

Russell Donates \$2,000 to County's Hospital; His Second Contribution

1967



Alexander Russell, doubtless Fairfield's oldest businessman both in actual years and in length of service, recently donated \$2,000 to the Fairfield Memorial Hospital. The announcement was made by Dr. C. S. McCants, administrator, who, on behalf of the hospital board, publicly expresses appreciation to Mr. Russell for the generous contribution.

This was the local Negro mortician's second gift to the county institution. Shortly after the hospital opened in 1954, he contributed the money for a Cystoscopic Room, which contains special equipment for treating kidney ailments. A plaque on the door carries the donor's name.

Dr. McCants says the \$2,000 donation will probably be used to equip a patient's room in the new wing of the hospital, soon to be completed. Other recent gifts to the hospital include an ice-making machine, made possible by Joseph B. Elliott, Winnsboro native, now chairman of the board of York Corporation in Philadelphia, and a \$100 gift by the newly formed Winnsboro DeMolay Club. All these donations are very useful and deeply appreciated, officials declare, and assist greatly in the expensive expedient of equipping hospital

rooms, both new and old. Although the hospital staff successfully battles most infectious diseases, the addiction to giving is one malady it would like to see become a bit more contagious.

Alexander Russell, who will be 89 years old this spring, was born May 20, 1878, in what is now the Winnsboro Mills village, the son of J. W. and Elizabeth Russell. Early in life, he purchased a farm from his father, made a success of this difficult avocation and has continued to expand his interests ever since. He was married to the late Jessie DeWese, who died about a year ago.

Young Russell enrolled in the then rather ill-equipped and understaffed local schools and later attended Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte for a brief period. He worked for the Pullman Company five years before returning to Winnsboro to pursue varied business interests, where he has lived ever since.

In addition to some farm lands, he has accumulated a substantial amount of property. The Russell Funeral Home and ambulance service is operated from a building on South Vanderhorst Street and adjacent to it is a modest residence where the elderly proprietor now

advancing years, he appears to be in fairly good physical and mental condition, maintaining an interest in his various affairs. Following the biblical injunction he "takes a little wine for the stomach's sake." Russell also contributes to other charities, notably religious-connected ones, and while he was being interviewed a "parishioner" came in for a "forgotten Christmas present." He received it in the form of folding money. Assisting in the several enterprises are Alexander Gibson (at the funeral home), Heyward Banks and Ed Woodward.

An ardent baseball fan, from 1923 until travel become too difficult for him, Russell rarely missed a World Series when the games were played in New York and he frequently secured tickets for friends. His favorite clubs were the old Giants, the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Yankees.

Other holdings formerly owned by the longtime funeral director include two South Congress Street stores which currently house a cafe, poolroom and barbershop. This property was recently purchased for a reputed \$40,000 by Bert W. King, proprietor of an appliance, tv and radio center, a jewelry and furniture and the owner of other business interests.

