



The Cliffside Chimes

Newsletter of the Cliffside Historical Society

Volume 7 Jan-Feb 2008

The Collins Orchestra

In the late 1920s Cliffside had an orchestra and quartet headed up by C. M. Collins. According to the *Rutherfordton Sun*, just before Christmas of 1927 the Collins Orchestra and quartet “broadcast two excellent programs” on Asheville’s WWNC. “Receptivity here (in Cliffside), and from reports of many radio fans in other parts of the county, was remarkably good,” said the *Sun* reporter.

The orchestra, which usually performed light classical and modern dance music, had been heard earlier in December on WBT in Charlotte, “the first time a county orchestra had ever broadcasted.”

Who was C.M. Collins, and who were his musicians?

He was also leader of the Cliffside Band and the high school band and orchestra, having replaced D.C. Cole, who had moved elsewhere in the county. In the Collins Orchestra, C.M. was director and played the trumpet. Miss Beulah Heafner, who assisted Mr. Collins at the school, was the pianist and violinist. She also played the mandolin. Jesse Lancaster was the clarinetist, and Hall Padgett and Oliver Butler played the saxophones. Howard Bland was the trombonist and Ovia Padgett played the drums. Also in the orchestra was W. T. Grady.

In November 1927 the orchestra played at the Cliffside Theater during the showing of the silent spectacular, *Ben Hur*, starring Ramon Navarro and Francis X. Bushman.

Collins at times sang at the Methodist Church in a quartet with C.D. Hughes, H.M. Owens, and Charles Metcalf.

An Incredible Tale

In a past issue we had a story on Dr. Rush Shull, one of Cliffside’s physicians from 1912 until 1920 when he moved his practice to Charlotte. He was a son-in-law of R.R. Haynes.

Dr. Shull became quite prominent in Charlotte, and his work in radiology made him known and respected in the medical profession nationwide.

In 1941, at age 54, Dr. Shull had an amazing adventure. The incredible details were written up in the Charlotte papers, and included in his biography. Here’s the full story.

In August 1941, Dr. Shull was summoned to appear in federal court in Asheville to testify in a disability case. Mrs. Shull accompanied him as far as Marion to visit her sister. Dr. Shull drove on alone. It had been raining for days and it continued to rain as he drove from Marion to Old Fort. Just after passing through the latter town, he ran into a landslide and was forced to turn back.

He stopped at a drugstore in Old Fort to have a Coca-Cola. There, he saw an old friend, Dr. Johnston, and told him of his difficulties. The other doctor insisted that Route 10 to Asheville was always passable even in the worst weather. Encouraged by this, Dr. Shull again set out for his destination. As he crossed a bridge outside Old Fort, he could see that a deluge of water, a flash flood, was coming out of the mountains. However, he kept on going for several hundred yards until he passed a mountain boy.

“Mister, you better get out of that car!” the lad warned. Noticing that the water was rising rapidly around him, Dr. Shull got out of the car and followed the boy along a barbed fence toward higher ground. The current was so swift it was all Dr. Shull could do to hang onto the fence. At the moment the youth reached higher ground and disappeared over a little hill, the rising water swept Dr. Shull and the fence away.

The floodwaters carried him along, buffeting him unmercifully against the wire fence. After what seemed like eternity, he managed to catch hold of a branch of an elder tree growing on the bank. There he hung for one hour and forty minutes. He could not swim, but he grimly clutched the branches and hoisted himself up with each surge of the water. The branches which he held were the topmost limbs of the tree and therefore small and limber. Each time a wave came, he almost drowned but managed to keep his head out of the flood.

After some time, Dr. Johnston, who was making a call in that area, saw Dr. Shull’s car but was unable to locate its owner. Finally, he surmised what had occurred and placed an emergency phone call to a family up the river. These people immediately searched the river and discovered Dr. Shull still clinging to the top of the elder tree. They brought a truck and plow lines and began rescue operations. Two Boy Scouts, who were counselors at a nearby camp, swam the torrent and anchored the lines on the opposite shore. They then assisted Dr. Shull into a packsaddle and he was pulled to safety across the river.

His rescuers drove him to their farm and put the doctor to bed. He directed them to cover him with blankets and a heating pad.

The next morning, old Dr. Johnston was able to reach the farmhouse in his Model-T Ford. He gave the patient—who was suffering from shock, exposure and severe cuts from the barbed wire fence—tetanus antitoxin. The following day, Dr. Johnston took the younger physician to the hospital in Marion, where he began to recover and was moved to his home in Charlotte. Amazingly, a farmer found his glasses unbroken, one mile downstream from the elder tree.

