ANTE UP, MISTER PRESIDENT:
THE IMPACT OF THE NEW DEAL IN JACKSON COUNTY

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by

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ABSTRACT

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The advent of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal in 1933 found Jackson County suffering in ways similar to those in other rural areas of the nation. Overproduction had lowered farm prices to levels below cost; and the absence of capital in the county prevented local industrial growth. Real per capita income in Jackson County had been low before the Depression, and the county's dependence on agricultural cash crops and natural resources used in industry made avoiding the Depression impossible. Further, runs on the larger banks in Asheville in 1930 ignited fears that all banks were insolvent and teetered on closing. Political conservatives received most of the blame for the crisis, and in Jackson County the sense of helplessness horrified officeholders, both Republican and Democrat. The trade school, the Sylva Collegiate Institute, failed to weather the crisis. Meanwhile, more than one-third of the working population in the county had lost jobs, and most of those with jobs were on reduced pay. Even earnings of state employees and officials were cut by ten to thirty percent depending upon the position, but all suffered some loss. Politically and socially, the Depression bred strife and discontent; and it is against this backdrop that the impact of New Deal policies on Jackson County should be measured.

Still, the clear impact of New Deal programs in Jackson County cannot be easily determined. The question of the legacy of the New Deal in Jackson County remains unanswered. Perhaps the isolation of the county in the midst of the Blue Ridge Mountains as well as the independent nature of its people led to resistance to the reforms of the New Deal. Possibly, the people molded the New Deal to their needs as many agricultural and industrial recovery programs vested power in the local people. Finally, local leaders hindered some programs such as public welfare because state and local taxes were required to initiate some of these, and as a result, while outwardly they heralded the program, they secretly fought it.

This thesis will consider the New Deal's impact upon the economy, political structure, and social views of Jackson County from the introduction of the program in 1933 to the nation's entry into World War II. The span of years from 1933 to 1941 also allows for the equal attention to the governorships of John Christoph Blucher Ehringhaus and Clyde R. Hoey. Though Jackson County represents a relatively small area, the New Deal influenced the county in three distinct ways depending on the location: Cherokee Reservation, the college area at Cullowhee, and the remainder of the county. Limitations and implementation at the local level also pose interesting questions as to how the New Deal was received by the people. Furthermore, the personal popularity of President Roosevelt served to assist in implementing the program, but one must wonder if the New Deal detracted from his popularity. Also, one must examine how party machines employed the program to increase their own power.

For Jackson County farmers, the New Deal gradually raised market prices and increased credit. Eventually, businesses received credit assistance; and public works projects brought employment to the area. For the first time, the prospect of security for the disadvantaged and poor was obtained; and young people were provided a way to

explore the country through work programs which moved them from their home communities to other states where work projects were located. In summation, the goal of this paper is to determine what if any significant impact the New Deal made upon Jackson County economically, politically, and/or socially.

CHAPTER 1

THE GREAT DEPRESSION: A COUNTY IN THE CRUCIBLE

Jackson County, North Carolina presents a puzzle to individuals studying the Great Depression and the New Deal. Unlike most of North Carolina and the rest of the United States, Jackson County exhibited signs of progress and growth even during the harshest days of the Depression. Building construction increased steadily throughout the Depression and the New Deal, and the infrastructure of roads and highways expanded across the county. Farmers modernized their agriculture practices and became more prosperous while county industry focused less on exploitation of raw materials and more on finished products like paper. Other western North Carolina counties failed to enjoy such progress. Indeed, most of North Carolina suffered greatly through the Depression and the New Deal because the economy of the state east of the mountains depended primarily upon such price-depressed crops as cotton, tobacco, and related industries.

Jackson County indeed fared better than much of the state during the Depression and New Deal, but why? New Deal policies touched the lives of the county's citizens, but did these policies significantly change the way people lived? Anthony J. Badger, a professor of history at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in England, in both North Carolina and the New Deal and Prosperity Road: The New Deal, Tobacco, and North Carolina depicts the New Deal as a series of ambiguous policies by which the federal government imposed itself upon new areas of North Carolina life. In comparison, Douglas Abrams in Conservative Constraints: North Carolina and the New Deal illustrates New Deal policies in terms of the limitations placed upon them by North

Carolina conservatives and the cloudiness created by such constraints. Yet, neither gives any heed to North Carolina west of Asheville.

The History of Jackson County provides an overview of life during both the Depression and the New Deal. However, it fails to address how New Deal policies impacted the county. On the other hand, Bjorn Ahlin's Social and Economic Conditions in Jackson County During the Depression covers in depth life during the Depression with the New Deal addressed as a part of the whole. This work presents a fair description of the period, but it neglects to answer the key questions of what makes Jackson County in the Depression a worthy topic and what effect the New Deal produced. Other secondary sources have alluded to the county during the New Deal but have not sought to further the topic nor do they answer the question of how the New Deal brought change to the county.

Therefore, this paper seeks to address these questions through comparing the New Deal era to the decade preceding it. Using the middle to latter portion of the 1920s to the inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 as a base, change created by New Deal policy can be measured; and from this data comparisons with other time periods and regions can be made. Furthermore, this paper examines the influence of the New Deal topically in these areas: agriculture, business and industry, education, politics, and social institutions.

The Roaring Twenties, a period that brought great prosperity and change to much of the United States, merely purred in Jackson County, in the mountain region of North Carolina. The isolation of the county served as a barrier against the change occurring outside the mountains of western North Carolina, and led numerous scholars to believe census statistics that appeared to confirm that this isolation inhibited the trafficking of ideas, technology, and commodities. In comparison to many urban areas in both North Carolina and the nation as a whole, the county clearly lagged; but in competition with comparably-sized towns, Sylva, the county seat of Jackson County, fared well in spite of

its isolation.[1] People in the county exhibited a strong sense of independence though often curbed by a dose of conservatism.

The county itself included two incorporated towns, Sylva and Dillsboro. It possessed four primary, improved highway arteries and two railroads, the Southern and the Tuckaseigee and Southeastern Railroads. Numerous other roads stretched across the county, but these ranged from packed clay roads to cowpaths- both nearly impassable during bad weather. Forests covered almost eighty percent of the mountainous terrain while still leaving an abundance of fertile valleys for agriculture. Though not particularly hospitable to industry or commercial traffic, the land provided ample resources for comfortable living.[2]

The economic boom of the mid-1920s brought considerable change to the county. This decade witnessed the arrival of the first automobile in the county. Its breakdown in a bog failed to impede its appeal for the people of the county. Indeed, it actually influenced local people to consider the need for greater road improvements. This decade also produced the first electric network and subsequently electric lights, radio, and refrigeration though initially only businesses and about two dozen homes possessed this convenience. Technologies abounded. Air conditioning, gas filling stations, battery radios, and even electric egg-hatching machines made their debuts.[3]

Radio tied the county to the events of the world. The citizens of Jackson County tuned into radio programs from across the United States. By 1930 news items like election results were broadcast instantly via radio.[4] Keeping pace with radio, local theatres introduced a myriad of advancements such as air conditioned buildings and talking movies, which put Sylva on equal or better terms with Asheville, the largest city in the region. Economically and technologically, Jackson County boomed with activity.

Demands for consumer goods rose while terms like "store-bought" came to be status symbols of economic prosperity. Isolation possibly hindered change, but change came to the county nonetheless.[5]

On the other hand, approximately seventy percent of the population in Jackson County still relied upon agriculture for their livelihood. In 1930 only about seven percent of the 17,519 persons recorded in the Census listed industry as their occupation. The agriculture of western North Carolina did not resemble the large farms of the eastern part of the state. Whereas the Piedmont and Coastal regions focused on cash crops of cotton and tobacco, Jackson County farms generally produced corn, hay, and potatoes- none of which produced high profit margins. For the most part, the commercial agricultural endeavors of county farmers were unprofitable.[6] While much of the state enjoyed the benefits of booming tobacco and cotton markets, Jackson County failed to enjoy the prosperity.

With this in mind, farm leaders and the county commissioners hired an agriculture advising agent, C.W. Tilson, in 1925. Tilson immediately took stock of the county's problems and promoted crop diversification and effective farming methods as a cure to the ailing agricultural economy in the county. First, he recognized that the county's small farms could not compete with the larger ones in the Piedmont in the production of tobacco or cotton. The answer, asserted Tilson, lay in producing diverse secondary and multiple crops. For instance, if one produced tobacco or corn as a primary crop, then a secondary crop of fruit, tomatoes, poultry, cabbage, peanuts or beans should be raised to augment the primary cash crop. Next, he suggested that farmers produce their own livestock feed and their own seed grains; for many farmers raised only a primary crop and later traded for seed and livestock feed often at a loss (trade proved more expensive than cash, but farmers rarely had cash). Tilson admonished that farmers could earn a greater

profit if they would only minimize their costs, and he advocated self-reliance to achieve this objective. Finally, he promoted the concept of plot gardens to provide farmers with a supplementary food source. In addition, farmers could barter the surplus from such gardens to meet other needs around the farm. Though the implementation of these plans required time and the trust of local farmers, the first strides towards greater agricultural productivity in Jackson County had been made before the autumn of 1926.[7]

Furthermore, Jackson County experienced much success through crop diversification particularly with tomatoes and cabbage. Tomato farming in north Jackson County valleys created some profits and laid the foundation for later success. Cabbage crops immediately proved successful to Carol Jamison in the Glenville area and later to many farmers in the Hamburg area adjacent to Glenville. He planted one acre of Reed Strain Danish cabbage which yielded over forty-three thousand pounds of top-grade cabbage (Some argued and continue to argue that Hamburg cabbage was the finest grown anywhere). Later, the Hamburg-Glenville areas planted nearly three hundred acres of cabbage that secured top prices and good profits throughout the Depression.[8]

With the decline in prices of cash crops during the latter years of the 1920s, county government officials believed agricultural goals needed revisions to double the current agricultural income of the county. Again, C.W. Tilson emphasized production of vegetables and crop diversity. He also recommended producing complementary agriculture products such as poultry and corn or cattle and soy beans. By 1930 the concept of "balanced farming" had taken hold and had greatly improved productivity.[9]

Rising prices of livestock products spurred Tilson to urge the county commissioners to invest in twenty registered Jersey bulls to improve the dairy stock of the county, and he pressed them to take measures to maintain livestock of the highest quality. He suggested first that farmers sell their scrub cattle and purchase only registered stock.

Tilson also continued importing registered Jersey cows and bulls for the county.[10] Later, he organized the upgrading of beef cattle production in the county and helped secure quality stock for farmers interested in producing beef cattle. In addition, Tilson recommended that farmers with less grazing area raise sheep; and by 1930 lamb and mutton production numbered among the numerous agricultural endeavors of the county.[11] The improvents in the agriculture of the county may not best be measured in dollars and cents but rather through the successes of small farmers such as Will Lewis. A Savannah community farmer, Lewis began his farm in 1926 under the guidance of the county agent with one cow and a small flock of White Leghorn laying hens. Through his following of proven practices, his farm increased to over a hundred laying hens, five milk cows, and two brood sows. He effectively manipulated his small farm to produce all of the necessary feed for livestock while producing legumes and cover crops to complement his primary crop of corn. Furthermore, Will Lewis earned additional income from the sale of cream, eggs, and occasional fryers a portion of which he reinvested in expanding his farm.[12]

Another example illustrating the success of balanced farming and diversification can be seen through the statement of Lloyd Wilkes Cowan of the East Fork community concerning farming in the early 1930s: "Most everyone had the basics of a family livelihood in that they owned a garden, a milk cow, a work horse or steer, hogs, chickens, and other desired farm animals that helped produce food for the table."[13] Crop and livestock diversification would later become the foundation of North Carolina's Governor O. Max Gardner during the first years of the Depression, and this description of the Cowans' farm personifies Governor Gardner's vision of self-sufficient agriculture and also reveals the impact of Tilson's plan on even isolated communities.

Then just as county agriculture realized the first fruits of its progressive efforts, the stock market crashed. Initially, farmers paid little heed to the calamity. Most

continued to anticipate a banner year in 1930, and just two days following the stock market crisis when Sylva held its annual Jackson County Livestock and Poultry Show, farmers and interested people from Macon, Swain, and Haywood Counties joined those from Jackson County to celebrate the largest show to date. Nearly a hundred booths, displays, and exhibits depicted modern farming implements and techniques as well as showcase prize-winning livestock. Merchants also displayed their wares and provided visitors with a good time by awarding prizes for games of chance and various types of races. All in all, the success of the event bred optimism for future agricultural endeavors.[14]

Auguries for 1930 promised growth and prosperity for Jackson County farmers. The 4-H Club won first prize, and B.H. Cathey and H.P. Cathey won twenty-one ribbons in poultry competitions at the North Carolina State Fair.[15] Swain, Cherokee, and Jackson counties created the Smoky Mountain Mutual Exchange, a cooperative aimed at obtaining the best prices for agricultural products. Primarily, the cooperative controlled pricing through reducing competition and organizing distribution from Murphy to Asheville to maximize profits. It operated the "Poultry Car" which ran weekly buying and selling of poultry at pre-set prices which guaranteed the farmer the best margin of profit.[16] Throughout 1930 steady price increases in the county's main crops made it a profitable year for many farmers.

Still, the drastic drop in rated agriculture commodities across the state cast a shadow on such prosperity. From 1926 to 1930 flue-cured tobacco dropped from over twenty cents a pound to about twelve cents. Likewise, cotton prices suffered over a thirty-three percent loss in that time frame.[17] These drops precipitated a widespread decline in prices for many agricultural products and heightened the fear of economic collapse in much of the state, and yet, this fear failed to cross over Balsam Gap into

Jackson County. The failure of cash crops such as tobacco, corn, and wheat to prove profitable during the early Twenties had pushed the county's farmers to embrace crop diversification prior to the Depression. When the Extension Department of the State Department of Agriculture urged increased production of staple food crops, beef stock, and dairy products as 1930 waxed old, Jackson County had already moved toward greater production of such agricultural products. Thus, C.W. Tilson's progressive farm management had served to prepare the county as economic hardship worsened.[18]

As businesses encountered the first ripples of the stock market crash and the subsequent depression, more and more people sought their livelihood from the soil. Those fortunate enough to own property raised potatoes, corn, and beans while those without property sought employment tending and harvesting crops. Indeed, many recalled hoeing crops all day for twenty-five cents. Entire families often participated with older, supervisory males receiving considerably more pay than the young men and boys. Women usually received the same wages as young men though in some instances they received the same as supervisory males. Girls generally managed the household and tended younger siblings while the family labored, and when they labored with the family, they received wages compartable to that of the boys. Of course, parents usually received the wages of the boys and girls, and often the parents would hire out the services of the family as a whole without regard to individual wages. Again, Tilson's early sponsorship of plot gardens and crop diversity allowed farmers the prosperity to hire additional workers and to offer assistance to the less fortunate.[19]

In Glenville after the onset of the Depression, declining cabbage prices leveled at a reasonably high price. Bumper crops of the Hamburg cabbage proved a blessing for many in the county in that cabbage kept well through the winter; and the surplus often made it into the pots of the needy. Organization was the key. The cabbage growers, for

example, formed the Hamburg Cabbage Growers Exchange which enabled member growers equitable opportunities to market their cabbage at higher rates without fear of price gouging.[20]

Others such as Ralph Hunter utilized favorable conditions created by the Depression, and assistance from the Extension Department of the State Department of Agriculture, to capitalize a venture in beef cattle farming. With two calves, a heifer, and a bull of a superior bloodline, Domino Hereford, he not only established the core of his successful beef cattle farm but also a profitable breeding farm for registered beef cattle stock. Earlier county policies that had eliminated scrub cattle improved the quality of beef production. Much of the county still employed open-grazing policies which allowed herds to roam over large areas before being rounded up in the autumn, and scrub cattle often ruined the stock by producing mongrel mixtures of dairy and beef cattle. These combinations produced smaller cattle with less quality meat. Elimination of scrubs meant more profit for cattle farmers and ensured that they would flourish throughout the Depression.[21]

In his years as governor, O. Max Gardner repeatedly encouraged communities to raise more food at home; and though Jackson County heeded his proposals and similar ones from its county agent, farmers still spent more on food and farming necessities than they earned through rated agriculture commodities. Governor Gardner responded to this state-wide problem with his "Live-at-Home" program, which reinforced C.W. Tilson's concept of self-sufficiency on the farm and in the home. Both programs advocated growing vegetables that could be effectively canned, dried, or stored for winter use and raising a variety of livestock for milk, ham, eggs, and meat. C.W. Tilson believed that such a regimen would help farmers more than direct, short-term government assistance. He also insisted that farmers raise more grain, especially corn, since the price increases of

both wheat and corn had improved profitability throughout 1930.[22] Farmers in the county grasped the potential benefits from Tilson's plan and adhered to its tenets.

Governor O. Max Gardner proclaimed February 18-25, 1930, "Live-at-Home Week" with state sponsored essay and oratory contests. Live-at-Home circuit speakers canvassed the county promoting self-sufficiency and outlining plans by which one tenth of an acre per person could produce enough food to insure a nutritious diet throughout the year. In addition, Pauline Smith, of the Governor's Staff on Relief, extolled the significance of proper canning and preserving techniques.[23] In addition, agents from the Department of Agriculture developed long-term agriculture plans for the county, and on December 14, 1931, farmers, agents, and local leaders choreographed the first five year plan for the progress of agriculture in Western North Carolina. Representatives of Jackson County heard the Minnesota Plan, which advocated the education of the community and businesses about the benefits of cooperating with the farmer. Furthermore, the Minnesota Plan stressed cooperation among farmers to reduce costs of marketing and distribution as well as to unify the development of farming. In particular, it unified farmers behind a set of goals that would benefit all farmers, such as road improvements that enabled them to transport commodities more easily.[24] For an isolated western county, such efforts by the governor seemed monumental and greatly enhanced the previous efforts of the county to improve agriculture.

In spite of its location, Jackson County did not exist in a vacuum. The events of the nation and world impacted on it in a manner similar to the rest of the country. Both agriculture and industry in the county extended into neighboring counties and often into Tennessee, Georgia, and South Carolina. However, whereas the farming community of Jackson County had unknowingly prepared against poor economic times by enacting progressive reforms during the late Twenties, business and industry in the county clearly

lagged. Most of the county's industry relied upon the acquisition of natural resources such as lumber and mineral ores. In spite of the apparent lag, more of the population depended upon county industries for their primary source of income. Building construction in the county's urban areas boomed throughout the decade. Still, Jackson County's business and industrial community seemed less prepared for the Depression because of its dependence upon trafficking raw materials rather than finished products.

The stock market crash in October of 1929 did not bring immediate depression to the county. Local newspapers mentioned nothing of the Depression until December 16, 1930: "At this period of depression, so many are unfortunate and in need, a large contribution should be made up at this time." Though earlier frontpage headlines of The Ruralite claimed "Fourteen Banks Close Doors" in Western North Carolina, the major portion of the article commented on the stability of Jackson County's banking and the absence of uneasiness among county depositors. Indeed, the Jackson County Bank ran a full page advertisement depicting amounts of cash on hand and the actual increase of assets and deposits in the preceding week.[25] Only a few merchants changed normal operation or credit policies, and one of these, J.P. Haskett, had done this intermittantly since 1926, as can be seen in his advertisements reminding customers of his no credit policy. In fact, after running ads throughout 1929 that heralded his policy of no credit, ads which either offered credit or made no mention of credit ran for most of 1930 until September when he again ran ads warning customers of his cash policy.[26] Thus, the return of credit actually heralds the restoration of faith in local merchants in the economy.

In addition, the construction of roads between Sylva and Cullowhee as well as between Sylva and Bryson City had lessened the amount of traffic flowing through Sylva. As 1930 waned, merchants recognized a business slowdown but attributed it to the construction of these highways.[27] They believed that business would return to normal

after the completion of highway construction, and the local newspapers still rarely mentioned the Depression. People in general thought the following year would return the economic growth of previous years.

Some included Jackson County's economy with that of the rest of the state: "North Carolina was affected by the Depression. Its economy just sagged a little more."[28] The Depression spared North Carolina some of its worst effects like the severe crop losses in the western states due to a prolonged drought. North Carolina, unlike some Southern states, did not depend solely on a single cash crop such as cotton, and the growing industry of the state also weakened the effects of the Depression. North Carolina's already low per capita income dropped during the Depression, but it decreased at a lower rate than in any other state. Thus, according to Anthony J. Badger, North Carolinians being accustomed to a sluggish economy weathered the Depression better than the populations in most other states.[29]

In contrast to the rest of North Carolina, from 1925 through the end of 1930, Jackson County experienced an economic boom. Both rural and urban building construction flourished.[30] Public works also increased dramatically with new road construction projects and sewer and water system development.[31] This period also witnessed the creation of the county's first hospital, which was located in Sylva.[32]

Illegal distilling of bootleg whiskey probably led all county industries. Jackson County was the hub of bootlegging activities between Georgia, Tennessee, and South Carolina as well as from the foothills of North Carolina to the West.[33] One man recollected that his father distilled thousands of gallons of liquor a year, and the local newspapers report numerous vehicles and stills seized in raids by revenue agents.[34] Indeed, local bootlegging proved so profitable that numerous stills found in the county were made entirely of copper (Copper stills produced a finer grade of alcohol, hence it was much more expensive).

Finally, both the Jackson County Bank and the Tuckaseegee Bank prospered during the latter 1920s.[35] Each bank ran advertisements in the county newspapers assuring the public of the financial stability of the establishment and the wisdom of saving money during both the prosperity of the middle Twenties and the beginning of the Depression. These advertisements also often included a summary of assets and liabilities which revealed steady growth throughout the 1920s and most of 1930.

While the economy of Jackson County boomed during the Twenties, North Carolina's slowed. Tobacco prices declined, and the expansion of cotton production in Texas and Oklahoma glutted the market and forced its price down. Tobacco and textile industries initially enjoyed the lower cost of raw product, but whereas tobacco demand reached increasingly higher levels beyond production rates, textile manufacturing exceeded the demand. The economy of Jackson County fortunately depended upon neither tobacco nor textiles and was thus able to avoid much of the distress felt by much of the state.

In addition, bank failures occurred with alarming frequency even in western North Carolina. Between November 18-25, 1930, fourteen banks across western North Carolina closed their doors including the three largest of four banks in Hendersonville. Asheville also experienced runs on banks by a panicked populace. The situation in Asheville grew so serious that the mayor attempted to bolster the banks with public monies, and he later committed suicide after many banks collapsed in spite of his efforts.[36] Governor O. Max Gardner's wife best revealed the atmosphere of the Depression: "All depressed about rumours of the Commercial Bank here closing tomorrow.... Times are tragic.... The bank closed as predicted- thousands lost their all. Runs being made on two other banks. City in turmoil."[37] Yet, local newspapers proclaimed the vitality and preparedness of Jackson County's banking institutions, and the absence of runs on either of the county's banks, the Jackson County Bank and the

Tuckaseegee Bank, suggests that few in the county were overly concerned about the crisis.

Banking in the county was characterized by quiet confidence. That is not to say that individuals did not lose money but rather that the panic that afflicted much of the state did not prevail in Jackson County. The two local banks foreclosed on over two hundred fifty tracts of property, but as Hugh Monteith sardonically observed: "A man just wasn't one of the boys if he hadn't lost his home or business, one."[38] One bank failed temporarily, the Tuckaseegee Bank which became insolvent in April of 1930, and its subsequent investigation revealed several illegal banking practices. In particular, the bank had overvalued many collateral properties.[39]

According to Lester Wilson, a resident of Jackson County during the Depression, word of the bank runs reached the Pumpkintown community via radio. Then some depositors sought to make withdrawals, but bank officials denied them their money. Still, those who lost money accepted the loss stoically. A strong faith in the land and themselves prevented widespread panic among the people of Jackson County.[40] Most produced the majority of their food from their gardens, and even those who lived in towns maintained garden plots. The stability of The Jackson County Bank and its strong leadership also deterred panic. With the poise of a seasoned poker player, C.J. Harris, the primary owner of the bank, obtained a cash loan from the Wachovia Bank of Asheville to cover the holdings of all depositors.With this cash on hand, Harris openly displayed it and offered all depositors their money. Whether a bluff or not, most accepted his word on the stability of the bank; and only a few withdrew their money.[41]

During the period preceding the New Deal, the industrial base of Jackson County expanded despite the failure of one of its largest industries, Blackwood Lumber Company. The lumber industry faltered shortly after the crash of the stock market. Fortunately, the emergence of Sylva Paperboard in January of 1928 as a significant

employer of local workers filled the loss through using the chestnut wood previously bought by Blackwood Lumber Company.[42]

Sylva Paperboard used a new process to manufacture paper efficiently, but it employed experimental methods for much of the process. Its first two years of operation failed to produce paper at anticipated levels of efficiency. However, as workers gained familiarity with the new equipment, Sylva Paperboard demonstrated profitability and exceeded initial expectations. Another saving grace of the experimental process centered upon its ability to use the woodchip byproduct of the neighboring leather tannery. Also, the process created no noxious odors, which was another advantage. Though full production failed to be achieved until 1934, the continued growth of Sylva Paperboard in the midst of the Depression greatly lessened the impact of economic hardship.[43]

Another stalwart industry in Sylva was Parson's Tanning Company, which operated throughout the Depression on a regular basis. The company weathered the poor economic climate through a reduction in the time required for curing leather. Less curing time enabled the company nearly to double its production levels and thus earn a profit in the face of declining prices. From 1929 until the New Deal era began, the company experienced steady growth and provided many with a regular income.[44]

New industries related to technological advancements also provided the area with economic stimuli. The Dillsboro and Sylva Electric Light Company extended electricity to the county, and with it came the electric light, radio, and refrigeration.[45]

An unexpected blessing bestowed the county with a growing tourism industry when the Great Smoky Mountains National Park became a reality. Gertrude Dills McKee, Jackson County native and the first woman to be elected to the state senate, lobbied for legislation that helped create the national park, and from its opening it proved a fantastic attraction for tourists.[46] With limited finances during poor economic times, tourists were

lured by the inexpensive grandeur of the park and its surrounding areas. It provided great beauty and a myriad of outdoor activities for tourists at relatively little cost. Thus, the national park contributed to the emergence of tourism in the county and played a major role in building the area's reputation as "the Playground of Eastern America."[47]

On the other hand, two of the county's traditional industries, lumbering and mining, began a period of decline. As already mentioned, Blackwood Lumber Company shut down overnight after the stock market debacle. Though it eventually reopened, it never operated above fifty percent of its previous output. The other faltering industry, mining, had begun a downward spiral midway through the decade because kaolin mines in the county played out. Kaolin, a clay which was used in producing pottery, had been the primary mineral extracted in Jackson County; and its success motivated others to seek their livelihood in mining. Mica mines operated all through the decade and into the depression, but the mines yielded only insignificant amounts until the Second World War. Late in 1928 excitement over copper deposits in East LaPorte revived earlier attempts at copper mining, and from December of 1929 until 1932, the mining operation shipped a railroad car of ore a day. The Depression, however, pushed copper prices down and forced the mine to close. Others tried mining gold, corundum, and even nickel; but none were productive. Both lumbering and mining provided employment opportunities during the hard times. The work proved hard and often dangerous for minimal pay. In fact, one miner said that he often worked ten or twelve hours a day for a dollar and was glad to get it. However, mining work was not preferred. It was only a means by which to earn enough money to start a farm.[48]

Other industries emerged in the county which provided little in terms of employment but nevertheless greatly effected the lives of the people. The 1920s changed life as technology introduced new modes of transportation, communication, and entertainment. The movie industry hit Sylva with an explosion of modern refinements

such as the county's first air conditioned building and talking picture shows. By 1927 Sylva boasted three movie theatres: the Rodeo, the Sylvan, and the Lyric. The oldest of these, the Rodeo, was suitable only for older, silent movies; and it became a Westerns-only theatre. The Sylvan and the Lyric, however, vied for movie-goers through the introduction of orchestral phones and "Artic Nu-Air" air conditioning.[49]

Then on January 20, 1930, the Lyric introduced one hundred percent talking movies that employed the "vitaphone," a Western Electric sound system which synchronized a phonograph with the action on the screen. Though sometimes moving mouths produced no sound and bad guys dropped before guns banged, the vitaphone greatly advanced movies; and at this time, Sylva was the only town of its size in the South to possess such technology. "Fox Movietone Follies of 1929," the first talking movie shown in the Lyric, drew large crowds during its showing and paved the way for other first rate films. In spite of the Depression, shows at the Lyric remained hot topics in local papers, and though the Sylvan closed in 1931, J.E. Massie began construction of a more modern theatre, the Ritz. Much of the success was owed to the strong involvement in the community. The theatres provided locations for benefits and school functions, and the owners actively used the theatres for the betterment of the community.[50]

Radio, telephones, and automobiles during the period preceding Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal brought much change to the county. Early in 1920 at the Halson Theatre, Jackson County citizens heard their first radio broadcast, and shortly thereafter, J.S. Higdon purchased one for his home.[51] By 1925 sales advertisements for radios appeared regularly in the Jackson County Journal. The census data of 1930 revealed that two hundred twenty-five families owned radios with the majority of these located in Sylva because most of the radios operated on electricity and Sylva remained one of the few areas in the county with electric power. Many communities, however, had semi-communal

radios, which were purchased by several individuals or even several families. In this manner, isolated areas had contact with the outside world through battery-powered radios.[52]

The telephone also brought change to the county during this time. Though telephones had been introduced almost thirty years earlier, it was not until the Twenties that they were used by more than just a few people. Most phones connected businesses like hotels, resort amenities, and grocery stores; but the emergence of home telephones by the late 1920s was evident through numerous newspaper advertisements listing numbers for delivery service. Still, the census of 1930 revealed only one hundred thirty-three residential phones mainly in the Sylva area, which illustrated the lack of a county-wide network of phone lines.[53]

While the telephone may not have played as great a role as suggested by local newspapers, the automobile probably exceeded the role portrayed by the media. Jackson County residents owned eight hundred seventy automobiles by 1930, but more than half were the older Model "T" Ford series. As newer models rolled off of assembly lines, Ford drastically reduced the price of its Model "T" in an attempt to eliminate its remaining stock; and thus, the automobile became affordable for most families in the county. Used Model "T" Fords were sold as low as thirty-five dollars while new Model "A" Fords sold for as little as four hundred thirty-five dollars. Amazingly, one hundred fourteen of the county's automobiles exceeded values of one thousand dollars when only a few luxury cars and some larger trucks sold new for more than this amount.[54]

The automobile also initiated changes in the way people socialized. It revolutionized courtship rituals and introduced car-riding as a rite of dating, though still not an acceptable rite of dating for respectable women. Automobiles also made other options available for young couples such as movie-going. Cars increased the access of communities to towns and cities, but they also lessened the dependence of the community

on its church. Individuals now socialized via the automobile. Automobiles provided a quick and easy means of transportation to dance halls and movie theatres. In addition, the automobile itself became a form of entertainment. Scenic drives and car-riding replaced walking to church meetings and revivals.

