

Incidents And Observations

TWO OLD-TIME GOVERNORS

Passing the homestead of Governor Holmes, two miles northwest of Clinton, a few days ago, I regretted to note that the cabin section of the home as existing for many years has been torn away. That cabin, long used as a kitchen by the Williams family, is thought by Mr. H. E. Faison, who is the local antiquarian, to have been the real home of Governor Holmes. If so, it should not lightly have been torn away, since it so eloquently spoke of the simplicity of the life of one of the great men of the south.

More than a hundred years ago, Governor Holmes was advocating construction of good roads and of advancement in education. One of his state papers reads very much like those of modern days. Yet his conception of what good roads and good schools meant was, doubtless, quite in contrast with the modern conceptions.

There may be some questions as to the cabin's being the entire residence of the distinguished Sampsonian, but the home of Governor Owen, on the sandy plain overlooking the western bottom lands of the Cape Fear in Bladen, stood thirty years ago in such a state of preservation that one could with no difficulty conceive that the household of the North Carolina governor who declined to accept the vicepresidency, which would have in so short a while inducted him into the White House as President, could not have been conducted upon any magnificent scale, such as the romantic notions of the old South might suggest. The slaves' cabins had long ago disappeared and the broad acres of Cape Fear bottoms could not be seen from the home site. Only the sun-dial still stood in the old garden to indicate the modes and manners of yesteryear. The home occupied so graciously many years by Mr. and Mrs. Gulon, the latter a daughter of the governor, was occupied by the adopted daughter of the couple, who seem to have had no children of their own. The maiden lady was one of the numerous descent of Pocahontas. The traditions of many slaves among whom was an African prince, still pervaded the community.

Contrasting Conditions of Graves

A score of years after that visit to the Owen home I was to become familiar with Governor Owen's grave in St. Bartholomew's churchyard, Pittsboro, Governor Owen and his brother, also one or two other Bladen youths afterwards to play important parts in the annals of their times, attended the original Bingham school at Pittsboro, before the school had become permanently established at Mebane. Those boyhood days naturally led the youth when distinguished to spend his summers in the old village, which in those days was quite a summer resort for several of the southeastern families of note. On one of those summer sojourns in Pittsboro, Governor Owen died. His Bladen home was so remote that he was buried in St. Bartholomew's churchyard, where a flat stone fitly engraved marks his resting place today.

The good roads that Governor Holmes had advocated have now been attained, and the two or three-day journey to Bladen is clipped to a few hours. Yet it seems fortunate that circumstances led to this Pittsboro burial, where the grave and distinguishing stone are surrounded by the loveliness of the well kept churchyard and by the tombs of a not-inconsiderable number of other dignitaries of the State. It is also suggestive of the prominence of the Chatham gentry of that day that a daughter of Governor Holmes married a citizen of Haywood. With her lived Governor Holmes' son, an old bachelor, whom family documents indicate to have been buried at Pittsboro also, but of which no authentication could be discovered. The younger Holmes was probably buried at Haywood. The sister's family was among the host of Carolinians trekking to the west.

In contrast with the lovely environs of the Owen grave is the Holmes graveyard, overgrown with trees and briars, without a mark of identification of the former governor's own last resting place, and nearly a half-mile from a road.

Old Haywood

The village of Haywood, so prominent in antebel-

lum days has now had its identity largely merged with that of the larger village of Moncure, only a mile away. The broad bottom lands in the fork of the Haw and Deep, as they converge to form the Cape Fear, afforded a rich agricultural domain to support the dignity of the Haywood gentry. The old village, according to tradition, lacked only one vote of becoming the site of the State capital, after the burning of the old capitol at Raleigh, I believe. One has only to imagine Raleigh at Haywood to see a transformed geography of the State. With the waters of two fair-sized streams, with considerable power available, with the coal mines just a few miles up the Deep, and locks on the river making navigation possible, as was the actual case for quite a number of years, it is conceivable that the capital at Haywood would have been quite a city when the actual Raleigh was still only a straggling country town. The North Carolina railroad would have almost assuredly been extended from Goldsboro through Haywood, Pittsboro, Asheboro, and on westward. Pittsboro, Siler City, Asheboro, Old Trinity, would have been the Luthams, Burlingtons, and Greensboros of today, so far as importance is concerned. In fact, only one vote again, and that the vote of the Chatham representative himself, estopped the road's heading through Chatham when it was built. That representative, who was a great planter, didn't want a railroad coming through Chatham and killing or frightening the cattle. At least, tradition thus hands it down.

Towering aloft, two or three miles from Haywood, today is the smoke stack of the great auxiliary plant of the Carolina Power and Light Company, which is the salvation of Chatham county's finances. Listed at several millions of dollars, about a sixth of the whole taxable assets of the county, the Carolina Power and Light Company's check is a mainstay of Chatham's comparatively excellent financial status today, in the face of a series of eight bad crop years climaxed with the effects of the general panic.

