

GATES COUNTY INDEX

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12 Pages This Week

February Court Day Now Just a Memory

By Bill Davey

Gatesville.—It was quiet in Gatesville Monday—a quiet which indicated the silent passing of a day that is rich in the memory of many of Gates county's oldsters: February Court Day.

No one, not even the older settlers themselves, seems to know the origin of February Court Day, but everyone agrees that its death as a county-wide holiday is not far away.

It has gone the way of many of the old customs and the old times, but the memories of the day when the whole county went to town still linger.

February Court Day dates from the time when slavery was a common practice in North Carolina and when seine-fishing in the Chowan river with huge hand-pulled nets was a normal and lucrative trade. It was on February Court Day that the owners of the fishing grounds on the Chowan came to Gatesville to an always-ready labor market: surplus slaves to be hired for a pittance from masters who were glad to turn them over to the fishery owners, freedmen whose farms had not brought them and their families a living, sinewy roisterers who liked nothing better than adding a brawny shoulder to those engaged in pulling in by hand the huge nets full of their silvery catch.

It was a natural magnet, this third Monday in February, which drew into the county seat the wealthy landowners, the slaves, the fisher folk, the swaggering wadies, the professional gamblers, the horse traders and the pickpockets. To the county folk it was a gay holiday; to the fishermen it was a yearly necessity; to the gambler and the rowdies it was paradise.

February Court day seems to be merely a term which has begun for what reason no one seems to know. There is no evidence that there was ever court in session at the time (though a number of participants are said to have ended up in court later because of their actions on that day), but the name has stuck through the years.

After slavery was abolished the practice of using the one day of the year for labor-hiring continued. See COURT DAY, Page 9

Sunbury School Post Is Taken By Mrs. Parker

Sunbury.—The addition of Mrs. Shellen L. Parker, who is teaching the sixth grade in the Sunbury school, completes the roster of teachers in the schools of Gates county, it was announced Monday by W. Henry Overman, county superintendent of schools. Mrs. Parker fills the vacancy left in the Sunbury school by the departure of Mrs. Margaret G. Tyler several months ago. Two other vacancies which remained in the county system were filled shortly after Christmas, but the Sunbury position remained open.

Mrs. Parker has taken the sixth grade job at least until the end of the present term, Overman said, but there is a good possibility that she may remain permanently. Mrs. Parker, whose home is in Sunbury, taught during the 1944-45 school year in the Gatesville high school.



SAILORS. The Gates county sailors pictured here met recently in Tsingtao, China. The men are Earl E. Pierce, EM 2/c of Sunbury, son of Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Pierce, and Ralph Hobbs of Corapeake, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Hobbs.

Graham Says Men Badly Needed For Road Building

Raleigh.—The expanding road building program in the state is demanding large numbers of men for work in the various highway construction departments, Chairman A. H. Graham of the State Highway and Public Works Commission said today.

"Right now", he said, "there is an urgent need for immediate employment of levelmen, rodmen and chainmen to work in highway locating parties. Since this work can be regarded as employment of a permanent nature, this seems to me to be a good opportunity for veterans to get into a type of civilian employment with a future", he observed.

"If we had them, we could put a large number of men to work tomorrow as members of highway locating parties", the Chairman said.

Although some experience is necessary to qualify as a levelman or rodman, Graham pointed out that men who have not had any previous experience in highway work can qualify as chainmen. Also, it is entirely possible, he said, that a chainman can be promoted "through the ranks" to rodman, levelman or even higher through the experience gained under actual working conditions.

Marvin E. Hobbs Is Commissioned

Gates.—Ensign Marvin E. Hobbs, USMS, of Gates, recently graduated from the U. S. Maritime Service Officers School, Fort Trumbull, New London, Connecticut. He has been shipping out with the Merchant Marine since April, 1944, and wears the Atlantic and Pacific War Zone Bars. His parents live at the same address. Ensign Hobbs received his license as a Third Assistant Engineer in the U. S. Merchant Marine as well as being commissioned an Ensign in the U. S. Maritime Service.

Short Stay!

Gatesville.—James Lee Eason, son of Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Eason of Gatesville, was rushed to the naval hospital in Portsmouth last Tuesday—thirty minutes after he had arrived home with his navy discharge after 32 months of service.

In the time Eason was in the navy he spent nineteen months in the Pacific and was a Fire Controlman 3/c. During his time in service he escaped unscathed only to wind up in a navy sick bay on the day of his discharge.

The cause—an acute attack of appendicitis with which he was stricken a half-hour after he had arrived home to start learning how to become a civilian.

Virginia Power Company To Cut Rates This Area

Raleigh.—Utilities Rate Expert Edgar Womble has announced that the new rate schedules of the Virginia Electric and Power Company will save Northeastern North Carolina customers about \$100,000 a year.

The new schedules, lowering the rates on power supplied, were approved last week by the State Utilities Commission. The lowered rates, which affect home users, small shops and power for street lighting, will become effective April 1.

