

# Gilbert E. Alphin Of Mt. Olive 92 Years Young Recalls Civil War

By PAUL BARWICK

When the war between the States started in 1861, Gilbert E. Alphin was one year old; but before it ended he had heard the sound of bombshells bursting in the battle of White Hall and seen 'Yankees' destroying the property of his people.

Soon after he was born, his father was taken off to war, and although he was away most of the time, Mr. Alphin remembers his father coming home once or twice before he was wounded. His father died because of the wounds and never returned home.

It was while he was in a cotton field picking cotton with his mother that the battle of White Hall was waged. 'I don't remember seeing anything,' he said, 'but as we walked through the cotton patch that day, I remember the sound of the shells bursting and the thunder that it caused.'

Not long after the war was over, Mr. Alphin went with his brother



GILBERT ALPHIN to White Hall to carry some naval

products which he had made. 'I wish you could have seen the trees. They are as big as lumbering trees splintered and bombshells were sticking in some trees, not exploded.'

'I'll never forget those days,' the elderly gentleman said as he leaned forward in his rocker. 'I didn't see it myself, but when I was running a store down in Duplin County, Sarah Jones, who was there and older than I, used to come to the store to talk about the war. It was a terrible sight, Gilbert,' she would say. 'Well, I saw some of our boys throwing the Yanks in the well and the same for them.'

'We were forced to give ground,' Mr. Alphin said, 'but when we reached the top of the hill, we stood pat and drove the Yanks back across the river.'

'The most vivid expression which lingers in the statement which lawyer Bob Sornegay made as he came through the cotton field on the day of the White Hill battle. The lawyer remarked as he fled, 'Well, Sally, they're in here on us.'

Although his early life is marred by the memory of the War in which he lost his father, Mr. Alphin has lived to a ripe old age, and on Sunday, May 25, he celebrated his 92nd birthday.

After working on the farm for several years, he left home and started on his own. It was a long road to success, but he made it. When 16 years old, he was a hired hand on the farm where he traveled, but then he decided one day to begin a business of his own.

'Goldsboro was a small place then,' he said, 'but I went there and started selling apples and peanuts. My counter and whole place or business was a bare head which I would put on front street. I lived tight then,' he added, 'and soon saved a little money. However, I still had to use a barrel and that was my beginning.'

At the time when he was moving from place to place on the streets of Goldsboro, the mayor of Goldsboro was Joe Peterson, who was a very good friend of his. Police Chief

Hurst was also among his close friends, and they helped him a great deal in reaching his goal.

After a few years work he accumulated about \$400 and leased some land from Colonel Humphrey for his business establishment. The land he leased in the two blocks between the Goldsboro Hotel and the Court House Square. On this land he put up a little store, 10 by 20 feet. This was his first building.

'I was doing right well, and the people were nice to me in Goldsboro, but I had to buy my peanuts from Will Bob and Charlie Griffin, who had a place of business down the street. You know, he said and patted himself on the knee, 'before I left Goldsboro, the Griffins were buying their peanuts apples and the like from me. I had a big business, but I decided to move to Clinton.'

He did well in Clinton but moved back to Goldsboro and stayed for a while. Before he left Goldsboro the first time, he sold out his business and that was three in number.

When he decided to go back to the farm, so he purchased a 400-acre farm in Duplin County and still owns the farm today. Gilbert Jr., is running the farm now, for when Mr. Alphin was 78 years old he decided to retire. When he retired he moved to Mt. Olive, built himself a home, and has been there ever since.

Never was Mr. Alphin idle and always he was thinking up some method to improve the conditions about him. So one day while looking over a window shade hanger and curtain holder, he saw that it didn't know what he was doing.

After arriving at home, he went to work and invented a Curtain and Shade hanger which he had patented. The first model was not as good as he liked, so he improved upon it and had another patent for it. 'I made right much off the invention,' he said, 'and after about five or six years, I began to sell rights to sell the invention to different ones in different

counties. I sold the rights by counting the least and that is to ask God's guidance in life and live a holy life.'

His eyesight is 'not as good as it could be, but pretty good.' His hearing is a little bad, but he's still full of life. A lot has entered the life of Gilbert E. Alphin, but he has lived it well. 'I think you should live and be happy, for life is something God gave to us to enjoy as long as we treat it like we should.' He's 92 years old now, and is active as he was when he retired some 17 years ago.

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