

Elkin Twenty Years Ago

By GRADY BURGESS

(A SUPPLEMENT)

Through the courtesy of Mr. J. R. Windsor there was put into my hands a few days ago a copy of the industrial edition of The Tribune that was published in the summer of 1914. And this old fragment of the earlier journalism of this publication contains many interesting facts. It also shows that I made a few mistakes in the historical sketch of Elkin that has been running in The Tribune for the past few weeks, which I would like to correct at this time.

The first correction that I would like to make is that the pastor of the Methodist church at that time was the Rev. J. A. J. Farrington, instead of the Rev. J. P. Hipps whom I stated was here. Mr. Hipps was here the next year.

Another correction is that Dr. L. R. Salmons was one of the physicians of Elkin at that time, and Dr. H. C. Salmons was located in Jonesville, being mayor of our neighboring town.

Another correction is that there was only one "livery, feed and trade and sale stable" in Elkin twenty years ago, according to a statement in this old paper I have, instead of the three that I stated as being here at the time. However, another stable was being planned at that time, and was built a year or so later.

Still another correction is that Mr. A. L. Reeves was connected with Somers & Company's 5c and 10c store then instead of having a store of his own. Somers & Co. also had stores in Mt. Airy and North Wilkesboro in 1914.

Perhaps there are other little errors that could be located by a more thorough study of the material at hand, but these mentioned are all there are of any importance that I have in mind just now. Any further corrections by anyone else will be welcomed and appreciated.

One of the most interesting items in this old paper that was published 20 years ago is the following:

"There are now 24 automobiles in Elkin, the kind and owners being as follows: Overland: E. F. McNeer and B. L. Johnson; Hupmobile: W. W. Whitaker, Dick Smith and H. H. Barker; Reo: Raymond Chatham and G. T. Roth; Ford: T. G. Harris, T. G. Trivette, J. S. Atkinson, Dick Grier, C. H. Billings, R. B. Lewis, C. G. Armfield, E. G. Click, M. Q. Snow, C. E. Holcomb, J. W. Ring and A. L. Reeves; Buick: R. L. Poindexter and J. R. Poindexter; Maxwell: T. H. Eidson; Carmeron: Byrd Snow, and I. H. C. truck, Elkin Hardware Co." There is also shown a picture of "Jargo" Elkin's first automobile. This is a very small contraption looking somewhat like a buggy with the shafts taken

off. W. W. Whitaker and F. A. Brendle are shown in the seat of it. And here is a statement about the fire department which may remind you of some of the humorous spurts in the Gab Bag in regard to that organization: "The fire department has a hand reel and hose and hand fire engine, but the fire company has become disorganized, the bucket brigade method being more effective. However, with the completion of the waterworks, the fire company will be re-organized on a firm basis."

And here is one about the lock-up: Elkin has a good lock-up, but it has been used only one time for about two hours since it was built four or five years ago."

But if the local lock-up did not have such a rushing business in the "good old days" there were other things that did; for we learn that Elkin had the distinction of being the largest country produce market in North Carolina, handling more than 10,000 coops of chickens and over 8,000 cases of eggs annually. It is further stated that about 750,000 pounds of fruit and 4,000 bushels of peach seed were handled each year.

The manufacturing plants are represented as doing a very large business also, there being shipped by them approximately 2,500 car loads of manufactured goods a year, going to all parts of the U. S., and to Canada and Mexico. The volume of the business represented in dollars amounting to \$1,500,000.

Among the many things that were shipped from Elkin at that time was the brogan shoe made by the Elkin Shoe Co. Mr. A. M. Smith, with his factory, was able to make over 400 pairs daily, and shipped 150 car loads each year to a dozen or more of the states of the Union.

The Dixie Hardware & Manufacturing Co., also did a large business in the manufacture and shipping of the Eldson Patented Canner and the Eldson Patented Mail Box. These two inventions of Mr. T. H. Eldson were shipped into a great many of the southern states.

The Elkin Buggy Co., manufactured high grade buggies, and did a thriving business here in 1914.

But because of the constant changing of times and customs some of these industries have either had to diminish their business, or close out altogether.

The town commissioners of Elkin twenty years ago were G. T. Roth, J. S. Atkinson, E. G. Click and C. N. Bodenheimer. (Mr. Bodenheimer was an ex-postmaster then.) C. G. Armfield was mayor, J. F. Hendren, clerk and treasurer, and W. W. Harris was constable.

And here is a statement about the tax rate: "The tax rate for general purposes is twenty-five cents on the \$100 property valuation and \$1.65 on the poll. The special taxes for water, sewerage and school purposes increases these amounts to \$1.32 and \$2.25 respectively."

Another statement about clubs and secret orders is as follows: "Five secret and fraternal orders are represented here, including the Masons, Odd Fellows, Junior Order, Red Men and Knights of Pythias, while the boys have an active Boy Scout organization and the ladies of the town have a Reading Club, Community Club and Civic League." And this about the telephone: "A local telephone exchange gives the people of Elkin inter-communication and many lines penetrate the country and enter nearby towns. The Bell lines give excellent long distance service."

