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Pettyjohn, Glenn, "News Clipping - Living Memorial To The Growth Of Gardner-Webb" (1951). *Rock Gymnasium*. 4.

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Living Memorial To The

Growth Of Gardner-Webb

By Glenn Pettyjohn

In the year 1940, when Gardner-Webb survived the closing of its doors only by the valliant efforts of a limited few, there emerged a symbol of the hard work going on at that time, and it has lived through the years, remaining today as a landmark of Boiling Springs.

The gymnasium, the large rock building that stands in front of our new library, previous to the turn of the decade of 1940, existed only as a weather-beaten, gloomy structure. Although described by some as an "eyesore," and suggested by others to be removed, one man stood up on his heels and said no. He had a dream of utilizing the old structure by renovating it into a suitable athletic building. He had a dream of reinforcing it and fortifying it against the weather, and all the while had not more than enough money than to start an outside foundation around the wood frame.

There was, on hand, 10 loads of stone and 40 bags of cement, but no money was available for the purchase of more, nor was there any funds to hire labor. Nevertheless, Mr. J. R. Cantrell, the stable, firm-minded president, undertaking the project, hired the men to do the work, and then set out to raise money for their weekly wages and for more supplies.

Day by day and week by week, he labored, approaching men on the street, in the stores, and in the fields. Many were not interested in such an endeavor, but many reluctant contributions were made. Somehow, each week there was money enough for wages of the men building the rock gem walls.

The granite they worked with was the native flint of Bolling Springs, hauled from the fields right here in the community, and erected into a structure of lasting endurance.

To look upon it now, at first glance, we wouldn't see that it is a \$6,000 project that took 6 months of sleepless nights, and weary days to complete. We wouldn't see the uncertainty that existed at the time about its completion. Today Mr. Cantrell modestly admits that it was a stab in the dark, and an act of faith, that he wouldn't undertake again. But it is a living reflection of his perserverance and stable-mindedness.

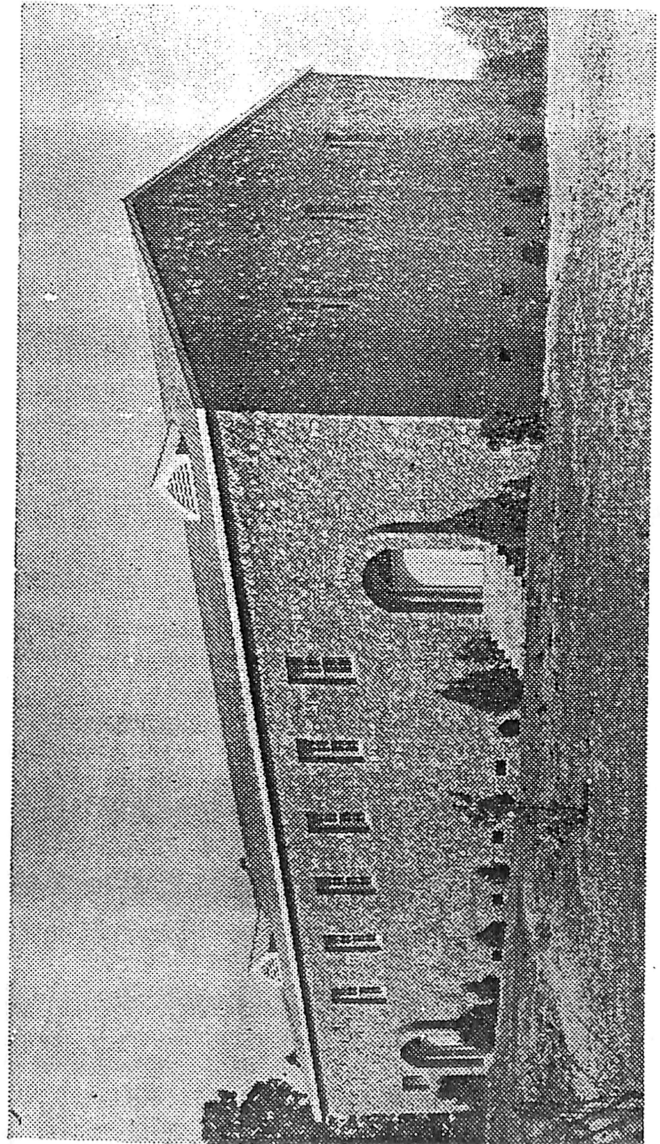
While at Gardner-Webb he made many other improvements which probably seem small to us today, but at that time were of great importance. With only 3 buildings on the campus (including the gym) there was much needed work to be done. Even the E. B. Hamrick building stood in ruins because of a fire that destroyed everything but the four walls that held it together. Before retiring from the presidency,

he had reconstruction at the half-way mark on the E. B. Hamrick building.

The amazing thing about the work done by Gardner-Webb's former president is that he personally raised practically all the money used in the building that he did up until the time of his retirement.

Today, he is the pastor of Lattimore Baptist Church, which also he led in building. In addition to that, he teaches a veteran's class in agriculture at Boiling Springs High School.

Now that the new library has been erected behind the old stone gymnasium, it will either have to be moved or torn down. Nevertheless, the big boy will have served a good purpose for the college and community. For many years, it has been the only place in the whole community where the college and high school could meet for practice and games. Many have the times been also when successful parties were staged there. When the time comes, there will be many to say, "That is one Joe we hate to see go."



THE PRESENT GYMNASIUM