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Bishop Francis Asbury - Bishop Rode Horseback (News Clipping)

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Bishop Rode Horseback

ASBURY WORKED THROUGH AREA

Diary Reveals Story Of Hardship By Early Bishop

(BY P. C. GARDNER)

Since no attempt has ever been made to put in book or pamphlet form a historical sketch of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Cleveland County and as this is your Centennial year, the following data will be of interest to many of your citizens. Francis Asbury, the First Methodist Bishop consecrated in America, was born at Handsworth Staffordshire, August 20, 1745.

When 16 years old he became an itinerant Wesleyan preacher, and in 1771 he was sent as a missionary to America, where he was consecrated in 1784. During a long life of almost incessant labor it is estimated by his biographer that he traveled about 270,000 miles, mostly on horseback, preached about 16,500 sermons, and ordained more than 4,000 preachers. He died in Richmond, Virginia, March 31, 1816.

The following data is an abstract of the Journal of Bishop Asbury written by him from August 7, 1771 to December 7, 1815, and published in three Volumes in 1821. The data herein abstracted is confined to the trips of Bishop Asbury to the counties of Lincoln, Cleveland, Rutherford, and Burke, and several of the South Carolina counties adjoining, and is, as follows:

Rode Horse Back

"Tuesday, April 22, 1788: Rode to Rutherford courthouse; and the next day to Burke courthouse; it being court time, we went on, and reached brother White's, on John's river, about ten o'clock at night; here I found both the saddles broke; both horses foundered; and both their backs sore—so we stopped a few days". (pp. 30 & 31).

Visits Graham Home

"Friday, March 26, 1790: Rode about twenty-two miles; stopped at Col. Graham's, dripping wet with rain; he received us, poor strangers, with great kindness, and treated us hospitably. We had awful thunder, wind, and rain. I was still unwell with a complaint that terminated the life of my grandfather Asbury, whose name I bear; perhaps it will also be my end. We were weather bound until Monday morning, the 29th of March; for several days I have been very sick and serious; I have been enabled to look into eternity with some pleasure. I could give up the church, the college, and schools; nevertheless, there was one drawback—what will my enemies and mistaken friends say? Why, that he hath offended the Lord, and he hath taken him away! In the afternoon I felt somewhat better. Brother Whatcoat preached a most excellent sermon on "The Kingdom of God is not in the word but in power"—not in sentiments or forms, but in the convincing, converting, regenerating, sanctifying, power of God. I am making close application to my Bible; reading the Prophets at my leisure whilst on my journey; I met with a pious Baptist—Glory to God for what religion there is still to be found amongst all sects and denominations of people." pp. 68 & 69).

Graham's Fort

(NOTE: Col. Graham was Col. William Graham who served in the Revolutionary War. He resided on West bank of First Broad River just Southwest of Shelby in Cleveland County, near Sharon Metho-

dist Church. He was a large land owner, and his son-in-law was Sheriff of Rutherford County. His home was known as "Graham's Fort") Here the good Bishop says that Col. Graham received him with great kindness and that he remained there four nights reading his Bible, and that a part of the time he was a very sick man.)

"Wednesday, March 31, 1790: Rode to Gilbert-Town, and preached at H——'s with some freedom, but was very unwell in the afternoon". (p. 69.)

"Thursday, April 1, 1790: Rode about fifty miles through Rutherford and Burke counties; it is a day of small things here". (p.69).

"———1795: My body is weak and so is my faith for this part of the vineyard . . . This country improves in cultivation, wickedness, stills and mills; a prophet of strong drink would be more acceptable to many of these people".

Found Liquor Stills

"Monday, April 4, 1796: I crossed Fair-Forest, and came to J. G.'s where I had to stop and rest. Since I came into South Carolina, I have rode through Newberry, Spartanburg, Union, and Lawrence counties. There is a general complaint of the want of corn in these parts; and no wonder, when we consider the great storm which they have had, and the number of stills in the country; the people here drink their bread as well as eat it.

