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HISTORY OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, ALABAMA
TO 1860

By

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FOREWORD

I wish to express my appreciation to all who have aided in the collection of material for this thesis. I am especially indebted to Dr. T.P. Abernethy of the History Department of the University of Alabama for his wise counsel and personal guidance.

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CONTENTS

Chapter I

The Beginnings of Washington County

English territory -----	1
Spanish settlement -----	1
Disputed territory -----	3
Organization of Washington County -----	3
Early settlements -----	4

Chapter II

Washington County

Mississippi territory -----	6
First election in Washington County -----	6
Settlement of claims -----	6
First Courts -----	7
Indian factory -----	8
Indian troubles -----	10
Spanish hostilities -----	11
Patriotic Meeting -----	12
Division of Mississippi territory -----	12
Limiting boundary of Washington County -----	15

Chapter III

Economic Conditions

Indian trails -----	16
Spanish and American duties -----	17
First roads -----	17
Transportation in the county -----	20
Farming -----	21
Other occupations -----	23

Chapter IV

Social Life

Characteristics of early settlements -----	24
Typical homes -----	24
Home manufacturing-----	25
Amusements-----	26
Religious Activities -----	27
Schools ---	32

Chapter V

Old Towns

St. Stephens -----	34
Fort Stoddert -----	41
McIntosh Bluff -----	43
Wakefield -----	43
Bladon Springs -----	44
Deer Park -----	45
Map of St. Stephens -----	46
Map of Fort Stoddert -----	47

CHAPTER I

The Beginnings of Washington County

When Spain ceded Florida to Great Britain in 1763, the northern boundary was the thirty-first parallel. But Great Britain soon divided the territory into East Florida and West Florida and extended the northern boundary of West Florida to the parallel of thirty-two degrees and twenty-eight minutes.

At the close of the American Revolution, Spain recovered the Floridas. It was understood between the United States and Great Britain that if England kept the Floridas, she was to have to the parallel of thirty-two degrees, twenty-eight minutes. But if she had to cede it to Spain, the United States was to have to the thirty-first parallel. Great Britain signed the treaty of 1783 with Spain and did not define the northern boundary of Florida. Naturally, Spain insisted on the boundary held by England.¹ This situation left the United States and Spain in dispute.

In 1789, probably to check American aggressions and to gain the good will of the Indians, Spain built Fort St. Stephens on the Tombigbee River.² All the people were required to labor a certain number of days upon the public works, to take an oath of allegiance, and to assist in repelling the plundering Creeks. These Indians were contin-

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1. Hockett, Homer C., Political and Social History of the United States p. 164.
 2. Pickett, A.J., History of Alabama, p. 417.

ually stealing horses and other property of the settlers.

The commandant's house, the block house, and the church were made of frame work, clay, and plaster. The other houses were small frame buildings covered with cypress bark.

The houses of the French farmers, along the rivers, were built almost entirely of clay. Those of the Americans were constructed in the rudest manner, of small poles.¹

The garrison in 1791 was composed of one company under the command of Captain Lisro. By 1795, there was much activity in land grants about St. Stephens. The storekeeper, Francis Fontilla, occupied a tract adjoining the fort and twenty arpens.² about a league from the fort. Other Spanish grants were: Hoan Salivan twenty arpens, Adam Hollinger twenty, Julian Castro ten, Tobias Rheams twenty, George Brewer twenty, John Baker fifteen, William Powell twenty, Cornelius Rain ten, John Johnston twenty, Solomon Janson seven.³ Some of this land was on one side and some the other side of the Tombigbee River. Some of it was near the fort and some as much as forty miles away.

The conveyance of land began about 1798. William Trumbell sold his tract of about eight acres at St. Stephens to Nathan Blackwell. In the same district, Dominique Dolive sold the Sunflower place, which he acquired in 1788, to young Gaines for eighty dollars. Adam Hollinger sold his fifty acres front seven miles below St. Stephens for four hundred dollars cash.⁴

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1. Pickett, p. 417.
 2. An arpen is about 1.28 acres.
 3. Hamilton, Peter J., Colonial Mobile, p. 317.
 4. Ibid., p. 317.

Although Spain occupied Fort St. Stephens and controlled the country, the United States had not released her claims. By the treaty of 1795, she was victorious. Spain agreed to accept the thirty-first parallel as the northern boundary of Florida. But she put off having the line surveyed as long as possible.

The Mississippi Territory was created, April 1798. It extended from the Chattahoochee River to the Mississippi River between the parallels of thirty-one degrees and thirty-two degrees, twenty-eight minutes.¹

It now became necessary to define the boundary between the United States and Spain. April 1798, Andrew Ellicott began the surveying and completed his work, March 18, 1799.² The Spaniards were disappointed to learn that St. Stephens was in the Mississippi Territory. But they promptly surrendered when a detachment of American troops marched across from Natchez. Lieutenant John McClary received the fort for the United States.³ However, the troops did not remain long at St. Stephens. They moved down to Ward's Bluff which was near the line. Here they built Fort Stoddert.

