

STATION

From 1A

At the time, Falls wondered why they would make such a recommendation but figured they knew best, so he did not purchase the building.

Later, though, he realized the bank did him a favor.

"Within five years all of the old stations were going out of business because of leaking gas tanks that were contaminating the soil," he said. "If it hadn't been for the bank I would have owned that property myself today."

The property, owned by the Cheshire family, became vacant some 10 months ago when the last tenant, Billy's Automotive, closed up shop. The only person to operate a business there between Falls and Billy's, according to Falls, was Eddie Leftwich, who bought the business from Falls and ran a garage there for about a year.

City Codes require vacant buildings be brought up to current codes within 90 days, and if not the city can take legal steps to demolish the building and place a lien against it.

After that process was completed, Murphrey became anxious to see the structure go because he felt it gave visitors a negative impression of the city.

"Structures must adhere to all the building codes," he said.

"We have passed new codes and ordinances in the last year to strength the minimum requirements. We've put more teeth into the codes and are putting more enforcement into them because we have a lot of pride in the city and care about its appearance.

"When buildings are left to deteriorate we'll go through the process to remove them," he said. "We are not going to let our city move backwards. We're moving progressively forward. We're going to be moving through the procedure to get some more buildings, including houses, demolished. It doesn't give a real good feeling about the town when you don't clean up. We just have too much pride to let those buildings just stay unattended."

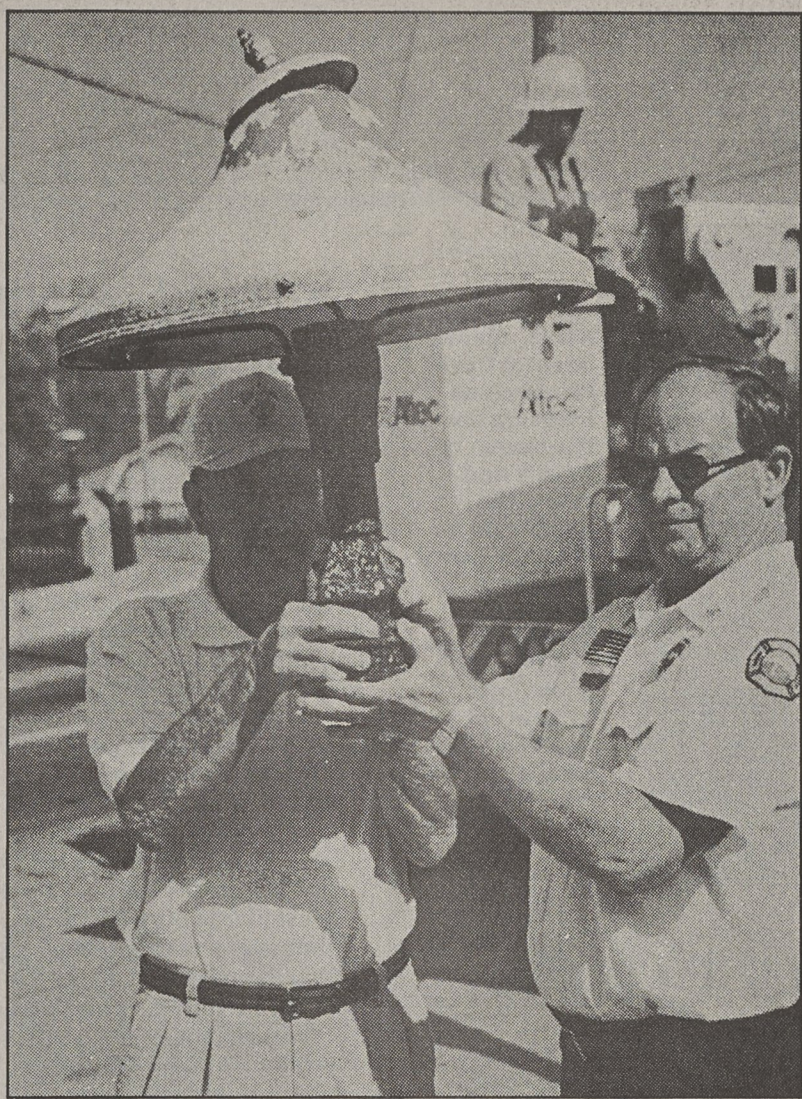
Falls said the building, which was constructed in 1937, could have been a landmark.