Haywood, The Rooster

In a previous issue we've written of the big "strike" of 1934, an event that, in Cliffside, lasted only one day but is remembered as a significant spike on the time-line of our town.

Concern about labor unrest beyond Cliffside caused management to shut down the mill for nearly a week. As usual, Cliffside's resident reporter/columnist, F.C. "Skipper" Thompson, got the last word. The headline for his colorful, tongue-in-cheek dispatch to the *Courier* on September 11, was "Cliffside Mill Starts Up."

The rising sun over the hills of Carolina found a bantam rooster crowing from a National Guard bunk just outside the Cliffside Mills Bleachery here. This rooster, "Haywood" by name, is the mascot of Company "H", Waynesville, and he was named for the guardsmen's home county. The boys rolled out for guard duty; Haywood came to attention and saluted by flipping his right ear with his foot; the wheels in the Cliffside plant started to turn, the first time since last Wednesday at 11:00 a. m.

This plant resumes operations with 700 loyal employees at their posts. As Mr. M. Hendrick, secretary and general manager, says, "there has never been any dissension among our people here."

~ 2007 ~

If the number "2007" is printed anywhere on your address label then it's time to renew your annual membership. Please use the application form on page 6 to renew or, if you are a non-member, to join the Society. We need your support.

Clyde A. Erwin – Educator

We will doubtless never again see the like of Clyde A. Erwin. And if by chance a man like him should appear in the Old North State, he would not find work in education. According to eye-witness testimony, Erwin did not spare the rod when he disciplined students, and he never held an earned degree from any college or university. But let no one doubt, he was an educator of the highest caliber and he did great and lasting service to education in North Carolina.

Clyde Atkinson Erwin was born in Atlanta, Georgia, on February 8, 1897, the son of Sylvanus and Mamie (Putnam) Erwin. His parents were, however, both North Carolina natives. And education was in his blood. His father alternated between teaching and newspaper work and his paternal grandfather, Ira Erwin, was for 30 years one of Cleveland County's best-loved teachers. It was said that during the days before and just after the Civil War, Ira Erwin somehow managed to "keep alive the torch of learning."

In 1909 Sylvanus Erwin died after a prolonged illness, leaving his widow and three children with only \$67. Though Clyde had to help support the family, he was determined to get an education. Working in summers to earn money for the family, and save enough to buy books for the school term, he attended grammar schools in Charlotte and Waco and graduated in 1914 from Piedmont High School in Lawndale. After his graduation he was able to obtain a teaching position in a rural two-teacher school. In the 1914-15 school term he earned \$187.50, and saved almost every penny. In 1915 and 1916 he attended the University of North Carolina, but he was needed at home and was forced to leave the University and forego the degree he wanted so much.

In 1916 Clyde Erwin took a position as principal of the Gault School in Jonesboro, SC. The next year he moved to Waco where he was principal from 1917 to 1919. And in 1919 he was hired as Superintendent of Cliffside Schools. The move to this small mill village on the Second Broad River might not have appeared to Erwin a giant move up, but so it turned out to be.

R. R. Haynes claimed he built Cliffside to be the ideal textile community, and he valued education. Likewise, following his death, Haynes' family – his son Charles in particular – was determined that children in Cliffside would receive a first class education. In 1919 the push toward that goal gained momentum with the hiring of Erwin. And

in 1920 a new Cliffside school building was begun that would cost a quarter million dollars — not a cent of which was public funds — to be dedicated in 1922. When it was completed this was the finest school building in Rutherford County. It was up to Erwin to see that the education taking place in that school was of the same quality as the building. And he did just that.

Clyde Erwin began and developed the high school program at Cliffside. And he did it with such dedication, determination, and skill that people moved from neighboring communities into Cliffside just so their children could attend the Cliffside School. In 1919 there were 260 students in the elementary school at Cliffside; by 1925 there were over 700. In 1919 there were three high school students; in 1925 there were 110. In 1919 there were 11 teachers in the Cliffside School. In 1925 the Cliffside school system had 21 teachers and was fully accredited by the state board of education. People recognized Erwin's ability and they saw in him a champion of education.

In 1925 Prof. W. Ross Hill, Rutherford County Superintendent of Public Instruction, resigned and Clyde Erwin was elected to fill that position. And now Erwin began to hit his stride! Between 1925 and 1931 he raised the educational efficiency ranking of Rutherford County from 85th to 42nd. In that same period he reduced the net building indebtedness of the county by 10% even though seven new buildings were erected. He saw to it that the more than 100 school buses in Rutherford County were operated at lower cost than that of 96 other counties. In 1931 Rutherford County led all counties in the state in the number of high schools belonging to the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. By 1932 Clyde Erwin was president of the North Carolina Teachers' Association.