Governor Sargent, of the Mississippi Territory, created Washington County, June 4, 1800. It was named for George Washington and was the first county of Alabama. At that time, the county was of an immense size. It included the territory from the Chattahoochee River on the east to the Pearl River on the west between the parallels of

1. Hamilton, p. 343.

2. Ibid., p. 294.

3. Ibid., p. 341.

thirty-one degrees and thirty-two degrees, twenty-eight minutes. It was eighty-eight miles from north to south and three hundred miles across from east to west. Sixteen counties of Mississippi and twenty-nine of Alabama have been wholly or partly formed from the original Washington.¹

The population at that time was 733 whites, 494 slaves, and 23 free negroes.²

The principal settlement on the Tombigbee River was at St. Stephens. But there were settlers scattered along the river for about seventy miles.

Above McIntosh Bluff, there lived the Danleys, McGrews, Kimbils, Barnetts, and Hannons. Below the Bluff were the Bates, Powells, and Lawrences.³

The Tensaw Settlement on the Alabama River was also in the new county. Among those living there were Halls, Byrnes, Mims, Kilcreas, Easties, Stedhams, and Linders.⁴

The settlers were by no means a homogeneous people. During the Revolutionary War English settlers from West Florida and refugees from Georgia and the Carolinas came. Here, the Tories found a place of refuge from the distractions and disasters of war. There also came the Scotch and English traders. Many of these married native women.⁵ Many wealthy and intelligent people of mixed blood lived along Little

1. Owen, F.M., MS Washington County.

2. Ninth Census of the United States.

3. Pickett, p. 417.

4. Ibid., p. 417; Tax List for Washington County 1802. Dep. of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

5. Abernethy, T.P., The Formative Period in Alabama 1815-1823, p. 9.

River. Here they found excellent pastures for their cattle.

The Yazoo sales of 1795 brought hundreds of Georgians into the Tombigbee region. They established themselves in the distant and isolated regions and helped to organize the wild frontier. But, along with the desirable settlers, were the criminals and lawbreakers. To these, the frontier offered an escape from the law.

1. Pickett, p. 499.

CHAPTER II

Washington County

In 1800, Mississippi Territory was composed of three counties, Adams, Pickering, and Washington. The arbitrary rule of the governor caused much dissatisfaction and the people made urgent appeals to the President. These, with the great increase in population, caused Congress to establish a second grade territorial government.¹ This meant that they were to be allowed a legislature. The assembly met at Natchez the first Monday in December 1800. There were nine representatives,² four from Adams, four from Pickering, and one from Washington.

On August 15 and 16, 1800, an election was held at McIntosh Bluff to choose a representative for Washington County. John McGrew received forty-seven votes and Joseph Thompson received twenty-five.³ But the election was rendered illegal as it was not held on the appointed day.⁴ By a second vote of the people Joseph Thompson was the successful candidate,⁵ but too late to attend the first assembly.

The United States first gave attention to straightening out the overlapping claims in the new territory. By the Treaty of Fort Confederation, in 1802, and the Mount Dexter Treaty, in 1805, the Choctaws released their claims to a considerable area in the Tombigbee region.

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1. Pickett, p. 461.
 2. Hamilton, p. 343.
 3. Returns of Washington County election 1800 Dep. of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.
 4. Returns of Washington County election 1800 Gov. Sargent to W. Carman, Sheriff. Oct. 2, 1800.
 5. Returns of Washington County election 1800 Sheriff Carman's Report. July 1, 1801 Ala. Dep. of Archives and History.

Yet, there were also the Yazoo Claims to be settled. For one and one-fourth million dollars, the United States bought these from Georgia in 1802.¹

Some of the Bigbee settlers were holding tracts of land either under Spanish, English, or Georgia grants. Congress appointed a board of commissioners composed of Joseph Chamberlain, Robert C. Nicholas, and Ephram Kirby, at St. Stephens to consider claims under these grants. In February, 1804, they began investigating the claims in the district eastward from the Pearl River. They discontinued December, 1805, having recorded two hundred seventy-six claims.² These the President ratified.

There were other settlers living on land without a title of any kind. For these, the government also made provision. Each inhabitant who was living on public land about the time of Ellicott's survey was allowed a section of land. Those who came just before the board of commissioners was established received one-fourth section.³ The land office at St. Stephens was not established until 1807. Although the government tried to sell the acreage at a reasonable price, there was much speculation. In 1818 and 1819, some of the land near St. Stephens sold for as much as sixty or seventy dollars an acre.⁴

The first civil court of Washington County was held at McIntosh in 1803.⁵ John Caller, Cornelius Rain, and John Johnston presided. They had no code of laws, but decided in accordance with the laws of

1. Hamilton, p. 379.

2. Pickett, p. 474.

3. Ibid., p. 474.

4. Ball, T.H., Clark County Alabama and its Surroundings, p. 677.

5. Brewer, W., Alabama: Her History Resources and War Records, p. 574.

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 their native states. Naturally, there was much difference of opinion.

In 1801, a petition to the assembly requested that all the public buildings be erected at St. Stephens. There was considerable protest against it from the rest of the county. They declared it would be too expensive for the people of the lower and middle part of the county. St. Stephens lost its petition. The court house was located, in 1804, at Wakefield, and David Kerr was the first judge.

The distance from the Tombigbee settlement to Natchez was so great that Congress erected a new judicial district. Harry Toulmin was appointed first United States judge of the Tombigbee district. Judge Toulmin is remembered as the compiler of the Mississippi Territorial laws of 1807, the Alabama laws of 1823, and for his fourteen years service as federal judge.

