

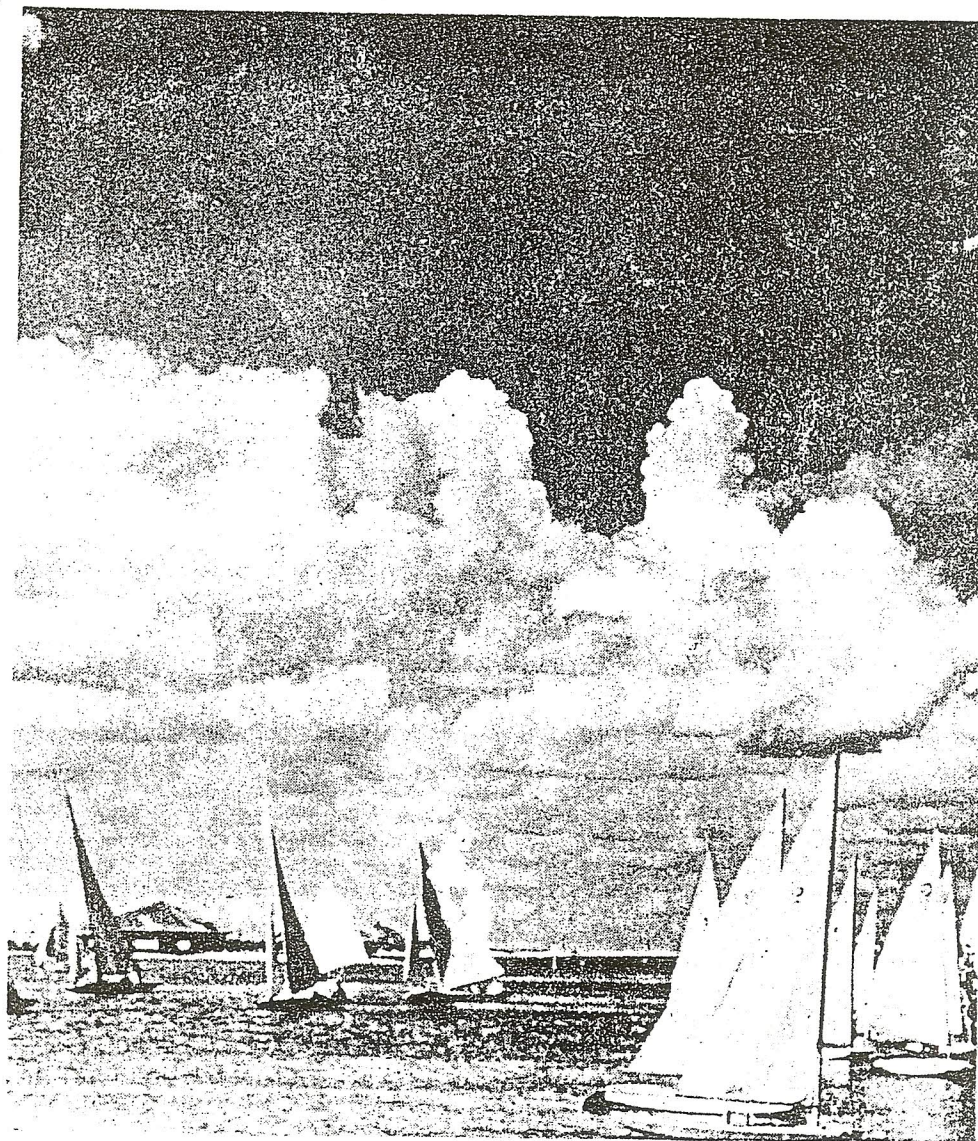
THE STATE

A Weekly Survey of North Carolina

AUGUST 3, 1940



TEN CENTS



WHITE SAILS AND CLOUDS—The sailing season is on at Wrightsville Beach, home of the Carolina Yacht Club, one of the oldest such organizations in the country.

Warren County

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THE STATE

A Weekly Survey of North Carolina

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August 3, 1940

Discovering Warren County

We thought we knew something about Warren, but it wasn't until John Tarwater took us into custody last week that we really began to get some knowledge of this great section.

