

Commemorating Clayton's 100th Anniversary

The Clayton News

VOL. 48 NO. 9

Centennial Edition 25c

Published Wednesdays by The County Press

CLAYTON, N. C. FEB. 29, 1956



CLAYTON'S MAIN STREET IN 1956 — 100 years after the town was named.

This Has Always Been "Sports Town"

By Connie Hicks

Through all its days Clayton folks have loved athletic competition.

Although three major wars and one heartbreaking local tragedy have dimmed the luster of local sports battles through the century past, the "dim-out" was temporary. Clayton folks have earned and maintained a reputation for lusty and loyal team support.

While baseball and several of its sandlot variations were popular for many years prior to the advent of organized inter-scholastic sports competition in Johnston County, it was not until the second decade of this century that records were kept and titles vied for. And in 1916, the Clayton high school baseball team won the state championship for the first time.

D. C. "Peg" Poole played on that team. Old-timers recall that in the game with Raleigh for the eastern championship, he hit a home run "over the fence" at the Chapel Hill ball park, for the winning run. In the championship

game against Cherryville, he batted in the winning run again. "Peg" was born and raised in the country a few miles from Clayton. In his high school days, there were few if any restrictions regarding subsidization of athletes. He recalls that Benson school paid his board and tuition for a while and he went to school there and played ball for them. When Clayton made a similar offer which he liked better he transferred to Clayton.

This 1916 state title was the first of several for Clayton teams. According to John T. Talton, Clayton high school also won the state championship in 1922 and 1926. Jesse Ellis, still remembered as an excellent coach, trained the 1916 and 1922 teams. He died early in 1924.

His successor was Vann Stringfield, who came to Clayton in 1924 and coached here for about three years. His first team, in the spring of 1925, won the eastern championship but lost to Shelby in a game for the state title. The

following year he took his team all the way.

Bill Nichols followed Stringfield. By this time, basketball was gaining in popularity in this area. Even the girls had begun to play inter-scholastically. Among Clayton women who played basketball in the early and mid-twenties are Annie Belle Barbour, Massey and Pauline Smith Coats. They recall that Clayton girls were "so-so" and don't even remember their coaches, since a succession of willing but untrained high school teachers undertook to direct them. Annie Belle recalls, "I do remember that we defeated a good Garner team one year and we were mighty proud of that."

Played In Warehouse

There were no gymnasiums, as such, in the county at that time. Paeton Stallings, a native of Selma, played basketball on the Selma team from 1930 through 1933

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Clayton Was Created By Settlements Uniting

Names of several settlements out of the past must be included in any history of early Clayton. Each, in its time, was a center of activity and helped advance the countryside during the years before Clayton was given its name on Jan. 30, 1856. Such names as Hinton's Quarter, Roxborough, Stallings Station and Gulley's Store are the principal ones.

The first settlers came into the area probably about 1740, clearing land under warrant from the royal governor. By 1746 enough were in the area that the Colonial Assembly decided that Craven County, in which this section was included, should be divided in two. Thus Johnston County came into existence with the courthouse in Walnut Cove. A division of Johnston was made in 1759 with Johnston taking in its present area and Wake County also and the new county taking the old courthouse.

When a new courthouse location was sought in 1758, William Hinton offered two acres of land free. The land he offered is in the vicinity just north of the present W. R. Peele Co. The justices appointed to find a location accepted his offer. Before the courthouse was built however Hinton sold his land to Nathaniel Cary. The building was built on Cary's land but the settlement that sprang up in its area was called Hinton's Quarter.

Cary, with an eye to business, built a two-story house near the courthouse and secured a license to keep a tavern there and during the years acquired many acres.

During the years 1759 to 1771, court was held on the "last Tuesdays in March, June, September and December" by Assembly order. For access to the county seat, new roads were laid out. One crossed the Neuse at the present Smithfield site to join the River Road to New Bern, and others were laid out to the west and north.

In 1771, Wake was formed out of Johnston and again the courthouse was moved this time to a riverside lot offered by John Smith, Jr., at the site of the Neuse ferry crossing. With the re-location of the court, Hinton's Quarter settlement faded away and tavern keeper Cary sold his large holdings and moved to the western part of the state. The building was still standing in the mid-nineteenth century.