In 1803, the United States established an Indian factory at St. Stephens. Joseph Chambers was placed in charge. The purpose of the factory was to maintain friendly relations between the Indians and the Americans. The parsonage of the old Spanish church, built in 1789, was used as the skin house and the block house as the government store.

The government store kept a stock of Indian trinkets, blankets, iron tools, ploughs, arms, and ammunition. These they exchanged for deer, beaver, otter, bear, fox, and raccoon skins, bear's oil, honey,

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1. Pickett, p. 474.
 2. Return of Washington County election 1800. Protest of Joseph Thompson to House of Rep. Ala. Dep. of Archives and History.
 3. Washington County Court Records, Chatom, Ala.
 4. Pickett, p. 481.
 5. Hamilton p. 341.
 6. Pickett, p. 505.

1

beeswax, bacon, ground nuts, and tobacco.

About a month after Chambers started business, the store was broken open. A trunk containing all his money, both public and private, all his clothes, and all his papers, was stolen. Later, it was found in the mouth of a creek about a mile from the fort. It had been sunk in ten feet of water but had not been opened. However, the papers were very wet and some were injured. The sentinel was suspected but the fact could not be established.

2

The factory had much competition from the firm of Panton and Leslie at Mobile and Pensacola. Of course, the firm paid no duties on goods imported and neither did the traders pay on their importations into the United States. Thus it had a distinct advantage over the factory at St. Stephens. It was suggested that a custom house be established at Fort Stoddert and that duties be charged on the goods imported from the Spanish territory.

3

The Tombigbee settlers disliked to have the trading house located in their settlement. The Indians coming in caused too much disturbance. The officials would not agree that the trading house caused more disturbances. But they believed it would be to the interest of both the United States and the Choctaws if the trading house was moved within the Indian limits.

4

In 1805, George S. Gaines came down as the assistant factor and

1. Chambers Letters, Joseph Chambers to William Irvin June 1, 1803; Chambers to Irvin Oct. 9, 1803; William Cocke to Cato West 1803 in Cato West's Letters.
2. Chambers Letters, Joseph Chambers to William Irvin June 1, 1803.
3. Ibid., June 1, 1803.
4. Dinsmore Letters, Silas Dinsmore to Gov. of Miss. Ter. May 28, 1805; Chambers Letters, Joseph Chambers to Gov. Claiborne Aug. 8, 1803.

in 1807 he became the principal factor. He had an assistant clerk and interpreter. Mr. Gaines often came in collision with the revenue authorities of Mobile. They exacted duties and delayed his vessels. Finally, to avoid payment of these duties, the Government instructed him to obtain the consent of the Chickasaws for a road through their country. He failed to get the use of a road, but was allowed the use of a ¹bridle path. No doubt the Indian factory lessened the Spanish influence and prevented the Choctaws' joining with the Creeks in war.

But there were many things which brought about friction between the whites and Indians. Probably one of the greatest causes of trouble was the selling of whiskey to the Indians. Many of the chiefs realized the bad effects of strong drink and protested to the President ²against its sale. The Government gave strict regulations to the agents. No trader who carried strong drink was to be allowed in the Indian country. Silas Dinsmore worked tirelessly to keep peace in the Choctaw country. Once when he was complaining to the chiefs about robberies and other disorders, they admitted that they disapproved of these happenings, but said they were powerless to prevent them. Mr. Dinsmore suggested sending soldiers to help them maintain order. At this suggestion, they requested him to give them a chance. The Indians at once formed societies of different families for the purpose ³of recovering the stolen goods and punishing the offenders.

1. Pickett, p. 506.

2. Dinsmore Letters, Henry Dearborn to Silas Dinsmore Sept. 14, 1802.

3. Ibid., Silas Dinsmore to Gov. Claiborne Aug. 21, 1803.

Again, when the Indians threatened revenge for the murder of a relative, Dinsmore told them that if a white man was killed he would cut off all their supplies until the guilty person was punished. The Indians assured him that no innocent man should suffer.

Many times he offered to pay for horses that had been stolen. Once he even suggested paying the relative of a slain Indian four hundred fifty dollars. These were some of the methods he used to prevent mischief.

The Creek Indians were becoming horrified by the coming of so many settlers. Tecumseh made a tour through the country exciting the Indians to war. A group of Creeks visited the trading house at St. Stephens and demanded goods on a credit. They also let it be known that they planned an attack on the factory. But Pushmataha influenced the Choctaws to join the whites. Thus the Tombigbee settlers were saved the ravages that other settlements had to endure. Of course, there was much excitement as massacres occurred in different parts of the country. A number of blockhouses were built and settlers came to them for protection.

However, Indian troubles were not the only cause of unrest in the country. The Spaniards were continually intriguing with the Indians and driving away American cattle. But in 1806, when they closed the Mobile port to Americans, the settlers were ready to fight.

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1. Dinsmore Letters, Silas Dinsmore to Cato West May 17, 1804.
 2. Ibid., Silas Dinsmore to Governor Claiborne.
 3. Pickett, p. 548.
 4. Gov. Williams Letters, Gov. Williams to Joseph Chamberlain Mar. 27, 1806; John Callier to Thomas Williams June 24, 1805.

Governor Williams feared that they would attempt to force their way
¹
 to Mobile. In fact, plans were made to capture the town and at
 another time plans were made for burning it. But Judge Harry Toul-
²
 min used his influence against the projects and they were postponed.
 Governor Williams made several requests to the Federal Government for
³
 arms and ammunition. He wished to be prepared if a crisis came.

The English also had their share in causing excitement in the
 Tombigbee territory. The attack of the British war vessel Leopard on
 the United States frigate Chesapeake brought forth a wave of patriot-
 ism. The settlers were indeed becoming Americanized as was proved by
 their patriotic resolutions. September 8, 1807, the people of Wash-
 ington County met at the court house in Wakefield and pledged their
⁴
 support to the United States. Apparently, they had forgotten all
 their grievances against the government. Heretofore they felt that
 the government disregarded the matter of their protection against the
 Indians and the importance of Mobile Port. Even now, Judge Toulmin
 doubted the ardor of public sentiment since local discouragement bore
 so heavily on the minds of the people.

Very early the Tombigbee settlers felt that the Mississippi set-
 tlers had a distinct advantage over them. First, it was a great dis-
 tance to Natchez. Second, their population was greater and they were
 consequently able to swing more legislation in their favor than could

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1. Gov. Williams Letters, Gov. Williams to Sec. of State James Madison April 1, 1806.
 2. Toulmin Letters, Harry Toulmin to Cowles Meade Aug. 16, 1806.
 3. Gov. Williams Letters, Gov. Williams to Henry Dearborn Feb. 13, 1806.
 4. Toulmin Letters, Copy of the resolution forwarded to the President, signed: James Callier, Chairman, Thos. Malone Secretary.

the Tombigbee settlers.

As early as 1803, the Tombigbeeans petitioned for a division of the territory. Again, in 1809, they sent another petition to the Federal Government. Of course, the Mississippians were opposed to division. They wished to come into the union as one state. In 1812, the House passed a bill for the admission of the undivided territory. But the Senate favored division and suggested that the bill be postponed until the next session. By 1815, the situation had been greatly changed. The extensive Indian cessions had opened larger areas for settlement. Now the Tombigbeeans looked forward to a greater population and they opposed division. They not only had visions of great political power, but also anticipated the removal of the capital to St. Stephens. The Natchez settlers saw the trend of things and they now advocated division. The Tombigbee settlers held meetings to protest against dividing the territory. A convention of delegates from the different counties met at John Ford's house on the Pearl River. Judge Harry Toulmin and Sam Dale were there as delegates and helped formulate resolutions against division. Judge Toulmin was selected to carry the resolutions to Congress.

In December, 1816, the House announced in favor of division. Judge Toulmin immediately accepted this and began to work for a favorable boundary line. He was not able to secure his proposed line but it was somewhat better than the one suggested by Mr. Lattimore.

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1. Abernethy, T.P., The Formative Period in Alabama, p. 33.
 2. Ibid., p. 35.
 3. Ibid., p. 36.
 4. Moore, A.B., History of Alabama and Her People, pp. 131-132.

The accepted line ran due north from the Gulf of Mexico to the north west corner of Washington, and thence due north to where Bear Creek flows into the Tennessee, then along the course of that river to the Tennessee line.¹

Alabama Territory was created by an act of Congress March 3, 1817. There were only seven counties - Washington, Baldwin, Madison, Mobile, Clark, Limestone, and Lauderdale - in the new territory.² The laws of the Mississippi territory were to be effective until changed by the assembly. The officers of the old government for the eastern district were to hold their positions until replaced. William Wyatt Bibb of Georgia was appointed Governor.³

The first legislature of the Alabama territory met at St. Stephens January 19, 1818. At this time Governor Bibb brought to the serious attention of the assembly the petition of the Mississippi Constitutional Convention. They were petitioning Congress to make the Tombigbee River the eastern boundary of their state.⁴ But the petition was of no avail. The boundary remained as fixed.

The population had grown so rapidly that the second session of the legislature, December 1818, petitioned Congress to admit it into the union. A new site was selected for the capital on the Cahaba River. With the removal of the capital from St. Stephens, Washington County ceased to be an important center. Many of its most influential citizens

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1. Abernathy, p. 37.
 2. Pickett, p. 614.
 3. Abernathy, p. 38.
 4. Pickett, p. 615.

moved away. On March 2, 1819, Congress passed an enabling act authorizing the people to frame a constitution for Alabama. Israel Pickens and Henry Hitchcock represented Washington County at the convention in Huntsville.¹

The vast area that composed Washington County, in 1800, did not long remain. As the population increased new counties were organized. As early as 1809 the county began to lose territory. First Baldwin took a slice off the south and then Clark got all of the county east of the Tombigbee River.² Other counties were created on the west side also, and it lost the territory to the Pearl River. In 1820, Baldwin County was reorganized and Washington's present southern boundary was fixed. When Choctaw County was organized, in 1847, Washington lost territory on the north and its present northern boundary was fixed.