By CARL GOERCH

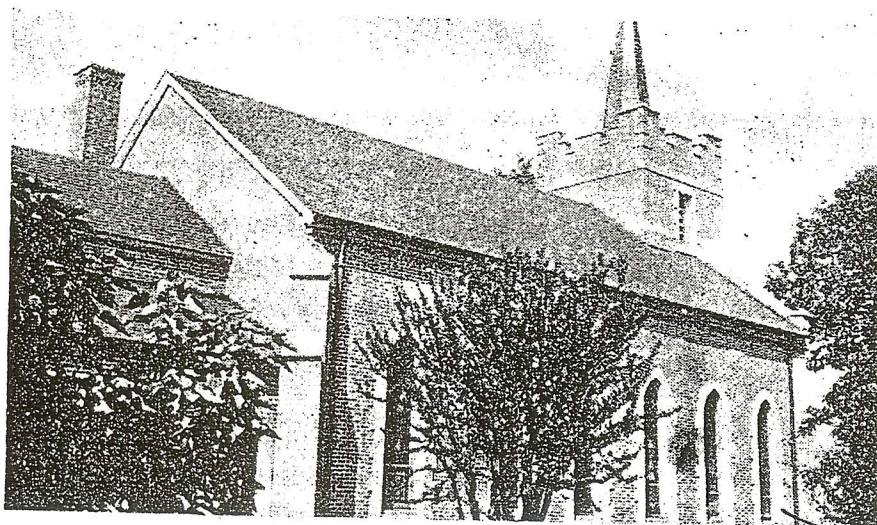
WHAT," asked John Tarwater as we met at the Hunter Drug Company store in Warrenton, "are you doing up in these parts today?"

We told him that we were just passing through.

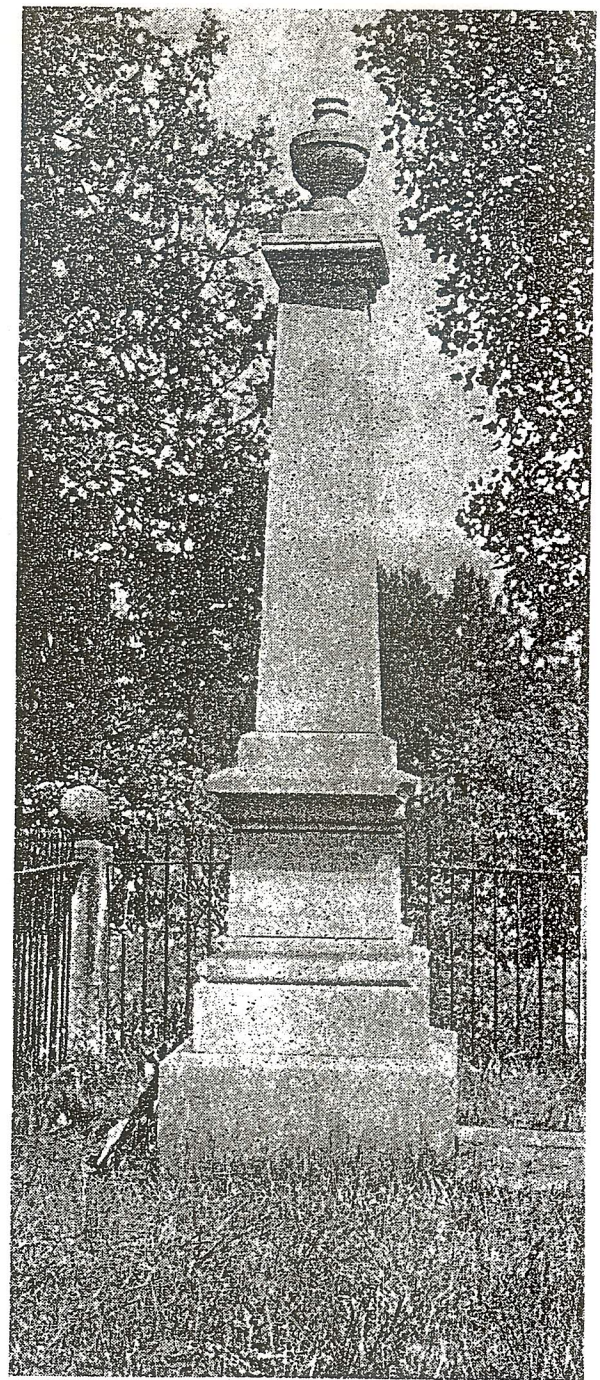
"Why don't you stop over for a while and write up an article about the finest town and the finest county in North Carolina?" he demanded.

We didn't have to ask him to what town and county he was referring. However, we explained that we had mentioned Warrenton and Warren County in several articles and thought that we had covered that section of the state pretty well.

"That's what you think," was his rejoinder. And then, as he looked around him. "See that man sitting over there at the table in the corner?"



