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STUMP SPEAKINGS AND BARBECUE

By Louise Pettus

Politics and barbecue have long been present on the southern scene--especially at "stump speakings." Before radio and television, the candidate's only hope to speak directly to the voters was to find a well-heeled supporter or two who would "throw a picnic" at some grove with a good spring or well and a nearby creek or pond for watering the horses.

Every county had a spot or two with such reputation that they drew huge crowds. August was a favorite time--the cotton was laid by and the busy harvest season was a few weeks off. The farmers called it "slack time."

Turner Barber, baron of Barberville in Lancaster County's Indian Land just south of Pineville, N. C., put on a huge picnic in late August 1877. Barber, a native of Chester County, was an entrepreneur who was involved in a number of enterprises which resulted in his acquiring extensive acreage in Chester, York and Lancaster Counties. He was also a great admirer of Gov Wade Hampton who had "redeemed" the state from "Carpetbaggers and Scalawags" the previous fall. Although it was not an election year, Barber decided to put on a huge barbecue to honor Hampton and North Carolina's counterpart, Zeb Vance.

The crowd, which included a generous number of North Carolinians, was estimated to be from 2,000 to 2,500. A correspondent of "Southern Home," a Charlotte newspaper, described the gathering in this fashion: "...all sizes and conditions of life were to be seen there; from the prattling babes in the mother's arms, to the pompous individual who wears high heeled boots and parts his hair in the middle; and the Anglo Saxon and African Democrats were all there to enjoy the festivities of the occasion."

A local orator-hero was always chosen to be the master of ceremonies. In this case it was Capt. William Erskine Ardrey of Pineville, a Confederate hero. His address was described as appropriate to the friends of Hampton and Vance--in other words, he extolled the virtues of the Democratic Party. Next, Col. John D. Wylie of Lancaster who spoke in a "graceful and eloquent speech of some length."

Then the crowd "repaired to" the table. The table was 200 feet long and "groaned beneath a weight of cremated beef, turkeys, ducks, pigs and cakes." When he advertised the barbecue, Barber promised

1,000 lbs of his own beef. Customarily, other local farmers contributed their bounty to the feast. Such barbecues were community activities with much local pride at stake.

There were more speeches after the dinner. R. P. Davis of Monroe, Capt. J. G. Potts of Pleasant Valley and Leitner Shurley, the schoolmaster of the Pleasant Valley Academy, also spoke.

Always there was music. Lancaster's band took over after the speaking and "the young ladies and gentlemen present engaged in merriment and dancing."

Turner Barber was a native of Chester county and may have moved to the community later called Barberville to escape some hard feelings in his home community. Chester Courthouse records, for instance, show that in 1849 he was charged with of Assault and Battery. He pled guilty and paid a fine of \$200.

In Indian Land Turner Barber was something of a celebrity and for years a legend. The 1860 census reports that he had 27 slaves. Barber was 31 years at the time. He enlisted in the Confederate Army and was elected 3rd Lt. of Indian Land Beat No. 2, 21st Regiment. The 1870 census listed him as a farmer with real estate worth \$5,000. That was during Reconstruction when the area was occupied by federal troops and former large plantations were going bankrupt. With a personal estate valued at \$7,500, he was the wealthiest man in his community.

After he came to Lancaster county Barber married Tryphosa Emiline Key, a daughter of Cephas Key who had built a large home in 1860 called "Water Oak." Barber bought his father-in-law's house. He also built "Barbers Bridge" over Sugar Creek. The bridge led to his home located on what is now known as Barberville road. The handsome old house began to deteriorate in the 1940s and no longer exists.