



Mrs. Titus Hartsell

This history of Locust for 100 years is proudly dedicated to Mrs. Hartsell, Aunt Lou, as she is affectionately known. Without her preserved records and written history of Locust, this book would have been almost impossible. Mrs. Hartsell has lived the most of her 89 years in the heart of Locust, and has been keenly interested in its growth and development. This interest was shown five years ago when she called the Locust postmaster, to remind him that 1969 would mark a century of existence for Locust. She thought that a celebration for the occasion should be held in the community.

Others contributing valuable information were: Mr. James Hartsell, Mr. Elam Tucker, Mr. A. J. Furr, Mrs. Hoyle Tucker and Carriker's Studio.

Our thanks to all who helped in compiling the information.

LOCUST CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Saturday August 30, 1969

10:00 a.m.

PARADE: Featuring 75 Covered Wagons

2:00 p.m. Auction Sale

8:00 p.m. Street Dance

Sunday August 31, 1969

Attend Church of your choice, dress in Centennial Costumes.

6:00 p.m. Community worship Service to be held at Locust School. All ministers of the community will be participating.

Monday September 1, 1969

10:00 a.m.

Parade: featuring Bands, Floats, Miss Centennial, Miss Locust Fire Queen, etc.

There will be various kinds of activities during the entire day.

LOCUST — 100 YEARS

In the late 1860's two brothers, John and David Curlee bought several acres of land where the Charlotte and Fayetteville road, running east and west, crossed the Concord and Wadesboro road running north and south. Previous to this, all this area had belonged to Johnny Barbee, known to be the first settler in this locale in the late 1700's. Two other brothers went on to settle in Cabarrus and Mecklenburg counties. It is believed that all Barbees in this area are descendants of the early settler. The remains of a family grave plot are still located about one mile Northeast of the square of Locust. The Barbee grave markers, still legible, date back into the late 1700's. Now these roads, which marked the Curlee purchase, are Highways 24 and 27 crossing No. 200 (fifteen miles from Albemarle and twenty-seven miles from Charlotte).

15 Miles to Concord and 25 Miles to Monroe

In the years around the close of the Civil War, the roads of the Crossroads community were covered with deep sticky red mud in early spring and winter. This presented the traveling problems of the farmers from Mecklenburg county passing occasionally on their way to Fayetteville with a wagon full of flour; farmers from Cabarrus county traveled south to Wadesboro or Cheraw, South Carolina. Therefore, the Crossroads community became a camping area for farmers taking their wheat to market and because of this, permanent settlement was slow. Because of the location, it was a stopping place for travelers in wagons on their way north, south, east, and west. Due to this rambling traffic, the Crossroads community became notorious for its gambling, drinking and being "wild" because the people only spent the night and weren't interested in settling down to make it a peaceful community.

This community was first established because the people of western Stanly County had conceived the idea that it was no longer necessary to have widely scattered farms near rivers and streams. A central well could be dug in the community providing enough water for several families and their livestock. This well was dug at the crossing and walled by W. Riley Hartsell, Sr. More than 100 years later, elder citizens of Locust can remember families still carrying water for their daily use to their homes, which were in some cases, more than a mile away. Aside from community use, this well was used by the travelers and their livestock as they were traveling through. There was a large spring west on highway 27 about where the Medical Building of present day has been erected. This was another main source of water which was used by many to do their washing, since it was the only source of running water. As many as 25 families would do their washing there in a single day. The wood was free for the gathering to heat water in the huge black pots. Soap was scarce, so most women made lye soap for the family wash. After the Curlee brothers bought their land they erected a large frame building on the North West corner of the square, which was to be opened as a central merchandise store.

Other heads of families known to have lived in the immediate vicinity at that time were Mrs. Fannie Howell, Dick Moss, Whit Moss, Emerson Honeycutt and Andy Yow. Family names in the surrounding territory were Furr, Love,

Little, Teeter, Smith, Huneycutt, Osborne, Tucker, Crayton and Hartsell. There were others but these were the most numerous, just as they had been until a few years ago. But as these names indicate, the first inhabitants of the "Crossroads" and Western Stanly County in general were German, Scotch-Irish and English descent.

The German and the Scotch-Irish came down from Rowan and Cabarrus counties. The English and possibly a few French came over from Anson County and the eastern part of the state.

