

MUNITY

At 82, judge recalled Sherman's invasion, a life full of adventure, gracious hospitality

In 1938 the probate judge of Chester County was James Henry Yarborough, 82. In his eighth year in office, he had announced for a third term.

Yarborough told an interviewer, "If you are going to write something about me, I want you to start off by saying that in my long life I have never been worth, in dollars and cents, above my liabilities, as much as \$100."

He said his father, William Burns Yarborough, was not at all practical but was a "lover of nature, stars, flowers, birds and bees."

His parents had lived in the Jenkinsville community of upper Fairfield County not far below the Chester County line.

Yarborough was 9 when Sherman's troops invaded his home community. He remembered the army took the family's corn, wheat, oats, peas, fodder, hay and everything in the smokehouse.

For the boy the worst loss came when a Yankee soldier killed his pet dog for barking, by driving a bayonet through the dog's neck as the small dog ran through the boy's legs.

Louise Pettus



NEARBY HISTORY

When the Federal troops left, the boy found a peck of dried corn on the cob that the Yankees' horses had left untouched. The boy thought he had found a treasure.

Yarborough attended Old Broad River Academy and Furman University. He became a teacher.

After a few years, Yarborough got bored with teaching and sought a more active life. He went to Leona, Texas, and became a cowpoke. While teaching had been too quiet, cow punching proved too strenuous.

He returned to South Carolina to study law. Getting a job as clerk with an established lawyer, he studied law on the side and was admitted to the bar. That was the year of the big Charleston earthquake, 1886.

Yarborough's interest in criminal law lasted about as long as his interest in teaching or cow punching. He decided to become a minister and attended the theological seminary at Louisville, Ky. After getting his degree, he was called to preach at Little River Baptist Church in Fairfield County. This time he stuck with a profession and served in the ministry for 45 years.

Yarborough married Lily Inez Harden, and they reared four daughters and two sons. When rearing a family during and immediately after what he called the War Between the States, there

were no public schools, Yarborough said, so parents hired a tutor or taught their children.

He recalled that an invitation to visit neighbors meant making a day of it. A man would take the carriage and whole family. Upon arrival, the men gathered in the dining or sitting room and the women and children in the parlor. The men passed around a decanter of brandies; the women and children had wine and cake.

After the reception the men mounted horses and rode over the plantation and inspected the crops. At the home chickens were being killed — never fewer than six — and readied for the large iron pot, which contained a "well-cured country ham" that had been cooking since dawn.

Yarborough remembered that besides the ham and chicken, there were vegetables of the season, a pan of candied sweet potatoes, rice, boiled custard and pound cake.

Yarborough concluded the interview by remarking that it was a shame in those days if a man parted his hair in the middle or shoveled food in his mouth on the end of a knife blade.

Louise Pettus is a retired history professor from Winthrop University. Her column appears Saturdays.