

Winnsboro Claims Oldest Town Clock

Char 6c

9-11-40

Shipped From Europe 107 Years Ago, Hauled From Charleston With Wagons, Clock In Tower Still Is Running—
Town Is Historic and Prosperous.

BY FANNIE LOU BINGHAM.

WINNSBORO, S. C.—Down here at Winnsboro is the oldest town clock in the United States that is still running. Atop the city hall in the very heart of the city it has ticked away for 107 years telling the time to a people who anticipate no business boom because they have known no depression.

Today the Town Hall and clock are surrounded by scaffolds and the WPA is giving both a complete beauty treatment—which puts old inhabitants to reminiscing and visitors to enquiring into the present and past history of the two.

The lack of a depression it seems is due largely to the location at Winnsboro of one of the biggest plants of the United States Tire & Rubber company. Of the 5,200 inhabitants of the city, 1,500 are employed by this mill.

Winnsboro also is a county seat and has the usual number of people in county offices and town businesses. These added to the number in the mill make more than one out of three of the total inhabitants gainfully employed.

THE WINNSBORO MILL.

According to M. A. Kirkland, the superintendent, of the Winnsboro mill can receive no benefits from the new defense program unless it enlarges, for the plant has been operating at full capacity—24 hours a day for the past 30 months.

The lowest operation record was back in '31 and '32 when it ran at 92 per cent capacity, 24 hours a day which was practically no unemployment at all in those dark depression times.

Woodward Dixon, retired lawyer, is the acknowledged town historian. He turned the pages of his scrapbook and regaled your writer with the present and past glories of Winnsboro, a town which it seems has had more than its share of "firsts" in the development of America.

HAD PART IN REVOLUTION.

"It was back in 1770", according to Mr. Dixon, "that Col. Richard Winn and his brother, Jack, came to this section from Virginia. Later they were followed by the Woodwards, the McMasters, the Ellisons and others.

"In 1777 the Mt. Zion Institute, one of the leading schools of the country, was organized. This is the present city high school and is undergoing \$100,000 improvement program.

"Just a few years later Robert Buchanan organized the Mt. Zion Society which brought together the people of the 'up country' and the people of 'the lowlands.'

"And along came the American Revolution also. Winnsboro sent as officers: Col. Richard Winn,

Captain Jack Winn, Captain Robert Ellison, Captain Thomas Woodward and Captain John Buchanan, who fought so bravely at Cowpens.

"When the war with Mexico came, a Winnsboro man was the first to cross the border. The monument erected by the Ladies Memorial association, which stands directly in front of the Town Hall, perpetuates the memory of the men who went to the defense of the Confederacy.

"And if a war comes again to the borders of the United States, Winnsboro men will also be among the first to rush to her defense.

"It was General Cornwallis of the British army, who gave Fairfield county its name. Riding over the countryside he was much impressed with the fertility of the land and the beauty of the scenery. Waving his hands he exclaimed, 'Fair fields, fair fields.'

"This story was repeated again and again and the section became known as Fairfield District and later as Fairfield County.

LAI D OUT IN 1785.

"In 1785, an Act of the General Assembly established fairs and mar-

kets at Winnsboro. Later in the year, the town was laid out and made the county seat of Fairfield District.

"It was about this time that Captain Kincaid came from France and built the elaborate home which is now known as 'The Anderson Place'.

"And here, regardless of what the historians may say, was the first cotton gin.

"Captain Kincaid had it in his mill house. One day a young fellow named Eli Whitney came by asking for food and work. When he left he carried with him the plan of Captain Kincaid's gin. That is where he got the drawing which he showed the Georgia widow who furthered his ambitions.

"In 1785 a square wooden building with a belfry atop was erected for a town hall.

"Sometime between 1820 and 1830 this building was traded to Robert Cathcart for his duck pond which was right in the middle of town.

"The present town hall was erected thereon and in 1833 the clock was purchased. For 107 years both have remained very much as they originally were. Today's remodeling has been necessary in order to make them safe.

"Many are the tales which have been told about the purchase of the clock. Some say it came from England; some from Alsace, France; and some from Bremen, Germany. Certain it is that it came from across the water and was hauled from Charleston to Winnsboro in wagons.

