

Published Every Tuesday and Friday. W. F. MARSHALL, Editor and Publisher. PUBLICATION OFFICE: Front Terminal Building, Corner South and 117th Sts., Gastonia, N. C. Telephone number 24.

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 1903.

PICKED TO PIECES.

A Careful Examination into the Arguments Against Removal—Each one Answered in Detail.

We have seen a circular addressed to the citizens of Gaston County and headed in large type: "REASONS WHY THE TAXPAYERS OF GASTON COUNTY SHOULD DEFEAT THE QUESTION OF THE REMOVAL OF THE COUNTY SEAT. READ CAREFULLY AND YOU WILL BE CONVINCED!" signed "L. M. Hoffman, in the name of the opponents of removal."

We will now take the criticisms and objections of Mr. Hoffman's circular, and think we can show the facts and reasons that they are untenable, and not justified by the conditions which exist and affect it.

The first criticism is that the 22nd day of April, the date fixed for the election, is most inconvenient for the country people, while it makes little difference to those town people who have voting precincts at home.

Then he objects that it requires only a majority of the votes cast, not a majority of the qualified voters. In answer to this we will say that the law allows the Legislature to remove a county seat without any vote at all, for there is no provision in the Constitution prohibiting the people through their General Assembly from moving the county seat by legislative enactment.

A majority of the votes cast, the argument is that it is unfair to the opponents of removal, because the bill was not so framed that it permitted these opponents to take advantage of the stay-at-home vote, so that this class of voters, who take no interest in the matter (and there are quite a number of them in every election) could be counted against removal.

And again it is objected that the expense of the county buildings were not provided for in the act for removal, and the people not allowed to vote on this expense. This is another case where in Mr. Hoffman is right, the law and the Constitution are wrong, for it is provided by law, and not prohibited by the Constitution, that the Commissioners shall make provision for the necessary county buildings, and the law not only allows but expects and requires them to do so, and this would have to be so, for contingencies might arise which would require their immediate erection, and the people of the county might be in a bad predicament if they had to wait for an election to be carried by a majority of the qualified voters before they were provided for.

And he says that the bill for the bonds will be kept in the background. In this a fact charge in the light of the fact that the act for the issue of the bonds has already appeared in the Gastonia papers, and was published before any allegation of its concealment was made by Mr. Hoffman and both are public acts accessible to the opponents of removal, who have the privilege of giving them as much notoriety as they wished.

we are informed that it has costly trimmings, marble floors, and every convenience and if the commissioners should see fit to have one built as expensive as the Iredell court house this would leave a balance of \$14,500 for a site and jail, an amount we contend more than sufficient for this purpose. And in answer to the suggestion that an addition and repairs could be made to the present court house at Dallas, we venture the opinion that it would be impracticable and unwise to undertake an addition to that court house, sufficient to supply even the temporary necessities, for it seems that in other counties in the State when court house facilities are needed they are honored by erecting a new building, but if such additions were practicable at 1-10 of the amount that it would cost to remove the county seat, which Mr. Hoffman says would be sufficient for such additions and repairs, and this 1-10 should be estimated at \$5000 and the present court house at Dallas should be valued at \$50000 (and we believe we have put these figures too high (we would then have a court house costing \$10,000 which he says would be a capital one for the county. So when he wishes to argue the supplying of the courthouse at Dallas he puts the cost at \$10,000, but to provide courthouse, jail and site at Gastonia \$39,000 is not sufficient.

votes cast were in favor of removal; but the bill being so framed that those not voting and taking no part in the election were counted against removal, it was defeated. Two years ago when the jail was burned a movement was started for the purpose of asking the Legislature to pass an act again allowing a vote on the question, and about 2800 citizens, which we suppose was more than two-thirds of all the voters in the county, petitioned the Legislature for an act allowing a vote on the question of removal, and asked that the result in such a bill or act be made to depend upon the majority of the votes cast but Mr. O. F. Mason of Dallas, who was the only member of the Legislature from this county and whose approval of any bill on the question was necessary before the Legislature would pass it, opposed any steps being taken asking for any legislation on the subject, and after he was overwhelmed with petitions asking for the bill, he finally and reluctantly consented to introduce a bill requiring a majority of the qualified voters, and assumed the authority and prerogative, otherwise invested by law in the county commissioners, to insert in the act that not less than \$50,000 should be expended in the erection of county buildings in case of removal. Those representing these petitioners for the bill realized that there was an enormous registration caused from the Amendment campaign, and asked Mr. Mason to at least allow them a new registration, but he refused even this, and so after carefully considering the matter, and feeling that the minimum amount fixed in the bill to be expended for county buildings was extravagant, and realizing that it would be impossible to carry this or any measure where a majority of the qualified voters of the county were required to vote in favor of it before it could be carried, and such majority of the qualified voters was based upon the enormous registration caused from the Amendment campaign, they thought best to abandon such election. Now will any reasonable fair minded man say that Mr. Mason's will was responsive to all these petitioners. We asked for bread but got a stone, and because we did not undertake to hold the election in the face of such obstacles and objections, this is now attempted to be used against us in this campaign, and while Mr. Hoffman states in the campaign circular that at the election of 1897 the question was more favorable for removal, and argues that at this election of 1897 and the one ordered for 1901 there were more reasons for removing the county seat, we recall that there is no difference in the degree of his opposition, but this opposition was as vigorous and bitter at those times as it is now. If this statement of the circumstances attending the 1901 act should seem by anyone uncalled for at this time, such statement was made necessary by the attempt to now use these things against us. Besides we fail to see any argument for his side in adversely criticizing us for not holding an election which he urged ought not to have been ordered or permitted by the Legislature.

