

Biography of B. B. McCormick

(Continue from Preceding Page)

for the beaches. The election was held on May 1, 1923 and on June 2, the Board received a petition asking for the issuance of bonds for the purpose of acquiring property and building a modern school. Two years later a special election for trustees for the new tax district was held and B. B. McCormick was elected to serve for a period of two years. He served on this board of Trustees from that time, being re-elected every two years until 1947 when he resigned because of poor health.

He can truthfully be referred to as the "father of the beach school system." He saw the beach schools grow from a 3-room frame structure with an enrollment of 41 to two fireproof elementary schools and one fireproof high school with a total enrollment of 1,500. Not a year passed during his 22 years of service as a trustee that he did not contribute liberally from his own financial resources to the maintenance and betterment of the beaches school system. He used machines and men and his own knowledge of construction, levelling, filling, and improving school yard play areas in order that the children who filled such a large part of his thoughts, would develop healthy in mind and body. For the major part of this public service he did not ask or receive compensation other than his own inner satisfaction.

The school officials of the beaches sought at every opportunity for advice and assistance in developing the physical facilities that the Board of Trustees had shown foresight to acquire. He amply made up for his lack of formal educational background by having available for the educational specialists of the beaches a store of wisdom drawn from his personal experiences throughout a long and industrious life.

The children of the beaches were aware of his affection for them and his concern for the welfare of the schools. He was known to many of them in their private talk with genuine respect as "Uncle Bennie." And they used every opportunity to visit and talk with him.

In 1947 he was made an honorary member of the class of 1947 of Fletcher High School and went through the ceremony of graduation with that class. The school presented him with a special medal in commemoration of his many services to the youth of the beaches.

B. B. McCormick served with scrupulous diligence as Jury Com-

missioner from 1938 to 1946.

In 1919 seeing that a development company was necessary for the future of the beach he entered into the contracting business as a sideline to his timber interests. At first he found that only limited facilities were necessary for this new enterprise and that the equipment for his timber interests would serve very nicely. It was not long, however, until the construction business had grown to completely overshadow his initial business interests and a major contracting business was developed. These were years of rapid growth and valuable experience. B. B. McCormick adopted a basic policy in his business dealings that has been of great importance to the community in which he lived: the McCormick Company must serve a two-fold purpose — its financial interest and the civic interest of the community. There are many examples that could be mentioned of this dual business policy; for example, many acres of swamp land at Jacksonville Beach were improved and many productive and desirable sites for business and living were developed as part of the transactions of the construction company. Through his business he made great sacrifices to obtain the initial development of Highway A-1-A to St. Augustine through St. Johns County. After he had cleared the St. Johns County portion of this road from St. Augustine to the Duval County line it was necessary to complete the grading of this road gratis from the Duval County line to Jacksonville Beach so that it could be a continuous link with Atlantic Boulevard.

In 1925 he was member of a group which furnished the Duval County Board of County Commissioners with a survey for a proposed second highway to the beaches via Hogan. This highway would have intersected the present highway known as A-1-A at 37th Avenue South in Jacksonville Beach. The County Commissioners took no action on this as it was then completing the reconstruction of the existing road to Jacksonville Beach. This road is now known as Atlantic Boulevard.

After much insistence on his part, with others, the County in November and December of 1929 made a survey for an additional highway to Jacksonville Beach beginning at the present intersection of Beach Boulevard and Atlantic Boulevard through Hogan, paralleling the then existing Florida East Coast Railway and intersecting present road A-1-A at a distance of about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile through Jacksonville Beach at 12th Avenue South. At a later date the Southside Business Men's Club joined with beach officials in suggesting the purchase of

the abandoned East Coast Railroad right of way for a highway that was to continue through Hogan and to the beaches as previously suggested by him. Thus his farsightedness was verified. Both of the above mentioned surveys were made under the direction of Ellis, Curtis and Kooker, Engineering firm of Jacksonville, Florida, and are on file in the official county records.

During World War II the firm of B. B. McCormick and Sons contributed greatly to the all out effort to win the war in the performance of contracts, constructing airfields and barracks in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. The McCormick name was carried to South America when the McCormick Construction Company built two important airfields in Brazil. This service to his country was the highlight of his business career.

From his sons for whom his life has been a constant inspiration the material for this short sketch has been obtained. Of his rich personality and idealism they have contributed this more intimate portrait.

"He considers the dedication of the bridges across the Inland Waterway in his honor today, a reward not for the larger things of which he was a part during his life, but for the small things in which he was always interested, for it was his belief that the larger things as a whole would attract the eyes of

those who sought the grandeur of publicity and praise, while the smaller things which we are all prone to ignore, would go wanting. There never was a time, regardless of his own circumstances, that anyone who was in trouble, and who called upon him for help, was not inspired.

"It was his thought that it was a God-given responsibility and privilege to be one of those persons to whom all could call upon in distress. He is justly proud of the many fine men and women whom he has seen grow from childhood and enter life as a credit to citizenship under his indirect influence upon the school system.

"He was always a contributor to churches of all faiths, regardless of creed or color, although he was an original organizer and member of the Beach Methodist Church.

"He is thankful today to those who have actually taken a more active part in the ultimate development of the New Beach Boulevard, foregoing their position in order to honor him for the principles for which he has tried to live.

"He gave formal utterance to the ideals of a lifetime of service in these words:

"Be tolerant, treat every man right the first time you meet, for you know not under what conditions or where, you may meet him again."

Compliments of

The Florida Machine & Foundry Company

Steel Castings of All Kinds

and

Land Clearing Equipment

1561 WEST CHURCH STREET

TELEPHONE 4-0661

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA