

## Wasson Proposes Homestead Exemption State Study Shows Laurens Assessments Vary Widely

Owners of identical \$10,000 homes in Laurens County may be paying as little as \$4.20 in county taxes or as much as \$119.70, according to a recent study.

Robert C. Wasson, chairman of the State Tax Commission and a former state senator from Laurens County, had the study conducted to illustrate what it means when there is no uniform rate of assessment.

He said he does not consider Laurens County to be unusual in the state but he

points out that 28 counties already have begun or completed reassessment programs. He selected Laurens County for the study because he is familiar with the County.

Wasson's study shows that assessment on real estate in Laurens County could vary from six tenths of one per cent of market value to 17 per cent.

He said the average county assessment of real estate in South Carolina is five per cent. In Laurens County, for

example, the owners of each of the 110,000 homes would be taxed on the basis of a \$500 assessment if a five per cent ratio were used. At the rate of 70 mills (7 per cent) they would each pay \$35 a year in taxes.

It doesn't work that way in Laurens County. There are 13 separate boards of assessors in the county and the County Board of Equalization is composed of the chairmen from the district boards.

Each of the 13 boards uses building permits as the basis

for their assessments in their particular geographical area. However, there is no agency which follows up on the information provided in the building permits.

Wasson would like to see a uniform assessment rate of 10 per cent placed on all taxable property. All automobile, airplanes, boats and farm machinery will be assessed at the same 10 per cent ratio beginning in 1970.

Wasson has been quoted as saying he would like to apply the same figure for industrial

plants. All new plants are assessed at 9.5 per cent.

However, Wasson realizes the idea of doubling the assessment to 10 per cent on real estate would be a political impossibility. But he hopes to gain favor with an idea to provide a \$10,000 homestead exemption and then increase the assessment ratio to 10 per cent. The exemption would apply to all owner-occupied dwellings.

Anyone who owned and lived in a home valued at less than \$20,000 would realized

a tax reduction.

In the Laurens County example, the owners of the \$10,000 homes would pay no taxes because there would be a \$10,000 exemption. The owner of a \$20,000 home, assessed at today's average figure of five per cent, would pay 70 mills on a \$1,000 assessment — or \$70 a year in Laurens County.

Wasson's proposed exemption would reduce the base value to \$10,000. The 10 per cent assessment ratio would provide the same \$1,000 as-

essed valuation as before — and taxes would remain at \$70. On a house with an actual value of less than \$20,000 the taxes would be reduced and on a home of more than \$20,000 taxes would be increased.

Wasson says that the homestead exemption is equitable in that a home is a necessity and is non-income producing. The exemption is used in many states.

In addition to the uniform rate and the homestead exemption, Wasson believes it

is necessary that assessment be taken out of the hands of the counties in order to remove local political influences and that assessment of all property for taxation be done by the State Tax Commission.

He says a system of appeals and a system of regional or county assessors would have to be established but he believes this is the step that must be taken if the constitutional requirement of "a uniform and equal rate of assessment" is to be realized.

### Debutantes Featured

Fourteen girls will be presented tonight in the Clinton Debutante Ball. Their pictures and an article about tonight's event are on page 9 in today's Chronicle.

Also featured in today's Chronicle is a page devoted to information about the Jacobs Blocking Trophy which originated in Clinton and is being continued by William P. Jacobs III and Hugh S. Jacobs of Clinton. See page 10.

### The Lighter Side

By DONNY WILDER  
Chronicle Editor

I've learned not to try to bluff my way through names. Naturally, I learned the hard way.

Having been away from Clinton for several years, there have been times when it has been hard for me to put names with faces.

When I first returned to Clinton, a couple of times I tried to bluff my way through. Someone would say, "I'll bet you don't remember me." Most of the time I remembered but sometimes I wasn't certain but I'd still reply, "Sure, I do."

A few weeks ago a local lady cured me. We went through that routine and then she said the phrase which I had been dreading: "OK, what's my name?"

I had no earthly idea and could feel myself physically shrinking — in addition to blushing furiously.

That's the day I learned. I won't forget that lady's name any more and now, if I don't know, I flat-out admit it.

I was telling Horace Payne about that experience recently and he could sympathize with me.

He said that some time ago, he was trying to wiggle writing out a receipt for a fellow he was supposed to know, he thought he had the problem licked when he asked the customer, "How is it you spell your last name?"

The fellow replied, "S-M-I-T-H."

### Clinton Has Quiet Holiday

The Clinton area had a relatively quiet Christmas.

Police Chief B. B. Ballard reported that the holidays were "the quietest we've had in a long time."

There were seven arrests during the holidays, all on charges of drunkenness or traffic violations. There were no major automobile wrecks reported.