And all the while he advocated for more and stronger education. Erwin pushed for the nine month school term when many thought a six month term too expensive. He

pushed for a 12 year school program long before such programs were adopted. *The Charlotte Observer* in 1934 said, "Public education in the state at this time calls for a flaming champion who will not be afraid to take his fight into the open and right up into the faces of the people, and confidently stand his ground against all those hesitant, if

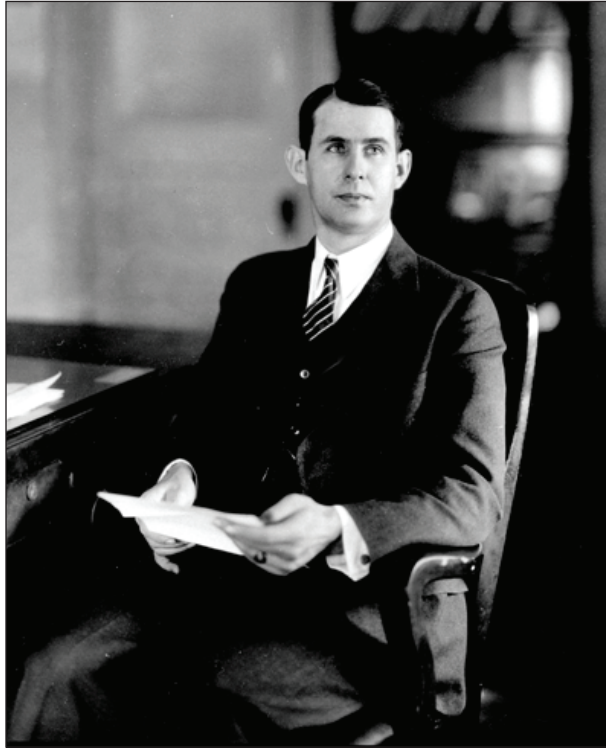
not hostile, forces that would relegate public education to a place of casual and secondary importance in the function of government in North Carolina." The *Observer* said Clyde Erwin was such a champion.

On October 24, 1934 Governor Ehringhaus appointed Clyde Erwin to fill the position of State Superintendent of Public Instruction left vacant by the death of Dr. Arch T. Allan. On May 28, 1935, Catawba College awarded Clyde Erwin the honorary degree Doctor of Pedagogy. Dr. Erwin was sometime faculty member and Chair of the Board of Trustees of East Carolina University. He was re-elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction several times and served in that capacity until 1952. On his watch the state textbook rental plan was established, free textbooks were

provided for grades 1 through 7, and the twelfth grade was added. In addition the state supported school term was extended to nine months, the compulsory school attendance age was extended from 14 to 16, and the first state bond funds for public school construction were made available.

Clyde A. Erwin died of a heart attack July 19, 1952, in Raleigh at age 55. He was the longest serving member of the Council of State, composed of elected state officers, who serve as an advisory council to the governor. Among his many honors was his chairmanship of the US delegation to the 13th International Conference on Public Education in Geneva in 1940. In an age that often seems to value certification more than accomplishment, it is refreshing to remember a time when certification was less important — and to remember a man who with minimal certification achieved maximal accomplishment.

—Don Bailey



Clyde A. Erwin

Dr. Hunt Reminisces

On October 12, 2007, Dr. Jack Hunt, who for 40 years was Cliffside's dentist, made a talk to members of the Historical Society.

I remember talking to Ruby about this talk tonight. She advised me, she said, "You need to write down what you are going to say, 'cause if you don't, you will forget it. You can't remember it." I thought a little bit and I said, "OK, I will write it down." And then she said, "You can't read it, either." So anyhow I am tickled to be here and I did jot down a few notes that I will refer to from time to time, if I can read them. Reno [Bailey] called a couple days...three or four days ago...and Ruby said, "You talked one hour and 20 minutes!" And I said, "No, that was Reno."

Reno would argue with that. Anyway we did ramble around a lot. I can ramble all night, but I won't, but I thought you might get someone else up here to help me a little bit and to answer questions about Cliffside that are hard to explain. Hope you all can help me a little later. I am not a Shakespeare scholar, but he did say, "All's well that ends well." And I thought we'd turn this around a little bit, into "All's well that *begins* well.

