

HISTORY OF RAMSEUR

BY

INEZ McMATH

At the time this was written  
Inez McMATH was a seventh grade  
student in Ramseur School

The first known published history of  
Ramseur, North Carolina

Published In  
THE ASHEBORO BULLETIN  
April 28, 1918

Won the first prize at Randolph  
Schools County Commencement for the  
best paper on any historical subject  
relating to Randolph County

(Miss McMath is now Mrs. Joe J. Parks)

The town of Ramseur is situated in the central part of North Carolina and in the Eastern part of Randolph County, eight miles from Staley, twenty five miles from Star, and thirty miles from Greensboro. At the close of the Revolutionary War all the land in and around Ramseur was owned by William Allen and was kept in the Allen family until 1840. The town was started by the father of Jezekiah Allen, who died in 1899. None of his descendants are living, since his only son died a short while after he did. Mr. Allen and Henry Kivett built a saw mill along the river in 1840 and started a little town, naming it Allen's Fall. After building the saw mill and finding the water power so valuable, they built a dam from logs sawed out in the mill. They ran the mill for ten years, during which time three dams were washed away. At that time there were only a few residences and a small school building. In 1850 Messrs. Henry Kivett, John Allen, Washington Brower, and David Kivett built a small cotton mill of only two rooms and about one third the present dimensions. After these settlers came, a store, which was managed by I. H. Foust, Sr., and eight more residences were built. Mr. Foust lived in one end of his store building, which stood where the grist mill now stands. When the cotton mill was built it was named Columbia Manufacturing Company, and the town was named Columbia. Henry Kivett was made the first mill superintendent. The building was heated by stoves and lighted by lamps in which lard was burned instead of kerosene. There were only six cards and 480 spindles. Later twenty four looms were put in on which they made 36 inch goods. Mr. James Whitehead was at that time selling agent.

The next managers of the mill were Messrs. Dennis Curtis and G. H. Makepeace. They made some improvements, among which was the building of a rock dam. They sold out to Mr. W. H. Watkins, the present manager, and others in 1879.

The dynamo was put in after Mr. Watkins came and water was supplemented by steam power. The spindles have increased from 480 to 11,280, and the looms from 24 to 344. The present dam was built in 1888.

There have been 14 superintendents, viz: Henry Kivett, Naland Cox, Elijah Whitney (during the war), G. H. Makepeace, A. W. E. Capel, T. L. Chisholm, W. F. Hurley, J. E. Cole, E. C. Watkins, Charles Randleman, I. F. Craven, J. M. Whitehead, and E. J. Steed, the superintendent now acting.

The bridge across the river was built in 1875. Before that time the people crossed the river in boats, or forded it.

There was no post office when Mr. Watkins came here. But, Dennis Curtis, a business man of the town, who lived in Franklinville, brought the mail to the people twice a week. Soon after Mr. Watkins came he sent in an application to the post office authorities for an office and it was granted.

The first post master was Mr. W. R. Burgess. The mail was often misplaced and sent to Columbia, S. C., so under the influence of Mr. Watkins, the name was changed to Ramseur, in honor of General Stephen D. Ramseur, his Commander in the Civil war. At that time Mr. W. H. King walked and carried the mail from Staley to Ramseur once a day.

When Mr. Watkins first bought the mill the bunch yarn and warps were hauled to Greensboro to be shipped. After the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad was built from Mount Airy to Wilmington, the nearest shipping point was Staley. The railroad was graded from Climax to Ramseur in 1889, and was completed in 1890. It was built by the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad Company. The first conductor was Captain Overcash. The train made only one trip a day to Madison, a few miles beyond Greensboro. The Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad Company sold out to the Southern Railway System which owns it at present. The train now makes two trips to Greensboro every day except Sunday. Captain W. D. Lane is now conductor.

One among the first places of business was a tin shop operated by a Mr. Henley. He made tin buckets, coffee pots, etc. The building stood South of the cemetery. Another place of business was a shop for carding wool, operated by Mr. D.B. Burgess, Sr. The wool was brought from the country, carded, and made into rolls, then spun on the old fashioned spinning wheel and woven on the old fashioned loom into blankets, jeans, and linsey-woolsey dress goods.

The first furniture was made by hand by Silas Hopson. He made bedsteads, bureaus, ward robes, tables, and other things. The only furniture made by hand in town now is by Mr. J. T. Turner. The chair factory was built in 1889 by Mr. A. W. E. Capel, and was named Alberta Chair Works, in honor of his daughter, Miss Alberta Blanche Capel. The chairs were made ready for bottoms and then hauled to some of the houses and bottomed for three cents a chair. Then they were hauled back to the factory, varnished and sent to various parts of the State.

Messrs. Samuel and Reed Smitherman managed the first broom shop in the basement of the chair factory. This building was destroyed by fire. The chair factory was replaced by a furniture factory, which was burned in 1908. It was rebuilt on its present site and is the second finest in the State. They manufacture bedsteads, wash stands, bureaus, etc. These are shipped to the various parts of the United States.