Occupations related to automobiles emerged, and more and more individuals found work in urban settings pertaining to the auto industry. Tire shops, maintenance and service stations, and gas filling stations offered numerous new employment opportunities.[55] In fact, on July 13, 1926, J.E. Stimson opened the first automobile paint and body shop in Western North Carolina. Stimson's shop also repaired upholstery and cleaned both the interior and exterior of automobiles.[56]

One problem faced by automobile pioneers in the county dealt with the absence of operator guidelines. Accidents relating to improper operation of vehicles rose meteorically in the county. Newspapers warned both locals and tourists of the dangers of congested roads and unsafe driving practices. The earliest cases of driving while under the influence of alcohol forced local courts to create a policy on how accidents and traffic violations would be ruled. Overall, the automobile altered the county as it did the nation; the closeness within communities eroded while the ties connecting them grew stronger.[57]

In response to changes occurring in Jackson County prior to the Depression, county leaders implemented various educational reforms. They introduced new agriculture and vocational classes as well as emphasizing life skills such as budgeting and saving money. Local business leaders also requested that schools prepare students for jobs in their business, and county leaders sought to raise the standards of all schools to a level comparable to the average state school in part by creating incentives for teachers with post-high school education experience.These improvements in the county's schools

influenced people's attitude toward education and laid the foundation for changes that would affect them during the Depression.

This decade before the Depression not only impacted business and agricultural communities of the county but also profoundly affected the education community. State sponsored standardization of schools in 1921 pressed the county to meet guidelines of accreditation for high schools including a four year course of study, a one hundred sixty day term, and four full-time teachers. Sylva High School, Webster High School, and Cullowhee High School all received accreditation prior to 1926; and after this achievement, county officials designated the construction of new schools and the consolidation of smaller schools at centralized locations to be the goals of the county.[58]

With the onset of the Depression, economic inequality among the schools in the county emerged and provoked farmers to protest the course of education in the county. Whereas Sylva students completed the seventh grade at age thirteen, less prosperous, rural communities like Savannah completed the seventh grade at age fifteen. The greater tax base of Sylva allowed it to meet the state guideline of an eight month school year, but less affluent communities only offered six months of school a year. As these students from rural schools reached the high school level, the discrepancy evinced itself in higher dropout rates. By fifteen or sixteen years of age, many embarked upon full-time occupations often without completing the seventh grade.[59]

Hard economic times and the failure of the state's Equalizing Fund, a program which forced taxation at a definite rate equal in all counties, forced the state legislature to reevaluate and revise its funding of state accredited schools. The state senator from Jackson County, Gertrude Dills McKee, had opposed the Equalizing Fund in favor of equal education opportunities in all schools. Her determined efforts secured the state's support of six month terms in every public school.[60]

Locally, money shortages in the county required educators to work without pay for two to three months at a time, and in order to maintain the eight month school year, many teachers also agreed to work two extra months without pay until additional taxes were collected. The lack of taxes in the state and county temporarily halted building programs and standardization of county schools. Other services, however, emerged. Many schools like the one in Tuckaseigee provided milk and soup for needy children during the Depression years, and through Parent-Teacher Associations schools administered free vaccinations, health clinics, and nutrition programs.[61]

According to the 1930 census, approximately nine percent of the county was illiterate with only about one fifth of those having received any type of public education. As the Depression worsened, it increased the demand for education in the county. Fewer students dropped out upon reaching their fourteenth birthday because jobs were scarce, and many adults returned to school for the same reason. Adult education programs flourished because many realized that an education might serve them well during these poor times. Record numbers enrolled in the public schools between 1930 and 1932, and as these students reached the time of high school completion, they doubled the number of those graduating in 1930.[62]

Another improvement in education occurred directly through the standardization of schools. Quality teachers were essential for the success of county high schools, but the paucity of teachers with formalized post-high school training limited the progress of education. In response to the demand, teacher education and training became the focus of the Cullowhee Normal and Industrial School. Alonzo C. Reynolds, the president of the school, stated: "The supreme purpose of the school is the development of teachers."[63] With this emphasis, the school thrived until the state cut appropriations, but before these cuts, its success earned it the right to award baccalaureate degrees in education and to be renamed Western Carolina Teachers College. The goal of the college

since its inception was to serve the needs of the community. To achieve this goal, it sponsored commuter conferences promoting Governor O. Max Gardner's Live-at-Home program; and it offered practical knowledge courses in personal finance, home economics, and agriculture. Meanwhile, the emphasis regarding educational improvement continued to stress the development of quality teachers.

One of the casualties of the Depression was the Sylva Collegiate Institute, which was possibly the most successful private school ever to operate in the county. The Tuckaseigee Baptist Association in cooperation with neighboring Baptist associations and the Baptist State Convention and the Home Missions Board of the Southern Baptist Convention sponsored the school, and for three decades the school provided the area with what it advertised as "the leading high school education west of Asheville." Employing quality teachers and enforcing a strict educational regimen, the school achieved a reputation for excellence in academics and athletics. As secularism grew and public education improved, the demand for private, religious-based education waned. With the Depression wrecking havoc in much of America, the Home Mission Board refocused its efforts towards relief and withdrew its support from the school. Despite sacrificial efforts by the faculty and local supporters of the school, it closed its doors permanently in 1932.[64]

Many improvements changed the face of education in the county. Yet, hardships were common to both students and teachers. One former student of Western Carolina Teachers College remembered carrying buckets of water up the hill to his dormitory because the school did not have the funds available to repair water pipes. Another county student recalled carrying roasting ears and water to school for lunch because his family had nothing else while still another student remembered bringing catshead biscuits sopped with bacon grease and a baked sweet potato. Many of the local one room grammar

schools provided an education regardless of limited facilities. During winter months, students crowded around a black pot-bellied stove vying for seats which neither roasted nor froze the student; and students really did often walk two or three miles in the snow to get to school because the schools rarely, if ever, closed on account of weather.

In addition to fostering educational reforms, the climate in both agricultural and industrial communities corresponded closely with the health of the county's two primary political parties, Democrat and Republican. The prosperity of the middle 1920s tipped the scales in favor of the Republican Party. During the majority of this decade, candidates of the Republican Party fared well in county elections. Indeed, Republican Mont B. Cannon became only the fourth Republican Sheriff to be elected since the formation of the county; and Republicans controlled the elections for county commissioner as well by winning all races from 1925 through 1930.

From 1926 to 1932, Jackson County with its economy flourishing began a swing towards conservative Republican politics. The 1924 presidential election showed the Democratic Party firmly entrenched as had been the case since 1878, but in the 1926 election, a Republican resurgence evinced itself, with the Grand Old Party sweeping the county election. Democrats claimed that strife within the party and sordid voting practices by Republicans caused their defeat. Both of these claims were valid. The Democratic Primary had allowed divisions in the party to fester, and the election did appear to be flawed. Republicans received the votes of one person three separate times, a dead man, and of one hundred four fictitious persons. On the other hand, Jackson County enjoyed one of the most prosperous periods of growth in its history for which the Grand Old Party took credit.

The 1928 election focused upon the candidates for president. Herbert Hoover offered continued economic prosperity. Governor Al Smith promised honesty and

effective government. Hoover faced the past scandals of his party, but religion loomed large over Smith's campaign. His Roman Catholic heritage and "wet" stance on Prohibition proved to be overwhelming liabilities. Indeed, W.D. Wike, a teacher at Western Carolina Teachers College and prominent county Democrat, in a letter to Congressman Zebulon Weaver stated: "Some of our Democrats say that they won't vote for Smith nor for any man that does vote for him."[65] Contrary to Wike's statement, both The Jackson County Journal and The Ruralite weekly published articles proclaiming Smith as the better candidate. Furthermore, Democratic clubs and organizations sponsored rallies, speeches, and even movies glorifying Governor Al Smith. Though numerous Democrats voted against Smith, the strong work and organization of County Party Chairman E. Lyndon McKee deterred a party split in local elections; and the Democrats carried the county with the exception of presidential candidate Al Smith.

Though North Carolina emanated an aura of progressivism through a pro-business posture, it ranked at or near the bottom of all the the states in most economic categories. Politicians sought to remedy this by creating a climate conducive to industrial expansion and economic development. Republicans and Democrats alike wanted to increase spending for education, roads, and burgeoning technologies. Much like the attitude of the nations's president, Calvin Coolidge, the business of North Carolina was business. As a result, government leaders avoided punitive taxation, welfare assistance, and labor legislation. Instead, they directed the efforts of the state towards highway construction and standardization of education. Both Governor Angus W. McClean and Governor O. Max Gardner increased state spending to improve these areas as well as other projects which improved the business environment.

With a large bonded debt and the onset of the Depression, Governor Gardner curbed many state projects but continued his policy of business progressivism. He also

attempted to raise the efficiency of government and its programs, but a reduction in the state's tax base forced him to cut appropriations by thirty percent over the next two years. During his stint as governor, he doggedly fought to preserve the financial credit of the state; but his intensive efforts to maintain business and financial institutions bred contention between agriculture and big business. Farmers and labor demanded that business pay its fair share, and they forced the governor to succumb to their demands for corporate tax increases.[66] Finally, the Depression ended the good fortunes of Republican candidates. Though Prohibition had served the Republicans well as an issue during the election of 1928, their poor showing in the elections of 1930 revealed that the economy ruled over politics in Jackson County.

The reversal of the economy in 1930 signaled the reversal of fortunes for the Republican Party. Republicans who had used the economy to their gain in previous elections now found it used against them. Democrats blamed President Herbert Hoover for the Depression, and as conditions worsened, his popularity waned. Still today, many in the county refer to the Depression as "Hoover Days" or "Hoover Times"; and the term "Hoover" itself became synonymous with squalor or poverty. All the while, Republicans in office in the county worked diligently in assisting with relief and in providing direction for the Welfare Committee. Sheriff Mont B. Cannon, a Republican, continued his department's support of those in need. He and his deputies identified impoverished families and delivered clothing and foodstuffs to them from the Jackson County Welfare Committee, a coalition of Baptist and Methodist churches organized specifically to meet the needs of the county's poor. In most communities, people put aside party differences to assist the less fortunate. Some, however, refused to receive aid on the grounds that it was politically motivated while others claimed that they failed to receive relief because of their political affiliation. On the whole, Jackson County weathered the Depression, but its onset tended to unify and strengthen the Democratic Party.[67]

Life in the county during the latter part of the 1920s revolved around family and community with the focal point of each being religion. During this period, religion and politics shared many of the same issues, which often obscured the line between the two. Baptists were the largest denomination in the county, with Methodist, Church of God, and Presbyterian congregations comprising the largest portion of the remainder. Churches guided communities and actively participated in politics, and they also served as centers for social functions and in some cases education.

The early years of the decade saw Jackson County Baptists move against their own policy of separating church and state to endorse Warren G. Harding in his presidential campaign with a resolution lauding his fine character as well as his stance on Prohibition. Though scandal and corruption later besmirched his reputation, county Baptists continued to advocate certain candidates. In fact, during the 1928 presidential election Methodists and Baptists coalesced against demon rum and its supposed champion, Al Smith. Their coalition demonstrated the separation of the National Democratic Party from its traditional Southern, Protestant base while illustrating the power of religion in the county.

Governor Al Smith's nomination at the national convention raised the ire of many Southern Democrats for the sole reason that he was a Roman Catholic with a desire to repeal the Eighteenth Amendment. So, Baptist and Methodist Democrats in Jackson County withdrew their support. One leading county Democrat, the aforementioned William D. Wike, claimed: "State tickets are in danger unless you make it plain that you oppose Smith's Prohibition policies together with some of his other notions."[68] Still today, many conservative Baptist and Methodist Democrats vote against party in favor of their religious beliefs.

Churches also played a key role in defining socially accepted behavior. Individual churches sponsored temperance clubs and organized rules of public conduct. Indeed,

many churches expelled members for "walking disorderly," a term often associated with abuses of alcohol. Ministers often preached fiery sermons against the evils of alcoholism, as can be seen in church minutes denoting particularly moving sermons. Still other churches recorded prayer requests or deacon ministry service to some "wayward soul" in the community. All of these actions served to empower local churches as the Depression embraced America.[69]

Furthermore, churches wielded much power through central geographic settings within the community. Whether or not it was by design, many churches lay in the center of the community. Early in the 1920s, poor roads and few cars meant walking was a primary mode of transportation. Revivals and prayer meetings not only pulled people from the community but from neighboring ones as well. As individuals walked and were joined by others, social contact and intercommunity ties were established. Thus, the trek to church became almost as important as the church meeting itself. People sometimes walked ten or twenty miles to attend a church service just to walk with a certain young woman or man. Church services lured many younger unmarried men and women through these properly chaperoned walks to and from service. Even the activities at church were geared towards the youth . "Box suppers" and other such events provided opportunities for social interaction among the young men and women. One woman, in particular, recalled meeting her husband at such an event: "We'd hold box suppers and sell 'em. We'd bake and fry chicken and we'd make up a box and take it and sell it. The men would buy the boxes and sit down and whoever the box belonged to, they'd eat with them. Eat together...."[70]

As the automobile reduced the influence of the church, the need to socialize brought people together to perform necessary tasks such as corn shuckings and barn raisings; and the prosperity of the period led to an artistic flare in certain crafts. Indeed, the latter 1920s witnessed a return and renaissance of craft-making. Quilting had

remained essential throughout the period and during the Twenties its artistic beauty blossomed. Wool carding and knitting as well as basket weaving also enjoyed revivals among women, and of course, these activities generally spawned occasions in which communities came together both to work and to compete. While women made art out of their work, men used their time to fashion accouterments for leisure such as musical instruments, baseball bats, pipes for smoking, and other such things. Some men also spent this time inventing more effective tools for use around the home or farm, and some placed great stock in crafting quality handles for garden utensils or other tools. Whittling and carving also re-emerged at this time. Primarily these occasions presented an opportunity for socializing, but they also served to pass down knowledge to the younger generations.[71]

The onset of the Depression made these events even more necessary. The optimism that the economy would quickly right itself hindered government leaders of North Carolina in preparing against a crisis in the event of long term economic depression. Indeed, for the most part the state held to a course of entrenchment which meant no aid to the poor and impoverished. As a result, even by the close of 1930, no state or federal relief agencies provided any assistance to impoverished North Carolinians. Instead, communities provided for the relief assistance of their own. Though some communities proffered assistance through clubs, organizations, and businesses, the local church represented the core of relief programs in most. However, in 1928 a coalition of Baptist and Methodist churches formed a committee to meet the growing needs of the indigent in Jackson county. The committee primarily identified those truly in need and prevented abuses of assistance, but it also provided a unified, efficient effort that orchestrated the distribution of aid throughout the county. From its inception until the close of 1930, this coalition of churches effectively met the needs of the impoverished. However, the overwhelming number of demands for assistance early in 1931 quickly

depleted the resources of the committee, and its chairman, Doctor Wayne McGuire, implemented a plan for soliciting clothes, food, and money. McGuire, a local dentist, pushed the Welfare Committee to mobilize clubs, businesses, and individuals outside of the church community. Largely through these efforts, no one starved or lacked a place to stay.[72]

As Jackson County entered the Depression, it had enjoyed the prosperity of the preceding decade but it had also laid the foundations for its future success. In agriculture, the county had hired an agent and implemented a plan for agriculture development. Large forests provided lumber and wood chips for both the tannery and the papermill as well as the lumber company. Ores and minerals also offered a source of wealth for some and steady labor for others, and the creation of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park introduced the tourism industry to the county. Above all, the self-sufficient nature of the people in Jackson County would prove to be a valuable resource as the Depression ravaged much of the country.

People endured the hardship. The county continued to grow. Businesses closed only to be replaced by new ones. Indeed, the number of new businesses outnumbered those going out of business. Dealers sold fewer new automobiles, but used and older models maintained high levels of sales. Teachers and professors across Jackson County received less money for their efforts but continued to foster learning in the minds of students. Employment was scarce but schools were full. Some faced hunger and homelessness but not alone. Numerous merchants, farmers, churches, and fortunate others pitched in to provide them sustenance and shelter. Agricultural prices steadily declined, but the local farmers compensated by improving their efficiency. They diversified and upgraded crop and livestock production, cooperated with each other and local businesses, and set sound goals for both the short and long term management of agriculture in the county.

Overall, the Great Depression hurt Jackson County. However, it also served to prune industry, agriculture, and education for greater growth and prosperity without significantly damaging the moral fabric or culture of the county. In many ways, this period acted as a crucible molding the county, and this cannot be expressed more clearly than in the editorial of the May 1, 1930 edition of the Jackson County Journal:

> It is true a depression, such as the whole nation has had to undergo, has affected Jackson County as well as the rest of America; but we are far more fortunate than most sections of our country.
>
> Nothing but hard work, both muscle and brains, coupled with a great faith in our own land, is needed to make Jackson County prosper; and The Journal sees on every side evidence that Jackson County folks are exercising both more abundantly than ever before.
>
> The acres upon acres that are being turned to cultivation, the acres that have been and are being sown in pasture, all speak of the faith that the people have in themselves and our splendid county.[73]

ENDNOTES

[1] The Ruralite, May 18, 1926. Two separate articles laud Sylva as one of the most progressive towns in the South; and one claimed that Sylva would become "the Playground of Eastern America" as well as "the Hub City of Western North Carolina".

[2] Ibid., August 10, 1926. This article highlighted road construction and other transportation projects as well as provided a map.

[3] Ibid., July 6, 1926; June 26, 1929; June 19, 1929; January 14, 1930. In 1926 Delco-Frigidaire Sales Company opened an office in Sylva because of the great demand for new appliances like washing machines, air conditioning units, refrigerators, and vacuum cleaners; and numerous advertisements for such products began to appear.

[4] Ibid., October 28, 1930. The article informed voters that for the first time they could receive up-to the-moment election results over the radio.

[5] Ibid., October 14, 1930.

[6] Ibid., July 7, 1932; January 3, 1933. Both of these articles used data from the census of 1930, and the latter article included a chart of production totals and acreage in farming.

[7] The Jackson County Journal, January 12, 1928. The initiation of Jackson County's five year agricultural plan emerged at this time, and key parts included crop diversification and scrub livestock eradication.

[8] The Ruralite, August 5, 1930. The Glenville-Cashiers area has an ideal climate and soil for producing cabbage and related crops.

[9] The Jackson County Journal, December 12, 1929. Scrub livestock had almost been eliminated; the county witnessed increases in agricultural profits; and cooperation among farmers and local businesses grew after successful joint efforts to promote such cooperation.

[10] The Ruralite, May 4, 1926; December 12, 1929.

[11] Ibid., May 4, 1926; December 12, 1929. The article on December 12, 1929 illustrated the impact Jackson County made in producing quality livestock especially in cattle, hog, and sheep stock.

[12] The Jackson County Journal, January 27, 1927.

[13] Interview by the author with Lloyd Wilkes Cowan, 12 January 1997. Cowan farmed in the Savannah community and managed department stores in Sylva for forty years.

[14] The Jackson County Journal, October 31, 1929.

[15] The Ruralite, January 14, 1930. The 4-H Club in Sylva worked closely with the public schools to instruct students in modern farming techniques, and Jackson County's five year agricultural plan focused on agricultural education. The results are evident through the success of Jackson County entrants in state competitions.

[16] The Ruralite, February 12, 1929.

[17] Frederick Lewis Allen, Since Yesterday (New York: Bantam Books, 1961), 155.

[18] The Ruralite, February 4, 1930.

[19] Interview by the author with Lloyd Wilkes Cowan, January 12, 1997.

[20] The Ruralite, August 5, 1930.

[21] The Ruralite, April 15, 1930; The Jackson County Journal, December 12, 1929.

[22] The Jackson County Journal, October 14, 1930. North Carolina Attorney General Dennis G. Brummitt outlined Governor Max Gardner's "Live-at-Home" program in a speech at Western Carolina Teachers College.

[23] The Ruralite, February 4, 1931.

[24] Ibid., November 17, 1931.

[25] Ibid., November 25, 1930.

[26] Ibid., August 13, 1929.

[27] Max R. Williams, ed., The History of Jackson County (Sylva: The Jackson County Historical Association, 1987), 190.

[28] Carl Douglas Abrams, Conservative Constraints: North Carolina and the New Deal (Jackson: The University of Mississippi Press, 1992) 3.

[29] Anthony J. Badger, North Carolina and the New Deal (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1981) 1.

[30] Interview by the author with Paul Buchanan, 25 January 1997. Paul Buchanan graduated from the Sylva Collegiate School in 1929 and Western Carolina Teachers College in 1934, and he taught at Webster School beginning in 1933 and later became Superintendent of Schools in Jackson County after a tour in the Navy.

[31] Williams, 216.

[32] Bjorn Ahlin, "Social and Economic Conditions in Jackson County During the Great Depression" (Master of Arts thesis, Western Carolina University, 1971), 90.

[33] Interview by the author with --------, 15 January 1997. At the request of the interviewee, the name of this individual will not be disclosed because family and kin of the interviewee still reside within Jackson County.

[34] The Jackson County Journal, January 12, 1929.

[35] Ibid., January 12, 1929.

[36] Badger, The New Deal, 7.

[37] Abrams, Conservative Constraints, 4.

[38] Williams, Jackson County, 449.

[39] The Ruralite, September 27, 1932.

[40] The Jackson County Journal, May 1, 1930.

[41] The Ruralite, November 25, 1930; The Ruralite, June 4, 1930.

[42] The Jackson Journal, January 5, 1928.

[43] Ibid.

[44] The Ruralite, June 6, 1933.

[45] Williams, Jackson County, 202-203.

[46] The Jackson County Journal, June 11, November 12, 1936.

[47] Ibid., May 10, 1926; Ibid., January 5, 1928.

[48] Interview by the author with Neal Lewis, 12 January 1997.

[49] The Jackson County Journal, September 9, 1928.

[50] The Ruralite, June 19, 1929; January 14, 1930; January 21, 1930.

[51] The Jackson County Journal, June 23, 1923; May 1, 1930.

[52] Interview by the author with Lester Wilson, 19 January, 1997. Lester Wilson farmed in the Pumpkintown Community, served in World War II, and worked for the state.

[53] The Ruralite, May 4, 1926; January 10, 1933; October 3, 1933.

[54] Ibid., June 15, 1926; July 7, 1932, citing the census of 1930; November 4, 1930. In 1932 the census data listed 870 automobiles in Jackson County with 114 of them valued at more than one thousand dollars. Advertisements for new automobiles during this period list only a few automobiles at more than eight hundred dollars with the average price range lying between five hundred and seven hundred dollars.

[55] Interview by the author with Paul Buchanan, 25 January 1997. Paul Buchanan remarked upon the emergence of specialized automobile service stations from the days of drug stores selling automobile fuel.

[56] The Ruralite, July 13, 1926. Stimson brought the idea for an automobile paint and body shop with him from Florida, and reports indicate that it operated successfully.

[57] Ahlin, "Social and Economic Conditions," 98-99.

[58] Jackson County Public Schools, 1853-1954 (1954), 28-29.

[59] The Jackson County Journal, May 9, 1924.

[60] Williams, Jackson County, 302.

[61] Ahlin, "Social and Economic Conditions," 61.

[62] The Ruralite, August 1, 1933.

[63] William Ernest Bird, The History of Western Carolina College: The Progress of an Idea (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 76-77.

