

## Sylva Was Incorporated Fifty Years Ago--1889

On March 3, 1889, the Town of Sylva, in the County of Jackson, was chartered as an incorporated town by the General Assembly of North Carolina.

Hon. L. J. Smith, of Cullowhee, was the Senator from this district; and Hon. Wm. A. Dills, of Dillsboro, was Representative in the House.

The officers for the town named in the act were: Mayor, O. B. Coward; Commissioners, E. R. Hampton, A. M. Parker, W. M. Burns, A. W. Bryson, and Robert L. Madison.

Mr. Coward was then a merchant in Sylva. He died at Webster in 1893. He was for many years identified with the business and political life of the county, and was an important factor in both. He later served this district in the State Senate.

Gen. E. R. Hampton is generally called the father of Sylva. He secured the postoffice for the little settlement. He, A. B. Dills, and D. J. Allen hauled the lumber and erected the railroad station at their own expense, and Gen. Hampton acted as depot agent for several years without pay, in order to induce the Richmond and Danville Railway Company to stop their trains here and make Sylva a station.

A. M. Parker was a well known figure in Jackson county for many years. Later he moved to Arkansas, and died there.

W. M. Burns was a Sylva merchant. He moved from Sylva to Tennessee and died there.

Capt. A. W. Bryson was a captain in the Confederate Army, and was a contractor. He died in Sylva in 1907.

Prof. Robert L. Madison is the only survivor of the original officers of Sylva. The same year, 1889, he went to Cullowhee and began the school that has now become Western Carolina Teachers College. At the time of his appointment to the town board in Sylva, he was editor of the Tuckasee Democrat.

J. C. Fisher, named as the police officer, was a well known veteran, and a well known citizen of the county for many years. He removed to Dillsboro, where he died.

On Monday, May 6, the first municipal election in the town was held, and O. B. Coward was elected Mayor, J. S. Jarrett, A. M. Parker, A. W. Bryson, R. L. Madison, and B. H. Snerrin, were elected aldermen, and S. A. Davis, marshal.

The petition to the General Assembly requesting that Sylva be incorporated was published in the Tuckasee Democrat on Jan. 19, 1889. It reads:

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**  
Notice is hereby given that application will be made to the General Assembly now in session to pass an act granting a charter giving a municipal government to the Town of

Sylva, the limits of the same to extend one-half mile every way from the depot as at present located in said town.

It bears the date of Jan. 18, 1889, and was signed by E. R. Hampton, founder of Sylva, O. B. Coward, merchant, E. A. Moore, carpenter, lumberman and capitalist, W. M. Burns, lumberman and merchant, S. A. Davis, carpenter, A. W. Bryson, contractor, J. B. Rochester, carpenter, J. W. Diverbits, lawyer, and J. L. Potts, the postmaster.

The following excerpts are taken from the original charter of the town:

### Chapter 139 Public Laws of 1889

An act to incorporate the Town of Sylva in the county of Jackson, and to provide for the Local Government thereof.

SECTION 1. That the Town of Sylva, in the county of Jackson, be and the same is hereby incorporated by the name and style of the Town of Sylva, and it shall be subject to the provisions of law now existing in reference to incorporated towns.

Sec. 2. That the corporate limits of the said town shall be as follows: One-half mile east, west, north and south from the southeast corner of the depot as now located, and shall run with the four cardinal points of the compass so as to form an exact square.

Sec. 3. That the officers of the said town shall consist of a mayor, five commissioners and a marshal, who shall also be chief of police, and such additional police officers as the commissioners may provide for by an ordinance for that purpose, and the commissioners shall also have power to elect and appoint a secretary and treasurer.

Sec. 4. There shall be an election for the corporate officers of the town

the same restrictions that county and State elections are held. All male citizens over twenty-one years of age who have resided in the State twelve months, and ninety days in said county previous to the day of election, shall be entitled to vote at said election.

Sec. 15. For the purpose of carrying this act into immediate operation, and until their successors are elected on the first Monday in May, 1889, and qualified, the following persons shall fill said offices for mayor, commissioner and marshal, viz: Mayor, O. B. Coward; commissioners, E. R. Hampton, A. M. Parker, W. M. Burns, A. W. Bryson, and R. L. Madison; marshal, J. C. Fisher.

