

After 54 Years

Mrs. Lisle Retires From

Cotton Career in Rule

Inside:

Mrs. Lisle retires
from life as cotton
gin owner in Rule.

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Name to retire

The name "Lisle Gin Co.," which has been a part of Rule since 1921, will disappear next fall. After 54 years of running the gin since her

husband's death in 1927, Mrs. James A. Lisle is retiring. (Staff Photo by Loretta Fulton)

By LORETTA FULTON
State Editor

RULE -- In 1927, a young man named James Lisle, who had moved here just six years earlier, was killed in an accident, leaving his wife and four children to make it on their own.

Mrs. Lisle, a widow after eight years of marriage, was left with little choice. She had to support her family, and practically the only way to do that was to carry on her husband's business.

Fifty-four years later Ola Mae Lisle is retiring from a business she handled successfully -- a business in which women still are as rare as a cotton patch without a boll weevil. Next fall, for the first time in half a century, customers at the Lisle Gin Co. won't be greeted by owner-manager Mrs. James A. Lisle.

Mrs. Lisle is retiring this month as "the boss around here" over a span of years that saw the cotton industry change from the days of team-drawn, one-bale wagons to today's 12-bale module makers which dot the landscape.

Those early years were ones in which farmers cultivated small farms, often less than 200 acres. And usually half that acreage was planted in maize to provide feed for the teams which did the work.

Those were the days when every member of the family picked cotton, piled it on the wagon and prepared for a rough, slow trip to the gin. Mrs. Lisle remembered that one of the happiest moments in the industry came when wagons were replaced with rubber-tired trailers.

"We thought that was wonderful," she said.

Keeping Up With Technology

During those years Mrs. Lisle kept up with the latest technology in order to provide

her customers with the most efficient ginning. She personally oversaw the rebuilding of her gin twice, in 1949 and 1961.

When the Lisles moved to Rule in 1921, their first gin was run on steam produced from coal-fired boilers. The modern structure which today sits on the north edge of Rule is all-electric.

During her long career, Mrs. Lisle survived two of the worse droughts in the area's history, in 1931 and 1952. In that first drought the Lisle Gin Co. processed the least number of bales in its history, 500, compared to an all-time high of 12,000.

Mrs. Lisle also has seen two

of the best years in the cotton business, 1926 and 1979. Cotton this year is bringing the highest price she can remember, 80-plus cents per pound, but the grade of cotton isn't as good as in other years, she said.

For a woman who started out not knowing "one bale of cotton from another," Mrs. Lisle has learned the business literally from the ground up. Mrs. Lisle's husband died in February 1927, and she had

the next fall to learn how to run the business. She even attended school in Abilene to learn how to class cotton so she wouldn't have to hire someone to do it.

"I would go to school all day, and they would grade me on my classing," she said.

Mrs. Lisle also learned, through on-the-job training, everything there is to know about the gin itself.

"I used to make a hundred trips a day out there," she

said. As a result, Mrs. Lisle, who will be 80 in August, said, "that gin out there is just like the palm of my hand. I know everything in it and all about it."

In 54 years' time Mrs. Lisle has had numerous male employees working under her, but her unique position has never caused any problems.

"I've just had wonderful cooperation with the hands," she said. "They respected me and never questioned me."

Mrs. Lisle also praised the farmers who have been her customers all these years. Without their support and patronage, Mrs. Lisle would have had to find another job.

"The farmers were just wonderful," she said. "They looked over so many mistakes right at first. I depended on them then and they depend on me now."

Although Mrs. Lisle spent many long days and nights running the gin, she also had time for her four children and their activities. A housekeeper took care of the children while Mrs. Lisle worked, but when it came to extra-curricular activities at school, Mrs. Lisle was always on the front row.

"I don't ever miss anything in sports," she said. Her last grandson to play sports for Rule High School will graduate this year but that won't keep Mrs. Lisle home.

"I'll be just as interested in the local teams," she said.

Her support for the hometown kids hasn't gone unnoticed. In 1974, she was given a plaque by the high school for "continued support of Rule

athletic teams."

Mrs. Lisle also has been an active supporter of the school's agricultural program,

and one year she was voted "outstanding farmer" by the ag department. In the 1960s, Mrs. Lisle was made an honorary member of the Future Farmers of America chapter.

Other groups also have benefited from Mrs. Lisle's participation over the years. She is a member of the chamber of commerce, the Philadelphia Club and the Rule Garden Club. She was a charter member of the Eastern Star chapter and the Recreational Club. In 1967 the chamber of commerce voted her "Woman of the Year."

Mrs. Lisle is active in the First Baptist Church where

she is a member of the TEL Sunday School Class and has been on the finance and nominating committees.

"Everything the church has, I'm in it," she said.

Never Wanted to Quit

With four children, 11 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren, Mrs. Lisle isn't afraid her hands will be temptingly idle after retirement. She enjoys putting together scrapbooks, and she has plans for traveling.

Mrs. Lisle said she has just begun telling people she won't be back next year. Most of

them are shocked to learn she's retiring, she said.

