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## THREE NEGRO COMMUNITIES IN TIDEWATER VIRGINIA

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## INTRODUCTION

### Going Ahead by Communities

When a number of families living conveniently near to each other begin to want things as a group which no one home could supply for itself, the community is born. Every family in the country is a part of some community. In turn every community, being made up of human beings, is subject to the same demands on the part of its families for worship and education. Too, it finds poor health, lack of opportunity for sociability, and a scant money income equally depressing. Some communities seem to be resting content in an atmosphere of indifference, while others are full of vitality and strength to go ahead.

Whatever the causes that keep communities stagnant the accomplishments of those thoroughly alive help to point the way forward. The story of Little Forks, Ebenezer, and Ruthville tells how three Negro rural communities have found and are finding ways of meeting their needs and longings by harmoniously using their own resources.

Each one, it will be noticed, progressed in so far as it pooled its interests, brains, and resources toward common ends. Each went ahead because of effective group work. Individuals stand out in these communities, not as men and women who have made personal successes, but as sound and tireless leaders of groups.

These communities and others may well be compared with themselves at different points of development. Yesterday, what was the community doing for itself? Today, what is the whole community thinking about and working on?

Has the school improved in equipment, housing, and teaching?

Is the church entering into the broad needs of the community like recreation or home improvement, or is it still on a personal salvation basis?

Has the agriculture of the community kept in line with the results of study and successful practice?

Are appearances changing? Are there many barren and cheerless homes still to be found in the community?

Are more of the young people disposed to like the community as a place in which to make homes, or do they like to leave as soon as they may?

How many sons and daughters of the community are going away to school, later to return and give the whole community the benefit of their opportunities?

Little Forks, Ebenezer, and Ruthville are answering some of these questions with some degree of success. The story of their experiences is told with the idea that other communities may be led to check up their group accomplishments and may lose no courage in the solution of their problems.

The author feels strongly his indebtedness to the people of Little Forks, Ebenezer, and Ruthville for the material of this bulletin. The county demonstration agents, teachers, farmers, housewives, and young folks in these communities have contributed their time, interest, and willingness to help at every turn. Several of the workers at Hampton assisted in various ways. Dr. C. J. Galpin, especially, gave friendly suggestions and the aid of his office in carrying on the work.

# THREE NEGRO COMMUNITIES IN TIDEWATER VIRGINIA

BY ALLEN B. DOGGETT, JR.  
Department of Rural Sociology and Economics

## LITTLE FORKS COMMUNITY NANSEMOND COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Peanuts, hogs, and a little acreage in cotton provide the cash money for most of the Negro farm homes outside of the trucking section in Nansemond County, Southeastern Virginia. Entirely dependent upon agriculture, Little Forks community, a few miles north of the North Carolina line, has the typical light-colored soil of the Virginia-Carolina peanut belt. Its prosperity, like that of the other communities of the belt, rises and falls with the price of peanuts.

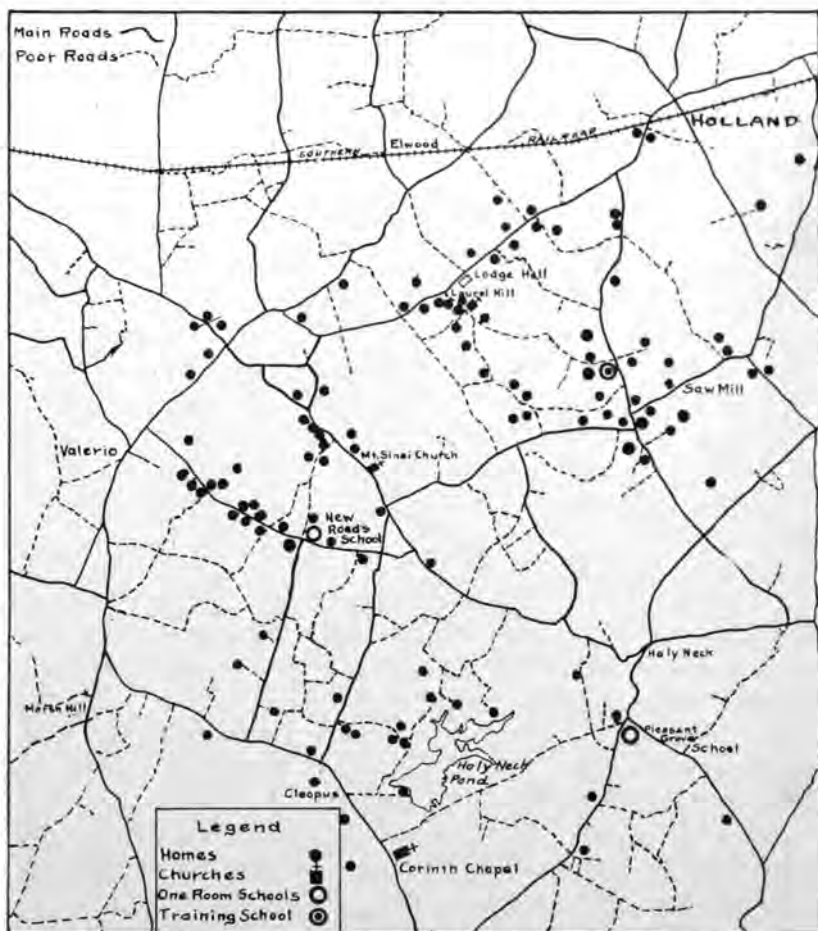
The farmers of Little Forks use the peanut warehouse, the cotton gin, banks, and stores at Holland on the Southern Railroad about three miles from the community's consolidated school. So far as soil and situation go, this seems no more favored than other peanut communities in Southeastern Virginia.

A concrete road now under construction will connect Holland with Suffolk where the peanut factories are located, but the "big" roads through the community itself are passable in a flivver practically the year round. The wood roads reach some homes, but the majority of families live on or within sight of the main roads.

Little Forks has an air about it, a pride in well-kept homes and farms that reaches any visitor. Many of the eighty-three homes are painted; some are whitewashed; some are gray with weather.

"Yes," as one neighbor said of another, "T. L. G. Walden lives in that white house with the red brick chimneys at each end, back from the road, with the big sycamore and cedars."

He did not mention the fact that this home and farm had been slowly developed from a cabin in the woods. There are other homes like Mr. Walden's in this community; and at least three well-informed young men are beginning now as he did forty years ago—in a clearing in the pines.



**COLORED COMMUNITY OF LITTLE FORKS  
NANSEMOND COUNTY, VA.**



But the community has not always been what it is today in appearance, in pride in its school, churches, and other organizations, in its ability to think and agree in terms of Little Forks. Nor has it "just grown." It is being made steadily and surely by the one hundred and fifty-six members of the Patrons' League, by the pupils and teachers of the graded consolidated school, the Farm Boys' Loan Association, the Industrial Farmers,



#### BUILDING THE NEW BRICK SCHOOL, LITTLE FORKS

The consolidation of four one-room schools combined with co-operation among the patrons made a seven-room building possible.

the Lodge, the Christian and Baptist Churches. These, with other organizations, are working groups in the creation of more satisfactions for the community.

#### **The Patrons' League**

The Patrons' League, known as the Nansemond County Training School League with a membership of 126 men and women, has done more to bring together the community than any other one organization. Formerly there was a one-room school in each of four neighborhoods (making up the community) served by the two churches, in the largest of which, New Roads, lived forty-five families.

In 1917 the New Roads school overflowed and the crowded condition led to action on the part of the patrons of the school. "Three of us went to the County Board," said one of the former patrons of the New Roads neighborhood school, "and talked about a new school. The superintendent said to get four schools to come together and the Board would give a graded school. He said 'You go to the patrons (at New Roads) and have a committee appointed to visit the other three schools in the section to arrange for a consolidation.' We did so and reported back to the Board. The Board said, 'Call an educational meeting at some church so we can meet all the people.'"