There is also a long write-up about a modern brick hotel that was to have been built on a lot between East Main and Market streets at the present location of the F-W Chevrolet Co. It was to have had 34 rooms, a large dining room and ample kitchen facilities, and was to have fronted on two streets. Mr. W. S. Gough was the financier and promoter of it. This statement is made about it: "This hotel will have all modern conveniences for the benefit of the guests, including a barber shop, news and cigar stands, sample rooms, steam heat, private and public baths, city water and sewerage and a spacious lobby. It will contain 34 well-furnished living rooms and will have three stories and a basement." Construction was begun on the building, which was to have cost \$15,000, but for some reason the project was abandoned. Thus one of Elkin's dreams was not realized in order that a better one might be accomplished!

Still another interesting item which is contained in this old edition of The Tribune in 1914 is one about the old wooden bridge which spanned the Yadkin river. It is, in part, the old Jonesville Bridge, which spanned the Yadkin river between Elkin and Jonesville for 41 years until last year, had the unique position of being the longest wooden suspension bridge in the world, as far as could be ascertained, the span being 210 feet. The bridge was built in the winter and spring and opened up in May 1872 by a company of stockholders among whom were R. E. Gwyn, A. Chatham, etc., the work being done by a Mr. Lindsay from New England. The material for the bridge, which was enclosed except at the ends, was of the best variety and was sound when the bridge was torn down after serving as a means of communication between Surry and Yadkin counties for 41 years. The

old bridge was operated as a toll bridge until 904 when Surry and Yadkin counties purchased it from the stock company and made it free." I remember crossing this old bridge a few times, and I think that I shall never forget the beauty and grace of the large rainbow like arches, one on either side, that were the supporting parts of this old product of human skill and ingenuity. There are many pictures in this old 1914 copy of the Tribune showing the streets, stores, factories, churches and many of the dwellings as they were at that time. And the front page presents a bird's-eye view of Elkin taken from the top of the hill in Jonesville at the present home of Mr. J. I. Cockerham. Though the picture is somewhat dim the general appearance of what it shows of the town looks rather familiar. There are also two pictures of the old wooden bridge referred to above.

A picture of the business section of the town as it looked in 1890 has these words beneath it: "All of the business houses in Elkin were on the street along the creek and are shown in this picture." (About all that is shown in the picture is the old cotton mill, two or three dwellings and three or four stores). There are also several pictures of the leading business and professional men, the pastors of the churches, educators, members of the town council, etc.

In a full page ad of the Chatham Manufacturing Co., are these words: "Twelve grades of blankets, with corresponding range prices.—They go to practically every state in the union, and to many of our island possessions.—Mills at Elkin and Winston-Salem, have not shut down for more than a week or ten days at Xmas since mills started in 1878.—Output is 5,000 pairs of blankets per week."

And in an ad for the grocery store of the Rev. J. R. Jolly, which was at the present location of the Lawrence Dry Cleaning Co., we find this statement: "In the first brick building erected in Elkin, and always JOLLY."

Another full page ad., for the Elkin Hdwe. Co., has this to say: "We are agents for the famous Blue Ridge buggies, H. H. Babcock buggies, George E. Nissen and J. I. Nissen wagons, Elkin Harness Co.'s wagon and buggy harness, collars and bridles."

Many other things are contained in this old paper about how Elkin looked and what went on within her peaceful bounds twenty years ago that would be of interest to many people, but I shall now desist from any further discussion of them, lest I tire you with the length and tediousness of this sketch.

Perhaps at some later date The Tribune will want to republish the historical sketches of both Elkin and Jonesville that are given in this paper, along with other things of interest that are in it.

Five Indian towns of prehistoric times have been discovered in Southern Peru by an archaeological expedition.

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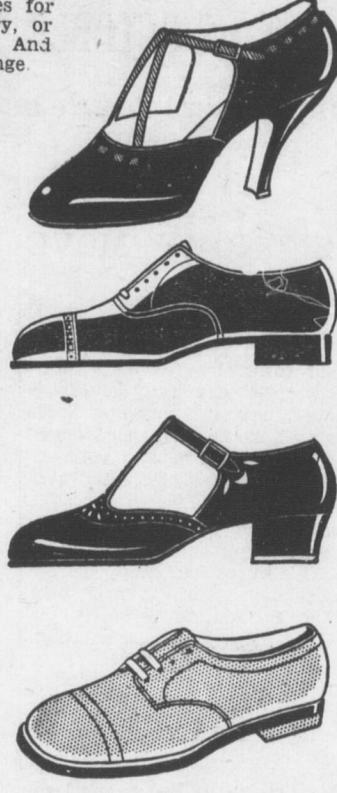
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