"They think I've been sort of a martyr all these years," she said. But Mrs. Lisle disagrees. "I've enjoyed it so much, it's been so pleasant. I never wanted to quit."

Mrs. Lisle admits there aren't many women doing the job she is. In fact when she attended professional conventions over the years, she said, "I usually was in a class by myself."

But her philosophy about her career choice, which she would pass along to other women is, "if you have to do it, you can do it."



In the home of June and Leon Biffle, 84 players--Mrs. Bill (Lorene) Fouts, Audie (Tommye) Verner, Robert (Belle) Turner, J.A. (Ola Mae) Lisle, J.H. (Irene) Cloud, and Mrs. J.B. (Jessie) Parmley.



To Ruth, Mrs Lisle
James, Jean, June

March 8, 1981 - Mrs. Ola Mae Lisle was given a retirement tea in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Leon Biffle, with Mr. and Mrs. Sam Turner as co-hosts. Six ladies, Mrs. Jessie Parmely, Belle Turner, Irene Cloud, Tommie Verner, and Loren Fouts, members of a 84 Club that Mrs. Lisle helped to start some 40 years ago, also were in the houseparty.

The Lisle's children, Grandchildren and Great-Grandchildren were present. Children included, Mrs. Joe B. (Jean) Cloud, Mrs. Scott (Helen) White, Mrs. Lance (Helen) Pinkard and James A. Lisle, Jr.. Grandchildren included; Scotty and wife Kinney Gail White, daughters - Kimberly and Brandi; Joe Harold Cloud; Virginia (Westbrook) and husband Stephen, ~~Hataghus~~ daughter ~~Stephanie~~ Stephanie, ~~Carina~~ Carina, and Jennifer; James and wife Jo Ruth Lisle, sons and families, Jimmy and wife Rhonda Lisle, son - Justin, Mike and wife Thelia Lisle, and David Lisle

Mrs. June Biffle greeted the people at the door. Jean Cloud registered guests. James stood in line with his mother and greeted friends who came. June White served punch. Helen Pinkard and Jo Ruth Lisle directed the people to be served to the dining room table, from a 3 tiered cake. The first layer was white, the second layer was chocolate and the third layer was lemon. All three were covered with snowwhite icing and decorated in pink. The fourth tier was fresh flowers. The punch was pink. The serving appointments were crystal and gold. Everyone in the houseparty wore pink corsages.

The beautiful home of June and Leon Biffle was spacious and roomy and very interesting with objects of conversational pieces from their travels around the world, pieces of art, painting by their two daughters, June's collection of cups and mirrors, birds, small animals and all kinds of taxidermy art of preserving and stuffing skins of animals that she has been able to get.

Joe Harold Cloud took pictures of the party. Leon Biffle took movies of the people as they came. This is to be a part of a film he is making of the people of Rule.

As you came through the front door you could see on the wall greetings, white letters on a pink background (Mrs. James A. Lisle, Rule love s you).

Mrs. Lisle received a plaque for the 54 years of Gin business, also cards and gifts and pot plants.

It was a very cold cloudy March day, strong North wind with a hint of snow in the air, but over a hundred friends, customers and neighbors came. Others called, some from out of town called. Mr. and Mrs. Bill Ratliff of Haskell, neighbors of Jimmy and Rhonda, came. They had been invited by Justin, and when they came in they said, "We do not know you, but we know Justin, and we are glad to be here." Justin loves Margeret and Bill.



Mrs. J.A. (Ola Mae) Lisle



Mrs. J.A. (Ola Mae) Lisle



Helen, Mrs Lisle June, Jo Ruth + Jean



Mrs. June Biffle, and Joyce Turner

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TWIN CITIES NEWS

Serving the Progressive Communities of Rule and Rochester

Thursday, March 12 1981

DT



Mrs. James Lisle Honored

On March 8th from 2:00 - 4:00 Rule had a retirement reception for Mrs. James A. Lisle. It was held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Leon Biffle. Hostesses were;

Mrs. Bell Turner
Mrs. Bill Fouts
Mrs. Jessie Parmelly
Mrs. Irene Cloud
Mrs. Audie Vernor

Mrs. Sam Turner
Mrs. Leon Biffle
Mrs. Lisle wore a yellow dress and was presented with a pink carnation corsage. Each hostess wore a pink carnation pin-on. Mrs. Sam Turner baked and decorated a large three tier cake in pink and white. Pink punch and coffee were served with the cake.

Attending Mrs. Lisle were her children- James A. Lisle, Jr.- Mrs. Joe B. Cloud, Mrs June White, Mrs. Helen Pinkard, Many grandchildren and greatgrandchildren and 118 guests. She received many nice gifts. It was a beautiful occasion for a beautiful and deserving lady.



Mrs. J.A. (Ola Mae) Lisle



Mrs. J.A. (Ola Mae) Lisle

®



Mrs. Ola Mae Lisle



Mrs. Ola Mae Lisle
Mr

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