

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH  
--OF--  
JONATHAN NEWMAN McELWEE

Jonathan Newman McElwee, only son of William Lewis McElwee and Mary Eugenia Sadler Poag McElwee was born September 21 1867 on his father's plantation in the Mount Holly section of York County about five miles Southeast of Rock Hill. He was raised on the farm and secured his early education at a small country schoolhouse located about three miles from the farm homestead. When he reached the age of seventeen he decided that agriculture was not suited to him and attended college at Newton, North Carolina. After two years of college he returned to Rock Hill and secured a position with A.E. Smith & Company which was one of leading mercantile establishments of that day. He worked for this firm about three years, then decided to go into business for himself. He opened a fancy grocery store. Later on he took into partnership the late John M. Russell and the firm was known as J.N. McElwee & Company. After operating tushly as a partnership for several years he bought out Mr. Russell's interest and operated under the name of J.N. McElwee. (See photostatic copies of two cancelled checks issued in January 1900. It might be interesting to note that it was necessary, according to law, to use documentary stamps on all checks issued then).

Mr. McElwee was a progressive merchant. After buying out Mr. Russell's interest in the business, he also bought out Gibson & Tompkins who operated another fancy grocery which adjoined his store. (Ebird's Department Store now stands where these two stores were located). After purchasing the stock from Gibson & Tompkins he transferred all of it to his main store and opened up one of the largest restaurants in <sup>the</sup> South between Richmond and Atlanta. This business was known as McElwee's restaurant and was famous for fine foods and delicate dishes. Back in those days he also served some of the largest banquets ever held in the State, some times as many as 500 plates. In connection with his restaurant, all in the same buinlding, he installed one of the most beautiful soda fountains ever bought in Rock Hill with an ice cream parlor ~~xxxx~~ in conjunction. Nothing in some of the larger cities could compare with it. Mr. McElwee was branching out into other enterprises about this time. He employed the services of a German baker ( Mr. Paul Scultz) and opened up a bakery. As time went on and business progressed the bakery was sufficiently enlarged to meet the heavy demands of the trade, not only of the town of Rock Hill proper, but the surrounding towns as well. Bread was shipped to Fort Mill, Chester, York and Lancaster. Rural stores were also supplied for their customers. For a few months he supplied all of the bread and rolls for Winthrop College when new equipment was being installed ~~xxxx~~ at this institution. He also operated a mercantile business at the Manchester Cotton Mills ( Now Industrial Cotton Mills) and was in business there for approximately twelve years. During the time he operated this ~~xxxx~~ business he put in a line of dry goods, notions and shoes at his Main Street store in the city. He was the first merchant in Rock Hill to put in a National Cash Register, afterwards buing several. He was also the first merchant to put in an electric coffee grinder and a meat slicing machine, also a cheese cutter which would cut any amout of cheese the customer desired from  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. on up. Mr. McElwee was not only a progressive merchant but was an enterprising

He was the first merchant to handle Christmas Toys, Dolls and fire works. He bought this merchandise in quantities sufficient large to supply the trade in Rock Hill and the Smaller Rural Merchants.

merchant as well. After he had been in business for several years he bought the Old McElwee's Mill on Fishing Creek, which was a part of his grandfather's vast holdings, did away with its old fashioned water wheel and install a cylindrical water <sup>wheel</sup> turbine, which was made of steel and is still in operation. At the same time he conceived the idea to convert this mill into a ~~flour~~ flour and ~~grain~~ meal mill combined, instead of just a ~~rock~~ rock ground meal mill. A ~~cotton~~ cotton gin was also operated in connection with the mill. He installed ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ machines to bolt flour which cost several thousands of dollars and operated the mill ~~xxxxxx~~ a number of years like ~~this~~ this, but this venture did not prove profitable. He finally sold the mill as it was located too far away from his main business to give it the proper supervision. In ~~addition~~ addition to operating the mill he also ran a store in connection with it. Along about 1908, Mr. McElwee opened the first moving picture theatre in Rock Hill, know as the Pastime Theatre. These were back in the old silent picture days when admission charges were five and ten cents. He was also ~~mg~~ manager of the old opera house in Rock Hill, operated another picture show, an open Air Dome during the summer months, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ and a vaudeville theatre. As other side lines he opened the first Billiard Parlor and Bowling alley ever in Rock Hill. He also rented the old Gordon House (which stood where Belk's Department Store is now located on Main Street) and operated a hotel. At that time the only other hotel in town was the old Carolina Hotel on Main Street which is now being operated as (supply name). Marshall Hotel. Mr. McElwee had a slight stroke of paralysis in the early twenties and sold out all of his interests except a small fancy grocery, which he operated up until a year before his death. *IN 1928*

Mr. McElwee was married in December 1890 to Miss Katherine Russell, daughter of the late William McCamee Russell and Margaret Nelson Russell, in the First Presbyterian Church of Rock Hill. To this union ~~xxxxxx~~ four children were born, John Russell McElwee, Now of Columbia, South Carolina, William Lewis McElwee, who died when he was three years old, Mrs. Margaret Nelson McElwee Holt of Burlington, North Carolina and Mrs. Catherine McElwee Rhea of Rock Hill, South Carolina. The old J.N. McElwee home was situated directly across the street ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ in front of the Andrew Jackson Hotel where the MAXWELL BROS. Furniture Company now ~~xxxx~~ stands. He was a public spirited citizen, as it might be well to note that through his efforts and the granting of so many feet of land it was made possible for Oakland Avenue to be extended on through to Black Street. Prior to the sale of this property ~~to the late James Edwin Reid to build a furniture store~~. Oakland Avenue stopped off right at the Corner of the Andrew Jackson Hotel and the ~~xx~~ First Baptist Church. It might be interesting to note also that the last White Way Light on East Main Street was directly in front of Mr. McElwee's home. This lamp was ~~part~~ <sup>paid</sup> for in part by Mr. McElwee due to the fact that the City Of Rock Hill paid for part of the installation and the property owner the other part.

Submitted by: Mrs. Catherine M. Rhea  
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