

SALUDA CENTENNIAL

AUGUST 9, 1981

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Thank you for the invitation to speak today. I am both honored and humbled.

Our scripture text, which Mr. Edgerton read from the 11th and 12th chapters of Hebrews, contains the record made by the writer of Hebrews of the faithful men and women in the history of Israel. He names them and their faithful characteristics. Glowing remarks concerning their lives and activities and their contribution to the ongoing life of faith. Having named them, he concludes by picturing them constituting a cloud of witnesses somewhere beyond the earth, urging us by example and legacy to remain steadfast in our life's race with our eye fixed on Jesus -- the Pioneer and Finisher of our faith. On any kind of an Anniversary, especially a Centennial Anniversary, we should look back to the faithful who laid the foundation, who built the society, and who left us a legacy of faith. When we realize that those faithful men and women are in that cloud of witnesses, it brings us a sense of reverential awe and respect.

To adequately look at the past, we must return to the year 1788. Prior to 1788, the settlers had moved into the valleys and foothills of what is now Rutherford, Polk and Spartanburg counties. Some of them came before the American Revolution and settled on the Packolet River, White Oak Creek, Green River, and Broad River. They were waiting for the day when they could move to the top of the mountains and make their settlements. In 1788, the Treaty of Hopewell was concluded with the Cherokee Indians. This Treaty provided that the Indians move west of the Pigeon River, leaving the Blue Ridge Mountains for the white settlers. Immediately, the settlers began moving up the mountain to establish their permanent homes. Some came through the Howard's Gap and

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Holbert's Cove, the Thompsons, Morrises, Holberts, Newmans, Bradleys, Bishops, Guices, and Hendersons. The Summeys, Gosnells, Metcalfs, Morgans, and Howards moved up Fork Creek. Through the Saluda Gap into the Mountain Page area came the Wards, Bells, Harts, Turners, Statons, Forresters, Capps, and Forests. To the East up Green River and into Big Hungry came the Arledges, Kuykendalls, Blackwells, Joneses, Jacksons, Justices, Laughters, McGraws, and Justuses. The Edgertons and Burgesses found their way along the Broad River. The John Morris family is credited as being the first to reach the top of the mountain and establish their home.

Burwell Pace and his sons were first to settle the area where the city of Saluda is now located. For some years, it was known as Pace's Gap.

The background of these early settlers, of course, was rooted in immigration from Europe. They were all acutely aware that they had come from many countries to settle in the American Colonies. After reaching America, they were influenced by three important movements, the first being the Great Awakening. From 1740 to 1760, a mighty spiritual Awakening spread throughout the colonies from New England to Georgia. This Awakening was marked by spiritual fervor and whereas the Baptist denomination of Christians had been extremely small in the colonies, they emerged from this spiritual Awakening as the largest numerical denomination in America. That explains why the older churches in this area are Baptist.

Secondly, they had participated in the American Revolution. They had fought and sacrificed for freedom. Liberty was dear to them. They had first become free men in Christ and were determined to erect a government where that freedom would be protected.

The third significant event was the erection of a federal government containing a Bill of Rights forever guaranteeing personal liberties. These early settlers were grounded into a strong spiritual experience and a love for liberty.

One other characteristic of these early settlers was their inclination to be pioneers. In every sense of the word they were Frontiersmen.

Burwell Pace typifies those who settled on the Mountain about Saluda. His ancestor, Richard Pace, had settled in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1616. As the family expanded, some moved to North Carolina. They bought large plantations on the Roanoke River. Later, Burwell Pace along with many of his relatives was swept into the Great Awakening revival movement. Many men in the Pace family were ministers who established churches in South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Burwell Pace was a patriot during the Revolution and labored with the Colonists for independence. Unfortunately, both his father and brother remained loyal to the King. They were both killed in the fighting at Shallow Ford in Yadkin County, North Carolina. Since they were Tories, their land was confiscated.

Burwell Pace began moving West, settling first on the Yadkin River in North Carolina. Having married Lydia Woodruff, he later moved to the Ninety-Sixth District in South Carolina and settled near his wife's family at what is now Woodruff, South Carolina. He came to the Gap of the Mountain before 1800 and settled. The Gap was to take his name -- Pace's Gap -- until the city, Saluda, was incorporated.

Burwell Pace was the ancestor of many of you -- he was my great, great, great-grandfather.

On reaching the mountain tops, the settlers secured a land grant or purchased land from the land speculator. They went about clearing the fields, erecting long cabins, and other necessary buildings. Homesteads were being hewn out of the wilderness.

Remember, these settlers arrived in 1788 or 1789. Probably before completing their own dwelling houses, they organized a Church. The Mountain Page Church was organized as early as 1789. This tells us a great deal about their religious faith, and more importantly, about them. They knew that the Church of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was essential for a wholesome life as well as the foundation for an enduring society. Friendship Church was con-

stituted in 1834. Originally named Forman Chapel, Friendship Church was used jointly by the Baptists and Methodists. Mountain Page and Friendship constituted the center of life in this particular area for almost a century.

Macedonia Church was constituted in 1898. When Saluda was incorporated there were no churches in the corporation. Within a very few years, the Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopal churches were organized. Later, in 1914, the Presbyterian Church was erected, as well as the Saint Matthews Baptist Church.