The new Washington County was only thirty-eight miles long and its width varied from twenty-two to thirty-two miles. It had a total area of one thousand seventy square miles or 684,800 acres.³ As the size of the county changed, the court house was moved. About 1815, it went to Barrytown, now in Choctaw County. When that county was organized, the court house came down to what is known as "Old Washington Courthouse". This place was about eighteen miles northwest of St. Stephens. Here the court house was burned after a few years. Then St. Stephens realized its dream as the court house was built there.⁴

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1. Pickett, p. 617.
 2. Owen, T.M., MS. Washington County Copies of Acts of Legislature.
 3. Hurst, Lewis A., Soil Survey of Washington County, Alabama, p. 5.
 4. Private Conversation with Mr. Henry Atchison; Owen, T.M., MS. Washington County Copies of Acts of Legislature.

CHAPTER III

Economic Conditions

As early as 1777, emigrants began coming over the Indian trails¹ into the Tombigbee Country. Often they swam or forded the streams, but sometimes they crossed on "raccoon bridges" or on rafts made of reeds or logs.² They usually camped in the woods at night. Many times they were robbed by the Indians and sometimes they were murdered.

Probably the most settlers came by the trails of the south-east³ through the Creek Country. Some came in by the trails of the north-east through the Cherokee Country. A few came down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to Natchez, and then across to the Tombigbee. A party from North Carolina had considerable trouble on the route from the north-east. They crossed the Blue Ridge in wagons and came down into the Tennessee Valley. Here they constructed flat boats and floated down the river to Muscle Shoals. From this point, they started on foot to the Tombigbee settlements. When they reached Cotton Gin Port, two canoes were built. Their only tools were axes and grubbing hoes, so the workmanship was very crude. When the boats were finished, they were connected by a platform of canes. Some of the men and the horses went by land towards St. Stephens. The rest of the party and the provisions started down the river in the canoes. About

1. Bartram, William, The Travels of William Bartram, p. 352.
2. Pickett, p. 423.
3. Ibid., p. 486.

two miles down stream their craft struck a log and was wrecked. One¹ white child and twenty-one negroes were drowned and they lost all their provisions. Finally after one hundred twenty days weary travel,² they reached Washington County, in 1802.

Once the people were in this county they were isolated from all other Americans. The Choctaws separated them from the Mississippi, the Cherokees separated them from the Tennessee, the Creeks separated them from Georgia and the Spaniards occupied Mobile. There were no roads and the Spaniards prevented their free use of the Tombigbee. They detained the American ships and charged twelve and one-half per cent ad valorem on all goods imported or exported by Mobile River. Through the joint operation of the Spanish custom house at Mobile and the American at Fort Stoddert, the people along the Tombigbee were often obliged to pay from forty-two to forty-seven per cent ad valor-³am. These duties bore very heavily upon the frontiersmen. They paid sixteen dollars per barrel for Kentucky flour while at the same time⁴ their fellow citizens near Natchez paid only four dollars. To them, it seemed that the United States Government cared little about their needs.

There were only two things that United States could do about the Spanish duties at Mobile. One was to protest against them, and the other was to build roads to prevent the American trade passing through the Spanish port. The first did no good so the government started a

1. There were sixty negroes in the party.

2. Pickett, p. 466.

3. Toulmin Letters, Resolutions forwarded to the President from Wash.Co.

4. Pickett, p. 503.

road project.

in 1805, the Federal Government obtained from a delegation of Creeks at Washington City the right to a horse path through their country. The road extended from Ocmulgee River in Georgia to Min's Ferry on the Alabama and thence to St. Stephens on the Tombigbee River. The path was called the "Three Chopped Way" because three blazes were cut on the trees to mark its course. The chiefs and warriors were to establish bridges, ferries, and houses of entertainment along the way. The Indian agent, Colonel Hawkins, was to regulate the ferriage and price of entertainment. This was necessary as unreasonable rates were being charged. When Lorenzo Dow came through this country, in 1803, he was charged one dollar and fifty cents at one place and eleven shillings at another place for a night's lodging.

In 1807, this road was extended from St. Stephens to Natchez. One ferry was opened on the Tombigbee above St. Stephens and another one was opened on the Alabama above Little River.

Many funny incidents happened in connection with these ferries. Once while Mr. McGrew kept the ferry above St. Stephens, this incident occurred. One very cold morning a horn blew for the flat on the east side of the river and two boys carried it across. There they found an old man in a covered wagon. Nearing the west bank the boys decided to have some fun. They asked the old man if he could swim.

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1. Transactions of Alabama Historical Society, (1898) Vol. II p. 175
"Early Roads in Alabama" by Peter J. Hamilton.
 2. Pickett, p. 486.
 3. Hamilton, P.J., "Early Roads in Alabama", p. 51.
 4. Hamilton, P.J., Colonial Mobile, p. 348.

When he replied that he could they told him to jump over board. To their surprise, the curtain raised and his wife pointed a double-barrel flint and steel shot gun directly at them. Then came her command, "You both go overboard and swim. Land the flat and drive on but ¹ pay nothing".