The broom shop is now owned by Messrs. A. H. Thomas and M. E. Johnson. Its capacity is sixty dozen brooms per day.

The Novelty Wood Works was built in 1900 by Messrs. W. A. Ward and J. A. Martin. It is now managed by Mr. J. W. Parks. They manufacture bobbins, picker sticks, etc. These are sent to mills over the Eastern part of the United States.

The Fleta Lumber Company was built in 1907 by Mr. W. H. Watkins, Jr., and Mr. J. D. York. The plant was named in honor of Mrs. Fleta Watkins Cole. Here they saw and dress lumber which is used for building purposes in this and neighboring towns.

In 1880 there were no side walks, except a few feet of plank in the center of town. Since 1902 the town has grown with great rapidity. Improvement of streets have been carried on to such an extent that there are now several thousand feet of concrete side walks, built without issuing bonds, which can be said of but few towns of its size in the State.

The telephone system was installed by Mr. H. B. Moore in 1907. He had 32 telephones but today there are 296 in town and the surrounding country.

At present there are 17 stores, a cafe, meat market, and a flourishing bank in town. The bank is in a brick building which was built in 1907, with a post office building adjoining. The first cashier was Mr. E. R. Smith. Mr. G. M. Kimrey was the first post master in the new building.

The electric plant was installed in 1912 by Mr. W. H. Watkins. The power is not so great, but the streets are no longer dark. All of the churches and some of the residences are lighted with electricity. The roller mill was built the same year and it run by electricity, as is also the broom factory.

The first church was a Missiohary Baptist Church, organized by Reverend W. C. Patterson, who died before the building was completed. So Reverend Lane Hutson was called as pastor. Every Sunday the people came from far and near to hold union Sunday School. A cemetery was started by the Baptist people, since the people of that denomination held preaching and Sunday School in an arbor. The first one to be buried was a Jones child. Reverend W. C. Patterson was also buried there. The cemetery was put under the care of the town in 1902. The Baptist building was built on its present site in 1890. It is situated on Liberty Street, being a large brick building, consisting of two Sunday School rooms and a large auditorium. Reverend W. O. Johnson is now pastor.

The M. E. Church was organized by Reverend Joseph Thomas in the old school building. A little later, in 1886, another building was erected on Liberty Street and Reverend Charles Phillips was first pastor.

The Church was built on its present site in 1896. It is situated on Main Street, being a large wooden building, consisting of four Sunday School rooms and a large auditorium. Reverend H. C. Byrum is now pastor.

The Christian Church was organized by Reverend M. H. Hurley. They have a nice wooden building near the cemetery, and Reverend T. E. White is now pastor. The Holiness Church was organized a little later, and Reverend B. B. Bulla is now pastor.

The first physician was Dr. Holton, who was the only one in town. There are now three, Drs. C. S. Tate, S. W. Caddell, and F. C. Craven.

The Masonic Lodge was organized in 1885, and was called Marietta Lodge in honor of Mrs. Etta Watkins Craven. The lodge room is now in the School Building. There are several other secret orders which meet in the same hall, among them Red Men, Juniors, and Knights of Pythias.

The first school building was constructed in 1820, stood in front of the present school building. It was a square log building with only one door and a rock chimney, with a fireplace which was at least five feet wide. At this time they taught subscription school and people came from many miles around. The first teacher was Mr. Pealau, who was a cripple. He taught only a short while. The next teacher was Jessie Pugh, who taught three months subscription school with 26 on roll. There were four studies, reading, writing, arithmetic, and a very little history of North Carolina. Most of the time was spent on arithmetic, and those who could work the single rule of three, were considered fine scholars. The children in those days had a verse which read like this: "Multiplication is vexation, division is as bad; the rule of three perplexes me and fractions run me mad".

The present school building was constructed in 1890, a short distance North of the old school building. The building consisted of four class rooms and the Masonic Hall. Later two more class rooms were added, together with an auditorium which had an elevated floor and two drawing rooms. The rooms are constructed in accordance with the best theories of light, heat, and ventilation. The first principal was Prof. D. M. Weatherly, who had eight years experience teaching in the high schools and graded schools of North Carolina and Virginia. He then went to the University of Nashville, Peabody Normal College, Nashville, Tenn., and graduated in 1891. We owe much to him for what our town and school is today. The first music teacher was Miss Lily Stroud. Mr. William C. Hammer was at that time Superintendent of Public Instruction. None of the teachers have stayed with us over four years except Mr. Weatherly and our present principal, Prof. W. P. White, who is successfully carrying on the work begun by Mr. Weatherly.

The land around Ramseur is the best farming land in the country and many of the farmers have nice residences, automobiles, and telephones. The sand clay roads have made the farms more valuable, and will do much for the development of the town and surrounding country.

