

SEVEN ISLANDS

A visit to the Seven Islands on the Ocmulgee River reveals the relics of days gone by. The road, now scarcely traveled, is narrow and grown up on either side by underbrush. A modern farmhouse now stands on the hill overlooking the river where once were the dwellings of the mill workers.

Just north of this residence are two of the only mill houses left standing, their immense hand-hewn rock chimneys bearing evidence of an earlier day. The houses are in fine state of preservation, proving the quality of the timbers used in their construction.

OLD BLACKSMITH'S SHOP

Perched on the hillside nearer the river is the old blacksmith's shop with its old time worn bellows, where nails were wrought by hand, as well as the tools used. Clinging to the steep hill, one side of the foundation is built of large stones fitted carefully together, and stands as a monument to the thoroughness of the builders of that day. The shutters of the windows were made secure with hand-wrought iron bars still in tact, although the roof of the shop has fallen in and the sills are soft heaps of decay.

OLD NUTTING HOUSE

A narrow pathway leads up the hill on the summit of which stands the old Nutting home overlooking the waters of the Ocmulgee. Here lived Charles R. Nutting, formerly of Vermont, the chief promoter and President of the Planters' Manufacturing Company. This old building of six or eight rooms is fast going to decay and a part of the roof has already fallen in.

A retaining wall, securely built and still standing, broken only by stone steps, holds in tact the yard from erosion. The house is a wooden dwelling, built after the New England type of architecture, with narrow stoop, side porch and dormer windows from which a fine view of the river was at that time possible, but now obstructed by trees. There is much to show that it was a substantial and comfortable home.

The doors of the old house are well preserved, and the structure of the chimneys, foundations and wall shows the highest type of masonry. It has withstood time and the elements, despite its age.

To the south of the residence was the vegetable garden and a hill-side terrace, the first, no doubt, in the county. Time and decay have left their marks on the

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old house, its roof falling in, the porches crumbling, the windows paneless, and its former occupants dead long years ago.

This old house harks back to the early days of Butts County when the first cotton factory in this section was built on the Ocmulgee River, and when the slaves toiling up its steep sides lifted the stones into place to the chanting and rhythm of their weird songs.

#### OLD GRIST MILL

South of the factory site, about two hundred yards, was the old grist mill, a substantially constructed wooden building erected in 1862, on the western bank of the river.

This is a large three-story structure built by Owen Garside, an Eastern contractor, employed by Colonel Nutting, with the help of other skilled workmen and slaves. It is one of the best built houses in the county. It rests on foundations of hand-hewn stones. The pillars underneath are about twenty feet high and are marvels of masonry. Everything is first class about it and shows no signs of its age.

It was said of Colonel Nutting that he never wanted to do the same job over, and there are many evidences around the old factory site to show that he believed "Whatever is worth doing at all, is worth doing well."

During the invasion of Sherman's army through the county in November, 1864, this old mill was spared for some reason. It was the only grist mill in the county left standing by the Yankees.

Inside the building are two high water marks on the Ocmulgee River. The highest mark reached by the water was Dec. 10, 1919, during a freshet when the river reached half way of the second story. The other high mark was in March, 1922. This mill was in operation and did a thriving business until about twenty years ago when it was abandoned.

#### The Old Saw Mill.

South of the grist mill, about thirty feet, is the saw mill the beams of which are of heart timber gotten out by hand and mortised together. Here, too, is no sign of decay. The massive hand-hewn timbers are in excellent state of preservation.

Numerous mill stones, worn by the constant grinding of years, are piled on the bank, and at the mill store are

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rusty and worn out machinery.

Once the scene of great activity, with groups of people coming and going to the cotton factory and the mill, today it is desolate looking, grown up with large trees and underbrush, its quiet broken only by the continuous sound of the shoals as the waters rush over the rocks.

#### OLD SLAVE QUARTERS

About one mile farther south, on a bluff overlooking the river, are the old slave quarters consisting of twelve well built, commodious houses arranged in the form of a rectangle of about one acre, with wide projecting roofs, quarried rock chimneys, and foundations of stone as at the mill.

There are only five of these houses left standing, the others having been torn down and moved away, but they are a reminder of another day under a different social system.