By the year 1869 population in the "Crossroads" community had increased enough to warrant an application for the establishment of a post office. This application required a name other than the generally used "Crossroads". So there was a meeting to decide on a new name and a young girl in her early teens, Miss Maggie Howell, happened to be present when this discussion took place. Maggie happened to look out at a wooded plot where a large locust tree was in full bloom. Beyond the locust tree plowed fields lay flat, and the reddish clay dirt of the Charlotte road stretched out level. This view was unbroken by hills.

Miss Maggie Howell suggested, "Why not call our place Locust Level?" And so it was called until May 29, 1894. The Level was dropped and it was simply called Locust. In this year of our centennial, 1969, locust trees are still to be found on the vacant lot at the crossing between Ritchie Tucker's property and Hwy. 200 North. The establishment of this post office in 1869 was the official beginning of Locust Level. Mr. John Curlee was appointed the first postmaster to serve. This centennial celebration, one hundred years later in the year 1969, marks a century of growth and development in Locust community. For 100 years, our schools, churches, economic, agricultural, and cultural endeavors have grown in the heritage of this crossroads community.

For the next few years there were some changes made in ownerships of local stores. There were no schools or churches located within the immediate village. The nearest school and church was located a little more than a mile south on Hwy. 200. Flat Rock Church was built around 1835. No one knows the exact place where the school was built.

In 1876 the Curlees sold their business to W. Riley Hartsell and returned to Lenoir. David Curlee moved to Big Lick community. Neither left descendants to carry on their name in the community.

William R. Hartsell was appointed postmaster in 1876. He and his son William, Jr. were in charge of the post office until 1894.

Mr. Riley Hartsell built a large, hewed log home on the right side of Hwy. 200 South, at the crossing in the late 1870's. It was long known as the Turner house. The house still stands but has been remodeled to a colonial type home now occupied by the Fred Burris family.

There is another log home still standing in Locust. Richard Hopkins built a hewed log home near the public road, east of the crossing. This log home, located near the old Presbyterian Church, was bought in 1923 by Elum Tucker, 88, who still resides in it. He remodeled it, but left the original log part intact. It had no windows when he purchased it, so he cut out places in the logs to place windows in. He estimates the original part to be 100 years old or more.

He still uses part of the old road bed to get to his home.

Farming was the main livelihood in the community, except for the few merchants. Fertilizer started making a change in the cotton production and there was a need for a cotton gin. In 1887, Eli Osborne and Calvin Huneycutt bought and put into operation the first cotton gin within the village Locust Level. The gin was operated by horse power and the press was set outside of buildings which housed the gin. Two bales per day was a good output for both men and horses. Two daughters, Mrs. Henry Eudy and Mrs. Hoyle Tucker, of Mr. Osborne still live in the community.

Prices in the general stores in the 1880's were much cheaper than today, but wages were far less, too. Some of these prices were: Calico yardage, 10 cents per yard; raisins, 40 cents per box; castor oil, 25 cents; pair of shoes, \$1.50; and a pair of socks at 25 cents each.

The first blacksmith shop was opened in 1872, owned and operated by J. F. Hartsell and Eli Honeycutt. Other owners of the shop in later years were Henry Tucker, C. H. and John Hartsell, William and Israel Barbee, Ellis Thomas, and Duke Dry. To these shops the people came to have their horses shod, their plowshares sharpened and their wagons fixed. Most times the blacksmith made his own coal to use by charring wood.

Tar was used to lubricate the wagon wheels. The men made it by lighting pine splinters, and letting the pitch drop in a bucket as they burned.

Along these years in the 1890's several other businesses opened one at a time.

The first liquor store was owned and operated by Roe Furr.

I. J. Barbee was the first to open up a beer joint. From the recollections of the tales of yesterday, it seems that these places flourished for several years.

The first barber shop was operated by John Hartsell and scissors and old hand clippers were the tools used. Haircuts were 15 cents and shaves, 10 cents. Other shops in later years were operated by Jack Little in the Littles' Store building near the square. Dewey Barbee operated one across Hwy. 27 from A. J. Furr's present home.

The first florist and plant business was reported to be that run by Mrs. George H. Tucker.

There was an Elkin's Jewelry Store near the present square of Locust in 1898.

The first doctor to settle in the Locust vicinity was Dr. Crossen. He was known to settle here in 1865. He lived and practiced medicine on Hwy. 27 West, near the square.

In the early 1900's the old crank telephones were being used in this area.

