

HISTORY OF SCHOOLS

(Continued from Page One)

"Meeting House". And this area is just east of the Don Phillips house and where the 2-story residence of Mrs. Walter Scales stands.

However, it is not believed that any building was ever erected on this acre site, but instead the little "Night's Chapel" adjoining the lot was used in week-days for the school, and Sundays for a community church. This is borne out by the fact that on January 1, 1825, the lot was conveyed by the Trustees to William Covington. Though the Town was still almost in "swaddling" clothes, the Founding Fathers looked ahead with a vision. The Academy Trustees on April 9, 1799, bought from Tod Robinson Not No. 12. This lot No. 12 was owned by Thomas Childs according to the 1788 Plat; and today standing about on this lot is the two-story residence of Mrs. T. C. Leak across street from the present Methodist par-

sonage. Then in 1808 the Trustees obtained a 20-foot strip connecting Washington and Franklin streets, just on the east side of the present Methodist church, for a street to the Lot No. 12 school building. As Time moved on, successive changes were made, and finally the school became located on Lots 30, 31, 17 and 18 (the old Grammar School Site).

Just think of the water, figuratively speaking, that has gone over the dam since that time—in these 166 years!

It is interesting to note the family names of the first Board of Trustees of the original Richmond Academy. Those names are with us today—Henry William Harrington (the first of many in this section to plant cotton), Thomas Dockery, Thomas Crawford, Miles King, Edward Williams, Dudley Mask, William Hunter. Men of whom we are all proud.

This Academy was the forerunner of our modern high school. The Academy was more advanced than the subscription schools, and prepared students for College.

But while the Academy has a serious job to do, that of emphasizing EDUCATION with stress on the three R's, still there was time out for fun and frolic, albeit the teachers were undoubtedly stern and commanded discipline. There must have been gay parties with fun, dancing and merry-making—the Minuet, the Quadrille and the Waltz.

The Academy evidently went into decline, because we find a Legislative Act of 1846 passed to revive the original 1788 Act which to quote "had become obsolete and ceased to have effect." And after a lapse of 58 years, a new Board of Trustees was named in 1847—Sheriff John C. Knight, James Pickett Leak, William B. Cole, Dr. Calvin C. Covington, John W. Cameron, William G. Webb, and Congressman Walter Leake Steele.

Then came the War Days, of 1861 to '65. And Sherman's army came through Rockingham in March, 1865, pillaging and destroying—and burning the two-story wooden cotton mill (yarn) that had been built in 1837—the seventh oldest cotton mill in the State. That mill was known as the Richmond Mill, chartered by the General Assembly in December, 1833—just a month after Wake Forest Institute was authorized at Cartledge Creek convention Nov. 4, 1833. This mill was rebuilt in 1869 as Great Falls mill, and then in the 'Seventies and 'Eighties and later more and more mills were built around our town so that the Town became known far and wide as a great Industrial Center.

Despite Reconstruction and Carpet-baggers, the Richmond Academy continued to operate; and another Legislative Act was passed in 1883 giving the Trustees authority to buy and sell property.

With the approach of the Gay 'Nineties, prosperity returned to our devastated Southland and with it a renewed interest in Education.

And while the Academy continued to operate through the years, there sprang up other schools, all of a private nature. Among these schools was that taught by Rev. Andrew McMillan in the 'Seventies in an

old dwelling with a long porch that stood where the Manufacturers building now stands, or perhaps it can be better identified as the Radio building—or the building just east of KAY'S new Colonial-type structure.

Rev. G. W. Neal was principal of the Academy coming here in August, 1877; he was 8 years at Newbern.

In the early fall of 1881 a young wisp of a girl, Lucy Phillips, came to our town to teach—she a little 19-year-old girl fresh from college. And this girl was married on April 9, 1883, to Moses H. Russell, a merchant of the town. And Mrs. Lucy Phillips Russell today, at the age of 91 is sturdy and well—one of our community's First Ladies, and a person our Town is happy to honor.

Still another teacher in the 'Eighties was Dr. Carroll—and his Classical School gained a state-wide reputation. He then taught in the old J. M. Pennington wood shop, then about where the Carolina Standard lumber plant now is located, owned by W. P. McRae and Leo Page.

