

Historical Sketches of Wilkes County Published by John Crouch in 1902.

(Continued From Page One)

This condition will not always exist. The broad valley of the Yadkin will one of these days be the best stock regions in the world. This is rather premature history but I verily believe it is true.

One of the most important branches of agricultural industry is that of fruit raising. Wilkes county is situated in what is known as the isothermal belt and is the best fruit-growing section in the world. The Blue Ridge on the north-west rising to the height of about 4,500 feet above sea level forms a wall to protect us from the cold north-west winds. On the south side are the Brushy Mountains about 2000 feet above the sea level. Many years ago it was discovered that orchards planted in the elevated coves and on the mountain sides along the Blue Ridge and Brushies were very seldom damaged by frost in the spring, and that the fruit was not subject to the attacks of harmful insects abounding in the valleys and that the fruit attained a perfection in shape, color and flavor not known in other localities. For the last few years the quality of fruit raised in this section has attracted the attention of the whole country, and parties from New York and other great fruit markets have come to buy our fruit and investigate the orchards, and they have pronounced this the finest fruit-growing section in the world.

It is not my purpose to establish a "scientific theory" in regard to this state of things but it is a fact, proven by scientific investigation and established by abundant testimony that, by reason of the nocturnal radiation of heat absorbed during the day, the stratum of air in the bottom of a valley after nightfall is colder than the air some distance above the surface. Here this condition is intensified by the greater amount of heated air and being surrounded by mountain walls leaving no avenue by which the heated air may escape, thus it gradually rises and escapes through the gaps of mountains. I quote the following paragraph from the Handbook of North Carolina, issued by the Department of Agriculture:

"The fact remains that within the limits of these frost belts fruit never fails, and at the height of 1500 to 2000 feet (hoar) frosts never falls. Such localities are found . . . along the face of the Brushy Mountains in Caldwell, Alexander, and Wilkes. In the future this phenomenal section must become of inestimable value, for nowhere is there such certain assurance of the security and maturity of peaches and other tender fruit crops, or of the grape: to the successful cultivation of the grape the soil and the general conditions of the climate offer numerous inducements."

There is a large portion of soil in the county that is especially adapted to tobacco. At the World's Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia several years ago tobacco raised near Boomer, this county, was awarded the first prize. Tobacco raising could be made an important industry, and is an excellent crop to put in rotation with wheat, corn and clover.

Another industry that might be mentioned at this time is the cultivation of Genseng or Sang. The roots of this plant sell for fabulous prices, as the plant has been almost extinguished. Wilkes is the natural home of this plant and it will grow luxuriantly if it can be protected from thieves. The United States Department of Agriculture has sent out a bulletin on Sang culture, and anyone contemplating trying to raise this plant should write to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., and ask for a copy. It's free.

Sheep raising could be made a profitable branch of agriculture industry. Before the stock law was enacted nearly every farmer had a herd of scrub sheep running "outside" on mountains and hills. These herds of scrub sheep paid better than anything else the farmer raised considering the cost and labor. The wool furnished the whole family in winter clothing and lots of wool to sell to the factory besides, and the sheep still left for mutton or market. When the stock law was enacted the people thought that since their sheep could not run at large their sheep raising industry was destroyed, so they sold their sheep and quit the business. That was a very foolish step indeed. Nearly every farm in the county has some land that is too rough to plow that would make excellent pasturage for a herd of sheep. Suppose you fence in such a scope of land, say 25 acres, and put in it twenty-five the best improved stock of sheep. Each year you can ship \$75 worth of wool and you will have the increase

Store Manager



Burl Hayes, popular manager of Hayes Hardware company, which is located on Tenth street in this city. The store carries a large stock of hardware, seeds and Purina chows for poultry and farm animals.

Hayes Hardware Is Popular Store

Burl Hayes Manager; Store Has Dealership Famous Purina Feeds

Hayes Hardware company is a comparatively new firm in North Wilkesboro, having been organized only about five years ago, but it has become a very popular store with a widely growing patronage in this section of North Carolina.

Burl Hayes is manager and part owner of the store and the other owners are Kyle Hayes and Joe F. Hayes, all of whom are well and favorably known.

Burl is the type of gentleman who likes to make friends and to see them often. He always appreciates a visit to the place of business which he operates.