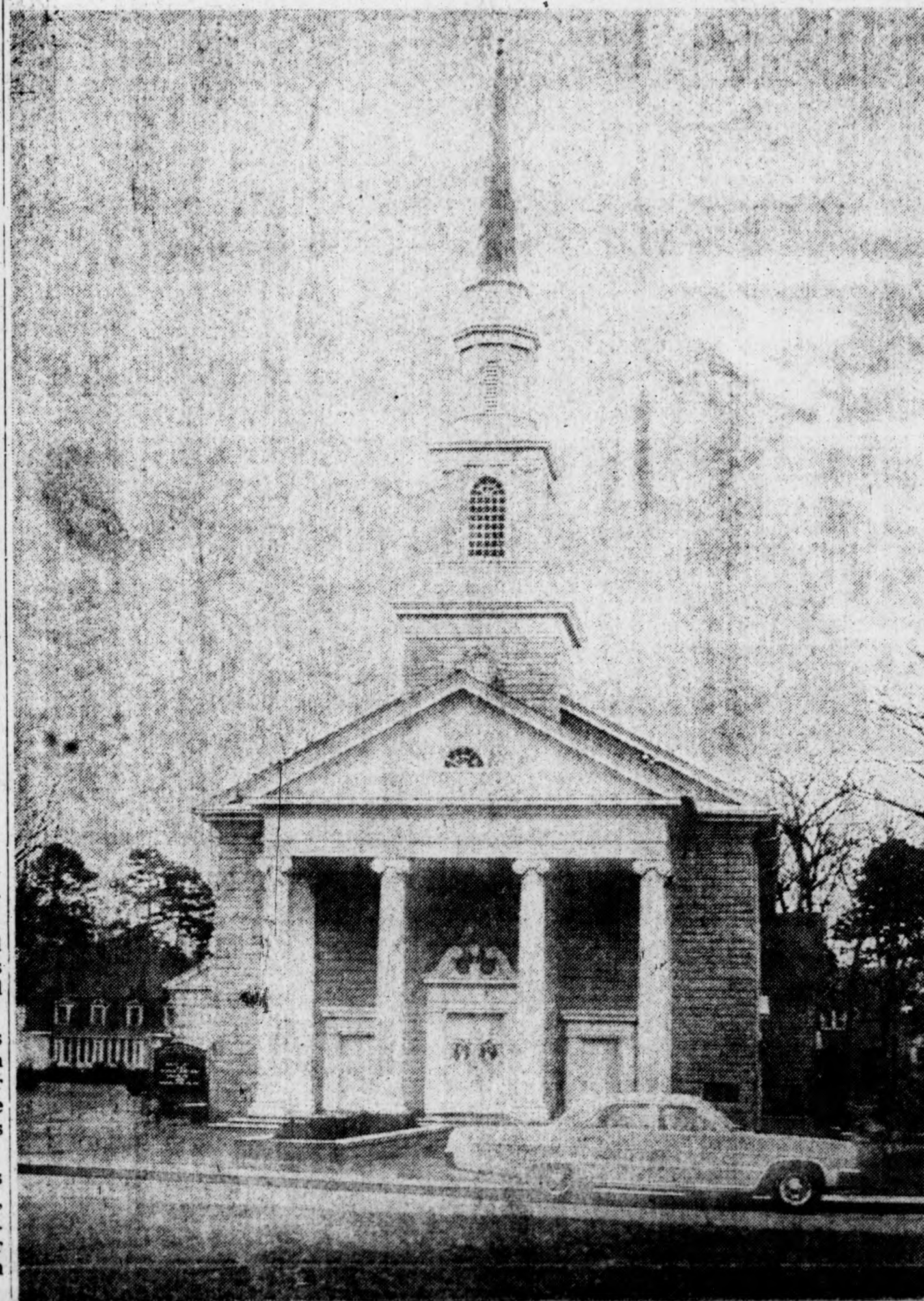
There were two fire calls over the holiday weekend, one to a grass fire on N. Adair Street and the other Whitten Village where a fan motor caught fire.

## Chapel To Be Razed On Thornwell Campus



**THORNWELL CHURCHES**—The Memorial Chapel, above, which has stood on the Thornwell Campus since 1905 is being torn down. It has been replaced by the new Hartness-Thornwell Memorial Church, shown below. The chapel took the place of the old

Thornwell Church which burned on Thanksgiving Day, 1904. The chapel shown above cost between \$9,000 and \$10,000 to build. The New Hartness-Thornwell Church cost about \$431,000. (Photos by Bill Quarles)



## Vance: Textile Prospects Brighter

Activity in the last quarter of 1967 makes prospects brighter for the South Carolina textile industry in 1968, the president of the South Carolina Textile Manufacturers Association reported today.

