

Post Office Address—

# How Bolivia Got Its Name

By EUGENE FALLON

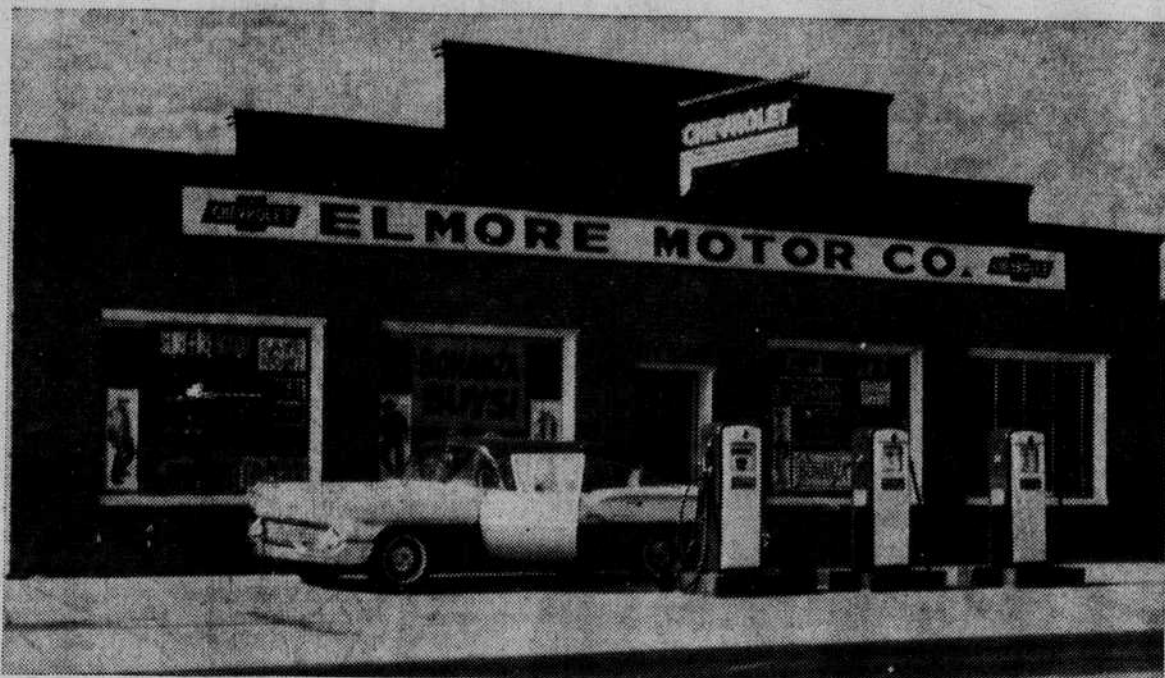
The year was 1892 and John Peter Cox was in a bit of a quandary. In his hand he held a letter from the U. S. Post Office Department which informed him that the name he had chosen for his community was already in use as a postal department of the United States mails, and requested that he forward another name.

Cox looked out his window thoughtfully. He loved the settlement astride a dirt trail heading toward Town Creek. His father had brought him here when he was very young. He barely remembered any other place. He and other spirited neighbors in the little community nestling in the pines had fought long and hard for mail delivery. John Cox was not going to be stymied by a technicality. Here he was, an appointed postmaster and the nearest mail delivery a dozen or more miles west of where he sat — on what was known as the Old Georgetown Road, a wide-crowned dirt road leading from Wilmington to Georgetown, South Carolina.

J. P. Cox, like most Carolinians of his period, had never seen the inside of a college, but here was a self-taught man, one who read everything he could get his hands on. Suddenly he brightened. Why not? he thought. Surely there could be no danger of repetition. If Bolivia could exist in South America, why one could exist in North Carolina. And so it came to pass. A town was born, and it was born with a postmaster.

