



Straight from the Shoulder — Right from the Heart of Duplin

VOLUME NUMBER SIXTEEN

KENANSVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27th., 1948

No. 9

## Duplin Officers And F.B.I. Apprehend Duplin Ax Slayer In New York City

By Sheriff Ralph J. Jones  
James (Pete) West, wanted for one of Duplin County's boldest daylight robbery and murder charges, was apprehended in New York City by F. B. I. men of Wilmington, N. C. and New York on February 20.

Sheriff Ralph J. Jones compliments and pays high tribute to our F. B. I. Agents in their fine cooperation in the apprehension of this robber and axe slayer out of a city of eight million people. They worked almost as super men for the reason that there were no finger prints nor pictures that could be secured of James (Pete) West. The only description our F. B. I. had was: Negro, age 20, height 5 ft. 10 inches, weight 165 pounds, gray-blue eyes, dark sandy hair, scar on top of head, bites finger nails to quick.

On January 22, 1948, Mr. Walter J. Johnson, 62 years of age, a country merchant of Rockfish Township, on the Harrell Store Road, was slain by James (Pete) West, by striking several blows on his head with an axe, crushing his skull.

The officers of Duplin County were summoned to the scene accompanied by State Highway Patrol and a man hunt was staged for several days, both day and night and covering Duplin, Sampson, and Pender counties.

Sheriff Jones' bloodhounds tracked West from the scene of the murder through woods for a distance of eleven miles.

West states that he gained the knowledge that officers and bloodhounds were on his trail and he tried to evade them by wading in water waist deep in the head of Boone's Lake. He then backtracked himself to offset the dogs and changed his course from easterly to a northern direction.

In his confession he gave his activities during his 28 days of escape.

He states that he traveled altogether in woods and fields in a northerly direction, not knowing the territory he was in. On the night of the murder, Jan. 22, at about 8 o'clock he contacted David Draughan, a colored man living about four miles south of Baltic and offered to pay him \$5.00 to take him by car to Magnolia.

Draughan, seeing that he was wet up to his waist, was suspicious and refused to take him whereupon West again took the woods and spent the night there.

The next morning, Jan. 23, he still kept in his northerly direction and came out near Baltic at about 10 o'clock at a colored man's house. Fred Brunson. He saw children playing in the yard and gave a small boy \$5.00 to go to Leslie Torrans' Service Station for him and buy for him one loaf bread, 1 pound cheese, 1 jar peanut butter and 1 can of pork and beans. On returning with the food he gave the boy a \$1.00 tip.

He immediately walked off, still in his northerly course through fields and woods and arrived in Faison about 7 p. m. At that time he secured a room from an unknown colored family and spent the night, a distance of 25 miles from the scene of the murder.

On the morning of Jan. 24, he caught a north-bound train in Faison for Norfolk, Va. On arrival in Norfolk, he went to see his sister, Janie Mae West, who lives at 408 Washington Ave. His sister had heard of officers in pursuit of him and she hurried him away to Eastern Shore, Va.

At Eastern Shore he secured four days work from a colored man on a farm. It was while there he met a colored man who married a girl from Wallace. His name was Vernon Bly and he lived in Harlem District, 28 W. 135th St. New York City. Bly asked West to go to New York with him and they left together arriving there on Feb. 2.

West immediately secured a job selling ice from house to house from a push cart.

The pressure from Mr. Walter J. Johnson's friends and the citizens of his section brought on the Sheriff's Office for everything possible to be done in apprehending West; put a heavy burden on Sheriff Jones and he promised that not a stone would be left unturned that might lead to his arrest.

Sheriff Jones made a three-day canvass, securing the past activities of James (Pete) West and he took the names and addresses of all his relatives, friends and his associates. The information he obtained covered Duplin, Sampson



JAMES (PETE) WEST

B. I. of Wilmington, who also kept in daily contact with Mr. Shipe F. B. I. manager in New York and who had previously managed our F. B. I. Agency in Charlotte, N. C. Of all the leads furnished to F. B. I., the one of his sister's address at Norfolk, Va. was the one that put them on his track. From there they learned of his whereabouts and learned of his leaving for New York with Vernon Bly and they secured Bly's address.

F. B. I. agents, Mr. Joseph J. Phelan and Mr. Tennith S. Bathford of New York City, located Vernon Bly's home and they kept watch James (Pete) West was seen there, He was followed for several hours under general observation and then feeling definitely sure that he was the right man, they effected an arrest. He was carried to Federal Detention House for analysis and questioning.

