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In Cleveland County's Early Days

By MAMIE JONES

RECOLLECTIONS OF "BASS" SUTTLE

This writer is fortunate in securing an interview with Benjamin Baxter Suttle. Mr. Suttle is unique in that, while he is well informed as to current happenings in the nation, he has a trigger quick memory for events and conditions of the early days in the little town of Shelby. His parents were Elizabeth Gold

and Doctor Benjamin Franklin Suttle, affectionately known to the older residents as "Aunt Liz and Uncle Dock." They lived in the big white house on the corner at 501 North LaFayette street.

Mr. Suttle is telling this story:

THE FIRST TRAIN

"When I was about four years old, one Sunday morning in April, 1875, my Mother took me to see the first train pull into Shelby at what is now the Seaboard Air Line depot. It was then called the Carolina Central, or 2C's.

"I'll never forget that train! Such a smokestack! And such a whistle! There was no stock law at that time and sheep were grazing lazily by the side of the railroad track. The loud, shrieking whistle and the noise of the oncoming train frightened the sheep; they ran so far away they have never been heard of since.

"The coming of the first train to Shelby was the occasion for a gala celebration in the little town. Half the countryside was present that balmy spring morning to see it come in, pulled by a wood burning engine. The majority of the crowd had never seen a train before.

"Mr. Pagenstacher, the wine maker, was on hand with the brass band of which he was director. There was also a brass band from Lincolnton. So there was plenty of noise and maybe some music.

"As you know, the railroad from Wilmington to Rutherfordton had been started in the eighteen-fifties, and had reached Cherryville about the time the War Between the States started, and trains were running between those points. But with a war on there was nobody to build a railroad, so for something like ten years nothing was done toward railroad construction.

"When work was resumed and the track was completed as far as Buffalo Creek, a station was established there and hacks from Shelby met passengers and brought them to town. As progress continued, Brevard's Crossing became a stopping point. This was of special convenience to travelers going to Cleveland Springs which was a famous summer watering place in those early years.

(Note: At this point I recalled a story, current at the time, which was told by my grandmother, of a woman who was present, seeing a train for the first time, and hearing the chug, chug, chug of the running

engine, exclaimed "Poor thing, no wonder it is panting! It has come a long ways, and you know it must be tired!" M.J.).

Mr. Suttle continues his story:

EARLY SCHOOLS

"My first teacher was my sister, Minnie Suttle. She taught a private school of perhaps 20 pupils at our home on North LaFayette. (Minnie later married E. G. Gilmore, but is dead now).

"I attended Captain Bell's Military School, located at what is now Junior High; I was under White & Bandy; I was also a pupil under Palemon J. King, who had the reputation of whipping so many of the boys. No, he did not whip me. But don't publish anything about P. J. King whipping pupils. I am told he is still teaching in Georgia, and he might come back and jump on me yet.

"When I was a little fellow there was a fence around the courthouse square. Mr. Walton Green kept the postoffice which was then located on what is now the postoffice grounds, almost opposite the eastern courthouse door. A group of us little boys would sit on this fence and send one of our number to ask Mr. Green for the mail. This would make him mad. In fact, he stayed mad most of the time.

TOWN'S FIRST BUGGY

"The site of my present residence, 409 West Warren, was formerly occupied by an inn owned and operated by Mr. Loss A. Botts. Here the stagecoaches going from Rutherfordton to Lincolnton and Salisbury and return, would stop for food and change of horses. Back of the inn was a cotton gin operated by mule power. I recall Mr. Botts as a very proud old man. He is said to have owned the first buggy in Shelby, and Maj. H. F. Schenck is said to have owned the first buggy in the county outside of Shelby.

"The town's first commercial baker was Peter Hilderbran and a mighty little bakery he had.

UNSANITARY MEAT MARKET

"Meat markets were very small affairs in those days, since there was no commercial ice for refrigeration. Jim and Summey Alexander operated a meat market of a kind. After the beef was butchered they would hang the pieces on the fence to drain. Of course there were flies—but then, everybody had flies!

"On such days as they would slaughter a beef they would advertise it by blowing a trumpet on the

CLEVELANDER

From Page 1, Second Section

Court Square. For a quarter you could buy all the beef you could carry! But with all, values are comparative. I worked many a day at Fromm's brickyard and carried brick during an eleven-hour day for 20 cents a day. Eight dollars a month was considered fair pay for a laborer.

NO STOCK LAW

"During these early days of Shelby there was no stock law. Gardens and pastures were fenced in. Pigs lay in mudholes in the middle of the street and people and vehicles went around them. Goats, cows, calves, and other animals roamed the streets as they chose. When necessary, the ownership of each animal could be established by its earmark. Each animal owner had a certain earmark for his stock. This earmark was registered at the courthouse.

"There were a few sheep raised in the county, though they were not profitable commercially. But wool was used for certain articles of clothing, including home-knitted wool hose for the entire family. Pete Jenks had a wool carder.

MINDING THE GAPS

"One of the earliest tasks I recall being made do was minding the gaps during harvest. As the corn would be hauled from the fenced-in fields a road must be kept open for the wagons to come and go. I had to watch this opening where the fence was let down for entrance of the wagons, to keep roving animals from getting into the fields where corn and fodder were piled.

THE EARTHQUAKE

"I recall events by association. I had measles the year of the earthquake. That was in 1886 on the 31st of August, about half after nine o'clock at night. The railroad was being constructed from Shelby to Rutherfordton at that time; and that night when we first heard the rumblings some people thought the walls of the railroad cut were caving in.

"The Carolina Central, called for brevity the Two-C's R. R., was completed to Rutherfordton in 1887. This railroad crosses the county from east

to west.

CHARLESTON, CINCINNATI AND CHICAGO RAILROAD

"Before the completion of the Two-C's R. R., work was begun in the county on what we now call the Southern Railroad. It was then called the Charleston, Cincinnati and Chicago, or Three-C's. When construction workers reached the crossing of the Seaboard and Southern tracks just west of the city, it was found that their work would interfere with the daily trips of the Seaboard to Rutherfordton and return; hence they could work on this particular part of the tracks on Sundays only. The Seaboard did not run on Sundays. This road was completed in 1889.

"The Southern enters the county from the South and travels the county northward for a distance of approximately twenty miles.

(To be Continued)

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