[64] Interview by the author with Paul Buchanan, January 25, 1997.

[65] W.D. Wike to Zebulon Weaver, August 22, 1928, Weaver Papers.

[66] Badger, The New Deal, 7-9.

[67] Ahlin, "Social and Economic Conditions," 101-102.

[68] W.D. Wike to Zebulon Weaver, September 4, 1928, Weaver Papers, Special Collections, Hunter Library, Western Carolina University.

[69] Interview by the author with Lloyd Wilkes Cowan, 12 January 1997.

[70] Selma Frizzell, Interview by George Edward Frizzell, 12 January 1980. Selma, even in her early eighties, maintained a vivid memory of the events of this period, especially concerning activities in the church and community.

[71] The Jackson County Journal, January 20, 1928.

[72] The Ruralite, May 17, 1932.

[73] The Jackson County Journal, May 1, 1930.

CHAPTER 2

AGRICULTURE DURING THE NEW DEAL

The agricultural policies of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal catered to the needs of the South. He believed the problems facing the South existed in the nation as a whole. Having farmed and frequently vacationed in South Georgia, Roosevelt felt that he understood the region's problems and could thus effect a solution. He had observed how farmers faced agricultural problems in the South, and though he did not always agree with their solutions, he always listened. Indeed, both Roosevelt and his experimental farm in Georgia won the respect of neighboring farmers, who often advised him on farm problems. Roosevelt also used his two hundred acre farm for numerous agricultural experiments such as producing non-traditional cash crops like squash and cantaloupes. Through such experimentation, Roosevelt came to the conclusion that the nation's agriculture could be improved through practicing self-sufficiency and crop diversification. Indeed, before raising multiple, alternative cash crops on his farm in Georgia, his farm ventures had been unprofitable.[1]

On the other hand, Franklin D. Roosevelt realized that farmers needed and probably deserved government assistance. As a result, he pressed local governments and farmers to adhere to the following practices: equality in agriculture, conversion of marginal lands to tree crops, reduction of local taxes on farms, and the refinancing of farm loans to prevent foreclosures. F.D.R. used these tenets to sway the farm vote during his 1932 campaign for president, and much of his New Deal program arose from these early ideas. But by his inauguration, Roosevelt had decided that the time for change was at hand.[2]

"Action and action now!" defined the mood of the nation as Franklin Delano Roosevelt took the oath of office as President of the United States of America in 1933, but Roosevelt himself empathized with those demanding action and intended to grant them their wish. He immediately focused the nation's energy on recovery. The first hundred days of his administration witnessed dozens of pieces of New Deal policy go before Congress. Roosevelt used his easy victory over Hoover as a mandate to implement his New Deal, and in the process he gained almost dictatorial power from Congress to enact these policies.[3]

Among these New Deal policies, the Agriculture Adjustment Act became the agent by which agricultural reform moved from paper to reality. However, the AAA did not force farmers to reform but rather sought their approval and cooperation by working with them and through them. As a result, most North Carolina farmers embraced the AAA, which sought to raise the prices for agricultural products. Cotton and wheat growers across the state supported such legislation so long as the state unilaterally enforced it to ensure that all farmers abided by it. With tobacco prices remaining fairly constant throughout the early years of the Depression, tobacco farmers felt no need to support it nor fight it. They simply took advantage of its benefits while sidestepping cumbersome regulations. All over North Carolina the value of farm products rose, and with it the situation of farmers improved significantly. On the negative side, the Agriculture Adjustment Act focused on recovery rather than reform. Crop regulation only raised profitability of farms and did not address the problems which had put them in debt.[4]

Labor costs, soil erosion, ineffective farming practices, glutted markets, and inadequate transportation for cash crops all contributed to the plight of the farmer. The AAA did not seek to solve any of these problems. However, the operation of the AAA through the North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, which had several agents

in almost every North Carolina county including Jackson County, indirectly made the AAA into a tool for correcting such problems. The Depression had taken its toll on the Agriculture Extension Service, and in 1932 amidst tight budgets and faltering local Extension programs, the AAA rescued the program from sure extinction. Some Agriculture Extension Service leaders feared their agents would lose credibility if they administered AAA programs, but the head of the Extension Service, Dean Ira O. Schaub of the School of Agriculture at North Carolina State University, welcomed the responsibility and newfound power of administering such programs. Schaub believed that the AAA would make his agents indispensable to rural North Carolina. It would also put the means for agricultural reform into place, and as in Jackson County, the AAA would find reforms such as crop diversification already being carried out by the county agriculture agent.[5]

Jackson County's agricultural endeavors had continued to prosper even in the midst of the Depression. The AAA built upon the progress already underway in the county, and it used its authority to guarantee that farmers heeded progressive reforms. Next, the AAA ensured that Jackson County's Agriculture Extension Service agent remained exclusively in the county because state budget cuts had placed this position in jeopardy. Through the office of the Agriculture Extension Service, crop quality as well as prices had been improved, and the county agent, G.R. Lackey, under the auspices of the AAA, assisted farmers in overcoming the many of other problems which plagued them. Lackey worked with the individual needs of farmers. He advised them on the best uses of their property and which crops were best suited for certain types of soil and various topics; but he also organized AAA programs for the county. These he usually handled on a county-wide or community basis. Lackey initiated cooperatives, organized the county's farmers, and provided instruction on effective farming practices. Most importantly, G.R.

Lackey identified the problems faced by Jackson County farmers and pursued solutions to those problems.

One of the problems that livestock farmers still faced centered on the remaining scrub livestock. With numerous herds of cattle and hogs ranging free across the county, scrubs posed a threat to pure breeds. County agents had pushed for the elimination of scrub livestock since 1926, but they had never possessed the money for incentives nor authority for enforcement until passage of the Agricultural Adjustment Act. Within a year of the passage of the AAA, scrub livestock had largely been eradicated in the county. Pure breeds of quality livestock had transplanted the scrubs and effectively improved the quality of the county's livestock. The elimination of scrub cattle in Jackson County meant greater weight for beef cattle as well as better cuts of meat because scrubs combined several breeds- some of which were not preferred for beef production because of either small size or poor quality of meat. Often these scrubs ate more but produced less bulk because they were the offspring of milk cattle or dwarfed breeds. In addition, the calves that they birthed tended to be smaller and less productive than their sires. Furthermore, the combination of two breeds notorious for giving small amounts of milk produced calves stunted by malnourishment. Such mixtures harmed the profitability of raising cattle as well as hogs, sheep, and horses. Thus, ridding the county of inferior mixed-breeds improved the quality of livestock farming.[6]

While eradication proved significant, alone, it was pointless. The New Deal also assisted those farmers who achieved certain standards for raising livestock. For instance, farmers who produced livestock of pure breeds with birthing and siring documented could obtain loans for livestock investment more easily than could farmers who could not verify the pedigree of their stock. Also, New Deal programs provided loans for the financing of farms which produced pure breeds of livestock, and often these programs offered

payment for the slaughter of scrub cattle. The Extension Service sponsored education for livestock farmers which explained the importance of scrub elimination and modern livestock farming practices. As an incentive for attending such classes, the AAA agent awarded livestock of pure bloodlines (generally a calf or young pig) to those who successfully completed the course.[7]

Jackson County farmers established four primary breeds of cattle stock: Jersey, Holstein, Hereford, and Angus. To bolster the sagging dairy industry, cattle farmers working in cooperation brought twenty Jersey cows into the county. Jerseys produced large quantities of rich milk, high in both butter and cream content. Not too much later, new dairies emerged in the Savannah, Whittier, and Webster communities. Initially, these dairies focused upon the production of cream and butter, but with their success, Holsteins, a breed which produced more milk than Jerseys but with less cream and butter fat, was added to their stock.[8] The success of Jackson County dairy farmers influenced M.Y. Jarrett, O.N. Gillette, and S.H. Weaver to build a creamery, Smoky Mountain Creameries, in the Dillsboro area. They bought cattle, milk, cream and butter from local dairy farmers to sell to the public; but marketing ice cream yielded the creamery its greatest profits.

It was at this time that Western Carolina Teachers College established a working laboratory dairy which provided students with educational opportunities as well as fresh milk and butter. In fact, Western Carolina Teachers College had created North Carolina's first operating state dairy. By 1934 dairy farming comprised a central part of the county's total agricultural income as well as a key element in the county's relief for the impoverished (these dairies provided milk through the school system to impoverished children and their families). Local dairies also made the success of the cream-making

industry possible, and through cooperation with area businesses, dairy farmers successfully marketed their products all across the county. Throughout the Depression, production of milk steadily increased in quantity and value.[9]

Similarly, beef farmers enjoyed handsome rewards for their efforts. Hereford and Angus breeds yielded quality strains of beef cattle, and farm loans coupled with other New Deal assistance programs provided a nurturing environment for entrepreneurial ventures into beef cattle production. The Asheville Livestock Market and the local Sylva Cattle Market promoted the sale of pure breeds. Quality cattle lines brought higher prices at the market, and some county farmers exploited these higher sale prices through selling cattle to other farmers in Jackson County who desired to raise cattle of quality bloodlines.

With continued emphasis on crop diversification, county agricultural officials suggested that livestock farmers also diversify. Again, the goal behind diversification was self-reliance for county farmers. Farm agents pushed farmers to raise two primary cash crops, vegetable crops for home use, and to own either a brood sow or milk cow and chickens. On a wider scale, the county agent also recommended that communities share resources such as pure bred boar hogs and registered stock bulls. Communities like Caney Fork generally raised the same breed of livestock in order to keep strains pure when using a communal bull for breeding, and as in Caney Fork most livestock owners in the community would make some payment such as grain feed or labor for the services of the stud animal. The end result produced neighborhoods and communities which functioned independently of outside interference or assistance.[10]

Numerous families adhered to diversification policies, and by 1934 most farms had either a brood sow or milk cow. Indeed, many had both as well as a flock of chickens. Though neither as prosperous nor as concentrated as cattle farming, raising hogs proved lucrative and increased greatly during these first years of the New Deal. The quality of

hogs also improved as farmers began raising pure breeds of Yorkshire, which was favored for its lean hams, and Poland China Hogs, which achieved great sizes in just a short time. In fact, one Poland China hog dressed out at nearly eight hundred pounds, an astounding weight for a hog either on foot or dressed. Local businesses which sold meat requested pure-bred Yorkshire hogs, and Sylva Supply even offered monetary incentives for Yorkshire hogs. The Jackson County Extension Service, however, provided pure strains of the Poland China hogs to area farmers as well as free Poland China pigs to individuals who successfully completed 4-H Livestock Education programs.[11]

Before 1935 hog raising had grown into a major agricultural activity. As late as 1926 the hog population of the county had been less than two thousand hogs of primarily mixed breeds. Scrub eradication and modern farming practices brought the number of hogs to well over ten thousand. The AAA focused upon raising the profit margin in hog farming. It sponsored education which instructed farmers in modern methods, and it reformed the marketing of hogs through regulation. Hog farming also moved from free or open run, which allowed hogs to run wild over a wide range, to fenced in production which limited the area in which hogs could range. The AAA paid for the slaughter of mixed breed hogs and helped organize area livestock markets for easier sale of hogs. It also sponsored cooperation among farmers and businesses. For instance, some area businesses restored credit to hog farmers at the request of AAA officials, but as hog farming became more structured and profitable, theft of hogs occurred more frequently. Theft did not deter farmers from producing more and more hogs, which earned them both a good source of income and a source for meat through the winter. By 1935 hog farming had become part of the lives of Jackson County people as can be seen through the introduction of new, popular leisure activities like "hog-calling," "hog-wrestling," and "greased pig-catching." November hog slaughtering had also become a festive event

despite its intrinsically morbid nature. Agriculture clubs, farm organizations, and area businesses awarded prizes to the largest hog, best show hog, and the prettiest pig.[12]

Another successful livestock commodity during this time was sheep. The demand for raw wool drove prices up and enticed several area livestock farmers to experiment with wool production. In spite of high prices for wool, sheep farming remained a secondary agricultural endeavor. One reason for its lack of expansion was that wool prices could not match the prices for beef cattle, which competed with sheep for the same pasture land. Wool production also required a great investment of time and labor, and few seemed willing to make a commitment to make wool production more than a side activity. Furthermore, mutton never gained popularity among the people of Jackson County. Overall, the total income from the sale of wool never exceeded two thousand dollars with the greater portion of this figure going to livestock farmers who already had successful cattle or hog farms.[13]

Poultry also provided county farmers additional income. Commercially, it gave some farmers a steady income through the sale of eggs and fryers though prices for both were low. Jackson County poultry farmers effectively marketed their goods through "the Poultry Car," which operated in cooperation with Western North Carolina businesses and farmers to ship poultry across the region. Within a few months of the Agricultural Adjustment Act, prices for poultry began to rise gradually and by the close of 1934 had reached prices comparable to those of 1929. Of greater significance to county farmers, poultry provided both eggs and a source of meat. Many families would have fared much worse during the Depression without the steady food provided through poultry.[14]

In livestock farming, Ralph Hunter of the Caney Fork community set the standard for Jackson County farmers. He raised Hereford cattle, Yorkshire hogs, and Hampshire sheep; and he practiced stringent breeding practices for all of his livestock. Hunter also proved that self-sufficiency made livestock farming highly profitable. Beginning with only

a few Hereford cattle in 1931, his venture grew into a large, prosperous farm numbering several hundred head of cattle, over a hundred hogs, and a herd of sheep. Throughout the county his farm held a high reputation for producing quality beef cattle as well as large hogs. Indeed, some paid ten to fifty percent above market value for his livestock because of the quality of their bloodlines.[15]

Whereas New Deal policies guided livestock farmers, it took a more hands on approach toward crop production. President Roosevelt desired to alleviate the plight of farmers, and his own experience in farming had led him to the conclusion that farmers required immediate monetary support in order to maintain their independence. The Agricultural Adjustment Act and farm loan organizations assisted farmers financially through raising crop prices and offering low interest loans. The Agricultural Adjustment Act operated through the North Carolina State Agriculture Extension Service, an organization bent upon instructing farmers in effective farming methods; and the AAA provided them with the authority to implement such methods. One such concept, crop diversification had been in effect in Jackson County since the middle of the 1920s; but the AAA re-emphasized it and rewarded those who practiced it.

The period following Roosevelt's inauguration in 1933 witnessed the introduction of numerous crops into the county at the insistence of the county agriculture agent. In the Cashiers-Hamburg area, farmers introduced vegetables similar to cabbage such as broccoli, cauliflower, and brussels sprouts, and they experimented with rutabagas and melon crops. In 1934 Jackson County farmers produced over two thousand tons of rutabagas. Cabbage producers enjoyed banner years from 1933 through 1937, and cabbage remained the primary cash crop of Southern Jackson County. Green beans also flourished all across the county, but they remained a secondary crop throughout the Depression. The Cashiers-Hamburg valleys also found tree farming to be lucrative, and

more importantly, tree farming did not compete with the resources required for successful cabbage production.[16]

In the central and Northern sections of Jackson County, farmers relied upon five basic crops: wheat, rye, corn, Irish potatoes, and sweet potatoes. New Deal programs pushed for self-sufficient farms and recommended numerous garden vegetables to accomplish this goal as well as to provide supplementary income. The county agent, G.R. Lackey, urged farmers to grow tomatoes, beans, onions, peanuts, cucumbers and squash as secondary cash crops. Lackey also encouraged farmers to raise oats, soy beans, and hay, for increased livestock production in the county created a corresponding demand for feed grains and hay. In addition, tree crops like peaches, apples, walnuts, chestnuts, and cherries also moved from subsistence to commercial farming as did blackberries, blueberries, and strawberries.[17]

Of all of these, tree farms and orchards provided the steadiest income during the Depression years. The long term investment required in tree farming suited many of the county's farmers whose property consisted of large tracts of marginal land which produced few crops well. These marginal areas in most of Jackson County provided ideal soil for tree crops. The acidic soils and wet climate of Southern Jackson County yielded healthy fir trees which sold well as Christmas trees even during the Depression, and the sloping hills and valleys of central Jackson County supported various types of fruit trees though apple trees were by far the most common.[18] By 1935 Jackson County had almost fifty thousand apple trees of bearing age of numerous varieties: Red Delicious, Winesap, Arkansas Black, Granny Smith, Granny Rogers, and Golden Delicious.

In addition, tree farms inhibited soil erosion, a growing concern of AAA officials. The North Carolina Conservation Report of 1935 stated that over 37,000 acres of tillable land had been lost due to soil erosion and that another 17,500 acres had been abandoned because of extensive soil erosion. Much of the erosion occurred because of poor farming

techniques such as plowing with the slope of the land or cultivating marginal land. AAA administrators addressed both of these problems and others contributing to soil erosion through agriculture conservation and forestry classes and workshops which were conducted by the agriculture agent, G.R. Lackey. The AAA recommended tree farms for marginal land, land with steep grades usually not suited for crop production, and modern farming techniques to combat soil erosion. Furthermore, it financially supported those who converted marginal land to tree farms.[19]

One of the most interesting changes in Jackson County's agriculture occurred in tobacco farming. The previous decade had seen little tobacco farming in the county except that raised for personal use. After the New Deal passed legislation which limited tobacco production, county farmers suddenly began growing tobacco. Whether county farmers chose to raise tobacco because of its increased value of almost a hundred percent since 1932 or because the AAA paid tobacco farmers to allow land designated for tobacco crops to lay fallow, they did choose to continue raising it as a cash crop throughout the Depression.[20]

With the AAA operating through the North Carolina Extension Service agents, its greatest influence may have come through the education of rural farmers. Education programs ranged from proper livestock slaughtering techniques to the importance of proper bookkeeping. Through these programs, Jackson County farmers gained valuable knowledge about how to make their farms profitable. In particular, the Jackson County Agriculture Extension Service Agent discovered that farmers lost much of their feed grain to rats and rot. He advised farmers to try storing feed grain in silos, either earthen trench silos or stave silos which are built above ground. In 1932, Jackson County had only two silos, one of which held only a ton of grain; but by 1935 thirty-eight new silos had been built including one which held eighty tons of grain (most held between ten and fifty tons).[21] Still other programs offered through Western Carolina Teachers College

educated farmers and future agriculture teachers alike in subjects like modern agriculture, horticulture, and soil conservation. The faculty of the college also demonstrated great community service spirit through performing seminars on agricultural topics in various communities throughout the county.[22]

The AAA agents also promoted the creation of county cooperatives. They served as mediators between the farmers and local merchants to find new markets for farm products. Joint ventures between farmers and local business owners proved quite successful. Farmer Appreciation Week and other festive events organized by both farmers and local businesses enhanced the goodwill among all involved as well as promoted both to the public. AAA administrators also arranged credit for farmers with these merchants so that farmers could survive until the next harvest.[23]

For farmers in more serious need of financial assistance, the Emergency Farm Mortgage Act granted emergency loans to farmers whose farms were in jeopardy of foreclosure. Some county farmers saw this as an opportunity for a second chance and quickly agreed to the loan stipulations, which included following provisions for crop diversification and soil conservation measures, in order to receive aid from the EFMA. The Emergency Farm Mortgage Act agents rarely enforced such provisions, and not until passage of the AAA did the government penalize farmers for not adhering to its policies. Less than twenty percent of county farms refinanced their loans through the EFMA despite its low interest rates. Those who did use the service received between a thousand and five thousand dollars to settle their debts and to refinance their farms if they had been lost in foreclosure.[24]

Next, the Agricultural Adjustment Act, which primarily regulated agricultural production, increased the stability between supply and demand of agricultural crops which gradually raised the market price of such products. Across the state, the AAA paid farmers to plow under crops, reduce acreage, or switch to alternative crops in an attempt

to reduce the production of certain crops such as corn, cotton, and tobacco. In Jackson County, the AAA regulated the production of corn and hogs. AAA administrators believed that corn had been over-produced in the county for the past few years and that hog production had grown so rapidly since the beginning of 1933 that it would become unwieldy without strict production guidelines. Therefore, county agents persuaded corn growers to produce alternative crops and to plow under marginal land, but no one in the county recalled anyone having to plow under fields already planted.[25]

The drought conditions of the Midwest created grain shortages which forced AAA officials to reconsider some of their program's main tenets. The drought of 1933 and 1934 in the American Midwest threatened to create a "new American Desert," and though Jackson County did not directly feel the adverse effects of the drought, it did assist the county in recovering from the leaner years of the Depression. First, the drought forced AAA officials to relax demands for crop reduction; and it forced livestock farmers in those western states to relocate their cattle. By late July, 1934, the Federal Government assisted farmers in the Midwest in shipping cattle from the drought areas to the East where existed sufficient pasture land on which these cattle could graze until the end of the drought. Twenty-five thousand cattle were moved from the Midwest to Western North Carolina of which Jackson County received two thousand head. Area cattle farmers requested an additional one thousand head for the pasture land in Cullowhee and Tuckaseigee valleys. However, the second shipment never arrived because the train derailed and most of the cattle on board escaped or died in the derailment. Of the two thousand which reached Jackson County, some were sick to the point of death and others were so starved that they ate almost anything including thistle, poison sumac, poison ivy, buckeyes, and chestnut burs. As a result, many more cattle died shortly after disembarking from the train.[26]

The federal government paid land owners one dollar per month per head of cattle for fenced pasture and fifty cents per month per head of cattle for open range pasturing. Individual county farmers pastured as few as ten and as many as two hundred fifty cattle while Blackwood Lumber pastured almost a thousand cattle. Some farmers pooled their land in order to petition for more cattle, and in these larger open ranges, farmers had to construct camps to manage the care and movement of western cattle. Overall, western cattle brought about ten thousand dollars income into Jackson County, and for many farmers it provided the capital necessary to finance their own cattle farming.[27]

Another agricultural area which the New Deal influenced dealt with the construction of a kraut factory in Hamburg. June 15, 1934, Dr. H.T. Hunter, the president of Western Carolina Teachers College, recommended to the Tennessee Valley Authority Development Council that a kraut factory would be beneficial to the success of Jackson County farmers.[28]

Late in 1934, many county farmers banded together to create a cooperative, the Farm Federation, which stored, transported, and sold produce. The Farm Federation quickly constructed a warehouse and hammermill in Sylva. In two months, the Federation had the warehouse up and running, and in the first two weeks of operation it handled several tons of produce- mainly cabbage, potatoes, and green beans. The immediate success of the Farmers' Federation encouraged other area farmers and even local businesses to invest in the Federation's ultimate goal, the construction of a cannery adjacent to the warehouse and hammermill. To ensure the success of the cannery, the Farmers' Federation promoted the growing of vegetables suitable for canning especially two hundred additional acres of tomatoes. When the cannery opened in July 1935, it processed over ten tons of cabbage, approximately a ton of green beans, and large quantities of other vegetables. Area farmers enjoyed this new market, and local

businesses profited from inexpensive canned goods. It also employed women from the area, primarily the wives of farmers.[29] Another venture in canning occurred on the campus of Western Carolina Teachers College. With a greatly reduced operating budget, President H.T. Hunter sought to conserve money through canning the produce grown in the college's agriculture laboratory garden. The campus cannery proved so successful that Hunter urged area farmers to sell their produce to the college, and the cannery produced enough canned vegetables to supply the college cafeteria throughout the year.[30]

Jackson County faced two significant problems in agriculture: transportation of crops and livestock and the scarcity of workers after other New Deal programs took effect. Transportation problems had begun to plague the county during the Twenties when travel by automobile became prominent. Early road projects had been limited to main arteries connecting the county to the surrounding cities of Asheville, Bryson City, and Franklin. However, as agriculture grew more prosperous, farmers required secondary roads of higher quality to transport crops more rapidly and efficiently. With red clay cowpaths representing the only entrance and exit to some Jackson County communities, a trip into Sylva to sell farm goods often consumed the entire day. One WPA worker remembered pushing his Model T with his brothers at least a mile up a deeply rutted dirt road every day just to get to the work site. New Deal works projects greatly improved transportation through surfacing the main roads with asphalt and numerous secondary roads with gravel. WPA workers also widened and leveled many roads as well as adding ditches so that roads would not wash away.[31] Such projects better enabled farmers to transport their goods.

New Deal works programs put many of the county's men to work. Most of these men's primary occupation had been farming, and by 1934 farm prosperity and works projects created a demand for workers. Several New Deal programs cut back their number of laborers while some left the county entirely. Still, many farms in Jackson

County found it difficult to entice young men to work on the farm. One man commented that if he had been paid good money to pretend to dig a ditch, then he would have done it too rather than work on the farm.[32]

With men off laboring in the CCC, TVA, and WPA, women took the reins of many farms. They planted the crops, managed the finances, and conducted the daily business affecting the farm. Even in the fields, younger women found a place tending both crops and livestock while older girls watched over the younger siblings. One woman recalled, "We hoed the corn, milked the cows, and canned the vegetables. Nobody thought much of it. We had a job to do, and we did it."[33] During this time, women gained greater freedom on the farm; and much of the prosperity in agriculture should be attributed to the efforts of women. Indeed, women managed the affairs of almost thirty percent of Jackson County's farms during this time, which represents one of the county's most successful ever in agriculture.[34]

For the remainder of the Depression, agriculture in Jackson County prospered even though some programs like the AAA ceased to exist. Cooperatives like the Farmers' Federation enjoyed considerable success and even offered its stockholders six percent dividends. Local farmers, who had become more self-sufficient and productive, also enjoyed good times as agricultural prices rose throughout the remaining years of the decade. Even though money was often scarce, Jackson County farmers had clothes to wear, plenty to eat, and even some luxury items like coffee and sugar. So, the adage of "ten cent cotton, forty cent meat- how in hell can a poor farmer eat?" held no truth in Jackson County where the New Deal had built upon the successes of the 1920s to forge agricultural prosperity.[35]

ENDNOTES

[1] Frank Freidel, F.D.R. and the South (Baton Rouge: Lousianna State University Press, 1965), 9-13.

[2] Elliot Roosevelt, ed., Franklin Delano Roosevelt: His Personal Letters, 1928-1945 (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1950), 296.

[3] Ibid., 318.

[4] Anthony J. Badger, North Carolina and the New Deal (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1981), 13.

[5] Ibid., 15.

[6] The Ruralite, June 12, 1933; August 8, 1933. The Asheville Livestock Market comments on the need to improve livestock, and the county agent lauds the efforts of area farmers in ridding the county of scrub cattle.

[7] Ibid., September 26, 1933.

[8] Interview by the author with Neal Lewis, 28 June 1997.

[9] William Ernest Bird, The History of Western Carolina College: The Progress of an Idea (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Press, 1963), 172.

[10] The Ruralite, March 14, 1933; March 21, 1933.

[11] Ibid., January 24, 1933; September 26, 1933; November 28, 1933. From virtually non-existence in the 1920s, hog raising became a cental part of life in Jackson County. Businesses offered as much as twenty percent above market price for certain pure breeds, and news items such as "Seven Hundred Eighteen Pound Dressed Hog" occurred with some frequency in the local newspaper.

[12] The Jackson County Journal, June 14, 1934; The Ruralite, February 14, 1933; September 19, 1933; May 24, 1935.

[13] The Ruralite, March 14, 1933; The Jackson County Journal, January 12, 1928.

