

SOUTHEASTERN BERTIE COUNTY

A Land of Great Possibilities -- Hog and Cattle Raising, Fruit Growing, Fishing

To the Editor:

I read your article of October 21, which contained an account of your visit to Minton Bros. farm with keen interest, and with a just sense of appreciation I trust of the complimentary terms in which you speak of this community of which I happen to be a resident. I especially appreciate your reference to the Merry Hill school and its work. We are somewhat alive to the cause of education as our records will show. If I recall correctly we were about second in the county who established a better rural school system by enlarging our district and voting a local tax. Perhaps it will be of some interest to you and your readers to know something of the obstacles and difficulties that we have had to contend with in our efforts to provide adequate educational facilities for our children.

Prior to 1911 our school house was a typical one of that date, just a little one room affair. On the night of November 22, 1910, it was destroyed by fire. The origin of the fire has never been disclosed. Soon after this Mr. R. W. Askew, beloved County Superintendent, came to the community and made a stirring appeal for a larger and better school; so with renewed enthusiasm we went about the job of establishing a local tax system. The election was carried by a small margin.

A good three room building was erected. Two teachers were employed for the next term which was the fall and winter of 1911 and 1912. A piano was placed in one of the rooms, and used as a music room. We were very well fixed, and of course we were proud of our accomplishments.

On the night of November 22, 1911, just one year from the date of the destruction of the old building by fire, at a late hour of the night, the writer was distressed to discover that our new building was being devoured by fire. No one could get to the scene in time to save anything. If you can picture in your mind something of the disappointment and grief of the Christian people when Nero maliciously caused the destruction of Rome by fire, you can conceive in some measure how those of us felt who labored so faithfully in the establishment of such a worthy enterprise, which now lay in ashes. And as was the case with Rome it was done by an enemy to our cause. When teachers and children began to gather for school the next morning there was a scene of signs of grief that I never shall forget. Parents, teachers and

children wept together. The product of our efforts and sacrifices was simmering in smoke and ashes. It looked as if we would have to abandon all hope, but we would not give up. Such an attack against our cause inflamed our passions for still greater things. So we pressed forward and on and on until our efforts resulted into a modern, well equipped brick building. Though we experienced some obstacles in the erection of this building and were about one year building it as a result of two contractors failing, and finally had to take over and complete it through the Board of Education and bonding companies. When you visit the community again you must come over and see what we are doing. Our school building is situated just to the East of the village and on a commanding spot. It is quite a creditable enterprise and we are proud of it.

Wish you could have come to our annual fair. Had you seen the agricultural exhibits, of grandeur and beauty, fruit and various other departments which would compare favorably with most any county fair; and then could you have seen the people flocking around the pens, with expressions of amazement at those big hogs of Minton Bros., of which you wrote, you would have said it is good to be here. I suspect you would have been tempted to look around a bit for a "Tabernacle." You must come to our fair next year.

Since you seem to be favorably impressed with our county, suppose we take a little trip, and get just a bird's eye view of the features that contribute to the greatness of our section? This being the part of Bertie where our civilization had its beginning necessarily makes it a place of historical interest; but we'll not go into that now, but think about it from an agricultural viewpoint. Beginning at the head of Salmon creek where Minton Bros. farm is located, we look over to the left side of the stream from Minton Bros to the Chowan River. Here may be seen the Gaskins farm, Edenhouse and Ball Gray, composing several hundred acres of land producing cotton, peanuts, corn and tobacco in abundance. On the other side going down to its mouth and following the Sound's edge broken in with hills, brooks and valleys, and several big farms. The first big farm we come to is Avoca. This is a very large and valuable farm, owned and operated by W. R. Capehart. It is adapted to all kinds of crops common to this climate. He has a pecan grove consisting of several hundred trees. They are not very large yet, but are in full swing bearing. I do not know what kind of an estimate to put on this grove. I never have seen one that in any way equals it.

I might say in passing that Mr. Capehart operates a great seine fishery where in the spring during fishing season people come from several States.

We'll now cross over the Black Walnut Swamp and glance at another farm not quite so large but being on the sound shore, hence beautifully located, and it is land of fine texture and quality. This farm is owned by Mr. E. S. Askew, our State Senator. Next we land on the farms and home of Mr. Geo. W. Capehart.

