

Blythewood, Once "Doko", Celebrates Birthday

Fairfield's neighboring town to the southeast, Blythewood, celebrated an anniversary Saturday- its one hundredth. Blythewood is located in Richland County now, but up until 1913, it was part of Fairfield County. It seems the residents "seceded" from Fairfield because of an argument over school districts.

The town wasn't always called Blythewood, either. It went by the name of Doko until Dr. S.W. Bookhart, founder of the Blythewood Female Academy, changed it. He didn't like the Indian name and gleaned Blythewood from a walk in the woods he described as "blithe and pretty".

Doko is believed to have been the Indian word for "watering place". And that's exactly what Blythewood was back in the late 1800's. Steam engines stopped at the Doko Depot for water. Now that passenger trains no longer run from Columbia northward through Richland, Fairfield and Chester counties, the depot at Blythewood has been closed.

Blythewood's main street is Hwy. 21; much of the traffic over this highway is now being

routed onto I-77 from north of Ridgeway on into Columbia. But far from drying up and blowing away, Blythewood's population is growing at the rate of 300 this past year. Many of the newcomers are well-to-do city dwellers seeking fresh air and space, which Blythewood has in abundance. Price of land has jumped considerably. And while I-77 is taking the travelers off the main street, its close proximity to the town may bring in more residents.

On its 100th birthday, Blythewood-ites, oldcomers and newcomers alike, celebrated with an early morning parade, square dancing, a barbecue, gospel singing and baked goods. State Senator Alex Sanders presided over a historical program at noon at the Hoffman House, a perfect example of what newcomers have done to put Blythewood on the map. The historic house was in bad shape when a former Miss South Carolina, Tootsie Dennis Brantley, and her husband rescued it, turning it into an antique gallery and law office. Mrs. Brantley is also a real estate agent.

Although several old, family businesses remain, there are some new businesses, too.

Recently a pharmacy and modern grocery market opened; the town also has a dentist and a doctor; and on Saturday the Blythe Wood Stove Company seemed to be doing a brisk business in wood-burning stoves.

What does the next hundred years hold in store for the town of Blythewood? Will the community experience a population growth spurt? Only time will tell, but the next few years should be interesting ones.



A Century Old

Blythewood, once a part of Fairfield County, celebrated its 100th anniversary as a township this past Saturday, with a parade in the morning

and other activities throughout the day. (Independent photo)