[14] Ibid., June 15, 1926; February 18, 1930; June 9, 1931.

[15] The Jackson County Journal, June 28, 1934; The Ruralite, March 14, 1933; March 14, 1933.

[16] The Ruralite, June 3, 1936; The Jackson County Journal, July 26, 1934.

[17] Ibid., January 10, 1933; January 16, 1934; The Asheville Citizen, January 22, 1933. In addition to these articles, all of the interviews listed in the bibliography provided information to support the emergence of crop diversification under New Deal policies.

[18] Interview by the author with Paul Buchanan, 12 January 1997.

[19] The Jackson County Journal, May 31, 1934; November 22, 1934; December 6, 1934; The Ruralite, January 29, 1935. These articles illustrate the emergence of tree farming in Jackson County through classes offered at the W.C.T.C. to employment offered in tree farming.

[20] Ibid., February 4, 1930; January 10, 1933; March 14, 1933.

[21] The Jackson County Journal, November 22, 1934.

[22] Bird, 175-177.

[23] The Jackson County Journal, June 14, 1934; July 26, 1934; August 30, 1934.

[24] The Ruralite, August 22, 1933; March 14, 1933; The Jackson County Journal, March 28, 1935.

[25] Ibid., January 16, 1934; February 13, 1934; May 24, 1934. The first two of these articles deal with the formation and regulations of the Agriculture Adjustment Act in relation to Jackson County while the third article explores the effect of the drought upon A.A.A. policies.

[26] The Jackson County Journal, June 28, 1934; July 12, 1934; The Ruralite, June 26, 1934. Jackson County farmers eagerly signed up to pasture Western cattle, and A.A.A. administrators charged Ralph Hunter and D.D. Davis to place the Western cattle in county farms.

[27] The Ruralite, July 10, 1934; January 8, 1934. The A.A.A. shipped the cattle to pastures in the West, and the final tally revealed that 1,684 cattle had been pastured in Jackson County.

[28] The Ruralite, June 19, 1934.

[29] The Jackson County Journal, August 30, 1934; December 6, 1934; The Ruralite, October 9, 1934. The Farmer's Federation operated at the grassroots level. The individual farmers controlled its activities in the county, and it proved to be a tremendous success for farmers and local businesses alike.

[30] Bird, The History of Western Carolina Teachers College, 174.

[31] Interview by the author with Neal Lewis, 28 June 1997.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Interview by the author with Tulin Ashe, 28 June 1997.

[34] The Asheville Citizen-Times, December 18, 1932.

[35] Ahlin, Social and Economic Conditions, 28.

CHAPTER 3

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

"It's more than a New Deal, it's a new world," stated Harold Ickes, Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior.[1] After more than two years of the Depression, many Americans had doubted both democracy and capitalism. Fear and hesitation marked the character of the nation as Franklin Delano Roosevelt took office. President Roosevelt understood that his first task must be to ease fear and to restore the nation's confidence. To accomplish this task, he developed a positive program which reflected the ideas of the progressive consensus in America, which was an belief shared by farmers and middle class America.[2]

Roosevelt strengthened this consensus. He appealed to other groups to put aside self-interest and to work together for the common good of the nation. He cast no blame on any particular group for the woes of the American economy, and thus, he avoided alienating any group. Indeed, the New Deal attempted to alleviate both the problems of the individual and of corporate America. Despite its contradictory nature, Roosevelt's New Deal signified the action desired by so many.

Furthermore, Franklin Roosevelt restored America's confidence in itself and its leaders. When he spoke, he did not use the vernacular of accountants and lawyers but rather of the common man. Roosevelt emphasized words like *trust, faith, and courage;* and he included himself with the masses of America. In his first fireside chat, he assured the people that their money was safe in the banks of the nation, and he used himself as an icon for the people to follow. "Our money is in the Poughkeepsie Bank....Let us unite in banishing fear....Together we cannot fail," stated President Roosevelt with a voice brimming in confidence in his people, the American citizens.[3] When Americans heard

these words they felt uplifted and close to their President. In spite of the distance between Roosevelt and the common American in terms of position and wealth, he related well to them. One Southern farmer said, "He was a man that could talk to you- he had sense enough to talk to a man who did not have any education, and he had sense enough to talk to the best educated man in the world."[4] More important, Roosevelt was sincerely interested in the people, and they could see this. Some even claimed that Franklin Roosevelt was "the biggest hearted man to ever occupy the White House."[5] This popularity of the President transcended both policy and party. In North Carolina, including Jackson County, his popularity translated into acceptance of the New Deal.

Beyond restoring faith, Roosevelt believed that America needed visible action by its leaders to combat the Depression. People desired action. Will Rogers, the comic voice of American sentiment, on the need for action said, "If Roosevelt burned down the capital, we would all cheer and say 'well, we at least got a fire started."[6] Thus, President Roosevelt pushed a great number of programs before Congress in a feverish attempt to demonstrate to the people that the government was indeed working to end the Depression. By one hundred days after his inauguration, the federal government had passed a record number of bills into law, and through this flurry of activity, it raised the confidence of many by showing them that the government had at the least made an effort to end their plight.

Franklin Roosevelt sought to accomplish five basic goals: the devaluation of the dollar to stimulate the stock market and trade; increased employment to provide relief for the jobless and to pump money into the economy; the alleviation of widespread poverty; federal industrial development of regions such as the Southeast which clearly lacked an industrial base; and finally, reformation of the methods by which business did business. The President attacked each of these objectives individually. Programs that addressed singular goals characterized much of the early New Deal program, and this buckshot

approach drew the ire of many New Deal opponents. They argued vehently against this, but the saving grace of such an approach was its immediate image of government action. Therefore, the public generally supported New Deal policy as in the case of the NRA.

Often programs paradoxically sought to accomplish conflicting objectives. For example, the National Recovery Act assisted big business but it also sought to improve the conditions of individual workers. The Economy Act and the closing of banks reduced inflation while the abolishment of the gold standard, the Public Works Administration, the Civil Works Administration increased inflation.[7] Some programs also challenged government tradition if not Constitutional Law. The National Industrial Recovery Act, for example, gave the federal government the power to intrude upon the operation of business and industry, and despite its good intent, the Supreme Court eventually struck it down as unconstitutional. On the other hand, another such program, Social Security, found permanent acceptance among Americans.

On the state level, government activity inspired the populace, but in terms of real achievement, the New Deal accomplished less in North Carolina than in most other states. North Carolina's New Deal began with a struggle between state and federal Democrats. North Carolina Democrats saw the New Deal as a tool to advance their agenda, which centered on maintaining the status quo. When federal officials sought to put New Deal programs into the hands of the people, state officials led by Josiah Bailey, a conservative, Democrat congressman, fought to control the kind of New Deal that North Carolina received.[8] As a result, North Carolina never received the full benefits of New Deal policy.

The National Industry Recovery Act which checked the downward spiral of wage cuts, falling demand of consumer products, and the reduction of worker rights, found initial support in North Carolina's two primary industries, textiles and tobacco. Many industrial leaders, however, feared the loss of control over workers; hence they

removed their support from the National Recovery Administration.[9] Created by the NIRA, the National Recovery Administration addressed many business problems. General Hugh Johnson, who headed the NRA, relied upon the consent of business leaders to attain compromise policies, codes, and enforcement authority. Johnson pushed for limitation of the work week, and he also encouraged business to incorporate a twelve dollar per week uniform minimum wage as opposed to eight dollars per week. Johnson also sponsored the elimination of child labor. Children represented a significant part of the work force in a number of mill towns though the Depression had greatly reduced this number. In Jackson County increased enrollment in schools attest to this.[10] Unfortunately, North Carolina's leading industries, tobacco and textiles, tried to manipulate NRA actions to benefit their business operations. The struggle between North Carolina's industrial leaders and NRA officials resulted in a stalemate. Then in 1935 the Supreme Court determined that the NRA was unconstitutional in Schechter Poultry Corporation v. United States decision.[11]

Another New Deal program, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, operated largely through North Carolina's existing programs and administration. Harry Hopkins, who headed FERA, offered North Carolina direct federal assistance and matching funds for relief of the impoverished. Governor Ehringhaus immediately organized several relief agencies and applied for matching funds. FERA then operated through these agencies or the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration as Governor J.C.B. Ehringhaus entitled them. From 1933 to 1935, FERA pumped 40.8 million dollars into NCERA for monthly relief assistance to three hundred thousand North Carolina citizens. These grants continued until works projects enabled those in need an opportunity to earn their relief payment. By the end of 1933, NCERA provided emergency relief payments primarily through the Civil Works Administration; and relief payments for CWA exceeded those granted by NCERA President Roosevelt himself had

stipulated this so that work would hold a greater appeal than just basic relief. In North Carolina this proved successful as the number of NCERA relief recipients declined while CWA relief payments grew in number. The Civil Works Administration assisted over 70,000 North Carolinians in less than one year, and numerous roads, schools, and sanitation facilities received much needed repairs through the efforts of the CWA It also employed over one thousand teachers as project administrators, clerks, and career advisors for those working in the CWA Most importantly, the NCERA and the CWA provided North Carolina with relief when distrust of the government had reached a climax which could have turned revolutionary.[12]

The CWA had begun the healing process, but the Works Progress Administration completed the the work of the New Deal. Artists, musicians, writers, and other professionals including academics found employment in the Works Progress Administration in areas related to their field. Artists designed logos and murals to beautify urban settings like museums and schools. Writers were given historical research preservation projects and numerous other assignments which allowed them to use their skills. The Works Progress Administration's greatest achievement lay in the construction of roads and highways, public parks, and public buildings. Overall, the W.P.A. spent 173.7 million dollars and employed nearly 40,000 workers across North Carolina, and the impact of of the W.P.A. can be seen through the thousands of miles of highway and the thousands of buildings constructed by the W.P.A. which still continue to be used today.[13]

Later, the New Deal addressed the problems facing the elderly and those who could not fend for themselves. Early in 1935, New Dealers passed the Social Security Act which provided for the security of the aged through insurance pensions. It also granted assistance for those who could not provide for themselves such as the blind and young children, and it offered unemployment insurance for those who could not find

work. The burden of implementation fell upon the states. Individual states received incentives and matching funds from Washington. The financial and bureaucratic strain of making the program work rested on the state government, and not until 1937 did North Carolina achieve the required federal guidelines.[14]

The combination of state and federal programs created confusion, primarily concerning the distribution of funds and the appointment of governing officials, on both state and national levels. State New Dealers sought to appoint friends and political allies while the national officials pursued individuals who were favorable to the national New Deal policy. The struggle to make appointments allowed some poorly qualified candidates to hold office, but for the most part, an equilibrium between the state and federal New Dealers allowed for the successful completion of most programs. Some like Mrs. Annie Berry, the head of the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration, proved the quality of her appointment through the impartial fulfillment of her duties. However, complaints about corruption, party favoritism, and ineptitude occurred frequently at local levels. Many complained that those receiving aid via the CWA or WPA did not deserve it as much as did certain others. In answer to numerous complaints and heavy Congressional demands, Harry Hopkins, the federal WPA director, appointed George Coan to lead North Carolina's Works Progress Administration. Coan performed adequately, but he used his position for the enhancement of the North Carolina Democratic Party. He gave employment and government positions primarily to Democrats, and he encouraged employees to campaign for Democrats Josiah Bailey for United States Senate and Clyde Hoey for North Carolina Governor. In addition, prior to the election of 1938, Western North Carolina Congressmen and legislators persuaded Coan to employ an additional one thousand workers to ensure successful elections.[15]

New Deal policies also offered many communities the foundation for future industrial prosperity. The Tennessee Valley Authority not only put many men to work,

but it planned and organized the construction of a network of dams and power producing facilities. Regulation of water flow reduced the number of damaging floods, and the production of electricity opened areas to large industrial businesses. The Rural Electrification Act followed and brought progress to Western North Carolina. The New Deal was successful across most of Western North Carolina.

New Deal policy in Jackson County first evinced itself in Roosevelt's Three Day Bank Holiday on March 7, 1933. Jackson County Bank officials advised the public that it would close in compliance with federal regulations and that it would reopen the following week. In spite of its sound finances, federal officials failed to grant Jackson County Bank permission to reopen until May, 1933 because of the high rate of bank failures in the region during the preceding year.[16] After reopening, the Jackson County Bank operated successfully for the duration of the Thirties and Forties. Later in the year even more good news came. Tuckaseigee Bank, which had failed because of the Depression and illegal banking practices, would reopen its doors, and those who had lost money in its collapse would be reimbursed. However, its shareholders bore the responsibility of paying this obligation, and they had to pay ten percent of the value of their own shares to cover the losses incurred by the bank. The survival of banking reassured many in Jackson County that they were on the trail of recovery, and this belief speeded the county's recovery by increasing the optimism of buyers as well as improving the people's faith in government.[17]

While the bank closings created concerns for the public and some measure of distrust, the appearance of the Blue Eagle pulled people together to fight the Depression. After the implementation of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933, Blue Eagle symbols, the sign of the National Recovery Administration, filled local newspapers and store display windows. Nearly all businesses in Sylva participated, and The Jackson County Journal lauded the efforts of area businesses for doing their part by embracing the

National Recovery Administration. Indeed, almost one hundred percent of county businesses supported it.

The passing of the National Industrial Recovery Act enabled the National Recovery Administration to check the growing plight of the worker by controlling certain aspects of businesses such as wage cutting and the length of the work week. The National Recovery Administration sought to increase employment , to establish minimum wages, and to stimulate the sluggish economy.[18]

Local business owners closely adhered to the regulations set forth by the National Recovery Administration, and displaying the "Blue Eagle" of the NRA became a matter of pride. Sylva's grocery, hardware, and dry goods stores reduced hours of operation, and took on additional employees when possible while larger industries like Sylva Paperboard created a new shift in order to take on more employees. Some businesses such as Parson's Tannery added new workers by reducing the work week of current employees. In this manner, two hundred additional jobs were created through the NRA in cooperation with county businesses.[19] Those in need cherished these NRA jobs because they represented a steady source of cash income. One individual recalled that those who obtained a job through the NRA often fared well because NRA jobs paid straight cash whereas a number of area businesses paid a combination wage of cash, script, or even trade credit. Both The Ruralite and The Jackson County Journal encouraged customers to trade and do business with those establishments that displayed the symbol. Some businesses such as Sylva Paperboard even performed above the expectations created by NRA officials. The acceptance of regulations and revolutionary reforms by county residents encouraged local government officials to create additional plans for recovery such as the organization of a chamber of commerce which would promote business ventures, tourism, and certain agricultural endeavors.[20]

By the autumn of 1934, the National Recovery Administration began to lose its sway in Jackson County not from corruption or ineffectiveness but rather because it was no longer needed. Increased tourism and an improved economy reduced the need for NRA programs. In fact, the Glenville-Hamburg area of the county faced a sore need for farm laborers, and all across the county requests for work dropped drastically. Thus, in spite of criticism from Clarence Darrow and the American Liberty League, the N.R.A. did not leave Jackson County in disgrace but quietly like the hero whose job is done.[21]

While the Bank Holiday and the National Industrial Recovery Act depict how New Deal policy directly influenced area industry and business, other, seemingly unaffected, industries felt the impact of the New Deal indirectly but no less significantly. Lumbering, for one, received little assistance in spite of being the county's largest industry at the time. Yet, the buyers of lumber and wood enjoyed New Deal support and maintained a steady demand for raw lumber and pulpwood.

Blackwood Lumber, the largest lumber operation in Jackson County, had ceased operations shortly after the Stock Market Crisis in 1929, but it had resumed limited operation early in 1932. Many anticipated that the complete resumption of operation would soon follow because of the tremendous building programs already begun by New Deal programs. However, the expected demand never occurred, and Blackwood never again enjoyed its former prosperity. Some attribute the lack of demand to be the result of too many suppliers. When Blackwood closed in 1929, it had enjoyed monopoly status; but during the interim, several smaller lumber mills emerged to vie for their share of the demand.

As a result, Blackwood Lumber arranged to sell pulpwood to Champion Paper and Fiber Company in Canton, North Carolina. Champion Paper offered to buy thirty five cords of pulpwood, but the drought conditions of 1933 dried streams used for

transporting the wood and made moving lumber slow and tedious.[22] The agreement between Blackwood and Champion fell through, but the idea sparked another possibility: providing pulpwood to Sylva Paperboard, which also used pulpwood for manufacturing paper. Even after reaching an agreement with Sylva Paperboard, Blackwood's mill operated at a fraction of the level at which it had operated before the Depression.

Indirectly, prosperity from the New Deal gradually increased demands for lumber, and later, Champion renewed its offer to purchase pulpwood from Blackwood. Champion Paper and Blackwood Lumber agreed upon forty cords daily. Sales of raw timber nearly tripled to almost two million feet in March and April of 1933, and for the first time since the onset of the Depression, Blackwood began new road construction to reach stands of virgin timber. The number of lumbering projects in Jackson County increased steadily throughout the Spring of 1934, and then the industry settled into a period of moderate growth.[23]

In January of 1934, the federal government offered to purchase 39,000 acres of land owned by Blaclwood Lumber, but the company rejected the offer on the grounds that it was a ridiculously low offer, only two and a half dollars per acre. The leadership of Blackwood Lumber, which strongly disliked President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal, attacked the government's offer to buy. They claimed, "It doesn't seem like a New Deal to us when the government offers such an alarmingly low price [for the 39,000 acres]".[24] Mead Corporation later bought the property at a similar price. At this time, Blackwood Lumber begain curtailing its operations. They removed railroad tracks in the Caney Fork area in October, 1934; and though company officials assured the workers that it was merely moving moving the tracks to areas unaccessable by truck, many saw the removal as the end of Blackwood Lumber Company. Lumbering continued with the use of heavy trucks, but the loss of the permanence greatly affected East LaPort, the heart of Blackwood's lumbering community. They saw this as the final days of large scale

lumbering, and many sought new occupations in other parts of the county. Smaller logging and lumbering operations continued to be profitable, but Blackwood's demise signaled the end of logging's heyday when almost ten percent of Jackson County citizens earned their livelihood by lumbering.[25]

After the brief surge following the New Deal, Blackwood Lumber entered a slow period of decline though not due to a faltering economy. While the local economy grew and fueled the faith of the people in the New Deal, poor decisions regarding personnel and the removal of its railroad network shook the faith of those who worked for and did business with Blackwood Lumber. Both workers and buyers moved over to the competition, which though smaller in size appeared more stable and often undersold Blackwood. Contributing to its problems, Jay Key, the owner of Blackwood Lumber Company, suffered an automobile accident which cost him his leg and forced his wife to manage lumbering operations. She knew little about the workings of a lumber company, and worse still, she trusted some for guidance who knew less than she. According to A.A. Edwards, one of Blackwood's last supervisors, "Mrs. Key hired all sorts of people who knew nothing of the woods or lumbering.... [These workers gave] advice that the timber supply was just about exhausted, which was not true, and Mrs. Key ceased operations when a great deal of lumber could still have been cut."[26] Within ten years, Blackwood Lumber completely shut down and except for abandoned logging camps, railroad beds where tracks had lain, and second growth forest in the midst of virgin timber, one might find it difficult to believe that the Blackwood Lumber Company had controlled a lumbering empire in Jackson County.

Other lumber companies emerged during this period, but none achieved the success that Blackwood had achieved. Jackson Log and Lumber Company harvested timber in the forests south beyond Blackwood Lumber's farthest holdings on a fifteen thousand acre tract located along Bear Creek. Jackson Log and Lumber never set up

permanent camp because it only intended to cut about six million feet of timber and then relocate to a new tract. Gennet Lumber Company purchased the tract on Wolf Mountain adjacent to the holding of Jackson Log and Lumber. Gennet harvested almost three and a half million feet of timber before it relocated, but more importantly, these two companies provided employment for those who had worked for Blackwood Lumber Company. Other small lumber companies such as C.W. Denning and Company and Boyce Lumber Company also produced several million board feet of lumber, but these two logging companies used a circular saw which produced an inferior cut to that of a band saw such as Blackwood and the larger logging operations used. These smaller logging companies also sold raw timber or timber which has not been kiln -dried. Most smaller operations operated within the family, and none achieved any permanence in the county but rather operated for only few years and then ceased operation.[27]

The New Deal could have possibly saved the lumber industry in Jackson County, but it did not. Some suggested that politics played a major role in lumbering. Those in both the southern and northern parts of the county looked to tourism as the next industry and chose to allow lumbering to relinquish its status as the leading industry in the county. Others suggested that New Dealers held aid from Blackwood Lumber because of its owners' anti-Roosevelt stance. Indeed, Mrs. Joseph Key swore, "If he's elected [Franklin D. Roosevelt], I'll shut this thing down, and it will never run another day."[28] Whether or not politics played a role in Blackwood Lumber Company's decline, relations between New Deal officials and Blackwood leadership were never warm. New Dealers only hinted that the quantity and quality of available timber made long term lumbering in Jackson County unfavorable. Regardless, by the end of the New Deal era only about twenty percent of those who had worked in the lumber industry still earned their living by logging and lumbering.

Another large industry in Jackson County, Parson's Tannery, operated successfully throughout the New Deal. Many New Deal programs positively influenced the operation of the tannery. Parson's Tannery processed raw leather hides, a lengthy and expensive process. Some hides required as much as a year curing time, and all through the Depression leather products were much in demand. As a result, Parson's Tannery maintained an average workforce of more than two hundred full time employees.[29] Those employed by Parson's Tannery lived comfortably in spite of the Depression. According to Luther Wike, "I had a brother-in-law who worked for the tannery. He never knew what a depression was like because he worked regular and was never laid off."[30] Another, a worker for the tannery, claimed that the work was hard and the hours long but that those were Hoover Days, and people were glad to have work.

Parson's remained successful because it directly reaped benefits from the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps, which operated under the War Department. Before the New Deal, the War Department had held several contracts with the tannery for leather, primarily for rifle straps and uniform belts; and with the CCC under the auspices of that department, the needs of the CCC naturally went to those companies which already provided them materials. Though CCC workers did not train for combat, they received physical training comparable to military recruits (often more difficult because of the resentment held by many in the Army because military recruits were paid fifteen dollars a month while CCC volunteers received thirty dollars per month), and their Army instructors often enforced strict uniform policies which required polished boots and belt. With thousands across North Carolina joining the CCC, demands for quality leather rose drastically; and in Sylva, the added demand forced Parson's Tannery to hire more full time workers. At the height of this influx of new workers, Parson's employed fully one hundred fifty men- not including all of those who sold acid wood to the company on a regular basis.[31]

However, workers at the tannery labored long hours for small wages. Some unskilled laborers earned only ten cents an hour, and their work included many unpleasant tasks working with raw hides and harsh chemicals in a sweltering environment. Skilled leather and electrical workers earned considerably more though they labored as hard. Few, however, that worked for the tannery felt the effects of the Depression. They had cash money, food, and clothing as employees of the tannery; and during this time few could ask for more.[32]

Others also reaped the benefits of the tannery's success. Area businesses enjoyed the money that it pumped into the economy, and area lumbermen sold over fifty thousand dollars of chestnut bark and acid wood to the tannery. Farmers and loggers earned extra income selling chestnut bark and acid wood for eleven dollars a cord. Numerous families participated in this industry.[33]

In 1937 Armour Leather Company bought the rights to Parson's Tannery, and it maintained its standing as one of the county's leading businesses. Armour Leather also initiated a campaign to emphasize its role as a significant contributor to the welfare of the county's economy. The campaign also urged Jackson County residents, especially those with direct ties to Armour, to buy only Armour products: leather, canned hams, and meats. Armour also gave some employees bonuses in the form of scrip which could be used to purchase Armour products.[34] By 1938, it appears that competition among area businesses for good employees had forced Armour to offer such incentives as bonuses. This is a testament to the impact of New Deal policies in providing employment for county residents.

The recession in 1937 little affected Armour Leather. Continued leather orders for New Deal projects and increased military demands maintained the demand for leather products. Armour added more workers and newer equipment again in 1938 to meet its growing sales. Shipping also became more effective as Armour added a railroad line to

speed the shipping of its products. As the Second World War approached, Armour enjoyed numerous military orders for leather products, and its need for New Deal assistance dwindled. However, the impact of the New Deal on the tannery in Jackson County had been great.[35]

Another significant industry in Jackson County was the manufacturing of paper products. Sylva Paperboard emerged during the Depression as one of the county's most influential businesses economically. Though operational difficulties plagued its inital years, the growing experience and ingenuity of workers ironed out these problems to make Sylva Paperboard an efficient operation. By September of 1933, New Deal policies in the form of the National Industrial Recovery Act had begun to influence the operation of Sylva Paperboard. The National Recovery Administration set guidelines for operation, and Sylva Paperboard followed these guidelines without voicing any opposition in spite of the increased expenditures required under the N.R.A. guidelines.

Most of the regulations suggested by the National Recovery Administration concerned employment of workers. The first of these required Sylva Paperboard to employ an additional forty workers, and though reduced individual employee hours per week provided some new positions, most occurred through Sylva Paperboard's thirty-three percent increase in payroll. Shortly thereafter, the N.R.A. enacted a forty hour work week with overtime pay of one and a half times the standard pay, and it established a minimum wage which increased the average worker's pay by twenty percent. Workers now earned more money and generally worked fewer hours. These National Recovery Administration reforms improved the economy in Sylva by employing more workers and pumping money into the town's economy.[36]

Later, in 1934 newer technology, the Bauer Mill, increased productivity; and Sylva Paperboard began earning its first significant profits. Employment now included

nearly one hundred fifty full and part time employees. Like Parson's Tannery /Armour Leather, Sylva Paperboard bought large quantities of raw materials, pulpwood, and supplies from area lumbermen and businesses, which boosted the local economy considerably.

Sylva Paperboard grew steadily until the recession of 1937 when operations slowed to a halt. After but one month, the factory commenced near normal operation. However, Paul Ellis, the operations manager, said that he was unsure whether the factory would be able to maintain a regular schedule or not. Sylva Paperboard also stopped buying raw materials in an effort to alleviate the financial strain on the company. Company officials announced that the primary reason for halting new purchases arose from an over-abundance of raw materials such as pulpwood.[37]

By late summer, all signs of recession had disappeared, and the factory resumed completely normal operations including the purchasing of pulpwood. In a reversal of the spring recession, demands for paper in the fall swamped Sylva Paperboard but also renewed the prosperity that it had enjoyed throughout the New Deal era.

Many who have written on this period in Jackson County's history such as Bjorn Ahlin have attributed the relatively mild Depression in this county to the success of Sylva Paperboard. Not only did the factory provide several hundred people with employment both as workers in the factory and suppliers of pulpwood, but it also played an integral role in the county's economy. Though the New Deal policies did not directly increase the success of Sylva Paperboard, these policies did allow more people to share in these successes by encouraging higher minimum wages, a standard forty hour work week, and the addition of more employees.