In addition to handling a large stock of hardware, farm and household merchandise, the store has the agency for the widely famous Purina Feeds, famous as the highest type of feed for poultry and farm animals.

The store also carries a big stock of field and garden seeds and can supply almost any seed order, whether it be for a nickel packet of garden seeds or enough to seed an entire farm.

The firm invites a visit from the people of northwestern North Carolina and will be glad indeed of the opportunity to quote prices on hardware, seed or feed needs.

of the herd besides. This is simple logic and the people won't be long in catching the idea.

When all the agricultural advantages of Wilkes county are considered it is hard to find a county that will compare with it. We can raise almost anything that is grown in a temperate climate, live "under our own vine and fig tree," and live sumptuously from the products of the plantation, and besides sell a surplus each year. We have the purest free-stone water and the purest air in the world and the healthfulness of our climate is not surpassed. After considering the blessings the Creator has so lavishly spread over our county why will our young men leave the old "State of Wilkes" and seek better chances elsewhere? There can be but one answer to that question: they lack information about the resources of their own county.

FORT HAMBY

In the spring of 1865 about the time of the surrender of General Lee and immediately following, there was a band of desperadoes under the leadership of a man named Wade, a deserter of the Yankee army, who made headquarters at Fort Hamby. Fort Hamby was an old fashioned residence built of logs; there were two buildings, the larger one was two stories high and was the one used as the fort. The other building was about thirty feet from the main building, only one story high and was used as the kitchen. These buildings were on the north side of the Yadkin river near the mouth of Lewis Fork, about eight miles west of Wilkesboro. They were situated on top of a hill overlooking the bottoms of the Yadkin river and Lewis Fork creek, and from the fort windows was an excellent view on either side. It was an ideal location for a fort and no doubt Wade and his gang of robbers felt secure inside the heavy log walls.

The gang consisted of Wade and Lockwood, two reformed Yankee deserters, and about eighty-five men from this and ad-

joining counties. They were a terror to the people round and committed many depredations, robbing dwellings, smoke-houses, stores and anything else they could plunder and destroy, killing innocent women and men as well.

On one occasion a woman (the wife of Frank Gwaltney) was passing along the road on the opposite side of the creek several hundred yards away in a covered wagon when one of the robbers decided to try his rifle. He fired upon the wagon and the ball struck the woman and killed her.

The last raid of Wade and his gang of robbers was a raid into Alexander county. John Greene, father of Dr. W. C. Greene, was one of the most prosperous planters in Alexander county. He had learned that the robbers were marching in the direction of his home, and supposing that they would attempt to rob him he set about making preparation to resist them. He supplied all his negroes and laborers with arms and stationed them in the house. The negroes were stationed in the dining house and the old man Greene and his son W. C. Greene, whom Wade's men had threatened to kill, took position in the front part of the house. About bed-time Wade's men surrounded the house and Wade and two others went to the front door and tried to deceive Mr. Greene by pretending to be Confederate soldiers returning from the war. Their story was not believed and while Wade and Green were talking some of the robbers tried to force an entrance at a back window. Young Green rushed to the window and began firing on the robbers who at once retreated. The robbers went up on the Brushies and stayed until about daylight and then made their way back to Fort Hamby. W. C. Greene at once set about to raise a company to pursue the robbers and capture them before they could reach Fort Hamby; but they soon found that they could not overtake them.

The people were enraged at the conduct of these robbers and determined to drive them out of the county or capture them and destroy them. A company was soon made up—mostly of men from Alexander county—which was prepared to make an attempt on Fort Hamby. The company came across the Brushy mountain by Solomon Davis' who had been robbed by Wade's gang. Davis told the men that he was too old to engage in the attack, but he wanted to encourage them all he could. He had some four-year-old peach brandy to which he told the men to help themselves. They drank what they wanted and some of them filled their bottles and carried them with them. Jones Brown who had just returned from the Confederate army was in the company, and was riding a mule beside Parks Gwaltney. When they were riding along the bank of the Yadkin river Brown was in a very solemn mood. Suddenly he drew his bottle of brandy from his pocket and tossed it over the river bank and said: "Parks, I never intend to touch that again." Gwaltney, in relating the incident several years later said that "coming events seem to cast a shadow before them." But they marched on, and when they were near the fort a consultation was held and a plan of attack was agreed upon.