This was the beginning. The educational meeting was held March 7, 1918, in Mt. Sinai Church. This building seats 480 people, yet there were many standing.

"Our superintendent and the Board," he continued, "gave us the plan by which we were to go to work for our school building. They gave us to

understand that four schools must come together and elect one president with whom the Board could deal. This we did at a later date. At that time we did not know where the building would be. We were all agreed that we wanted the school but couldn't settle on the place, so we turned it over to the School Board and everybody was satisfied with its choice. The Board gave out the amount of \$2200 to be raised by the patrons of the consolidated school. We thought it quite a task but jumped into it anyhow. In nine months' time the money was raised and the Board notified. Our Board never demanded one cent of this money but our president and secretary turned over the receipts as the money was spent in building."

After completion of the building the patrons raised \$156.50 for shades and curtains and another \$250 to start the industrial work. These large sums were free-will gifts on the part of the patrons made at the regular meetings of the league as well as by entertainments under the auspices of the Woman's Club. Mr. Gresham, State Supervisor of Negro Education, found \$500 to carry the domestic-science work along.

The Patrons' League now meets monthly when the regular dues of 25 cents are laid on the table. The county demonstration agent, Mr. J. T. Cross, is a frequent visitor at these meetings and finds that his work and plans are well received and carried on by this body.

With the coming of the county training school two of the neighborhood schools have been abandoned, while the other two are now used by the little



THE HOME OF MR. J. H. LEWIS, LITTLE FORKS

Equipped with water system and electric lights, this farm home is attractive without and convenient within.





THE HOME OF MR. T. L. G. WALDEN, LITTLE FORKS

A community leader and prosperous farmer, Mr. Walden started with one room and a small clearing.

folks in the elementary grades. It is a most satisfactory arrangement, for they are spared the longer walk. Parents of pupils in these two schools meet occasionally as a body, but the big school absorbs the interest.

Twenty-three young men and women have gone to Hampton, Petersburg, Lawrenceville, and other schools from this community. Seven have returned to teach or farm.

### **The Mothers' Club**

In connection with the school the women members of the league have organized a Mothers' Club. Its officers call the regular meetings six times a year. The idea of the club was brought in by two of the teachers—Miss Ruth Howell and Miss Bessie Kenig from the Hampton Summer School. Co-operation is thus brought about between patrons, principal, and teachers.

"We don't have any set topic for discussion at our meetings but just come and bring our sewing and make garments," said one mother member. "We like to know how best to train our children at home and how to benefit conditions at home. Our teachers help us out here, and I think our teachers know more about our difficulties at home now since we have our club. We are all more friendly now and more in touch with things. There is not as much gossip as there used to be."

## Community Health

The group health work in the community is done through the churches and the schools. Clinics have been held at the Training School for adults as well as for the children. The Public Health Nurse, supported by the schools of the county, besides examining every school child in the community, has met with the Mothers' Club and has stimulated interest in preventive measures. This graduate nurse also visits the churches, bringing information on preventive measures.

## A Community Catastrophe

On the morning of December 1, 1922, the pupils and teachers of the consolidated school came to find their building in ashes. In addition to the regular school equipment, it contained a stove, industrial equipment, and a sewing machine just purchased by the patrons and not yet unpacked. The building was insured but not the equipment, which represented the savings of the patrons. The evening following the fire the patrons met with the County School Board and it was decided to put up a brick building containing eight rooms.

"It was a sharp blow to the community," the president of the league remarked. "Right after the fire some felt that they would never have another school there, but after that meeting they took heart and are going to raise more money. We have had three bad-crop years and are carrying the church, too."

## Four H Club Work

"Twenty boys were doing club work in cotton, corn, peanuts, and hogs in Little Forks last season," says County Demonstration Agent J. T. Cross. "They held their meetings at the school once a month. They have their own officers and carry on their business now without my help, although I am always there when they meet. At first I had to run the meetings, but now they do not hesitate to stand on their feet and tell what they are doing. Songs are always a part of the meetings."

"We tell how we made a success," was what a club boy said of the programs in their meetings. "We also learn how to conduct ourselves and how to hold a meeting. We had a Banking Day when we deposited our money in the bank."



THE ELL OF A NEW HOME, LITTLE FORKS

Built with aid from the Farm Boys' Loan Association and owned by one of the Farm Boys  
Later, four large rooms will be added.

### **The Farm Boys' Loan Association, Inc.**

One of the most earnest and community-minded groups in Little Forks is the Farm Boys' Loan Association, Inc., with a membership of thirty-one young men. The community need look no further for its future leaders than among the Farm Boys. Indeed leadership is theirs already for its president is county demonstration agent, another of its officers is a successful merchant at Holland, several are home owners already and heads of families, while the others are saving their earnings through the association against more schooling elsewhere, or a future home.

"We didn't know what it was to amount to then, but we started our association at a peanut-popping at my home ten years ago." H. L. Porter, one of the five charter members, was telling how an association of a small group could get so it could lend one another sums large enough to build homes or make first payments on good farm land.

"We got the peas popped, but at the same time got to discussing how we could better our condition. We decided to meet at Willis Waldron's home and organize a club so we could discuss our problems and continue to have social times. We drew up some by-laws and taxed ourselves 10 cents



**HOME OF ONE OF THE FARM BOYS, LITTLE FORKS**

Such comfortable, well-kept homes surrounded by fertile fields express the highest rural values.

a month. This looks like something small to pay in, but some months came when it seemed almost impossible to get that much. We were under our fathers then."

President J. T. Cross said, "Our purpose was to better our condition spiritually, mentally, and morally. Topics were discussed at our meetings. Members trembled in their shoes when it was their turn to speak. But we gradually grew out of that for we realized there were bigger things ahead. Some of us decided to go away to school. The Farm Boys felt proud of this for we realized that when these men came back they would do effective work for the community."

There were times, it appeared, when the sun did not seem to shine, but the Farm Boys continued to meet at the homes of the members, often walking through the woods to get there, realizing that success hung on the effort of everyone to be at his post. Expenses for stationery and incidentals increased and dues were raised one cent to keep intact the ten cents a month. In two years' time dues were raised to 25 cents and the membership was increased by election. Later on it was felt that the recognition and protection that incorporation would give was desirable, and the Farm Boys are now incorporated under the laws of the State of Virginia. Stock is sold to members at \$5.00 a share, in small instalments if desired; and the capital



**A PROJECT OF THE INDUSTRIAL FARMERS, LITTLE FORKS**  
Profitable winter work is supplied by this sawmill and a needed industry added to the community.

thus accumulated is lent to members on the approval of the Board of Directors for such needs as making payments on farms or for productive, short-time purposes. Two members have borrowed as high as \$500 each to help build homes. Sometimes one not a member is aided in buying land.

The Farm Boys stand for the best and highest values in community life. Moral standards are held up. Not one has gotten into trouble. On meeting nights, opened with prayer and a hymn, discussion may take the direction of the best ways of doing things, how to use money, or what the community needs to improve it, all under the suggestion of the program committee. "We made our own by-laws," said Secretary Walter T. Lewis, "and are governed under them. There has never been any serious misunderstanding for we could always agree on something. We now have thirty-one members. Three have sold out their shares because they were not satisfied. This, we feel, was a natural weeding out. Cigarette money, and loose nickels and dimes have been turned into homes and farms during our ten years of association."