Gulley's Store

Another tiny settlement grew up near the old courthouse and the Round House plantation in the early 1840's. In December 1845 a post office was opened in a store operated by Needham Gulley. The office was probably established to serve a rural area and located in

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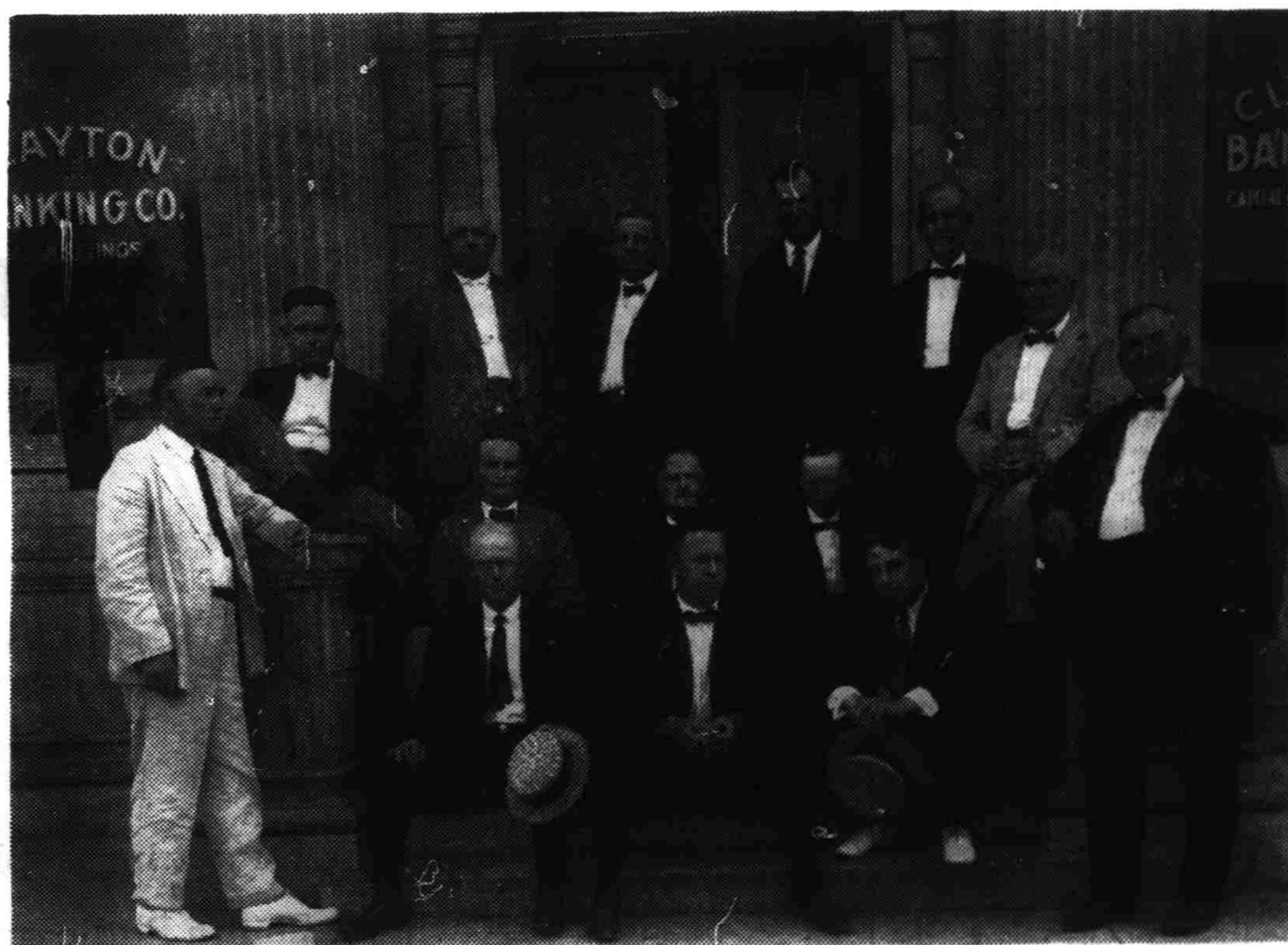
In Next Issue

Because of limited space and because additional copy for the Centennial Edition came in at the last minute, this paper contains only feature articles. Next week the News will run regular news and correspondents' copy which had to be omitted this week.



COVERED BRIDGE STOOD UNTIL 1938 — A pre-Civil War covered bridge crossed the Neuse river about four miles from Clayton on the road to Archer's Lodge, and it stood until 1938. That year highway engineers tore down the covering, but left the footing because they "could not build a better one." Ephriam Ferrell, a relative of Banks Ferrell who lives in Clayton today, came to Johnston County in 1860 and began building the bridge. He left to serve the Confederacy and returned to complete it. The bridge replaced a Neuse river fording on a main route used by the stage, floating the coach and horse across. Later a windlass-operated ferry was in operation and was replaced by the bridge.

(Photo courtesy of Charles Barden)



BOARD OF DIRECTORS — After a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Clayton Banking Company, the men recessed to have their picture taken one day in the early 1920's. They posed in front of the bank's new building. The bank had been started by Ashley Horne in 1900. It was in business until 1930. Seated, front row left to right, Eliot Poole, Dwight Barbour, C. W. Horne. Seated second row, R. W. Sanders, L. F. Austin, B. M. Robertson. Standing, Dr. J. J. Young, Swade Barbour, D. H. McCullers, John T. Talton, Dr. E. H. McCullers, C. P. Ellis, W. A. Barnes, R. A. Wall.

(Photo courtesy of John Talton)