So I am going to try. Anyhow, somebody said they wanted me to tell this story about Dr. Robertson and how I got to Cliffside. It is an interesting part of my stay in Cliffside. I was sitting out under a tree one day [in Lattimore] with my Dad right after WWII. And a car drove up, a sort of ruffled-up Pontiac, and a guy bounced out of it and said, "I am Harry Robertson." I had never seen him before. He said, "I am a dentist and heard you were home. I have been sick since half way through the war and I want to go to Hot Springs, Arkansas, and see if I can get recovered. I would like for you to come over and work in my office, if you would."

I said, "That's awful nice, I appreciate that, but I have always planned to go to Shelby. I have a deal working over there and I plan to go Shelby. Thank you anyhow." And he left. And my Daddy, who was much more practical, said, "Son, maybe you ought to think about it a little bit. You will be fooling around here two or three months waiting to get started, and you don't have any money."

So I went over the next morning and told Dr. Robertson again about my plans to go to Shelby in two months. The office was full and he immediately opened the door and said, "This is Dr. Hunt and he is coming to take my place." And this was before we got it all agreed to, but anyhow we did. Here's how generous he was: He said, "This is Ruth, my wife. She is not going with me. She is not a good chair-side assistant, but she can handle the phone and appointments and that sort of thing. And you don't have to pay her. You can have everything you make, I don't want any of it." That was pretty exciting.

So I decided I would come and stay for two months until I went to Shelby. I got home and Dad said, "Well, Son, did you see Maurice Hendrick?" And I said, "Who is he?" And he said, "He is boss over there in Cliffside. He succeeded Mr. Charlie [Haynes]. You need to go talk to him." And I said, "Why?" "You don't understand Cliffside," he said. Anyhow, I went over to see Mr. Hendrick and I was intimidated. He was [in his office] above the fish pond, over there behind a big old desk, an imposing person with black horn rim glasses. We talked

and I told him my plan and, if it was OK, I was going to stay only a couple of months and then I was going to Shelby. "I hope that's alright," I said, and he said, "Yes, that will be fine. People here need dental care and Dr. Robertson has been in and out all during the war. They need some health care and they will be tickled. And when you leave it will be no problem." I got to the door and he said one other thing. He looked down over those horn rim glasses and



Dr. Jack Hunt

said, “I just want to say the people here in Cliffside today [also] came to stay two or three months.” Well, I didn’t think about that until years later, then I thought about it a lot. He loved to tell that story.

When I did get here [Mr. Hendrick] told me that there were 451—I remember this number—451 heads of households in Cliffside. My calculations were that there was 3,000 people in the village. Each head of household had a wife and two or three children, so my guess was 3,000.

After I was here awhile I fell in love with the people in the community and I wondered, and have thought about it a lot since, why Cliffside is so unique and why people have such a warm feeling for it.

First, Ruby and I lived in a little room with Mrs. Robertson. We ended up living on Stimson Street, across from the grave yard. Coach Dorus Huss and his two daughters were on one side of us, and Jimmy and Ferne Padgett and their beautiful daughter Virginia lived on the other side. We enjoyed that beautiful area a long time.

You know, when I was practicing it was a different era. My office was low key. People would come in sit down on the stool with their wife or child. Another unique thing was, I never sent out any statements. It was unique, and I don’t think any of my dentist colleagues could say that. One reason was most people paid their one dollar, two dollars or three dollars or whatever the bill was when they left. Of course some people would pay a dollar a week or that sort of thing. But anyhow, that is how my practice was different from my friends’ practices.

There were interesting experiences in my office. One was a guy—a lot of people from Chesnee came to my office—this one, a sort of red-faced, chunky guy came in and he wanted all of his teeth extracted. I told him, “Check with your doctor and let him check you over and see if you are ready for this procedure.” The man said, “I have already seen him today. Dr. Broome.” (I hear people like my Humphries friends giggling, because Dr. Broome ran a liquor store in Chesnee—and he was not an MD.)

After awhile I got up enough courage to back into that place myself. Almost everybody from Cliffside snuck around to “see Dr. Broome.”

So anyhow we loved living here. We had a lot of opportunities to do other things and always ended up staying. Cliffside kept calling. We lived in 8 locations in our lifetime and but nowhere was loved as much as Cliffside. A two-bedroom house, one bath, four of our five daughters grew up there, and we were happy as larks. We learned a lot, had a lot of lessons in Cliffside.

