

FIRST SAND CLAY ROAD.

Supervisor Watson Tells How He Was Indicted for Building the First Road in Marion County. I claim the unique honor of being the first man in South Carolina and, I believe, the first man in the world, to build a sand-clay road, for which service I was indicted in the criminal court, tried and convicted. The people whom it served Marion county, S. C., twenty years ago did not think highly of my road and were slow to accept it. Today Marion county has bonded itself for \$100,000 to build sand-clay roads. The United States government is sending its experts all over the nation, teaching the people how to build cheap sand-clay roads. The method is destined to prevail all over the country. It was only ten years ago that the government got on to the advantages of the earth road and at that time the leading road authorities of the country gave it as their opinion that work on earth roads was worthless and was money thrown away. All that is away. All that is changed. But, to my experiences as a pioneer.

More than twenty years ago I built the first sand-clay road in Marion county, S. C. It was called sand-clay because I dug up the clay and hauled sand to build the first road of this kind in the county. The road was built on a very boggy place which was almost impassable. It was kept just barely passable by digging long ditches, owing to the lay of the land, had to be very long, emptying into a creek a considerable distance away. The road was then corduroyed with rails, poles and puncheons, with turf, mud and whatever could be found packed in between. It was noted as the worst piece of road in Marion county, hardest to keep up and most unsatisfactory all round. In the campaign before the election I had started on every stump in the county that I could build a good sand-clay road wherever I could get a good quality of sand and clay. I had discovered the method myself and felt sure that it would work anywhere, because it was sound in principle.

The election came off and I won. This particular bad stretch of road was selected for the trial and the sand-clay method, and a worse subject for treatment could not have been found in the world. It was considered an "impassable" place and there was much open scoffing and skepticism. I tackled this road, however, confident that I would win out and began by pulling out all the poles, rails and puncheons and other corduroy material. Then, by throwing up clay from the sides of the road I got the road in shape, properly, and began hauling sand to put over the clay. I worked it in and then hauled still more, thus raising the road high in the middle. The foundation, owing to the boggy condition of the locality, was a wet, spring clay. When the first rain came trouble came right along with it, and world's of it. My road from one end to the other became a perfect mortar bed. The road had been well nigh impassable before and it was completely so now.

Then came the indictment. The citizens who had the misfortune to be compelled to travel that road were up in arms. A more indignant set of people never appealed to the courts of South Carolina for redress. The grand jury met and returned a true bill against me, charging that by improper methods of road building that I had destroyed one of the public highways of the county, "against the peace and dignity of the State and the statute therein made and provided." My case came on and everything went against me. The judgment of the court was that I must put the road back like it was before and it was so ordered. In the opinion of the court, it was best to choose the lesser of the two evils. The old road was bad and the new one was much worse. Another feature of the judgment of the court was that I should put the road back as I found it at my own expense.

But I never did a thing to that road. Fair weather came and it dried off and was in fine condition. There has been no necessity to do anything to it since and I have a photograph of it now showing it to be in fine condition after twenty years of continuous service. Just before another court came round the people petitioned the court to not have the road I had built changed and to allow me to make another demonstration of the same kind. In their petition they stated that the road was in better shape than it had been before. The judge in granting the petition, said that I was the first man to be brought before him for working on the road, though many had been brought before him for not working the road and he said that I should certainly be allowed to build other roads of the same kind.

Understand, that I did not pitch in and do this road building along such new and radical lines off-hand. It had all been carefully planned and worked out and I had experimented carefully for years. I knew what I was about and even when things seemed to be breaking against me, I never lost faith in the method. I first noticed the effects of combining sand and clay in building a mill dam and I followed it up until I was certain that the system would make good in road-building. I had no precedents to guide me and every road-building authority in the land was against me, and I had to strike out alone.

It may well be believed that the system created a commotion in Marion county. The event will go down in history as one of the liveliest periods in the country's history. Friends, relative, members of the same family, societies and churches were divided on the question. Some thought that I was crazy and said so openly. Others said that I was born fifty years ahead of my time and a few others thought my system practical and the thing to adopt. The fight was long and harassing. I left the county and the report got out that I had been run out of the county because of my heretical road views. Since that time, however, the value of the

sand-clay road being fully demonstrated, my friends in Marion county have insisted on my coming back to the county about every four years to do other demonstration work, until Marion county now reads the State in road building as a bond issue of \$100,000 has been voted to continue the building of sand-clay roads, the roads that I wanted to build for their twenty years ago.

Since I did this pioneer work the United States government has sent out to every section of civilized world experts to learn the secrets of road building employed by the oldest and wisest countries in the world and to find a practical method of road building. Uncle Sam did not look for information from "away down South in Dixie," but it was here that he found it after many years' search. It has been but one decade since the discovery was made and the growth of the idea has been astounding. I have now in my possession bulletins of the road department of Agriculture stating that work on earth roads was work thrown away and was entirely useless. These bulletins go on to tell how to build macadam road, corduroy roads with rails, poles and puncheons, the same kind of road that I had ordered thrown away twenty years before. Now the United States Office of Public Roads is teaching people everywhere how to build good roads and sand-clay roads are coming in for the greater part of their attention.

In Richland county, S. C., the county in which is situated Columbia, the capital of the State, the people caught the sand-clay idea about ten years ago and they have done fine work. They had the advantage of a number of other counties in that they had an immense revenue from eight or ten dispensaries and had the use of convicts on the road as well. They have been doing some really fine work. The adjoining counties, Marlboro, Darlington and Florence, and Robeson county, N. C., caught on and went to work. These counties have made wonderful success of it.

In this article I have tried to state the facts plainly and simply so that the reader might have an idea of how the sand-clay system got its start and what bitter opposition it met with. I want to publish the whole story in a much fuller form after awhile, giving the origin of the system, the story of my fight for it, the orders of the court, judgments, etc., that enlivened things in Marion county twenty years ago.

The sand-clay road is here to stay. It is a fact that sand and clay and water are the worst enemies that a good road has to fight, when they are not mixed in proportion. When properly mixed and shaped, they make the best road in the world. It is the only road in the world that will not wear out. The more you use a sand-clay road the better it gets. Of the agencies that go to make it water is the most important and the most essential. You can make a road with mud clay and water. In short, you can leave out any other of the ingredients named and make a road, but you cannot leave out water. Moisture you must have, in order to properly combine the mass. For this reason put nothing in the road that will interfere with the work of the water. It is my opinion that the water, where possible, had best come from beneath the road for various reasons too numerous to mention here. I know that this is a feature of road building in which other road builders and I do not agree. The highest authorities, in fact, disagree with me, but I feel sure that I can prove what I say, and will stick to my assertion that the most important feature is the control of the moisture. I venture the assertion that one half of the funds used in road building is thrown away by unnecessary ditching along the sides of the roads.

The special demonstration which got me into so much trouble was done to show this very point—to prove that it could be done without expensive draining and side ditches. Now, if this same material that has been forming a good road for twenty years over this Marion county bog had been on a sand hill or in a place, the materials would have been dissolved, cut up and turned to dust long ago because of the lack of moisture necessary to hold it together. The proportions put in that special stretch of road would make a good road anywhere else. It can be readily seen, therefore, that the proportion of the various materials that go to make the road must be varied according to the amount of water that may be present. Sometime it is proper and practical to drain, for instance, of the sand is scarce and drainage easy. The man who says that he can build a good road in certain set proportions without knowing the condition of the ground over which the road is to be built and without knowing the proportion of sand, clay and water already in the soil simply does not know what he is talking about. Put him down as a fakir. He must know just what sort of top service he is dealing with and all about the sub-grade and foundation before he can form a correct opinion as to the amount of materials needed to form a good road. If he builds a good road by any other method he does it by blind luck.

AUTO KILLS TWO.
Miss Bowman, of Sumter and B. W. Bettis, of Trenton, Die In Auto Smash.
Hendersonville, N. C., July 13—As the result of a deplorable accident, an automobile smash-up, occurring just after midnight on the Asheville road, about two miles out of Hendersonville, two young people, Miss Lenie Bowman, of Sumter, S. C., and Mr. Ben W. Bettis, of Trenton, S. C., are dead, and Miss Mabel Bowman, sister of one of the victims, lies seriously injured in Hendersonville.

The accident occurred while a party of eight, among which was Mrs. P. G. Bowman, mother of the dead girl, was returning from a dance at the Lakeview Hotel, in the touring car of Mr. Bettis. The young owner was driving at the time when for some unknown reason, the car swerved, skidded on the

muddy clay, and went crushing down an eight-foot embankment.

Young Bettis was killed by a blow across the back from the front seat under which he was pinned, and Miss Lenie Bowman was crushed under the rolling machine. Her sister was also badly injured. Mrs. Bowman was pinned under the rear of the car, which had to be raised prior to her removal. The remaining members of the party escaped with minor cuts and bruises.

The bodies of the two young victims were shipped to their respective homes this morning from Hendersonville. The wife of Dr. George Mood, of Charleston, was a sister of young Bettis.

There were eight people in the car taking a ride while returning from Lakeview Hotel, after the dance. Misses Mabel and Lenie Bowman, with B. W. Bettis, occupied the front seat. Those in the back seat were: Mrs. P. G. Bowman, Miss Mary Pitts, W. Hammond Bowman and Miss Jennette Henry, of Sumter; Miss Rosa Sharfson, of Allendale. Coming to the steep fill on the newly built Asheville-Hendersonville highway, the driver saw a vehicle in front and gave room, going to the right it is said. The loose dirt covered with the heavy machine, and before he could turn the car tumbled catching the occupants under it.



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9 37	10 22		McColl		6 49	5 34
10 02	10 47		Chlo		6 25	5 10
10 25	11 10		Minturn		6 00	4 45
10 41	11 26		Little Rock		5 44	4 29
10 55	11 40		Dillon		5 30	4 15
11 20	12 05		Floydale		5 05	3 50
11 55	12 40		Mullins		4 30	3 15
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