The first known switchboard to be in operation was located in the late George Tucker's home, located near the Wayside Florist. His wife Amanda and son Ernest were the switchboard operators.

Later there were four other locations for the switchboard. Ethel Honeycutt, Jim Hartsell, and Mollie Osborne were switchboard operators. The telephone lines had to be put up and maintained by each individual. The telephone itself had to be purchased when installed and the monthly fee was 50 cents.

Jim Hartsell's father, Farrington, ran a line to Georgeville and maintained it as long as Dr. Ira Yow was in practice there. All of these services were discontinued in 1914.

In 1905 the citizens of Locust Level applied for an incorporation of the township. This incorporation was granted but after several years the incorporation was done away with. Again in 1911 Locust sought to be re-incorporated. This time also the incorporation did not last long. Due to the lack of specific legal records of these incorporations, Mrs. T. M. Hartsell wrote in 1949 for information to Sec. of State, Thad Eure. His letter came as follows:

I find from the records that the town of Locust in Stanly County has been twice incorporated. The first time was by Chapter 298, Private Laws 1905. This act was ratified on the 4th day of March, 1905. In 1911 a second act incorporating the town of Locust was passed and will be found in the Private Laws of that Session, Chapter 94. This act, ratified on the 22nd day of February, 1911, repealed the first act in its entirety.

The limits were about ½ mile in each direction from the square. There are recollections that the main reasons for wanting the incorporation was to be able

to stop some of the lawlessness in the community. It is said that liquor making and the handling of it was in a big way. They needed some type of law in the area, so it was achieved after the incorporation went into effect. The first mayor was Dan Turner, Whit Teeter was mayor second term; and the first policeman was George Tucker. However, Mr. Tucker did not complete his first term and Ellis Thomas was appointed to finish out the remaining designated time.

A known resident of Locust Community related several incidents of jokes and pranks being played on the policeman.

One night, a young man by the name of Shufford Tucker decided to pull a joke on him. He dressed up as a lady, and went to the lawman's home. He asked the policeman's wife where he was, knowing all the time that the lawman was at the general store. It was never learned who got the worst end of the deal, Shufford or the policeman, when his wife got through with him.

Other incidents recalled were young men throwing firecrackers at the policeman, and being chased by him.

The incorporation boundary ended at the branch near the present Locust School. When being chased by the policeman, the boys would run beyond the branch. When they crossed it, the lawman couldn't bother them.

Our first constables in the community were: Mack Crayton, Eli M. Osborne, J. F. Hartsell, C. Hartsell, Math Barbee, Jacob Whitley, Ephrim Barbee, Poe Williams, V. L. Hartsell, Harry Lee Love, Red Honeycutt, Frank Teeter and J. R. Hartsell.

The general store, near the crossing, kept changing hands over the years. Sometime around 1910 John Turner owned a building with two stores. Whit Simpson operated one and Eli Osborne operated the other. About this same time Alec Harwell operated a blacksmith shop behind the present Mrs. Hoyle Tucker's home.

D. W. Turner operated a general merchandise store near the crossing. It is said to be the store where girls bought their hose and other "niceties".

Around 1912 Lonny Little operated a grocery store for the next 10 or 12 years. This store was located on Hwy. 27 West, near the crossing. It is said Mr. Little owned the first car in the vicinity.

In 1912 Luther Greene operated an ice house, selling block-ice, and store west of the crossing. Later he moved across the road to the Dan Turner building.

Around 1919 Jack Little opened up a business in the Van Hartwick building east of the crossing, and later moved across the street, where he operated his store until about 1947. The site being on the adjoining lot of his home, where his wife Brettie still resides.

Mr. A. J. Furr owned a grocery, east, at the crossing for several years.

J. F. Hartsell operated a casket building business (1910-1920) near Coy Barbee's old residence on Hwy. 200 North. He operated a grocery store and buried the dead, using the same building for both.

Telephone lines came through Locust in 1925 from Charlotte to Albemarle.

In 1926 Hoyle Tucker and Fetzer Hartsell built a new service station and garage on the east corner at the square. They operated this business until around 1955. The only telephone in Locust was installed in Mr. Tucker's station soon after they opened for business. Many incidents are recalled of the conveniences and inconveniences of having the only telephone in the community. Such as going to the station late at night to call a doctor for someone, or driving a good distance to tell someone they had a phone call.

In 1927 the Hwy. 27 from Albemarle to Charlotte was improved and paved for the first time.

The original dirt public road ran by the old Presbyterian Church through Locust, led northeast below the square; and went through the middle of Locust

School grounds. It is now called the "old road." It is still used by many children walking home from school.

The new paved highway in 1927 was to bring about a change in the growth of Locust in the next few years.

Farming was still the main source of livelihood in the area. During these years corn shuckings were one of the main gatherings of neighbors in the fall. The corn was gathered and put in huge piles outdoors. A shucking was usually planned where a large number of friends and neighbors gathered. Usually there was lots of food prepared for the occasion, and a square dance afterwards. The story goes that upon finding a red ear of corn, the man got to kiss the lady beside him. One related that if the girl beside you was pretty, the ear was slipped back in the pile and found again. If she wasn't a good looker, he didn't show the red ear at all.

By the early 1930's many young men began leaving the farms to seek employment elsewhere. Cannon Mills in Concord and Kannapolis was the main source for many who left home. Most of the young men boarded in town, since there was no daily transportation as we have today.

Business places made few changes or little growth in the 1930's except for a lumber yard in 1938 operated by A. J. Furr and Realus Barbee.

A. J. Furr and C. C. Honeycutt had bought the old Hartsell store building and moved it to the square several years earlier. The building had to be moved back in 1939 when Hwy. 200 was completed. The site is now that of Pike's Drug store.

Locust didn't make many changes for the next five years, until the young men started returning from World War II and venturing into new business. The Turner Estate was settled and sold off. This gave opportunities for interested men to start more business places along the highway.

An airport opened up by B. E. Holbrooks between Locust and Stanfield for the charter of small planes and flight training. Many of the young men from Locust became interested and took flight training from instructors John M. Brooks and Ritchie Tucker. Veteran pilots of W. W. II. Johnnie Whitley was instructor and flight examiner.

From 1949 to 1969 Locust has grown steadily and boasts of numerous new and modern business places such as: picture studio, furniture store, insurance office, recapping business, cafes, hardware stores, clothing stores, grocery and meat market, modern barber shops, new post office building, modern green house, shoe repair, music store, skating rink, swimming pool, outdoor theater, hosiery mills, dry cleaning, jewelers, auto parts, real estate and construction, drug store, bank, beauty shops, used car lots, nursery, painters, lumber co., upholstery, pump co., dime store, tire stores, chainsaw sales, service stations, oil co., fire dept., doctors, fire tower, fish market, electric shop and repairs, milling and feeds, fertilizer, and chain stores.

During the growing years of Locust, a medical building to house doctors was built by stockholders in the community. Much work was done by a committee to secure a doctor here, the nearest otherwise was in Oakboro. Dr. Scott L. Bennet, M. D. and his family moved here from the state of New York. He practiced here 2 years, and decided to move back to his home state.

Dr. Bassow was next to begin practice in 1963. He decided to move on to Albemarle where he would be nearer to a hospital.

Dr. Arthur V. Thomas, optometrist, now is practicing in the building.

The Star Mail Route was a contracted mail service from post office to post office. The first service from Locust Post Office to Concord was carried by Eli Osborne and Titus Hartsell by horse and buggy. This time was in the early 1900's. The two men alternated the trips, furnishing their own horse and buggy. Other Star Route carriers were Jason Osborne, Quince Whitley, Gale Hartsell, Jim Hartsell, and Jim Jenkins. Passengers were also carried in the buggies along with the mail. Mrs. Agnes Tucker went with her father, Mr. Osborne, on the mail route when she was very young. She remembers it since it was her first trip to Concord.

Mr. T. M. Hartsell was appointed rural mail carrier for the local mail route from Locust in 1909. Farrington Hartsell was postmaster at the time.

Mr. C. C. Honeycutt was appointed as a second carrier a few years later when the route was extended. These two men worked out of the Locust Post Office until it was closed and transferred to Stanfield in 1919.

Mr. Hartsell held the job for 32 years. Mr. Hoyle Tucker, substitute, took the regular position until a new appointment was made.

Mr. Hartsell commented the day he retired in 1942 about how the roads had been improved over the years, and the better methods of transportation. He said that many a cold morning in the earlier years, with the temperature below freezing, he had put a lighted lantern under the "laprobe" to keep his feet warm.

Pictured is Mr. Titus Hartsell in his buggy and horse, Prince, on the rural route.