"The construction was good," he said. "But the top was too big for a flat roof and it always leaked. My grandfather did the brick work. It had indented mortar joints. It was dark red slick-faced brick with black mortar joints. It would have been a beautiful building to restore if it had been sand blasted and gotten back to the black and red."

Falls recalled that his father operated a station at that intersection from 1928 until his death. The first building stood only ten years and was replaced when the sloping terrain had to be filled in during the construction of Highway 74.

Falls recalled some fond memories at the location. He said the business operated 24 hours a day except during World War II, when the government prohibited businesses being open for more than 12 hours.

"We sold 70 Kings Mountain Herald there every week," he said. "People would come by and buy them on Wednesday night knowing that they were going to get one in the mail the next morning."



Gene Tignor, left, and Fire Chief Frank Burns salvage 1930's light from old Otis Falls Service Station for use at the Kings Mountain Fire Museum.

"We sold fruit and produce outside. Exxon used to get after us for having the driveway full of stuff like that. A year and a half after we closed people began to put that stuff everywhere. We were the first convenience store in town and didn't know it."

Falls said most of the older folks came by the station about every day to swap hunting and fishing tales, "and just have a good time."

Jim Leigh, who operated the Pure Oil Station across the street, and his father, Martin, had a big Bulldog that Martin would bring over for Falls' small daughter, Linda, to pet. Mr. Harmon (Martin Sr.) lived next door and worked at Plonk's Grocery Store," he recalled. "He would come out in the evenings when he was real old and buy an apple. He had a little knife, and he'd peel his apple all the way around and the peel would come off in one long strand. He'd eat the apple and then eat the peeling. I could write a book about things that happened there."

"We pumped a half-million gallons of gas a year when you had to hold the nozzle in your hand. For 13 years before World War II started our door was never locked. When my grandmother died, we had two doors. We had to stack coffee jars against one and go out the other one because we couldn't find the key."

For a long time, the station was the only one between Charlotte and Spartanburg that was open after midnight.

"During the war you could only stay open 12 hours," he recalled. "The Esso station down at the corner of 74 and 161 was run by Bus Oates and he got drafted. So my daddy rented it so we could have one open during the day and the other one at night."

During the early days, Falls recalled that pumps had 10-gallon tanks on the top of them and gas was released by gravity. Most folks bought either one,

two or three gallons because every time a gallon was pumped a bell would ring and the attendant had to stop the pump and start over.

"Hardly anyone bought a dollar's worth of gas," he noted.

Soft drinks were five cents. If you took the bottle, there was a penny deposit. Bob Grigg, who formerly worked with Coca Cola, operated a soft drink facility at the present site of City Auto and Truck Parts and marketed two soft drinks called Bob's Cola and Whistle Cola.

A.K. Walker operated Quality Sandwich Shop on Railroad Avenue, and delivered fresh sandwiches to all small stations and stores from Kings Mountain to Spartanburg.

He said some of the older folks were reluctant to let him service their cars because of his young age and others, once they learned how good he was, wouldn't let anyone else do their work.

He recalled working several 24-hour shifts during the winter putting snow chains on cars.

Falls said he was standing between the door and the cash register on December 7, 1941 when he heard about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He was 14 at the time. At age 17 he joined the Army. After the war he came right back to the station to help his father.

"I guess you could say I officially went to work for him in 1948 and sold the business in 1983," he said. "But I was there from the time I was so little it was all I could do to pull the pumps down. I grew up there."

Central Methodist plans \$1.5 million renovation

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

Although the official groundbreaking will not take place until Sunday, May 6 Central United Methodist Church began moving dirt around yesterday morning to make way for a \$1.5 million building and renovation project.

The congregation plans a single story multi-purpose building which will include a gymnasium and modern kitchen facility as well as new administrative offices.

The 11,000 square foot facility will be built north of the sanctuary on what is now the church parking lot which faces Piedmont Avenue. The parking lot is being removed and graded down to street level, but once the total project is complete the facility will accommodate more vehicles (approximately 81) than it does now and will include a covered entrance on the back side of the existing educational building.