Robert M. Vance of Clinton, also president of Clinton Mills, said there had been a noticeable uptrend in the textile business during the fourth quarter after a sharp decline throughout most of 1967.

"Despite several uncertainties that could change our outlook drastically, we anticipate this upturn continuing in 1968," Mr. Vance said.

"Profits, which were down nearly 33 per cent in 1967, should improve, although nowhere near 1966 levels. Sales volume should be near that of 1966. The work week and employment will grow. Capital investments to maintain our level of modernization will continue, though still at a somewhat limited pace.

"Military procurement has become fairly stabilized and our inventory position has greatly improved. We expect this to continue."

Vance said it appears most of the industry's capital expansion during the coming year will be in the man-made fiber field. He cited one leading industrialist, who said he knew of \$239 million in new construction and expansion in textiles either projected or on the planning boards for 1968 in South Carolina, with \$219 million of this total in man-made fiber producing plants.

After two record years, capital investment projects announced in 1967 by South Carolina textile and related firms amounted to about \$35 million, Vance said. Many companies postponed planned capital improvement programs after it became evident the business downturn would continue through most of 1967, he said, and others held up plans pending restoration of the 7 per cent investment tax credit.

Reviewing 1967 in the South Carolina textile industry, Vance said there were these "plus" factors:

—The fifth industry-wide pay raise in less than five years came in September, offsetting much of the loss of overtime pay suffered during midyear cutbacks. As of October, the S. C. Employment Commission figures showed the state's textile payroll at a rate of more than \$710 million annually, compared to \$679 million in December 1966.

—Total textile employment was 148,900 as of October, 200 above the total last December and 3,100 above April's low point. Vance noted that more than 15 per cent of South Carolina textile employees now are Negroes. He said that during 1967 the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission singled out for praise the South Carolina textile industry for its success in providing job opportunities for Negroes.



**PURPLE HEART**—Mrs. Louise English Blackwell receives a posthumous Purple Heart award for her son who was killed Nov. 19 in combat in Vietnam. Roy James (Jimmy) Blackwell Jr. was killed during the

21-day battle at Hill 875. Presenting the medal is Major Robert H. Mackie of the Presbyterian College ROTC staff. The presentation took place at the Blackwell home on Sloan Street. (Photo by Bill Quarles)

## Bedridden Young Man Keeps In Touch Via Radio

By BILL QUARLES

A non-drinking, bedridden young man has accepted the Alcoholic Anonymous credo as his own:

"God give me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference."

Ed Wellmaker, 24, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Wellmaker of Teakwood Drive, has used that as a basis for a sunny disposition and hungry interest in life despite being bedridden.

Ed was born with a spinal bifida (open spine). Until he was 12 years old, he was able to get around in a wheel chair but his joints stiffened and for the past 12 years, he has been confined to bed.

His father is a night supervisor at Clinton Cotton Mill. The Wellmakers have been living in Clinton since Oct. 25 of last year.

Better known as KMM-2222, Ed keeps in touch with the outside world through his Cobra Citizens Band radio. "I must admit that sometimes I get very lonely, but I am always able to find someone to talk with," said Ed. On many occasions while living in Greenville, Ed played the role of a middle man as he relayed messages from construction workers, who were operating small radio units, to their home office.

Ed has correspondence with one operator in Antigua, an island in the West Indies; and with another in Liberia. Ed is usually in touch with all local operators plus all those passing through.

He has many other interests. He plays the ukulele, the electric organ, and sings, all in a prone position, of course. He also is learning how to play the guitar through an educational television program. Ed says that there is some good in all music, but



**ED WELLMAKER . . . At Radio Controls**

he favors gospel and folk music.

Ed who has a large vocabulary and a very keen mind, has only eight years of formal education from a private

### S. C. Hearing Slated Jan. 12

The annual public hearing of the South Carolina Congressional delegation has been scheduled for Friday, January 12, Congressman John L. McMillian, Chairman of the delegation announced today.

The hearing will be held in the Senate Chamber of the State Capitol in Columbia and will begin at 10:00 a.m.

Anyone desiring to appear should contact Congressman Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn, Secretary of the delegation at 124 Federal Building, Greenwood.

Both U. S. Senators and all six Members of the House of Representatives are expected to attend.

### County Tax Deadline Monday

Monday is the deadline for payment of Laurens County taxes without penalty.

Effective Jan. 1, a one per cent penalty is scheduled to go into effect.

On Feb. 1, the penalty is increased to two per cent of the tax bill and on March 1, it goes to 3 per cent.