#### OLD MULE SHED

About one mile to the south of the mill still stands the Nutting mule shed in fair state of preservation. This structure, erected during the War between the States, faces southwest, with wings about one hundred feet each way with its quarried rock foundation, with the same troughs built of heavy oak timbers, mortised and primed together. It has stood for more than seventy years and justifies the builder's idea of doing things in a substantial way.

All this property is now owned by Walter Lamar of Macon, Ga.

## MILLS.

As the pioneers settled first along the streams where the land was fertile for the cultivation of their crops, and convenient to water power, mills were among the first industries established. Suitable sites were early located and roads were built to them, convenient to the settlers in that section.

The first mill mentioned in the county's records was Taylor's mill on the Yellow Water creek. Others were Daniel Beauchamp's mill on the Tussahaw creek, and Parham Lindsey's mill on the Ocmulgee River. All of these mills were in operation in 1826. The last named, near Seven Islands, was sold in 1861, to Charles A. Nutting. It was later known as Lamar's mill.

Branch's mill in west Butts, Levin Smith's mill between Jackson and Indian Springs, and Pinkard's mill on the Towaliga River were mentioned in 1827. Evans' mill was in existence in 1828. Hendrick's mill on the Tussahaw, and Robert Smith's mill were in operation in 1829. Others were Bailey's mill on Yellow Water creek, in 1831, Robinson's mill on Yellow Water and McKibben's mill in 1832; Heflin's mill in 1834, and Robert Humber's mill in 1836.

As the county became more thickly settled other mills were built and put in operation. Nathan B. Barnett had a mill on Tussahaw creek in 1839, or earlier; William Nolen owned a mill in the county in 1841. McMichael's mills on Yellow Water creek, known as the upper and lower mills, were in operation in 1843; Henly's mill on Indian Creek and Davis's mill on Little Sandy Creek were convenient to the settlers in 1843. Cook's mill was in the northern part of the county in 1844; Robert Lawson's mill on Sandy Creek in 1848; Fambrough's mill at High Shoals on the Towaliga River and Captain Price's mill, south of Jackson, were known in 1849. The latter was later known as Duke's mill, near the William F. Clark place south of Jackson. There is now no evidence of its use to the citizens of long ago.

James Newton

## PEOPLE.----Industrial Life

The early settlers of Butts County came from the older counties in the State, from Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas. Some came from Pennsylvania and States farther east. Many of them were sons of those who had received bounty lands in Georgia for service in the Revolution, and there were many Revolutionary soldiers themselves.

When the Indian lands between the Ocmulgee and Flint Rivers were ceded to the State of Georgia by the treaty at Indian Springs in 1821, and later surveyed and disposed of by lottery, these early settlers were seeking newer lands.

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The lots consisted of 202<sup>1</sup> acres each and grants were taken out by fortunate drawers at a cost of \$10 each. Many of the drawers then sold their lots at once, while others settled on them.

The first settlers came in wagons and carts drawn by horses and oxen, <sup>and in covered wagons.</sup> They came horseback and on foot. Many of them brought their personal possessions ready to set up housekeeping, their looms and spinning wheels, their cards and flax wheels, their tools and implements. They brought some furniture, although the pioneer's home was scantily furnished, their dishes, pewter, pots, kettles, and pans.

They had their chickens, ducks, geese, and peafowls. The long colorful feathers of the latter adorned many a home. The feathers of geese and ducks were made into pillows and beds.

Some settlers drove their cattle and sheep for the country to which they came was new. Most of them had slaves who helped to build their houses of logs and planks, with shutters for windows instead of glass panes. Such houses were crude though comfortable. They contained large open fireplaces where log fires heated the home and on which the cooking for the family was done. They cleared the land for plowing and planting.

The houses were swept with home-made brooms of sedge and and lighted at night with lightwood knots or home-made tallow candles. These were made by turning suet that had been tried into molds.

Every home had its ash-hopper. This was made by placing the ends of boards or planks, three or four feet in length, at an angle of about forty-five degrees to each other and closing up the sides, and setting <sup>on this</sup> an inclined plane. Bits of pottery, shucks and straw were then placed in the bottom of the container, into which ashes from hickory wood taken daily from the fireplace were poured. *This was done that the water might drip through.*

Over this heap of ashes in the hopper was poured water which found its way through the ashes and dripped down into a vessel placed for the purpose below the hopper. This lye, as it was called, was boiled with scraps of meat, bones and fat and converted into soap, which was a household necessity.