Here’s one of the things I remember about Mr. Charlie. He married late in life, I think he was about 60. One day his wife Katherine called me and said, “I wish you would stop by on your way to lunch today to check on Charlie. I don’t know if you can do anything for him, but he complains about a tooth.” And so I did. I went in and looked in his mouth a little bit and tried to do the best I could. Somehow we got to talking about Amos Owens. Amos Owens was known as “the great blockader” in this area. He was a very colorful person. There was a little book written about him by Corn Cracker Pike from Polkville, about 1900 or something. One reason I was interested is that my grandfather, who I am named after, was in one of Owens’ functions and got in a fight and got stabbed and was paralyzed for the rest of his life. So we were talking about this stuff and she said, “Charlie has an original manuscript of the life of Amos Owens.” And I said I would like to read it. So she walked to the library and pulled it out and sorta handed it to me, and looked around at Mr. Charlie and said, “Charlie, Dr. hunt would like to read your little book about Amos Owens.” And Charlie said, “Tell him to sit over there in the corner and read it.”

So if any of you have a library and keep a few books, that’s the only way to keep them, as they will get away from you. I learned that lesson from Mr. Charlie.

I learned about service from a lady in Cliffside, and I saw her daughter here a little while ago. Our number two little girl, Penny, when she was about three years old, was always talking about “Mrs. Lord.” We didn’t know what she was talking about. She kept saying, “Mrs. Lord...I saw Mrs. Lord today.” So one day we saw this lady, and Penny said, “Hey, Mrs. Lord...there is Mrs. Lord...hey, Mrs. Lord.” The lady was Mrs. Herman Norville. Mrs. Norville kept the nursery at the church and Penny thought that, since she was always in the church, Mrs. Norville was the Lord’s wife.

When I reminisce, I think of a lot of people. Winky Pearson, anybody remember Winky? He was always involved in baseball and kids, and so forth, as, of course, a lot of others were, too. And I remember bird hunting with Hal miller and Grover Jenkins. One of the things I remember was how really and truly smart the people in Cliffside were, with brains, you know. I didn’t come over here expecting that, to be very candid. That was something I learned quickly. The smartest people I have been around before or since came from Cliffside. You know Don [Bailey] is one example, and there are many, many others, such as Reginald Harris, who ended up as President of the

American Society of Internists.

I remember rabbit hunting with John Harris. John had a bunch of dogs. You know there no dogs in Cliffside but hunters kept them close by. John always had some beagles. Soon after I moved here, we went over to my farm with what must have been 25 men, 25 children and 25 beagles and we were having some real rabbit hunting. Somebody cooked the stew and we had a lot of fun.

I learned a little about politics from Lassie and Gotha Humphries. Everybody, with the exception of P.D. Causby and Fred Robison, were democrats and nearly everybody had a picture of FDR on a wall in their house.

In Cliffside, when you got out of line a little bit, someone was sure to kid you about it. I remember Hicky Wortman telling me one day (about what I was doing wrong or hadn't done), "You better behave or we will send you to Henrietta." Now, that was community pride.

How do you get hooked on Cliffside? It is unique. Is it the closeness of the neighbors, clannishness, pride, or big families, or osmosis, or heredity? It does take a village to raise a child. Everybody here remembers that. The village helped raise you. So why are you hooked? You are or you wouldn't be here. So what hooked you on Cliffside? I thought about this many times and [I've settled on] one word—there are many words but the one word is love. And God is Love.

From the Web site

I find that the river and River Street are on my mind a lot here lately, especially during the night. We camped on the river, fished and swam in the river, made tree houses, climbed rocks, swung from ropes and vines and found all types of wildlife in the woods. The games we played were made up games and granted during that time nobody had much but what we had was enough.

I dream of the river as I remember it. I can still picture the large trees overhanging the river, sandbars, the rapids by the 10-foot hole, climbing Buzzards Roost and laying on the pine needles and just watching the river roll by.

Being born in a house on River Street, having my aunt and uncle living next door and my grandmother a few houses down the street, knowing everybody on the street, feeling protected and cared for by the people on the street made it like no other place I have ever lived or expect to find again.

The memories are there, they are vivid, and although all the houses have been torn down and the people I knew and loved are pretty much gone by now, they still exist in my mind and heart and always will.

—Gene Ingram

Cliffside Historical Society Membership Application

Renewal New

Please enter my membership and donations for the following categories:

Table with 2 columns: Category and Amount. Rows include Individual (\$10), Family (at same address) (\$15), Lifetime (individual) (\$100), Lifetime (family) (\$150), Web Site Sponsorship (x \$25), Donation, and TOTAL ENCLOSED.

Make checks payable to the Cliffside Historical Society. Mail to Cliffside Historical Society, 10612 Round Rock Rd., Charlotte NC 28277.

All donations are tax deductible.

Name: Address: City, State, Zip: Phone: Cell Phone: E-Mail: