

EARLY DAYS IN HIGHLANDS

(Continued from Page 4)

- O. M. Ricketson 50
- James Cansler, Shif. Macon Co. .30
- John Love 50
- The Misses De Sanssure of
Charleston, S. C. 1.00
- Mrs. Parmer (of Charleston) .50
- Yates Snowden (Charleston) .50
- T. B. White, Sec.

One can not fail to be impressed with the very large number of contributors needed to bring the undertaking to a successful issue. From all over the county and even beyond the confines of the county, people came to lend their aid though most of the gifts were small. The first actual public use of the school building was on March 31, 1878, for a religious service. (Without a doubt it was then in an unfinished condition.)

"School And Church House"

It will be recalled that the original paper stipulated that the building should be used alike for a "school and a church house." The Highlands Union Sunday School moved into the new quarters and it was the "meeting house" henceforth for all denominations until 1885, when the Methodists entered the first completed church in the town; and two months later the Presbyterians moved into their splendid new house of worship. As might be expected, public meetings of every legitimate description were granted free use of the new town school building. The day of the old Law House had passed. With some added acreage it fell into the hands of a Mr. Bathrick as private property. Its last days were, as a lowly tool house of the later owner, Mr. S. Clark.

CHAPTER IV

First Teachers

A Mr. Baxter was probably the first to teach school in the new structure, unfinished as it was, in the spring of '78. Several teachers held short sway, Mr. Baxter having succeeded Miss Porcher. In addition to accepted attainments as an educator, he was an accomplished flute player. A further pastime of his was bringing down with a rifle the magnolia blooms from the tree tops back of the Selleck place on Spring Street.

Mr. Baxter fades from the picture rather abruptly and Mr. Holway steps in. He was elected principal, and had hardly assumed charge when on April 24th appears the record, "Bad state of affairs about the new teacher." Equally terse, on May 1st: "Committee asked Mr. Holway to resign." Our curiosity is stirred mightily to know what crimes or grave misdemeanors were laid to the charge of the poor pedagogue, but it was forever to remain unsatisfied.

A Rev. Mr. Lukens was the instructor who finally brought the school up to the summer vacation.

The ensuing fall marked the beginning of an era of confidence and steady improvement in the Highlands school. The building and furnishings were now complete. That indispensable adjunct of school and church in those days—the bell—was last to be added. It came, a splendid 360 pounder. Heard it was, under favorable atmospheric conditions, for a distance of three miles.

In the principal's chair was Miss Orpha E. Rose, accomplished young teacher fresh from the public schools of Chicago. And well she guided the destinies of our school for the next six years. She had executive ability with accompanying strength of character. This became apparent at once in resultant organization and discipline. She possessed, too, the ability of imparting knowledge with the skill to bring out the best in the pupil and to arouse his ambition. Near the close of her first spring's term, on account of frail health, Miss Rose relinquished her place briefly to Rev. A. M. Cooper. But with the fall opening of '79 she was back in the chair till the close of her administration in the summer of 1884. Holding the highest esteem of the townspeople it was with universal regret that her resignation at this time was accepted.

CHAPTER V

New Cycle In Growth

The building of the school house, as has been noted, marked an important milestone in our little history. The closing of the six year period following marks another at which we may well pause before resuming the last cycle of the 15 years leading up to 1890.

Among the newcomers to the town in the spring of 1878 was Dr. Geo. W. Kibbee. He liked the climate, the people, the tiny town and quickly decided to cast in his lot with us. His family had arrived, he proceeded to the building of a home on the old Satulah road, and at once began the practice of his profession. He was the first resident practicing physician in Highlands and surrounding country.

Doctor Fights Pestilence

Dr. Kibbee had made research and special study in the control of a specific type of fevers, and had produced an especially valuable method of treatment for them. He met with success in his new home town through the spring and summer. This same season the 19th century scourge of the South, yellow fever, broke out in epidemic

at New Orleans. Promptly Dr. Kibbee left for the stricken area and used his weapons with success. But on Sept. 28 came the dreadful news to a grief stricken family and the horrified village that the week previous Dr. Kibbee had laid down his life. The pestilence which he had so bravely fought claimed the physician himself. He literally laid down his life to save others.

