city's first store building. J. R. Finley operated the store and was the town's first postmaster. The building was located on the present site of Forest Furniture company.



Now the North Wilkesboro postoffice occupies the above pictured building, erected by the government at its present location on C street a few years ago. The building is of modern design and erected according to the latest approved plans for efficient postal service.

where the Mulberry Field Meeting House stood it was not until about 1799 that the question was finally decided and a wooden courthouse built. From the formation of the county to that time, embracing a period of about twenty-two years, the regular courts were held at various places, sometimes in houses and some times out in the open air under the trees. It is said that many times the courts were held near Brown's Ford, and at other times over near Fairplains and on the hill where the late John Finley lived.

There was strong opposition to building the courthouse at the Mulberry Fields notwithstanding the State's committee had decided that it should be built there and Rachel Stokes and Rebecca Wellborn had decided to the county fifty acres for the site. The people across the Blue Ridge contended that the county seat should be located nearer the center of the county. Hamilton Horton had secured a charter for a turnpike from Holman's Ford to New River and the road was built; a stage line was then put into operation from Guilford Courthouse to Knoxville, Tenn. Emigrants from the east came this way and many of them settled across the Blue Ridge about the Old Fields on New River, along the Watauga river and Beaver Dam creek. A considerable settlement had sprung up across the mountains which was protesting against building the courthouse at Mulberry Fields. The settlements across the mountains continued to grow and the agitation about the location of the court house was not ended until Ashe county was formed and all the territory across the Blue Ridge was given to the new county, embracing all of the present counties of Alleghany, Ashe and Watauga, and probably more.

There is some dispute as to when the first courthouse was built and where it was located, but I think it safe to say that it was built about the year 1799 and was located near where the Chronicle building now stands. The fifty acres of land—including the Mulberry Fields—given to the county for a courthouse site by Rachel Stokes and Rebecca Wellborn was divided into lots and sold, with the exception of the courthouse plot and two public lots, one at the old North spring and the other at the old South spring. The money accruing from the sale of the lots was used to erect the courthouse. The house was made of logs and fastened together with wooden pins. Part of the logs of the old courthouse were used in constructing Dr. W. C. Greens' residence, which is still standing.

Between the years of 1820 and 1830, in order to accommodate the rapidly increasing population, it was necessary to build a larger courthouse. Then was the old brick building—35 x 45 feet—with the stone foundation built. Frank D. Hackett tells me that his father was appointed to superintend the construction of that house and he was placed under a bond of \$10,000 for the faithful performance of his duty. It was one of the best courthouses in the State at the time of its construction. This building was torn down this year, 1902, and the new house now being constructed by L. W. Cooper & Co., of Charlotte, will be completed by Nov. 1st, of this year.

There is much pathetic remembrance connected with the old courthouse that has just been torn down. Within its walls wives and mothers have heard the sentence of death passed their husbands and sons. Within its walls have been tried those who had taken the lives of father and child. The ablest jurists in the State—such as Col. Polk, Armfield, Linney, Pearson, Glenn, Bower and others—have made the old temple ring, with their pleadings for mercy and justice. And the politicians and statesmen—such as Settle, Linney, Pritchard, Ransome and Vance—have cheered the multitudes and fired the patriotism and ambition of thousands by their oratory. This volume is too small to give the history of this old building. Its walls have been pulled down but it will be many a day before it is forgotten.

Wilkes county's first jail was built immediately after the county was formed and was located on

the southwest corner of the present courthouse lot. The stocks, whipping post and pillery were near the jail. The first jail was a wooden structure and it is said that Colonel Cleveland kept Tory prisoners in it during the Revolutionary war. About the year 1828 this jail was sold and torn down and a part of the timber used in the building of the old Noah hotel. A new jail was built on the hill where Esq. R. M. Staley lives, and that jail remained until about 1860, when the present jail was completed.

HARRY HOLLAND

Who has not read the story of the Indian in the hogskin during the Revolutionary war? An Indian had been disguised in this way and had been deceiving the pickets of the patriot army and when they got within range of the fictitious hog he would shoot them down. Harry Holland, being a soldier in the patriot army, was on picket duty and discovered what he thought was a large hog.

After watching the supposed hog for a short time he noticed that it had actions peculiar for a hog, and instead of being frightened away was coming nearer him. Holland suspected that it might be a false hog and he shot and killed it, and no, it proved to be an Indian in a hog skin with rifle cocked ready to shoot the patriot soldier.

Harry Holland was a native of Wilkes county; was born and raised near Millers Creek, and was buried on the W. B. Owings plantation. After the war was over and our independence was won, and the soldiers had returned home, Holland would take great delight in telling this story, and probably there are people yet alive who have heard him tell it.

