

MARION PROGRESS

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BIG FIRE AT OLD FORT

United States Leather Company at Old Fort Damaged to the Extent of Almost a Million Dollars.

One of Western North Carolina's greatest industrial plants suffered to the extent of nearly one million dollars Sunday afternoon when fire of unknown origin practically wiped out the Old Fort tannery of the United States Leather company. Several buildings, with valuable machinery, were destroyed, the entire loss being variously estimated at from \$750,000 to \$1,000,000. This loss, it is stated, is covered by insurance.

SEVERAL DWELLINGS BURN.

Several dwellings, barns and garages near the tannery were destroyed and badly damaged by the fire, and only the high pressure provided by the Old Fort water works and the zealous efforts of employes and residents, who fought the blaze, saved the entire town from destruction. There was a high southwest wind blowing, and it carried sparks and embers before it. There was no loss of life in the fire, but W. P. Goodson, a colored man, dropped dead, evidently suffering an attack of heart failure from the excitement.

The fire was discovered at about 1 o'clock Sunday afternoon in the main building of the plant. It was not fully under control until about 5:30 o'clock, at which time the blaze was confined to a certain area. At that time a huge coal pile, said to contain 1,500 tons, was still burning.

The large stores of acid wood and tan bark were saved from destruction. The leather storeroom at the west end of the plant was saved from the fire by a thick fire wall. There were at least three buildings burned, among them being the acid plant and the refinery building. The greatest loss was in the destruction of costly machinery. There was some hides burned, but the acid wood and bark lost is estimated at under 100 cords.

W. P. Artz, of Old Fort, is the general manager of the tannery, and when asked his opinion of the fire's origin, replied that it was unknown, but that there were some suspicious features of the conflagration. He said that in the main building the fire would appear to be in one part, then would jump to another section of the plant. A thorough investigation will probably be made.

The tannery is from 150 to 300 feet from any other building, but the wind was so strong that the fire spread and destroyed or badly damaged the houses of J. S. Bradley, L. B. Moore, Lonnie Finck, R. H. Green and Pat O'Riley. The roofs of other houses caught afire on different occasions during the afternoon, but a sharp watch was kept and many houses were saved by this extra vigilance. Barns in the vicinity of the tannery were left heaps of smoking ruins, and it was reported that several garages were destroyed.

Every available water connection was in use and at one time there were as many as eight large lines playing water on the fire. The Old Fort water system provides a pressure of about eighty

pounds to the square inch. While the fire burned the acid plant, there were no explosions. The huge quantity of acid wood and bark, kept on hand by the tannery, was stored in large sheds out from the burned buildings, and the fact that that stock was saved, kept the loss from reaching a much higher figure than it did.

There were thirty cars of the Southern Railway company in the danger zone, which were pulled out. Most of these cars were empty, but one was filled with gasoline and might have caused a costly explosion had the fire reached it. George Sandlin, dispatcher of the railway, called a negro fireman, employed by the tannery, and an engine was coupled to the cars and they were hauled to safety.

It is thought that the United States Leather company will rebuild the damaged buildings.

There are from 300 to 500 men employed at the tannery, which is one of the largest manufacturing plants in Western North Carolina. Practically its entire supply of wood and bark, used for tanning purposes, come from the mountain woods of this part of the state.

R. L. C. Gibson Appointed County Auditor—List-Takers.

The board of county commissioners held their regular monthly meeting at the court house Monday. In addition to routine business tax-listers and assessors were appointed for the different townships in the county as follows:

Marion—W. B. Ratliffe.
Montfords—Morris Nanney.
Crooked Creek—J. Y. Gilliam,
Old Fort—C. C. Burgin.
Broad River—T. B. Ledbetter.
North Cove—Rom Avery.
Nebo—John Wilson.
Higgins—Frank Witherow.
Dysartsville—L. G. Price.
Bracketts—W. C. Raburn.
Glenwood—J. M. Haney.

R. L. C. Gibson, former Register of deeds, was appointed county auditor. Mr. Gibson will enter upon his duties at once. He will have an office in the court house and will serve as clerk to the board of county commissioners.

