

My der Governor hoese

Thursday, June 2, to be exact), When Rev. A. C. D. Noe of Bath, his brother, Rev. W. R. Noe of Wilmington, and I were in your office, you asked that I investigate and report to you on the proposed restoration of the old town of Bath, in which these two brothers and other persons are interested. On Saturday, June 18, I went to Bath and conferred with Rev. A. C. D. Noe and with other inhabitants of Beaufort County, so that I am now ready to report on this subject.

The town of Bath is a place of freat historical interest. The first town in North Carolina (chartered 1705), it was the dwelling place of several governors and the legislature met there upon a number of occasions. The pirate Blackbeard for a time made it his headquarters. The first chief justice of North Carolina, Christopher Gale, lived there. The first library in the colony was there, and the oldest church building now standing in North Carolina is St. Thomas Episcopal Church, built in Bath in 1734. In the colonial period Bath was an important commerical, religious, and political center, but the growth of the town of Washington farther to the west sapped its life, and since the Revolution it has amounted to little. Today, with a population of only 350 or 400 it is hardly more than a cross-road settlement. The very fact that it has not been bitten by the bug of progress, however, means that a number of old buildings in the town have been allowed to remain much the same as they were in times gone by. St. Thomas Episcopal Church, the Marsh house (with a remarkable chimney measuring seventeen feet across), the Bonner house, the Williams house, recently purchased for the Episcopal rectory, and other old buildings give evidence of the importance and prosperity of the old place in a period

This historic old town has been too long neglected and richly deserves whatever attention it may now receive. A well planned and well executed restoration no doubt would arouse a great deal of interest and would draw large numbers of tourists.

The present movement to restore the town begins with the desire for the better care of St. Thomas Church. For a number of years various members of this church and Episcopalians elsewhere in the State have realized that something needed to be done. Since Rev. A. C. D. Noe went to Bath as rector of the church in 1936, this realization has taken concrete form and a movement has gotten under way to take better care of the old building. A sum of more than \$3,000 has been raised, and some work on the church is contemplated immediately.

Furthermore, the old Williams house next to the church has been purchased for a parsonage, and this structure is now being repaired.

As Mr. Noe and his associates went more fully into the subject, they became convinced that they should not limit their efforts to the church and the parsonage, but that something more ambitious should be undertaken. They now hope to restore also the Marsh house, the Bonner house, and perhaps other buildings; to conduct an historical pageant every June (before the opening of "The Lost Colony" on Roanoke Island); and to hold an annual interdenominational religious assembly in a great open-air amphitheatre on the banks of Bath Creek. Such a program far transcends the original plan, and obviously is of wide interest. What began as a project mainly of concern only to Episcopalians, has now grown until it will appeal to people of all denominations.

Such a program of course involves money. Mr. Noe estimates that \$150,000 will do the job, but I believe that probably several times that amount will be required. Mr. Noe is optimistic about raising the funds, and I hope that his optimism is justified. Nevertheless, before anything too ambitious is undertaken, it would be well to know that the money was available.

There is no reason why certain steps should not be taken immediately. Mr. Noe and his associates can go ahead with work on the church and the parsonage, for which they have already raised some funds. In undertaking the more ambitious program the first step would seem to be a campaign for money, and for this purpose a corporation probably should be formed, to be known as The Bath Restoration, Incorporated, or something of the kind. It is likely that many leading North Carolinians would be willing to allow their names to be used in this connection. Provided sufficient money can be raised to go on with the work on a large scale, the program should by all means be put in the hands of an expert in restoring historic places. A fairly large salary would be needed to command the services of the proper man.

The plan has interesting possibilities, and I believe that it is worthy of our support. Certainly the Historical Commission will be glad to co-operate in every way possible.

I am sending copies of this letter to Senator W. B. Rodman, Mr. Junius D. Grimes, and Miss Elizabeth Mallison, all of Washington, N. C.; to Rev. A. G. D. Noe; and to Rev. W. R. Noe.