Seventy years later finds Bolivia roughly about three times as large as it was at birth. If there were 100 citizens in 1892, there are today 300, give or take a dozen. There are no banking facilities, no doctor, no drugstore, no theatres, but there are two fine churches in town, Bethel Methodist and Bolivia Baptist. And there is Bolivia High School, an excellent brick edifice in which Bolivia youngsters may matriculate from the first grade through high school. And there's U. S. Highway 17, running like an eager athlete right through the heart of town. South it leads, to Shalotte and South Carolina and on to Jacksonville, Florida. North it leads to Wilmington, New Bern and Norfolk. At once a blessing and a curse is this shining high

## Bolivia Is Motor Sales Center



Two modern automobile sales agencies dominate the Bolivia business scene, and it is the only town in the county with two authorized agencies. Top photo shows Elmore Motor Co., Chevrolet agency, and the lower photo is of Willetts & Son, Ford dealer.—(Elgie Clemmons Photo.)

road. High school over, the young folks take to it in great numbers. Many never return except for brief visits for sentimental reasons. And most of the working population of Bolivia is employed at Wilmington, in another county, 20 miles away. This is not to say that progress has bypassed the village in north-central Brunswick.

Bolivia has several worthy boasts. First and foremost of these are two thriving automobile agencies — something no other community in the county can claim, including the county seat at Southport and bustling Shalotte. America's favorite cars are dispensed at Bolivia: Fords at the C. P. Willetts and Son agency, and Chevrolets at Elmore Motor Company. And, mixing business with beauty in true Southern fashion, is the Elmore Nursery—10 flourishing acres of camellias and azaleas taking root almost within shouting distance of Highway 17.

The writer visited the nurseries, located on the very edge of an enchanted forest. The soil was richer than a king. Compost,

peat and other aids seemed like a redundancy, heaped upon some of the darkest soil this side of the famed Nile River Valley. One enters between wide rustic gates, to be met with a clamor from a colony of geese and the subdued cooing of half-a-hundred pigeons. All this feathered choir are enclosed behind wire. Beneath latticed overhead three young ladies, tanned and happy, worked tenderly among the seedlings.

There was an office, unpainted and carrying through the woodland motif, upon which hung a sign reading: "American Camellia Society." A pleasant gentleman of middleage invited us inside, where he introduced himself as John Elmore. There was a pert and slender girl present also. Elmore introduced her as Miss Mildred Mercer, manager of the nursery.

Elmore, a resident of Wilmington, is no stranger to Bolivia, having come here in 1934, when he opened an auto agency. In 1944 Elmore took in a partner, J. Foster Mintz, a local man. The business prospered, but Elmore found time for flowers, something he had always loved.

"It started as a hobby," he explained. "At first I planted a few camellias and azaleas to root in the yard of my Wilmington home. I scratched up a few feet of earth alongside my garage. But the dirt was hard from packing, or something, and after a while I came down here and bought this bit of good earth."

The bit of good earth is located down a long dirt street as far as one can travel for the woods. According to Elmore, "Brunswick has both the sorriest and the best growing-land in the world." It was obvious enough that the nursery lies upon some of the

The geese, said the nurseryman, keep down the grasses. The pigeons are but another hobby.

From a hobby, Elmore Nurseries developed into a paying business. On the very day of my visit an Elmore truck had left for the Jersey coast, bearing a big shipment of azaleas. Elmore Nursery ships frequently to Asheville, and last year 100,000 azaleas were grown here, plus 2,000 camellias.

Had Bolivia ever boasted a large industry? Mercer Cox, son of the town's first postmaster, says it did.

He was born at Bolivia in 1883. Now retired, he lives in a white bungalow with his wife. In a two-story white home within calling distance lives their daughter.

"In 1910 the Waccamaw Shingle Company came to Bolivia," recalled the octogenarian. "They came here from Bolton in Columbus County and located about a quarter-mile west of Highway 17. Remained in business about ten years. They employed about one-hundred men—as many people as were in all Bolivia at the time."

Mercer Cox ought to know. He worked for the shingle-makers for about 18 months himself. At first he ran a locomotive hauling logs; later as woods-boss.

"They turned out an honest product," said Cox. "A lot of their shingles still cover roofs in this area. They used nothing but cedar. And they had some skilled men, too."

It wasn't all boon and blessing, however. Mercer Cox attested that that fact in the following information:

"Up till the coming of the shingle company we had no need in Bolivia for either a policeman or a jail. But we soon got one of each. The boys were rough, some of them, and Saturday nights were inclined to be a bit on the boisterous side. Still, in all my days in Bolivia I can recall no serious trouble. No murders, lynchings or rapines."

After the shingle mill pulled stakes the Bolivia Lumber Company operated a big sawmill. J. D. Johnson owned that outfit, which also worked about 100 men at its peak of operation. Johnson leased the business to Felton Garner of Greensboro, in order that he, Johnson, might open a motel and restaurant. That motel, called, like the restaurant, the "Green and White", happens to be the very first motel opened in Brunswick County. Johnson and his wife still operate the combined business, but the Bolivia Lumber Company is no more. It was closed down about ten years ago, leaving Bolivia without an in-



It may seem a little ridiculous to read about swimming on a day when the temperature dipped into the mid-twenties here, but a couple of contacts we have had this week with young couples that have moved into the community turned our thinking to this sport, even though it is definitely out of season.

We were talking last night to Hal Reeves, who has moved with his wife and young daughter into one of the new brick homes at Boiling Spring Lakes, an affluent suburb during his undergraduate days at Georgia Tech he was a member of the varsity swimming team. In fact, he was a member of the free-style relay team which won the Southeastern Conference 400-yard championship one season; and at the end of his junior year was elected captain of the

dustrial payroll of any kind.

J. D. Johnson, the same man mentioned above, remembers well the opening of the Bolivia School. Although he was living in Southport during the building of the consolidated house of learning, his daughter taught classes that first year of operation. Johnson wasn't sure whether it was 1927 or 1928, although he inclines toward the earlier date.

Only recently Bolivia has acquired its first fire department, details of which appeared in the pages of this newspaper. And only recently has the town adopted a formal government, complete with mayor and town board. This is the second time around for municipal government in Bolivia. An highly-placed citizen of Bolivia, who prefers to remain anonymous, had this to say about politics on a local scale:

"There are two viewpoints here. Should Bolivia remain a country community or should it bend every effort toward being a town. That is the big question. And that is why our first town government fell by the wayside."

swimming team. "I love swimming," he confessed; "and just look where I ended up. With all these lakes here, it couldn't be better!"

Charles Blake, his wife Katie, and their son have moved to Southport following his graduation at UNC at the end of the winter semester. This Southport boy did not go out for the swimming team while a student at Carolina, but when he was a cadet at Georgia Military Academy he was a member of the swimming team, as a diver, no less. One year he competed in the Regional Championship at Chapel Hill and his whole family went up to watch him perform.

An then there's Hoyle Doshier, now skipper of the Idle On IV, who was a member of the varsity swimming team when he was in school at Carolina.

With three former college performers living here now, it would seem that the coming season would be a likely time to focus interest on the wonderful sport of swimming. It has much to recommend it: It is good exercise, it is a sport which can be enjoyed by young and old; and Brunswick county affords access to an ocean, countless lakes, rivers and sounds where swimming may be enjoyed.

There will even be a new facility, come summer, for Clarence Murphy already has dog the hole and has let a contract for the installation of a freshwater pool at his oceanfront motel at Yaupon Beach. He says that another motel owner is seriously considering putting in a pool before summer.

Here in Southport workmen have completed the task this week of unvelving the basement of the old Miller Hotel. It is a 30x80-ft hole in the ground that is 10-feet deep and walled in with poured concrete. Naturally there has been some speculation as to what will be done at this site, and there has been a lot of free advice offered. It is noteworthy that far in the lead in this latter category is the suggestion that a public swimming pool be added as a local tourist attraction on our waterfront.

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