### **The Industrial Farmers**

Another group in the community which is not only working for its own gain but supplying a community need, are the Industrial Farmers, a

company of twelve farmers. "We don't like to admit it," said one of this group of older men, "but the Farm Boys have the honor of setting the pace. They showed us how to work together without splitting. In forming the Industrial Farmers, our idea was to get together and have a fund lying back to help out someone if we saw fit. Shares are sold to members at \$10. Three years ago we decided to buy a sawmill as there was none in the community. When we borrow money as we did to get the sawmill, all twelve members sign the note. We paid \$2700 for the mill and now have \$200 to pay up on it."

Once a month the meetings are held, when such matters as the buying of a timber lot or plans for getting out bills of lumber are taken up. On the days when the mill is running the Industrial Farmers are at their work about the mill and are paid for work done by the day or piece as the case may be.

"Our mill fills in the winter time," Mr. J. H. Lewis, the treasurer, remarked. "We will quit in March."

## The Church

Mt. Sinai Baptist Church has been the spiritual dynamic of Little Forks for over fifty years. Rev. Israel Cross, its resident pastor from its beginning until his retirement in 1911, took the lead in bringing Little Forks to where it is today. Rev. Israel Cross was brought up in a white church before the war and was a self-educated man. Of unusual initiative, he threw his life into the lot of the community where he was born and raised. In 1867 he held a revival and established the Mt. Sinai Baptist Church in a log hut. Today one of the finest rural colored churches in the Southland tells of community spirit and community action preached by Rev. Mr. Cross during a lifetime. Mr. J. W. Weaver, whose custom it is to give the church history once a year to the Sunday school, spoke forcefully of his former pastor.

"Israel preached if you want something go get it yourselves. He believed his people should know how to live in this world and that dying would take care of itself. He kept advising the people to buy land and homes and to keep the smoke-house full. He set the example himself. He was the father of things in this community."

After two years in the log church a frame building was put up. This



MT. SINAI BAPTIST CHURCH, LITTLE FORKS

An open-country church that speaks well for the work of a community-minded pastor who lived where he preached for over forty years

was outgrown by 1871 and another was erected. This in turn was superseded by a better and more roomy structure in 1885-'86. The members supplied the funds for each new building. Finally, in 1921, a \$35,000 brick church was erected, about one-third the cost of which the community is still carrying. The membership is close to 500 and the average attendance between 300—350. There are 125 pupils in the church school which meets each Sunday.

One of the church organizations is the Home Mission Sisters with twenty-five active members. These women take care of needy cases in the community.

"We help in cases of sickness. Sometimes children do not have sufficient clothing to come to Sunday school. We like to see that every child can come," said an active member. "By various social activities we have raised a total sum of \$1200 which has been given to different schools."

The Baptist Young Peoples' Union held each Sunday evening at the church gives opportunity for friends to meet and provides opportunity for young people to participate in a young people's service.

Corinth Chapel of the Christian demonination in the lower part of the community broke off from the parent group in 1868 and completed its present well-ordered edifice in 1916. Although there are two churches in



**CORINTH CHAPEL, LITTLE FORKS**

Although there are two churches in the community, there is complete accord on progressive issues.

the community, there are no splits along church lines and no talking. Both churches are of such long standing in the community, and have been so fortunate in their leadership, that they seem just as natural as the two arms to the body.

### **The Lodge**

At Laurel Hill is the lodge of the Sons and Daughters of Peace. Men, women, and children, forty members in all, belong to this benevolent order. Sick and death benefits are paid and the loyalty of the membership indicates confidence in it. Social features are anticipated at each meeting.

### **Recreation**

The community's baseball and picnic ground is at the training school. There is usually a ball game every holiday, either between the boys and the girls, for they have a team also, or with a nine from a neighboring community. Both sides are always well supported.

Fox hunting is also a major sport. Let a hound start a fox and it is not long before a respectable following on horse and mule is striving to be in at the finish, hounds and hunters being gradually added as the chase crosses the farms of the community.



The annual picnic, held at the school, where in case of rain the crowd may be sheltered, includes all the Boys' Four H Clubs, Farmers' Community Clubs, and other organizations identified with the agricultural demonstration work in the county. The picnic is organized and managed under the leadership of the county demonstration agent and the Farm Boys.

### **Demonstration Work**

The farmers of Little Forks have been close co-operators of the demonstration agent, Mr. J. T. Cross. During the year 1922 there were demonstration plots in cotton, corn, peanuts, and wheat. A demonstration in ornamental planting was held at the school and church, and was participated in by a large group. Local trees and shrubs were used. This work has spread already to two homes and has stimulated the sentiment for taking better care of the home premises.

### **Co-operative Marketing**

As a community, Little Forks is not supporting the Peanut Growers' Exchange. There are several deep-seated reasons why this progressive community has not joined the ranks of the supporters of commodity marketing in the South.

"Since the new management of the Exchange this year (1922), our people are encouraged to put it over here. But we lack information. We are still not sure of the management. We need more information." This, from one of the influential growers, partially sums up the situation. The peanut crop of 1922 in Little Forks amounted to 7292 bags. This, it will be remembered, was a year when the crop practically failed in this section. The failure of the Exchange to inspire confidence and to reach out with its publicity to community groups accounts in a measure for this lack of support.

### **The Homes**

One-half of the families of Little Forks live in houses of five, six, and seven rooms. There are only five one- and two-room houses among the entire eighty-three, while one out of every eight families lives in from eight to twelve rooms. Practically everybody is well housed today. But beginnings were small in most cases. Additions were made and remodeling done

slowly as the numbers in the families increased and as the income from the land allowed.

The land belongs to those who till it in Little Forks. In all but seven cases houses and farms are owned by those living in and on them. Five families are croppers and two are share renters. The desire to own good homes has long been a controlling incentive throughout that section ministered to by the late Rev. Israel Cross.

Current news and ideas enter five out of every eight homes through the daily paper, the farm press, and magazines and weeklies. Twelve families subscribe for a daily and twenty-four take a farm paper—an excellent showing.

Musical instruments are found in many of the homes. Twenty have organs; ten, pianos; thirteen, victrolas. In one-half of the homes music adds to the pleasures of social and family gatherings.

Twenty autos—almost one-fourth of the farmers own them—make easier a wider acquaintance and broader business contacts. There are, however, twelve families, all living on farms of less than ten acres, who have no conveyance of any kind.

If attention to flowers on the part of a busy housewife is indication of home pride and an expression of a desire for things beyond the everyday necessities of living, the women of Little Forks have both. In three out of every four homes time to tend flowers is taken from the demands of field and household.

The open or covered well and bucket is the source of water in most of the homes. Only eight pumps are in use. Two families have running water and baths. Three homes have electric-lighting plants. There are no telephones in the colored homes.

### **The Farm Business**

Backing up the brick church, the brick school now under construction, and the large and attractive houses, is the community's agriculture. The farmers of Little Forks own so much that the Holy Neck District, of which it is a part, pays more taxes, colored, than any other district of the State. Taxable property has been bought and paid for and taxes are paid in Little Forks from its farming.

1983 acres were under cultivation in 1922. Of this 730 were in peanuts, 643 in corn, 411 in cotton, 103 in hay crops, and the remaining acreage in garden and truck crops for home use. As seven-eighths of the farms had gardens of one-fourth of an acre or more, it is evident that a large supply of the food for the family is being grown at home. It is considered a disgrace in Little Forks for a farmer to buy corn or hay.

The quality of the stock is improving. Pure-bred cockerels have transformed several flocks from mongrels to birds that bring two and three cents more, "live," on the same market.



THE OUTSIDE OF A LITTLE FORKS SMOKE HOUSE

The hogs particularly are an important money crop. The combination of grazing crops, the peanut fields after harvest, and corn makes pork with little if any cash outlay, and the market for Virginia hams has not yet been glutted. Many hams are smoked at home and then sold; others are sold

green. The varieties of hogs include not a few pine-rooters, the "snap dragon," and others. But the introduction of pure-bred boars is already showing in several herds, and as opportunity to use better stock comes to the community, greater money return may be expected from this important source of income.