A signal honor came to this six year old mountain town in the spring of '81 when president Garfield appointed a citizen, E. Selleck, to the post of Collector of the Port of Philadelphia. His enjoyment of this distinction was short-lived, however, due to the assassination of the ill-fated President. Whatever the future otherwise might have held for Mr. Selleck, the lure of the Blue Ridge was too strong for him. The next year found him returned to our midst and to the joys of his little village farm.

First Newspaper

Illustrative of the courage and spirit of the early settlers are their efforts to establish a weekly newspaper. E. E. Ewing, veteran editor and former publisher of the Kansas Farmer began, in 1881, publication of the Blue Ridge Enterprise. Village and adjacent country items, petty town politics, live editorials and a modicum of advertisements made up the columns of this standard sized four page paper. Probably a successful newspaper on a permanent basis was an impossibility considering the small population hemmed in by mountain fastnesses as they were, with means of travel and communication undeveloped. But the weekly sheet was a needed medium of expression, and outlet for exchange of views amongst those whose world was largely confined to their midst. For a dozen years the paper struggled along intermittently; Editor Ewing to be succeeded by A. F. Clark, Richard Goldie, T. G. Harbison and Chas. A. Coe in order. Succeeding names with changing styles of the sheet were The Highlander, Mountain Eagle and Highlands Star until its decease in the early '90's.

CHAPTER VI

Social Life

That they were segregated and provincial the little community would never presume to deny, but the eternal presence of the glorious waterfalls, the wonderful mountains, and the incomparable trackless forests in yet thousands upon thousands of acres to charm their own and woo an outsider, was their world. And these were the assets ultimately to bring sectional and national fame and perennial popularity. In some ways noted the ears of the outside world already had been caught. May we add one more which at that time made lively copy?

A contingent of revenue officers on a moonshine trail in the spring of '85 had made a successful raid. They brought in their quarry of a couple of prisoners, and halted for the night at our village hotel. The friends and kin of the captured formed a rescue party. The enemy camp was stormed but the besiegers were speedily put to rout losing one dead and two reported wounded. Excitement ran high for days, Mayor H. M. Bascom even declaring martial law for the town.

The carving for the social side of life—particularly as is evidenced in community gathering at the end of the day's work—is a very natural one. And especially noticeable is this in small and isolated communities. It was manifested in our town by the informal "sings" the first year in the homes, the most popular ones being those of Mrs. Kelsey and Mrs. G. A. Jacobs. Very few owned an organ, the first piano appearing in 1880.

Debating Society

A debating society came into being very early, from which sprang the "Literary Society", a going concern in 1878, with the twin aims of improvement and entertainment. It flourished for many years patronized by visitors and townspeople alike. Young and old and all ages in between enjoyed and took part in the weekly meetings. A healthy temperance society similarly organized met monthly. The entertainments featured vocal and instrumental music, readings, recitations, speeches, dialogues, tableaux, etc. Visitors were impressed into service to lend their talent for the common benefit. A part of the duties of the officers, of course, was to see that programs were provided. The school children were favored participants. Once a husky 17 year old boy, Charley Skinner by name, had been assigned a declamation. He ascended the platform and began: "Ladies and Gentlemen: What are you looking at me for? I haven't got anything to say to you!" and marched to his seat. Needless to say he was never again importuned to take a part, the glee with which his performance was received by the youngsters of the audience notwithstanding.

Orchestra Formed

A local amateur orchestra in the late 80's was an appreciated addition to the community musical and social life. Its leadership was under the late Prof. Louis Zollner, who played 1st violin. Frank Sheldon played the cello, B. T. Kelsey, Jr. 2nd violin, and Harlan P. Kelsey 3rd violin.

