

## REMINISCENCES OF PENDER COUNTY, NO. 2

(By CHAS. H. UTLEY)

### A High-Type County Commissioner

There lived in Canetuck township thirty years ago a rather unusual man, who stood out from the crowd as a progressive citizen, and who, to my way of evaluating men, was a very fine gentleman. And whatever progress the county has since made has been due in part to the foundations he helped lay. This man was Franklin Flynn, for many years a County Commissioner, and, I think, much of the time Chairman of the Board. No man in those days had the county's welfare at heart more than Mr. Flynn. And he was always at the post of duty, a man of rare common sense, and well balanced judgment. He evinced the same care and economy in spending public money as his private funds. With grafters he had no patience; and firmly believed in the majesty of the law. He rightfully regarded public office a public trust; he was no public speaker, but in private conversation or friendly argument could assign as many logical reasons for or against a proposition as the next man.

In the heart of Canetuck lived three bachelors with an unmarried sister, these were Allie, John and Emmy Dew. John lived on the sunny side of the street in pleasant and cloudy weather, he saw the funny side of every question, and had the keenest sense of humor. On one occasion he and I sat together at a one room school commencement in his neighborhood where lived Mr. Andrew Moore, father of several sons, all of whom had large families, and some even then had grand children. Late in the evening John turned to me and said, with a twinkle in his eye, I have just counted the Moores and find there are just 76 present and it is not a good night for Moores.

### A Canetucker Serves a Scotland Firm In India

Rufus Pridgen, a bachelor too, but living with his mother and two unmarried sisters, was a fine fellow, a good friend of mine. For many years he was employed by the Acme Tea Chest Company of Scotland, getting out timber for them and near the close of his life they gave him a complimentary trip to Scotland and then sent him to India to investigate the timber there. He died an untimely death from a stroke of paralysis.

### Currie Citizens

Men and women who look more to the future than to the past have always made a strong appeal to me; for these are the people of vision who are the pioneers of progress in every line of development. In those days there lived in the vicinity of Currie a few whose names deserve especial mention. J. D. Everett (Averitt?) was the first man I met there and he proved to be not only a warm personal friend but a most progressive citizen. One lesson he taught me out of his own experience. He had grown to manhood in Cumberland county near Stedman; his father was a prosperous farmer, and had his life insured for a large amount. When he died the children took their share of the insurance money to Fayetteville and deposited it with a merchant with whom the father had long done business, and in whom they had implicit confidence. J. D. had deposited just \$5,000.00, his amount, with the merchant. Suddenly the merchant failed and Mr. Everett lost every cent of his money. He used to laugh about it and pointing to his wife and children, said look at my possessions, let the money go I can earn more. He fell a victim to typhoid fever and died in the prime of young manhood. Pender county lost a valuable citizen in his death. He was the collector for Moore's Creek church, but said he had to have permission to use any language he chose to get money from people. And he usually got it, for everybody liked him, for if there ever was a hail fellow well met, it was John D. Everett.

### Dr. George Lucas

Dr. Lucas was a member of the Presbyterian church, a splendid physician, a progressive citizen, a man of more than average common sense, a successful farmer, the champion of education, friend of the people, kind to the poor, answered every call day or night, gave his time and skill often without either remuneration in money or expressed thanks, took an active interest in everything looking to the development of his adopted county. I may be excused for using space to relate an incident that occurred on a day never to be forgotten by any of us who were there. It was some two years after I became county superintendent of schools. In those days the schools were poor and conducted, all except two, in one

room houses. I strongly advocated local tax as the only way then provided for their improvement. An election had been called for the whole of Grady township. Both the chairman of the Board of Education, then Mr. John B. Davis, and I had been urged to be present and we were on hand. The opposition was strong, led by Mr. Nick Richards, a man of rather strong personality, a local school committeeman, magistrate, and with people opposed to schools on general principles, a man of some influence. The voters were there in full force, pro and con. About ten in the morning some man came to me and said: "Mr. Utley, Nick Richards says you said so and so." I said, "No; I never said it," and he asked, "Will you go with me and tell him you did not say it?" "Certainly," I said. So far as I knew I was perfectly cool. We walked up to the crowd who were in a lively discussion. I faced Mr. Richards, who was a large man physically, weighing nearly two hundred pounds, and asked Mr. Richards if he said I said so and so. And by the time the words were out of my mouth Dr. Lucas caught my right arm and said Mr. Utley don't hit him. I have never thought it had ever occurred to me to strike the man but to his dying day Dr. Lucas said he saw I was in the act of knocking the man down. But listen; as the day wore on the opposition grew more offensive, so much so, that Mr. Davis became disgusted and left. Late in the afternoon I saw Dr. Lucas and Mr. Richards in a threatening argument. I stepped up and just as I reached them Dr. Lucas grabbed a hatchet and I saw he was going to strike Mr. Richards a dangerous or fatal blow, I jumped a long jump and caught the right arm of Dr. Lucas as he raised the hatchet to strike. Both men were violently angered, and I have never doubted that I saved Nick Richards a severe blow if not his life. We lost the election. Dr. Lucas reared a family of fine children, one son became a physician, but died in early manhood; he educated his daughters who were fine, highly intelligent young ladies. Their mother was the daughter of Dr. Simpson, who had died before I went to the county.

### Marries Mother-In-Law

When I first knew Moore's Creek church and its congregation, Mr. Judd Hollingsworth was a prominent and popular citizen, had a fine and fertile farm, lived in one of the best homes in the county and was church clerk and a prominent member of the Junior order, a quiet, unassuming man, but a gentleman of the very finest type. He died an untimely death in the prime of manhood, and the fraternity to which he belonged erected a nice monument at his grave. His daughter married a stranger just before I knew the family who felt it his duty to oppose everything proposed for the improvement of the schools, county and country. I later learned his wife died and strange to relate he then married his mother-in-law. And, I think, left the county.

### Mr. Wash Henry and Family

Here was a splendid citizen who had several of as fine and fine-looking daughters as any man in any county. Of course the Editor will attribute this to the fact of their connection with Sampson, for as I recall the family connection, Mrs. Henry was the sister of a prominent Sampson citizen Mr. Kedar Vann (wrong I think, Ed.) with whose son Preston I had pretended to study Latin while in the class of Prof. J. B. Carlyle, at Wake Forest. Mr. Wash Henry not only enriched life by his personal usefulness and uprightness of character but made a great contribution in his excellent children. The oldest daughter, Miss Mittie, married Rev. C. T. Tew, a highly useful Baptist minister. Miss Mamie, one of the finest characters, and certainly one of the most beautiful women this scribe ever knew, married, I think, another Sampson man, for Mr. Tew, hailed from regions where the huckleberries grow. Anyhow the second husband referred to proved worthy of his connection, becoming a fine business man, and when, I met him, resided at the old Henry homestead near Atkinson. The youngest daughter Miss Lorena, I think, married a Sampson man also, who settled at Atkinson and when I knew him was prominent in the Baptist church there and in the business of the town. There was still another daughter, said to be one of the most skilled domestic artists that section ever knew, but whose later life I know nothing of.

### A Sampsonian's Philosophy

Here is an interesting story Mr. Wash Henry told me many times over because I always enjoyed it. Once upon a time, as all good stories begin, Mr. Kedar Vann and some other gentleman had

a misunderstanding over some matter that greatly irritated both but especially angered the second man and inspired him for a pugilistic combat, but on his advancing on Mr. Vann, Mr. Vann said very emphatically: "No fighting in this, quarrelling is the thing, quarrelling is the thing." I had also known intimately a grand son of Mr. Vann at Wake Forest, Herbert Eakins, of Pender county, who had to leave college for lack of funds, went to the eastern section of the state to teach, contracted typhoid fever, and died only a few weeks after opening school. In college he was quiet, studious, clean in habits and speech, prompt in the discharge of every duty, a gentleman wherever he was seen, for so reticent was he that he was more often seen than heard.

### Albert Highsmith Now A Doctor of Philosophy

When I went to Moore's Creek church Dr. Highsmith was a young man. He was through high school and soon went to Wilmington to work in the offices of the Atlantic Coast Line railroad. We boarded with a Mrs. Rivenbark together with many of Albert's fellow employees, for I lived in Wilmington then. In the fall of 1905 I went to teach in a one room school in Canetuck. I had already collected some two or three hundred books, so I suggested to Albert that he let me place the books in his room and he gladly and graciously accepted the offer. In the spring when I removed them he assured me they had been a great delight and benefit to him through the long winter. At the time Wilmington had no public library. Having had a mania for books when a growing boy and having been denied the privilege and pleasure of books and having always highly valued them and now more than ever, I emphasized to him the pleasure and value of reading. The next time I saw Albert Highsmith, after knowing him as a young man, was on a visit some years ago to N. C. W. C. at Greensboro, where he is at the head of the department of education and a Ph.D. I have always been glad he had the pleasure of reading my books that winter.

### Senator James Moore

Here was a man who might have been a highly useful citizen had he been a man of more vision than nature and training had endowed him with. He had served the county one term in the State Senate, owned a good home, had a good farm, had influence, especially with the non-progressive, was a life-long bachelor, opposed practically every movement made for the improvement of the schools of the county. He never seemed to realize that a new educational era was dawning; and that one great need of his native county was better schools and better trained citizens. His brother Caspar, also a bachelor, a local merchant, was the more progressive of the two men. Both died before reaching old age.

### Mr. W. R. Walker

Mr. Walker was one of the county's best private citizens, a farmer and local merchant, friend of education, a pillar in his community, for the things that uplift and inspire a people to higher living. He took great pride in his children, wanted them educated. His oldest daughter Eloise married Prof. Weatherly, a successful teacher, and the young lady was an exceptionally bright girl.

### Mr. Orr

A man intimately and favorably known to many people for he was the local and popular mail carrier. He was a faithful member of Moore's Creek Baptist church. I understand he has served out his required time and is now retired, I think his wife has just recently died. He too, took great pride and interest in his children. His oldest daughter he educated, and she was teacher for some years before becoming the wife of a Mr. Beatty who lives near Tomahawk, in Bladen county, whose neighbors have told me they have no finer neighbors than Mr. and Mrs. Beatty. Mr. Orr has one son, a professional man, I think. The last time I saw him was in Richmond, Virginia, years ago, where he was in special training. A younger daughter, Sadie, a little girl when I knew her, I am told, became a very fine lady, married well, lives in another county, and is a credit to the family and home from which she came. Should any member of the family see these lines I would like to assure them that I cherish very highly the memories that cluster around them as true friends of those by-gone days.

Since thinking about it, I have concluded that fewer newspaper folk have sought the National feed trough than of any other professional group.