

PETTUS

BLEACHERY'S OUT-OF-DOORS CHRISTMAS PARTY

Archie O. Joslin, retired president of M. Lowenstein & Sons Inc., and resident of Rock Hill from 1928 until 1936, once recalled how the famous "Out-of-Doors Christmas Tree Party" began in Rock Hill in 1931 and continued for about 40 years.

Joslin had come to Rock Hill to build the Rock Hill Printing and Finishing Co, better known as the bleachery.

In Joslin's words written around 1956: "My first Christmas party at Rock Hill, S.C., had grown to included 20,000 children in Huntsville, Ala., Rock Hill, Anderson and Gaffney, S. C., and Rockingham, N.C., Covington, Ga., and Wilmington, N. C., Lyman and Columbia and Honea Path, S. C.

"The Yule parties started in 1931 when Leon Lowenstein (son of the founder of the company) and I sat on my front porch in Rock Hill, S.C. to plan a thrill for our employees' children.

"Such parties are a grand approach, I believe, to relationship with one's employees through their children. As we discussed the plans, a little boy stopped and asked me to hold his kite while he unknotted the string. The incident gave the idea of Christmas gifts in which the family would participate — such as a girl's sewing kit or a boy's baseball glove.

"My idea was truly fastened to a kite. We planned a children's Christmas party so large that it could be held outdoors to become known as "The Out of Doors Christmas Tree Party" at Rock Hill.

"Our yearly Christmas party around a festive Yule tree in the mill yard or warehouse is the kind of relationship that brings the greatest happiness to the employee and employer. . . to know each other as we meet on common ground like own mill properties to play and sing together while Santa distributes gifts.

"Months before our annual event a questionnaire is filled out by each employee giving the names of the two youngest children, indicating a boy or girl. They are classified in five age groups.

"We then confer with Santa Claus and Co. workshops to review the toys and choose them according to ages. Eight toys are selected per child. Tickets are distributed to each employee for his children. The Nativity scene is used at one plant — illuminated at night.

"The big day arrives and participants gather early at the area which has been roped off like a stadium with a turnstile entrance to each section. The mill whistle blows and out comes Santa Claus to thrill the thousands of children.

"The tradition, spirit and inspiration which took years to develop has become a genuine impulse to go forward

"So when the world seems full of difficulties I think of the great shining star on top of our mill Christmas trees in memory of "Christ's birthday guiding the little children of our great organization's annual party — am refreshed as I visualize their happy smiling faces."

Archie O. Joslin and his family lived in Rock Hill for seven years. In 1936, they moved to New York when Joslin became president of M. Lowenstein & Sons Inc. (The company now is a part of Springs Industries, Inc.) The Rock Hill Chamber of Commerce gave Joslin a testimonial dinner and a plaque that cited him for the "highest ideals of citizenship . . . sterling character, high purpose and example"

Today, Joslin's name is easily associated with Joslin Park, a recreational spot on Lake Wylie that was built for the company's employees. Among many things, Joslin should also be remembered for establishing the tradition of the "Out of Doors Christmas Tree Party."