The owner farms are in the main well supplied with farm machinery. There are thirty two-horse plows on as many farms; twenty-seven discs, thirty-seven weeders, thirty-eight planters, thirty-three riding cultivators, and thirty-two mowers on the fifty-two farms cultivating twenty acres of crops and over. Thus on the farms large enough to warrant it modern machinery and mule power are important items in cutting down the cost of making crops.

The family incomes—that is, the total income the family has to spend after the expenses for seed, fertilizer, and hired labor have been taken out—vary all the way from less than \$100 to more than \$1200. From a study of this phase of Little Forks agriculture it seems that this difference is due to several factors. It was found (1) that the larger the farm the larger the in-

farms of like acreage considered; (3) that the returns from hogs are an income; (2) that the farms making the high yields made the high incomes, portant factor in a good family income; (4) that farms well equipped with machinery made larger incomes than those poorly equipped; and (5) farmers having large families had a larger income than those on the same-sized farms with small families.

### SUMMARY OF LITTLE FORKS COMMUNITY

Little Forks has developed leaders within itself who have carried the community to a high point.

The community has backed its leaders without suspicion or jealousy.

Its two churches have stood for a reflection of spiritual teachings in the prevailing high standard of school, home, and farm.

The consolidation of the four neighborhood schools brings the educational facilities of the community into step with modern educational advancements.

Special group activities within the community interest the boys, the young men, the housewives and girls, and the heads of families.

Young men and young women see a future in Little Forks. They have been given an opportunity to participate in community development.

Little Forks has long been living from its own garden and smokehouse, and feeding its stock from its own stack and corn crib.

The progress in school, church, and home has been backed by corresponding agricultural development.

Families have a lot to lose by leaving Little Forks. Consequently they do not leave.

## EBENEZER COMMUNITY SOUTHAMPTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

The agricultural community of Ebenezer, Southampton County, is in the heart of the Virginia peanut belt. Its soil is a light-colored sandy loam particularly adapted to the growing of Virginia peanuts, cotton, and corn. The church and school are three miles from Ivor and five from Zuni on the N. & W. Railroad, both stations affording good freighting facilities and peanut warehouses. The country is slightly rolling and drains into swamps which divide the community into three more or less distinct neighborhoods. The roads of the community are passable by motor the year round and are above the average for country roads.

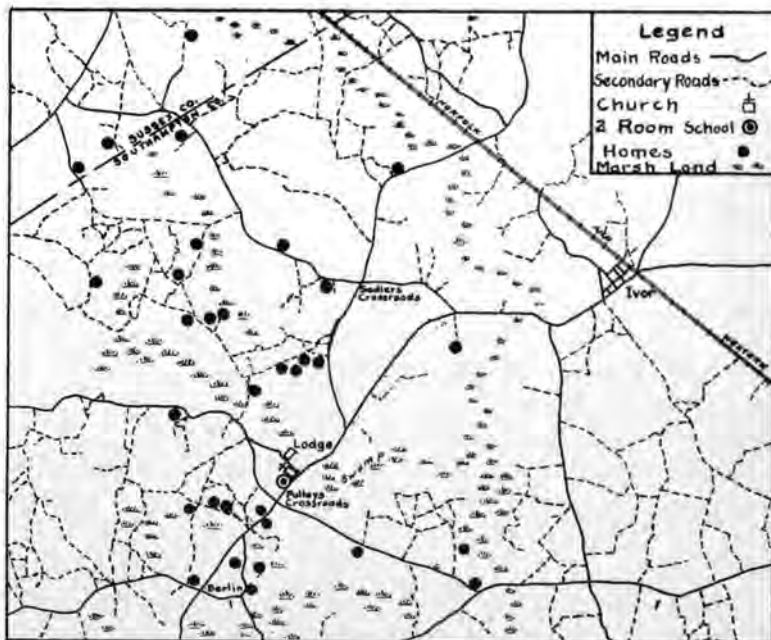
Ebenezer is a growing community. It is growing, not in numbers (it consists of twenty-six families at present) but in its ability to work together as a group and to get for itself the things it wants and needs. Twenty years ago the majority of the community worked for white people by the day or month or year.

"We were born in white folks' houses and we worked for white folks. We hadn't found out that we needed anything until we began to buy land and have homes of our own. Then we began to look ahead."

The awakening of Ebenezer was summed up by a successful farmer, now the owner of 200 acres of land, who began with his hands and who now makes a profit out of his headwork also.

"It was the Rev. J. C. Allen, a farmer, a blacksmith, and our preacher, who came to us once a month and told us what to do. He brought us out of a hole. His whole heart and soul were for the colored people to have something. He advised us to buy land, to build a schoolhouse, and have homes of our own. He got our people ashamed of themselves and pulled the scales from our eyes." Such was the type of leadership during its period of gradual change. Hundreds of communities today are as Ebenezer was. They are fertile fields for the community-minded preacher, the sincere school-teacher who sees beyond the day, and the successful men within the communities themselves who have made a success and who are not resting content upon it.

Progress was not sudden, however. Time was and is always taken to make the necessity for every move thoroughly understood before going ahead with any part of an undertaking.



**COLORED COMMUNITY OF EBENEZER**  
**SOUTHAMPTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA**  
 1 2 3 4 Miles  
**SCALE**

“We can now unite along all lines because the ‘know-alls’ are few and are not now disposed to kick out when their will is crossed,” said a leader in Ebenezer. “The one who wants to run a thing or break it to pieces makes no headway now because all our people understand that we are working for the benefit of everyone.”

### **The Church**

Ebenezer Baptist Church held its first meeting in a log schoolhouse, later building a small frame structure. Under the leadership of Rev. J. C. Allen, ten years ago, the present edifice was erected. Money was raised by rallies, while members pledged to give what they could. Many gave lumber and labor, which was valued and credited. Later on more money was raised and the building was enlarged to its present size. The church has three hundred members, but on preaching Sundays more people attend than



#### EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH

Ample, shaded grounds, a roomy building, and the disposition to make its facilities useful in the life of the community are some of its values.

are enrolled. Each Sunday there is the Sunday school and the meeting of the B. Y. P. U. The church is a member of the Sharon Baptist Association and its missionary collections are used by this body for the help of needy schools and foreign missions.

The Women's Circle has forty-five members. This organization meets every first Sunday for a strictly Bible program by the members. The Woman's Circle has not yet interested itself as a group in the problems of the community. But as there is at present no regular meeting of women, aside from the Circle, it seems highly probable that this society will enlarge its interests to include such discussions as centre in the problems and interests of the young people at work and at play, or the never-settled topic of home improvement.

#### The Lodge

Lily Bright Lodge of the Independent Order of Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria has had a decided social usefulness and has done much to hold the people together for over thirty years. Through the Order.



**THE NEW TWO-ROOM SCHOOL, EBENEZER**

The patrons, with the help of the Rosenwald Fund and the County Board, erected this building.

too, when sickness overtakes one, a small sum is paid, and in case of death a decent burial is assured. There are sixty-five adult members and a juvenile department enrolling children under eighteen. Its weekly meetings offer a great deal of social enjoyment and do much in bringing out personal character and talents useful to the community in other phases of group activity. The county demonstration agent, Mr. A. B. Doles, is a member of this lodge and often has occasion to address it along the lines of his work.