Chatham Misses Erwin

Chatham missed the capital by one vote; it missed the railroad by the same margin; and only a few years ago it lost the opportunity of having the town of Duke, later Erwin, located on the Haw, just a few miles from Pittsboro. No fairer proposition was ever made a county. The Duke and Erwin interests owned a considerable tract of land on the Haw, including a considerable water power site. Those interests proposed establishing a factory on the property on the one condition that the county build a good road the few miles from Pittsboro to the proposed site. The chairman of the board of commissioners was interested in the Bynum cotton mill plant. Yet it is hard to conceive of such short-sightedness. The competition of a cotton mill is not a local matter. But for some reason or other, or no reason, the board of commissioners declined to expend the sum necessary to build the five miles of road across the hills to the power site.

Later, when the world had gone crazy in the other direction, Chatham spent hundreds of thousands of dollars, yea a million, in building dirt roads, and the debt exists and there is no factory plant and no considerable village to help foot the debt service charges. The power plant came, probably, without consulting Chatham representatives or commissioners.

In the case of the Duke plant, Chatham's loss was Harnett's gain. In the case of the North Carolina railroad, the state chose a much less difficult route than that through Chatham and Randolph. That route would have necessitated severe grading across a broad area sliced up by the Haw, the Deep, and Rocky Rivers. The chosen line followed the summit of the watershed for many miles, with remarkably little grading necessary for the mileage westward to Greensboro. It would, almost undoubtedly, have cost the state twice as much to build the road through Chatham and Randolph as it did by way of the present Durham, Burlington, and Greensboro, for grading in those days was not the power machine process of today. It was a pick and shovel process.

Contrasting Methods

Sometime ago I wrote of the attempt to build a railroad from Clinton to Point Caswell, on the tide-

water reaches of the Black River. That was in 1883. For five miles from Clinton the line ran through heavily timbered flats. There was not a tool used in grading except picks, mattocks, shovels and axes. Yet the bed for a narrow-gauged road was made for \$400 a mile or less. Stalwart Negro men labored from early till late for a dollar a day. The boss of the grading crew was "Dock" Holland of Enfield. He was a pretty tough bird, not vicious nor drunken, but far from religious. The engineer was a deeply religious old gentleman from Fayetteville, Mr. O'Hanlon. He actually got four dollars a day, and it was a wonder with us boys how a man could spend so much. That meant \$1200 a year if he worked the whole year, but out of that had to come his board and his expenses for trips back and forth to Fayetteville. The engineering force and Mr. Holland boarded at our home while the work of either party was within a fair walking distance. One of the helpers of Mr. O'Hanlon was a youth, Anderson Butler, a double-first cousin of Senator Marlon and Col. George Butler. He has been a useful Baptist minister for forty years or more.

Tempora Mutant, Mutamur

Times have changed. The four-foot cut made through a little field of ours and through about the only clay subsoil on the big old place took weeks. A steam shovel would have cut through within two or three days. And now a highway engineer must have a regular salary of \$2,000 or \$3,000 and be allowed traveling expense. Or that was the case only a short time ago. Many of them, I suspect, will be glad to get the O'Hanlon wage of four dollars a day for such time as employment can be found. The engineering fraternity have had their golden days. Almost any youth who had a smattering of mathematics would blossom out into a full-fledged engineer. There is scarcely a highway in the state which has not been surveyed scores of times, for one reason or another, and sometimes seemingly with no good reason. And again, negro men would be glad to have the chance to work with shovel and pick for a dollar a day.

The old Latins phrased it about thus: "Times change and we change with them." It was a simple folk back in those days of the eighties—yes of the nineties and also of the first decade of this century. Prosperity and progress came, or something that was mistaken for them, and the people changed. Staid matrons would learn to dance and formerly sober couples gloried in liquor parties. The world went crazy with respect to money and pleasure. Just think it was only just the other day that Tyre Taylor was going to make North Carolina rich by turning it into a pleasure ground! The Asheville section, Florida, and other resort sections conceived the idea that everybody could take a holiday with plenty of money to spend. Poor Asheville! It was only the other day that we noticed a summing up of the financial situation of Asheville by Judge Carter. The liabilities were listed in the millions; the assets one row of naughts after another. Poor Asheville!

Folly, Far-Reaching

And such insanities as those that appeared in Asheville and Florida, to keep from trampling upon the toes of folk nearer home, would not have been so bad if they had not been so far-reaching. An illustration. You would scarcely be able to imagine any connection between the Florida boom and my failing to collect for advertising for the Acme Fertilizer Company, of Wilmington. Here is how it went. An advertising agency in Greensboro had charge of the Acme's advertising business. That advertising agency got involved in the Florida craze. When the boom burst, the company burst. The Acme Company had paid the agency a lump sum for its advertising in all the papers. My contract was with the agency. I finally got part of the bill from the receiver.

You cannot hurt one man now economically without hurting somebody else. The big business interests of the country seemed to think for years that they could continue to prosper with the agricultural third of the population barely eking out a living and even pledging their capital to live at all. They got fooled.

(Continued on page eight)