Agricultural Possibilities

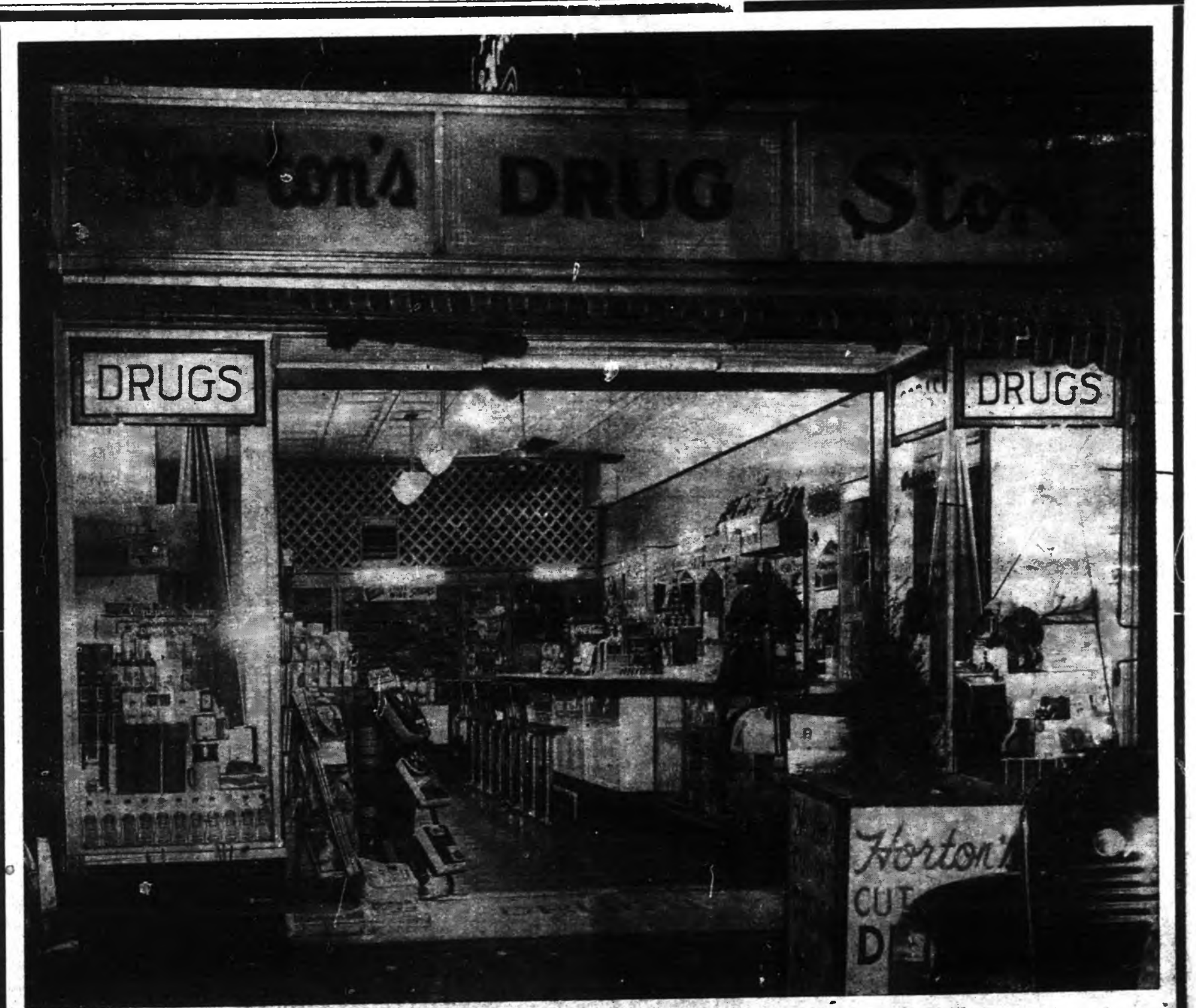
At this time agriculture is not regarded as a very profitable industry in Wilkes, but the fault is in the people and not in the natural resources. There is not a section in the world of equal area that surpasses Wilkes county in agricultural possibilities. And in a few years when the people shall have learned the truth of this statement Wilkes will be one of the finest agricultural counties in the State. Our climate is so diversified that we can grow the sugar beet in one end of the county and cotton in the other. In fact, almost anything grown in a temperate climate may be found in Wilkes.

The red clay soil so abundant in the county is the richest land to be found. There are thousands

of acres of this kind of land that has been turned out as worthless. This land will all be reclaimed and will make old Wilkes county rich. It is not the purpose of this book to tell how that can be done, but the State Department of Agriculture will cheerfully give any information you may desire along this line, or any other item discussed in this chapter.

Several years ago stock raising was an important industry in this county but it has been neglected until there is not a thousand dollars' worth of stock exported in a whole year. Before the Civil war the stock raisers of Wilkes drove their cattle on foot to Philadelphia and other northern markets. Now a market is at the door, but the cattle are not here.

(Continued on page four)



—Before the Celebration—During the Celebration—After the Celebration—

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