On April 25, 1889, a new corporation came into being—The Rockingham Educational & Literary Assn. On the following day the Trustees of the old Academy leased the building and lot to this new group for a period of 50 years on condition that the new Association would erect on the lot a school building to cost not less than \$2000. And from that date might be said to start the upward trend in education here. A building was erected in 1887 of brick and had two class rooms on the first floor and an assembly hall upstairs.

Members of the old Richmond Academy when the lease was executed in 1889 were T. C. Leak, H. C. Wall, W. T. Covington, W. I. Everett, A. M. McAulay, H. S. Ledbetter, H. C. Dockery.

For twelve years the Academy was operated by the Rockingham Educational & Literary Association; and then on August 27, 1901, the Association leased the property to the Rockingham Graded School—the land fronting on Washington street 228 feet, and extending southward on Lawrence street 382 feet to Franklin street.

Four rooms were added in 1901.

The first Trustees for the new Graded School in 1901 were Settle Dockery, Paul Whitlock, Thomas S. Wright, William C. Leak, George Warburton, M. H. Russell, A. J. Maxwell, Marion Lee Hinson, Robert L. Steele, James Pickett Leak, W. N. Everett, H. S. Ledbetter. The Superintendent in 1901 to 1906 was A. B. Hill.

In 1902 a young teacher came to our midst who has made his indelible stamp upon the educational life of our entire section. That young man was L. J. Bell—just a little over 24 1-2 years old. And it's this Mr. Bell whom we delight to honor today—and for whom this fine new \$475,000 new building is named. This man became Supt. Hill's assistant. And in 1906 he succeeded Hill as Superintendent—and served honorably and magnificently for 42 years—a man gentle in spirit, doggedly set on giving the community the BEST that could be provided with limited means; a kindly man, a real gentleman and an EDUCATOR without a peer! In 1916 he took on the duties of County Superintendent as well, and filled both positions with ability and honor until his health necessitated his retiring as County Supt. in 1947—and as Town Supt. in 1948. And your School Board in 1948—selected our present James E. Huneycutt as Superintendent—a worthy successor to a great man.

But we must hurry on with this story. In the winter of 1901 Senator Cameron Morrison introduced the Bill to give a charter to the Rockingham Graded Schools. In May of that year the town people voted a tax on themselves to help support this school. And four brick rooms were added that summer, the school opening in September with 200 pupils and six teachers. (Just here we might add that now in 1953 we have 57 white teachers in our three schools and a total enrollment of 1548).

Of those twelve Trustees named in 1901, only one is living, Lawyer Paul Whitlock in Charlotte. Members were ap-

pointed to serve on a staggered basis and re-elections to be made by the remaining Board members for four-year terms. This plan was followed until the Spring of 1931 when Representative Emerson Scarborough had a Bill passed changing the system of selecting School Trustees, and providing for a Board of five, to be elected for two and four year terms. And that is the system in vogue today.

In the 52 years since 1901 there have been but five Chairmen—W. C. Leak from 1901 to 1918, W. N. Everett 1918 to 1923, George S. Steele 1923 to 1931, Bruce Benton from 1931 to 1945, George P. Entwistle from 1945 to 1947, and Isaac S. London from 1947 to the present time (1953).

Now let's pull back the curtain to May 1, 1901. The Board Chairman then was W. C. (Doc) Leak. The teachers were A. B. Hill, superintendent; Edwin A. Armstrong, principal; Miss Martha (Mat) Johnson, Miss Nellie Armstrong (later married to George Steele), Mrs. Fannie Wood Steele, Miss Pat LeGrand.

The same Board one year later. The time—early summer of 1902.

L. J. Bell comes to the Rockingham school, as principal replacing Edwin Armistead. (He born at Kings Mountain on Jan. 26, 1878, and graduated from the University in 1898 with highest honors).

The Board in sessions 4 years later. The time—early summer of 1906.

L. J. Bell is elected Superintendent, and Miss Pat LeGrand as Principal. An addition to the school is badly needed. Supt. Bell suggests a bond issue for additional rooms and an auditorium. The enrollment for fall of 1906 to be 260.