Emmanuel Episcopal Church, built in 1822. It was here that Horace Greeley was married in 1836.



Monument over the grave of Anne Carter Lee, daughter of General Robert E. Lee.

We glanced in the direction he was pointing.

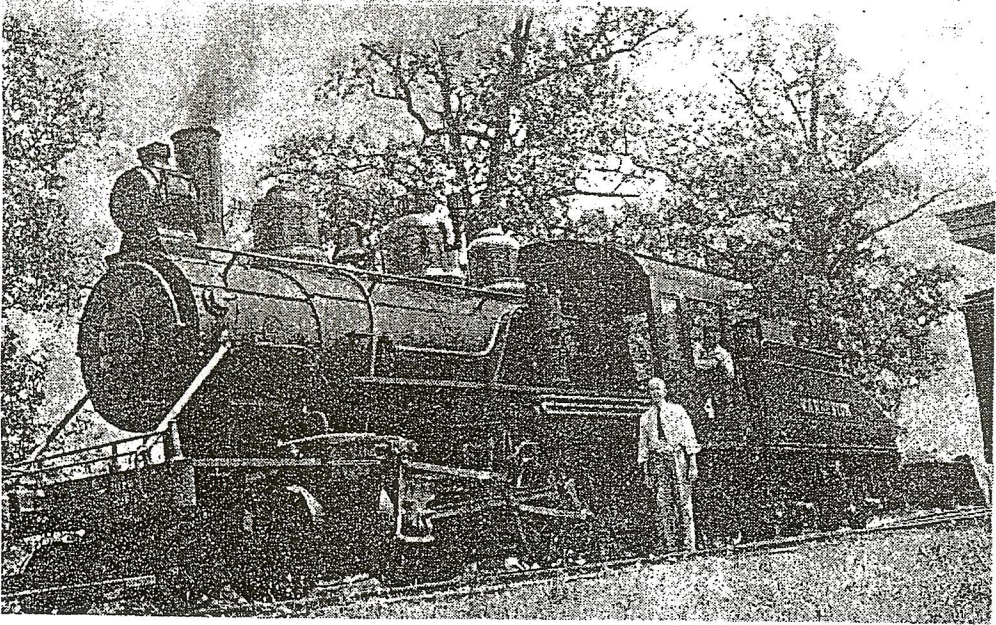
"That's Alphonso Jones. He's manager of this drug-store and has been connected with the establishment for the last thirty-three years. This store, incidentally, was established sixty years ago by Frank Hunter. He's retired now, and Alphonso looks after the business."

We regarded Mr. Jones with interest.

"Come outside a minute," said John, "I want to show you something else."

We walked down the street a piece.

"See that church over there?" he demanded. "That's Emmanuel Episcopal Church, built in 1822 and con-



At top is the Warrenton Hotel, owned by the town of Warrenton. And below is the Engine of the Warrenton Railroad Company, also owned by the town. That's Superintendent Blalock and Engineer Harrison in the picture.

secrated in 1824. Do you know who was married in that church?"

We told him we had no idea.

"Horace Greeley. He married Miss Mary Youngs Cheney in that church on July 6, 1836. She was down here teaching school at the time.

"And over yonder is the Warrenton Hotel. I believe we're the only town in North Carolina that owns its own hotel. It was built in 1920, and the town issued bonds for its construction. At the present time the hotel is operated by private interests but the town still owns the property."

We told him we never had heard of a town owning its hotel.

"Bet you never heard of a town owning its railroad either, did you?"

We shook our head.

"Get into my car."

We drove three or four blocks and came to a railroad-depot. Two men

were standing on the platform. One was introduced to us as Mr. A. C. Blalock, superintendent of the Warrenton Railroad; the other was J. J. Harrison, engineer.

Mr. Tarwater explained how the railroad had happened to be organized.

"The Seaboard wanted to come through Warrenton when it was building its line," he said, "but our folks at that time were rather skeptical about the proposition. They didn't want any snorting locomotives or rattling railroad coaches scaring livestock or maybe setting fire to things, so they told the Seaboard to build their railroad somewhere else. And the Seaboard did. In due course of time, however, our citizens decided that maybe they'd better have a railroad after all: one that they could operate themselves and run whenever it suited them to run it. So they built

the road from here to Warrenton, three miles away. That was back in 1875, and from a financial point of view, it's been one of the most successful roads in the country. Maybe not as long as some, but just as wide. That's the engine over there."

"How many engines have you got?" we asked him.