Twelve thousand residential and three thousand commercial use V.E.P.Co. power in Northeastern North Carolina. All customers who use more than 50 kilowatt hours per month will be affected by the rate slash.

Electric power in the section is supplied now entirely by V.E.P.Co., and through the REA lines in outlying districts.

At present, Womble said, the rate charged by the Virginia company for 100 KWH is \$4.25, which will be reduced to \$3.95 under the new schedule. The commercial rate of \$5 for 100 KWH will be lowered to \$4.75.

Womble estimated that the Utilities Commission has affected savings in power rates for the State amounting to nearly \$800,000 annually. This has been accomplished, Womble said, since January, 1945.



IMPROVED IRON LUNG... Nurse Minnie Malek, Los Angeles, demonstrates new 60-pound lung on "patient" Barbara Johanson. The new lung will replace the heavy iron lung type now in use for polio victims which weighs from 600 to 2,500 pounds. The new lung, known as the Blanchard mechanical physio-therapist, is now being successfully used in several hospitals.

Accidental Death Verdict Returned In Brown Shooting



LT. RUTH K. STALLINGS, of Hobbsville, receives the congratulations of Colonel S. M. Browne, Commanding Officer of Lawson General Hospital, Atlanta, Georgia, upon being commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Physio-Therapists Corps. Lt. Stallings' commission was awarded after nine months of study and practice in administering physio-therapy treatments to wounded battle veterans.

Farm Drainage Problems Will Be Investigated

Gatesville.—A number of Gates County farms with serious problems in drainage will be visited by H. M. Ellis, agricultural engineer from N. C. State College, Jesse Liles, county soil conservation representative, and John W. Artz, county agent, Artz announced Monday.

Artz said Ellis and Liles are working together in an effort to find solutions to the drainage problems of a number of farmers in the county and that the three-man group will examine as many farms as possible on Thursday.

A number of people have already notified his office that they want their farms examined, Artz said, but that he would be glad to hear from any others in the county who wish to have their particular problems examined.

Hobbsville Girl Is Club Officer

Mars Hill College.—Miss Annie Hope Blanchard of Hobbsville, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Blanchard, was recently elected chaplain of the Nonpareil Literary Society of Mars Hill College, where she is a member of the sophomore class.

Gatesville Masonic Lodge Meets Thurs.

Gatesville.—The regular monthly meeting of the Gates county Masonic Lodge will be held Thursday evening, February 21, at 7:30 in the Masonic Hall, it was announced by L. C. Hand.

Hobbsville.—A verdict of "death by accident" was given in the fatal shooting last Wednesday morning of Oliver Linwood Brown, 63.

Acting Coroner J. P. Cross of Gatesville submitted his verdict to clerk of court L. C. Hand shortly after he had been called to examine the body, which was found by Brown's son on the back steps of his house before noon on Wednesday.

Cross said the gun, a single-shot shotgun, was found partly under Brown's body, and evidence seemed to indicate that Brown had stumbled on the back steps and fallen, discharging the gun as he fell and fatally wounding himself in the back of the head.

At the time of the shooting Brown was alone at his home, his wife having gone to the home of a neighbor.

Neighbors reported having heard the report of a gun from the direction of Brown's home approximately thirty minutes before the body was discovered.

Cross said in his verdict that there was absolutely no evidence of foul play in the case and that a series of circumstances precluded any idea of suicide.

Brown is survived by his wife, Mrs. F. achus Brown, and a son, R. L. Brown, both of Hobbsville; a daughter, Mrs. S. E. Rountree of Washington, D. C.; two brothers, J. W. Brown of Gatesville and W. A. Brown of Hobbsville; and two sisters, Mrs. J. W. Hudgins and Mrs. E. J. Hobbs, both of Hobbsville.

Funeral services were conducted Friday afternoon from the Zion Methodist Church by the Rev. T. A. Collins, pastor, assisted by the Rev. R. E. Ferguson of Hobbsville Baptist Church. Burial was in the family cemetery.

Active pallbearers were James Hudgins, James Wright, Ernest Hudgins, Dr. J. W. Brown, C. C. Brown, Hardie Brown, Marshall Hobbs, and Emmett Brown. Members of the Men's Bible Class of Zion Sunday School served as honorary pallbearers.

Traffic Violators Fined In Short Court Session

Gatesville.—Only four traffic violation cases appeared before Judge E. S. A. Ellenor's recorder's court last Tuesday, in one of the shortest sessions in several months.

Grover Edward Ralph, Corapeake negro, drew the stiffest sentence of the session, when he was convicted of charges of reckless driving and driving without a driver's license. Ralph was fined \$25 and court costs.

Tommy J. Boyce of Tyner was fined \$10 and costs on a charge of driving an automobile equipped with improper brakes.

Fines of \$10 and court costs were meted out to Roosevelt Britt, negro, of Whaleyville, Va., on a charge of driving without a driver's license, and to Willie Stallings, negro, of Hobbsville, who was charged with improper brakes.