Even though the school was overflowing, it was not until 1911 that the auditorium and four class-rooms and an office were completed. And thus the building stood until 1952 when it was torn down to make available the lots for business purposes. And in its stead the Board bought thirteen acres of land in the northeastern edge of town, and completed and moved into this \$475,000 L. J. Bell building April 10, 1952.

(Previously in 1922 a 3-story brick high school was built on a 15-acre tract also in the northeastern part of town, and formally opened January 1, 1923).

On the cornerstone of the new addition to the old grammar school in 1911 were engraved the names of the following Trustees—W. C. Leak, chairman, M. L. Hinson, Robert L. Steele, J. P. Leak, W. N. Everett, H. S. Ledbetter, H. C. Dockery, Claude Gore, George P. Entwistle, C. C. Taylor (none now living). When the building was demolished in 1952, the old cornerstone was preserved for future posterity—as well as the old school bell—and this bell is to be enshrined in this school, even as the name of our beloved Mr. L. J. Bell will be enshrined and perpetuated.

Principals to serve under Mr. Bell since 1906 were Miss Pat LeGrand, O. V. Hicks, Miss Nettie Brogden, Miss Bessie Dunlap, Joseph Allred, Miss Kate Finley in 1918 (still Principal of the high school) and Miss Bessie Terry in 1922—she still principal of this L. J. Bell Ele-

mentary School, but resigning as of June 2, 1953.

Following World War One, prosperity and growth inevitably required more room, and so the high school was built in 1922. On a plaque in this high school are the names of the following Trustees of 1922-1923: W. N. Everett as chairman, H. S. Ledbetter, Claude Gore, George P. Entwistle, C. C. Taylor, L. J. Bell, J. Stansil Covington, Bruce Benton, Nancy Pegues Leak, George S. Steele, E. A. Allen, E. Burton Terry. Only four of these are living.

In 1926 still more room had to be built—this time a splendid six-room building and auditorium on a lot donated by Claude Gore. Miss Sena Dunn is principal of this school in Great Falls Village.

From 1901 to 1931, the School Board had consisted of about twelve members and it was a "self-perpetuating" board. With depression of the early 'thirties, the people began to feel that there should be a more democratic method of selecting Trustees, and so Rep. Emerson Scarborough introduced in the 1931 Legislature a bill to change the system by having five members, with two to be elected for four years, and three for 2-year terms. This Board who took over in May, 1931, consisted of Rev. Bruce Benton as chairman, George P. Entwistle, M. B. Leath, W. P. McRae and W. H. McCall.

Dr. Benton served as Chairman from 1931 to 1945 when he retired from the Board, and George P. Entwistle succeeded him as chairman. Mr. Entwistle served until 1947 when he resigned, and Isaac London was made chairman, and still is. Mr. London had been elected to the Board in May 1943, and re-elected successively.

The present Board—as of 1953, consists of Isaac London chairman, John Entwistle, Dan Gore, Leo Allen and Lonrge McCaskill.

And before closing, this record would be incomplete did we not state that the Town on Dec. 9, 1936, voted a special 25 cent tax on themselves to provide a nine month and a twelfth grade; and then on May 28, 1949, the Town and County voted a bond issue of \$1,750,000 for new school buildings—and with its part of the bonds the Town built a new Negro high school and this new Bell Elementary.

And since way back in the 'Twenties the school has been on the Accredited "A" list—in fact, the Rockingham school was the THIRD school in North Carolina to be so rated—a fact that can be laid to the vision of L. J. Bell, and his two able principals—Miss Kate Finley and Miss Bessie Terry.

And one final word—we also have with us as one of our excellent grade teachers Miss Maude Moore who came to our

grammar school in November, 1909, and has been a Rock of Gibraltar for the young children over these nearly forty-four years.

And Mrs. C. P. Stewart (the former Miss Lottie Linton) came to the Rockingham grammar school in 1909 and taught for eight years.