"How many do you think we'd have?" he retorted. "We've only got one track, three miles long, so naturally we can use only one engine. She makes two or three round trips every day, depending upon the quantity of freight and express to be hauled. This is engine No. 4. The other three have worn out. Not long ago we spent about \$10,000 getting this one put in first-class shape again."

"And she runs like a top," said Engineer Harrison proudly.

Mr. Harrison has been engineer for 40 years. Mr. Blalock has held down his job for 36 years.

"If you've got time," said Mr. Tarwater, "I'd like to run you out to Nathaniel Macon's grave. You know who Nathaniel Macon was, don't you?"

"The greatest North Carolinian that ever lived," we replied promptly.

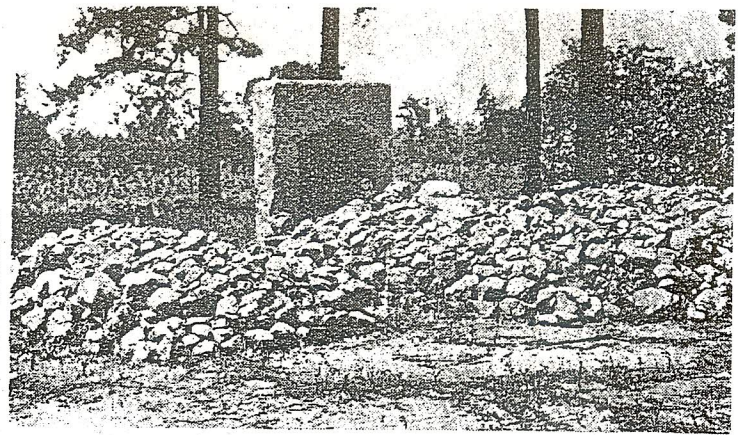
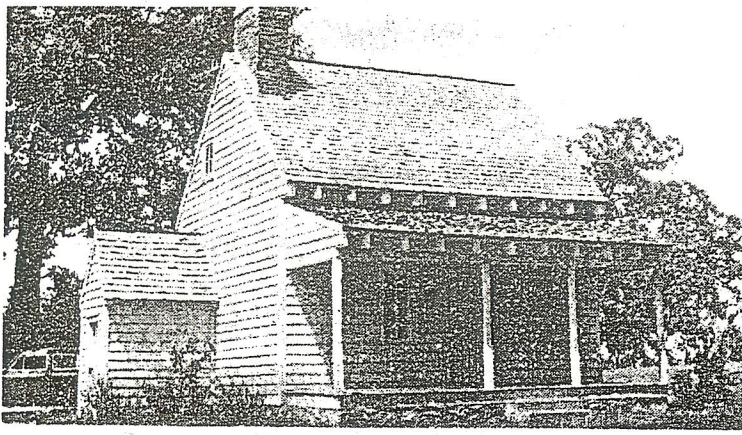
Mr. Tarwater, visibly affected, reached forward and shook hands. "And don't forget that he was a native of Warren County," he added.

We got into his car again and drove along the highway in an easterly direction toward Macon and Vaughan. Then turned off to the right and followed a dirt road for a distance of about four miles.

"There it is," said John, pointing to a spot about one hundred yards ahead. "I've heard it said that Nathaniel Macon requested no monument on his grave, but that he suggested that everyone who visited it should throw a rock upon it. Look at all those rocks!"

We got out of the car. A monument, suitably inscribed, has been erected over the distinguished Carolinian's last resting place. Three other graves are adjacent to it: that of Mrs. Macon; a six-year-old son, Plummer, and a Mr. Thornton. Upon the grave of each are thousands of rocks—large and small. John and I looked around, found two small stones and tossed them on the grave of Macon.

Practically every North Carolinian knows the history of Nathaniel Macon, so there is no use going into details. His distinguished services as U. S. Senator and Representative, as Speaker of the House, as member of the North Carolina legislature, and his other activities for the advancement



On the left is the reconstructed home of Nathaniel Macon. It still contains many of the original timbers. On the right are the graves of Macon and members of his family. He requested that every person visiting his grave throw a rock thereon.

of our state and its people will never permit his name to be forgotten.

About two hundred yards from the graves stands the house in which Macon lived. It has been renovated and rebuilt in parts but many of the original timbers and flooring are still in the structure. "Buck Springs" was the name given to his plantation.

There are many living descendants of Nathaniel Macon—but none of them bears his name. He had only one son, who died when six years old. His two daughters married and, of course, changed their names. And so, while there are a large number of descendants, they all have some other name than that of Macon.

