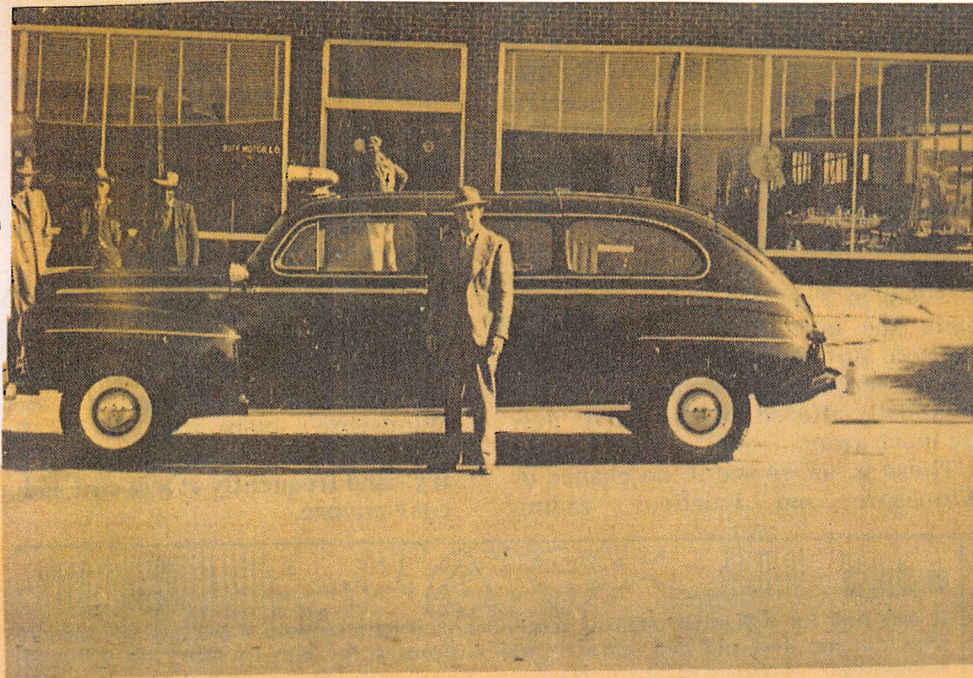




1974
NOT SO LONG AGO — T. W. Ruff stands in front of a 1946 hearse, which Ruff Motor Company ordered for the late Alexander Russell (standing, far left). The hearse, which resembled an elongated '46 Ford car, is said to have been the only one ever ordered through a local company. Mr. Russell was owner of Russell Funeral Home, now Russell-McCutchen. The picture belongs to T. W. Ruff, Jr.

In Salisbury, N. C.

Wilmington, Mass. Ocean Funeral Home

BENJAMIN RUSSELL

9/24/1936

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 charity 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.