

R. M. JOLLY - PUBLIC SERVANT

I have always been interested in good roads. I have felt that the public weal and woe, wealth and poverty, prosperity and disaster, are closely linked to the system of public roads. Then it is not surprising that the first office I should hold was that of road overseer of the Champion Ferry Road in 1869. Again, while I was in Georgia, I was appointed overseer on road into Jackson, the county seat of Butts County, in 1872.

Soon after I returned to my own farm in Cleveland County, Sheriff B. F. Logan appointed me his deputy. I served under him for eight years.

I recall one instance of that work that I believe should be told. The sheriff came to me one day and told me that he was behind in his tax collections, and asked me if I would undertake to collect in places that others had failed. I told him that I would if he would support my efforts. He promised. The next morning I went to get the tax books made up of taxes for the most part of eight years past due. Such taxes are the bane of any sheriff. That situation was found in townships numbers 10 and 11. In various places in the townships I posted notices of my purpose and mission indicating that the taxes had to be settled. When the posted dates came I was on the spot. During the first sixteen days I collected \$700. It did not come easy. As an illustration of the difficulty, I will mention the case of one man who said he would not pay. He owed \$15.00. When I went to the house his wife had a fine piece of cloth on her loom. I indicated that I would have to take the cloth for the taxes. She begged me to substitute a colt of her husband's in the stable. I put the halter on it, and started to lead it away when it began to neigh in panic. When its master heard it, he rushed forward with another man and demanded that I unloose the horse. He could see that done for the tax receipt which I held against him, I observed. He swore that he would never pay it. Thereupon I told Robert Fortinberry, the father of Andy Fortinberry, and a blacksmith, whom I was paying a dollar a day to pilot me over the county, to lead on while I brought up the rear. The man brought out his ax but made no further show of resistance. That night I locked the horse in Fortinberry stable. The next day I went back, collected the \$15.00, and turned his colt back to him, and wrote tax receipts for \$600 more.

The \$600 was collected on the next trip in about twenty days.

On another trip I stayed with William. Hull. One day I was alone in the township house which was in a lonely place in the woods when he came in, told me that he had become uneasy about me because some of the men were threatening my life. I asked him if he had anything to do at home. He replied that he could sow oats. I then suggested that he could be doing that. Nevertheless, I expressed my appreciation of his concern for me, but felt that I could take care of my own hide. My mother had taught me that it was seldom that a barking dog ever tore anybody's trousers, and I did not fear from that quarter.

The year before, 1877, Mr. Beattie and I had together operated a saw mill on the John Tucker place where we sawed lumber and shingles for both the public and ourselves. Our sawyer was T. M. Tucker. His brother Thomas, was a wagoner at the time. They were both hard workers and upright gentlemen.

The next year I farmed on Mr. Burrell Blanton's land, Beaver Dam creek, Cleveland County, and made a good crop of cotton which sold for eight cents a pound. While there I was a road overseer on the road into Shelby, N. C.

During the year 1878, I moved back to my own farm and began to develop it. By this time my boys were getting large enough to do considerable amount of work. I made a good crop, and built a new house on the hill above the old Palmer house, where I lived through 1879 and 1880. I had also established a public ferry across the river which I operated, In 1878 I bought another tract of land containing one hundred acres from the man, W. P. Lowe, from whom I bought the first one hundred and thirty-six acres. I paid \$1,000 for the second tract.

In 1881 I moved to my mother's in order to take care of her. Father had passed away in 1875, leaving the bulk of the estate to my brother, G. W. Jolly, who was to take care of mother. However, he seemed to be unable to wrest a living from the soil, and decided to return to Mississippi. C. M. Jolly moved back from Mississippi to his fifty acres. While I was at my mother's place, 1880-1883, I spent \$400 on the house and \$1,000 on the farm, developing it to its former fertility. The chief work was ditching. I did the greater part of that by myself. I knew that it had to be done if a profit could be realized on the place, Accordingly, I went to it with a bang. It was a big job throwing up the dirt, cutting the poles and filling in the rock walls, but I did it with the help of my boys, When it was done, I planted the entire bottom lands in corn of the seven-ear variety, the seed of which I had procured from Thomas Ware, who lived near Shelby, Mr. Daniel Humphries, a man seventy years of age, pronounced it the finest field of corn he had ever seen. It produced eight hundred bushels of corn. Besides that I raised some wheat and cotton.

The next year I raised 103 bushels of wheat from seven bushels of seed. We threshed that and 8,000 more with a machine which Preston Bridges, Joe Blanton, Daniel Anthony, Clifton Lipscomb, Ellis Cleary and I owned.

I next built a cotton gin on the road above Gaffney where I ginned my own thirty bales and many more for the nearby farmers.

In 1887 when I had again been made road overseer, the roads had become almost impassable. I wore my thirty-six hands out for a whole week trying to get the road from P. P. Goforth's place to State Line, N. C., in some sort of shape. They were so mad on Saturday night that they had an election and voted me out. That was satisfactory with me. I told them that I was going to run for county supervisor of Spartanburg County and if I should be elected I would use my influence to have the roads widened and the beds arched.