This is quite a large farm consisting of as fine land as one can wish for. Just a little further on we come to lands and the home of Senator Askew. I need not attempt to describe the attractiveness of this home. It will suffice to say that although Mr Askew owns many farms all about in Bertie county, beside town lots and property near town, where he could enjoy the advantages of the city and town life he has chosen to make his home and lives on this magnificent place, where from his house he can see all the beauty and grandeur of that historic and pretty body of water. Leaving this farm we come next to Nichols farm. It too is an excellent farm, and is a valuable place, though the way to it is little bad to get over.

Now, the next farm we come to is a large and valuable one. It is being developed into a stock farm, hence the change of scenery will be a rest to us. It was my pleasure to visit this farm some weeks ago. It was interesting to feast my eyes upon 62 head of cattle. Most of which are of the finest type and breeds that can be had. So those who

are interested in raising fine breeds of hogs may visit Minton Bros farm and those who are interested in raising fine cattle should visit this farm. It is known as the Winston farm and owned by Senator Askew. If I mention many more farms belonging to Mr Askew, some one will conclude that he must be of some prominence as a farmer as well as prominent in public life. The next on our trip belongs to Mr T. A. Smithwick. Here we find demonstrated what can be done in fruit production in Eastern Carolina. He is noted for winning prizes wherever he puts fruit on exhibition. Because of the superiority of his fruit in size, smoothness and quality he is a winner in competition. Some of his competitors are honoring him with the title, "The Apple King" to distinguish him.

Now these farms which we have gone over hurriedly constitute just a part of our section, or the Southeastern part of Bertie county. We claim that we have a section of county that has in it as fine farm lands as can be found anywhere, and that it is rich in possibilities for stock raising, and that with the proper development many branches of agriculture may be pursued with profit and pleasure.

There is much being said nowadays about the possibilities and the development of our Eastern section, and that it will eventually become the garden spot of the world.

So we are looking forward in confidence, believing that our section will constitute a part of that paradise, or whater it may be called—even of "Paradise Vista." So in the language of Andrew Gump we say "Come on Adam, here's your Eden".

S. A. ADAMS.
Merry Hill, N. C.

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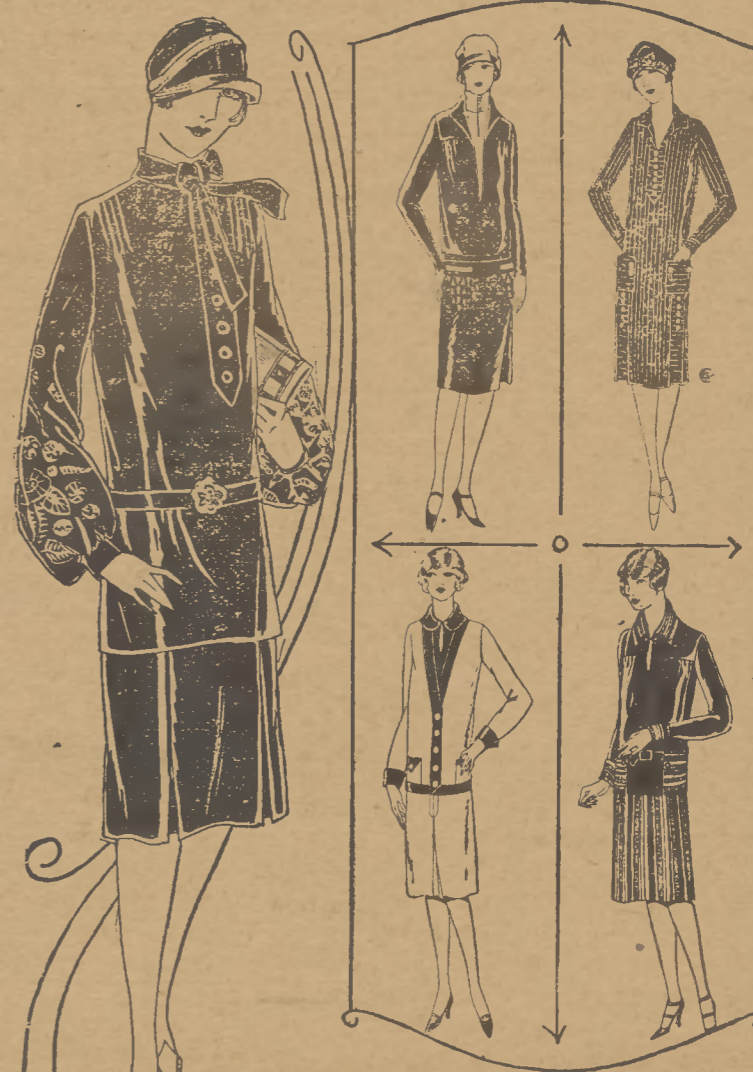
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