In addition to Sylva Paperboard, Armour Leather, and Blackwood Lumber, Jackson County had several smaller industries- most of which extracted natural resources. Mining, once one of the industrial mainstays of the county, entered the Depression in a

decline. Increased technologies and more advanced materials replaced the need for mica and feldspar, two of the primary minerals extracted in Jackson County. Higher grades of kaolin in neighboring counties reduced the amounts mined in Jackson County mines, which many believed had already played out. Mining for chrome along Dark Ridge also played out during the early part of the Depression. These mines produced only about fifty tons of ore after 1930. The Depression itself ended copper mining in the county. As prices for metals dropped, the investment required to produce even modest amounts of copper from the Cullowhee mine outweighed any possible returns; and the cooper mine in Cullowhee closed down never to open again.[38] Some considered the decline of the mining industry as one of the factors contributing to Depression conditions in Jackson County.

After the advent of the New Deal, mining occurred on a small scale with little input from the government. Some mica, feldspar, and vermiculite continued to be mined, but many of those who mined for a living sought work through New Deal agencies. Some continued to work at the local mine while also working relief jobs for the WPA or PWA, but most entirely abandoned mining. The discovery of a rich vein of vermiculite several miles long and approximately twenty-four feet wide on a tract of land in Tuckaseigee restored some interest in mining, but few desired to give up newly acquired New Deal employment to return to the mines.[39] Mining had become less profitable and more strenuous than PWA, WPA, or CCC work. As a result, the New Deal hastened the decline of the mining industry in Jackson County.

With lumbering and mining on the decline, Jackson County business leaders turned to an industry which arose from the ashes of the Depression to become one of the most important during the New Dea era. Though tourism had been of some importance before the New Deal, the inaccessibility of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which had been created in 1930, made travel to the mountains less attractive to some

tourists. Those who did venture into the mountains generally drove to a resort and more or less stayed there for the duration of their vacation because narrow, winding roads inhibited comfortable travel. As a result, tourism never reached its potential.

The improvement of highways and the construction of new roads especially those which ran near and through the Great Smoky Mountains Parkway proved boons to tourism in Jackson County. Before the Depression, only a few boarding houses and bed and breakfasts could be found in Jackson County, and those were located primarily in the Southern part of the county. Tourism in the county was also hindered by the inability of tourists to travel from one part of the county to another. Travel from Cashiers to Sylva required almost a quarter of a day and was best not attempted in poor conditions. However, the WPA paving project which connected the northern and southern ends of the county allowed tourists to travel more easily within the county. As roads improved and tourism increased, local entrepreneurs took full advantage and added amenities and more quality lodging to existing resort areas.[40]

Under Roosevelt's guiding hand and the work done by New Deal programs, the Great Smoky Mountain National Park blossomed into one of America's most visited parks in just a few years. Roosevelt, who had visited the park in its infancy, pumped over 1.5 million dollars into parkway additions and further road improvements. Works Progress Administration and Civil Conservation Corps workers constructed nature trails, rest areas, and fire towers (Forest fires during this period were common and often destroyed homes and barns located near forest areas).[41] After the completion of the road connecting North Carolina and Tennessee through the park, the numbers of people traveling through the park nearly doubled; and following years saw increases of no less than twenty-five percent.

The thousands of tourists visiting the Great Smoky Mountain National Park through Jackson County brought much cash into the local economy. Gas and service

stations, hotels and boarding houses flourished. Even Western Carolina Teachers College profited by holding summer camps and renting dorm rooms to vacationers. Restaurants, and a host of other businesses also benefited from the influx of tourists. New businesses arose in the tourist industry. Articles in local newspapers advertised recreational park tours, hiking and fishing trips, and for the independent adventurer, maps of the area and the park.[42] Before the end of 1933, businesses and community leaders in Sylva established a chamber of commerce to publicize all that Sylva had to offer the tourist; and by 1935, tourism had swelled to such numbers that during the summer months available hotel rooms were nonexistent. Hugh Monteith, the secretary for the Sylva Chamber of Commerce, reported that requests for information regarding tourism had far surpassed any previous year. Local hotels and boarding houses reported that the number lodging in the county had made 1935 one of the best years for tourism ever.[43]

Increased tourism stimulated building and construction activities across the county. Tourism before the New Deal had been based in South Jackson County, but now construction crews and independent builders were at work on new hotels and boarding houses in all parts the county. The few hotels which had closed during the lean years of the Depression, such as the Lloyd Hotel in Sylva, reopened though under new ownership. In the Spring of 1934, two motor lodges, the Riverside Tourist Court and the Old Mill Inn, opened in Sylva. Each of these motor lodges consisted of a service station which included a small restaurant and several cabins. Several boarding houses ranging in size from four to eight rooms also opened, and by 1938 these had been joined by another two motor lodges and several more bed and breakfast style inns. Over-night Sylva developed into something of a tourist town.[44]

Cashiers, on the other hand, had long been a haven for tourists. Sheer granite rock faces and pristine mountain streams made it an idyllic resort town. Numerous boarding houses and inns attained widespread popularity among visitors. The most

popular of these resorts, the High Hampton Inn, which was operated by E.L. McKee, enjoyed many patrons for its rustic beauty and rich historic heritage as the summer home for General Wade Hampton of Civil War fame. E.L. McKee purchased the property in 1924 and began limited guest lodging during the summer months. After the main structure burned to the ground in 1932, McKee rebuilt the inn and remodeled the outlying buildings and two rental cottages with the twenty-seven thousand dollars recouped from insurance for the fire.[45] With personal money and loans, McKee upgraded the amenities to include swimming and tennis facilities in addition to golf. After it reopened in 1934, High Hampton Inn offered guests a beautiful golf course, hiking trails, fishing and boating on the newly constructed lake, and open-hall dancing. These projects provided carpenters, landscapers, and laborers steady employment for nearly a year and in some cases permanent employment at jobs as diverse as hotel porter and golf course maintenance workers. Overall, E.L. McKee pumped approximately thirty thousand dollars into the local economy through the construction of the hotel at High Hampton Inn; but the effort proved successful in drawing large numbers of tourists to the resort.[46]

Other resorts, like Fairfield Inn in Sapphire Valley, emulated the changes made by High Hampton Inn and also enjoyed the patronage of many tourists. Fairfield Inn offered its guests swimming, boating, hiking and golf as well as the services of a summer camp for girls. By contrast, Whiteside Cove catered to an older clientele with its elegant inn, the Alexander House, and its raw scenic beauty. It offered few amenities. However, one of these, a small, pleasant restaurant nestled amidst several walking trails, made Whiteside Cove attractive to many of its guests.

All across Jackson County, tourism exploded as an industry as is in evidence from the great number of tourist related businesses which sprung up during this time. The Fowler House at Glenville, Jarrett Springs Hotel in Dillsboro, and the Pioneer Lodge near Wolf Mountain represent a few of the more successful boarding houses operating at

this time. Each of these establishments served large numbers of guests all through the tourist season.

The Jarrett Springs Hotel and the Fowler House served excellent meals on which they prided themselves. Mark Jarrett, the owner of the Jarrett Springs Hotel, offered buffet style country cooking which included his own sugar-cured hams. Meals at the Jarrett House consisted of large quantities of simple country fare, and guests shared the experience of dining at Jarrett Springs Hotel with others. Before the end of the 1930s, the hotel enjoyed a tremendous reputation as one of the areas finest eating establishments. The Fowler House also enjoyed prosperity during the New Deal era. William "Mack" McDuffie Fowler turned the home of his family into a boarding house for tourists in the early part of the century, and through gradual expansion it came to accomodate ninety guests, mostly honeymooners. The Fowler House offered the latest in technology with the first indoor plumbing, electric lights, and telephone in Glenville; but hospitality and comfort made the Fowler House a success with its guests- among whom included the King and Queen of Liechtenstein, who honeymooned there in 1939.[47]

Booming tourism also posed a number of problems for Jackson County. The increased traffic across mountain roads created numerous hazards. Mountain roads followed the terrain, which was often steep and winding. Most roads also tended to be narrow, and all but the main arteries were gravel or packed dirt. Rain and poor weather conditions impeded travel and in some cases made it impossible. Many roads were nothing more than cowpaths or logging trails. Vehicles using the same road at the same time ran the risk of collision, and in poor weather many vehicles bogged down or turned over on the uneven terrain. Furthermore, automobiles of the Thirties lacked safety equipment, and many involved in automobile accidents died or received severe injuries. The absence of basic motor vehicle laws and regulations also contributed to the problem.

The local newspapers alerted the public of such dangers many times during the tourist season and cautioned the people to use prudence when driving.

New Deal programs like the Works Progress Administration and the Civil Works Administration performed various road improvement and maintaintenance projects. Workers filled ruts and gullies, widened roads, and cut drainage ditches as well as banked and graveled roads. WPA and Civilian Conservation Corps workers also built scenic overlooks and picnic areas along the parkway, and they built stone embankment along the edge of cliffs. These New Deal projects reduced some of the effects of the overpopulated mountain highways.[48]

The improved roads ended the isolation of much of the county. Ideas flowed into the county with the onrush of tourists. Artists, authors, kings and queens came to Jackson County to vacation and with them came change. In 1936 and again in 1937, the greatest of those bringing change visited the county, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.[49] Roosevelt like the millions of other tourists came to visit the scenic beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and approximately seven thousand lined the streets of Sylva to cheer as he passed through the town. For good or ill, his New Deal had closed the doors on two of the county's leading industries, mining and lumbering, by opening the door for tourism.

From its humble beginning in Jackson County during the Twenties, the automobile industry evolved into an influential industry during the latter part of the Depression. Growth of tourism and the replacement of some railways with roads and motorized vehicles ensured the success of the auto industry and other related businesses.The low prices for automobiles brought about by the Depression enabled those with money to purchase one more easily, and by 1939, the number of automobiles in Jackson County had tripled since the beginning of the New Deal in 1933.

The increased number of autos on the roads encouraged the operation of fuel stations and repair centers. Businesses which focused entirely upon automotive services replaced the drug store gas pump, and competition among such businesses forced specialization. Some stations dealt only with changing or repairing tires, fixing and painting damaged auto bodies, or maintaining or repairing engines. By September of 1933, J.C. Cannon, L.H. Cannon, and M.B. Cannon had opened a Shell Oil Service Station, the first chain service station in Jackson County. It offered fuel and oil as well as the service of "three automotive specialists trained by a Shell representative."[50] Not much later, Gulf brought its service station to Sylva; and before the close of 1935, another chain service station and several privately owned stations operated in the Sylva and Cullowhee area with two more located in the Glenville-Cashiers area. Sylva also boasted two tire replacement and repair centers and an automobile body shop. Between fifty and a hundred people found employment in the automobile service industry.

In June of 1934, R. Moore began Sylva's first taxi service. The taxi service covered the Sylva area and occasional trips to Cullowhee. Moore also used a telephone for pick-up service and deliveries. Since that time several other taxi services have operated in Sylva, but the taxi service has changed little since Moore ran his service.[51]

New Deal optimism translated into increased automobile sales in Jackson County. Chevrolet and Ford already had dealerships in Sylva and Cullowhee before the New Deal, but it was not until the New Deal that Dodge, Plymouth, and Oldsmobile opened dealerships in Jackson County. Samuel Cogdill brought the Dodge and Plymouth trademarks to Sylva in 1934, and Daniel Allison opened Allison's Incorporated, an Oldsmobile and Harvester dealership, in 1936.[52] Sales of automobiles proved lucrative for the remainder of the Thirties, but new automobile prices also rose gradually until the outbreak of World War II. Several used car dealerships also emerged as New Deal

policies maintained a steady flow of money into the county. Many of these dealerships, however, lacked any permanence, and they closed or changed owners with some frequency. Overall, the New Deal brought the prosperity required for success in the automobile industry, but it did little to direct the growth of the automobile industry.

Merchants also benefited from the prosperity brought by the New Deal. Such businesses as the Sylva Supply restored credit to its customers and encouraged area farmers to bring their goods to barter or sell. Paris Department Store and Leader Department Store increased their line of products which illustrated the strength of the local economy. New businesses also opened with some frequency though many were only short term operations. One significant new business, Schulman's Department Store, focused on luxury and designer clothing. Some suggested that Sylva's small town economy could not support a luxury clothing store, but Sol Schulman, the owner of Schulman's Department Store, successfully attracted business; and Schulman's developed a fine reputation for both quality clothing and friendly service.[53] Other businesses also emerged and operated successfully, and today many of these businesses still do business in Jackson County.

Overall, the New Deal instigated change into the business community of Jackson County. Some change occurred directly, like regulations on minimum wages and standardization of the work week, while others occurred as a result of other factors such as the rise of the tourist industry growing from the combination of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and W.P.A. road improvement projects. The New Deal transformed Jackson County from a county dependent on the exploitation of its natural resources (lumber and minerals) to one which produced finished products (paper and leather). The population of Jackson County also moved closer to a service oriented economy as tourism expanded; and it became more urban with the growth of industry.

The most important contribution of the New Deal, however, was the return of prosperity.

ENDNOTES

[1] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal (Cambridge: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1959), 22.

[2] Frank Freidel, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the South (Baton Rouge: Lousiana State University Press, 1965), 22.

[3] Schlesinger, 12-13.

[4] Freidel, 14.

[5] Douglas Carl Abrams, Conservative Constraints: North Carolina and the New Deal (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1992), 43.

[6] Schlesinger, 13.

[7] Elliot Roosevelt, ed., F.D.R.: His Personal Letters, 1928-1945 (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1950), 318.

[8] Abrams, 48.

[9] Anthony J. Badger, North Carolina and the New Deal (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1981), 29-30.

[10] Abrams, 45.

[11] Badger, 36.

[12] Ibid., 40.

[13] Ibid., 40-41.

[14] Ibid., 41-42.

[15] Ibid., 44.

[16] The Ruralite, March 14, 1933.

[17] Max R. Williams, ed., The History of Jackson County (Sylva: The Jackson County Historical Association, 1987), 210-211.

[18] The Ruralite, August 8, 1933; The Ruralite August 15, 1933.

[19] The Ruralite, September 19, 1933. Businesses promoted the actions of the N.R.A., and a spirit of cooperative, competition existed. Local businesses worked together to enforce regulations and to restore prosperity, and yet, the N.R.A. generated friendly competition among businesses in areas which helped the community such as making jobs available.

[20] The Jackson County Journal, July 19, 1934. Some county leaders recognized the significance of tourism and sought to promote it early on. The creation of the Chamber of Commerce represents just one example of their progressive thinking.

[21] The Jackson County Journal, September 27, 1934. Farming communities faced dire shortages of laborers. Greater than normal crop acreage and the large number of men working for wages brought on the shortage.

[22] The Ruralite, May 2, 1933.

[23] Ibid., August 15, 1933. Jackson County possessed a wealth in timber especially in the southern part of the county. However, many of these tracts were inaccessable or impracticle to lumbering because they lacked roads and streams (Streams were vital in transporting the lumber).

[24] Ibid., January 23, 1934.

[25] Ibid., October 30, 1934.

[26] Bjorn Ahlin, "Social and Economic Conditions In Jackson County During the Depression" (Cullowhee: Western Carolina University Press, 1971), 18.

[27] Ibid., 18-19.

[28] Ibid., 16.

[29] Williams, 164.

[30] Luther Wike, Interview by Bjorn Ahlin, December 14, 1969.

[31] The Ruralite, June 6, 1933.

[32] Williams, 451.

[33] The Ruralite, July 13, 1934.

[34] The Jackson County Journal, January 7, 1937.

[35] Ibid., January 20, 1938.

[36] The Ruralite, September, 1933.

[37] The Jackson County Journal, February 3, 1938.

[38] Williams, 158.

[39] The Ruralite, September 19, 1933. Mining was also a dangerous occupation. Many miners worked twelve or more hours a day in all kinds of conditions using the most rudimentry tools and methods.

[40] The Ruralite, May 16, 1933; July 4, 1933.

[41] Ibid., November 28, 1933.

[42] Ibid., August 8, 1933.

[43] Ibid., June 18, 1935.

[44] Ibid., January 10, 1933.

[45] Ibid., May 10, 1932.

[46] Ibid., June 21, 1932; November 1, 1932.

[47] The Jackson County Genealogical Society, Jackson County Heritage: North Carolina (Waynesville: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1992), 244.

[48] The Ruralite, November 28, 1933; December 19, 1933.

[49] The Jackson County Journal, April 5, 1937.

[50] Ibid., September 12, 1933.

[51] The Jackson County Journal, June 28, 1934.

[52] Williams, 173.

[53] Interview by the author with Sol Schulman. July 17, 1997. Though Sol Schulman has a fine mind for business, he has always placed great emphasis on the well-being of his community as can be seen through his years of service to it both physically and financially.

CHAPTER 4

RELIEF DURING THE NEW DEAL

Conditions in Jackson County prior to the New Deal had gradually worsened until a majority of the people in the county lived below the poverty level. Though conditions in Jackson County existed at levels considerably better than in neighboring counties and in many areas across the state and nation, by the winter of 1932, local county relief agencies had spent all of their funds; and they could only offer government flour through the Red Cross. Dr. Wayne McGuire, the head of the Jackson County Welfare Committee, alerted County officials that the demand for relief flour had increased to the point that an impending shortage was inevitable.[1] Local relief agencies had reached the end of their resources, and still no end of the Depression was in sight.

More bad news hit the Welfare Committee in the spring of 1933. The Red Cross informed them that it could no longer supply the poor with seed for next season's crops.[2] Furthermore, salary cuts for employees at Western Carolina Teachers College, Sylva Paperboard, and other area businesses meant that the numbers requiring aid would continue to grow; and in spite of the optimism that increased road construction in the area would bring numerous jobs to the county, no new ones had been forthcoming.[3] It appeared that the Depression had finally struck in Jackson County.

Though conditions in some areas of the nation spawned revolutionary sentiments, in Jackson County people only worried about survival and taking care of themselves. While some like Henry Ford, the automobile mogul, believed that relief to the poor should trickle down from relief given to businesses and corporations, other leaders of industry found ways to provide relief. Ford also argued against direct relief programs:

> It's the best education in the world for these boys [poor boys], that traveling around [searching for work]. They get more experience in a few months than they would in years of school.[4]

However, few young men in Jackson County ventured far searching for work because employment, especially during the summer months, could be found albeit not on a consistant basis. Employment during the winter months was scarce. Workers received low wages as a rule, but in the agrarian communities of the county, such wages supplied their needs if only barely. Ties of tradition and family bound the young men of the county to their communities, and though they did not roam the countryside as Ford suggested, they did need education to grow out of poverty.

With November came the presidential election, and few doubted its outcome. The nation overwhelmingly voted in Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his New Deal. Jackson County citizens along with the rest of the nation anxiously awaited the inception of new leadership. Almost immediately after the inauguration, relief programs came to Jackson County. Several hundred young men received Civilian Conservation Corps work while many others used the recently established National Re-employment Service in Sylva to find employment. Over three hundred applied for jobs through the re-employment service, and in just a short time, it matched up many job seekers with employment opportunities. The National Re-employment Service rapidly reduced the number of unemployed persons in the county.[5]

The New Deal offered several solutions for relieving the poor. Over five hundred million dollars was pumped into direct relief via the Federal Emergency Relief Administration for North Carolina's poor. North Carolina received two hundred fifty million of this without strings attached while the remainder had to be matched by funds from the state.[6] The Democratic leadership of North Carolina, however, had great difficulty in appropriating the necessary funds to free up the grant money of the federal

government, and thus, the state government delayed these funds because Governor J.C.B. Ehringhaus feared leaving the budget unbalanced.

A large pool of surplus labor existed across North Carolina. Farmers who depended upon cotton and tobacco found themselves deep in poverty while the trickle down relief programs of the Hoover Administration little affected them. Owners of small farms and mill workers received next to nothing in terms of aid, and the landed aristocracy opposed tenant purchase and resettlement programs, which enabled tenant and small farmers to accrue land for their own farms. In addition, state leaders like Josiah Bailey argued against New Deal plans which brought relief directly to North Carolina's poor because he viewed it as a threat to his powerful supporters, the owners of large farms and mills.[7] Even North Carolina's governors during this period rejected greater New Deal grants of aid for fear that it would loosen their hold on the power that enabled them to remain in office. As a result, of all the states in the Union, only Virginia received less Federal Emergency Relief Administration funding; and no state received less Works Progress Administration funding than North Carolina.[8] North Carolina also ranked the lowest in the number of relief projects and relief jobs per percentage of population.

North Carolina also lagged in developing a policy for providing welfare to the poor and elderly. The federal government passed the unemployment provision of the Social Security Act down to the state government to work out a means of implementation before the deadline of December of 1936, but fearing that the program might jeopardize his balanced budget, Governor John Blucher Ehringhaus refused to call a special session of the legislature to establish plans for distribution of the unemployment compensation.[9] Later in a biographical piece on Governor Ehringhaus, Douglass Abrams concluded that "Governor Ehringhaus worshiped 'the Great God Boodgit'" because he fought so hard against fiscal policies which favored relief, employment, and the regulation of business.[10]

Some of North Carolina's congressional leadership, however, believed that North Carolina could receive a "Little New Deal"; but it never materialized because the views about relief of the Democratic leadership of North Carolina differed so drastically with those of Roosevelt and his New Dealers.

Yet, relief was the theme of the New Deal. Franklin D. Roosevelt himself proclaimed that "the primary task [of the New Deal] is to put people to work," and during the first one hundred days, most of the New Deal programs enacted dealt with the immediate relief of impoverished people.[11] Few in Congress believed handouts would solve the nation's woes, but most agreed that the poor of America required urgent assistance. People needed money, food, and understanding. Franklin Roosevelt provided all of these. He sponsored numerous loans and public works programs, but of equal importance , he let the American people know that he understood their plight.

Within the first thirty days of taking office, Roosevelt established the Civilian Conservation Corps which employed single males between the ages of seventeen and twenty-eight.[12] Another organization, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, assisted those without employment and those who were unemployable such as the elderly. FERA provided the needy with food and clothing, and later it organized the Civilian Works Administration to provide temporary employment to those in dire need.[13] Harry Hopkins, the head of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, fostered the CWA; and though it paid workers low wages, it provided relief work until one could find better employment. Those employed by the Civilian Works Administration performed trivial tasks such as picking up litter and mowing grass, but it fulfilled Hopkin's goal of providing relief immediately.[14]

The Civilian Works Administration created hundreds of jobs in Jackson County. Its sole purpose was to ease the poverty of the Depression through the creation of jobs,

and it did accomplish this though its actions often appeared without reason. Some reported that its leaders were chosen solely on the benefit of family name and political standing within the county and that many of the CWA supervisors lacked the skills to accomplish the simplest of tasks. Workers complained that job assignments made little sense. Workers in one community such as Savannah received job assignments across the county in the Balsam community while those from that community worked in a community adjacent to Savannah. Others reported that their employment skills had been neglected or overlooked because skilled workers sometimes received menial labor while unskilled workers received training to perform a task in which other workers were already adept. Finally, some CWA projects lacked purpose or reason. Yet, few rejected the labor, and many of the projects benefited the county.[15]

One of the few Civil Works Administration projects which did seem to follow a plan dealt with the control of forest fires in the county. Some of the first CWA workers in Jackson County received training in spotting and fighting forest fires, and later they received training in the prevention of forest fires.[16] The construction of firebreaks and firetowers in the forests of the county were especially beneficial in reducing the number and severity of forest fires in the county.[17]

Another successful undertaking of the Civil Works Administration concerned educating the illiterate and unskilled. In Jackson County, unemployed teachers received training at Western Carolina Teachers College and were re-employed to teach adult education classes. These classes ran for four month intervals, and they taught illiterate adults reading, math, vocational skills, and home economics.[18] The goal of the program was to reduce the illiteracy rate and the unemployment rate while teaching adults the skills necessary to function efficiently in a modern economic society.

Other problems tied to the lack of organization within the Civil Works Administration included work conditions, wages, and determination of hours worked.

Some workers worked in the bitter cold without proper clothing. Most of the projects required working outside in the weather, and some of the poorer workers lacked coats, jackets, and mittens. A few employed by the Civil Works Administration refused to work regardless of the weather or the task, but all received pay. Some complained that certain crews accomplished almost nothing but received the same wages as other work crews who consistently completed their tasks. Such problems led to the replacement of the Civil Works Administration by the Works Progress Administration.[19]

Before the close of 1933, over three hundred men and a few women had found employment in the Civilian Works Administration. Their wages ranged from one to two dollars per day. Men performed basic maintenance, litter pick up, and grounds work around public buildings while women sewed clothes and quilts for the destitute and elderly. Overall, the CWA brought sixty-eight thousand dollars to the economy of Jackson County ($65,000 in wages and $3000 in supplies and construction materials).[20] Three hundred twenty-six workers received some wages from the CWA, which supplemented their incomes enough to enable them to buy the necessities: flour, potatoes, and beans.

The Public Works Administration and Works Progress Administration followed the Civilian Works Administration. The PWA and WPA provided employment for those still without jobs. These programs undertook more significant projects than did the Civilian Works Administration, and they focused on longer term employment rather than immediate assistance. The PWA and WPA encompassed more than 34,000 separate projects across the United States. These included the construction of bridges, airports, hospitals, and military bases as well as numerous ships for the Navy (including two of its first aircraft carriers).[21] One hundred twenty-five men enjoyed full time employment while others received some part-time employment, and the building projects of these programs also added jobs indirectly to the local economy through providing construction

materials to the project sites. The WPA and the PWA created over five hundred jobs in the county, and the Re-employment Service located another two hundred jobs for the unemployed of the county. Each of these programs operated much more effectively than did the CWA, and most workers seemed more or less satisfied with the work that they performed for these administrations.[22] The success of these measures cannot be questioned in that by May of 1934 the Re-employment Service office had relocated to Swain County because too few had applied in Jackson County.[23]

Other programs which provided relief included the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), which provided loans to home owners who faced foreclosure. Those home owners who applied for HOLC loans had to prove their need for assistance before they could receive a loan, but the HOLC generally approved low interest loans for most applicants.[24] By 1935 the Social Security Act offered assistance for those too young or too old to work as well as to individuals with disabilities which prevented them from working. Though it did not include agriculture workers and domestics, the Social Security Act of 1935 extended to more Americans than any other New Deal legislation. It provided assistance to groups that lacked coverage under any other plan, primarily children and the aged.[25]

The second phase of the New Deal began in January of 1934 when the Re-employment Service organized the registration of the remaining unemployed persons in the county. By the close of 1933, the Re-employment Service had found jobs for its initial registrants and had discovered a surplus of available, local jobs. Almost five hundred applied with the service at this time, and for those whom they found no employment, the Re-employment Service furnished bushels of seed potatoes and seed corn. The Re-employment Service officials explained that they could grow food until employment could be located for them.[26]

The National Recovery Administration offered additional employment opportunities through area businesses. It helped these businesses to adjust their work week and hours of operation in order to take on additional employees. The NRA also offered incentives to businesses to create extra employment opprtunities. Unfortunately, some businesses accomplished this through reducing the wages of those already employed. Most local businesses, however, supported the NRA wholeheartedly. Sylva Paperboard, for instance, increased its payroll to add another shift of workers; and the need for relief in 1934 waned as New Deal works projects employed almost a thousand Jackson County citizens.[27] New projects at Western Carolina Teachers College, the Breese Gymnasium complex, and in Sylva, the Jackson County Pool and Recreation facility allowed the Works Progress Administration to maintain a large force of workers through 1935. By that time, all but nine persons seeking employment had located employment.[28]

Federal and state relief programs through the New Deal had ended the depressed conditions prevalent in 1932, but in doing so, local relief organizations had been replaced by government ones. Local relief organizations no longer played a significant role in providing relief. Churches, the Parent Teacher Association, and the Jackson County Welfare Committee ceased or limited their relief outreach, and none of these organizations furnished relief as extensively as it had before the Depression.[29] With so many needing assistance, money for relief was scarce; and relief organizations could no longer meet the needs of the poor. Some of these agencies for relief looked for financial support from outside of the county. Churches, especially, believed that it was no longer their sole responsibility to dispense relief. Indeed, many now believed that the government held responsibility to provide relief for its citizens.

