

## SHARON FIRST NATIONAL BANK

From the time Sharon was founded in 1889, the small agriculture based town had a healthy economy that steadily continued for the next two decades. We are not privy to how the town's people got along without a bank for nearly twenty years. We do know, however that cotton buyers W. S. Wilkerson of Hickory Grove and Alburtus Hope operated some sort of banking concern for sometime beginning in 1889.

Some time in 1908 Dr. Joseph Saye of Sharon met with Roddy and Dunlap of the National Union Bank of Rock Hill to discuss opening a branch in the budding western York County town. The bankers told Saye they were willing to put up \$13,000 for a bank provided he could secure another \$12,000. Saye told the gentlemen that he did not think he would have a problem raising the funds though there were no wealthy planters in Broad River and Bullocks Creek Townships. Ever ready with a bit of country wit, he assured them he would have no difficulty coaxing the money from old socks, clocks, smokehouses and haystacks.

Though Saye, and no doubt, his father-in-law John S. Rainey, wanted a bank in Sharon they had one problem with Roddy's and Dunlap's offer. They knew that the clans of Western York County would not invest in a bank controlled by outsiders from Rock Hill.

Roddy and Dunlap agreed to give controlling interest to local people. Convincing local investors this was a Western York County business investment, Saye quickly raised \$25,000.

The Bank Board purchased a lot and hired local contractor W. W. Blair to build a bank. Blair chose a design that would act as a keystone of the business district--translating its support and strength in a single column. The construction of this building marked a new era for the town and within the next ten years 90 percent of the businesses were housed in brick buildings.

The Rock Hill bank placed their A. M. Haddon into the position of Cashier--Bank Manager to us. Experienced in bank management, Haddon continued with the bank until 1911. Upon his leaving Saye seized the moment and succeeded in placing John S. Hartness into that position. Hartness had no banking experience, he was virtually unknown except for the immediate area and was not known to be well-educated. It seems his only qualifications was that he was one of Western York County's own--and Saye insisted Harness had "a lot of common horse sense."

Hartness remained in that position for forty years, guiding the bank through the Great Depression and to the golden fifties. In the spring of 1912, he balanced the bank's books at over \$124,000 and by the eve of the Great Depression he had tripled the amount.

In 1934 the New York *American Banker* carried an article entitled "County Institution a Banking and Business School." This article reported that John Hartness had indeed proved he had an ample portion of "common horse sense." By then he had trained nineteen men and women in banking techniques.

Within a few years of its founding, W. L. Hill open the Planters Bank and competed for business. The Great Depression fell hard on the nation. During these years hundreds of banks--one of these was the Planter's Bank--failed and closed their doors. But the First National Bank of Sharon remained stable and charted the course for Western York County, bringing it though those rough waters.

Though the name and owners have changed with time, the First National Bank of Sharon still serves Western York County in spirit. With all confidence we look to its continuing service.