

Late George C. Graves Was Colorful Figure In Early Days of Carthage

Three Children Of Pioneer Business Man Reside Here

Penn Seawell, in the Moore County News of September 4, has an interesting story on the late George C. Graves, prominent merchant and livery stable operator in the early days of Carthage, county seat of Moore, and father of eight well-known citizens of North Carolina, three of whom live in Southern Pines. They are: George C. Graves, Jr., Henry L. Graves, and Mrs. George Heinitsch, Southern Pines; Mrs. W. G. Brown and Mrs. Charles T. Grier, Carthage; Mrs. Margaret Penn Fort Bragg; Mrs. R. N. Page, Jr., Aberdeen, and Mrs. Worth Miller, Kinston.

Mr. Seawell's story follows: It is to be remembered that, during World War I our old men of today and the boys in olive drab of that year received The Moore County News in faraway France and learned that, among other things, Graves Co., offered for sale in Carthage fish on Fridays. But even the men of that conflict, including a first lieutenant in the air army, were babes in the woods when the immortal saga of George Calvin Graves began.

George Graves, a man of illustrious forebears and antecedents, was the first druggist (or pharmacist) licensed in Carthage and, probably, one of the first in North Carolina. He was a graduate pharmacist and his prescriptions were well compounded. He could, in that era, also pull a tooth that was aching or heal a horse that was ailing. An all round good merchant, he did much towards the upbuilding of Carthage, Moore and adjoining counties and was well known and respected all over the state.

During his early days in Carthage he picked out one of the belles of that time, sought after her and won her in a relentless struggle as he did everything he set out to do. She was Miss Margaret McNeill, pretty and talented daughter of the late A. H. McNeill, longtime leader in the Democratic party, and for 32 years clerk of the superior court of Moore county.

Mr. Graves and the late Dr. John Calvin Blue were married to sisters, Margaret and Evaline McNeill, in a double wedding ceremony and it is rumored that the reverend gentleman who performed the ceremony got the names all mixed up so badly, having Evaline married to George Calvin and Margaret married to John Calvin; that he had to start all over and do it again. If this had not been done it is possible that Miss Lessie would be Blue instead of Brown.

A number of fine children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Graves, all of whom have been valuable in the social, religious and economic life of the state. But as this is the story of the phenomenal life of George C. Graves, the elder, it is best that the tale be expedited and those who survive him be excluded until another chapter is written.

Operated General Store

Mr. Graves store was primarily for the sale of dry goods and notions, but he also offered millinery and groceries. The old timers recall that it was a general store where you could buy anything from horseshoe nails and guns with ammunition, to tender steak at ten cents a pound, fabric for a dress or an Easter bonnet that was guaranteed to knock

the eyes out of the most bashful swain and, if the wearer happened to gyrate suddenly, to knock his head off if he stood within three feet and was not exceptionally nimble in his foot work. But this was only a small part of the Graves enterprises.

In his livery and feed stable a man or woman could rent a buggy, a phaeton, a two-seater, a carriage or a phaeton-sedan. Either of them could also obtain the services of a horse to ride, complete with saddle, astride for gentlemen and aside for the ladies as the latter in those days never displayed more than one-fourth inch of her ankle except to her husband and then only after the nuptials had been performed some several years, or that is what they say. At Mr. Graves' stable you could buy a horse, a mule, or a team or stable full of either. You could buy buggies, wagons, harness, saddles, bridles, whips, lap robes, and even hay, corn and oats. Furthermore, you could do your purchasing for cash or on easy terms for it was "easy to pay Graves' way" even as it is today.

The store, with its assortment of goods like a Sears-Roebuck catalogue was located about where the Moore Hardware, Jane's and Mack's now are located on courthouse square and the livery stable was located on Barrett street, in Carthage, about the equivalent of two city blocks from his colonial styled mansion, which he built for his bride many years ago, and which still stands a landmark of the success of this indefatigable and conscientious man who lived on the principle that his family should always have the best that his energies and ingenuity could produce.

Mr. Graves was what is known as a time merchant as many were called who were forced to wait for the money for their goods until a crop came around again or until the debtor's ship came in. According to Mr. Graves a great many people who owed him money were waiting for the safe return of the Titanic. But the merchant, shrewd as he was active, was not gullible enough to put much faith in promises. The chattle mortgage was his only defense, contrary to being fleeced out of house and home, and it worked a cross-fire in several instances.