Another horse path, Gaines road, was built through the Cherokee Country. It extended from Colbert's Ferry on the Tennessee to Peachland's upon the Tombigbee. ²

However, all of these roads were mere bridle paths for horsemen and pack-horses. The oldest vehicle brought into the new country was a rolling hogshead. It was packed with the travelers goods and shafts were attached to the ends. To this was usually hitched a horse but ³ sometimes an ox was used. The common pack-horses were small but hardy. They were fitted with a peculiar saddle on which they usually carried three sixty pound bundles. Two of these were placed across the saddle and a third was placed in it. The entire pack was covered with skins to keep off the rain. Taffia was carried in kegs and poultry was carried in cages made of reeds. The pack-horseman usually drove about ten ⁴ ponies but he did not use a line.

If a wild young horse refused to take his load, the pack-horseman took the tip end of the pony's ear between his teeth and pinched ⁵ it. Instantly the horse would stand perfectly still until loaded. These pack trains traveled about twenty-five miles per day. At night

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1. Conversation with Mr. Bob Hooks, Toinette, Ala.
 2. Pickett, p. 506.
 3. Hamilton, p. 468.
 4. Pickett, p. 422
 5. Bartram, p. 305.

the ponies were unloaded, belled, and turned loose to get their food.

In 1811, the Creeks granted a road to the settlers. Lieutenant Luckett and a party of soldiers widened the "Three Chopped Way" and it became known as the Federal Road.¹ Now settlers began coming in steady streams to the new country.

The United States got control of Mobile in 1813. Transportation was now more satisfactory on the Tombigbee and it became almost the only means of travel for Washington County. Barges from forty to fifty feet in length ran on the river. They were propelled by long poles furnished at one end with a spike and at the other end with a hook.² George S. Gaines has been quoted as saying that the first steamboat was built at St. Stephens by Messrs. Dearing. The boat was not satisfactory, however, as it was not strong enough to travel against the current.³ The exact date for the building is not known, but as the St. Stephens Steamboat Company was organized in 1818, it must have been about that time. However, as late as 1820 nearly all river transportation was on barges or flat boats.⁴ Flat boat travel was very slow. When Mr. Goldthwaite made his first trip from Mobile to Montgomery on a flat boat it took three months.

The Cotton Plant was the first steamboat to ascend the upper Tombigbee. In 1823, it made its famous trip to Columbus and back to Mobile in thirteen days. The greater part of the shipping was done by

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1. Pickett, p. 510.
 2. Ball, T.H., Clark County Alabama and its Surroundings, p. 174.
 3. Hamilton, p. 471.
 4. Ball, p. 177.

the river, but boats were scarce and other means were provided. Often cotton was hauled on wagons to Mobile. The cotton was sold and a year's provisions were brought home. Cattle, hogs, geese, and turkeys were driven seventy-five miles to the Mobile market.¹

The roads in the country were of the poorest kind and most of the travel was done on horseback. It was not unusual for a man to ride fifteen miles to mill.

The first railroad of the country was the Mobile and Ohio. It was built about 1852, on the western side of the county. The company received fifteen whole sections of land and a part of six other sections in Washington County.² This was quite an addition to the county's transportation facilities and had a tendency to cause settlement on the western side.

Most of the people of the county lived in the east. The nearness to transportation facilities was one reason for this, but there was also another reason. Along the river the land was fertile, but the upland was of an inferior quality. It produced little besides pitch pine and wire grass.³ The topography of the county was varied. It ranged from the low flat first bottom land of the Tombigbee River and smaller streams on the east, through the undulating and choppy uplands in the southern and central parts, to the hilly section of the northern part.⁴ Thus the county would sustain two very distinct types of settlement.

As early as 1791, the settlers along the Tombigbee were engaged

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1. Conversation with Mr. W.W. Warren, Chatom, Ala. and Mr. Henry Atchison, Leroy, Ala.
 2. Alabama State Tract Book for Washington County.
 3. Hamilton, p. 318.
 4. Soil Survey of Washington County, Alabama, by U.S. Dep. of Agr. p. 5.

in the cultivation of indigo and the burning of tar.¹ The indigo was soon abandoned for cotton. In October 1802, Lyons and Barnett of Georgia built a gin for the Pierce Brothers at the boat yard on Lake Tensaw. They also built another at McIntosh Bluff. All of their tools, gins, saws, and other material was brought from Georgia on pack-horses.² The gins required four men and several horses to operate them and they ginned two bales of cotton per day.³ In 1807 cotton gin receipts were made legal tender and passed as domestic bills of exchange.⁴

Many farmers in 1802, owned several thousand acres of land, some owned much smaller tracts, and others did not own any.⁵ From 1800 to 1860, the slaves constituted an average of forty-eight per cent of the population. But in 1860 fifty-three per cent of the population were slaves.⁶ Some of the farmers owned as many as forty-four slaves in 1805, and at the beginning of the Civil War, Mr. Atchison owned one hundred slaves. These farmers raised a variety of things such as cotton, corn, potatoes, rice, oats, vegetables and stock. In 1850, there were nine hundred eighty-eight bales of cotton ginned in the county, and in 1860, there were three thousand four hundred forty-nine bales ginned.⁷ This amount was grown in a very small portion of the county.