But to resume our school history. Rev. Jas. E. Fogartie at first

filled the gap caused by Miss Rose's resignation. It was understood as a temporary arrangement for Mr. Fogartie was the resident pastor of the Presbyterian Church. At this juncture Mr. S. Clark was the timely find. He was a Highlands citizen and an old and seasoned schoolmaster. But disappointment came again in little more than a year when Mr. Clark was chosen to the position of Supt. of Public Instruction for the County. He resigned the principalship of the school therefore to take the place of the aged A. D. Farmer who had long and honorably represented Macon at that post.

A schoolmistress again was the head of the school, Mrs. S. C. Davis, coming here from Murphy. She in turn was followed by H. S. Duncan, bringing our history up to the summer of '86.

Bright Outlook In 1890

Two young men from Pennsylvania, in the glow of youth and health, were tramping through the mountains of the South in the spring of '86, being interested in animal and plant life of every description. One of them was an interested visitor at our school one day when Mr. Duncan was teaching. At the opening of the session in the fall that visitor sat in the principal's chair. He was the late lamented Prof. T. B. Harbison, botanist-scientist-educator. With energy, courage and faith looking forward to an educational institution of high status, Prof. Harbison attacked the problems which faced him. New books, new equipment, new methods came in. The clumsy, handmade wooden desks dating back to 1878 gave way to new furniture of up-to-date manufacture. The knowledge of a new school spread abroad, and new recruits came from far beyond town and environs. In the winter of '88-'89 a substantial additional room designed to provide more class space and to house a library was built. The zealous principal himself aided by equally zealous students took some considerable part in the work of building. Already received for the library alcove were a large number of miscellaneous volumes, gifts to the enthusiastic principal from friends who thus bespoke their interest in a school with high aims and greater opportunities for the youth of this mountain section.

Thus the year 1890 arrived with the brightest outlook for the little town and the cause of education therein since its founding in 1875. Battles were ahead yet to be fought and won, but her citizens had established their right to existence. Nay, more, the people of Highlands were yet to claim all

Mrs. Root's Shop A Home Of Beauty

Tall pines shade the home where Mrs. J. E. Root of Highlands established her gift shop about ten years ago. Garden flowers border the pathway to the house, where inside visitors find themselves welcome in a home where they may relax in comfortable chairs to shop or visit with their home where they may relax in comfortable or visit with their hostess.

In a way, Mrs. Root explained, this home has grown, quite informally, into her gift shop, has been a dream come true for her and Mr. Root. His work as an engineer, which has carried them to many places for temporary residence, brought them to Highlands, where he was to install waterworks for the town. Here they found the place to make a permanent home. The gift shop began when friends living in China sent her, from time to time, boxes of rare and exquisite articles of Chinese art to sell. The first venture into the gift business started at the urging of a friend to invite others to her home to see the contents of one box that were particularly beautiful. They covered four card tables in her living room. When asked to display them in the newly completed Highlands Country Club, she had no more need to advertise. Soon she added to her stock the craft work of the mountain schools.

Her home has been enlarged to accommodate her stock of beautiful things in ever-increasing variety in order to serve her growing business. Three large rooms hold many treasures—for many of her things are just that—treasures; some of them are very rare. For instance, there are two Chinese mandarin coats, trimmed with white squirrel, with patterns of exquisite embroidery that can no longer be obtained. After the war, these products of the ancient civilization of an art loving people will never again be produced. There are applied Chinese quilts filled with raw silk, and many porcelains and carvings.

There is rare Staffordshire ware from England which feature diminutive figures under an old tree, wrought with unbelievable delicacy, with birds in the branches, tiny flowers and blades of grass.

Thus Mrs. Root has made her love of the beautiful serve her and others. That is part of the secret

the advantages enjoyed, and in degree the success attained by any community existing or yet to come in the commonwealth of North Carolina.

Bowling Center Is Place Of Popular Amusement

One of the newest and most popular amusement places in this section is the Highlands Bowling Center in the Cobb building on East Main street. The part of this building occupied by the bowling alley has 33 by 110 feet of floor space, and is insulated throughout and finished with celotex plank. The fluorescent lighting adds to the pleasure of evening bowling.