By 1935, many across the county believed that the Depression had run its course. Works Progress Administration workers earned two to five dollars per day with the work

day being about seven hours. Though Works Progress Administration wages still did not compete with those paid by Sylva Paperboard or Armour Tannery, WPA wages exceeded those of many workers and compared favorably to the earnings of moderately successful farmers. Over six hundred men and one hundred women worked on five major WPA projects and numerous smaller activities within the county.[30]

Businesses and farmers began to complain about the scarcity of quality labor during the summer of 1935. Some business owners remarked that they could not compete with the wages offered by the Works Progress Administration, and the owners of large farms also complained that they could not keep their farm workers when the WPA paid men to pretend to work. As a result of the relatively good wages paid by the WPA, some farm communities in the county actually experienced labor shortages.[31]

Prosperity returned to Jackson County in 1936 and 1937, but fears of future economic hardship worried civic and government leaders alike. Local leaders set aside funds for hard times, and families prepared against future hardship by saving money and not splurging on luxuries. State Senator Gertrude Dills McKee continued to fight for social security for children and elderly. In 1936, she authored the Old Age Assistance Bill which provided relief to those who could no longer provide for themselves as the result of age. This bill provided recipients fifteen dollars a month as well as assistance on winter fuel costs, and the federal government paid half of the cost while the state and county governments shared the remaining half. Earlier, Senator McKee had pressed for the passage of the Social Security Act which offered limited assistance to others who were unable to locate work for health reasons such as blindness or other disabilities as well as dependent mothers. McKee's staunch voice for such programs helped bring many social reforms into being.[32]

Still, in spite of her efforts, legislation bringing North Carolina under the

guidelines of the federal social security system was not realized until after the regular session of the General Assemby in 1937. Even then, Governor Clyde R. Hoey limited the protection offered by Social Security to approximately two-thirds of the amount required for the state to receive the maximum amount of matching funds from the federal government. The primary argument against the social security program arose, of course, from those with the least to gain, the wealthy, who argued that those who benefited the most were those who never returned anything to the government whether by taxation or by voting. Yet, this reform program did relieve the unemployed, aged, and needy across the state.[33]

Recession struck late in 1937 after returning prosperity and industrial growth led the federal government to curb relief spending. But Jackson County avoided the suffering of 1932 as WPA and other New Deal assistance programs increased spending to alleviate the effects of the recession. After this mild recession, industry across the state and nation began to improve as fears of war moved the nation from recovery to re-armament. Overall, the New Deal served to relieve the harsh economic conditions of the Depression, but it also carried adverse side effects such as shifting the burden of welfare to the federal government.

ENDNOTES

[1] The Ruralite, May 17, 1932.

[2] Ibid., July 12, 1932.

[3] Ibid., August 2, 1932.

[4] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933, vol. 2, The Age of Roosevelt (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), 274.

[5] Bjorn Ahlin, "Social and Economic Conditions in Jackson County During the Depression" (Master's Thesis, Western Carolina University, 1971), 67.

[6] Arthur S. Link, American Epoch: A History of the United States Since the 1890's (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Company, 1958), 394.

[7] Anthony J. Badger, North Carolina and the New Deal (Raleigh: The North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1981), 79.

[8] Ibid., 47.

[9] Ibid., 63-64.

[10] Douglas Carl Abrams, Conservative Constraints: North Carolina and the New Deal (Jackson: The University of Mississippi Press, 1992), xiii.

[11] Frank Alcester Gillespie, Roosevelt and the New Deal (New York: Albright Publishing, 1990), 223.

[12] The Ruralite, June 6, 1933.

[13] The Asheville Citizen, May 14, 1933.

[14] The Ruralite, December 5, 1933.

[15] Interview by the author with Neal Lewis, July 27, 1997.

[16] The Ruralite, January 23, 1934.

[17] Ibid., January 30, 1930.

[18] The Ruralite, December 5, 1933; January 9, 1934.

[19] Interview by the author with Neal Lewis, July 27, 1997.

[20] The Ruralite, January 23, 1934.

[21] Badger, North Carolina and the New Deal, 41.

[22] The Ruralite, January 23, 1934.

[23] The Jackson Journal, May 31, 1934.

[24] Gillespie, Roosevelt, 234.

[25] Ibid., 235.

[26] The Ruralite, September 5, 1933; October 3, 1933; April 10, 1934.

[27] The Jackson County Journal, September 27, 1934.

[28] Ibid., October 11, 1934.

[29] Ibid., November 22, 1934.

[30] The Ruralite, December 3, 1935; December 10, 1935.

[31] The Jackson County Journal, May 31, 1934; September 27, 1934.

[32] The Jackson County Journal, February 18, 1937.

[33] Badger, North Carolina and the New Deal, 50.

CHAPTER 5

A WAY OF LIFE

The Depression often brought communities together through sharing and cooperation. With few opportunities for public employment and a poor economic climate, many families became extended as relatives who had lost jobs and/or homes moved back into the home of their parents. The New Deal opened these communities by offering employment, providing relief assistance, and constructing roads. The National Youth Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps often removed young men from their homes to work in other states. The fear of future Depressions led many young people to seek higher education at colleges and universities. The emergence of tourism also introduced new influences to native Western North Carolinians, and the loss of an industry, lumbering, led many to seek logging employment elsewhere (most often in the state of Washington). The New Deal instituted change though many clung to traditions and customs.

During the half century preceding the Depression, Jackson County changed very little. The Depression forced a continuation of traditional styles of life. Communities had long been close-knit with the church as the center of social activity, and most families were extended to some degree. Population growth remained negligible with almost no influx of people moving into the county from beyond Western North Carolina. Geographically, the absence of quality roads both into and within the county isolated many communities which added to the already stand-offish nature of many Jackson County residents. Isolation also bred independence.[1] Many held closer ties to the land than to the state or government. As a result, few left Jackson County, and many of those

who did often returned.

In many ways, the Jackson County of the Depression was without class. Except for a handful of individuals such as C.J. Harris and E.L. Mckee, few could be classified as wealthy; and even E.L. McKee had struggled during the early years of the Depression. On the other hand, due to the strong sense of community and family as well as the relatively light impact of the Depression in the county, few could really be termed "poor." Most owned property and had plenty to eat though they possessed few luxuries. The lack of major industry in the county before the Depression ensured that most of the population farmed for a living, and regardless the size of farms few lived much above the poverty line in terms of cash income.[2]

In some ways, the New Deal began to change this almost classless society. The great number of government jobs created by the New Deal in the county, the growth of Western Carolina Teachers College, and the emergence of real industry, Sylva Paperboard and Armour Leather Company, lured some to live within the limits of Sylva and Cullowhee. The lines defining town and rural communities grew further apart.[3] Furthermore, some argued that New Deal programs themselves served to increase the chasm between the affluent and the less affluent. Some argued that the WPA, AAA, and especially the CCC provided assistance to only the relatives of certain families. Of course, those in Sylva and Cullowhee did receive information about such programs on a more timely basis, which may have enabled them to obtain such jobs more easily than those living in relative isolation. Modernization during this time also led to divisions. Electric lights, automobiles, and certain appliances became status symbols, and those who were employed by businesses which paid cash money in regular increments obtained such symbols more easily than did loggers and farmers.[4]

The World's Fair of 1933 in Chicago proclaimed "A Century of Progress" for America, and much of the nation looked ahead to the future with optimism. In Jackson

County, little progress had occurred until the late 1920s; and initially the progress was slow. Not until the New Deal did the county show any significant strides forward. Automobiles had been introduced in the county earlier in the 1920s, but not until after the New Deal were the majority of roads adequate for automobile traffic. Few homes had had electricity or telephones, and most people of the county depended solely upon farming for a living. Population and literacy rates changed but little, and demographics revealed that the population remained primarily rural farmers with few individuals having ever ventured further than twenty miles from their homes.[5]

While the younger generation of the outside world experimented with knee-length skirts, hip flasks, and mixed drinks, uninhibited language, sexual promiscuity, and defiance of the older generation drew the ire of most Jackson Countians. Even among the young in the county, a conservative heritage evinced itself in the attendance of church revivals, closely chaperoned school dances, and specific courting rituals like parlour sitting and church supervised dating: boxed suppers, choir practices, dramas, and visitations. Little seemed to change as most people in the county held in contempt those who displayed an affinity for the party set.[6]

Nationally, the party set attitude of the 1920s coupled with the crash of the economy gave rise to a younger generation with a devil-may-care philosophy. Across the nation, courtships tended to be longer than during the pre-Depression years; but pre-marital sex and promiscuity became commonplace.

In Jackson County, such lifestyles found little acceptance as can be seen through the stigma attached to births out of wedlock. Little changed in the county in terms of dating though car-riding seems to have increased as roads improved and cars became more widely owned. Generally, in rural and town settings alike, courtship occurred under the watchful eyes of parents at church services or in the parlor of the girl's parents. In this manner parents were able to discourage the affections of certain suitors. In some

cases, family members served as go-betweens for young couples until proper courting arrangements could be made or in situations where their union might not be smiled upon by parents.[7]

With money being scarce during this time, most courtship activities required little money. Individuals of means often attended movies or dances. Camping trips and parties also attained some measure of popularity. Local churches coordinated many of these activities, and area schools also organized events for their community. Festivals and carnivals occurred frequently throughout the county, and athletic events enjoyed much patronage.[8]

Camping especially seemed popular among Jackson County residents during the New Deal period. The sense of adventure evinced through the feats of Amelia Ehrhardt and other adventurerers encouraged many to explore their environments, and in Western North Carolina, this sense of adventure revealed itself through the popularity of hiking and camping. Newspaper accounts record camping clubs which regularly scheduled trips. Churches organized camping retreats and mountaintop services. Families also camped and built permanent campsites atop mountains or along favorable streams and trails. Older married couples supervised young couples and children, and often camping trips included separate areas within the campsite for unmarried males and females, especially those trips organized by churches.[9]

For young people in towns, parties were in vogue. Talking, singing, and playing games filled most parties with those in attendance placing little emphasis on food and drink; and like camping trips, adults generally chaperoned these parties. Hosts encouraged all to have a good time, but they also strictly enforced proper behavior. Some parties included live music and dancing. In fact, some party-goers did not consider it much of a party if the boys could not dance with the girls. Though camping trips and

parties occurred often, morals remain high as can be ascertained through the low number of premature and illegitimate births. [10]

Church records and minutes across Jackson County support this view. Most people in the county were members of the Baptist denomination and accepted its generally conservative views. Many, in fact, recalled that girls were not allowed to wear pants, lipstick, nor high heels in public. Those who wore knee length dresses, cut their hair, and put on make-up were labeled "hussies"; and they were told that men did not marry "that kind of girl."[11] To be considered successful in Jackson County, women first had to be or have been a skilled domestic. Some such as Gertrude Dills McKee pulled this off in spite of incredible career-related demands.

Dancing, which had emerged as a favorite pastime of the Twenties, remained popular among young people. Ball room dancing had become a fad in certain areas while contemporary dances like the "Charleston" spawned numerous variations; and of course, almost everyone in the county knew how to square dance though square dances were normally confined to larger social events such as "barn raisin's," weddings, and festivals. Occasionally, traveling bands or musicians ventured through the county during the summer months. They would set up in open lots along the main strips in Sylva, Cashiers, and Dillsboro; and after their performance they would pass a hat for donations. These informal dance concerts lasted from about dusk to midnight. Lots of folks gathered at these dances to socialize and enjoy the music.[12]

Groups and organizations held numerous dances to raise money for public works such as improvements to school buildings. Churches and Parent Teacher Associations during the New Deal era also held dances to provide relief for the poor. Relief dances often charged no ticket price but instead asked that individuals bring donations of foodstuffs and clothing. One of the most popular of these, "The Depression Ball," required that the girls dress in their worst clothes. For this dance girls had to ask the boys

to attend. Other dances occurred during the Fall Festival and Spring Fling celebrations, and portions of the money raised from these dances supported school lunch programs for impoverished children and needy families.[13]

With the onset of the Works Progress Administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and other New Deal programs, dances with New Deal themes became prominent. Workers from New Deal works projects enjoyed special dances organized by the local government and business community as recreation for them. The Works Progress Administration contrived many dances for its workers, and often workers themselves organized get-togethers and dances. The most spectacular of these dances, "The President's Ball," celebrated President Roosevelt's birthday, which occurred on the thirtieth of January. It was technically non-political, and numerous Republicans attended. The President's Ball raised money for research on infantile paralysis and relief for children. Seventy percent of the money raised remained in Jackson County, and dance organizers sent thirty percent to the National Polio Foundation.[14]

Though conservative elements in the county discouraged going to dance halls, at the least, four operated successfully in the county. The Grover Moss Place in Cullowhee, The Bottom Patch in Glenville, the East La Porte Community Center, and Moody's Barn in Sylva held dances regularly on Saturday night. They charged an admission ranging from twenty-five to fifty cents and provided music and occasionally food and drink. Local musicians played most of the music, though occasionally traveling bands or musicians gave performances. Fiddle-playing represented the most common music, but guitars and banjos also livened up dance hall floors. The success of dance halls illustrated the need of the younger generation to socialize with the opposite sex in a carefree atmosphere.[15]

Across the nation, courtship lasted a longer period of time than it had before the Depression.[16] In Jackson County, the length of wedding engagements remained about the same as before the Depression. Marriage ceremonies were often simple,

but this had been the case during the Twenties as well. Most ceremonies occurred in church and often incorporated sermons with deep religious meaning and even pleas to "lost sinners" to mend their ways.[17] For the most part, weddings included only the immediate family and close friends while the reception with cake and punch was an occasion for the entire community to wish the bride and groom well in their marriage. After the marriage, young couples often had a special room or cabin prepared for them at the home of the family of the groom. Some newlyweds spent their honeymoon at campsites away from their families, but generally, few couples actually had real honeymoons.[18]

A great number of weddings occurred out of state in either Georgia, South Carolina, or Tennessee. In both Georgia and South Carolina, one could have a ceremony and license for a small fee in a little more than an hour. Clayton, Georgia offered licenses and ceremonies during all twenty-four hours of the day while Walhalla, South Carolina had marriage packages which included late night ceremonies with bed and breakfast for a small fee. This lured many elopers from Jackson County. Many eloped to save on wedding expenses as opposed to fleeing disapproving parents.[19]

As conditions improved under the New Deal, marriages occurred in greater numbers in the county. Many who had waited for better times found those of the New Deal sufficient. At the same time, divorce rates remained relatively low, with negligible change since the onset of the Depression. The poor economic conditions of the Depression made many individuals more selective in choosing a spouse. Most frowned upon beginning a marriage without secure economic prospects or assets. As a result, marriages tended to endure at higher rates than those of the pre- and post-New Deal eras.[20]

Other recreational activities enjoyed in the county ranged from outdoor sports to activities which one could only find in Sylva. Among outdoor activities, a great number

of people in the county enjoyed fishing. Whether with store-bought fishing gear or cut cane poles and line, many people fished the streams and lakes of the county on a regular basis for trout, bream, and bass.

As the seasons passed from summer to autumn, a good number of people turned to hunting. Squirrels and rabbits offered sport for boys with sling shots and a number of Cherokee still practiced the art of hunting with blow guns. Area valleys and meadows attracted a variety of feathered game for hunters: quail, pheasant, turkey, and ducks. Fertile valleys with streams in the county made ideal habitats for deer, bear, and wild hogs; and many found these places exceptionally good for hunting. Area streams also abounded in minks, coons, muskrats, and possum for trappers. Even though most saw hunting as a sport, both trappers and hunters prided themselves on the fact that they used what they took. Some hunters even claimed that no domesticated meats ever touched their table, and they were proud of this testament of their hunting skill. However, as the New Deal put more and more men to work on public projects, the dependence of many families on hunting for their source of meat declined. Hunting did, however, retain a key role as a leisure activity for many natives of Jackson County and for an increasing number of tourists.[21]

Hunting supplemented the diets of many with meat while providing an added income for others through the sale of furs. During the Depression, hunting had been essential for the survival of many families in Jackson County, but as the New Deal revitalized the economy, hunting became more of a sport than a necessity. After the harvests had been gathered, chores on the farm dwindled as poor weather inhibited the tasks that could be done. Light rain or even snow, which hampered most farm activities, actually aided hunters in tracking and stalking their prey. Wet leaves without a crisp crunch or crackle proved the bane of many squirrels, rabbits, and deer; and fresh snow allowed hunters to locate game trails and grottoes. Hunting like farming returned men to

their roots even when the factories and the Depression had removed them from their land. Fathers passed down the tradition of hunting to their children, and even today the departure of autumn leaves and Thanksgiving signify a time to hunt.[22]

Shooting, itself, enjoyed a strong following. Shotguns and rifles were common to most households in the county, and many practiced marksmanship for both fun and competition. Numerous competitions of marksmanship occurred across the county from early autumn until spring. Turkey shoots were the most popular single event, but club competitions also drew support. Among area clubs, shooting clays achieved the most popularity; but the expense of this sport limited it to the economic elite of the county.

With the isolation of many communities in the county, each area tended to develop festivals and celebrations unique to their community. But other celebrations were often shared by a majority of communities. Corn shuckings, hog butchering, and harvest festivals were common annual celebrations across most of Jackson County. These celebrations brought together entire communities to enjoy games, music, and food. Celebrations commenced early in the day and continued until late.[23]

Another popular event occurred on the Fourth of July. People from all over the county came together to celebrate. Though newspapers never mention fireworks, the day bustled with hundreds of other activities. Beginning early in the morning races and games of skill such as baseball were held on the outlying fields which occupied several acres of bottom land on the outskirts of Sylva. A carnival-like atmosphere existed, and music of all varieties filled the air. In the center of the celebration, merchants peddled their wares and offered opportunities to play myriad games of chance. In the evening, baseball teams played games for the Fourth of July Championship; raffle tickets were drawn and prizes awarded; livestock and agriculture awards were given; and as dinner commenced, speeches by students and politicians were made. After the dinner, things wound down, but for many this was the best time to conduct the business of buying and selling. Farmers

of prize winning stock enjoyed numerous business offers while businessmen who preferred not returning home with any of their wares offered incredible deals to customers.[24]

Other celebrations also achieved success. The Annual Cherokee Fair and Fall Festival attracted thousands of visitors. Many came from far and wide to witness the spectacle of "Indian Stick Ball" and other native customs. The fierce competition of Indian Stick Ball drew large audiences, especially after the reputation it gained from the demonstration given at President Roosevelt's inauguration. Others came to taste Native American foods and to purchase their craftwork.[25]

As autumn reached its peak, schools held annual fall festival celebrations and Halloween carnivals. Activities at these events included a large number of fundraising games for the school: bingo, cake walks, raffles, and fishponds. Schools earned much money for books and equipment through these events, and most people enjoyed them. Some of the schools also held basketball games between students and teachers or between area schools. All in all, these activities offered entertainment for many, and they were well-attended.[26]

Sports across the nation experienced considerable growth. Golf, tennis, and swimming became more universal across social and economic classes. Bicycling and roller skating enjoyed popularity as well. Among team events, softball emerged as one of the most popular with over one million teams across America.[27]

In Jackson County, many people actively participated in team sports, and many others followed the progress of local teams with intense loyalty. Local rivalries in football, basketball, and baseball fueled this popularity. One of the most contested rivalries existed between Sylva High School and Webster High School, but other rivalries compared closely such as the rivalries between Sylva and Cullowhee schools. College and professional sports also found support among residents of Jackson County, and it was not

uncommon for the more affluent of them to travel to Knoxville, Tennessee to watch the Volunteers play football or to Washington, D.C. to see the Redskins in action. As athletics reached new heights in the county, team sports increased its range of organization to include girls sports and elementary schools. By the close of 1935, most high schools in the county offered team sports competitions for girls though some parents refused to allow their daughters to participate on the grounds that it was not proper. Semi-professional leagues also emerged during the mid-Thirties with their competition coming from surrounding counties and cities such as Asheville and Charlotte.

Card and board games also brought individuals together informally and in organized leagues. Bridge and poker were the most common card games, but cribbage and peaknuckle [pinochle] were also played. Among men most of these games included gambling. Winning it big was an obsession of many Saturday night card players. In fact, high stakes money games of all types experienced popularity even if the money was just play money like in Monopoly, which itself was a fad among the young married set of the day. Monopoly mimicked the the wheelers and dealers of Wall Street while allowing its players to enjoy the thrills of spending large sums of money and monopolizing real estate and business without actually risking real money. The game like the stock market proved addictive, and at the height of the craze monopoly game players organized marathons and competitions.

Movie going remained a popular activity during the Thirties. Makers of movies improved technique and content and released a number of quality movies. Charlie Chaplin and Mae West continued to draw crowds while John Wayne debuted on the silver screen. The movie of the decade and possibly the century, Gone With the Wind, attracted record numbers of viewers in spite of requiring most to pay a higher than normal price (In Sylva the Lyric charged seventy-five cent which was fifty cent higher than their regular charge for showings.).

The most significant change brought on by the New Deal dealt with how people associated with each other. Working at carnivals and festivals to raise money for schools and relief projects brought people together and strengthened friendships. Communities bonded in an effort to meet the needs of the poor, and people gained a greater compassion for one another. One individual stated, "I am getting acquainted with my neighbors. I have lived near some of them for all of my life; but now we hoe corn and butcher hogs and go hunting together."[28] People remembered the harshness of the Depression, and these memories evoked humanitarian feelings. The New Deal tempered these feelings with optimism that times would become better, and in many cases people just realized that working together made life easier and in some ways more pleasurable.

As the New Deal continued, one might suspect that the devotion of people to religion would wane. Instead, church membership numbers continued to grow, albeit, at a slower pace as can be seen through church attendance rolls. One person stated that before the Depression and New Deal, "I never had time to go to church. I played sports, baseball and hunting. Now I go to church every Sunday and never miss a Sunday."[29] Revivals, prayer meetings, and singings filled the evenings of many people. A variety of religious radio programs also gained a following.

Not all religious denominations prospered during this time, however. The Repeal of Prohibition left some churches without a unifying conflict while the greater mobility of the period allowed individuals to seek other churches or even to do non-religious activities. In addition, as the New Deal took on a greater share of the relief effort which hastened the improvement of conditions across the county, the role of some churches as providers of aid had been displaced by the government. As a result, the dependence of individuals upon the community church decreased.

Two religious groups in the county retained a high level of activity during this period, the African-American and the Baptist churches. African-American churches

remained strong and active. Though African-Americans tended to be less affluent and mobile than the majority of the white population, this contributed to the richness of their churches. Individuals had little, but together they shared and worked to build a church in which their community could be proud. They also expressed a sincere enjoyment in attending church. The services were people oriented and required active participation. Singing and even preaching included the entire congregation whereas most white churches focused on the actions of others: the minister preaching or the choir singing. Thus, attending church provided more enjoyment and individual stimulation for some African-Americans.[30]

Baptist churches also fared well during the New Deal period in spite of lacking a unifying issue against which to crusade. Baptist churches tended to allow greater member participation than did other denominations. It was not uncommon for members to shout, to testify, or sing during the midst of a service; and emotional revivals were the hallmark of many of these churches. Baptist churches also led the way in providing a niche for the younger generation. They offered a range of activities for younger members allowing these members to meet and to socialize with other young people. Box dinners, visiting, and singings made the church the center for social interaction among young people. Young men searching for lasting relationships attended church as did their counterparts. In fact, girls who did not attend church risked being labeled "scandalous" and/or "hussy."[31]

Methodist, Episcopalian, and Presbyterian churches suffered losses in membership and attendance during this time. The Methodist churches in Jackson County experienced only negligible growth and some drop in average attendance. Episcopalians and Presbyterians accounted for the largest drops in membership. Each of these depended upon an outside Diocese to provide a priest or minister, and thus their services occurred intermittantly, and membership suffered. St. David's Episcopalian Church was

deconsecrated from the late Thirties until the Fifties because membership numbers could not support two churches in the county. The Presbyterian Church had a problem of a different sort. In 1890 their church leadership in Asheville advised them to meet with the Methodists until a minister could be provided. In spite of strong numbers throughout the early part of the century, not until 1940 did county Presbyterians have a church which they could call their own. The Depression meant that economically they could not afford a minister while the restoration of prosperity lessened their need. Some, for example, traveled to Bryson City or Waynesville to services now that good roads connected them to Sylva. For the most part, churches which offered fewer activities and member directed services suffered losses in membership and attendance.[32]

While church membership declined in some denominations, no major variance occurred in the morals of the county. Murders were rare. There were only four murders between 1926 and 1937 listed in the local papers. Thefts were also low, and some thefts actually turned out to be borrowings in which the stolen item reappeared after some time.[33] Attitudes on sexual relationships were well-defined and generally observed. One of the problems facing the county dealt with driving while under the influence of alcohol. Several accounts of accidents caused by drunk drivers appear in The Ruralite and The Jackson Journal.[34]

The work ethic in Jackson County also remained essentially unchanged by New Deal policy. Though at first relief bore a stigma, few refused to work for aid. New Deal policy had made the wages for relief work less than those earned from other types of employment. Unfortunately, these wages were still often higher than many jobs, especially those related to agriculture. Some, mainly farmers, complained about relief programs in which little actual work was done. Although it's true that early Civil Works Administration workers performed odd jobs and often had to wait a period of time

between the completion of a project and the beginning of a new one, most of these complaints originated from farmers who had been forced to pay higher wages in order to compete with New Deal programs.[35] According to Civil Works Administration and Works Projects Administration workers, they worked hard for small wages.

Women in Jackson County at this time also experienced changes in social roles. Seeking a career held less stigma, and in some cases a career such as teaching offered some prestige. Other occupations such as shop attendant in department stores also gained acceptance in spite of having been considered a lowly occupation of poor women during the Twenties. More women were also attending colleges. Local newspapers acknowledged the readership of women by introducing columns which catered to them. "Modern Woman", a weekly column in The Jackson County Journal, chronicled problems faced by females. In this column renowned psychoanalyst, Charl Ormand Williams, stated that women overvalued emotional relationships, organized their lives in accordance to the point of view of men, feared aging, felt inferior to others, and lacked solidarity with other women.[36] Some women gained greater respect for themselves during this time while recognizing the limits of womanhood imposed by earlier generations.

Innocence had been lost. The flat-figure gave way to a more curvacious one, and fashion sought to cover less of the body. Uplifted busts after the mold of Mae West were in vogue as dress lengths inched up to the knee with more provocative models revealing a full knee-cap. Hair lengths also became shorter with the intent of displaying the neck. Youth had also given sway to maturity, and with this evolution clothing in general grew more sophisticated to accent age. Hats and scarves also enjoyed popularity to the pleasure of milliners.