At that time West denied ever having lived in Duplin County or ever having known any merchant by the name of Walter J. Johnson. He told them they had the wrong man. He claimed he was borned in Bladen County and lived at Butters, N. C. He gave his mother's name as Hattie Boney McAchlin of Butters, N. C.

At this point questioning was discontinued temporarily for the reason that Butters, N. C., and Bladen County and his mother's name were all included in Sheriff Jones' lead notes to F. B. I.

The New York F. B. I. called Mr. Calson, our F. B. I. at Wilmington, to notify Sheriff Jones to bring someone to New York to identify the suspect.

Sheriff Jones arrived in New York Monday, Feb. 23, accompanied by Deputy Sheriff C. W. Wagstaff and on sight they recognized the suspect as James (Pete) West.

Sheriff Jones asked permission to question him privately which was granted.

James (Pete) West confessed that he struck Mr. Walter J. Johnson on the head once or twice with an axe and robbed him of his pocketbook which he stated contained \$146.00 in currency and several checks. He related that he took the money out of the pocketbook in the nearby woods and hid the pocketbook containing the checks by a pine tree under some pine straw.

James (Pete) West corroborated the above mentioned activities in this investigation and said, "Sheriff Jones, you were good to me when I spent two months in jail before, and I am telling you the truth. I am the man you are looking for."

After much persuasion that West waive extradition and come back with them without further delay, he decided to do so and he was returned to Duplin County on Feb. 24. He is now waiting trial without privilege of bond.

Sheriff Jones wishes to extend his thanks and appreciation to all who rendered aid and information and especially the fine cooperation of the County Commissioners for offering the reward.

## Attention Farmers!

Beginning March 8, 1948, the AAA Office will be closed all day on Saturdays. Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8:30 to 5:30.

David Hendricks of Knoxville, Tenn. spent last week and with Joe and Mrs. Dan Davis spent

## BOB GRADY SAYS

THANKS AGAIN  
Luther Rice Carroll was a very welcome visitor to the Times office a few days ago. Luther brought us about three dozen nice fresh eggs. Any more Luthers in the County?

## 21 YEARS AGO

21 years ago, 1927, while editing our college paper, I set out to sell some advertising to H. Well and Brothers in Goldsboro. The project was unsuccessful. I have continued trying each year since. This week we carry our first Well's Dept. Store ad. Please read it.

## WRIGHT SMITH

A few days ago I ran into Wright Smith of Outlaw's Bridge, shopping in Kenansville. Wright is a prominent citizen of the section and a successful farmer.

Talking with him brought some reminiscences. Wright stutters slightly. One day back in high school Prof. L. R. McCall, former Principal at Warsaw, asked Wright to repeat the passage from the Bible which begins with "The Heavens declare the glory of God."

It was in chapel session. Wright arose with all the dignity he could pursue and started the quotation. His tongue twisted and before he finished chapel session had broken up teachers included, but he knew the passage.

## MR. AND MRS. JOHN WATERS

Mr. and Mrs. John W. Waters celebrated their golden wedding anniversary Monday, Feb. 22. Ye Editor was invited to attend but circumstances prevented it very much to his regret. They are a fine old couple in Glisson. We need more John W. Waters in Duplin.

## OUR TEACHER MOLD

President Truman writes: "American business and businessmen can arouse public opinion — thru the power of advertising — to the need for improving conditions in our schools and our teaching profession."

"Only by so doing can we avoid paying heavy costs, both economic and social."

## Letters To The Editor

Dear Bob:

I saw in your last week's paper where you helped Kenansville receive a shipment of coal and I wondered if you would help us people who live north of Kenansville and south side of Goshen Swamp to get electricity.

In 1939 we paid our deposit on a light line with the Goldsboro R. E. A. During the war we were promised that our line would be the first line constructed, but since the war we have been given the same old run-around, the "shortage of material" but yet they have built lines around Goldsboro and Mt. Olive and Seven Spring.

I thing we people here who have waited nearly 10 years after paying our money should have some consideration.

If it takes a petition to have this Goldsboro Office investigated I will see that we get one.

I am sure if you will help us in this matter every person in the section will thank you very much.

Yours truly,  
Otha L. Holland  
Warsaw

Editors note: Otha Lee I will do anything I can that may help. Get your petition going and we'll go to work. Bob.

## PTA Meets Mon.

The Kenansville PTA will meet Monday night, March 1, in the High School Auditorium at 7:15. At this meeting annual reports will be given and the program will be directed by Mrs. Emory Sadler. This is the annual Founder's Day birthday party and a silver offering will be taken. The public is cordially invited.

