



Then AND Now
by VICTOR MEEKINS

MEDICAL SERVICE A CENTURY AGO

Doctors were not plentiful in the Coastland 125 years ago, and a person living on Roanoke Island sent to Currituck Courthouse for the doctor. My great grandmother, Esther Mann Meekins lived in the house where I live, and owned numerous slaves. It is a tradition that she was very good to them and allowed them to become too lazy to cut sufficient firewood to keep them warm, and it is said they didn't grow enough to eat on her farm. But those were the days of limitless fish and game.

John Marchant Meekins, famed bachelor of Roanoke Island tells a story which his parents handed down to him about medical service at the Esther Meekins home. Once a negro boy on the place was taken ill with a fever. The story is more interesting when Marchant tells it. But anyway the mistress was greatly disturbed and sent off two of her men slaves in a sailing canoe to fetch the doctor from Currituck Courthouse. Roanoke Island was then a part of Currituck County. The negroes sailed and rowed their slow log canoe to Halls Harbor, and went by vehicle of some sort to get the doctor. By going day and night they got the doctor back to the Meekins plantation in two days.

The diagnosis was measles. It was September. The doctor said: "go out there in your sheep pasture and gather up some sheep droppings. Make a strong tea and let the patient drink copiously." The negro boy is reported to have gotten well. Nanny tea is a traditional remedy in America. Perhaps it does have medicinal value.

The doctor's fee was a \$5 gold-piece. He was called into dinner, and found an abundance of hog's liver and boiled salt-bluefish. "Madam," he said, "of hog's liver I have never had enough, and blue fish is fit for the Gods."

John Marchant lives alone in his big old house, surrounded by old things. Many visitors pester him for his old silver and his old china, and the beautiful antique furniture he owns. Now approaching four-score, he is a man who enjoys the friendship of all. But he is tired of all his familiar surroundings and the nice things in his house so that he wishes to build a new home.

Carson W. Davis, owner of Manteo's oldest business was looking unusually well Monday morning. Maybe the reason: he got a letter from an old customer of many years ago, whose account of \$15 had long been written off the books—some 12 years ago. The man said, "I think I owe you \$15; please let me know if this isn't right. Mr. Davis didn't mention the man's name, but said "better than getting the money, it makes me feel good to know the man now has the good fortune to feel able to pay the bill." Did you ever feel for the other fellow like that? Looks like a nice way to look at it.

Something else makes the head of a business feel good. Mrs. Helen D. Ward runs a restaurant at Manns Harbor. Early this season a car drove up with a Wyoming license, maybe it was Montana, but one or the other. A couple came in and ordered a shrimp dinner.

"This is part of our reason for coming back to North Carolina this summer," they told her. "We never forgot how good the shrimp was you served us last year."

That's quite a nice compliment for a restaurant, when its cooking calls people three fourths of the way across the continent.

One of the most ridiculous things I ever read was where the Norfolk school authorities are in a dilemma because the teachers in the schools were raising Cain because they had no place to smoke. Can you imagine anything more stupid. Why is it so important for anybody to have to smoke on the job? Seems that a person competent to teach the younger generation ought to be competent to do without smoking for a six hour period each day. We hear plenty each year about extra pay for teachers, but very little about increased efficiency for teachers.

Now there is one thing teachers don't get a square deal about. A great percentage of people have stopped attempting to rear their children, and wait until their children are six years old, and turn them over to the teacher, who they expect should bring them up. It's too late to begin learning anything after six. A child must be taught the habits that lead to industry, before he is six. We can't say work, for it is against the law for a child to work, and very little work is allowed for grown ups.

Not long ago, a woman took her small child out to dinner. The child See THEN, Page Seven

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