As has already been seen, the southern and central part of the county was not well suited for farming. Here lived large stock farmers

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1. Pickett, p. 417.
 2. *Ibid.*, p. 469.
 3. Conversation with Mr. Henry Atchison.
 4. Pickett, p. 503.
 5. Tax Records of Washington County.
 6. Ninth U.S. Census Report.
 7. Seventh and Eighth U.S. Census Report.

but they were not numerous. In this section, one could ride for a day and see only one house. These farmers kept cattle, hogs, and sheep ¹ on the open range. There were so many wolves that much precaution had to be taken for the safety of the stock. Some say, after the turpentine business started, the white shining trees caused the wolves to leave. Others say the coming of the train through the country caused it. Probably both had an effect. Also the coming of more people had a tendency to make them hunt a more secluded spot.

Numbers of people were engaged in the spar business. Countless ² tall trees were hewn and shipped to Mobile. Lumbering also became an important occupation of the people. During the fifties the turpentine work was started. The pines were boxed and chipped. When the boxes were full of sap, it was emptied into barrels and hauled to the still where it was distilled into turpentine. Resin was a valuable by-product of the distillation. This work became more important each year. In 1859, the manufactures of the county were valued at \$7,350. This included the manufactured products of saw mills, distilleries, and ³ breweries.

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1. The number of live stock in the county in 1850 was: horses 639, mules 259, milch cows 4,055, oxen 382, other cattle 8,737, sheep 2,214, swine 11, 247. Value of live stock \$169,803, value of animals slaughtered \$7,726. 1860: horses 685, mules 507, milch cows 2,090, oxen 409, other cattle 11, 597, sheep 1, 796, swine 15,314. Value of live stock \$295,576, value of animals slaughtered \$39,579.
 2. Conversation with Mr. Hooks.
 3. Tax Record of Washington County Alabama.

CHAPTER IV

Social Life

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Settlers of different nationalities, with English predominating, came into the country prior to the time of the American claims. They brought all their possessions in a rolling hogshead or on pack-horses. With these early settlers, came a few women, but their numbers were small. Many of the traders married Indians. All settled in the wild country and more or less adopted savage customs. They had no laws, magistrates, or any kind of governmental organization.

Even after the county was organized, society was wild and wicked. The settlement was six or eight days travel from their territorial capital at Natchez. There was not much to restrain vice or encourage virtue. Robbers and horse thieves were a common nuisance. Often the sheriff had to call on the militia to help him discharge the duties of his office. Many times officers were dismissed because of drunkenness, bad character, or failure to perform their duty. Some officers resigned because of irregularity and partiality in the county courts.

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The typical home of these people was a log house covered with four-foot boards. The rafters were usually fastened with wooden pegs, but sometimes square nails were used. The chimney was made of logs and mud. The fire place was about six feet long. To one side of it,

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1. West, Amos, History of Methodism in Alabama, p. 35.
 2. Toulmin Letters, Harry Toulmin to Governor Williams, June 5, 1806.
 3. Callier Letters, Theo Brightwell, Sheriff of Washington County to John Callier, June 4, 1807.
 4. Ibid., John Callier to Cato West, June 4, 1807; West Letters, John Brewer to Cato West, Nov. 17, 1804.

was placed a small window with a wooden shutter. The floors of the cabins were either dirt or puncheon. Most of these cabins were built near a spring of water, but some of the settlers dug wells and got water with a sweep pole.

Their furniture was only the bare necessities and this was usually home-made. The bedstead was a wooden frame held together by ropes. On this crude bed, was placed a grass mattress. Their chairs were usually three-legged stools. The other article of furniture was a roughly made table which was used for many purposes.

Many things were hung around the walls such as bags of seeds, strings of red pepper, and clothes. Eggs were placed in cracks between the logs. The gun was always on a rack over the front door and the saddles were hung on the front porch.¹

All the cooking was done on the big fire place. The pots were hung on cranes over the fire and the skillet was placed on the coals. In these utensils, most of the food was cooked except such as potatoes and corn, which were roasted in the ashes.

The rude log cabins were the homes of most of the early settlers and they could still be seen as late as 1860. The rich farmers of the river plantations and most of the people of St. Stephens had better homes. These people owned negroes, and had many servants about the house, but the people farther back in the country were poor and did their own work.²

The women usually made all of their clothes. First they spun the

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1. Conversation with Mrs. M.L. Smith.
 2. Conversation with Mrs. Sam Simison.

cotton into thread, and then the thread was dyed. The dyeing was done with hickory bark, red oak bark, or dye rocks. The dye was set with copperas. Then the threads were woven into cloth.

Not only their clothes but also their hats and shoes were made at home. The hats were made of palmetto and shucks. Mr. Green Peevy had the reputation of making good hats. Sometimes beaverskins were sent to the factory to be made into hats. The Sunday shoes were made of deer and goatskins and the everyday shoes were made of cow-hides. It took a whole year to tan the leather. The pegs for tacking the shoes were made of maple. The maple log was sawed into blocks and then chipped into pegs. The deerskins were used to make strings. Shoemaking was a long, tedious process, but the shoes lasted well.

At the blacksmith's shop, wagons, plows, and other tools for the farmer were made. Often a slave-owner had one slave trained to do the iron work and another to do the wood work.

But these people did not spend all of their life in drudgery and work. There were the house raisings, log rollings, corn huskings, and quilting parties to which all the people for miles around were invited. When the day's work was finished, a dance usually followed. These gatherings were gala occasions. There was always drinking, but the whiskey was pure and not many got drunk.

