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NORTH WILKESBORO, N. C., THURSDAY, DEC. 12, 1940 \$1.50 IN THE STATE—\$2.00 OUT OF THE STATE

Swift Hooper Retires After 50 Years As Locomotive Engineer for Southern

"Casey Jones" Of North Wilkesboro Run Steps Down

(By Clay Thompson in Winston-Salem Journal)

Swift Hooper, the old-timer who pulled the throttle of the famous old Southern 97 for four years and whose train for 44 years was familiar to those who lived along the tracks between Winston-Salem and North Wilkesboro as the very hills themselves, hooted his contempt for the sleek-looking, oil-burning streamlined trains of today.

"I never saw one of them," he said in a tone eloquent with his contempt for the modern and his love of the old. "I never saw one of them," he said again. "but I'll tell you this much: Whenever they outrun one of the high-wheel coal-burning engines like the old 97 they're going to have to get up before day."

Hooper has retired from an engineering job he took on December 25, 1889, with the old Richmond and Danville railroad, which later went into receivership and became the Southern.

He's 68 now, and his heart is a bit weak for throttle pulling, but he can tell you as much about railroading as old Casey Jones himself.

In fact, he is the Casey Jones of the Winston-Salem-North Wilkesboro run.

On First Train to Wilkes Hooper was pitching the coal into the engine of Cal Teague, who pulled the throttle of the first train that ever rolled into

the hills of North Wilkesboro. That was back in '90. Shortly afterwards, he started pulling his own train there, and with the exception of seven years spent on the Southern main line from Spencer to Monroe, Va., the whistles of his trains No. 13 and 14 have resounded through the mountains.

Hooper rocked in his rocking-chair in his home on the High Point highway.

"Yes," he said, "four of those years on the main line I was pulling old 97, the fastest train that's ever been in this part of the country or ever will be."

"I was supposed to have been with her the day she wrecked in 1903 and would have been if I hadn't asked for the day off."

"Old Joe Broadie was pulling her at 90 miles an hour when she jumped the track on the curve at Stillhouse trestle near Danville. Old Joe and 11 others were killed that day she left the track. . . . No. Joe didn't know the track. You couldn't take that curve at 90 miles an hour. Joe was new on the run."

Ballad Born

And because Joe was new on the run, a ballad was born and placed on thousands of records, which in varying forms have spun out the blue story of how old 97 was "going down that grade making 90 miles an hour, and her whistle broke into a scream."

The story spins on to the inevitable conclusion where old Joe was "found in the wreck with his hand on the throttle, all scalded to death by the steam."

Keeping Close Tab On Beer Dealers

Raleigh.—Investigators for the beer industry will visit every North Carolina county during 1941 to make certain that retail beer dealers conduct reputable places of business.

Edgar H. Bain of Goldsboro, State Director of the Brewers and North Carolina Beer Distributors committee, announced today that the industry's "clean up or close up" campaign has resulted in the elimination of 136 undesirable beer outlets in 41 counties—109 by revocation, three by surrender of license, and 24 by refusal to re-license.

"A great majority of beer dealers conduct reputable places of business," Colonel Bain said, "but there is a minority which disregards the law and public decency. Our campaign is directed at these scattered outlets. During 1941, our field representatives will check on these outlets and when necessary, we will request the local authorities to revoke their licenses."

During the past year, Bain said, more than 1,000 retail outlets in 84 counties were inspected. He emphasized that the "clean up" campaign will be carried to all counties in 1941.

Hooper didn't say so himself, but railroad officials are known to have said that if Swift Hooper had been at the engine's throttle that fateful day back in '03 old 97 would have taken that curve at Stillhouse trestle.

"The fastest I ever run 97? . . . Well, the division man was late pulling her into Salisbury from down South one day. He pulled her in late and I had to make up some time. . . . Old 97 didn't carry anything but mail, and the mail had to go."