The four 20th Century Brunswick bowling balls are a part of her success. Another part is Mrs. Root herself, who adds a gracious presence to the beautiful things around her to create a charming and restful whole.

wick alleys are the best to be had, and bowlers have the choice of king pins or duck pins. There is every comfort offered players and onlookers. Twenty-four comfortable seats have been provided for spectators, and refreshing drinks and candies are to be had in the building.

The establishment is owned by Wilton H. Cobb.

Boss—Son, do you know the motto of this firm?

New Office Boy—Sure, it's "Push."

Boss—Where'd you ever get that idea?

New Office Boy—I saw it on the door as I came in.

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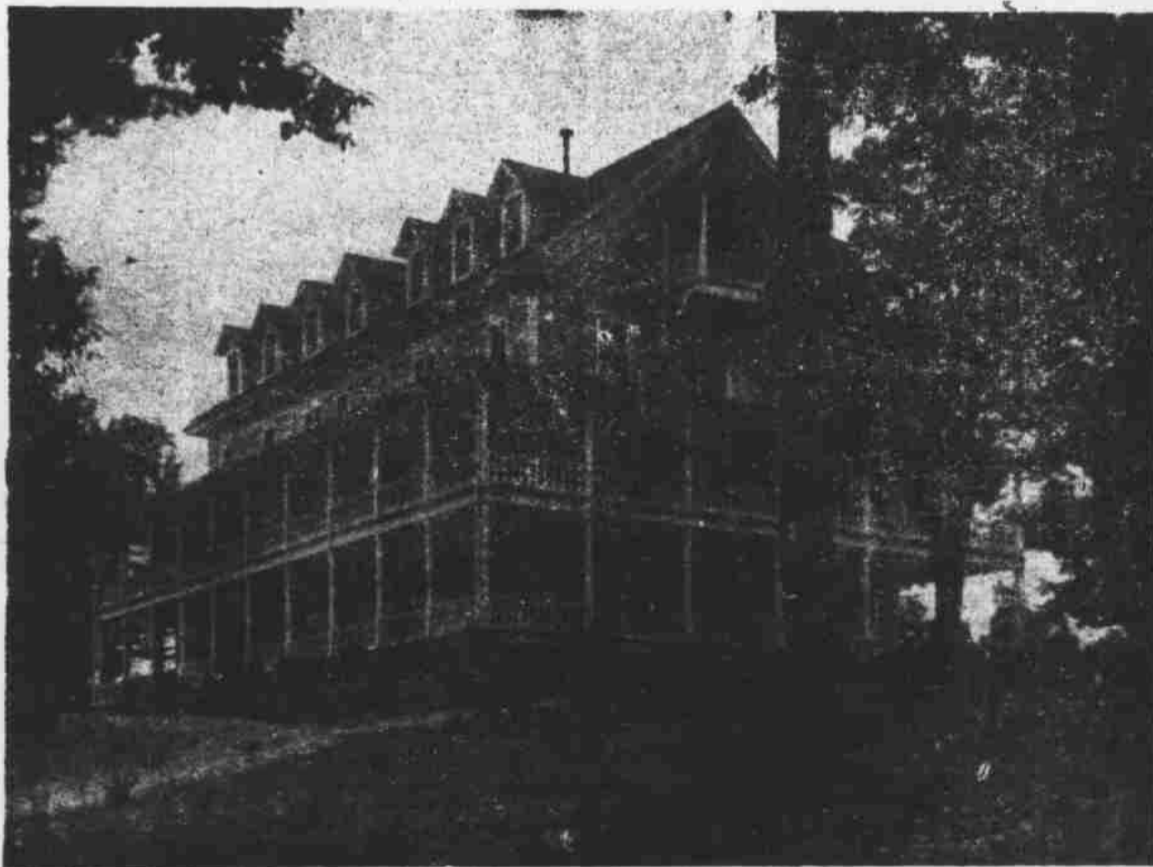
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Highlands, N. C.

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