I crossed Lawson-Fork at the high shoals a little below the Beauty-Spot. I could not but admire the curiosity of the people—my WIG was as great a subject of speculation as some wonderful animal from Africa or India would have been. I had about 100 people at the meeting-house, some came to LOOK at, and others to hear me. We must need go off without any dinner, intending to ride nearly forty miles to Father Moore's, in Rutherford County, N. C. After brother M. and myself had preached, we passed the Cow-Pens, where Morgan and Tarleton had their FRAY. We made it nearly twenty-five miles to the Upper Island Ford, on the Main Broad River; and after traveling until seven o'clock at night were glad to stop at brother S's, ten miles short of the place we intended to reach when we set out." (pp. 247 & 248).

Rode 6000 Miles A Year

"Wednesday, April 6, 1796: We came to Moore's; I was at a loss how to address myself to these people—it may be for the last time; it was laid on my heart to speak from our Lord's lamentation over Jerusalem. I felt awful among them" (p. 248 Rutherford county).

"Saturday, October 26, 1799: (In Burke County, N. C.) "I stayed at the house, to read, write, and plan a little. I tremble and faint under my burden; having to ride about six thousand miles annually; to preach three to five hundred sermons a year to write and read so many letters, and read many more; all this and more, besides the stationing of 300 preachers; reading many hundred pages; and spending many hours in conversation by day and by night, with preachers and people of various character, among whom are many distressing cases." (p. 358).

Fed Upon Path

"Monday, October 28, 1799: We rode about forty miles, and fed upon the path. We came to Daniel Asbury's, in Lincoln County. I crossed once more at the Horse Ford, where I was formerly in danger of being drowned.—Daniel Asbury, an experienced guide, conducted me across this time, but not without some difficulty; his horse stumbled and wet his feet; and my head began to swim before we got through; and my carriage to pitch over on large stones, and small rocks; I think I bid a final adieu to this ford! If I must try this route again, I am inclined to go

by Morgan-Town, the capital of Burke county. The winter approacheth—we must hasten south! (p. 358).

First Camp Meetings

(NOTE: The first camp meeting was held on Catawba river, in Lincoln County, in 1794, conducted by Daniel Asbury, and others. By 1800 the idea had spread to other sections of the state. It is said that the first camp meeting was held in Rutherford County in 1802, some eight miles east of the courthouse. However, the first mention or note of these camp meetings made by Bishop Asbury was in 1802, as above recorded. The Mr. Newton above mentioned was a native of Virginia, and known in our state history as the noted Latin teacher, having conducted a noted school at Wilmington and Asheville, and while a Presbyterian, he and the Bishop appears to have been very great friends and frequently appeared together in religious work).

"Wednesday, October 1, 1806: Now I know what Mills Gap is, between Buncombe and Rutherford— We came upon Green River, crossed, and then hobbled and crippled along to Martin Edward's, a local preacher; my host had waited two years; I ordained him to deacon's orders." (p. 207).

WITHROW BUILT WIDE BUSINESS

Established Big Business In Rutherford County

Forty yeras ago the late J. P. D. Withrow of Hollis, later called the "Merchant Prince," was being hailed in Cleveland and Rutherford county as the most successful rural business man of his day.

A feature story of his life carried in Shelby and Rutherfordton paper at the time described him as a man who could branch out from the ordinary lines of trade, go ten miles deep into the country and in a few years build a wholesale business so thriving and efficient that its effects could be felt for many miles around.

He was born at Hollis on December 7, 1866 and for two years as a young man, attended the Shelby Military Institute where he made a brilliant record, although only 16 years of age.

His merchandizing career began in February 1892 with a \$5 bill and within a few months he was selling sugar to the hill folk 26 pounds for a dollar while all other merchants were selling 18 pounds for a dollar. Residents from Cleveland, Rutherford, Polk, McDowell and Burke counties traded at his store. He established a branch store at Ellenboro and arranged to take all forms of country produce. . . everything that was to be bought and sold was traded at the store.

He became the busiest man in the county, carried the largest life insurance policy of anyone around. He was described as a champion of good roads and schools, reared a fine family and was a good neighbor and churchman.

His county sent him to the general assembly and three decades later sent his son, Grady, to fill the same post.

With more jacks being brought into North Carolina for breeding purposes, the State will soon begin reducing its annual workstock bill to other states.