

ODDS & ENDS #5

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:

—When Rock Hill High School was established in 1907 its first student body was all male. Sixty boys were required to take courses in the "Military and Calisthenics" department. The instructor was W. W. Dixon, a graduate of the Citadel. The newspapers said that Rock Hill High School was only one three schools in the state which received government-issued rifles. The other two were Clemson College and the Citadel.

—The 1904 Citadel graduation was held in the Winthrop College auditorium. Citadel seniors were in summer camp near Rock Hill at the time.

—Winthrop came to Rock Hill in 1895. By 1899 over 800 trees were bearing fruit on the College Farm. That year the college built a cannery to process the fruits for use in the college dining room. The farm also had a herd of purebred milk cows to provide milk and ice cream, beef cattle, large flocks of chickens for eggs and meat, vegetable gardens, and fields of hay and grains for the feeding of the animals.

In 1902 there was some debate about whether or not Winthrop should follow Clemson's lead and hire convicts for farm labor. One legislator pointed out that convict labor at Clemson only cost the state 25 cents a day, whereas free labor at Winthrop was costing the state 50 to 60 cents a day. Convict labor had built Main Building (now called Tillman) in 1894-5. At that time a legislative act was passed that intended to give Winthrop permanent convict labor but a flaw was found in the act and the matter dropped.

—Rock Hill once had public baths — believe it or not. In time for the Fourth of July holidays in 1901, S. F. Frew, superintendent of the Rock Hill Water, Light and Power Company, announced that a bath house was open to the public. Located on Black Street near the power house, the bath house had "four tubs and one shower apparatus". Mr. Frew had in mind building a place for "plunge bathing" in the future. We don't know what one paid for a tub or shower, whether the swimming pool was ever built, nor how long the bath house facilities were offered as a public service.

—Before 1900 Rock Hill had a "pest house" which was used to isolate cases of smallpox and other contagious diseases.

—Dr. Gill Wylie, a Chester native, was a prominent New York surgeon at the turn of the century. Wylie chartered the Catawba Power Company (forerunner of Duke Power) in 1901. When the India Hook dam was under construction Wylie came to Rock Hill frequently. Wylie often recruited nurses; in fact, he was the first U. S. doctor to use women to assist in operations. On many, if not most, of his visits to Rock Hill, Dr. Wylie performed operations, especially appendectomies.

In 1902 appendicitis operations were only 8-10 years old. The first appendectomy in the Carolinas was in 1898. Nationally, 1 in 10 appendicitis sufferers died during or soon after the operation. Dr. Wylie had lost only one patient in more than 100 operations. Prominent people from all over the state clamored for Dr. Wylie's services.

—In 1891 a correspondent of The State said that the first cedar tree in Upper Carolina was planted near the present town of Fort Mill by Thomas Spratt some time before 1790. At that time the cedar tree was considered very rare. W. E. Spratt of Fort Mill was having an office desk made of the wood of the first tree.

By Louise Pettus