

ODDS AND ENDS #26

In 1958 a model shelter was set up in the basement of Thurmond Building on the Winthrop campus. The shelter was built to resemble a family basement that would accommodate a family of 5 people with a week's supply of food, water and other necessities. Manequins were used to represent the family members.

Tools hung on the wall just inside the door--a saw, an axe, a crowbar, ropes and a chain. These were for digging out operations. Two fire extinguishers were present.

Shelves held foodstuffs, towels, soap, a stack of old newspapers. More shelves had canned goods and staples. And there were paper plates, cups and napkins along with wooden forks and spoons (picnic plastics were not yet in the market).

While wired for electricity, there were flashlights and plenty of batteries along with canned fuel for cooking. Families were advised to purchase a transistor portable radio with they did not have one.

Cots, folding chairs and a small table were present along with basic cooking equipment.

The emergency shelter was open for inspection of the general public for 3 hours a day. School groups, clubs and civic organizations were invited to inspect the model emergency shelter. They were also shown a movie that demonstrated various ways people could protect themselves.

Why was this shelter built? In the late 1950s a sizable number of citizens believed that this country would be attacked by air and that it would be much worse than Pearl Harbor because nuclear bombs would be dropped. These emergency shelters were taken very seriously.

The project was carried out cooperatively by the S. C. Home Economics Association and the Winthrop College home economics faculty and students. It fit very well with the goals of the York County Civil Defense unit, a part of the national Office of Civil Defense which had been in existence since 1942. Originally called into existence to fight our World War II enemies, after the war the OCD remained as a part of the Cold War against the Soviet Union.

—In September 1879 the Yorkville Enquirer reported the death of a black man in Chester county whose age was either 118 or 119 years. His name was John Miller and he had been born in Africa. Miller clearly remembered how he and many others were abducted from the island he lived on.

Miller said that two men came on shore, and after showing the natives a number of beautiful trinkets, they were invited to board the ship. Innocently they accepted the promise of being shown even more beautiful things. When the vessel began moving away they realized they had been tricked.

The ship landed its passenger in Charleston where Miller was purchased and continued to live in Charleston until sometime after the War of 1812. He often spoke of having seen George Washington "and could describe him perfectly as we are accustomed to regard him by his portrait."

—The crossing of the Catawba river at Nation Ford (between Fort Mill and Rock

Hill) by Jefferson Davis on April 27, 1865 is an often-told tale. There is another tale that cannot be documented but people long said that the following night General Wade Hampton swam his horse across the river in a desperate attempt to catch up with Davis' party. Hampton hoped to persuade Davis to continue the fight.

—An unusual souvenir of the Civil War, "a beautiful fan made of Confederate bills" was one of the objects belonging to Fannie Witherspoon Mason that was inherited by her niece Miss Lesslie D. Witherspoon.

The fan, along with photographs of Confederate generals, was passed around to 44 fellow members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy at a meeting in Miss Witherspoon's lovely Yorkville home at their May 1910 meeting.

The ladies endorsed two projects: one to mark every Confederate soldier's grave in Rose Hill Cemetery and the second to present portraits of Wade Hampton and Robert E. Lee to the Yorkville Graded School.

—The lovely village of Van Wyck in Lancaster County is close to the Catawba river just north of Hwy 5. Originally, the settlement was called Heath's but was often confused with Heath Springs a small town south of Lancaster.

In 1887 an official of the Seaboard railroad changed the name from Heath's to Van Wyck which was his wife's maiden name. She was a relative of the Mayor of New York and of Dutch descent.

So, it became Van Wyck, the only place in America with that name.