lar subscription and named "John T. Rankin." This belonged to the Wilmington Steam Fire Engine Company. All of these companies were volunteer organizations, and the apparatus for each was purchased and maintained by subscriptions from the business men of the city and by the dues of the members.

In addition to the above named volunteer companies, there was a fire company composed entirely of negroes, and about 1870, with the assistance of the city, it was furnished with a steam fire engine. This company, from its inception, was supported almost entirely by the city; it was a very good company, and did splendid work under the command of Valentine Howe, who was an exceptionally fine negro.

About 1878 the first appropriation was made by the city for the support of these companies, and this was gradually increased until 1898, when the city took over the property of the entire fire department, since which time it has been under the efficient leadership of Chief Schnibben.

THE EARTHQUAKE OF 1886.

On the 31st of August, 1886, I was a passenger in mid-ocean on the Cunard steamer *Etruria,* bound from Liverpool to New York, in company with the Hon. William A. Courtenay, who was then mayor of Charleston. These were the days before the Marconi wireless system of communication with vessels at sea, and we had no thought of the fearful earthquake of that date which shook Wilmington to its foundations and nearly destroyed the city of Charleston.

At the quarantine station in New York Harbor we were handed several telegrams, and, looking up in dismay from the reading of one addressed to me, I saw that Mr. Courtenay had suddenly vanished without a word. Panic-stricken by the terrifying news, he had hurried ashore to catch the first train to Charleston.

On my arrival at Masonboro Sound, where my family was residing, I heard with great thankfulness that my household had escaped injury. My wife had retired early with the two children, and she was awakened by the upheaval of the bed and the falling of glassware from the mantel. Terrified by the thought that the door would be jammed by the twisting framework, she pulled it open with desperate effort and, with a child

under each arm, ran to the open ground, on which were soon assembled neighbors and servants in a panic, intensified by the screams of the horses confined in the stables and by the loud lamentations of the negroes, who thought the day of judgment had come.

Several days later our office building was so greatly shaken by a second earthquake that we quickly sought safety in the street.

The newspapers of the day made the following references to this exciting episode.

The *Morning Star* of Wednesday, September 1, 1886, in its account of the earthquake, reported that "It was exactly ten minutes to ten o'clock p. m. when the first shock occurred. It lasted about thirty seconds and was accompanied by a long rumbling sound, like the passage of a railway train over a bridge. The river seemed to be violently agitated, and washed against its banks as if a storm were raging. The first shock was followed ten minutes afterwards by a second shock, and this by a third ten minutes later, neither of them of as great severity as the first. It is impossible to describe the alarm that pervaded the community. People thronged the streets and many of them were greatly agitated. A great crowd centered around the telegraph office, anxiously inquiring as to news from other places.

"As far as known, the damage caused by the shock was slight. Plastering was dislodged and fell in the Commercial Hotel and other houses, and bricks were shaken from chimneys and from the walls of buildings in the process of erection, among the number the chimney of a house on the corner of Second and Princess Streets."

The shock was quite severe at other places. At Smithville the Signal-Service observer reported as follows: "A severe earthquake shock felt here at 9.50 p. m., lasted about ten seconds, came from northwest. Ten minutes after the first shock another came from the west, lasting about three seconds."

The *Star* mentioned the wide extent of territory in which the earthquake made itself evident, with varying degrees of violence, as far north as New York and west to Chicago. The disturbance was greatest at Charleston, and at Laurinburg also the shock was extremely severe.

The *Daily News* had a very graphic account of the earthquake, and enlarged upon the terror and awe of the occasion, but differed slightly from the *Star* in a few comments. The