Smoking cigarettes completed the image. Although drinking alcohol became less flamboyant after the Repeal of Prohibition, cigarette smoking increased in volume by

almost twenty percent between 1930 and 1936. Women comprised the greater portion of this number. Whereas cigarette smoking had been viewed as a "flapper thing" during the Twenties, women of all ages accepted it or did it during the Thirties. Advertisements portrayed it as sophisticated and cultured. Camel Cigarettes employed famous sports figures with starlets to advertise the joys of "lighting up."[37]

Overall, the New Deal era witnessed much change socially. People in Jackson County became more conservative in concerns about finance; but socially they relaxed. Although moral standards remained high, they were not as rigid as in the previous decade. Relationships tended to be more casual and warmer. Leisure time also appeared to have increased with the reformed work week and the realization that sports and other non-work activities were just as fulfilling as amassing fortunes on Wall Street but without the risk. Some women even grew closer to discovering themselves exclusive of men. Measuring the impact of the New Deal upon these changes is difficult; and yet, as in the case of increasing the leisure time of Americans, one can recognize its significance.

ENDNOTES

[1] Interview by the author with Neal Lewis, July 17, 1997. Neal was in his twenties during the New Deal era and found work in the C.W.A. and later the W.P.A..

[2] Ibid.

[3] Interview by the author with Paul Buchanan, January 17, 1997. Paul Buchanan taught school in Webster, and his father operated Buchanan Pharmacy in Sylva during the Depression and a store in Cullowhee during the Thirties.

[4] Bjorn Ahlin, "Social and Economic Conditions in Jackson County During the Depression" (Master's Thesis, Western Carolina University, 1971), 73.

[5] The Asheville Citizen-Times, December 18, 1932.

[6] Interview by the author with Edna Lewis Frizzell, June 22, 1997. Edna Lewis Frizzell married during the New Deal era and was a successful housewife.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ahlin, "Social and Economic Conditions", 75.

[9] Ibid., 76.

[10] Ibid., 77.

[11] Interview by the author with Edna Lewis Frizzell, June 22, 1997.

[12] Ahlin, 81.

[13] Interview by the author with Paul Buchanan, January 17, 1997.

[14] The Jackson County Journal, January 30, 1936.

[15] Ahlin, 81.

[16] Frederick Lewis Allen, Since Yesterday (New York: Bantam Books, 1961), 107.

[17] Interview by the author with Tulin Ashe, July 14, 1997; Ahlin, "Social Conditions," 78.

[18] Interview by the author with Edna Lewis Frizzell, June 22, 1997.

[19] Ibid., Money was still scarce for many even though prosperity seemed to be returning, and memories of the Depression changed the spending habits of individuals. Individials tended to be more frugal even years after the Depression.

[20] Ahlin, "Social Conditions," 79.

[21] Interview by the author with Neal Lewis, July 17, 1997.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Interview by the author with Lloyd Wilkes Cowan, January 12, 1997. Cowan grew up in the East Fork community, and he focused upon activities generally found in rural communities.

[24] The Jackson County Journal, July, 1936.

[25] The Jackson County Journal, October 5, 1933; September 13, 1934.

[26] The Jackson County Journal, October , 1936.

[27] Allen, Since Yesterday, 126.

[28] Interview by the author with William Thad Frady, September 13, 1997. William Thad Frady reared a family in the Little Savannah Community where he worked in kaolin mines and farmed.

[29] The Jackson County Journal, May 16, 1935.

[30] Jackson County Genealogical Society, Jackson County Heritage, North Carolina, vol. 1, (Marceline: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1992), 58.

[31] Interview by the author with Edna Lewis Frizzell, June 22, 1997.

[32] Max R. Williams, ed., The History of Jackson County (Sylva: The Jackson County Historical Association, 1987), 154.

[33] Interview by the author with Paul Buchanan, January 22, 1997.

[34] The Jackson County Journal, February 21, 1934; The Ruralite, March 5, 1935; March 19, 1935. These articles confront the problems of automobile driving and explain how new licensing laws will impact these problems.

[35] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Crisis of the Old Order, vol.1, The Age of Roosevelt (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958), 274.

[36] The Jackson County Journal, January 19, 1934.

[37] Ibid., January 2, 1936.

CHAPTER 6

THE POLITICS OF THE NEW DEAL ERA

Politics of the New Deal era centered on the President at all levels: local, state, and national. Even before the inauguration, Franklin Delano Roosevelt assumed the mantle of leadership for America. Speculations about him and his New Deal abounded, and after the inauguration, Roosevelt immediately took a firm hold on the reins of government. He called a special session of Congress to initiate New Deal legislation, and to maintain the support of the American people for his programs, President Roosevelt spoke often to them in a forthright voice brimming with optimism and determination. Though a former governor from New York, Roosevelt's warmth and compassion voiced through "fireside chats" won him strong support in the South; and few labeled him a "Yankee."[1]

While much of the world outside of the United States turned to communism and fascism in responce to the Depression, Franklin Delano Roosevelt enacted reforms without revolution. Though sometimes he wielded powers comparable to those of a dictator, Roosevelt gained these powers not by force of law or violence but by forging consensus which often consisted of diverse groups. With his overwhelming personal popularity, he pushed Congress to pass his numerous programs. Unlike his political adversaries, Roosevelt also developed a rapport with the common people of America: the homeless, the veterans, the farmers....[2]

The success of President Roosevelt in those first months derived from heeding the pleas for relief. Programs to curb poverty won him much support but also some bitter enemies. Upton Sinclair, the famed author; Huey Long, the outspoken Senator from Louisiana; and Alfred Landon, the Kansan Coolidge, denounced Roosevelt and his New

Deal. Upton Sinclair used his celebrity status to criticize Roosevelt's relief efforts as inadequate, and his 1934 gubernatorial candidacy in California led the opposition Republican party to modern campaign techniques such as the employment of a professional public relations agency.[3]

Senator Huey Long, the most vocal and politically powerful of the three, used his political machine to make himself a viable contender for the presidency. Decked in flamboyant suits, he broached every issue and verbally attacked Roosevelt at every opportunity. He warned Americans of Roosevelt's warm manner and built his platform of "Share the Wealth" upon his criticism of New Deal policies. "Roosevelt," he admonished, "was a Scrootch Owl: a Scrootch Owl slips into the roost and scrootches up to the hen....and the first thing you know, there ain't no hen."[4] In spite of Roosevelt's early successes, Long's "Every Man a King" slogan and his relative lack of racial or social prejudices created a mystique which attracted many followers. Finally, Senator Long separated himself from Roosevelt's New Deal in such a way as to win the support of those little affected by the New Deal. Yet, his presidential challenge never fully materialized because the economy continued to improve. Then before Long's rise to prominence climaxed, an assassin shot him to death in Baton Rouge.[5]

By 1936, the national recovery programs of the New Deal had won the support of most Americans. However, Alfred M. Landon still stood firm on his platform: "America is in Peril."[6] Opinion polls and some Republican Party leadership gave Landon a slight edge preceding the 1936 election, but Roosevelt reponded to the challenge with a simple, confident question: "Are you better off than you were four years ago?"[7] Voters answered "yes," and Roosevelt won with almost sixty-four percent of the popular vote and five hundred twenty-three electoral votes.[8]

At the state level, the North Carolina Democratic Party existed in a state of paradox. North Carolina's Democratic leadership acknowledged President Roosevelt as

the foundation of their political power, and they supported most of the New Deal, at least in its infancy. As the economic conditions within the state improved, many of North Carolina's Democratic Party leaders lost enthusiasm for the New Deal and in some instances fought against it. While they never openly attacked Roosevelt, they did derail some programs while manipulating others to their benefit. Of the politicians who sought to control the New Deal in North Carolina, Senator Josiah Bailey repeatedly demonstrated his conservative nature by voting more conservatively than all but seven United States Senators between the years 1933 and 1939.[9] Yet, even he realized how closely his political success depended upon the success of Roosevelt. He established himself as a New Dealer during the first Hundred Days by voting for all New Deal legislation regardless of his opposition to certain programs and policies and the New Deal as a whole.[10]

Publically, Josiah Bailey lauded the President and his agenda, but those in close proximity to the Senator understood his distaste for the New Deal. Indeed, the campaign manager for Senator Bailey, C.L. Shuping, openly criticized the New Deal to reporters of the Raleigh News and Observer; but Bailey, the consummate politician, disavowed his campaign manager to distance himself from the negative publicity. Then in 1936 under the guise of a loyal New Dealer, Josiah Bailey sought re-election by emphasizing his support of New Deal legislation and his positive voting record. However, just days after his election victory, Senator Bailey joined a group of conservatives to block the expansion of New Deal programs in North Carolina; and later, he united with congressional conservatives to prevent President Roosevelt from packing the Supreme Court with New Deal supporters.[11]

North Carolina's other United States Senator, Robert Rice Reynolds, approached the New Deal with a cavalier attitude. He stated, "If the people of North Carolina are for something seventy-five percent, boy, I'm for it one thousand percent." He consistently

supported New Deal legislation.[12] His flamboyant lifestyle, however, limited his positive involvement because many state leaders failed to take him seriously. His notoriety arose from frequent pleasure trips to Europe, the Virgin Islands, and the Philippines; and it peaked when he kissed movie starlet, Jean Harlow, on the steps of the Capitol- an act considered by many to be scandalous and obscene.[13]

In the 1938 senate race, Reynolds faced tough opposition from Frank Hancock, a stolid New Dealer. Hancock attacked Reynold's lifestyle and declaimed his wasteful spending of tax payer' money while visiting "the nightclubs of Baghdad and studying the divorce laws of Russia."[14] Though Reynolds won the election, he had made bitter enemies; and he also grew disillusioned with the New Deal and pursued his own agenda. Senator Reynolds then initiated a campaign against communism, immigration, and "the alien in our midst."[15] He also pressed for an end to relief expenditures and aid programs. Labor rights and social security legislation were targets of his opposition.

Thus, though both Bailey and Reynolds showed initial support for the New Deal, each voiced stronger opposition to it after securing re-election as New Dealers. Economic stability as well as the growing tension in foreign policy enabled North Carolina's Senators to control the New Deal in the state and to abandon it after consolidating their own positions of power.

On the whole, the members of the United States House of Representatives from North Carolina remained loyal to the New Deal. Initially, prevailing economic conditions in the state bound them to the President and thus the New Deal. Across the state, Congressmen sided with the New Deal because the bulk of the population supported it wholeheartedly. From farmers to industrial workers, North Carolinians desired the New Deal; and the state's Congressmen in the lower house heeded their constituents. Yet, by 1938 their zeal for the New Deal had waned to the point that they sometimes offered opposition to certain of its programs though never directly to the President.

Representative Zebulon Weaver, whose district included Jackson County, strongly supported Franklin D. Roosevelt and solidified his political standing as a result. Though Weaver had only won marginal victories in the years before Roosevelt, he won comfortably in both 1934 and 1936; and his margin of victory in 1936 exceeded all of his previous margins.[16] Weaver accomplished much during the Roosevelt years, and he gained a reputation as a strong New Dealer, which may have enabled him to win elections in spite of several controversies.[17]

During the New Deal years, Zebulon Weaver gained an unfavorable distinction as "spoils man" who handed out jobs and positions at whim rather than on a merit scale. According to Anthony Badger in North Carolina and the New Deal, when the federal government ordered Works Progress Administration cutbacks Congressman Weaver saved one political ally even though the W.P.A. regional director said he was "the worst district director in North Carolina."[18] Others also accused Weaver of regional favoritism in his district. Some suggested that he completely ignored everything west of Buncombe County and that he brought little assistance to those counties. However, Jackson County seemed to be the exclusion to this rule in that it received numerous government projects. Furthermore, support for Weaver in the county remained high throughout the New Deal era. Prominent political leaders such as the McKees and the Wikes faithfully supported him throughout the New Deal, and no criticism against Weaver appeared in local newspapers. Overall, Zebulon Weaver realized that his fortunes lay with President Roosevelt because the vast majority of the farming and laboring populations of Western North Carolina strongly supported the President and his New Deal.[19]

The elections of 1932 signified the last of the closely contested elections in Jackson County during the New Deal era. From 1934 to 1940, the Democratic Party primary became the true election as the winner of the primary went on to capture the regular election without strong opposition, and during these years, no Democratic Party

candidate lost a November election. Indeed, Democrats carried all of these elections by more than one thousand votes or better than a ten percent margin of victory.[20]

Politics in Jackson County began and ended with President Franklin Roosevelt. He was the figurehead around which county Democrats rallied. He determined the ideals of the Democratic Party in the county. Numerous Democrats rode into office on his coattails, and his timely visits to Jackson County and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park energized the Democratic Party. Many attributed the great swing of votes to the Democratic Party to Roosevelt's popularity in the county. Roosevelt impressed the local people with his simple diction and apparent nearness as President. His visit to Sylva in September of 1936 galvanized support. Businesses, farmers, educators, and students organized to welcome him along the streets of Sylva. Local newspapers greeted him with a myriad of half and full page advertisements paid for by area businesses, organizations, and individuals. Over seven thousand people attended the motorcade. Miles of people lined the streets along the route of the motorcade while Sylva businesses proclaimed it a holiday by hawking their wares on the sidewalks and holding various types of sales with patriotic themes. The excitement of the day carried over into the November election in the form of an overwhelming victory for the Democrats.[21]

Action and excitement typefied the Roosevelt years. The New Deal offered programs for young people and created positions for future Democratic Party leaders. County political leaders viewed the popularity of Roosevelt as a mandate to distribute the spoils of New Deal programs to the victors.

Young Democrat and Teen Democrat groups organized and boasted large memberships. They frequently held barbecues and socials which were attended by various notable guests. These clubs enjoyed numerous social activities, but they also served a significant role in grooming future party leaders through organizing party rallies and functions. The Jackson County Young Democrats played a central role in organizing the

visit of Governor Ehringhaus to Cullowhee in November of 1934. Fundraisers and public awareness activities also made up part of the contribution of these organizations to the Democratic Party.[22]

While the Democratic Party in Jackson County enjoyed great growth and energy, the Republican Party lacked clear purpose and strong leadership. After their defeat in the elections of 1934, no significant events, speakers, or activities appeared in the local newspapers. Though individual Republicans still voiced their doubts about President Roosevelt and his programs to relatives and friends, few spoke with any real conviction except to complain of not getting their fair share of New Deal benefits.[23]

Yet, election results revealed a hard core of Republicans who still voted along straight party lines. East LaPorte, Little Canada, and Barkers Creek all continued to vote conservatively in spite of the strength of the Democratic Party. Each of these areas also tended to vote Republican regardless of how weak the Republican candidate or how popular the Democratic candidate.[24]

Democrats also tended to vote straight tickets especially in Cullowhee, Savannah, Cashiers, and Balsam. While the remainder of the county leaned only modestly in favor of the Democrats, these areas enjoyed overwhelming Democratic majorities which gave the county as a whole a solid majority. In the election of 1936, Democrats of the Cullowhee precinct boasted a victory margin of almost fifty percent over their Republican opposition.[25] However, not all areas displayed such loyalty to their party. Ticket splitting occurred frequently in some precincts. Popular candidates often carried the vote in these precincts regardless party affiliation. Mrs. Gertrude Dills McKee, the popular state senator from Sylva, for instance, won easily in some predominantly Republican precincts; and in the election of 1936, she was the only Democratic candidate to win the Canada and East LaPorte precincts. Overall, the Roosevelt years meant election victories for the Democrats.[26]

The greatest fear of the Democratic Party during the decade of the Thirties was complacency among voters. Party leaders in Raleigh urged local leaders to stress the importance of turning out the vote. Wallace Winborne, chairman of the Democratic Party in 1934, predicted a landslide victory in upcoming elections if Democrats worked diligently. He also urged voters to guard their privilege to vote even though no local races emerged.[27] Later, in 1938 Governor Clyde Hoey while speaking in Cullowhee asked voters to remember the record of the Democratic Party during the previous decade. He praised education reforms, especially the increased length of state schools to eight month terms; the ethical and economical administration of the state government; and the great humanitarian reforms brought on by the federal government. Governor Hoey also defended the policies of the New Deal and explained the reasons for carrying a large national debt. Though his message primarily went out to supporters, it echoed honestly some of the accomplishments of Democrats at all levels of government, but it also explained why New Deal policies were still required even after the return of prosperity.[28]

Governors, United States Senators, and even the President paid visits to Jackson County during the era of the New Deal. Politics were important to most citizens of Jackson County, and in almost every home political talk and stories abounded. Anecdotes relating a faux pas of either Democrats or Republicans were common. Republicans likened Democratic leadership in North Carolina to blind mice while in another anecdote they poked fun at the stance of Democratic leadership on the unbalanced budget.[29] On the other hand, many Democrats told tales of visits by Republican cousins in which they had to subtly remind them of the poverty brought about by the Depression and Hoover and of the relief brought by Roosevelt.[30]

Few known Republicans actually received aid in Jackson County. Political conditions in the county, as in the state, fostered certain abuses. Of these, a form of "to the victor go the spoils" was the most detrimental to the county. Though both political

parties had practiced it to some extent, the overwhelming Democratic victories and the greatly expanded government of the Roosevelt years allowed the practice to become unmanageable. Some claimed that political leaders and candidates promised jobs and relief aid in exchange for votes, and though no official charges were ever filed in the county, the fact that almost no Republicans received aid from the Works Progress Administration or the Civilian Conservation Corps suggests that abuses did indeed occur. Some Republicans who did receive aid commented that they did not ask and did not tell their politics.[31] Others suggested that aid found its way to those in need regardless of party affiliation, and overall, criticisms against the Democratic leadership of Jackson County rarely grew serious enough to make the local newspapers.

Even inside the Democratic Party of Jackson County, individuals fell prey to the spoils system. In highly contested primary races, some Democrats on the losing side decried that they had been excluded from later benefits of New Deal relief programs.[32] but for the most part, even after the most bitterly fought primaries in which no punches were pulled, the opposing factions generally pulled back together to defeat Republican opponents in the general election. As a result, the Democratic primary represented the real county election because its winner was assured a victory in the fall. Senator Gertrude Dills McKee, for example, won two primaries by a combined total of less than fifty votes but carried the general elections by almost three thousand votes.[33]

In spite of the harsh primaries, several truly dynamic and progressive leaders rose from out of the struggle to provide strong leadership for the Democratic Party. Among these, Senator Gertrude Dills McKee exemplified the best qualities of the county's leaders. After years of work dedicated to civic causes, she began her political career campaigning for Congressman Zebulon Weaver. In 1930 she won nomination for state senate and then defeated her Republican opponent to gain a seat in the state legislature. Though she continued to face stiff primary opposition, she retained her seat through three

more elections (State senate elections at that time were held every six years). During her time as senator, Mckee championed causes for children, the poor, the elderly, and women. Though being the first woman to achieve a seat in the North Carolina State Senate, individuals remembered her more for her ability to reach out to people of all social, economic, racial, and political backgrounds. Some straight ticket voting Republicans broke old voting habits to cast a vote for her- a testament to the quality of her leadership.[34]

Gertrude Dills McKee was the most prominent woman in the political arena of Western North Carolina, and her accomplishments in education and public welfare reform made her one of the most influential Democrats of the period regardless of gender. In spite of her prominence in politics, those who knew her recalled that she was a fine person who always had time for people- especially children and young people. With such leaders, one can see how Democrats swept the elections of the period.[35]

The Depression and the emergence of dynamic leadership at the local, state, and national levels restored the Democratic Party to a pinnacle of success it had not enjoyed since the turn of the century. Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his popular policies enabled the Democratic Party to make steady gains in strength and numbers throughout the New Deal era, and the concrete achievements of the New Dealers such as the construction of a better entrance and improved roads through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park solidified the positions of local incumbant Democrats like Congressman Zebulon Weaver. Increased opportunities for employment provided by New Deal programs such as the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Works Progress Administration also enticed support for the Democratic Party. Though some abuses occurred with New Deal programs, most in Jackson County felt that President Roosevelt and his New Deal had returned America to prosperity.

ENDNOTES

[1] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal (Cambridge: Houghton, Mifflin, Company, 1959), 274.

[2] Frank Freidel, F.D.R. and the South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 15.

[3] Frank Alcester Gillespie, Roosevelt and the New Deal (New York: Albright Publishing, 1990), 119.

[4] Freidel, Roosevelt and the New Deal, 41.

[5] Ibid., 45.

[6] The Jackson County Journal, September 10, 1936. This article includes a poll which showed Landon leading against Roosevelt, and it provided an outline of Landon's platform.

[7] Elliot Roosevelt, ed., Franklin Delano Roosevelt: His Personal Letters, 1928-1945 (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1950), 381. "Are you better off" became a focal campaign slogan in 1936.

[8] The Jackson County Journal, November 8, 1936.

[9] Anthony J. Badger, North Carolina and the New Deal (Raleigh: Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1981), 77-78.

[10] Douglas Carl Abrams, Conservative Constraints: North Carolina and the New Deal (Jackson: The University of Mississippi Press, 1992), 62-63.

[11] Ibid., 63.

[12] Ibid., 81.

[13] Ibid., 83.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] The Jackson County Journal, November 5, 1936.

[17] The Jackson County Journal, May 17, 1934.

[18] Badger, 44.

[19] Badger, 86.

[20] The Ruralite, November 6, 1934; November 5, 1936. These two articles include actual election results.

[21] The Jackson County Journal, September 10, 1936; November 5, 1936. From advertisements to news articles, Roosevelt's excursion through Sylva hit almost every page of the local newspapers.

[22] The Jackson County Journal, October 25, 1934; November 1, 1934; November 8, 1934.

[23] Bjorn Ahlin, "Social and Economic Conditions in Jackson County During the Depression" (Master's Thesis, Western Carolina University, 1971), 102.

[24] The Ruralite, November 8, 1934; The Jackson County Journal, November 12, 1936; November 8, 1938.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] The Jackson County Journal, November 1, 1934.

[28] The Jackson County Journal, October 27, 1938. This article outlines his speech and its significance to the area. Governor Hoey focused upon education, but he also attacked critics of the New Deal.

[29] The Greensboro Daily News, December 15, 1938. Caricatures of North Carolina New dealers illustrate the argument against budget deficits and the blind followers of President Roosevelt.

[30] Ahlin, "Economic Conditions", 102. Variations of the same story can be found in several of the interviews used for this paper.

[31] The Jackson County Journal, August 23, 1934.

[32] Ibid., May 31, 1934; November 22, 1934.

[33] The Jackson County Journal, May 28, 1936; June 11, 1936. Few Democrats crossed over to vote Republican even if their candidate lost in a primary. Primaries for some offices often had as many as ten candidates since positions such as the Register of Deeds were desirable because of prestige and money.

[34] Joan Wright Ferguson, "Gertrude Dills McKee: A Biographical Analysis" (Master's Thesis, Western Carolina University, 1971), 84.

[35] Ibid., 84-85. Though Gertrude Dills McKee requested that those she helped keep quiet, it was common knowledge that she had helped many children attend school and college. She had also worked hard to help numerous families make it through the hard times, but children were always her special concern.

CHAPTER 7

THE CHEROKEE

Jackson County had two minority groups, African Americans and the Native American Cherokee. These two groups experienced the New Deal of Franklin Roosevelt in contrasting forms. Whereas no program or assistance especially benefited the African American community of Jackson County, the Cherokee received what one might call a separate, little New Deal. While the New Deal focused upon recovery, it also brought economic reform; and in the case of the Cherokee, it encouraged increased social interaction and integration with areas beyond the reservation. Through relief and assistance programs, the New Deal also sought to bring them closer to the white community in America.

After the turn of the century, the conditions of the Cherokee in North Carolina had begun to improve gradually. Though nationally they had lost much of their land during the previous thirty years primarily in Oklahoma (19,500,000 acres in 1891 to less than 350,000 acres in 1929), the Cherokee in North Carolina had slowly began to reclaim some of their lands through private purchases.[1] As a whole, the Cherokee of North Carolina had amassed almost 56,000 total acres of property partially because whites considered most of it next to worthless.

The decade of the Twenties saw the Cherokee holding a precarious position both politically and economically. North Carolina had yet to grant the Cherokees state citizenship even though the federal government had already extended citizenship in 1924 to all Native Americans. North Carolina officials stated that if the land of the Cherokee were allotted, then they could be made full citizens, and not until 1930 did Congress override the decision of the North Carolina Legislature by passing an act which conferred

full rights of citizenship on the Cherokee residing in the state of North Carolina.[2] While the North Carolina Legislature heeded the ruling, local government officials, who deemed Cherokee citizenship a threat to their political power, often chose to ignore the rights of suffrage granted under the Congressional Act of 1924. As a result, few Native Americans, including those who had fought in the First World War, enjoyed full citizenship in Western North Carolina.

Throughout the 1920s, citizenship remained the "Eternal Problem." Cherokees debated Cherokees; Cherokees debated whites; and whites debated whites over the issue of citizenship for the Cherokee. Though the issue had been laid to rest at the national level with the Congressional Act of 1924 which bestowed full citizenship to all Native Americans who had not previously enjoyed it, the debate raged on in North Carolina throughout the decade. Local judges and election officials such as Judge William Webb ruled against the citizenship of Native Americans and disallowed their right to vote. Later in October, Manning ruled that the Cherokee were not citizens in spite of the affirmation of their rights by the Commission of Indian Affairs. Not until the New Deal did the Cherokee gain full citizenship in Western North Carolina.[3]

New Deal aid to the Cherokee also assisted the recovery of Jackson County during the Depression. The federal government dealt with the Cherokee as a separate entity within the borders of Jackson and Swain Counties. The Cherokee on the reservation and the surrounding areas had enjoyed few of the benefits of the prosperous Twenties. Most had existed on a subsistence level and had few resources whereby they could move beyond merely surviving. Most of their land was unsuited for cash crops, and the greater portion lay within the rocky, mountain forests of northern Jackson and Swain Counties. The Cherokee who dwelled in Jackson County lived much as they had a hundred years earlier, and when the Depression hit, they received almost no assistance through the Hoover Administration.

Awareness and sympathy among whites for the plight of the Native American grew during the hardship of the Depression. The Depression humbled all people of Western North Carolina and made them want to forget their own problems, and the woeful conditions piqued their compassion for those less fortunate such as the Native Americans. Beginning in 1932, articles on the cultural heritage and traditions of the Cherokee of Western North Carolina appeared in local and regional newspapers. In February of 1932, The Saturday Evening Post printed a favorable article about the culture of the Cherokee of Western North Carolina.[4] Then in November, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill invited the Cherokee to perform traditional dances on their campus as part of a Native American Awareness program.[5]

The climax of this cultural awakening to the Native American past occurred during the inaugural celebration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Two teams of Cherokee stickball players competed before a nationally diverse crowd of about two thousand people in Washington, D.C. as part of the inaugural celebration activities. Newspapers across America responded favorably to the manner in which the young men of the Cherokee conducted themselves both on and off the field. Viewers also enjoyed the intensity of the sport, and after the completion of the game, the Cherokee received grand cheers of appreciation from the crowd. While in Washington, people treated them with curiosity and respect, and because few whites had ever seen a real "Indian", the Cherokee achieved the status of celebrities.[6]

In Jackson County, the Cherokee gained the understanding of many whites through numerous articles in The Ruralite and The Jackson County Journal. Jackson County native, John Parris, Jr., wrote several articles on the Cherokee. His two part article, "Sequoyah: Cherokee Philologist" praised the inventor of the Cherokee syllabery which enabled the Cherokee to become a literate people. The appearance of such articles

suggests that a number of people in Jackson County were interested in the Cherokee and empathized with their plight.[7]

Economically, the conditions in which the Cherokee lived were possibly the worst of any community in Jackson County. The 1920s had brought little change to the Cherokee and no significant improvement to their quality of life. Logging, which had been their primary resource after the turn of the century, had played out as prices dropped and accessable sources of hardwood became increasingly more difficult to find. Still, harvesting pulpwood, which paid as little as fifty cents a day, represented the largest employer of Cherokees; and those who found other employment received less than half of what whites were paid. With the onset of the Depression, fewer opportunities for employment became available for Cherokee workers.[8]

The Cherokee made practically everything that they used because money was scarce. All Cherokee, both men and women, often worked in or near the community. Men performed maintenance, landscaping, logging, and farm work; and women generally worked in a domestic capacity, though it was not uncommon for them to work alongside the men. Women, however, were paid less than men and usually earned only about fifty to seventy-five cents for an entire day of hoeing corn, cleaning house, sewing, and cooking.[9]

Other problems also strained the limited Cherokee resources. Population growth through the unwelcome addition of "White Cherokees" stretched the arable land. These White Cherokees claimed Cherokee heritage either falsely through descendence or legally through marriage, and after being registered on the official rolls, they often took control of the best land while pushing the traditional Cherokee, those of purer Cherokee blood who practiced traditional beliefs, into the mountains.

The traditional Cherokee separated themselves from the modern world and even lived in isolation from relatives who shared in the world of the whites. They practiced

ages old farming methods and lived as their ancestors had lived. Most Cherokee, however, continued to work and do business with whites, but the "White Cherokee" had created a schism between whites and Cherokees which grew larger as poverty increased among the Cherokee.[10]

Census takers in 1930 recorded that the conditions among the Cherokee appalled them:

> [The house] was worse than filthy; no furnishings and not fit for a hog pen-garbage knee-deep about the house; offensive odor; human waste all about....flies in droves; sanitation uncared for.... I don't see how they live, and they are not living, but just existing.[11]

Such conditions prevailed over many of the Cherokee holdings especially among the traditional Cherokee.

Educational conditions further damaged the standing and esteem of the North Carolina Cherokee. Schools for Cherokee children extended only to the eighth grade, and they tended to focus on acculturation rather than education. Children attended school in an old church building in the Qualla Boundary not far from a school for whites only. Sim Hooper, a white teacher, operated the school under the auspices of the federal government. He and the Bureau of Indian Affairs encouraged parents to send their children to the school, and the school stressed reading, writing and speaking English.[12]

Before the Depression, the school closed its doors, and Cherokee children were required to attend the Cherokee Boarding School near Soco. Students from as far away as Snowbird, a Cherokee village near Robbinsville, North Carolina, attended the school. This school also stressed acculturation. While at the school, students were required to speak only English; and punishment such as washing out the mouth with soap was administered for breaking this rule. The Cherokee Boarding School also provided students with uniform clothing and required its students to bathe at least once a week.

A headmaster and a matron controlled the operation of the school and administered spankings and other punishments to students for failing to obey school rules. Running away, speaking the Cherokee language, and working too slowly represented some of the most common student infractions. While in school, teachers required students to work a portion of every day ironing clothes, cleaning house, and splitting wood. Even learning often took the guise of work in certain classes such as horticulture in which students spent much of the time hoeing a vegetable garden or corn patch. Chores filled the day, and little real learning occurred.[13]

In Jackson County as the Depression dried up employment, the Cherokee suffered first and most. They lost their jobs earlier and took greater cuts in pay than whites when businesses cut wages. Conditions among the Cherokee grew worse, but they had been impoverished for so long that the Depression only meant that more Cherokee would share in the poverty.

Many Cherokee owned hogs or even a cow as well as chickens, and all had a small garden plot. Wild game also abounded in the forests around Cherokee settlements, and the streams offered fish. According to Game and Bessie Walker, two Cherokee who lived at that time in the Qualla Boundary, food was not a serious problem; but their lack of money hurt:

> Well, we had milk and butter, chickens, ducks, hogs, and plenty of hog fat. For something to eat we made it good. But the clothes wore out- no money. You just had to patch them. For about two years there was no church held on Panther Creek. Everybody was needy; half of them didn't have shoes.[14]

During the Depression most Cherokee still dwelled in log houses with dirt floors and no indoor plumbing or electricity. They made their own soap, pots, and tools. New shoes and clothes were luxuries seldom acquired by Cherokee during most of the

Depression because money had to be used for food staples and supplies such as rifle shells and seed.[15]

In 1933 the New Deal began to gradually improve the lives of the Cherokee in Western North Carolina. New Deal assistance initiated recovery, but it also created programs to engineer reforms which would make the Cherokee full citizens. Young Cherokee men volunteered for work with the Civilian Conservation Corps or the National Youth Administration, and other Cherokee obtained work through the Works Progress Administration. Though most New Deal programs were open to the Cherokee, the federal government had prepared other programs just for the Cherokee.

One of these special programs, the Indian Emergency Conservation Work Program, gave over one hundred Cherokee men immediate assistance. It employed native Cherokee men for two weeks at twenty-five dollars a week performing community improvement tasks on the reservation. They improved primary roads and built paths into the more isolated communities. Aside from pumping money into the Cherokee communities, it initiated a series of projects which brought the Cherokee closer to the white communities in Jackson County.[16]

Five additional Civilian Works Administration projects benefited the Cherokee in 1934. These projects further enhanced the roads entering the Qualla Boundary and improved many paths into roads. It also ended the isolation of some communities. Overall in 1933, the federal government spent almost sixty-seven thousand dollars on road construction and repairs within the Qualla Boundary. Other New Deal projects also contributed to the betterment of life for the Cherokee such as the construction of a hospital and two new schools. The hospital brought healthcare within the reach of many Cherokee for the first time, and these schools meant that Cherokee children no longer had to attend the boarding school. The New Deal also sponsored the construction of other

buildings in the Qualla Boundary such as a hotel, and these building projects paved the way for greater change.[17]

The location of the Qualla Boundary to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park led the federal government to the conclusion that it should be a tourist attraction entirely within the bounds of the national park. The Cherokee, however, opposed the integration of their lands within the bounds of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park because they feared the loss of their land to the federal government. In July of 1935, the federal government acquiesced to the view of the of the tribal council and chose to route the accessways to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park around the reservation. After setting the metes and bounds of the park to adjoin the Qualla Boundary, the federal government assisted the development of the Cherokee reservation to capitalize on its favorable tourist location. Congressman Zebulon Weaver pushed legislation granting only the Cherokee the right to sell Indian products within the bounds of the reservation, and he helped the Cherokee to organize cooperative markets where Native American pottery, baskets, woodcarvings, jewelry, and other traditional crafts could be marketed.[18] Earlier in 1934, the New Deal had assisted the Cherokee in the construction of a hotel and several tourist gift shops, and with the favorable boundary of the heavily visited Great Smoky Mountain National Park, other projects to enhance the tourist industry on the reservation had been initiated. These projects immediately capitalized on the tourist traffic going through the park, and the economic impact of this tourism encouraged the Cherokee to preserve their natural resources and to extend their tourism operation.[19]

Awareness of their culture and heritage led the Cherokee to desire to preserve it. Roosevelt's New Deal not only saved the Cherokee from poverty, but it also assisted in the recovery of their cultural identity. Roosevelt appointed John Collier, a sociologist, to the office of Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Collier held a deep interest in the Cherokee and had studied their history and heritage intently. He used the power of his new position

to implement many ideas that he had formulated through his studies, such as restoring the responsibility of the federal government to the Cherokee as citizens.

For instance, John Collier felt that the Cherokee should be allowed to develop with the white community while cultivating their heritage, which had been greatly interrupted by the inclusion of unscrupulous whites into the Cherokee society. Furthermore, Collier believed that preserving the racial integrity of the Cherokee was tantamount to the survival of their culture. Thus, he proposed the abandonment of the boarding school method of education and requested the assistance of New Deal leaders to construct schools within the individual communities on the Cherokee Reservation. He also restored the traditional craft-making through the curriculum, and Collier recommended that the heritage and history of the Cherokee be made a part of the curriculum as well. Furthermore, he pressed the whites of North Carolina to become more aware and tolerant of the Cherokee and their traditions. He pushed for interaction among the Cherokee and whites through fairs and festivals which showcased the culture of Native Americans and exhibited the value of traditional Cherokee crafts and knowledge.[20]

In addition, Collier immediately ended the threat of allotment, which had often deprived Native americans of their land; and he banned the unregulated sale of Indian lands and sanctioned that some of their lost properties be returned to them at the expense of the federal government. Lastly, Collier made provisions for the organization of tribal ruling councils and governing bodies which enabled the Native Americans to determine their own economic future to some extent. Indeed, it was this provision which allowed the Cherokee to reject the annexation of their reservation into the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. Though Collier's provision initially received little acknowledgement from local white leaders, the prosperity brought to Jackson County by tourism eased the tensions among whites, White Cherokee, and traditional Cherokee though several White

Cherokee had to be forced from the reservation.[21] Congressman Zebulon Weaver urged that the Cherokee be granted the right to maintain rule over their on land, and after much debate, the federal government granted the Cherokee Tribal Council authority to carry out the everyday operations of government within the bounds of the reservation.[22]

Other New Deal programs assisted the recovery of the Cherokee by improving their standard of living. The Agriculture Adjustment Administration sent agriculture agents to teach the Cherokee modern farming practices and better methods of preserving agricultural products. They also introduced modern farming equipment to the Cherokee and set up markets for their products. Home-demonstration agents working under the Agriculture Adjustment Administration educated Cherokee women in food preparation and preservation, sanitation and hygiene, and child care.[23]

Education played an important role in bringing about the recovery of the Cherokee. After the construction of the new schools, additional school programs increased the quality and quantity of education opportunities for Cherokee children. The Cherokee Tribal Council also chose to lengthen the school year to eight months and to abandon the Cherokee Boarding School near Soco. Furthermore, the Council chose to allow students to speak Cherokee within the educational environment, but they also encouraged students to take more academic courses while raising the standards of these courses. Vocational and domestic classes received emphasis but not priority over the academic courses because the Cherokee hoped to have one of their new schools become accredited as a high school. The curriculum for the Cherokee High School sought to prepare students for success in their home environment while endowing them with the essentials for a post-high school education. English speech and writing formed the basis of the school's academic program. Career courses such as carpentry, animal husbandry, and horticulture formed the core curriculum of the school for the male students while the curriculum for females focused on craft-making such as basket weaving and making

pottery. As a result of these improvements in the quality of education on the Cherokee Reservation, the standard of living gradually began to rise; but the numerous programs offered to the Cherokee via the New Deal awakened envy among some whites, especially those of lower economic standing.[24]

One of the new schools on the Cherokee Indian Reservation included four years of high school, and its curriculum sought to prepare students to improve their home and community environment. Carpentry, animal husbandry, agriculture, and horticulture were offered to assist the development and improvement of life on the reservation while traditional crafts such as pottery-making, basket weaving, and the like were taught to allow the Cherokee to tap into the growing tourist industry. Though these vocational classes represented the core of the curriculum, academic classes such as English, literature, and history were also offered in an attempt to bring the mainstream Cherokee closer to surrounding white communities. Native teachers, however, reminded the students that they were Cherokee first.[25]

Overall, most people in Jackson County favored the assistance being given to the Cherokee. The Sylva Chamber of Commerce sponsored a Cherokee float in the Rhododendron Festival; the Jackson County Journal offered congratulations to the Cherokee for refusing to allow the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to annex their reservation; and the Daughters of the Confederacy honored the Cherokee who served in the Confederate Army with a historical marker.[26] Though some still held prejudices, relations between whites and Cherokee in the county improved throughout the era of the New Deal.

The Cherokee received a separate, little New Deal which brought them out of poverty and restored a measure of prosperity. For this the Cherokee held President Franklin Roosevelt in high regard. Prior to the Depression, Many Cherokee had drifted toward the Republican Party, but the New Deal completely reversed this trend. In 1936,

Franklin Delano Roosevelt visited Jackson County and the Cherokee; and they named him "Chief White Eagle."[27] The Cherokee Tribal Council welcomed the President warmly and thanked him for the benefits they had received from New Deal relief and recovery programs. Roosevelt credited the Cherokee for the extent of their recovery and vowed to continue the work of helping America to recover.[28]

Later in 1937 Congressman Zebulon Weaver urged the Cherokee to support the Indian Bill, which proposed an exchange of Cherokee Land for land in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park; but the Cherokee Indian Council did not vote on this issue. The situation remained unresolved, but local support for the Cherokee grew as Democratic leaders like Weaver sought alternatives to annexation of the Cherokee into the park. As a result, the issue remained in stalemate until after the Second World War.[29]

Though the Eternal Question of Cherokee citizenship had not been answered, six years (1933-1939) of the New Deal had brought the Cherokee close to an acceptable solution. Though poverty had not been eradicated, it had been slowed and put on the defensive as New Deal policies addressed unemployment, health care, education, and to some extent discrimination. The New Deal also treated them as citizens under the law in spite of the lack of confirmation from the state government, and overall, the Cherokee had made great strides forward in most areas of their life during the New Deal period.

ENDNOTES

[1] Theda Perdue, The Cherokee (New York: The University of Kentucky Press, 1989), 94.

[2] Ibid., 95.

[3] The Ruralite, January 23, 1924; October 24, 1924.

[4] The Ruralite, February 9, 1932. This was one of the first articles portraying the plight of the Cherokee in a sympathetic light.

[5] Ibid., November 15, 1932.

[6] Ibid., February 28, 1933; March 14, 1933; July 11, 1933; July 18, 1933. This event probably more than any other served to enlighten the white community to the cultural heritage of the Cherokee and its value.

[7] Ibid., July 11, 1933; July 18, 1933. These articles praised the heritage of the Cherokee and foreshadowed the successful journalism career of Jackson County native, John Parris, Jr.

[8] Perdue, The Cherokee, 96.

[9] Ibid.. Across Western North Carolina, women generally earned less; and it was also not uncommon for white women to work alongside of men.

[10] Ibid..

[11] Ibid., 97.

[12] Bessie Jumper, "Bessie Jumper Interview," Interview by Lois Calonehuskie and Gil Jackson (Cherokee, February 1987), Journal of Cherokee Studies, vol. XIV (Special Edition 1991) : 24.

[13] Ibid., 26-27.

[14] Game Walker, "Game and Bessie Walker Interview," Interview by Earl Davis (Cherokee, November 1986), Journal of Cherokee Studies, vol XIV (Special Edition 1991) : 63. Game Walker farmed and logged during the Depression.

[15] Martha Wachacha, "Martha Wachacha Interview," Interview by Lois Calonehuskie, Gil Jackson, and Earl Davis (Cherokee, March 1987), Journal of Cherokee Studies, vol. XIV (Special Edition) : 54-55. Martha Wachacha grew up during the Depression, and she worked cleaning houses and working in cornfields.

[16] Perdue, The Cherokee, 97.

[17] The Ruralite, September 7, 1933; January 30, 1934.

[18] Ibid., May 8, 1934.

[19] Ibid., November 13, 1934.

[20] The Cherokee Scout, June 6, 1934.

[21] The Ruralite, May 23, 1933; May 8, 1934.

[22] The Cherokee Scout, June 6, 1934.

[23] Perdue, The Cherokee, 99.

[24] The Asheville Citizen, June 17, 1939.

[25] Ibid.

[26] The Jackson County Journal, July 11, 1935; October 3, 1935.

[27] Ibid., September 3, 1936; September 10, 1936.

[28] Ibid., September 10, 1936.

[29] The Jackson County Journal, July 29, 1937; October 14, 1937.

CHAPTER 8

RELIEF FOR EVERY RACE

The South more than any other area in the nation needed the relief promised by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. During the winter of 1932-1933, much of the South existed below the starvation level. Southern states including North Carolina depended almost entirely upon agriculture, and as a result of the Depression, the economic woes which led to high unemployment rates exceeded those of other regions. Therefore, President Roosevelt tailored the New Deal specifically to meet the needs of the South. According to Frank Freidel, a Roosevelt biographer, "To him [Roosevelt] the greatest challenge facing the South was the alleviation of poverty, not the maintenance of (or the elimination) of white supremacy."[1] With this in mind, New Deal leadership paid no special heed to race but rather assisted the impoverished in recovery without regard to color.

In 1932 the African American population in Jackson County was approximately six hundred persons or less than five percent of the population. For the most part, the black population of Jackson County during the Thirties played only a small role in the economy of the county. Most blacks earned far less than whites even considering that they were often employed in the same types of jobs. Yet, the African American population exemplified how the New Deal sought "to make every American citizen the subject of his country's interest and concern.... The test of progress is not whether we add to the abundance of those who have much, it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."[2] In 1932, the African American community in Jackson County suffered under the Depression like the rest of the county. Most blacks worked on farms, but some

worked as miners, factory workers, cooks, carpenters, or even millers. Some worked a combination of trades in order to improve their lot or just to provide for their families. Few claimed any measurable wealth, but many lived in reasonable comfort considering the Depression. A remarkable fact about relations between blacks and whites during this time was the cohesion of interaction present among the races in Jackson County. This acceptance may have arisen from their occupations and their relative economic standing which they shared; for though whites generally earned more than blacks, it was not so much more as to place them on a separate economic level.[3]

Most African American farms were small, family operations in which one or more members of the family also held public employment. Like many county farmers, African American farm families were independent and incredibly industrious. They made use of every resource and opportunity and often rivaled area farms owned by whites in spite of disadvantages brought about by discrimination (For instance, the produce of black farms usually brought lower prices at the market in comparison to the produce sold by whites).[4] Mary Etta Alston Bryson, whose family did some farming during the Depression, recalled that even though her father worked at Parson's Tannery, he and her mother also worked hard putting in a large garden and raising hogs. Mainly they raised corn, but they also grew vegetables of various types to supplement their diet. Farms like the Alston's were typical among Jackson County black families especially among those in the Webster, Hogrock, and Tuckaseigee communities.[5]

With the emergence of New Deal programs in Jackson County, more employment opportunities for blacks also emerged. During this time many blacks left agricultural careers to pursue employment in the local businesses and factories of Sylva. Though most continued to maintain a small garden plot near their homes, agriculture moved from a primary source of income to a complementary one for most of the black community in the county. Common occupations included hotel porters and waiters, kaolin miners, and

factory workers. Parson's Tannery employed twenty-four black laborers in various capacities, and more than any other industry in the county. Although many of the least desirable positions were filled by black employees, blacks shared these positions with whites; but none complained as they were all glad to have steady employment.[6]

Amazingly, the work force in Jackson County during this time was integrated with blacks and whites working side by side without regulations making it mandatory. The hard times created by the Depression may have forced this integration, but New Deal policies ensured its continuance. Though New Deal programs did not offer special programs to the black community, it did offer them the same programs that it offered to whites. Indirectly, however, it assisted in the transformation of Jackson County's black population from agrarian to urban by bringing prosperity to businesses in Sylva and by increasing the number of opportunities for blacks.

Whereas economic possibilities rose for blacks in the county, educational opportunities remained stagnant even under the New Deal. Though the black community valued education, few had the chance to complete more than eight years of formal education prior to the Depression. The severity of the Depression meant that everyone of a certain age had to contribute to the well-being of the family, and most went to work early in their teens whether in farming or in industry. Furthermore, it would not be until 1948 that the first black high school would begin full time operation in spite of the founding of three white high schools at least a decade before the Depression. Regardless of such adversity, some like Annie Ruth Casey ventured out of the county to Asheville to complete their high school education. Fewer still went on to earn college degrees, but a small number did pursue a college education (Again, Ruth Casey was one of these, earning her degree at Winston-Salem State University). Still, little change occurred in the education of blacks in the county through the Twenties and Thirties.[7]

Social life in the black community centered upon the Church. While some white churches had become stagnant, enjoying little growth if not incurring losses in membership during the Twenties, churches in the black community remained strong. Singings and revivals often occurred among the three black churches in the county, and after the onset of the Depression, black churches became even more vibrant in the face of adversity. The church became the hub around which relief efforts were orchestrated, and the poor times turned many back to religion for answers. According to Mary Etta Alston Bryson, "Preaching, praying, singing, shouting, and eating dinner on the grounds was simply a way of life for the colored people of Jackson County."[8] Many blacks had to travel great distances to attend church but still never missed any of the three weekly services. Sunday dinners after church also represented an extension of the church service. People gave special thanks for the blessings of God at these meals, and they often invited the preacher for lunch as well as prepared a portion for those who were sick or just needy. Gospel singing followed many of these Sunday lunches and completed the social atmosphere which surrounded the Sunday worship services.[9]

Many blacks of Jackson County like their white counterparts enjoyed hunting and fishing. The exodus from the farm to the more urban areas of Sylva did not impede their love of these two pastimes. It did, however, change in that these activities became more integrated with the white community. In communities such as Hogrock, it was not uncommon for young white men to join young black men in hunting or fishing. Working together in the local mines or in the tannery also created camaraderie between blacks and whites at a time when it was not common elsewhere in some areas of the South.[10]

Initially, the Depression enabled discrimination against blacks. Businesses found it much easier to release black workers than white ones when poor economic times forced them to down-size because most businesses depended upon white customers more so than

black ones. Government aid and assistance also generally found the pockets of whites before blacks regardless the level of need.

The New Deal began to change this pattern. Blacks received aid and employment in amounts and numbers similar to those of whites. The Public Works Administration, The Works Progress Administration, and the Civil Conservation Corps provided employment opportunities to the black population of Jackson County. The PWA and the WPA located employment positions for blacks in the county, and these jobs included primarily physical labor jobs such as leveling roads, digging ditches, and landscaping around public buildings. These two New Deal organizations employed numerous blacks in the county. On the other hand, the CCC provided few blacks with employment, and those who did receive CCC assistance in the county often refused it because of the strict regulations governing the program which often required that participants be removed from their home districts.[11]

The life of blacks progressed slowly under the New Deal, but for the three decades preceding the Depression there had been no progress. Under the New Deal, opportunities increased in both range and quantity as new, non-traditional employment became available. Better job opportunities lured blacks from the farm to the towns especially Sylva, and programs that operated through the New Deal integrated the labor force which meant closer ties between races. Although the New Deal did not directly lead to wholesale changes in the black community, it did restore to it a level of prosperity which it had not experienced since the turn of the century.

ENDNOTES

[1] Frank Freidel, Franklin D. Roosevelt: Launching the New Deal (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 36.

[2] Frederick Allen, Since Yesterday: The 1930s in America, September 3, 1929-September 3, 1939 (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1939), 225.

[3] Interview by the author with Selena R. Robinson, January 11, 1998. Selena Robinson's family lived in Jackson County during the 1930s.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Jackson County Genealogical Society, Jackson County Heritage, North Carolina, vol.1, (Marceline: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1992), 58.

[6] Max R. Williams, ed., The History of Jackson County (Sylva: The Jackson County Historical Association, 1987), 190-191.

[7] Jackson County Genealogical Society, Jackson County Heritage, 147.

[8] Ibid., 58.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Interview by the author with Paul Buchanan, January 25, 1997.

[11] Interview by the author with C. Bryson, January 18, 1998. C. Bryson grew up in Jackson County during the Depression and farmed, mined, and worked in Parson's Tannery.

CHAPTER 9

THE CATALYST

The New Deal made a difference in the lives of the people of Jackson County. In almost every facet of their lives, New Deal policy or assistance either directly or indirectly touched them. That is not to say that every aspect of the New Deal was positive but rather that it impacted upon everyone in some form or fashion whether good or ill.

To farmers the New Deal brought technology and technological assistance, financial credit, and better prices for their produce. Agricultural endeavors became more diverse and efficient under the auspices of the New Deal while loans for farmers enabled many to continue farming. In general, county farms became more productive and self-sufficient as well as better at marketing their products.

In business and industry, the New Deal restored the faith of the public in both the state and federal government's operation through halting the liquidation of banks and certain industries. Though Jackson County lost one of its major industries , logging, other industries emerged with little real assistance from the New Deal. Both Sylva Paperboard and Parson's Tannery (later Armour Leather) alleviated the hardship of the Depression in Jackson County without any significant input from New Deal programs. However, as the Depression reached its peak, the National Recovery Administration pressed area businesses to provide more of the county with assistance through making available additional employment.

Another factor leading to the lessening of the effects of the Depression in Jackson County centered upon the burgeoning tourist industry. The creation of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park made Jackson County an ideal location for vacations and touring;

and President Franklin D. Roosevelt's ardent support of this park enabled the county to better capitalize on its proximity to the highway arteries leading through the park. Though the initial concept of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park did not originate under the New Deal, the New Deal exploited the idea to create numerous jobs for America's unemployed. These programs also enhanced the marketability of the park as a vacation hub with Jackson County holding several significant spokes within its bounds.

Socially, the New Deal in combination with the Depression brought change to Jackson County. Improved connections to areas outside of Western North Carolina encouraged the importation of new ideas and fads. The automobile also aided the change which was occurring. While improved transportation allowed new ideas entrance, they also paved the way for an exodus of young people especially young men who had experienced the world via the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Tennessee Valley Authority, or other New Deal public works projects. Though the majority of the population held strong to ages old traditions and ties of family, others embraced a new age in which the government held great sway over the lives of individuals.

In the face of mass employment in the county, the New Deal replaced community and church relief agencies. It provided emergency assistance to thousands of North Carolinians and hundreds of families in Jackson County through self-help programs, works projects, and direct relief payments or assistance. Later, old age pension plans and social security for the unemployed, the aged, and the needy offered aid to the portion of the population which had suffered the greatest through the Depression.Thus, New Deal policy ushered in radical changes in social thought and responsibility concerning the welfare of the county's population.

Even in its treatment of other cultures such as the Native Americans, the New Deal introduced change. It generally brought minority communities closer to the white

community. Though the New Deal did not seek to abolish Jim Crow nor did it sanction white supremist movements. Its policies ignored racial conflicts and instead focused upon alleviating poverty regardless of race. At the conclusion of the New Deal, minority communities in Jackson County had experienced positive gains in their struggle to achieve equality with whites.

In summation, the New Deal proved to be an instrument of change in the county. It pushed progression in many areas of the county. Modernization and openness characterized most New Deal activities within the county, and many New Deal programs shaped the economy of the county for the remainder of the century. Progress was evident in agriculture, business, and society although not all of the progress may be deemed entirely positive. Agriculture had become more productive. Industry moved from extracting natural resources to manufacturing products. Socially and politically tremendous upheavals occurred in Jackson County, and by the close of the New Deal era, life in the county had been transformed from the days preceding the Great Depression.

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