But he argues that the court house at Dallas is sufficient, and cites the old Mecklenburg court house as an example. If Mr. Hoffman is not misinformed or mistaken as to the size of the old Mecklenburg court house, and we think he is, this seems to us a poor argument, that because Mecklenburg county did not provide a sufficient court house, we should not, for it seems that Mecklenburg's was not sufficient for it has erected a new building at a cost of double what we contend would be necessary to build in this county, but however that may be, we know the county commissioners of Iredell county were indicted at the instance of Judge Shaw because of the insufficiency of the court house for that county, and the result of this indictment is that Iredell has a new one about which we have already spoken, and only a few weeks since Judge Long had the commissioners of Caldwell indicted because the court house for that county was insufficient, and because the commissioners had failed to provide a new one, and before the adjournment of the term of court at which they were indicted, they met and passed a resolution for a new court house, and we are informed that both of these court house buildings were quite as good as the one at Dallas, and we know this county is more populous and wealthy and requires more court house facilities than Caldwell, and we think the public necessity requires and we are as able to provide as ample court house facilities as Iredell. Besides, we understand that one other term of court, will take up all available space in the vaults in the Clerk's office at Dallas, and we understand also the Register's office is now insufficient for the lack of space in the vault, and it is a matter of common knowledge and observation that

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during the trial of criminal actions in this county, and often in the trial of civil actions, the jury are forced to deliberate in arriving at their verdicts in barnyards, old fields, or any other outdoor place they can find, which renders that secrecy and privacy which the law expects in such cases almost impossible, and any one who attends court can see that the seating capacity of our court house is entirely inadequate, and notwithstanding at the last term of our court Judge Shaw announced that witnesses and parties must be present when called, whenever he would require those standing in the court house to be seated it would often necessitate some of these very witnesses and parties leaving the building. Again Mr. Hoffman endeavors "to throw a scare" into the ranks of the voters by saying in substance that if the "Gastonia" win the cry will be for up to date buildings, doubtless meaning by this to make the impression upon you that a much larger sum will be asked for and expended for county buildings in case the election carries for removal than the available assets for this purpose. The standing and character of the present Board of County Commissioners ought to make this intimation and suspicion of bad faith on their part of no effect, for the rankest advocate of removal could not expend the amount provided nor any greater amount without the approval of the Board of County Commissioners. Besides the \$30,000 of bonds provided for out of which the expenses are to come for this purpose is the only amount for which the people can be taxed, and there could be no further bond issue unless authorized by another Legislature, and as the act provides for the completion of the buildings in case of removal by the first day of November, 1904, we don't think for these reasons this scare ought to work. But these suspicions and intimations have called forth the following signed statement from the members of the Board of County Commissioners, which speaks for itself, and if this is not a complete answer to this allegation of Mr. Hoffman, then the word and pledge of these men is worth nothing:

STATEMENT OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS. To the People of Gaston County: In view of certain reports current in the county, by circular and otherwise, which seem to reflect upon the disposition of the present Board of County Commissioners of Gaston county to guard wisely and economically the interests of the people whom they serve, in case it should become necessary to re-establish the county seat, we deem it but simple justice to ourselves and the public to make the following statement in regard to the matter: It is our purpose and intention, and we hereby pledge ourselves to the people of the county, to erect and complete suitable buildings; and to limit our expenditures strictly to the assets placed at our disposal at the time when the election shall be carried, to-wit: The thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) in funds authorized by the recent act of the Legislature, the \$5,000 donated by Gastonia, and the property now belonging to the county at Dallas.

And he points to Gastonia as an example of high taxes, and says "these same leaders once before underestimated the expense of a public improvement. We refer to their Electric Lights and Long Creek water. We believe they had to issue a large second installment of bonds. If the finance of Gastonia was in a deplorable condition, and Gastonia was a county instead of a town this might be considered an argument for him, but even if this is the case we fail to see any argument in citing Gastonia as an example, for his argument that more money will be spent for county buildings falls down for the reason that it cannot be done

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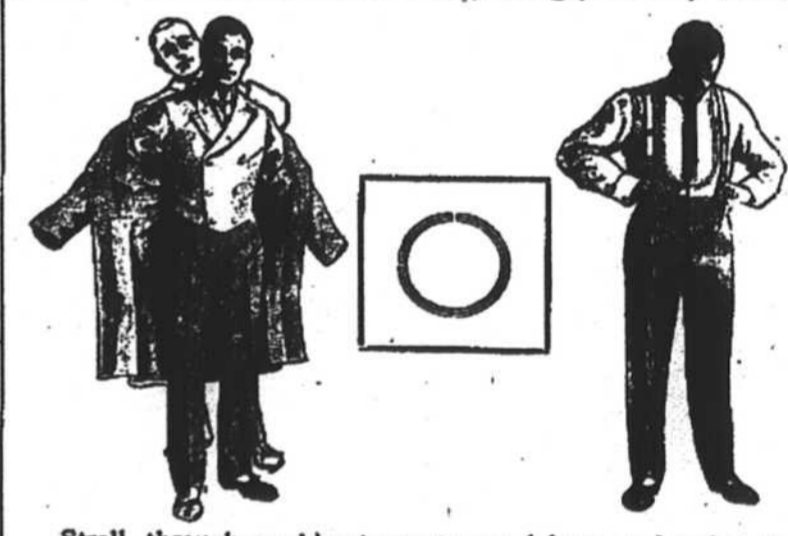
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(CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE.)