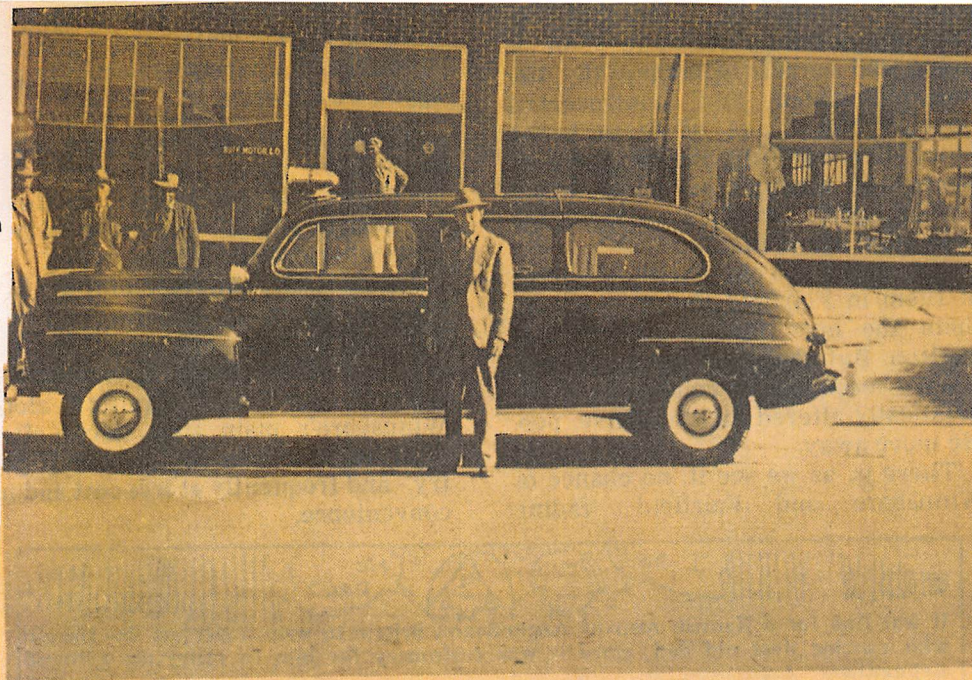
Aged Negress Earns Reward

12/17/1936

Margaret Goings, 99, Oldest Person In Fairfield County, Dies At Home Of Daughter.

Margaret Goings, (colored) who was in her ninety-ninth year, and who had lived in Winnsboro and vicinity practically her entire life, died at the home of her daughter, Katie Emerson on last Thursday about noon and was buried on Sunday. She came here as a girl of 13 from Virginia, where she and her mother were sold as slaves, and became the property of the well known Emmett Ellison who lived on a large plantation north of Winnsboro. "Ma'm Margaret" was a well known figure in Winnsboro where she was a practical nurse for a number of years. She had many friends among both races, and was known for her uprightness, honesty and integrity. She was the oldest person living in Winnsboro, and probably one of the oldest in the County. Her passing marks that of those good old time darkies whose day is nearly over. Up to several weeks ago she had retained all of her faculties, but finally the infirmities

of old age overtook her. Her passing is regretted by her many friends in Winnsboro and Fairfield.



1914
NOT SO LONG AGO — T. W. Ruff stands in front of a 1946 hearse, which Ruff Motor Company ordered for the late Alexander Russell (standing, far left). The hearse, which resembled an elongated '46 Ford car, is said to have been the only one ever ordered through a local company. Mr. Russell was owner of Russell Funeral Home, now Russell-McCutchen. The picture belongs to T. W. Ruff, Jr.

In Salisbury, N. C.

Winnipeg Man. Opera Funeral Home

BENJAMIN RUSSELL

7/24/1936

The subject of this sketch was born 14 miles north of Chester, S. C., a slave, the property of Mrs. Rebecca Nance for whom through the flow of 86 years he has treasured a respect and affection for the Christian characterized and human sympathy that was the ideal relation between Mistress and slave before emancipation.

In 1870, he began school life under Mr. Loomas, a northern white man, who taught him his abc's and under whom he learned to read and spell from the old blue back spelling book. He next went to Biddle University, Charlotte, N. C. where he remained under the instruction of the faculty, particularly Dr. Mattoon, for four years. At Biddle he was licensed to preach the Gospel.

He commenced to preach in 1875. He began teaching in the negro school at Blackstock, S. C. the same year (1875), succeeding Mr. Christopher Elder, a white man. Here he began to show his ability as an instructor of youth and the three great qualities of a servant of the Lord: namely, purity of heart, humility of nature and unselfishness of character.

The first has enabled him all through his 86 years to envision God in his greatness, his wisdom and his providence and mercy.

The second has enabled him to merit the respect of the white race as well as the veneration of the colored race.

The third has put upon him the seal of approval of both God and man and causes generation after generation of negroes to call his name blessed.

In 1882, in his 33rd year he married Mary J. Watts, aged 20, who still survives as a benign and blessing, through the half century of their useful wedded life; he as principal and she as assistant teacher in the Blackstock Colored School.

On account of age they both have retired from teaching. In appreciation of his usefulness and the high type of negro citizenship he has ever displayed the white trustees of the School District have named the School for Colored children "The Russell School." It stands just across the railroad from the White Baptist church in Blackstock, a monument to his unassuming, gentle nobleness of character as a citizen of the negro race.

The late Rev. J. A. White, Associate Reformed Presbyterian minister, made this remark of him once, "I feel no shame or hesitation in referring to him as Mr. Russell. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

Benjamin Russell and his wife live on a farm of 40 acres east of Blackstock, venerated for their age, respected for their virtues, regarded with affection by their neigh-

dark like ebony, their characters and reputations are white like snow.