Tuesday with her sister, Mrs. W. B. Pettaway near Jacksonville, and Mrs. Dan Davis spent

## Ralph Sheldon Is Presented Wallace Womans Club



In a benefit concert for its piano fund, the Wallace Music Club will present Ralph Sheldon, well-known pianist, in the High School Auditorium on Thursday evening, March 4th at 8 p. m. He will give a spring concert of favorite classics featuring Mozart's Sonata in F, Chopin's Barcarolle, Strauss' Blue Danube Waltz; shorter forks by Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt and Gershwin.

Ralph Sheldon, young American pianist, was born in Minneapolis. He attended Wesleyan University and studied with Josef and Rosina Lhvinne. In 1932, Mr. Sheldon went to Europe with the Lhevinnes for further study. He was awarded a Fellowship in Piano at the Juilliard Graduate School in 1940.

From 1941 to 1943 Mr. Sheldon served in the Armed Forces in the 109th Infantry, after which he returned to his studies. He is now living in Stamford, Conn.

He made his debut at Town Hall, New York on January 13, 1946 at which time he won the acclaim of the press and public for his fine musicianship, singing tone and sense of style.

Ralph Sheldon will play in North Carolina again this spring. Mr. Sheldon, as a young man, with his pupils, the Aley sisters, won such high praise throughout North Carolina towns where they gave concerts while he was in the Army stationed at Ft. Bragg. After his discharge he gave a tour for the North Carolina fund for music in the hospitals for veterans.

Last spring he gave a series of concerts in North Carolina. One of his concerts was given in Wilmington, and he also gave a private concert in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Kramer in Wallace. He so delighted his audience that he was urged to return at an early date.

## OES Met Tuesday

The Kenansville OES met Monday evening Feb. 24, at the Lodge Hall for their regular meeting. District Deputy Grand Matron, Mrs. Mae E. Thomas of Chadbourn and District Deputy Grand Patron, Mr. Norwood B. Parker of Clinton made their official visit to the Chapter. Other visitors present were from Coinjock, Chadbourn, Clinton and Pleasant Hill and also Worthy Matron of the Clinton Chapter, Mrs. Theonah H. Carr. There were 37 members present.

Grand representatives present from the local chapter were Mrs. Pear C. McGowen, Grand Representative for the State of British Columbia and Miss Bessie Kornegay, Grand Representative for the State of California. After the meeting a social hour was enjoyed.

## Registration Day At Johnson Church Next Sunday

Sunday, February, 29th is the fifth Sunday. It is the first time in 40 years we've had five Sundays in February.

Rev. G. Van Stephens, pastor of the Warsaw and Johnson Chapel Baptist churches will be preaching at the 11 o'clock hour at Johnson's. He is anxious for a large turn out of the membership. Each member will be asked to register on that day.

## Sgt. Quinn Receives His Discharge

Mr. Quinn plans to reenter school at Durham College where he was enrolled before entering the Army

## Sunday School Officers' and Teachers' Banquet At Warsaw Legion Hall, Mar 5th.

The officers and teachers from the 38 Sunday schools of the Eastern Baptist Association will have a banquet at the Warsaw Legion Hall on Friday night, March 5th at 7 o'clock. This should be one of the most important Sunday school meetings which the Baptists of the Eastern Association have held in years.

Rev. Thomas L. Rich, Jr., the Associational Sunday School Superintendent will preside, and Mr. L. L. Morgan of Raleigh, the State Baptist Sunday School Superintendent,

will be the principal speaker. There should be at least 150 present for this important meeting.

The Rev. Mr. Rich of Ingold has sent out notices with cards enclosed to be returned to him not later than March 1st, stating the number to attend from each Sunday School of the Eastern Association. The pastors and Sunday School Superintendents are urged to see that this information is sent to Mr. Rich in due time. The price will be .75 per plate.

## TAKEN FROM LIFE

By H. A. STALLINGS  
IN THE WILMINGTON MORNING STAR

Kenansville — We had a very pleasant chat this week with J. R. Grady, publisher of the Duplin Times and Mrs. J. R. Grady, Society Editor. Talking with them it is easy to understand why the Duplin Times has such a solid hold in its people. They are loyal to their paper and have confidence in its future. That is because the success of the Duplin Times is based on services rendered the people that are valuable and continuous. It is a day-in, day-out service that the Grady's expect to continue on and on. Let's hope so.