SUPERINTENDENTS

ROCKINGHAM SCHOOLS:

A. B. Hill	1901-1906
L. J. Bell	1906-1948
J. E. Huneycutt	1948-

Principals:

E. A. Armistead	1901-1902
L. J. Bell	1902-1906
Miss Pat LeGrand	1906-1910
O. V. Hicks	1910-1911
Miss Nettie Brogden	1911-1913
Miss Bessie Dunlap	1913-1916
Joseph Allred	1916-1917
Miss Kate Finley	1917-
high	1918-
Miss Bessie Terry	1922-1953
Mrs. Mattie Ewing	1926-1928
Great Falls	1928-1943
Miss Sena Dunn, G. F.	1948-

Board Chairmen:

W. C. (Doc) Leak	1901-1918
W. N. Everett	1918-1923
Geo. S. Steele Sr.	1923-1931
Rev. Bruce Benton	1931-1945
Geo. P. Entwistle Sr.	1945-1947
Isaac S. London	1947-1953

Board Members: 1901-1953:

Allen J. Maxwell	1901-1903
Sheriff T. S. Wright	1901-1904
M. H. Russell	1901-1904
Paul C. Whitlock	1901-1906
George Warburton	1901-1908
A. Settle Dockery	1901-1911
Marion L. Hinson	1901-1912
Robert L. Steele Sr.	1901-1916
W. C. Leak Sr.	1901-1918
J. Pickett Leak Sr.	1901-1918
W. N. Everett Sr.	1901-1923
Hal S. Ledbetter	1901-1925
M. T. Hinson	1903-1906
H. C. Dockery Sr.	1904-1911
C. C. Taylor	1904-1931
L. J. Bell	1906-1922
Geo. P. Entwistle Sr.	1906-1947
Claude Gore	1908-1931
A. D. Dumas	1911-1917
Dr. W. P. Webb	1912-1917
John C. Dockery Sr.	1916-1921

HAMLET THEATRE

Late Show Saturday Nite Sunday and Monday

CHARLTON HESTON
RHONDA FLEMING
JAN STERLING
FORREST TUCKER

PONY EXPRESS
A Paramount Picture

Ed. A. Allen	1917-1925
J. Stansil Covington	1917-1931
Rev. Bruce Benton	1917-1945
E. B. Terry	1918-1928
Mrs. W. C. Leak	1918-1931
George S. Steele Sr.	1921-1931
Rev. W. R. Coppedge	1922-1925
A. G. Corpening	1925-1931
Dr. J. M. Ledbetter	1925-1931
E. B. Liles	1925-1931
John Morrison	1928-1930
Ozmer L. Henry	1928-1931
W. H. McCall	1931-1943
M. B. Leath	1931-1947
W. P. McRae	1931-1947
Isaac S. London	1943-1953
Athos Cockman	1945-1947
Minor T. Hinson	1947-1951
Jay Helms	1947-1951
Dan Lenox Gore	1947-
John Entwistle	1947-
W. Leo Allen	1951-
L. F. McCaskill Jr.	1951-

PTA Give London Appreciative Vote

At its regular meeting April 16, 1953 the Rockingham Parent-Teacher Association voted to express its appreciation to Isaac S. London for his services to the Rockingham City Schools during the past ten years as a member of the School Board and expressed its regret at his decision to withdraw from that office.

The Parent-Teacher Association also expressed its appreciation of the unlimited time he has devoted to the recent building program and the loyal support given to the Parent-Teacher Association and the schools, both as a member of the School Board and as editor of the Rockingham Post-Dispatch.

Mr. London has been a member of the School Board since 1943, serving as chairman of the board since 1947. He has actively supported the building programs for the colored school, the

Great Falls cafeteria, and the L. J. Bell Elementary School.

LEGION WILL ELECT NEW OFFICERS TONIGHT

The local Post of the American Legion will elect officers during a dinner meeting at the Hut on Ledbetter Lake tonight (Thursday), it was announced this morning by Commander Stubbs. All members are urged to be present; also members of the Auxiliary.

HAMLET Drive-In Theatre
SATURDAY NIGHT
BATTLE IN BRITAIN

Today and Friday Tougher than the Barbary Coast.

