

WANDERING AND WONDERING AMONG MEMORIES' MAZES

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week, discovered for himself the surpassing beauty of the Big Savanna. He had just crossed the state from Clyde, on the Pigeon River, Haywood county, by way of Wake Forest and its lovely campus, on down to Burgaw. After reaching Burgaw, the late Dr. Walter C. Murphy, uncle of A. McL. Graham and Mrs. Henry A. Grady and Dr. Ferrell of the Rockefeller Foundation, asked me how I liked the mountain country, in which I had been teaching. I replied that the Big Savanna was the prettiest thing I had seen in crossing the state, and the Doctor so quoted me in a communication to the Wilmington Messenger. Thus I claim to have anticipated the recognition of the beauty which is now becoming so generally recognized among botanists.

Dr. Wells Arrested As a "Wild Man."

Dr. Wells is a native of Ohio. He has been professor of botany at State College for seventeen years. His coming to North Carolina introduced him to an undreamed-of wealth of flora. "North Carolina has twice the variety of soils and of flora that Ohio has, and three times the variety of either that Iowa has. You couldn't hire me to live in Ohio, though it is my native state," stated the beauty-loving and hard-working botanist.

But he had been in North Carolina ten years before he visited the Big Savanna and began his thorough study of the wealth of its flora and the condition of its soil in every section of its area. The results of that study, embodied in a booklet, should be read by every lover of beauty and every one interested in the knowledge of the soils of eastern Carolina. Two summer vacations Dr. Wells and his companions spent in the study. I know after reading the booklet last year that botany is a man's work. Some of us older ones once conceived of botany as an ornamental study for women.

It was a June morning six or seven years ago when he first visited the Savanna, and alone. He was, naturally, flushed with an enthusiastic survey of the wealth before him. It is rare to see a man in that area; but he saw one native cross over to the railroad as he busied himself in the identification of the flora about him. It was only a casual glance at the transient for him, but for the passing native the man on the savanna was a different matter. He must have watched from a vantage point for an hour or two, amazed at the behavior of the stranger. For he went on to Burgaw and reported to the officers that there was a wild man on the Big Savannah. He described the actions of the botanist perfectly, as the Doctor learned in due time. "He would stand straight up and look all around, point something black like a gun, walk a few feet, sit or kneel down in the grass for several minutes, stand up and look around again, point his gun-like contraption and go through the same performance over and over," or in words more appropriate to a Horse Branch denizen of that day, the man reported the actions of his "wild man" to the officials. It sounded curious to the officers and evidently looked that way when they arrived and saw the antics as described. If the Doctor had noticed their approach, he had thought nothing about it and gone on with his identifications and photographing, for the gun-like contraption was a camera. But directly he found himself arrested by two men, one of them at least having a big pistol. His captors were Pender county officials—and I would give a nickel to know just who they were, in order to guy my old friends right here. Of course, they were readily convinced that the botanist was no wild man and were not only chagrined at their own stupidity but made profuse apologies.

Doctor Wells and his comrades lived in a little shack built near the savanna, cooked breakfast and dinner for themselves, and went to the Black hotel in Burgaw for one of Miss Mollie's great meals in the evening.

The Address.

Dr. Wells discussed the beautification of home grounds before the Sampson ladies and displayed upon the Gem Theatre screen pictures of the state's flora from the mountains to the sea. He told how home grounds may be beautified at very little cost by the use of native plants in mass groups, and stated that such beautification adds real value to the home—a value measured in dollars. He himself has a half-acre in Raleigh, and he believes that if he should sell today, and he has a bidder, he could get \$5,000 more for his home and half-acre lot because of the beautification with native plants, which has cost him very little. He declares he has no lawn mower and

never expects to have one; that he has no money to spend in keeping smooth a half-acre lot. And here is Uncle Ned back, mowing the tiny front lawn and another tiny area in the rear of the Peterson cottage and charging fifty cents for the job—if it were a half-acre it would be quite a bill. Truly, the lawn mower may well be avoided.

A goodly group of ladies heard Dr. Wells and brought plants for identification, but ten times as many should have heard him, and every community that can secure his services for a similar address and for the identification of plants should do so.—Now you see, Dr. Wells, what you got by coming by and taking me with you to Clinton, and all other friends have to do to get, perhaps, a companion on similar trips is to turn to the south at the first street in Dunn east of the Atlantic Coast Line R. R., run south two blocks and stop at the second house of the third block on the left—hardby the white-pillard home of Senator Lee. Come along, if just to say how'd'y. Old "hag angina" keeps me in so close that such calls would be much appreciated.

How "Blue Pete" Died.

Before the last issue of the *Voice* came from the press, the issue in which I told of the graduation of Al Williamson at the six-weeks term of school in a little shed house on the Killett place, a tragedy occurred on that very place that is most distressing. Rev. Claude Peterson, known at Wake Forest, in contradistinction from the writer, as "Blue Pete," a name given him I believe by that devilish Will Bailey of those days, now Senator Josiah William Bailey, died a few hundred yards from the door of the Killett home, in the woods like a hog. You probably read of it in the daily press, but you probably did not conceive of the distressing circumstances in their fullness.

After Claude "quituated" from Wake Forest, he became a country pastor in South Carolina and down there married a Miss Davis. Much later, when his childless uncle, Mr. Killett, had died, Claude brought up the Davis family from South Carolina and the bunch of them bought the Killett place from the rest of the heirs, including the Wilson Killeets, one of whom, Ed, was mayor of Wilson 25 years ago. McDonald Davis became prominent in Democratic politics in Sampson and as a progressive farmer. His brother married one of the fine daughters of that very Al Williamson who graduated from the second reader and has prospered for fifty years as a farmer.