In the election I won over Mr. Sexton of Woodruff by 450 votes, and served with J. B. Leonard and J. W. Howell. At the next election the number on the board was cut to one. All three of us ran. Larry Gant, the editor of the "Headlight," sent for me. When I asked what he wanted, he said he wanted me to pull out of the race for supervisor and run for the legislature. When I refused to do it, he said:

"Mr. Jolly, you have 2500 votes to start on. But if you do not withdraw I will see that you are defeated." He did. He used his tongue and his pen to achieve his desire. I was let out on the first race. However, I told him that I would see to it that his man, Howell, was not elected, and therefore appealed to all of my friends to support Leonard.

After the election I saw Gant.

"You see what you get for your smart work," I sneered.

He spoke up: "It would have been better to have elected you. Then perhaps, you would have kept your mouth shut about a new county."

"You have nothing to do with my mouth about the new county," I assured

The next Monday morning I went to Columbia. South Carolina, spent the night with Governor Gary Evans. I asked him to appoint me doorkeeper of the lower house if he were elected president of the Constitutional Convention. He said that he would, but he wanted to know why I did not run for a delegate. I did not want to go as a delegate and told him so. I kept my own counsel about my visit. So did he. Three months later, after the election, when the convention should convene, I went along without telling anyone except my wife about my purpose. And when Evans was chosen president, I was appointed doorkeeper.

I was anxious to become doorkeeper in order to become intimately acquainted with the delegates so that I could call upon them when the new counties came up, I looked forward to a hard fight. I was in the right place when it came off. Rock Hill was making a strong bid with her thirty lobbyists when the question came up.

It was first decided that all new counties should embrace territory twenty miles square. This killed Rock Hill's chances. Her delegates secured passage of a bill making the basis of county incorporation a definite amount of capital invested; and they became gay as they went through the door by me. At one time they were so confident that one of the men offered to bet fifteen to one that Rock Hill would get the new county. I replied that Mr. Brice and I would give a blow to their confidence on the morrow. Here I confess that they would have won had the question been put to a vote on that day. However, before eight o'clock next morning lawyer Brice and I were on the floor with a petition from the people from York County asking the members not to vote for Rock Hill. In that way Rock Hill was beaten with the slogan, "Equal rights to all; special privileges to none," in a six to one landslide. In that way was my foresightedness vindicated. This victory over Rock Hill gave Gaffney bright prospects as a county seat. Of course, the delegates from Spartanburg voted against my proposition in order to save part of her territory for herself. This was the meaning of Gant's expression concerning the closing of my mouth about the new county.

But the fight was only half won. The various townships were to vote separately on the question of joining a new county. Consequently, the fight had to continue.

When Professor Sams was selected as a surveyor for the new county lines and was surveying a line running up the Pacolet river, he came to a point just below the mill, when Mr. Montgomery, the president of the mill, told him that if he should enclose eighty houses in the survey that he would control a sufficient number of votes to swing the election against the new county. Sams came to me and said that he was stalled again. I told him to go ahead with the line to the branch below the mill, run up the stream to the new bridge, cross it, and run back to the river, thereby leaving out the eighty houses.

After the line had been run to include twenty miles square of Spartanburg, York, and Union counties the next job was to pile up a two-thirds majority in each township for the new county. I had blazed the way for several years, but there was still much work to be done. Just before the election Mr. Hamrick told me that he was going to ask me to go over into the section, cut off York County and win it to the new county. I promised to go if someone would accompany me. I asked Booth Sutler to go with me. We went in my buggy, and canvassed the country. One night someone at Person's schoolhouse cried out, "Let Cherokee once name her baby, and we will vote for it."

I said "What do you want it to be?"

"Cherokee," he answered.

There those people gave the name to the county after their own township, Cherokee. After the speaking, at eleven o'clock, I spoke to Bud, "Let's go home."

"Right now?" he questioned.

"Sure, that name has done the work," was my rejoinder.

The next day in Gaffney I met A. J. Carroll who wanted to know what I had done. I told him that it was all sewed up if the name would be Cherokee.

At this place it is fitting that Botler should be commended. He was an indefatigable worker, a ready talker with a bright answer to any remark about the new county, and a good mixer. He made friends easily, and had the faculty of cementing the friendships formed into lasting attachments.

When we were at the convention I had secured a pledge from my co-worker from York, Mr. Brice, that he would vote for me in my efforts to secure a new county if I should call upon him. Just before the election someone had sent for him to make a speech against the proposed county at Blacksburg. I met him at dinner, reminded him of his promise that he would help me in my struggle if I should need it, in return for my service in helping him blast the hopes of Rock Hill. He remembered, arose, went to the train without making his speech. That was the last attempt Blacksburg made to defeat the plan. The election was held and Cherokee took its place by the sides of its sisters. I played a leading part in her making, and claim her for my own.

In the first race I was in the lead, and I have always believed I was counted out in the second race.