Nathaniel Macon married Miss Hannah Plummer, an accomplished lady and of one of the most excellent families in the state. In this he had opposition. It is recorded that while on a visit to her he met one of her suitors at her house. With his characteristic frankness, he proposed to his rival, in the presence of Miss Plummer, that they should play a game of cards for her hand, as that was the shortest and most amicable way to decide the controversy. This was agreed to; and they played. Macon lost: upon which, raising his hands and with his eyes beaming with affection, he exclaimed: "Hannah, I have lost you fairly, but love is superior to fortune! I cannot give you up: I love you yet!"

This frank expression, it is said, secured him the hand of the lady. A life of uninterrupted domestic felicity to her proved the wisdom of her conduct. He was happy in the wife of his love and she was proud of the husband of her choice.

We headed back toward the highway again. "Just a few miles from here is Littleton," said John. "Would you like to drive over there?"

"No," we told him promptly.

"It'll just take a few minutes," he urged.

We shook our head. "We've been to Littleton several times and we know it to be one of the finest communities in the state," we told him. "But if we drive over there now, the chances are that we'll run into John Skinner. We've heard John brag so much about Littleton that he'd keep us there for six or seven hours, and we'd never get back to Raleigh in time for supper."

"Maybe you're right," agreed Mr. Tarwater. "John's a great fellow."

We agreed with him heartily. And so we passed up Littleton and headed back toward Warrenton.

"By the way," said John, "I believe we'll drive over to Warren Plains and let you meet Miss Selma."

"Who is Miss Selma?" we asked him.

"Miss Selma Katzenstein. She's one of the best farmers in this section of the state and unless I'm mistaken she operates on a larger scale than any other woman-farmer in all of North Carolina."

It was only four or five miles to Warren Plains. Across from the depot stands a large two-story house. A lady was on the front porch and John introduced us to her.

A Successful Farmer

Miss Selma is a quiet, unassuming woman. Forty years ago her father bought a farm in that vicinity. As a girl, she used to follow him around as he superintended operations, and in this manner she became acquainted with all the details of farming. Nine years ago, the father died, and since then Miss Selma has been in complete charge. She has expanded her holdings considerably, having added six farms to the original place left by her father. She has had as much as 206 acres in tobacco and 125 acres in cotton. Altogether she has 552 acres in crop lands. The total acreage of her farms, including timber, is more than 2,000 acres.

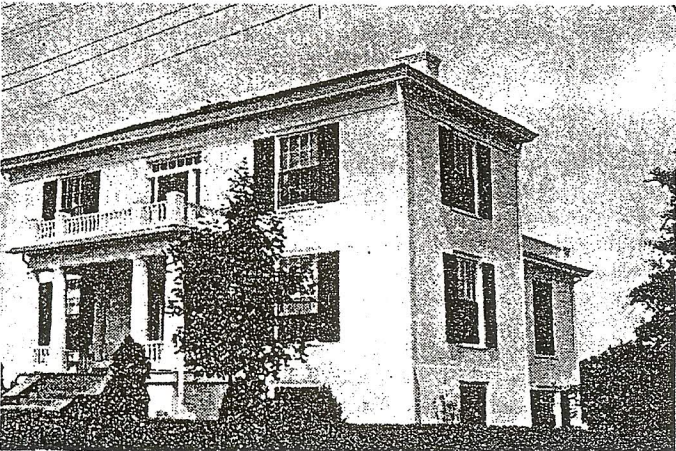
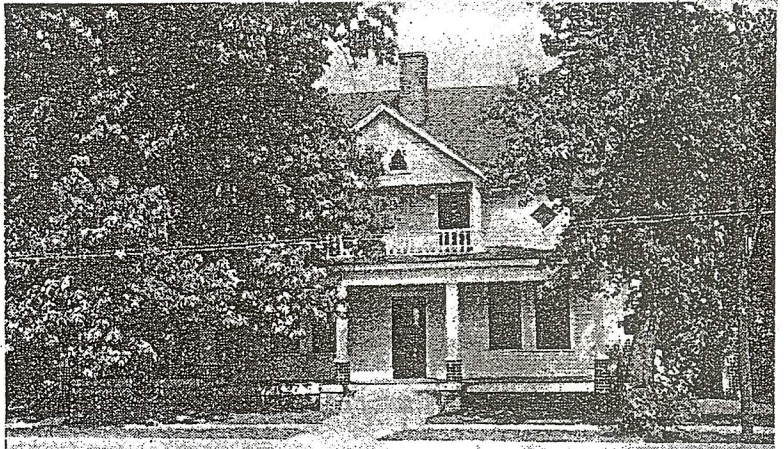
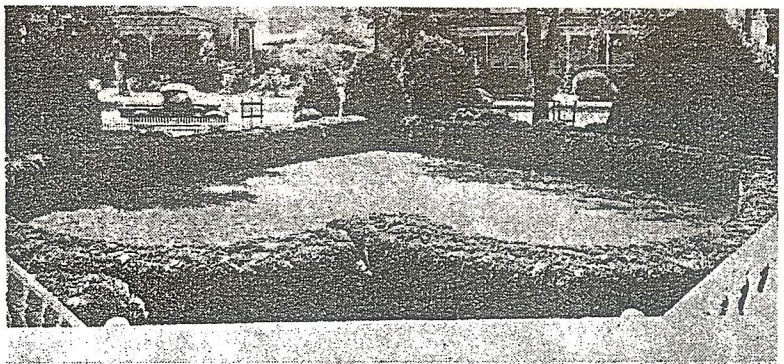
A fine person is Miss Selma; held in the highest regard by all who know her. Incidentally she's modern and up-to-date in her methods of agriculture and does a lot of studying from books which she has obtained from federal and state authorities.

