

# How dare an outsider use depot for illegal purposes

*That's reserved for the locals, one person said during the prohibition*

Some weeks ago I wrote a column on prohibition in the 1920s as it affected this area. Seeking substitutes for legal liquor, many turned to various extracts which were far more powerful than illegal moonshine.

Jamaica ginger extract emerged as the most desirable. People gave it the slang name "Jake." By 1924, county sheriffs were appointing "rural police" whose main duty was to intercept the extracts which might arrive by train or truck.

In June 1924, York's deputy sheriff Tom Quinn and a rural policeman, John Jackson, were at the Guthriesville depot which was about halfway between the towns of York and Chester. A shipment of Jake was addressed to Sid Parrish "who is said to operate a shack on the Rock Hill-Fort Mill road near the river bridge." The 288 quart bottles were shipped from Tennessee and the deputies estimated that they would probably have sold for 75 cents each.

People who lived in Guthriesville told reporters that they resented someone who lived in another part of the county using their depot for illegal purposes. One added that it would have been OK if the person actually lived in Guthriesville.

## No proof, no millions

In August 1887, the Rock Hill Herald printed a story about a visitor from Fort Worth, Texas, named Joseph W. Key. Key was seeking relatives named Key or Kee who were thought to be legal heirs of Martin and Nancy Key, who were Virginia natives. In 1783, Martin and Nancy Key had leased "49 acres, 3 roods, and 8 poles" to New York City for a period of 99 years. The lease was up and the city had advertised for the heirs.

Two Chester men, Chesley T. Kee and James W. Key, along with C.J. Kee of York County were believed to be rightful heirs. All they had to do was prove it and they would inherit property worth millions of dollars. To their great disappointment, they were unable to satisfy the city of New York that they were rightful heirs.

## Before 911, there was Lois

In December 1947 late one night, the Rock Hill home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Cobb caught on fire. There was no 911 system, nor automatic dialing, but Mrs. Cobb knew what to do. She dialed "O" for the operator and said her house was on fire and then collapsed from smoke inhalation.

## NEARBY HISTORY

Louise Pettus



Lois Jones, the operator who took the call, recognized Mrs. Cobb's voice and quickly called the fire department. Then she called some of the Cobbs' neighbors. John Tolles got the two Cobbses out of the house and probably saved their lives. Mr. Cobbs was president of Peoples National Bank. That story was told by Lois Jones' sister, Mary Sherer Connolly, who worked in the main office of Rock Hill Telephone Co. for 46 years. Mrs. Connolly recalled starting to work in 1919 as the only woman in the main office on the first floor of the Elk Avenue building.

The switchboard operators were all women and were on the second floor. In 1919, there were about 800 subscribers and 25 employees. Mrs. Connolly said that operators generally knew everyone's number by memory. No one's telephone number was longer than three digits, and telephone bills were sent on penny postcards.

## Lounge lizards and bums

There were more than 1,800 teachers enrolled in summer school at Winthrop College in 1924. Many, if not most, of the teachers were young (it was possible to teach in South Carolina after only two years of college at that time). Most of the young women were not Winthrop students in the regular sessions.

The Rock Hill police were instructed to watch out for the "skunks" who accosted, or even flirted with, the Winthrop students. And it wasn't just Rock Hill boys who were attracted to the campus. They came from Yorkville, Lancaster, Chester and other towns to pick up teachers and go "joy riding." The editor of the Yorkville Enquirer used stronger language than the police. He wrote that the young men who flocked to the Winthrop campus were "young idiots, tea hounds, lounge lizards, mashers and bums."

## Spoke his way to leadership

In 1802, the minister of the Waxhaw Presbyterian Church in Lancaster County was John Brown, who grew up in the church and had attended the Waxhaw Academy along with future U.S. president Andrew Jackson.

A biographer was to later observe that while the Rev. Brown was known to be a gentle and accommodating man, he probably also had some experience in fighting by virtue of going to school with young Jackson, who

was noted for his skills in fist-cuffs and being something of a bully.

A camp meeting known as the Great Revival in 1802, with somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 participants and 18 ministers, resulted in a split among the Presbyterians over Brown's attempting to replace "Rouse's Version" with "Dr. Watts Psalms and Hymns." The Rev. Richard Furman, who later founded Furman University, was present and later wrote that the Waxhaw congregation had forced Brown out of the church because he took communion with the Methodists. Whatever the cause, Brown resigned and became a schoolmaster.

In spite of the fact that Brown had no more than 18 months formal education, he was elected professor of logic and moral philosophy at South Carolina College in 1809. He spent two years in Columbia where he also served as minister of the Columbia Presbyterian church.

In 1811, Brown gave the graduation address at the University of Georgia and the next day the trustees hired him as president, based solely on his ability to speak to an audience. Alas, that was not enough. Brown was not able to maintain student discipline and five years later was forced to resign.

Louise Pettus is a retired Winthrop University history professor. Her column appears Sundays.

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