The company, which was composed of about 28 men, was divided into two squads—one under the command of Captain Evan Ellis, of Wilkes, and the other under the command of Colonel Sharp of Alexander. One squad was to dash by and be ready to commence the attack on all sides simultaneously. When this was done the fort was surrounded and firing began. The robbers within the fort returned the fire and the battle was hotly contested. James Linney was shot and killed during the engagement. The robbers had all the advantages of the fight, as they were protected from the fire of the citizens by the thick log walls of the fort, while the citizens were in open view of the robbers. After seeing that the attack could only result in disaster to the citizens they retreated under a heavy fire from the robbers. Parks Gwaltney said that he was marching back and forth firing into one of the windows of the fort where the robbers were constantly passing when he discovered that his comrades were retreating. He followed them and again happened to get with Jones Brown. They were riding side by side when they came to the ford of Lewis Fork creek. While they were in the ford the mule which Brown was riding became stubborn and would not go along. The balls from the fort were flying thick and fast all around them. Gwaltney was aiding Brown in trying to get the stubborn mule along. While they were yet in the ford a ball struck Brown on the thigh and the blood spouted and the clear mountain stream flowed on toward the sea crimsoned with the blood of a Southern hero. When the ball struck Brown he said "Parks, take care of yourself. I'm killed!" The blood

was flowing in a stream from the wound and the bullets from the fort were coming thicker and faster. By this time the mule had become maddened and the two comrades were riding along the road on the bank of the stream while the balls knocked up the sand all around them. Gwaltney was trying to hold his wounded comrade on the mule, but Brown was getting weaker every second from the loss of blood, and he again told Gwaltney to take care of himself as he was already killed. Brown then fell from his mule upon the sand and died, and Gwaltney hurried on to get beyond the danger line.

A company of men from Caldwell county had previously attacked Fort Hamby, and has succeeded in getting to the fort but were unable to capture it. In the engagement the Caldwell crowd lost two men—Clark and Hensely—who were shot and killed by the robbers.

Although defeated in the first engagement, the people were more determined than ever to burst up the gang of robbers congregated at Fort Hamby, and immediate preparation was made for a second attack. The first company was reinforced by men from Wilkes, Alexander and Iredell counties, and about 3 days later they went more determined than ever to capture the robbers. The intention was to camp on the south side of the Yadkin and wait

until just before day to surround the fort. When the citizens approached the place where they intended to camp they saw several lights and they supposed that Wade and his gang had started out on another raid and Sharp's men thought they would intercept them and give battle. They charged down on the men but to their surprise and delight instead of finding Wade's band they found a company of about seventy-five men from Caldwell awaiting to attack Wade's gang of robbers. The Caldwell men and the

Alexander, Iredell and Wilkes men joined forces and while before day they surrounded the fort and began the attack. All that day and all that next night the firing was kept up but no man on either side was killed. While before daylight the second night Wall Sharp slipped up to the kitchen under the cover of darkness of night and set it on fire. When Wade and his men discovered that the kitchen was burning they thought the fort would be certain to catch on fire and that they would either have to surrender or be cremated in the fort, so Wade asked what quarters would be given if they would come out and surrender. One of the men replied: "We'll give you a passport to h—!" But Wade thought it better to surrender than to remain and be burned up in the fort; so he announced that they would come out and surrender.

Manager Lerner's



Leon Lerner, a native of Poland who came to North Wilkesboro only one year before Hitler gobbled up his native land, is the popular manager of Lerner's department store on Main Street.

But by some means presumably by jumping from a window, Wade got out of the fort without being detected and instead of surrendering made a break for the river. (Continued on page five)

Leon Lerner Is Native Poland

Local Merchant Glad To Be American Citizen And In North Wilkesboro

Leon Lerner came to America from Poland, his native land, but despite the fact that he has been in this country only a short time he prizes his American citizenship very highly.

He was educated in the schools of Poland but when he came to America he did not know anything about the English language. In less than two years he has mastered enough of it to talk very intelligently.

Leon Lerner, the native of Poland, is a prominent merchant in Lincoln and when he chose North Wilkesboro as a good place to enter into business he sent Leon here as manager and he has been doing very well with the business and has become popular with a fast growing number of acquaintances in this section of the state.

Lerner's has a full line of clothing for all members of the family and at popular prices. You are invited to visit the store when you are in North Wilkesboro and if he has time Leon will tell you something about Poland if you insist.

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