Building Committee Chairman Jake Dixon said temporary parking will be added on adjoining lots that the church recently purchased. The church also utilizes street parking and parking space at nearby Harris Funeral Home and Warlick and Hamrick Insurance.

The church has outgrown its current fellowship and administrative space. The new multi-purpose building will be utilized for sports, banquets, and other activities.

The old fellowship hall, located on the lower level of the two-story church at the corner of Piedmont Avenue and Mountain Street, will be turned into storage rooms, a new choir rehearsal room and a small meeting room. The church will also install an elevator in one corner of the room.

Bathrooms will also be updated to make them handicap accessible.

A.A. Ramsey & Sons of Shelby is general contractor. The project and total cost of \$1,555,830 were recently approved at a Congregational meeting in which 72% of the people voted in favor.

"This is a challenge, but you have to have faith," said Dixon, who has been a member of the church since he moved inside the Kings Mountain city limits in 1952.

"This is the first major project since the sanctuary was built in 1967," he recalled. "The old sanctuary was torn down and a new one built on the same site."

Dixon noted that the church's youth outreach has grown tremendously in the past several months, and hopes that the new building will help increase participation in other programs as well.

"We're hoping this will help us grow and offer more services," Dixon said.

The church and contractor are shooting for a completion date of 380 days.

"The first thing we'll do is eliminate the parking lot, but there will be some parking around the new facility once it's completed," Dixon said. "We'll build the new facility first, move into it and then renovate the present building. Once it is complete the new facility will be larger than our present facility."

An early chore that will bring a little sadness will be the removal of two huge trees - an oak and a Magnolia tree - that have stood on the site for years.

"It's something you don't like to do, but it's necessary," Dixon said. "This whole new area has to come down to street level because the present church building is at street level and the parking lot is above street level."

The new building will tie into the existing facility at the educational wing. The present administrative offices are in that wing, but when the multi-purpose building is complete they will be converted back to Sunday School rooms.

About the only part of the church that won't be touched is the sanctuary, which includes a balcony and seats 425.

"We are real excited about this project," Dixon said. "When we had our final vote we thought it would be real close. But 72 percent approved it, and that's a good. This is the biggest undertaking we've ever done."

Dixon said the church has a unique ministry, and although he's now retired he said he is particularly impressed with the job the youth are doing.

"We have a new youth director (Jada McDaniel) who just came in this year," he noted. "They had 18 to 20 people starting off, but they're really growing. Tony Bradshaw and a bunch of them went and climbed Crowders Mountain for sunrise service Sunday. We had a Bring A Friend Sunday a couple weeks ago, and the night before they had a special youth service and 75 young people attended."

The Senior Citizens "Breakfast Bunch" is another of the church's outreach programs, and music has always been a strong point of the church.

"Linda Dixon is our music and educational director, and she does a real good job," Dixon said. "We have a Chancel Choir which is older people like myself, then she has a Children's Choir which practices every week and sings at least once a month."

The church also recently started a new youth choir and handbell choir.

BRIEFS

Hot dog supper at Grace Methodist

Grace United Methodist Church will have a hot dog and bake sale April 28 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Proceeds go to the Relay for Life. The public is invited.

Fund raiser slated at People's Church

The youth department of People Baptist Church will be having a fund-raising April 21 from 11 a.m.-7 p.m. All pro-

ceeds will go to help finance a mission trip.

Barbecue ribs, chicken, baked beans, slaw, and dessert will be sold for \$6.

For more information call Jackie Hopper at 739-7769.

Gospel singing set at House of Worship

There will be a gospel singing

Saturday, April 28 at 7 p.m. at

House of Worship, 901 Long Creek Road, Kings Mountain.

Featured group is Good News Messengers. The public is invited. For more information call Rev. Clint Day at 629-5569.

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Phone (704) 739-7496 • Fax (704) 739-0611
Office: 824-1 East King Street • Kings Mountain, NC 28086
E-mail: kmhnews@aol.com

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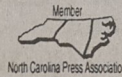
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