When prices were low on commodities raised on the farm there was devastating ruin on the same farm in the livestock market. Mules, horses, cows, hogs, and chickens perished like flies in a freezing winter, particularly if their description appeared on the face of his chattle mortgage. If a man had two mules or two hogs, no matter how similar in appearance and disposition, it was a remarkable coincidence it happened to be the one written in the chattle mortgage to Mr. Graves that died an untimely death and, at one fell blow, cut that merchant out of his money and left the survivor of the deceased in such a bankrupt condition he couldn't possibly meet his obligation until another crop had passed. Mr. Graves, at the time of his death, had a stack of those uncanceled mortgages which had never been satisfied.

Avenged Insult

But a time merchant is a credit man and, as Shakespeare has said, "Neither a borrower nor a lender be, for a loan off loses both itself and friend, and borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry." Mr. Graves, as every other man of his era that furnished someone something and took a very skeptical something as security, made his enemies. He was no exception. On one occasion it is recalled that he received a telephone call from one of these enemies. The old Norfolk-Southern had a branch line out of Carthage in that day, which went to Pinehurst.

This worthy stated to Mr. Graves that the train was pulling out at that moment and that he would be on it and that he wanted to tell him, Mr. Graves, what he thought of him. Then he added a vile name and hung up.

All the way to Pinehurst he told his fellow passengers of the way he "cussed out" George Graves and chuckled about it, boasting and bragging until he reached the end of the line at Pinehurst. Still chuckling, he emerged from the coach to find none other than George Calvin Graves, bristles raised, waiting to receive him.

What followed is history. That fellow got the soundest thrashing ever administered to a man who was still able to get up and run away with a stern boot toe imprint on his posterior. Mr. Graves was not afraid of anyone. And, if anyone figured that a short cut to an insult by the invention of Alexander Graham Bell would work, he didn't reckon far enough on the slowness of the Norfolk-Southern passenger train nor upon the fact that the man who

knew horses from front molars to broomtail also had an automobile. Mr. Graves' Case Four, deluxe model, which would fall off the court house at the incredible speed of thirty-five miles per hour if given a good shove, nevertheless beat that train into Pinehurst by minutes and left one insulter with the old adage that he who chuckles last chuckles best.

Mr. Graves had his share of bad luck. A number of fires did him much damage. He was also in the sawmill business and many of his mills and timber holdings were destroyed by fire as well as his livery stables on more than one occasion. Yet he lived actively until his eighty-fourth year when his funeral was conducted at the Presbyterian Church, in Carthage, where he was an elder. Many hundreds attended his last rites to pay honor and respect to this grand old man of another age.

But the saga of George Calvin Graves is not ended. Besides George, Jr., there are George, III, and George IV, and wagers are down that they will maintain and excel the fine heritage that is before them.

Give your children a refresher course in traffic safety as they start back to school.

Aberdeenian Wins Bronze Star For Heroism In Korea

A dangerous unusual four-man patrol in Company I of the 5th Infantry Regiment in Korea recently bagged valuable intelligence information and three enemy casualties.

The patrol included: M/Sgt. Richard I. Batchelor, son of Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Batchelor, Rt. 1, Aberdeen.

On July 5, the reconnaissance patrol crossed Company I lines with its mission to go out in front of the main line of resistance and take a good look around for enemy activity. Advancing about 400 yards the patrol saw a group of foxholes on the knob of a nearby hill. Previously the company had noticed enemy activity near that area. Positions were arranged with foxholes on each side and more on the high ground on top of the knob.

Master Sergeant Batchelor approached the foxholes on the right to check for enemy while another checked the foxholes on the left.

Batchelor then silently approached the positions on the knob with his three men spread out behind him. Sneaking to within 10 feet of the positions Batchelor took a five-man enemy group completely by surprise.

Standing up and yelling he opened fire with his carbine. One

enemy was killed on the first burst, another wounded. A third fled from the area but Pvt. L. O. Parker, of Salt Lake City, killed him with one shot.

Although the two remaining enemy escaped, valuable informa-

tion was found on the bodies of the dead.

Master Sergeant Batchelor was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his part in the action. He was cited for his skill in leading the attack, and his "outstanding cour-

age and unremitting devotion to duty."

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