The settlers brought their rifles and shot guns both as a protection against the hostile Indians, wild beasts and other enemies, and also as a means of securing game. They made traps for the purpose also.

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\* Butter was made in the dairy and with the milk and cream was kept in a cool spring house or in the cellars of their homes.

Vegetables in profusion were raised in the gardens. They contained, besides, medicinal plants for the benefit of their families and slaves. They grew beds of tansy, h<sup>er</sup>hound, catnip, sage and mint.

They cultivated thyme, lavender and sweet basil to pack away with their bedding and linens. Their sweet odors always suggest days of long ago.

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Wild geese, turkeys, ducks and other game were plentiful. The streams abounded in trout, shad and the choicest fish. The early <sup>settlers</sup> appreciated the abundant supply of fish in the streams and took measures to protect it.

On Feb. 16, 1832, James Clayton, Jr., was appointed by the county commissioners to prevent obstructions to the free passage of fish in the Ocmulgee River and its branches. Serving before him was John M. Pearson, who had resigned. He attended to this matter for at the July term of court, 1833. James H. Stark, treasurer, paid James Clayton, Jr., \$4.50 for opening sluices in South and Yellow Rivers "for the free passage of fish."

Among the large planters in this section before the 1830's was Joel Bailey who lived in the southern part of the county, at Mountain Spout Spring plantation, and owned besides other large bodies of land.

He and William McIntosh built the McIntosh hotel, now known as the Varner house, at Indian Springs in 1823. On Jan. 23, 1826, at Indian Springs, Joel Bailey and his wife, Sarah, made a deed to John Humphries of a negro girl, Minta, sixteen years old. The consideration was \$400, and the deed was witnessed by Samuel P. Saunders. *Joel Bailey was Colonel of the 5th Regiment of the Bulloch County Militia, Mar. 28, 1826-1829.*

Joel Bailey owned nearly one hundred slaves and grew cotton extensively which he marketed in Milledgeville, Macon, Augusta, and Savannah. He operated, it ~~appeared~~ appears, on a large scale and borrowed large sums of money. There were other planters who marketed their products in distant places, necessitating long hauls.

Wild <sup>animals</sup> ~~beasts~~ inhabited the woods, swamps, and cane-brakes, and the wary hunter was ever mindful of sudden attack.

The settlers tilled the soil and grew tobacco, cotton, corn, wheat, and other grains. They raised cattle, hogs and sheep. They lived off the products of their farms. \*

Some necessary articles were purchased in the stores, but they were few and far away, and most of their needs were provided at home. They made their soap for general use from grease and lye. The latter, as has been described, was made ~~from hickory wood~~ by dripping water through the ashes from hickory wood. Every farm house had its ash-hopper. Hogs were raised and the meat was cured. Every farmhouse showed the meat hung high to the rafters that it might be smoked from hickory wood to produce the desired flavor.

Many farmers had ~~hives~~ bees and produced their own honey. The early settlers planted their orchards ~~near~~ near their homes in order to have their own fruit and ~~their~~ housewives dried peaches and apples for winter use.

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Insects that destroy fruits and vegetables at the present time were unknown then.

Most of the wealth of the country was in lands and slaves. Cotton was marketed in Augusta, Macon and Milledgeville. To the grist mills the farmers carried their wheat and corn to be ground into meal.

The first settlers traveled on foot, on horseback, in ox carts and wagons. The more prosperous had gigs, carriages and barouches. Mention of them is frequently made in the records, especially in the settlement of estates.

In the settlement of the estate of Arthur Atkinson on Aug. 15, 1843, Washington G. Atkinson, Administrator, sold to Samuel Hancock one gig and harness. On Sept. 9, 1836, a riding chair of Robert Bickerstaff, deceased, was sold at public sale.

In the settlement of Henry Duke's estate his barouche and carriage are mentioned. He was the father of Robert G., Weekly W., William M. and Samuel M. Duke. Henry Duke is buried in the Jackson cemetery and his epitaph states that he died Feb. 14, 1850, at the age 81 years. The granite slab is greatly worn by the elements.