"Well, we steamed her up, and I took the throttle, and we headed for the hills."

Hooper stopped rocking his chair for a moment, and then he snapped:

"I gained 25 minutes from Salisbury to Monroe, Va. That's the fastest I ever pulled her."

The other three years Hooper spent on the main line he had trains No. 34 and 35, but they couldn't "stay in sight" of old 97.

Native of Kernersville

Hooper was born in Kernersville, and ever since he can remember a railroad engine has been his passion and glory.

"I had to have a job on one," he said, "so I went down to company shops (now Burlington) and got me one firing for Cal Teague from Winston-Salem to Donnah. I fired for him seven months, and for Ned Harris a while. Then I got an engine for myself, and I pulled her until last October."

For 44 years he has pulled passenger train No. 13 into North Wilkesboro and brought passenger train No. 14 back to Winston-Salem. That counts up to around a million and a half miles.

"Did I ever have any wrecks? Why I was killed out here at White street one day and was dead for several days. I guess they'd have buried me if Dr. Valk hadn't brought me out of it."

Hooper's engine jumped the track and fell on him at White street as he was pulling into Winston-Salem.

Another time his engine fell over on the turntable at North Wilkesboro, and still another occurred when his train plowed into a couple of box cars left on the main line in Lynchburg.

"It was a cold, foggy morning in Lynchburg, and you couldn't see farther than the end of your nose," he reminisced. "I was pulling into the yard at a good clip and broke into the cars. I had a couple of carloads of young steers on my train, and when it wrecked the steers that weren't killed really took the town."

Is Swift Hooper lonesome for the railroad?

"Thunder no!" he'll tell you.

"Fifty-one years is long enough for a man to stay on any one job, and it's plenty long for a man to pull a throttle."

Certainly the depot officials at the dozen or so stops between here and North Wilkesboro know that Swift Hooper is not pulling 13 and 14 these days.

And it may be, too, that those who live along the tracks know that it is not Swift Hooper who sits up there with his hand on the throttle and his eyes on the rail and pulls her whistle as she thunders through the hills.

Swift Hooper, the Casey Jones of the Southern who has pulled them with the best of them, has finished his railroading.

Home Standards Are Adopted By Building & Loan

The building and loan associations of the state have taken another step forward in providing greater personal service to the shareholders by the adoption of Minimum Construction Standards for small homes, according to Henry Gregory, Jr., of Rocky Mount, President of the North Carolina Building and Loan League.

For several months extensive research and study has been devoted to the preparation of such Standards by a group of selected

individuals who have had years of experience in the construction of home financing. These standards have been designed to insure sound construction in a large group of small homes which heretofore have not had such protection.

They will be especially useful and helpful to the person who is constructing a modest home for they will give him a guide as to what must be provided in home construction to have a dwelling which will be substantial and durable, Mr. Gregory said. These Minimum Construction Specifications can be applied to small homes as well as large. He also emphasized that another purpose of these Standards was to protect the associations in the construction loans which they are mak-

ing and that there will be no additional charge to the borrower for this service.

"The importance of these Specifications to the communities, individuals, and associations, cannot be over-emphasized," he added. "Thousands of mistakes in construction will be prevented by enforcing the lessons in sound building which have been learned by the associations in their years of experience in financing homes in North Carolina. So far in 1940 more than \$13,000,000 has been loaned out by these institutions for the construction of new homes and \$3,000,000 for repair, and modernization of dwellings."

These Specifications which have been set up are the minimum which will be changed

somewhat by the associations to conform to the requirements of the particular locality. Many of the associations already have put into practice extensive construction standards of their own which conform to local building codes and other conditions. Their advice and counsel based upon their experience was very helpful in working out the State-wide requirements, Mr. Gregory said.

POPULAR

As Forsyth county farmers have realized the value of terracing, the demand for work by the county terracing unit has become so great that all calls cannot be filled, says Assistant Farm Agent S. R. Mitchiner.

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