

Chesnee's Fast Growth Recalled by Judge Wall

First Settler Tells How He Found Only Woodland as He Moved There

By D. A. RUSSELL

"I will never forget the day that I was sawing the wood to build the J. B. Caldwell oil mill at Chesnee in 1910, for that was the day that Halley's comet came and it got so dark that we were forced to shut down the saw mill. That was about 11 o'clock in the morning, and although the darkness lasted only about 30 minutes, I guess, it seemed like several hours."

Thus Judge E. F. Wall, who was the first man ever to move to Chesnee and build a house in that town, recalled the comet and other interesting facts about that progressive community.

"The negroes refused to work and were scared to death for a while," continued Judge Wall, who has been magistrate at Chesnee for the past four years. "As a matter of fact, I didn't feel particularly eager to continue working myself. It got almost pitch dark for a while and it did give one a funny feeling."

History of Chesnee

"Judge Wall" as he is known by hundreds in Spartanburg County, moved to Chesnee, or where Chesnee later came into existence, on Christmas Eve night, 1909. When he moved there it was nothing but woods, with not a house standing.

"I believe there was a water tank in the location and they had a car box for a depot," said Judge Wall. "The materials for my house were purchased in Spartanburg, and I remember asking the C. C. & O. Railway officials what they would charge me to move my stuff to what is now Chesnee, and one of them asked me if \$10 would be too much. I often wonder now what the charge would be from Spartanburg to Chesnee for a carload of freight!"

It was not until 1911 that Chesnee was named and incorporated a corporation under the title of the Chesnee Land Corporation, bought up the lots in what is now Chesnee and sold them. The streets were named after the states by the land company, and Mr. Wall resides on Florida Avenue.

He was elected as the first mayor of Chesnee and served for more than 7 years. The present mayor is E. G. Jelly, who is engaged in the general merchandise business.

Mr. Caldwell built his oil mill in 1910 and it was Mr. Wall who furnished the lumber for it.

Telephone Exchange

"I ran the telephone exchange for 10 years," continued Judge Wall, "and when I sold the exchange to F. X. Davis for \$2,000, we had 125 subscribers, and the telephones at that time cost me \$24 each without any of the accessories. Mr. Davis later sold the exchange to a Mr. Green, of Tennessee, Mr. Green still later sold it to a Mr. McCullough, and the present owner, H. W. Askins, purchased the exchange from Mr. McCullough about 2 years ago."

Chesnee has a volunteer fire department and J. J. Collins is chief. Water for the town is furnished from three wells, "and, believe me, it's good water too," said Judge Wall.

As an indication of the progress Chesnee has made since the day Judge Wall built there, he recalls that at present there are the following business establishments in the town:

Three garages, four filling stations and two additional ones now being built; 3 cafes; 6 general merchandise stores; 2 drug stores; 5 churches, (including two negro churches); 4 gin outfits; 3 schools, the Chesnee Mill School, grammar school and Chesnee High School; 3 doctor's offices; 2 undertakers; 1 beauty parlor, and the Chesnee Mills.

Ginning Center

"At one time, just a few years back, I believe that Chesnee ginned more cotton than any other place in the state," said Judge Wall. "I can remember when they used to gin more than 10,000 bales in a year, but of course there's nothing like that now."

Judge Wall was appointed magistrate the first time by State Senator Jonas F. Grey and was reappointed after Senator W. D. Burnett succeeded Mr. Gray. His present term expires in 1935, he said.

Judge Wall also says that Spartanburg has made great progress during the last 25 years, and he

recalls that the roads to Spartanburg even 25 years ago were nothing to brag about.

"But we have made progress and that's what counts," he said. "Our progress may not be as fast as in some other places, but it's sure and I expect the next 25 years will show just as great an improvement in Spartanburg County, as compared with 25 years ago."