### **The School**

The two-room Rosenwald School, just erected, when contrasted with its log school of twenty years ago, parallels the growth of the community. The school of the community, after the log-cabin stage, was housed in a frame hut. It was when one hundred and eighteen pupils were enrolled in this small building that the County Board was petitioned for another teacher. Then the frame structure went up another story with the aid of old lumber, and two teachers handled the children.

The leaders began five years ago to arouse the community to the need for better school facilities. For four years entertainments were given



to raise one-half the amount for a \$1500 building. The County Board was to furnish the other half. In the meantime the community purchased two acres of land a short distance from the church for \$175 and it seemed as if work on the building would actually begin. Then the old school, declared unsafe, was torn down and Ebenezer went without a school for one term. Difficulties beyond the control of the community were by this time removed and the School Patrons' League began in earnest to get their school. Meetings were held, patrons got out lumber, had it planed, drew it to the site, and gave their labor. Both material and labor were valued and placed to the credit of each man. Now, with the aid of \$800 from the Rosenwald Fund an airy, well-lighted, well-ventilated, two-room school in the middle of an ample playground takes care of community needs. Of the 89 children in the community 60 are of age to attend the new school. Three are obtaining advanced training at boarding schools outside the community.

### Tenancy

One-half of the homes are owned by those who work the land. Two of these owner families cultivate between fifteen and twenty acres, eight put in between twenty and thirty acres of crops each yera, another forty acres, while the largest operator cultivates seventy-five acres. One of these who is getting a start in farm owning rents twenty acres in addition to the five owned.

Four families rent on the share-cropper basis, the landlord furnishing both land and team and taking in return one-half the crop made. These farms are operated with one horse and are between twenty and thirty acres in size.

There are three families who pay cash rent for small farms which are used to raise family supplies. The cash money in these families comes from working out at public work.

Six farmers pay a rent of one-fourth share of the crop made. These families have their own stock and equipment. The next step for them will be to move onto farms of their own, for they are otherwise ready to begin as owners.

Although half of the farms are rented the community keeps its stability. Within recent years there has been practically no shifting about to neighboring farms or to other districts. With a population that feels at-

tached to Ebenezer by an active church and lodge and now by the new school for which the whole community worked and saved, Ebenezer can go on making itself a stronger unit, developing additional satisfactions for itself. Were the population shifting or changing the community would soon lose its present ambition and begin to take on moss and mould.

### Homes

In appearance, number of rooms, and essential equipment, the matter of tenure seems to make little difference in Ebenezer. Every home had a privy of some sort although the matter of fly proofing has received no attention. Screens were found in three owner houses and one renter house.

There were only three homes not having sewing machines. Eight homes in the community had musical instruments of some kind, while one-half took current reading matter. One family takes a daily, five take the agricultural press, and six subscribe to a weekly or monthly of general interest.

Seventeen of the twenty-six families had well-kept flower gardens more or less protected from chickens and grazing stock.

Three croppers and four owners had autos. There was no family with-



**AN ATTRACTIVE FARM HOME, EBENEZER**  
Its owner worked hard to get it, and thinks the struggle worth while.

out a conveyance of some kind, so that independent opportunity to come and go is not lacking.

### **Agriculture**

Five hundred forty-one acres of land were cultivated in 1922. There were 221 acres in peanuts, 267 in corn, 39 in cotton, and 15 in hay and grain. Each horse in the community cultivates an average of 16 acres; but actually, the acres tended run all the way from 8 to 32. In Ebenezer the farms making the best use of horse labor made the largest incomes. Where one horse was made to handle over 23 acres, 5 out of 7 farmers made incomes of over \$500. On eighteen farms where less than 22 acres were cultivated by one mule, the incomes varied from \$50 up to \$500. One way for Ebenezer to obtain more money for community improvement, judging by the experience within the community itself, is for farmers to provide full work for the mules.

The yields for 1922 were much below the average for the community because of heavy rains that year. However, there are only three farms upon which the practice of growing winter cover crops or cowpeas in regular shifts with the other crops is practiced. Dependence on new ground and "resting" the land is still the custom in the community.

More farm machinery is being used in Ebenezer than formerly. Although the one-horse plow is still used for both plowing and working the crops, there are two farms upon which double plows and riding cultivators are used. The one-horse farmers may get the same results as the larger farmers by combining their mule power and using the deeper-plowing two-horse plow, in the growing of more cowpeas, and in the use of more winter covering on the bare ground which, after the hogs and cow have grazed it, may then be turned under.

The matter of increasing the yields of peanuts, cotton, and corn is of vital importance for community advancement.

In the last analysis a call for funds for church or school in Ebenezer must be met from the land. The community was fortunate in the early days of her awakening that a country-minded preacher led his people toward better agriculture.

The incomes of the families of the community, that is, what the families had to spend for fertilizer, seed, pleasure, clothing, school, music, and other necessities was \$911 for the farm owners, \$323 for the renters, and \$438 for

the croppers. The daily income for each member of the family was 45 cents for the owner families, 19½ for the renter families, and 18 for the cropper families. The importance of a community thinking as a group on the ways and means of increasing its cash incomes is seen in these figures. A few prosperous farmers in a community do not bring a good church, a good school, or a satisfying social life. It is more the general level of prosperity that governs the degree of advancement possible. A Community Club made up of farmers is important in offering the chance to think and do along the lines of the best experience which the community provides.

Another sign of forward looking in Ebenezer is the way in which the Peanut Growers' Exchange has been supported. It has required much faith and a belief in the large idea of co-operative commodity marketing for ten of the twenty-six farmers to join and remain loyal boosters of it. For the history of the Peanut Exchange has been from the start one of discouragement rather than of encouragement.

These members from Ebenezer produced 2466 bags of peanuts under the disheartening conditions of 1922. In an ordinary season the crop for the community would be double. The importance of every small community to a commodity co-operative association is indicated here, as well as the necessity for, and profitableness of, spreading information regarding the movement to all the people through intimate community groups.

It has been difficult for the farmers of the community to make headway in improving their hogs, both because of lack of good breeding stock in the neighborhood and because of the fencing laws. Now that the latter have been remedied and stock must now be fenced on the owners' farms, the stock to which the community's corn crop is fed will, no doubt, be of more profitable quality.

## SUMMARY OF EBENEZER COMMUNITY

Ebenezer is a growing community, like hundreds of others in the Southland. It is not just getting along.

Its preacher for ten years taught the gospel of home owning, better farming, and a decent school. The awakening of Ebenezer shows what one large-calibre man can start.

The work done by all the patrons in securing the new school has made one solid group out of twenty-six families.

Aside from the social life of the lodge little is yet being done as a community to satisfy its recreational needs.

The community is progressing in its agricultural practices. Its attitude is receptive rather than suspicious toward progressive farm experience.

