

ODDS & ENDS #4

We occasionally write "odds and ends" columns composed of isolated items that are interesting within themselves but too short to make a whole column. More tidbits from our files:

In the spring of 1916 The Record, a Rock Hill newspaper, carried an item on James Buchanan "Buck" Duke (the power company founder) who had recently visited his plant at Rocky Mount near Great Falls. The paper said that Duke had left instructions for clearing up a nearby island in the river "preparatory to the erection of a palatial home." The beautiful island of several hundred acres was to become what later articles termed a private manor seat to rival Biltmore estate. We don't know what changed Buck Duke's mind but he never built his manor house at Rocky Mount.

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Cotton was the major crop in this area before the 1950s. Cotton's major by-product is the oil-rich seed. Not until this century were men able to refine the seed and produce shortenings, cooking oils, paints, and cattle feeds. Still, there was an over-abundance. Farmers often threw the seed into gullies and streams. This prompted research aimed at finding additional uses for cotton seed.

There was a Home Demonstration office at Winthrop College during the 1920s that came up with a novel use for the extra seed. They called their invention a "fireless cooker." According to a pamphlet put out by the Winthrop agency and reprinted by the US Department of Agriculture for distribution in all of the cotton-growing areas: Heat an iron trivet in the fireplace or cookstove and place the hot iron in the bottom of a large lard can. The trivet would support a smaller lard bucket with food, i. e., meat, hominy grits, string beans. Both cans were to be tightly lidded and surrounded with cotton seed for insulation. The food would be cooked and ready for the next meal. This novel energy saver got a lot of attention in the newspapers across the south.

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In 1790 the York County Court, in need of jurors, ordered that the militia captains furnish the court with a list of the free holders (land owners) in their respective companies. The Clerk of Court was to draw the juries from this list. So it was that the jury membership was limited to white males who owned land and were physically fit enough to be a member of a militia. When the militia went off to military service in the War of 1812 it left the county with an inadequate jury pool so the requirement that jurymen also be militiamen was dropped.

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East of Lancaster there is a road connecting the communities of Antioch and Tradesville known as the "Ginger Cake Road". The name's origin goes back about two centuries. Before there was a national guard there was a state militia. Each county had several companies of militia. Once a year all the militiamen in the county would be called to the county seat for what was called the Annual Militia Drill.

There was a lot of democracy in the militia companies. They did not have to have uniforms although most of the companies chose something, if no more than a certain colored ribbon on the lapel to make them distinctive. The men carried their home cooked food with them to camp. Ginger cakes were a favorite and no sooner were they en route than the men began eating the cakes. It wasn't long before the soldier's joke that he was "hitting the Ginger Cake Road" gave the road a name it still carries.