Early schools were generally built alongside churches. Old Mountain Page School was the strongest. Others were in walking distance of the students; however, these distances were sometimes quite long. The American Mission Society of the Congregational Church established Saluda Seminary. This Boarding School made an invaluable contribution to the life of the people.

Our forefathers centered all their lives in family, school, and more importantly, the church.

We are not forcing historical facts when we conclude that these founders were deeply religious men and women. The church was paramount in their lives. Imagine entering the mountain wilderness and before completing their own homes, clearing fields, or opening a school, they constituted a Church! Almost a century later, when the city of Saluda was incorporated, three new churches were organized immediately. The faithful who are now in the cloud of witnesses set an example for all of us to follow -- each succeeding generation is challenged by them to build Christian homes, good schools, and strong churches. Society's enduring foundation will ever rest in Jesus Christ and His Church.

Let me remind you that today we are talking about two centuries -- one as a settlement and the other as a city.

The early preachers were Joel Blackwell (a soldier of the Revolution), James Blythe, Thomas Edward Justice; followed later by John Arledge, William Henry Jones, and John Holbert. Later, James Madison Justice, H. Carey Elwes, E.M. Bostic, Josiah Holbert, and John Broadus Middleton came along. The

Reverends Mr. Owen, Parish, Frost, Elliot, Joyner, and many others could be recalled.

Singing has always been important to mountain people. Song leaders and Singing Schools made their contributions. Such men as Burton J. Rhodes, Herbert Pace, and Uel Jones were singers and Conductors of Singing Schools.

The early medical practioners were Doctors Goelette, Hooper, Salley, Sankle, Cooksey, Fountterroy, and Dr. Little at the Drug Store.

Educators before my time, were Mr. Burrage, Mr. Peck, Mr. Hume, and Mr. Hollister. The educators whom I remember were Mr. Gossett, Mr. W.E. Sawyer, and Mr. H. Herbert Randolph. The one-room subscription schools were taught by many whose names I do not have, although Uel Jones and R.L. Jones are two that I recall.

After the introduction of the railroad, a city was incorporated. J. Leander Hart, better known as Daddy Hart, was possibly the most influential man in the first fifty years of the life of Saluda. Other influential men were Captain Pearson, Mr. Tanner, Joe Johnson, Sheriff Thompson, Luther Thompson, Mac Thompson, Calvin Hill, Tom Ballard, R.B. Staton, Gurley Laughter, Batey Hall, Mac Pace, Landrum Johnson, Bail Pace, Roy Ward, Dan Pace, Uel Jones, and Layton Capps.

The railroad-connected families made a great contribution to the ongoing life of Saluda. New people, new blood, new life, new ideas were constantly infused in the corporate life by the coming and going of the railroad family. Troxlers, Pattersons, Andrews, Seays, McCarsons, Troutmans -- innumerable.

Summer families also made their lasting contribution. We looked forward to their coming, as they contributed greatly to the life of the city. Some of the summer families came to stay.

The faithful ones preceding us are now in that cloud of witnesses. Somehow, as we remember their names and talk of them, there grows within us a feeling of awe and respect, along with a certain awareness of the continuity of life.

On Centennial Sunday, we feel the hovering about presence of this cloud of witnesses. Their legacy to us is a pioneering spirit. They were industrious people, able to conquer the wilderness and produce a stable, ongoing society.

Our forefathers took seriously their democracy. They valued liberty, freedom, and enjoyed a self-reliant life. They loved their homes and families. They worked hard, they inculcated moral values, provided education -- their admonition was "be somebody."

Above everything else, was their keen awareness of the spiritual nature of man. God created a spiritual being and He will never find peace and fulfillment until He finds it in God.

The oldest institution in the Saluda area is the Church. The only enduring entity is the Church and this will be so eternally.

General Douglas MacArthur, standing on the battleship, MISSOURI, to accept the surrender of the Japanese Empire, said the problem we face is spiritual. Our problem, the world's problem, is essentially spiritual.

There will never be a better world until there is a better Saluda. And there will never be a better Saluda, until we -- each one of us -- becomes a better person. Our condition will be radically changed when Jesus Christ, God's unique son, is permitted to born us anew through the Holy Spirit. When His body, the Church, has priority in our lives.

We are encompassed by a great cloud of witnesses, influencing us to lay aside the sins that trip us up and run with resolution and determination our life's race with our eyes on Jesus.

The faithful, by example, are urging us on.....

Resolve today to run to victory in Jesus. Anticipate that experience when we hear Him say, "well done" and suddenly find ourselves amidst the cloud of witnesses. Hear Him say, "You ran well. Eternal victory is yours!"

While growing up in Saluda, we were all ecumenical to a degree. When special services were conducted in any one of the Churches, we all attended. Revivals and Singings were attended by members from all the churches. The first Vacation Bible School was jointly sponsored by all the Churches and held in the Schoolhouse. The Christmas Midnight Service at the Church of the Transfiguration was a wonderful experience. Denominational lines were never closely drawn.

Our service today emphasizes the oneness of all believers in Jesus Christ and His body, the Church. It is portentous of that anticipated experience when gathered in glory in God's presence, we will join in unison to sing:

"Praise and honor and glory to God and to the Lamb, His Son, our Saviour, who reigns victoriously forever and forever."

Amen