W. H. Morris, W. B. Hudgins and Geo. A. Garrison were appointed road commissioners for Broad River township.

The commissioners ordered that two steel bridges be built, one across Broad river near Vein Mountain and the other across the Catawba at the Reid place near the mouth of Crooked Creek, in Old Fort township.

Death of Mrs. Ada Conley.

Mrs. Anna Conley, aged 59, died very suddenly at the home of her brother, G. C. Conley, three miles east of Marion, last Thursday evening. She was a member of one of the oldest and most prominent families in this section and well known throughout the county. Her husband died more than thirty years ago, since which time Mrs. Conley has lived with her brother. No children survive.

The funeral services were conducted from the residence Saturday morning at 10 o'clock by Rev. Joseph Fry and interment made at the family burying grounds at Murphy's Chapel.

W. G. Hunter, of Nebo, was in town on business Tuesday.

COUNTY COMMENCEMENT

Large Crowd Attends Exercises at Marion—Fine Exhibits—List of Prize Winners.

The climax of the county school year was celebrated in Marion last Saturday when all forces met together for a grand school rally and county commencement. The weather and roads were favorable and the streets were well packed with holiday folks of all sizes.

The parade, though delayed by late trains, came off in due form. Columbus persuaded Isabella of lands beyond the sea; Miles Standish and his band tossed in an adventurous Mayflower; the noble red man disported himself amid scenes of primitive savagery; "Ole Mammy" and "Kentucky Babe" with a goodly company of pickaninnies lolled before the fireplace of old plantation days (and don't forget "the little haun' dawg"). Stroudtown, eighty strong, rode proudly in a gay and capacious float drawn by four "richly caparisoned" mules. Hankins was a second with forty odd. An army of school children with banners manfully braved the dust and pierced the ether with their yells both studied and impromptu.

The lower grade contest in recitation and declamation attracted a large audience, only a small part of which could be accommodated in the court house. Mr. D. F. Giles, former county superintendent, now superintendent of Wake county, made the address of the day and was received with appreciative friendliness.

Ball games for the boys and rhythmic games for the girls occupied the children who lingered through the afternoon.

Between 8 and 10 p. m. Will and Lee Early for affirmative, and Cronje Laughridge and Elon Smalley, negative, in a debate at the graded school between Stroudtown and Dysartsville, a momentous decision was reached—to the effect that "The State of North Carolina Should Grant the Right of Suffrage to Women." Miss Camilla Dobson brightened this portentous prospect with an excellent piano solo and a sympathetic rendering of "The Ruggleses' Dinner Rehearsal."

A comprehensive exhibit of school work, both academic and industrial, was presented on the court room walls. Several schools illustrated in their exhibits the excellent and faithful work accomplished by their teachers during the year. The industrial work proper, such as basketry and weaving, called forth considerable favorable comment, and it is hoped that this work and systematic sewing may occupy a permanent place in our school courses. It is gratifying that a representative of one of the largest school supply houses operating from coast to coast, pronounced McDowell's the prettiest county exhibit he had seen.

COMMENCEMENT WINNERS.

Best progress in reading, first grade, Iola Jimerson of Garden City and Catherine Hunter of Nebo; joint honors. Best progress in reading, second grade, Ray Bowman, Stroudtown. Best progress in writing, first grade, Willie West, Clinchfield school; second

grade, Earl Hunt and Paul Lamb, Clinchfield school, joint honors. Best third grade Language book, Dean Miller, Clinchfield school; fourth grade, Una Childers, Clinchfield school. Best composition, Conservation of Our Native Birds, Dorothy Greenlee, Greenlee school. Best composition, Forest Conservation, Henry Wall, Greenlee school. Best essay, Ideal Rural Life in McDowell, Ella Williams, Greenlee school. Best third and fourth grade recitation—(Judges are requested to make this award as it was overlooked). Best fifth and sixth grade recitation, Freda Taylor, Nebo. Best high school recitation, Camilla Dobson, Greenlee. Best high school musical number, Camilla Dobson, Greenlee.

Perfect attendance—Dock Good and Justice Good, Woodlawn; Leila Lonon, Lena Spencer, Ethel Hennessee and Pansy Hennessee, Pitts; Annie Burnett, Hankins; Lena Brown, Billie Brown, Norman Bird, Carl Brown and Biddie Price, Ashford; Shirley Flowers, Hubert Flowers, Ed Frisbie, Reid Hild and Ada Norton, Stroudtown.