## RUTHVILLE COMMUNITY CHARLES CITY COUNTY, VIRGINIA

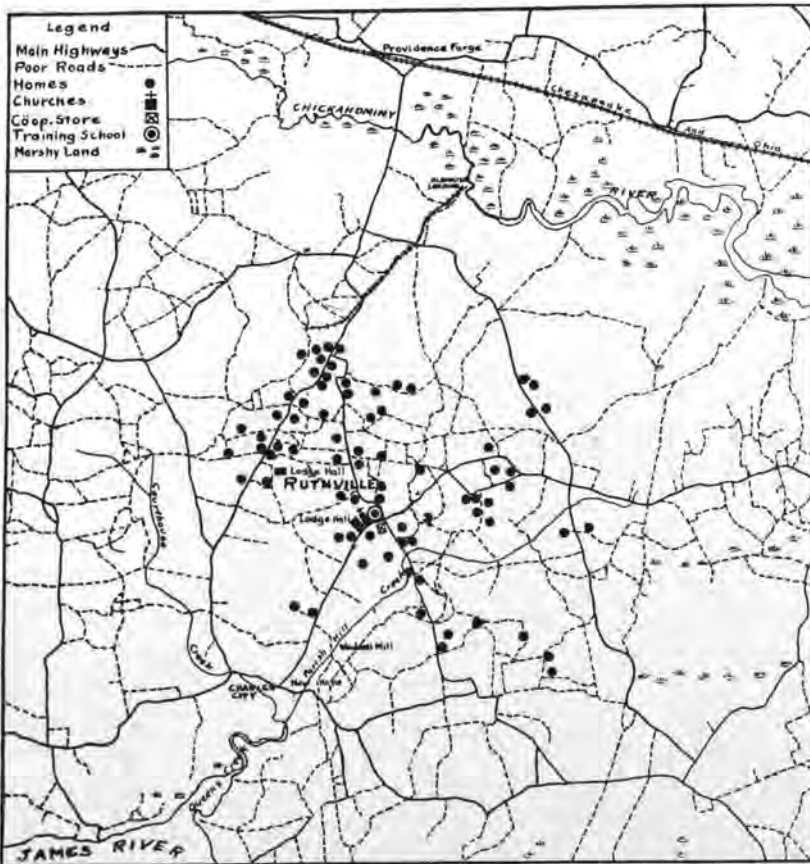
Ruthville is in the geographical centre of Charles City County, Virginia. The James River forms the southern boundary of the county while the Chickahominy shapes the east side. Both these waterways furnish transportation for the cordwood, ties, and mine props into which the timber of Ruthville farms is converted. The county is almost without a railroad, as the Chesapeake & Ohio touches only the upper corner at Roxbury, twenty-five miles from Richmond. Some shipping is done at Providence Forge Station, but the several landings along the river afford satisfactory outlets. The roads, excepting a graveled road to Richmond, which taps the uppermost section of the county and as yet does not reach Ruthville crossroads, are a series of hardened ruts in dry weather; in wet, a succession of water-filled holes of unknown depth interspaced with slick clay hogbacks.

Charles City County has no town, no banks, no trading facilities outside the county crossroads stores. But Richmond is not too far away to extend its banking facilities and its trading opportunities. Ruthville has almost daily contact with that city, particularly during the fishing season, when motor trucks and wagons take the James River products to market. Eggs, live poultry, a few calves, pork, and odd lots of farm produce are regularly carried in to Richmond throughout the year.

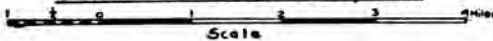
The main interests of the sixty-four families of Ruthville Community are their church and school, while the Co-operative Store, Lodge, and Sorghum Growers' Club, although influencing all, are being developed by groups within the community. All these organizations are housed at or near the crossroads known as Ruthville. A white-owned store and post office, together with a garage, are also located here.

### **The Church**

The Elam Baptist Church, known as Old Elam, is the oldest institution of the community. Started by Abram Brown and other free Negro followers before the war (the community was essentially one of free people); with the encouragement and aid of the First Baptist Church of Petersburg in 1810, Elam is said to be the third regularly organized colored church in Virginia. Before this time preaching and prayer meetings were held in a



**COLORED COMMUNITY OF RUTHVILLE  
CHARLES CITY COUNTY, VA.**



log meeting house by neighborhood preachers, frequently known as “chair-backers.” At a later date Abram Brown and his wife deeded a parcel of land from their large farm to the church as its permanent site. Many of the present members of Old Elam are descendants of its founder and early church officers, and church tradition in the families of the community has made for loyalty and unity. There has been but one serious split—about 1880 when the old membership became scattered and the building burned. In the old days the church had three nominal white pastors, the last one serving for



**OLD ELAM BAPTIST CHURCH, RUTHVILLE**

**A force for community unity for over 100 years.  
Odd Fellows Lodge Hall is seen at the left.**

fifteen years to conform with the State Code of 1849 prohibiting "unlawful assembly." Its first colored pastor was Samuel Brown, son of the founder, who was chosen in 1865, and whose useful and respective service lasted sixteen years. "At the death of Samuel Brown," to quote from the records of the historian, "the church felt at sea as to what to do. To get someone to take the church was an easy matter; but to get a *pastor* was quite another subject, for a church without a pastor is the object of attack by all kinds of ministerial hobos and pulpit leeches, which ultimately would divide the church and break up its peace and happiness."

The crisis was wisely met and the pastor chosen served Old Elam for twenty-one years. It was during the leadership of the next pastor, a man born and raised in the county, a graduate of Virginia N. & I. Institute, Petersburg, and a former teacher in the public schools of the county, that plans for a new church building were drawn and committees appointed. In 1917 a site was offered by the Odd Fellows Lodge and was accepted.

The money was raised by dividing the church into clubs, giving each club a captain. The brothers and sisters each had their clubs and after three years of work sufficient money had been raised and the cornerstone was laid under the leadership of the Lodge. No sooner was the new church completed when fire broke out in the old church edifice and in half an hour the building which was a heritage of the past and the evidence of three gen-



erations of church interest and loyalty was reduced to ashes. The new building had been in use but a year when again the community lost its church by fire. The effort, planning, and saving of four years and a money value of \$10,000 were swept away in a few moments. The Pastor, Rev. J. W. Kemp, knew his flock. The Sunday following the fire he called the members together.

“Brethren, what shall we do?” he said.

“Build another just like the old,” was the answer, and the community is again making sacrifices in duplicating the burned building. The solidity and complete agreement of the community in essential matters is shown in this deliberate undertaking. The church members themselves cleared away the debris, got out a bill of lumber, hired a carpenter as boss, and gave time and material until at present the church is all but ready for use.

One of the big events in the church life of the community was the holding of the Centennial Celebration in 1910. Plans were formed five years before the date of the anniversary. The members were taxed a penny for each year of the life of the church. The Centennial Needleworkers’ Club, made up of sisters of the church, also raised a large amount of money. The work culminated in a memorable week of homecoming, preaching services, and a renewing of old ties on the part of those who had gone out from the community to do useful work elsewhere. At the time of the Centennial, the Elam Baptist Church published its history in a thirty-five-page pamphlet, a publication which will do much to strengthen the loyalty of present and coming congregations.

Among the organizations of the church is the Willing Workers’ Club. It has given to the needy and poor, built a vestibule and belfry, painted the church which was burned, and is now active in doing similar work for the new church. Meeting at the homes of members, it is a source of much social enjoyment and, having as it does, definite, useful work to do, is a satisfactory factor in the pleasurable life of the community.

## The School

Prior to the organizing of the County Training School at Ruthville, the colored school of the community was the still familiar combination of one-room, one-teacher, thirty to eighty-five pupils, and a five-months’ term.

The movement to break away from this condition and have in the



THE CHARLES CITY COUNTY TRAINING SCHOOL, RUTHVILLE

The scene of the annual fair, and a social and educational center for the entire community

county a school in which children might be prepared for Hampton, Petersburg, and other schools, began in 1908.

Under the leadership of Mr. A. Q. Franklin, a successful farmer, who has always been a relentless worker for better schools for his community and people, and other prominent men, a meeting was called to discuss the matter. It was decided to make an effort to establish a central school and hire another teacher, at their own expense if necessary. Questions arose as to financing and managing. As it was to be a county and not a district school it became evident that the support of the patrons of the county was to be enlisted. Each of the thirteen churches of the county were notified to send five delegates to a convention to be held in August. The outcome of this gathering was the Intellectual and Industrial Association, which, fifteen years later, still meets once a month.

In order to keep up interest it was found necessary to meet often to report progress. After the forming of the association, five directors were appointed by each church, and the monthly contributions kept coming in through them. These directors, returning to their churches from the monthly meetings, kept the people informed as to what was required of them. As soon as the Board found it had money enough to make a beginning it purchased three acres of land.