Claude had become feeble, at the age of 72, having a hip which would not allow him to rise when down. His wife was dead and his children grown, and he probably lonesome and foot-free. He seems to have had no more gumption than to leave home without telling the Davises, and they or whoever he lived with were thoughtless enough to permit it. He had taken a vessel and gone into the woods in front of the house to pick some huckleberries. He got down out in the woods and was unable to rise, while the condition of his voice, which had become so seriously affected the last few years that he could speak only a bit above a whisper, prevented his shouting for help, if he had the strength to do so. That was Tuesday. When the aged man did not show up at home it was taken for granted that he had hitch-hiked a ride to his brother's out on the Clinton-White Lake highway. That night a heavy rain fell upon the helpless man in the woods; Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday passed, and Saturday morning the family, having learned that he was not at his brother's, made a search which resulted in the discovery of the body.—But the saddest part of it is that he had lived, in the judgment of the physician, up till within a few hours of his discovery—say till some time Friday—helpless as a hog broken down in the loins, cold, unfed, thirsty, gradually growing weaker, while he must have been wondering all the time he was conscious why a search was not made for him.

And this is the tragic fate, ye Wake Forest men of the early nineties, of "Blue Pete." It was a fate to test the professed faith of the aged minister.—Claude, without the inhibitions of most country folk who joined the church in those old days, had and told a wonderful religious experience back fifty-five years ago when he became a member of Boykins' Chapel. He always confessed that he was not much of a preacher but "when it comes to praying, I can do that up in a brown rag," was his own modest statement of his petitionary powers. You have seen from these pages the past two years and a half how modest we Petersons can be.—This one set out to make a paper for the thinking people of North Carolina—and, dog you, I have made it, even if this issue does not bear any great evidence of pro-

fundity. And Claude could do what he boasted—he could make as pretty a prayer, and almost as long a one, as you ever heard. And those three days of lonely dying must have been largely spent in his favorite exercise, for Claude was a real Christian.

The third Peterson at Wake Forest during my stay was Walter, the only son of Captain Joe Peterson, long one of Goldsboro's leading citizens and for a time that city's mayor. Walter died before he was really grown, for he was a mere boy during his Wake Forest student days, while Claude was a mature man of more than 25 years of age. Walter was a brother of the wife of Rev. Hight C. Moore, D. D., editor of the Southern Baptist Sunday school literature for many years. Capt. Joe was of the same old Sampson stock, his Duplin ancestor having moved from the Peterson nesting place south of Clinton.

A Georgia Historian Seeks Peterson Genealogical Data In Sampson.

And here before me is a letter to Judge Henry E. Faison of Clinton from a Georgia lady, Mrs. Julian C. Lane, of Statesboro, whose letter head carries the inscription "Historian," which would suggest that she is the official historian of her county or maybe of a larger district. Anyway, she is offering to pay Attorney Faison to dig up the records of the Sampson county Petersons, and incidentally of the McPhails.

I learned, while teaching in Georgia, that there was a prominent and wealthy family of Petersons at Douglas, I believe. Later I read a magazine article by a Mrs. Peterson of the group, an article, which with possible magazine comment, suggested a considerable degree of literary ability—but of course she was a Peterson only by marriage. But Statesboro is in south Georgia, and the Petersons in whom Mrs. Lane is interested may be a less prominent family down that way. Sampson and New Hanover folk swarmed into south Georgia early in last century. A few miles from Thomasville, which is not so remote from Statesboro, is a community called the "North Carolina Settlement." I know that a great aunt of mine, with her husband, a Sampson county Butler, went out to that section long ago. When I attended that Southern Baptist Convent in Savannah, when I met Mrs. McEachern, as recorded in the June 1 issue of this paper, a grandson, Rev. Oscar Butler, was pastor of the great Wesleyan Memorial Methodist church of Savannah.

Mrs. Lane writes Mr. Faison that "Malcom Peterson who came to Georgia was probably married about 1800." She states that Malcom Peterson married a McPhail. Mr. Faison has already located the land of Malcom Peterson as lying in Dismal township, just down here at Autryville.

There were seven families of the name in Sampson when the first census was taken in 1790, all which I have hitherto assumed to be of the same colonial family. If Malcom was akin to all the group and if he married a McPhail, his descendants in Georgia may be assured that they have a myriad of remote kin in this section. But his location in Dismal township, remote as distance went in those days from the Peterson locale below Clinton, and his marriage to a McPhail make me dubious of his being one of the English peasant stock that settled between Coharie and Six Runs, the main branches of Black River. The 18th century ancestor of Sampson county McPhails, I have assumed, drifted over into Sampson from the Cape Fear Scotch settlements. My old friend Hamilton McMillan, the Robeson county historian, used to insist that I was Scotch, as his grandmother, a McPeters in Scotland, had anglicized her name over here into Peterson. There was, then, among the Highland Scotch in those early days a family of Petersons, and Malcom Peterson may have been one of them and moved into Sampson along with the early McPhail, making him of an entirely different stock. And a man, especially one of those early fellows, who moves once is apt to move again or a half-dozen times.

If the Miss McPhail was a daughter of the grandfather of the late Isaiah McPhail, you could shut your eyes almost in any group in this section, throw a brickbat and run the risk of hitting a remote relative of those Georgia Petersons—for instance, within a hundred feet of the print shop where this is printed is Mordecai Vann, Chevrolet dealer for Dunn, whose mother was one of the McPhails.

Mrs. Lane will, I fear, never get her desired data. My father did not know just what kin he was to the patriarch Fleet Peterson of sixty years ago—grandfather of Rev. Claude Peterson whose tragic death is recorded above, though they lived only three or four miles apart and

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