

Rev. T. A. Snyder

Sometime before 1920 the Reverend T. A. Snyder came to Rock Hill to preach at Northside Baptist Church. There were only 8 church members, the low number resulting from "dissension in the church." For 3 months Snyder was paid only from the weekly collections, \$6 or \$8 a week.

The deacons liked their preacher and put him on a salary of \$1500 a year and then raised it to \$1900. He stayed at Northside for 9 years.

Snyder was "called" by West End Baptist and paid \$2,200. Until that time Rock Hill Baptists had never heard of such a thing as a preacher moving from one Baptist church to another in the same town. (The West End Baptist congregation later moved to McConnells Hwy. Their former Hagins St. site is now occupied by the Sword of the Spirit Family Church.)

Reverend Snyder was born in Rutherfordton, NC in 1890. At the age of 14 he went to work in the card room of a cotton mill earning 20 cents a day. Then he advanced to the spinning room and was paid 30 cents a day.

As Snyder told an interviewer in 1939, "Mill people just don't stay put. We moved down to Lockhart, South Carolina and I earned sixty cents a day there doffing."

When he was 16 Snyder was with a group of boys who had bought a can of dynamite powder and decided to experiment with it. One of the boys threw a lighted paper near the can. Snyder said the explosion burned off all his clothes from the waist up.

He was in agony for six weeks. Even his fingernails dropped off. The doctor cut holes in a piece of cloth for his eyes, nose and mouth. His mother wanted to put grease on the burns but the doctor said the grease would cause him to scar. Each morning the doctor came to the house and put a fresh cloth on him. Snyder didn't scar.

About a year later, Snyder was working as a soda jerk at a drugstore. The peanut parcher exploded and hit him in the face and knocked out four teeth. Then he had malaria and about six months later infantile paralysis. He learned to walk on crutches and rode horseback until a horse threw him and caused him to lose his crutches.

In spite of all his disasters, T. A. Snyder never lost his sense of humor. A member of the West End church back in the 1920s remembers him as "a lovable clown." By his own admission, he liked to tease and play the buffoon.

Snyder was more than a clown, though. He worked with the American Red Cross and twice a month he went out to the Catawba Indian reservation to preach. He also did some "social service work" with the city health nurse when she went to the reservation.

Snyder showed the interviewer a Catawba pottery water jug and told how he got the jug. "There was a big, burly Indian living way out almost beyond the border of civilization. He had a very sick baby once, and we went out there and saved its life by taking it to the hospital. Pretty soon he had some serious trouble

with his shoulder. We heard about that and brought him in to Rock Hill to the hospital. When we were taking him home over the cross-country road, we passed a farmer on the right of the road.

"The nurse and patient sat on the front seat, and both Miss McCowan and I observed that the Indian Chief raised his arm and turned completely round as we passed the man. 'Why did you change your position just now?' the nurse asked him. 'Does your shoulder hurt worse?'"

"In his broken English, he explained that the country man was very provoked when they put the road on his land and every now and again took a notion to shoot up somebody. He waited for us to be his targets that day, and when the Indian friend saw his pistol, he turned to shield Miss McCowan from the blow and to receive it himself. The nurse was very much touched by this act of appreciation. The jug is his expression of thanks to me."

When the interviewer asked Reverend Snyder what else he would like to have, he said that he would dearly love to have a pool table in his attic.