"She raises some of the finest tobacco that is brought to the Warrenton market," proudly stated Mr. Tarwater. And, inasmuch as he has been a buyer ever since he was 20 years old, he ought to know.

She also has built a cotton gin near



"Miss Selma," as she is affectionately known. She is one of the most successful farmers in Warren County. There are more than 2,000 acres in her holdings: over 500 under cultivation.



Beautiful and historic homes of Warrenton. Top, left: The residence of Mr. C. E. Jackson, built in 1836. Top, right: heart arrangement of boxwoods in the Jackson yard. There are hundreds of these boxwoods on the premises. Center, left: The home of Mr. John Graham, who for many years was head of the famous Graham School at Warrenton. Center right: The reconstructed Bragg home, where Governor Thomas Bragg was born.

Lower left: The beautiful Tasker Polk home, now occupied by his son, William, mayor of Warrenton.

the home-place and gins all of her own cotton.

Back to Warrenton again. John showed us the home of Tasker Polk, in which his son, William Polk, lives at the present time. A beautiful home which has recently been done over. Mr. Polk is mayor of Warrenton.

Also the home of Captain Crossland, who was in command of the Confederate craft, *Advance*, which ran the blockade so extensively during the War Between the States.

And the Governor Bell Place, built by Will Eden and now occupied by Mr. C. E. Jackson. The house was constructed in 1836. It runs all the way through the block and has hundreds of boxwoods in the front and rear yards. Not long ago a landscape expert from up North visited the Jackson home and somebody asked him what he thought the boxwoods were worth. He replied: "Well, if they

were transplanted and some wealthy Northerner wanted them real bad, I imagine he'd be willing to pay as much as \$100,000 for them."

For many long years, the Graham school at Warrenton was one of the outstanding educational institutions in North Carolina. Mr. John Graham was the last director of the school. It closed in 1918.

Frank Graham, present head of the University of North Carolina went to school there, and so did many other boys who are now prominent in the business and professional world. Mr. Tarwater took us around and showed us the house in which Mr. John Graham used to live, with the dormitories in the rear. The old school-building has been torn down and a modern high-school now stands on that site. It is known appropriately as the John Graham High School.

"Come to think of it," said John,

"I believe you'd be interested in the Tuckers."

"Who are the Tuckers?" we inquired.

"They're folks who live about five miles from here, out in the country. Sound and substantial farmers. There are four of them—Henry, Frank and two sisters. But let's drive out there and you can see for yourself."

On the way out, we stopped at Warren Plains again and John asked Miss Selma the exact route to get out to the Tuckers. She very kindly consented to accompany us.

We went along another dirt road and then followed a narrow lane for a mile or so; eventually winding up at a modest country home. A man came out on the front porch. "Hello, Miss Selma. How are you, John?"

It was Mr. Henry Tucker. John introduced us. "Glad to know you, Mr. Carlfish," he said, courteously.

Miss Selma and John told him the purpose of our visit and asked him if he had any objection to our writing up his place. He said not at all. So here's the story in connection with the Tuckers:

They were a clannish set; intensely devoted to one another. In 1924, Mother died, and they buried her in the family burial ground. But they couldn't bear the thought of her lying there underneath the ground, so they got together and built a beautiful stone mausoleum, about fifty yards from the house. After Mother had been in her grave six weeks, they had the body exhumed and placed it in the mausoleum.

