

where a big white house stands as a solitary reminder of him and of the mother, who in spite of all the terrible things which had befallen him, loved her son. Oaksmith seemed to have plenty of money and began at Fort Macon, near Beaufort, a marine railway, thinking that the commerce of the old port which used to have a fine trade with the West Indies, would be revived and that he would get ships to repair and clean there. But none came and rotting timbers and rusting chains and machinery told the story of this poor venture until within a very few years ago. Oaksmith loved the water and so did his ruddy-faced daughters and they went far and near in their small boat. One day, about 1873, the boat capsized and the daughters and their father were thrown into the waters of the sound. Oaksmith and two girls escaped but three were lost.

Rumor, which starts so many vile things, began to circulate a story, that the boat was capsized by Oaksmith to drown the girls, in order to obtain insurance upon their lives, which it claimed was held in large amounts in both English and American companies. There was even talk of an investigation. As a matter of fact the father seemed always devoted to the daughters. He had one son. Not long after he died, at some distant point the daughters who survived married and went away, and only the old mother, sitting in the big house and thinking of the olden days, remained, a strange but fascinating link between the present and the past; writing stories for magazines and newspapers; stories which had never lost their old charm and fascination. Where Oaksmith had been all the years he was hiding and with a reward of \$10,000 outstanding for him, he never told. He lived a sort of life apart when in North Carolina and while the world knew his history, there was yet a certain mysterious fascination about the man. In these days, as a visitor skims along the sound, the boatman will point out the place where Oaksmith's marine railway was and the place where his beautiful daughters met their tragic fate and, perhaps, refer to the facts I have given you.

FRED A. OLDS

#### THE STATE'S MICA MINES

##### Mountain Regions Have Furnished It for Over a Century

Mica has been mined in the mountain region of North Carolina for over a century though, of course, its use was at first very much restricted. When these mines began to be opened it was found that there had been much earlier discovery of mica in several counties, notably in Jackson and Swain. Pits were found from the bottom of which had sprung up trees of great size and there were also other evidences of the presence of workers of an unknown period. The mines, which were thus early opened, are somewhat in line running north and south, and this fact tends to bear out the belief that Spaniards, after the conquest of Florida, pushed up as far as southwestern North Carolina. Pistols of a very antique form have been found and in one case a lance head and a gorget, an ornament or insignia worn at the throat of Spanish officers. It is stated that one

or two Catholic medals have been unearthed and also some tools of iron of a form not in use in much more than a century in any country and of a kind never used by Americans. Thus there appears to be ground for belief that the Spaniards came northward, after their conquest of Florida, passing through Georgia and South Carolina and thence into Jackson and Swain counties in this state but that they did not pass the Tennessee line, being stopped by the great barrier of the smoky mountains.

The real beginning of mica mining in this state was in 1868, since which time some four million dollars worth has been produced, principally in the counties of Mitchell and Yancey, nearly all the remainder having been taken from Jackson and Macon counties. The mica occurs usually in the form of large irregular crystals, from one to two feet long, and from a few inches to nearly two feet in diameter at greatest width, these crystals being usually bedded in a matrix of quartz in large irregular veins, from a few inches to many feet in width, sometimes traceable along the surface of the earth for half a mile or more. The early miners do not appear to have made excavations in search of gems or of gold, as mica crystals, some of considerable size, have been thrown aside in the old openings. There is gold in that part of the state, but not in great quantities, but there are various gems, including the emerald, ruby, sapphire and garnet.

Any stay of the Spaniards in that section must have been very brief. The Cherokees were not a bloodthirsty tribe, and they may have welcomed the white visitors, who were full of the most fantastic notions of treasures, which they looked for wherever they went. The Indians regarded as valueless the things which the Spaniards would naturally search for, as the Red Men used only such substances as stones, for use in games; talc, because it was soft and they could rudely carve it into forms; clay which they could make into pipes and jars; flint and quartz, out of which they could form arrow and spearheads.

FRED A. OLDS

#### Campfire Supper

A campfire supper provided a pleasant evening for a congenial group of equestrians during the week, the company including Mr. and Mrs. Spencer Waters, Messrs. Banes, Taylor and Durant, Misses Bennett, Blake and Durant. The success of the affair has led to plans for its repetition.



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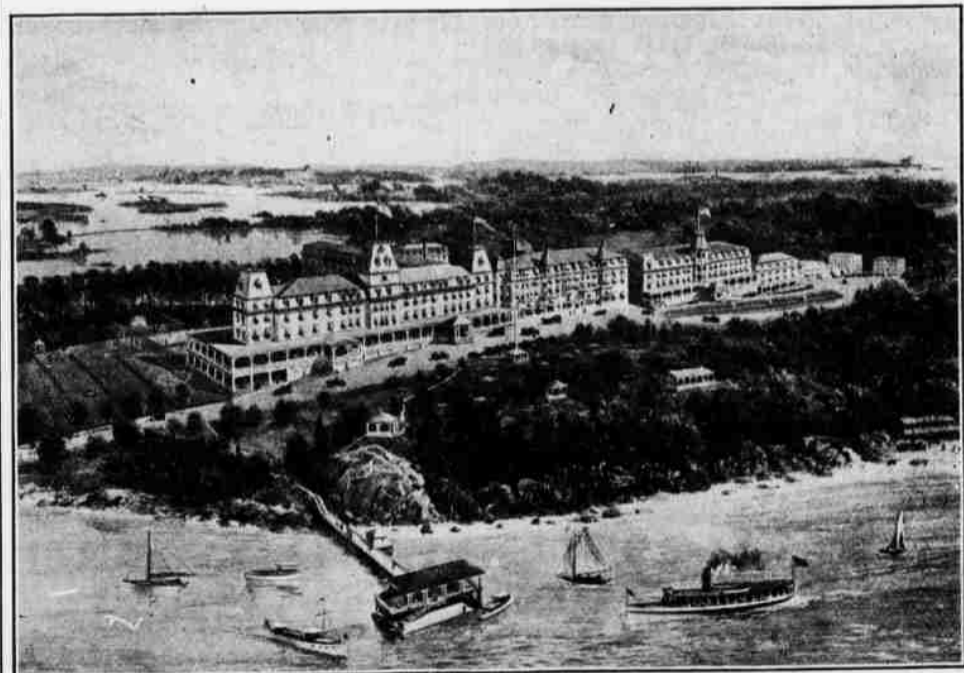


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