

8-23-92 - Bigger mentioned

Scrap drives stirred patriotic spirit

On Main Street in front of Rock Hill's Newberry Store in the last week of August 1942 stood a 1922 Dodge coupe, the "oldest known automobile in York County." On it was painted the caption: "Drop In On Berlin Soon."

Mrs. I.A. Bigger of Rock Hill had donated "Old Beut" to Rock Hill's

second scrap drive of World War II. The car had been purchased by Dr. Bigger in January 1923 and had seen hard service on the country roads he drove to visit his patients. Later, Mrs. Bigger, a teacher, had driven the one-seater with a rumble seat to school. The story about her contribution must have been widely spread because Rock Hill's mayor, Erwin Carothers, received a telegram from Major Bowes of New York, star of a weekly radio program, saying, "Beut has earned its place in automobile Heaven."



Nearby history

LOUISE PETTUS

The April scrap drive had requested that citizens turn in scrap iron and rubber. The August list, as announced by C.H. Albright, campaign director, was lengthened to include rags, manila rope, burlap bags and any kind of

metal except tin cans. The scrap could be sold directly to salvage firms, locally known as "junk dealers," or donated to the City of Rock Hill to be picked up by city trucks and sold to the highest bidder. The proceeds would be used "for the benefit of local men in the armed services."

Next, the bottlers of York County sponsored a drive and used their trucks for pickup. An additional 50 tons of metal was garnered.

The Works Progress Administration had started taking up the old electric trolley rails in April. The project lasted until September, partly because no WPA worker could exceed 120 hours of work a month. The old rails turned out to be 250 tons of the "finest steel available."

While uncovering the streetcar rails, the WPA workers also uncovered a large iron disk at the intersection of Main and Hampton streets that had been laid in 1912 to mark the exact center of the town of Rock Hill. On the face of the disk was "City of Rock Hill" and "The Good Town," with the dates 1870-1912. (Rock Hill was chartered in 1870.) The city council decided the iron disk was a valuable historical marker and ordered it returned to its original position. Within a few weeks another scrap drive was in progress. This time statewide newspaper publishers challenged schoolchildren with the offer of a \$25 war bond to the student in each county who collected the most scrap metal.

Every school had its bins. Many rural communities participated in collecting scrap for the first time.

In Rock Hill, the old iron water pump on the Central School grounds (at Orange and East Black Street) was dug up and donated to the drive. A World War I veteran turned in his treasured old helmet, weeping as he did so. S.T. Frew turned in a cannonball he dug out of Main Street when a small boy. (The cannon ball was probably a Civil War souvenir.) Numerous old automobile tags, souvenirs of families' first cars, were among the treasures turned in. Wartime patriotism eclipsed sentimentality.

R.C. Wallace of Rock Hill turned in an artillery shell, a prized possession. Wallace brought the Vicker Maxim 295 shell from the Philippines in 1910. It weighed 13 pounds and had 335 balls inside.

When it seemed that Rock Hill had no more scrap to be found, Rock Hill High and Winthrop Training School students managed to collect over 65,000 additional pounds. The collected mounds revealed plenty of rags (they did not have to be clean) and everything from toothpaste tubes to metal toys, including tricycles, contributed by teary-eyed children.

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