In 1926, Father died, and his body also was put in the structure, alongside that of Mother. Both bodies, of course, had been embalmed.

For several years afterwards, the children would gather at the mausoleum at frequent intervals, open the door and gaze at the bodies of their departed parents. Mr. Henry told us all this as we were standing there, and there were tears in his eyes as he did so. A most unusual case of devotion of children for their parents. And in order that there may be no misunderstanding about our writing this up, permit us to add that we respect them highly for it.

For the last four or five years, however, the tomb has not been opened.

And, speaking of tombs; there is one grave in Warren County which everyone must visit, and which probably is the outstanding historical spot in the county. At any rate, it ranks on a par with that of Nathaniel Macon. It is the grave of Anne Carter Lee, daughter of General Robert E. Lee, located about ten miles south of Warrenton and half a mile off the paved highway. Just beyond the community of Afton.

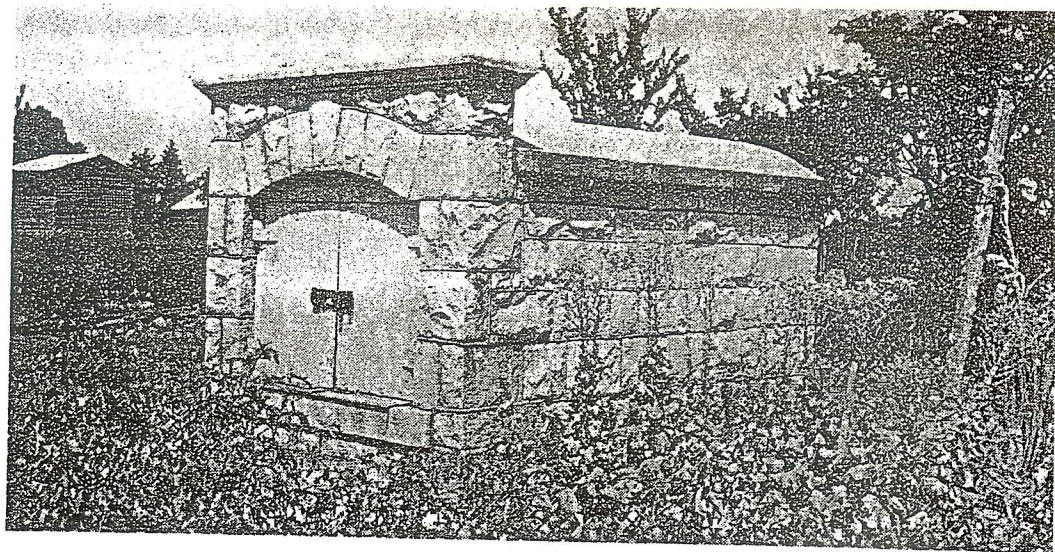
"This is a nice little settlement," said Mr. Tarwater, as we passed through Afton. "Some mighty fine folks live here."

"Maybe that song was written in honor of it," we suggested.

"What song?" he wanted to know.

"Afton the Ball is Over," we told him. But we don't believe that went over so well, because John didn't make any reply.

Perhaps you know the story of Miss Lee's death. It was during the War Between the States. She was staying at a resort (located about two miles from the grave) known as Jones' Springs. John took us in there too and showed us the place. It's a two-story structure and was evidently a palatial mansion in its day and time. Today it has gone pretty much to rack and ruin.



The mausoleum which members of the Tucker family in Warren County have built and wherein are interred the embalmed bodies of Mother and Father.

Anyway, Miss Lee was staying at Jones' Springs and fell sick. Typhoid fever, we believe it was. She died. They didn't have embalming facilities in those days, so they had to bury her in the neighborhood. The U.D.C. have erected a handsome monument over her grave.

That was in 1862. And then, in 1870, General Lee himself came down to Warren County and visited the grave of his daughter.

We drove back to Warrenton and on the way, John told us some more about the historic background of Warren County. It used to be known as Bute County, and was created as such in 1764. It was named for the Earl of Bute. The latter individual was a pretty strong Tory, so in 1779, when it was suggested that the county be split up, the folks said to hell with Bute, and they selected the name of Warren for one of the new counties and the name of Franklin for the other. Warren County derived its name from Joseph Warren, of Massachusetts, who was a Major-General in the Provincial forces and fell in the battle at Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775. He was one of the outstanding patriots of his time. The British tried their best to suppress his activities, but he wouldn't be suppressed.