After this chat we had an enjoyable conversation with Ellis V. Vestal, of Kenansville, who is a business-agriculturist. He is treating the farm as a business plant and is making a fine profit off his connection. He looks upon the reduction in tobacco acreage as one of the biggest blessings that has been bestowed on Southeastern North Carolina.

That may seem a bit unusual coming at a time when so many are regarding the tobacco reduction as a disaster and are making strenuous efforts to have the percentage of reduction lowered. Vestal goes back to the Biblical principle of "As a man thinketh in his own heart, so is he." Vestal says there is too much thinking about tobacco. Too many worrying about tobacco. Therefore, the thinking of the man who is operating a farm ought to leave tobacco out of consideration, on the ground that tobacco will take care of itself and continue to yield a profit per acre. Instead let the farmer think about how to make a greater profit off something else than tobacco.

Vestal is convinced he has done this. He says his books prove that he makes a far greater profit off a sow than an acre of tobacco. As a result Vestal is not thinking about reduced tobacco acreage. He is thinking about hog production.

He is bringing that about. He now has five sows, purebred Durocs. That means 75 to 80 pigs a year. The top half, or the fine animals, will be sold for breeding purposes. The animals not quite so good will be sold for meat to the livestock markets. Already he has sold breeding stock in Hyde, Duplin, Onslow, Sampson, Lenoir, Edgecombe, Pender, Stanley and other counties. Within the coming week he will have animals at Rich Square and Elizabeth City. He does not foresee any diminution in the purebred breeding market but he is careful to protect his own outstanding reputation as a breeder by marketing only his finest animals for breeding purposes.

In the marketing of the meat animals it is only eight miles to the livestock market at Warsaw and not very far to the livestock market in Wallace. Transportation therefore is not a major factor.

Vestal figures the finest feeding program is to give his hogs corn and peanuts and sweet potatoes raised on the farm and seventy-five per cent of the ration and to use oats, and the protein supplements for twenty-five per cent. He sells no corn off his farm, finding it more profitable to market the corn as meat. Vestal has around a hundred acres in cultivation and 50 per cent of the farm income is derived from hogs.

There is a fair amount of timber on the Vestal farm but he is saving this for his own use as he is planning to build a home on the farm.

He now lives in Kenansville. At present the Vestal program for the future shapes up as hogs first, timber second, tobacco third. If pick-up routes develop he will include dairy cattle in the program, but does not plan to operate a dairy himself.

Vestal is living in accordance with his convictions. He is not worrying about tobacco and he is making his farm primarily a business. He is president of the North Carolina Swine Growers Association and Secretary of the North Carolina Breeders Association.

Greenville, Feb. 24. (Special) Dr. John D. Messick will be inaugurated on Saturday, March 6 as president of East Carolina Teachers College in Greenville.

Born and reared in Beaufort county, Dr. Messick came to East Carolina last September to begin his duties as president. After his graduation from the University of North Carolina, he began his career as educator in the public schools and for nine years served as dean of instruction at Elon College. In 1944 he joined the staff of the State Teachers College, Montclair, N. J., one of the outstanding institutions for training teachers in this country. There he was dean and administrative assistant to the president for three years. He succeeded Dr. Dennis H. Cooke, now head of the department of education at Western Carolina College, Greensboro, as president of the college in Greenville.

Dr. Messick will be inaugurated on Saturday, March 6 as president of East Carolina Teachers College in Greenville.

Born and reared in Beaufort county, Dr. Messick came to East Carolina last September to begin his duties as president. After his graduation from the University of North Carolina, he began his career as educator in the public schools and for nine years served as dean of instruction at Elon College. In 1944 he joined the staff of the State Teachers College, Montclair, N. J., one of the outstanding institutions for training teachers in this country. There he was dean and administrative assistant to the president for three years. He succeeded Dr. Dennis H. Cooke, now head of the department of education at Western Carolina College, Greensboro, as president of the college in Greenville.



DR. JOHN D. MESSICK

Born and reared in Beaufort county, Dr. Messick came to East Carolina last September to begin his duties as president. After his graduation from the University of North Carolina, he began his career as educator in the public schools and for nine years served as dean of instruction at Elon College. In 1944 he joined the staff of the State Teachers College, Montclair, N. J., one of the outstanding institutions for training teachers in this country. There he was dean and administrative assistant to the president for three years. He succeeded Dr. Dennis H. Cooke, now head of the department of education at Western Carolina College, Greensboro, as president of the college in Greenville.