Taxes in the early days were imposed on the wheels of the vehicles and that fact may have caused the larger use of the two-wheeled vehicles.

Oxen and ox carts were in general use on the farms and were considered almost indispensable in the cultivation of their crops. In the records one reads: "For love and affection I give to my son, Asa Smith, two yoke of oxen and a cart." such gifts in those days represented a parental benediction. How times have changed. With newer methods and inventions the modern youth would spurn such a lowly gift and be satisfied only with the latest model of a modern automobile.

The men and slaves worked the farms and gathered the crops from year to year. This routine was broken now and then by the men attending court in Jackson or the general muster of the ~~militia~~ district militia, which was a great time for getting together. At the latter members imbibed rather freely and what occurred was often aired in the various church conferences the minutes of which recorded their misdoings.

Such gatherings were the occasions for fights and many a violator of an unwritten law repentantly confessed his misdeeds to his church.

On one occasion when a matter ~~in the Towaliga Baptist Church~~ of misconduct was being considered at a conference in the Towaliga Baptist church, and there was some disagreement, a member left that body indignantly stating there was "as much fuss at the church as on the court ground." For this infraction of rules he was later turned out of the church.

*a Justice of the Inferior Court and a practicing physician,*



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The women and slaves carded, spun and wove the cloth out of which their clothes were made. Every farm house had its ~~spinning wheel~~ spinning wheel, flax wheel and loom. It was a busy world for there were few stores near from which to purchase their needs.

In the appraisements of estates the items listed show something of the industrial as well as the social and religious sides of the early settlers' lives.

In the appraisal of Adam Lawson's estate, Nov. 16, 1825, the following items were noted: one loom, two wheels, one carding machine, brick molds, woman's saddle, man's saddle, one Bible, one lot of decanters, etc. The estate of Elisha Blessett, May 16, 1825, shows that there were listed the following: ~~one flax wheel, one check reel, two cotton wheels, woman's saddle, one powder horn, twelve stands of bees, sheep, etc.~~ On Aug. 11, 1826, the following items were listed in the appraisal of the estate of Stephen G. Heard: two spinning wheels, one reel, pewter and tin vessels, one table and canister, lot of books, candle sticks, copperware, rifle and shot bag, pot rack and tongs, land and mill, etc. On Nov. 13, 1827, the estate of William Rhodes shows the following items: three spinning wheels, one flax wheel and reel, three decanters, twelve tumblers, two Bibles, one music book, one side saddle, one tea canister and waiter.

Wool as well as cotton was carded, spun and woven into cloth. For colors home-made dyes were obtained from roots, berries, herbs, and bark. Logwood was used for making black dye. Garments were made for wear and styles did not change as often as at the present. If they did, the people knew nothing about them and were just as happy without the knowledge. Garments were laid aside only when worn out or outgrown and not because they were out of fashion.

The country was new and had not become adjusted and it is no wonder that drinking was a common practice. Laws prohibiting the manufacture and sale of whiskey had not been put into effect. Stills were established in various parts of the county. In defining the metes and bounds of certain bodies of land, it was not uncommon for a still house to be mentioned as a fixed point from which measurements were given. (Deed Book E, p287) There was one lot in the eighth district of Butts County one acre of which was reserved, when the balance was sold, for use and benefit of the owner with the privilege of conducting the water to the still house.

Wines were common, too, and every household almost had its decanter, ~~glass~~ wine glasses, etc. Drinking was so common a practice that every guest in the home was offered something to drink by the host. Even preachers of the gospel were accustomed to accept the proffered glass without criticism or censure.

It was certainly not a violation of the civil or church laws. Drinking to excess has always been frowned upon and for such conduct members were expelled from the church when repeatedly practiced.

As illustrative of the drinking habit and its effects the story is told of one of the pioneers who, having solicited a much needed loan of an old friend, arranged to meet him in Jackson and consummate the deal. They met by appointment and, according to custom, indulged in social drinks.

Finally the old friend broached the subject of the loan, but the would-be borrower by this time had so risen in worldly possessions he no longer wanted to borrow money, but had plenty of it to lend.