"The purchase of the clock made a more lasting impression on the mind of Adam Blake, well known local darkey, than anything which happened during his life. He lived to be very old and always he was telling how it 'tuk 50 waggins to haul the clock 'fum Charleston'.

"When the clock was first installed a bell was hung in the belfry above. This was rung to announce to housewives that fresh meat was being sold in the market.

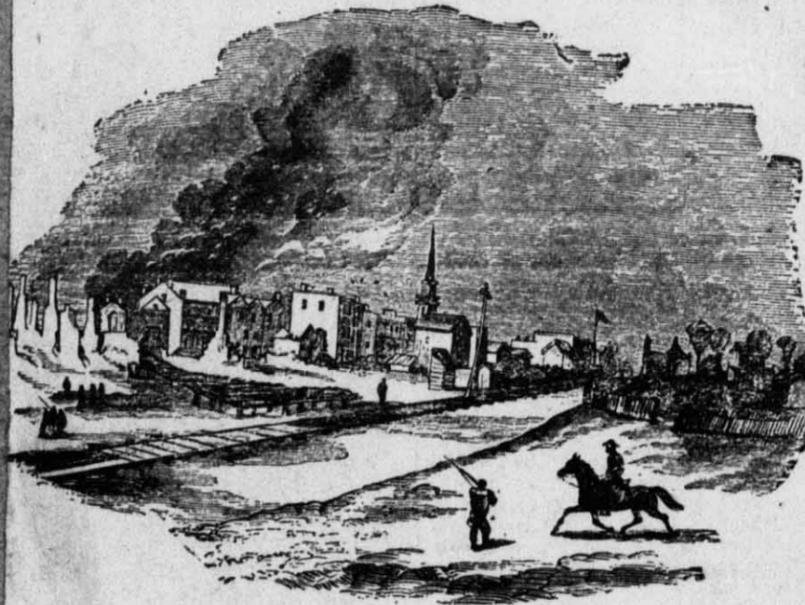
"Modern refrigeration came and the bell was no longer needed, but the clock has continued to tick through the years.

"Prosperity was assured for more than a century by the Fair fields for which the county was named. Later, in 1898 when the rest of the country was panicky, the Fairfield Cotton Mill was organized and the people went to work.

"Still later, the plant was bought by the United States Tire & Rubber company and was enlarged. Again it was enlarged, and still it is operating at full capacity.

"With a thoroughly renovated exterior and interior, it is expected that the old clock will toll another century of progress for Winnsboro and Fairfield county."

SHERMAN'S ARMY AT WINNSBORO



From a sketch made in February, 1865, by a staff artist for Harper's Weekly.

HUGE CHUNKS OF WINNSBORO GRANITE FURNISH DAZZLING SHOW AT QUARRY

Esso News June 15-July 15 1949

They call it "The Silk of the Trade," and it's one article guaranteed not to shrink. Geologists estimate that the rock in the Winnsboro Blue Granite Quarry has weathered less than half an inch since the world began. This South Carolina deposit is said to be the largest fine-grained granite quarry known.

One of the best vantage points from which to take in the exciting show is the rim of the giant quarry. Here, ninety feet above the arena, you can watch workers ride nervous drills and operate electric hoists. Spindle-shanked cranes lift great chunks of the glittering stone aboard railroad cars. More than 15 miles of track crisscross the quarry area, where piles of cut blocks are scattered around.

Granite has the grain of a diamond, and can be cut like a diamond. But instead of the tap of a hammer, black powder charges are used to shake loose the 25,000-ton blocks. These monsters are then drilled into smaller saw blocks that weigh a "trifling" fifteen to twenty tons.

Winnsboro Blue, really light gray with a bluish tinge, is used exclusively for monumental purposes. The Wisconsin State Memorial at Vicksburg National Military Park is built of Winnsboro Blue, as are the Jefferson Davis monuments in Richmond, Va., and New Orleans, La.

The cavernous quarry, operated by the Winnsboro Granite Corporation, is 9½ miles west of Rockton, S. C., on Route 219. Working hours are from 7 to 5 Monday through Friday, and from 7 to 12 on Saturday. Visitors are welcome to watch operations on these days.



Staff Photo
Winnsboro Quarry, Rockton, S.C.