

A visit to Winthrop's thriving farm - in 1931

A newspaper editor of the time was impressed with nearly all he saw

NEARBY HISTORY

Louise Pettus



designed for the use of Winthrop clubs. It seems that every girl belonged to at least one club. It was Johnson's conviction that clubs were the best way to take care of homeliness and, since the faculty were responsible for supervision of the clubs, the girls' recreation could be easily monitored.

In 1931 a club, or two clubs, might sign up for staying overnight in the Shack. There were 40 bunk beds and kitchen facilities that included an electric range. (For many years manufacturers furnished their latest appliances to the Home Economics Department for demonstration purposes.) The students paid \$1 each to cover the cost of the groceries from which they fixed their own meals.

There is still a building called the Shack on the same location as the original, but both its design and its purpose have vastly changed from 70 years ago. Grist didn't find the Shack of that day (an old farmhouse) to be very attractive, and there was no lake and none of the landscaping of today. It was a different world.

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

1,400 pounds of milk per day with 1,000 pounds for the students to make the ice cream. The milk was skimmed for butter only in summer, when there were few students on campus. Boyd Feemster was in charge of the ice cream production.

Grist was told that the hogs produced 24,000 pounds of pork yearly for the dining room. Much of the hog feed came from the dining room leftovers.

Beef cattle was raised for sale only. It was more economical for the college to buy beef quarters for its steaks and roasts. Packing houses used all the beef cattle in ways the college could not.

There were 2,000 chickens in steam-heated, concrete-floored houses. Of that number, 600 hens were continuously producing eggs for the dining hall. The college records show that in 1930 the hens laid more than 206,000 eggs. About 3,500 biddies were on hand at any time. All the roosters eventually ended up on the dining room tables.

Every year South Carolina's 4-H Clubs sent their best chickens to a "poultry demonstration." Records were kept of the number of eggs the champion hens produced.

Grist noted that there were many beehives on the farm and that the grains attracted numerous sparrows that were "almost a nuisance."

He visited the "shack" that had been built two or three years before. The Shack was specifically

Winthrop College began developing a working farm when the college was moved from Columbia to Rock Hill in 1895. Previously we have written about Winthrop's beginnings and its success in combining agricultural education with growing food for the college's dining room before World War I.

Through the 1920s, D.B. Johnson, Winthrop's founder and president for 42 years, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, added new crops and upgraded the dairy and hatcheries.

A good description of just how much had been done is found in an article written by A.M. Grist, the editor of the Yorkville Enquirer, in November 1931. Grist had never visited the farm previously and was greatly impressed. He said the Winthrop farm was the "largest farm in York County that grows no cotton."

Four silos were stuffed with hay from pasture cuttings of a combination of oats, rye, barley and Austrian peas. Grist was told by a Mr. Westergaard, the farm manager, that each silo held different formulas for different purposes such as using a different silo for feed for other cattle. The fully equipped dairy plant had a huge ice-making machine and cold storage rooms for the ice cream that was the most frequent (and favorite) dessert of generations of Winthrop students. Sixty milk cows furnished