Sec. 16. Nothing in this act shall be construed to authorize the man-

## Photograph of Sylva in 1893



## Mr. Sylva Asks About

The following letter from E. R. Sylva, the man for whom Mrs. M. S. Hampton, later Mrs. Morgan Smith, named Sylva, when she was a little girl, tells the story of the making of the town. How it came to be named Sylva, and through a great deal of light upon the beginnings of the town.

Those who study it will know why Mill street is Mill street, how it runs from a point near where Judge Cannon's Mills, on Scott's Creek, were located, to the square around the Southern Railway Station. Many people have forgotten that Capt. Enloe once had a tannery on the branch that runs down from the mountain by the Webster Cemetery, in front of Judge Cannon's old home, referred to by Mr. Sylva, and in front of the old home of Capt. Enloe, now owned and occupied by Mrs. O. B. Coward. This is the reason that the branch is referred to in old deeds as "Tanyard Branch."

Mr. Sylva, a Dane, came from none knows where. He never told; but he puts up a good case for himself in his letter, when he refers to his character. He was a rolling stone, and would probably have been forgotten in this part of the world, had not a little girl, who was attached to him, given his name to the town.

Mr. Sylva missed his guess, as you will note, when he surmised that most of the town must be on the North side of Scott's Creek, and that the depot was probably located there. The railroad came down the South side of the stream, instead of the North, and the town followed the iron rail.

The Hampton House, lumber for which was saved in Sylva by Mr. Sylva and the others mentioned by him, and which they erected in 1878, was razed a few years ago to make

## THE FOUNDER OF SYLVA, GEN. E. R. HAMPTON



## Start To Build A Church

The Tuckasee Democrat, Jan. 19, 1889, speaks of the plans for the erection of the first church building in Sylva.

Says the Democrat: "Efforts are being made looking to the early erection of a house of worship for the M. E. Church, South. We hope to be able to give next week, a definite report of the plans and purposes of the building committee. Sylva is entering upon its fifth year and there is not yet within its limits a church

themselves in this undertaking and push it to speedy completion. The Democrat is also desirous of seeing a Baptist church built here as soon as possible. The plans fell through, and the Methodists waited several years before erecting a house of worship.

Alfred Parker, who married Miss Louisa Cannon, was one of Sylva's first aldermen. Later he and his family moved to Arkansas, where both Mr. and Mrs. Parker died. Miss Laura Cannon, referred to by Sylva, married J. C. Fisher. (Please turn to page 2)