Best school average for year, to be determined. Best school float, Clinchfield school, Plantation Days. Largest load of children, C. M. Pool, Stroudtown; next largest, W. A. Houck, Hankins. Best school exhibit, Nebo.

Britt Hearings Closed—Hearing at Marion Last Week.

The Britt-Weaver controversy was given a hearing here Thursday before Commissioner J. L. C. Bird but no developments of importance took place. One witness swore that he voted for Weaver without having paid his poll tax. Two other witnesses also testified as to failure to comply with qualifications for voters. Other than this no evidence of any value was unearthed. About 30 witnesses were subpoenaed and all but four or five were present.

The last of the hearings in behalf of Mr. Britt in his contest for a seat in congress was held at Rutherfordton Friday. The hearings just closed lasted for a period of 40 days and witnesses were also examined at Waynesville, Hendersonville, Bryson City, Andrews, Sylva, and two hearings held in Asheville. No date has been set for the first hearing in behalf of Mr. Weaver who is now in Washington attending the special session of congress. Mr. Weaver's counsel will spend this week preparing for examination of witnesses throughout the district, it is stated, and the hearings will probably begin at an early date.

Mrs. Rader Wins Piano.

Mrs. S. C. Rader, formerly of Marion and now post mistress at Bayside, Cali., was the winner of the handsome piano given away by The People's Store of Arcata, Cali., recently at the close of a contest which had been running for six months. The contest was especially spirited, and at the close Mrs. Rader won out with 1,127,609 votes to her credit, nearly a hundred thousand more than her nearest competitor. Mrs. Rader has many friends and relatives here who will be glad to learn of her good fortune.

CLARK IS AGAIN SPEAKER

Clark Got 217 Votes and Mann Received 205—Control of House in Hands of Democrats.

Washington.—The Democrats, with the aid of four of the five Independents, organized the House when the new Congress assembled, re-electing Speaker Champ Clark, of Missouri, and sweeping into office with him all the other Democratic caucus nominees.

Mr. Clark received 217 votes against 205 for Representative Mann, the Republican choice for Speaker, who not only failed to receive an independent vote, but lost the support of five of his party colleagues.

All the Democrats present voted for Mr. Clark and were joined by Representatives Hall, Progressive, Minnesota; Martin, Progressive-Protectionist, Louisiana; London, Socialist, New York and Randall, Prohibitionist, California. The five Republicans who did not support Mr. Mann were Representatives Gardner, of Massachusetts, who voted for Representative Lenroot, of Wisconsin; Gray, New Jersey, and Dallinger, Massachusetts, who voted for Representative Gillett, of Massachusetts, and Haskell, of New York.

IS CHOSEN SPEAKER BY AID OF INDEPENDENTS.



CHAMP CLARK.

and James, of Michigan, who voted "present." Representative Fuller, Independent, Massachusetts, voted for Representative Lenroot.

Nominated By Schall. To the surprise of the Republicans, Representative Schall placed Mr. Clark in nomination. For a time it was thought that he had done so by inadvertency, but later it developed he had acted through pre-arrangement with Democratic leaders. He asked permission to address the House just after the first roll call and then after declaring the international situation demanded united support of President Wilson, roused tremendous cheering by announcing that although with his sightless eyes he could be of no use on the battlefield he could at least support the President by casting a vote for Champ Clark.

Representative Green, of Massachusetts, presented Mr. Mann's name in a brief speech and Representative Lenroot, of Wisconsin, the Progressive-Republican leader, seconded it. There were no other nominations, and in just an hour and forty minutes after the House was convened, Mr. Clark, as he had predicted to the minute several days ago, was declared elected and was escorted to the chair by a committee headed by Mr. Mann. In a brief address the Speaker pleaded for united action in the present crisis.

Calling of the roll was replete with outbursts of applause but the lion's share went to Miss Jeannette Rankin, of Montana, a Republican, and the first woman to be elected to the House.

The Sugar Hill school will close Friday of this week. An entertainment will be given at the school house Saturday night. The program consists of songs, recitations, etc. The public is cordially invited.