In Warrenton, John suddenly remembered that he hadn't shown us the Governor Bragg place, so we went around and saw that, too. The house has been rebuilt almost in its entirety, but much of the old frame-work is still in the present structure. In connection with Governor Bragg, it seems to us that Pete Murphy, Sumner Burgwyn and some of the other historical sharks of North Carolina have told us that Governor Bragg was born in jail. The story is that a Negro

was impudent to his mother. She shot him and was put in jail. It has been asserted that the Governor was born while she was thus incarcerated. But the folks up in Warrenton claim that this isn't so: that the Governor wasn't born in jail at all. So we'll take their word for it.

It was with genuine regret that we said good-bye to Mr. Tarwater, his

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"Jones' Springs," where Annie Carter Lee, daughter of the General, fell sick and died. Her burial place is only a short distance from here.

charming mother and some of the other fine folks up in Warren County whom we met during our brief stay there. And from what has appeared in this article, don't get the impression that Warrenton is one of those towns that lives in the past, because that's entirely erroneous. They've got an airport there that is the largest government field between Washington and Atlanta. They have a cotton mill which didn't even quit during the depression and which is said to make the finest cotton yarn you can find anywhere. They've got an excellent golf course, a fine tobacco market, modern stores and beautiful residences. There probably are more boxwoods in Warrenton than any other town in the state. Beautiful ones, too.

"Sorry you've got to leave," said John, "because you really haven't seen half the interesting things we've got up here. I'd like to have taken you up to Norlina, Wise and some of

the other towns in the county. Up in Ridgeway, for instance, they raise the finest cantaloupes in the state. But if you got to go, I reckon you got to go."

We did.

On the way toward Louisburg, however, we made one more stop. From many of the old-timers we have heard stories of Shoco Springs, which used to be a famous health resort, 75 or 100 years ago, and which is located about seven miles below Warrenton. People used to drive there in stage-coaches or in their own private carriages. There was a big hotel there and also several other buildings.

We turned off at the historical marker which informed us that the Springs were located about four miles away. After having driven three miles, we caught up with a colored boy, eight or nine years old, who was carrying a small sack in his right hand. Probably filled with cantaloupes. We stopped and asked him if we were on the right road to Shoco Springs.

"Yas, suh," he replied. "I'm going that way and I can show you."

"Hop up on the running-board," we told him.

He did, and we started off again. He was standing right close up against us, and in a moment or two we were startled by hearing a peculiar rumbling in his stomach. It kept up: the most weird sounds you can possibly imagine.

"Boy, are you sick, or something?" we inquired.

He ducked his head and looked at us. "No, suh; I'se all right."

The noises became even more violent.

"What in the world is your stomach making those peculiar noises for?" we demanded.

"That ain't my stummick, boss; that's this-yeah little pig I'se got in the bag."

And, sure enough, he did have a small pig in there. For a little while, however, we thought he was having the worst case of indigestion we'd ever met up with.

You have to walk about fifty yards to get to Shoco Springs. The spring is still there, and we drank of its waters, but the old hotel disappeared many years ago. It was burned down, a colored man told us. He owns the property at the present time and is still hopeful that somebody will come along some day and will develop it.

Probably never again, however, will Shoco Springs regain the glories which it possessed in the days immediately following the War Between the States. People used to come there not only from various parts of North Carolina, but from several other states as well. And vacations in those days were different from what they are. The guests at Shoco didn't come for just a week-end; they came for the entire summer.

Our Last Stop

We drove back to the highway and stopped at a filling station for a drink. Thinking to have some amusement with the young fellow who waited on us, we remarked: "General Robert E. Lee was buried somewhere near here, wasn't he?"

"No, sir"; he answered promptly. "It was Annie Carter Lee. She died in 1862 at Jones Springs, a short distance from here."

"And didn't this county used to be known as Union County?" we inquired.

"No, sir: it was known as Bute County before its name became Warren."

We asked him a few more questions—equally silly—but he had the correct answer every time. Those Warren County folks know their history.

Thanks to Mr. Tarwater and some of the other fine folks of Warren County, it proved to be a most interesting and enjoyable day. Not only that, but it proved that we didn't know the first thing about Warren County, which is one of the grandest and most interesting counties in the entire state. The people are friendly and hospitable and they put forth a hearty and sincere welcome to all visitors in that section. Next time you want to spend an enjoyable day, we suggest that you take a trip through Warren County.

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