

# When lawyers donned wigs

More odds and ends:

■ The first county lawyers were expected to wear wigs, but by 1800 the rules changed to only require black robes for judges and black coats for the lawyers. However, until 1832 the sheriff was required, when attending court, to wear a "cocked hat and sword."

The wording was then changed to "military hat and sword," a rule that lasted until 1882 when the sheriff, like the lawyers, was required to wear a black coat when appearing in court.

■ In 1952, W.B. Wilson, a lawyer and Rock Hill city recorder for 30 years, reminisced about law practice as it was in his father's day. His father had begun practicing law in Yorkville in 1848 and never had a typewriter.

The younger Wilson recalled that when he was 12 years old (in 1890) there were no stenographers in law offices and the men who worked there were not trained as draftsmen.

The senior Wilson would take home his notes for legal papers. Under a kerosene lamp, he would write out the draft and pass it on to Mrs. Wilson. She would copy it and pass it on to one of the children to copy.

The paper made its way around

the large dining room table from the parents to Arra Belle, to "Black," to William, to Oscar, to Fanny, to Loulie, to Minnie, to Mary, to Margaret, and to Yorke, until they had each made a copy. They kept at it until enough copies had been made. Three of the children — Black, William and Fanny — became lawyers.

What was even more remarkable than the copying exercises was that the fee for drawing a deed to real estate, \$5, was the same in 1952 as it had been in 1802, 150 years earlier. W.B. Wilson remarked that this fit well with what Daniel Webster had said about a lawyer: "One who works hard, lives well, and dies poor."

■ Back in 1932 in the depths of the Great Depression, it was imperative that farmers find other products than cotton and corn to sell. Clemson College, which trained and directed county agricultural agents, and Winthrop College, which trained and directed the state's demonstration agents, took on the task of finding alternative and marketable crops. The agents decided on poultry.

Since the price was prohibitive for shipping poultry in lots any smaller than could fill a rail car, and since few, if any, farmers had enough chickens to fill a rail car, a system had to be developed whereby the poultry could be pooled. It was not easy, but finally the agents worked out a plan.

Each Thursday, a Clemson extension agent received bids from all large poultry dealers. Each

county agent was wired the bid figure. The county agent then accepted or rejected.

The county agents then had to contact farmers. In York County, they sent out about 2,000 postcards telling farmers where the railroad cars would stop, the dates, the prices and the name of the purchaser. It was up to the county agents to estimate how many railroad cars would be needed and to inform the railroad and Clemson.

In October 1932, York County farmers sold 22,400 pounds of poultry to Getz Produce and Poultry of Chicago for a total of \$3,469. The farmers were delighted. The price was much more than they would have received locally.

■ When Winthrop College was moved from Columbia to Rock Hill in 1895, there was included in the college's acreage a farm tract of 144 acres. It had to be developed, so for several years it was unable to supply the college dining room with enough food. Local farmers supplied the Winthrop dining room.

Annie Perry, an 1896 freshman, wrote home that for breakfast the girls had their choice of cold light bread, corn bread, hominy, coffee, tea and milk, and always some kind of meat — fried ham, beef steak, hash (leavings from the day before) or fried bacon.

The average freshman gained 10 pounds over the school year.

.....  
*Louise Pettus is a retired history professor from Winthrop University. Her column appears Saturdays.*

Louise Pettus



COMMENTARY