"Sin Town"

Constance Bennett

Saturday Only

Double Feature
Jack Pot Drawing
Cash and Merchandise
TIM HOLT in

"Stage Coach Kid"

HIT NO. 2

It's a Horse on Lou and a barrel of fun for you! ABBOTT & COSTELLO In

"It Ain't Hay"

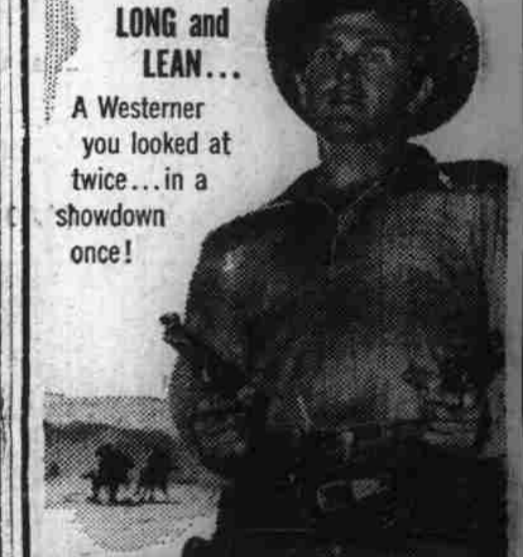
Sun., Mon. and Tuesday

First Run Picture

3 Big Days

Built for TROUBLE!

LONG and LEAN... A Westerner you looked at twice... in a showdown once!



THE TALL TEXAN

Starring Lloyd BRIDGES • Lee J. COBB
Marie WINDSOR • Luther ADLER

Rock-Ham DRIVE-IN

Today and Friday Battle of the Ages for the Loveliest of Harem Beauties

"Thief of Damascus"

Color by Technicolor
PAUL HENRIED
JOHN SUTTON

Sat. — Double Feature
FREE PRIZE NIGHT
GENE AUTRY in
"Wagon Team"
Plus
BORIS KARLOFF in
"Strange Door"

Sunday
A Pleasure Parade
"About Face"
In Technicolor
GORDON McRAE



KAHN TAILORING CO.
of Indianapolis
Is Sending Its
SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE
Conrad Lynn
Who Will Be At Our Store
Monday, April 27

Let him show you the new, colorful and distinctive fabrics and fashions. Let him take your measurements now for delivery later... and remember—our prices are low—

★
Every Garment We Make Is Individually Tailored to Measure

Long's
Opposite Courthouse
Rockingham, N. C.

Pine Tree Gift Shop offers
Wrought-Iron Works
Lamps and Lamp Shades
Flower Containers
Recommended by N. C. Garden Club
Decorative Mail Boxes
Imported Basket Wear
AND
Numerous Other Decorative
Ideas for Your Home
MRS. SAM T. SNODDY — MRS. LELAND H. COX

SKY-VU DRIVE-IN Theatre

Today and Friday
They were two of a kind.
"His Kind of A Woman"
ROBERT MITCHUM
JANE RUSSELL
Sat. — SILVER NIGHT
\$115.00
FIRST PRIZE
"Rose of Cimarron"
Natural Color
JACK BEUTEL
Sunday and Monday
"The Duel at Silver Creek"
In Technicolor
AUDIE MURPHY

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They were two of a kind.
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Natural Color
JACK BEUTEL
Sunday and Monday
"The Duel at Silver Creek"
In Technicolor
AUDIE MURPHY

There's **NO LIMIT** to the **LAUGHS!!**

WHEN THEY GET TOGETHER AS **M. P.'s!**

BOB HOPE **MICKEY ROONEY**
TEAM UP FOR LAUGHS... WITH
MARILYN MAXWELL "She's Restricted!"

They're a pair of M. P.'s (Miserable Privates) ... playing the old Army game with Marilyn ... off limits lady barred to military personnel!

OFF LIMITS

RICHMOND

Thursday • Donald O'Connor
Friday • Debbie Reynolds
"I Love Melvin" ★ Saturday • Gary "Distant Drums" • Cooper

MORE JOY!
Goofy
Cartoon
"HOW TO BE A DETECTIVE"
Sports Special
"Birthplace of Hockey"
Latest World Events in The News