“At this point we solicited the aid of the benevolent societies and sent

field agents to see individuals," says Mr. Franklin. "If our people are giving money for a purpose they want to see it used."

Just at this time the County Superintendent of Schools, hearing of the efforts centering in the association, advised building to meet State requirements, with the idea that by so doing aid might be obtained from State and county. This was done.

Three years later two rooms were finished and the teacher with his eighty-five pupils moved across the road into the new structure. The patrons, however, were determined to have two teachers and employed the other themselves for the remaining term in 1912. From then on development was rapid.

Distinguished visitors, hearing of the determination shown in the school work gave encouragement. The Jeanes Fund contributed a small amount. Free work was done by patrons, and building material was given for enlargement of the structure. Elam Church gave a large bill of lumber. But the sum of \$1442.12 was raised by the persistent efforts of the Intellectual and Industrial Association, the organizers of the school.

"The property was deeded to the county in 1918 and the State then took charge," Mr. Franklin said. "We now have a six-room school on the lot, including the farm-shop building, with five teachers."

The Smith-Hughes teacher of agriculture, Mr. J. A. Oliver, was secured in 1918 and has made his home in Ruthville since then, jumping into every branch of the life of the community. Thirty-six boys have taken his agricultural work for a year or more while twenty-seven have been in his classes regularly during the past term.

## Homes

Ruthville is a community of home owners. Of its sixty-four houses and farms only seven are rented. Fifty-seven own homes and land. Of these, seventeen rent land in addition to that owned. One hundred and forty-five adults and one hundred and ninety-seven children under eighteen years of age occupy these homes—an average of five persons in each. General conditions in all but five instances showed decided attention to improvement in the appearance of the buildings and surroundings. Forty housewives had flower gardens, many of them fenced against chickens and stock. There were thirty-three houses with grassplots around them.



**THE HOME OF MR. J. FRANK BOWMAN, RUTHVILLE**  
 Mr. Bowman is a leading personality in the community and a starter of, and worker in, group activities.

Paint or whitewash covers forty-four houses and outbuildings, or over two-thirds of the community.

The houses, with possibly a half-dozen exceptions, are large enough for family needs, family health, and the dictates of a modern civilization. Over half of the families, thirty-six in all, live in houses having six or more rooms; there are only eight families who live in two or three rooms.

Number of rooms in Ruthville homes:—

No. rooms	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
No. houses	5	3	10	11	8	6	6	3	2	.....	1

Another attractive feature of Ruthville homes is the porch. The barren entry is practically unknown. There is no stepping off to the ground directly from the door. The wide porch extending the length of the house, with chairs and perhaps a swing, tree shade, and an outlook which takes in grass and flowers is a common sight. There is always the feeling that Ruthville is a community of homes.

About every family has some quick way of getting to church, to meetings, or to the stores. The majority use buggies while nine have autos. Eighteen families use the wagon or cart. There are five families without conveyance of any sort.

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Screens are not in general use, for only one house in seven had screening over the used doors and windows.

One house has a bathroom and running water; one has a room ready for installation of bath; and four have water inside the house from a pump at the kitchen sink. The women and children of Ruthville still lug a lot of water.

The equipment for carrying on a well-ordered household varies with the family means and the size of the house. The leaders in the community, including the teachers, set a high standard and the effect of their well-ordered and completely furnished homes is apparent throughout the community.

There are a few families on the outer edge of the community back from the roads in the pines, who seem to be neglected. Their ties with the rest of the community are few. In two cases children in these homes do not go to school. No suitable clothing for school and Sunday school, lack of interest and knowledge on the part of the parents, slack home conditions, and community indifference account in part for these few instances of neglect.

There are sewing machines in forty-two of the sixty-four homes. Neatness, cleanliness, and care are apparent in the dress and appearance of the



A DINING-ROOM, RUTHVILLE

Hospitality, well-planned meals, and attractive surroundings supplement each other in this home.



**A FARM HOME IN RUTHVILLE**

Paint and whitewash cover over one-half the homes in the community.

school children, reflecting the attitude of the parents and the conditions within the homes.

Music is an important part of the home and social life of people everywhere. Ruthville has six organs, nine pianos, and nine victrolas in its homes. Neighborly good times are not infrequent in the community and music makes a heavy contribution to them.

Up-to-the-minute news of the outside world is spread from the eleven homes taking a daily newspaper. The agricultural press reaches twenty-five homes every week. A weekly of the news and entertainment type is taken in twenty-six homes. Thirty-six families have current reading matter. Thus practically half the community is in direct touch with conditions and progress elsewhere. There is no rural free delivery and the postoffice-store is visited frequently.

### **The Lodges**

Union Hall, located next to the church, is the meeting place of the Odd Fellows. This lodge has always stood for usefulness to the community as well as for social values. The giving of a plot of ground for the church

building and the planning of the Co-operative Store are examples of its broader work. The Knights of Gideon, St. Luke's, and the Benevolent Society are orders in the community which pay sick and death benefits.

### **Recreation and Social Life**

Ruthville is a thinking community; it is also a happy community. The social life afforded by the four lodges, the church, particularly at the time of the protracted meetings in August, the gatherings at the school, such as school closing and the annual fair, the annual entertainment given by the young people on February 22, the supper given to the married men and their wives by the United Sorghum Growers,—all these regular and well-established meetings and functions are anticipated by the larger social groups in the community and thoroughly enjoyed.

Then, too, among the more intimate neighborhood groups birthday parties, whist parties, Hallowe'en gatherings, fish fries on the banks of the James, and the informal, on-the-spur-of-the-moment gatherings when friends or relatives from Richmond or elsewhere chance to be in the neighborhood, all add to the enjoyment of living in Ruthville.

The Saturday work of the Ruthville Baseball Team attracts young and old. It is the ambition of every growing boy some day to make the baseball team. There is now not much sentiment against sound sociable times and games. Ruthville has progressed beyond the point of prejudice against recreation and good times for the young people. In consequence the young folks are well mannered and familiar with social usages. Country awkwardness of mind and body is relieved in the process of enjoying a natural, self-made program of healthy activity. It is easy for Ruthville's boys and girls to make choices in amusement. Doubtful pastimes and rowdyism are crowded out.

### **The Co-operative Store**

The Mercantile Co-operative Company, Incorporated, although started by and coming out of the Odd Fellows Lodge, is a distinctive community enterprise. A committee drew up by-laws to conform with the State Corporation Laws, obtained a charter and sold shares at \$5.00 each, no more than twenty shares to a person. An old store was purchased and moved a mile to the crossroads in the centre of the community by the men. " 'Keep her rollin' was the slogan night and day. We had her on her 30 by 40



**THE CO-OPERATIVE STORE, RUTHVILLE**

Owned, operated, and patronized by the community  
The United Sorghum Growers use the upper room for their meetings.

foundation on the eighth day. The men stuck with the job to the end."

The building ready, a committee was selected by the Board of Directors to go to Richmond and purchase supplies. The \$1000 worth of goods was not enough and three members put up \$100 each, personally, in order not to accept the credit which was offered them. The policy of the Board has been from the start to buy for cash and sell for cash.

There is a white-owned store across the road but relations between the two stores remain friendly. "At our meetings it was talked, not to go into business with the idea of putting anyone out of business, but just to do something for ourselves. As a result, there is better service all around. A larger stock is carried by both stores, both get goods from each other."