Born and reared in Beaufort county, Dr. Messick came to East Carolina last September to begin his duties as president. After his graduation from the University of North Carolina, he began his career as educator in the public schools and for nine years served as dean of instruction at Elon College. In 1944 he joined the staff of the State Teachers College, Montclair, N. J., one of the outstanding institutions for training teachers in this country. There he was dean and administrative assistant to the president for three years. He succeeded Dr. Dennis H. Cooke, now head of the department of education at Western Carolina College, Greensboro, as president of the college in Greenville.

Born and reared in Beaufort county, Dr. Messick came to East Carolina last September to begin his duties as president. After his graduation from the University of North Carolina, he began his career as educator in the public schools and for nine years served as dean of instruction at Elon College. In 1944 he joined the staff of the State Teachers College, Montclair, N. J., one of the outstanding institutions for training teachers in this country. There he was dean and administrative assistant to the president for three years. He succeeded Dr. Dennis H. Cooke, now head of the department of education at Western Carolina College, Greensboro, as president of the college in Greenville.

## Miss Young Visits Duplin

Miss Ina Young, social worker with the medical division of the Veterans Administration of Durham is working for several days in Duplin following up on previously hospitalized veterans and making reports to the hospitals.

Mrs. Marion Everett, field representative with the American Red Cross, was in Duplin County on Tuesday.

## 1912 OLDSMOBILE PASSES TEST

Norwood West, Jr. of Warsaw has a 1912 Model Oldsmobile Automobile. Norwood, Jr. being like his father, mechanically inclined, got his car in good condition and brought it to Kenansville for a test.

The 1912 Model went thru without a flaw. He got his blue sticker.

John M. Middleton - Operating auto intoxicated - guilty, 6 months suspended, not operate auto 12 months unless license, \$200 fine and cost

## Church Men To Meet March 7

The men of the Wilmington Presbytery will hold their annual fellowship dinner in the St. Andrew-Covenant church, Wilmington on Tuesday, March 7, at 6:30 p. m. Col. Roy LeCraw, of Atlanta, Ga., an outstanding layman of the Presbyterian denomination, will be the speaker.

Places will be laid in the dining hall of the host church for 250 guests. The dinner will be served by the women of the church.

Following the dinner, the men will adjourn to the church sanctuary, where Col. LeCraw will speak. The men who cannot be accommodated at the dinner will thus be able to hear the address at 8 p. m.

Mr. E. W. Faries, of Wallace, Chairman of The Men of the Wilmington Presbytery, will preside. Dr. Sandy C. Marks of Wilmington, Chairman of the Program of Progress Committee in the Presbytery, will introduce the speaker. Mr. Allen Marshall, a member of the Evans Memorial Bible Class of the host church will deliver the address of welcome. Rev. J. G. Morrison of Kenansville, will offer the prayer of invocation.

Col. LeCraw, a lawyer and business man of Atlanta, is an elder in the North Avenue Presbyterian church. He has long been very active in civic affairs, having served his city as mayor, as president of both the Junior and Senior Chambers of Commerce, and as Chairman of the Community Chest. He resigned as mayor of Atlanta after serving fourteen months in order to enter active military service. He was assigned to the European theatre and served as a member of the General Staff. After the close of hostilities, he returned to Europe as a member of the military government in the occupied countries.

Answering the call of his church to become the Director of the Program of Progress, Col. LeCraw declined to accept a salary, and is serving the church as a "dollar-a-year" man. His interest in his church and his conviction that the Program of Progress is vital to its welfare were given as his reasons for this action.

EDITORIAL FROM THE  
GOLDSBORO NEWS-ARGUS  
Keep Him  
Working For Us

Graham A. Barren is a candidate for renomination to Congress. He has been a hard worker, conscientious, and effective. The number of terms he has been in Congress makes him more effective. That effectiveness is of value to the people of the Third District. It is important not only in matters which come up in Congress. For the ordinary constituent who has relations with some administrative department of the federal government, effectiveness with the administration is even more important.

An editor of the News-Argus has not in the past agreed with Han Barden on everything. No public man can be expected to vote every time as every constituent would like. In fact, it's impossible.

If the voters of the Third District should pick another man equally hard-working, equally honest, it would be years and a number of terms in office before that man could do as good a job as Judge Barden can do if he is sent back to Congress. We believe he has served his people well and that they should send him back.

If he is spared competition in campaign no diversion of his time from the people's service will be necessary. It looks like good sense to us to send Han Barden back to Congress without any opposition in the primary.