## Three Of Sylva's First Aldermen



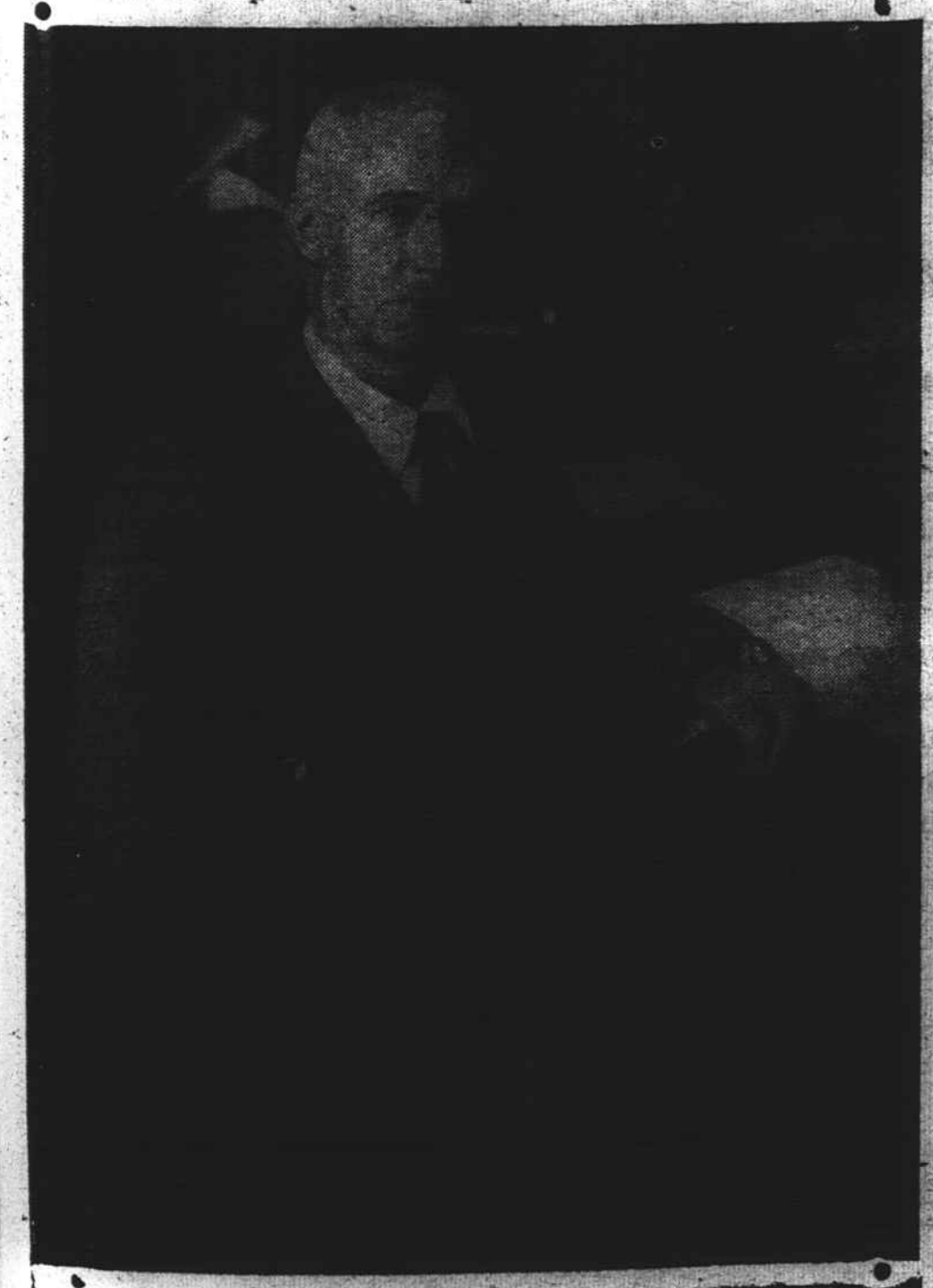
PROF. R. L. MADISON, THE ONLY SURVIVOR



THE LATE MR. J. S. JARRETT

THE LATE CAPT. A. W. BRYSON

## SYLVA'S FIRST MAYOR, THE LATE HON. O. B. COWARD



## SYLVA MADE COUNTY SEAT IN 1913 ELECTION

In 1913 the Court House and seat of county government were removed from Webster to Sylva, following a campaign of great bitterness.

The General Assembly of that year authorized an election on the question of removal, and the construction of a new court house and jail at Sylva.

At the event a majority of the voters would favor the removal. The campaign ensued and the issues were discussed from one end of the county to the other, by well known citizens, some favoring the move and others opposing it. Following the election, construction of the new buildings was begun and quick to completion. The first court was held, with Judge Frank Carter, presiding.

## Sylva's First Church In 1892

Sylva's first church building was erected in 1892 by the Baptist congregation. It was built on the hill where Sylva Collegiate Institute was later located.

Prohibition or sale of spirituous, vinous or malt liquors in said town. Sec. 17. That this act shall be in force and effect from and after its ratification. Ratified the 9th of March, A. D. 1889.

## STREETS NAMED IN 1890

May 14, 1890: Ordinance of the town commissioners defined the following as the streets of the town and declared them open to public use: Main street, extending from Branch near J. B. Rochester's on the west to branch east of E. R. Hampton's house.

Mill street extending from the branch at the line of E. R. Hampton and Jos. Baum up the south side of the railroad including open space around the depot and up the creek to Hampton's mill, and thence up the creek to ford near the new bridge east of kaolin factory. Spring street, from Mill street near the depot to Jackson street near where R. M. Davis lives.

Jackson street from Spring street east to Walnut street.  
Walnut street, from Mill street to the railroad to Jackson street.  
Balsam street, from Mill street to railroad to Jackson street.  
Keener street, from Man street to Mill street at railroad.  
Allen street, from Mill street to the corporation line.  
North Railroad street from Allen street to D. Z. Dillard's west line.  
Brendle street, from Allen street at the bridge to corporation line west.  
Love street, from Allen street at the end of Brendle street to the corporation line, east.  
Cascade Avenue, from Brendle street to corporation line near Logan Bumgarner's Hampton street, from Allen street east to line of John N. McComb, Jr.'s Line.