The benefits of the store to the community are summed up by Mr. J. Frank Bowman, a successful farmer and leader in civic affairs. "Our people have placed their money in a home business to which they have free access and do not have to hold back. We have twenty-eight shareholders, some of whom are young men. It has brought about thrift, as shares may be paid for in small installments. We employ a widow and two helpers to tend the store. Goods are hauled in our trucks here and in the community. We are



proud of our store and now feel that the community can accomplish something in a business way. We are getting so we can do things together now with little or no friction." The secret of the success of this co-operative store venture is its tireless, careful management. Preparations to start were not too elaborate. The business began small and has grown under the policy of "Pay as you go and no credit."

### **Community Health**

Ruthville is fortunate in having one of her own sons, Dr. V. T. Franklin, as its medical doctor. Conditions leading to tuberculosis have been worked on by Dr. Franklin until there are now no cases of the disease in the community. A clinic for those fifteen years old and over held at the school showed but two cases and these are now recovering in the Burkville Sanitarium. The public-health nurses from the State Department of Health did follow-up work after this clinic on cases of malnutrition due to internal parasites rather than to faulty diet.

Dr. Franklin does not hesitate to do educational work as he visits his patients, and preventive measures thus instilled have made Ruthville a sound place in which to live.

### **The Farmers' Community Club**

The United Sorghum Growers' Club which meets regularly in the room above the Co-operative Store, is the outcome of the effort of Ruthville farmers to work together on their common problems.

"Our people hadn't done much in a group way and didn't know the value of it," said one enthusiastic member of this organization. "There didn't seem to be anything that all of us were interested in to bring us together. We met for a matter of three years off and on, but when the growing of sorghum and the owning of a mill and evaporator jointly was suggested to us, we took the meeting right away from the chairman. Having a place to meet helps a club."

### **The Boys' Club Work**

The corn- and pig-club boys are a live group, twenty in number last year. They meet at the school for the election of officers and for their organized club meetings. Topics of current interest concerning their crops or livestock are discussed. Thirteen of the members brought their pure-bred

Durocs to the county fair. In order to get baseball equipment these boys, all under eighteen years of age, gave a lawn party at the school and sold ice cream, cake, pie, and candy. The management of this function was entirely in the hands of the club members. After the club meetings the boys play ball with their own equipment. Out of twenty who started corn or pig projects, seventeen finished their work, an exceptional showing.

The Smith-Hughes Agricultural Club is an organization of the boys taking agriculture in the school under Mr. J. A. Oliver. They conduct their own meetings, discuss matters of current interest in connection with their home agricultural work, and act as a body in preparing exhibits for the fair and in raising money for school equipment.

The future leadership of the community undoubtedly lies among the boys of these two clubs. They are developing leadership in their meetings; they are expressing themselves on matters serious to them now, and later on can do the same on matters serious to the community. They are doing and getting things done together. The good of the club is placed before the good of the individual. This attitude cannot help but carry over to the larger problems which come with maturity. Best of all, these boys are receiving encouragement from their parents in all their work.

### **The Farm Business**

The foundation upon which the community is building its good homes, school, and church, and supporting its lodges and well-managed co-operative store, and which keeps its daily life reasonably free from the pressing down of money worries, lies in the land, and to some extent on the seasonal fishing in the James River.

"Fishing nowadays about pays for nets and tobacco," said one follower of the river. "Our cash money comes from handling cord wood and mine props. But the good chopping is going fast. Our farms must do more for us."

Both of these sources of cash money would be insufficient for its standards were it not for the fact that the community "lives at home."

"Living at home" instead of off the store shelf has been encouraged and practiced for some time in Ruthville. Mrs. Mary E. Gray, a Hampton graduate and Jeanes agent, at the time (now replaced by the supervising teacher, Miss Cordelia Franklin, daughter of Mr. A. Q. Franklin, organizer of the



**FLOWERS AND SHADE, RUTHVILLE**

The house plot is fenced against stock, and a mass of bloom lines the path from gate to porch.

Intellectual and Industrial Society) began her work in 1908 and did much to encourage better home gardens, home canning, and the economical management of poultry and the family cow.

The farmers of Ruthville have approximately 800 acres under cultivation and about 1451 acres uncleared. Five hundred and eighty-three acres were corn in 1922, 153 in cowpeas or vetch and oats, 119 in winter grain cut for hay, and 33 in small grain. Corn is by far the most important crop in acreage and value. As a whole the community buys no corn or hay.

The farms run all the way from under five acres to over 200, with the majority between 16 and 40.

Size of farms in Ruthville:—

Acres in each under	5	5-10	11-15	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	OVER 50
Number of farms	10	7	9	6	13	9	4	6

At the present time the individual and group work on the problems of the farm business are being carried on under the leadership of the county demonstration agent and the Smith-Hughes teacher of agriculture, with headquarters at the school. The men are organized as the United Sorghum Growers; the boys have their Four H Club and the Smith-Hughes Agricultural Club.



RUTHVILLE DELEGATES AT THE HAMPTON FARMERS' CONFERENCE, 1923

oughly has the sentiment for better hogs, coupled with the opportunity to improve, taken hold. An average of two hogs per farm are killed each fall and put in the smoke-house, while the sale of hams and fresh pork on the Richmond market is the beginning of what may develop into an important source of income.

There were only eight families who did not have a family cow. Every housewife kept poultry, an average of twenty-nine birds to each home. It is the custom for the women of the household to care for the garden, the cow, and the poultry, and the income from these sources goes to them but eventually back on the table to the whole family. The practice of culling, ways of fighting mites and lice, and proper housing for the birds has been brought into the community. Four model poultry houses were erected by groups last year. Both the demonstration agent and the agricultural teacher are co-operating in working out, without thought of individual credit or personal jealousy, the problem of a sounder business foundation for the community.

Situated as it is in the centre of the county the people are looking to Ruthville to supply the stimulus that the smaller neighborhoods and communities cannot give. The community clubs of the county through which the county demonstration agent works meet here at the school to discuss county agricultural problems. The community and county fair is held annually on the school grounds and funds are now being raised to erect a Fair building after the standard State plan.

Through the county demonstration agent, Mr. Russell E. Washington, 5 breeding stations have been established in the community—2 where good bulls are available and 4 having pure-bred Duroc boars. The effect of this work is already seen in the quality of the family cows, but particularly in the hogs. Pure-bred Durocs are found on farm after farm. Ruthville has become a Duroc community. The pine-rooter is unknown, so thor-

With the amount of marketable wood in the community decreasing rapidly, and with the gradual playing out of the fishing, the far-seeing leaders believe that the time is ready to form a long-time program for the farm business which the community as a unit can and will support. They believe that the community will go farther working as a group along the same lines of agricultural endeavor than it will if each individual is working out his farm problems independently of a community plan. These leaders, considering the size of the farms and the fact that the entire community is already in the business in a small way, are looking to a gradual expansion of the poultry work, with the group shipment of both eggs and meat as the business develops. To a less marked extent they also anticipate the growing and finishing of more hogs for the Richmond market, which is one of the most satisfactory selling points in the East. As a basis for this forward movement these men believe that soil improvement and an increase in the yield of corn are important factors in maintaining the kind of church, school, and homes that will continue to satisfy this progressive community.



**AN OLD-TIMER**

The last remaining log house in Ruthville, unused for years

### SUMMARY OF RUTHVILLE COMMUNITY

The binding institution of the community has been the church for over one hundred years.

The establishment of the county school in Ruthville is the result of a fixed determination to gain educational opportunity for the community and county. The good school has brought and kept good teachers.

Groups interested in special work have developed ability to do things together easily, to the benefit of the entire community.

Plenty of social activities balance the workaday life in Ruthville.

Sources of cash money are in the process of changing from wood lot and river to land and livestock.

The community is now handling its own affairs with its own organizations.

HAMPTON INSTITUTE PRESS





## Three negro communities in Tidewater Virginia.

Doggett, Allen B.

Hampton, Va., Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, 1923.

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