Other amusements were shooting matches and horse racings. In the shooting matches, the price was fixed on a beef. This amount was divided into chances. The lucky shot won the beef. There was a race track about

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1. Conversation with Mrs. M.L. Smith.
 2. Conversation with Mr. Henry Atchison.
 3. Conversation with Mr. Sam Simison.

eight miles north of St. Stephens. Sometimes even the plow horses entered the races. ¹ Such racing was indeed odd, but it afforded much fun for the people.

Nothing offered greater sport for the men than hunting. Deer, turkeys, wolves, bears, and other game were plentiful. Many devices were improvised by the hunter to capture these wild animals. Wolves were often lured into heavy pole pens. Once he walked in, a trap door closed and he was there to stay. Again, pieces of meat would be hung about five feet high on a tree trunk. When the wolf jumped for the meat, he hung his paws on sharp wires as he came down and there he would hang until the hunter came. The mournful howls always let the hunter know when he had captured his prey. Honey was put in hollow trees for the bears. A wire was fixed so that they could put their heads into the hollow but could not take them out. The deer had a sly way of jumping into the cornfields. The places where they jumped the fence were located and sharp knife blades were placed along the rails. The deer would barely go over the top of the fence and would always get cut. Then the hunter could track it by the blood. ²

Many people grew up in this new country without ever seeing a preacher. In 1803, the first protestant preacher, Lorenzo Dow, came into the country. He was a Methodist, but the Methodist Church was not responsible for his coming. He preached in the Tensaw and Tombigbee settlements. ³ At several different times, he came through the

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1. Conversation with Mr. Atchison.
 2. Conversations with Mr. Ed. Long and Mr. Henry Atchison.
 3. West, p. 27.

country and warned the people to turn from the error of their ways. There was little evidence that his preaching ever accomplished much and he never attempted to organize a church. The people did not care greatly about hearing sermons, and some of them were not even hospitable. Once while in the Tombigbee settlement, Lorenzo Dow and a friend stopped at a house four miles from St. Stephens. They had been invited by the man, but when they started to leave, his wife made a heavy charge. They paid it and Dow's companion said, "Tell your husband never any more to invite travelers to be welcome for his wife to extort".¹

At the South Carolina Conference, in 1807, Matthew P. Sturdevant² volunteered to go to the Bigbee Country as a missionary. When he came into the country, in 1808, he found nothing in the way of a church organization. Occasionally he found a person who had been a member of a church whence he came. About 1809, he organized in the Tombigbee settlement the first Methodist Church of Alabama. Sturdevant's report to the conference, Dec. 23, 1809, showed seventy-three whites and fifteen colored members in the society on the Tombigbee. Thus, the first list of members of the Methodist Church had in it the names of fifteen slaves. There was not a time from 1809 to 1865 that the church did not have slaves as members of their communion.³

Mr. Sturdevant was able in prayer, powerful in exhortation, and good in singing. His sermons were in the nature of a warning to the

1. West, p. 28.

2. Ibid., p. 35.

3. Ibid., p. 43. History of the State of Alabama, p. 45.

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people to flee from the wrath to come. However, he received little support, either financial or spiritual. The people were worldly and could not be impressed with the benefits of religion.

The Baptists began preaching in the country in 1810. The first church, Bassett's Creek Church, was organized March 31, 1810. There were twenty members at its organization.

A church, named Oaktuppa, was organized near the Mississippi line.² Reverend Joseph McGee and Joseph Parker established this church. When Clark and Sumter counties were organized, Washington County lost both these churches.

All the first churches were organized in private homes. Here the community worshipped until a meeting house was built. Timber grew in abundance, but tools for cutting trees and cleaving timbers were scarce. Naturally under such conditions, a rough log church was constructed. The house was built flat upon the ground without even a pretense of a floor. It was covered with rough slab. The doors and windows had no shutters. The seats were made of split logs supported by forks driven into the ground.³ These places of worship were so uncomfortable that the preacher and his congregation would often go to the grove. Many times a bush arbor was built out in the woods. Here the people would listen for hours to the sermon. Soon after the beginning of a sermon, the preacher would pitch his voice high and continue throughout the discourse in a sing-song monotone. On a still night he could be heard

1. West, p. 48.

2. Riley, B.F., History of Baptists of Alabama, p. 15.

3. Ibid., p. 16.

more than two miles away. Many of the ministers were uneducated, but all were diligent students of the Bible. As a class the Baptist preachers were intolerant of denominational opposition.

There were much crime and vice in the country and public sentiment was unable to check it. Judging from the preacher's sermons, he endeavored to accomplish through the conscience that which the law could not achieve through fear of punishment.¹

The preacher usually had a parish of three or four churches. At these he held services once a month. On Saturday there was a short sermon and a conference. Only the most loyal members attended this service. The attendance on Sunday was much better. There were no organs in the churches and the songs were not written to music. After the preacher lined the hymns in long and short meter, all the congregation sang.² When the two sermons had been preached, the minister's work was over until the next appointment. Probably, he might help settle the difficulty between two of his members. Sometimes he visited a few homes provided they were near the church. Once a year, a protracted meeting was held at each church. This afforded somewhat of a social gathering for everybody.

The subject of giving was rarely mentioned.³ Arrangements were scarcely ever made in regard to the preacher's salary. It seemed that they entered sympathetically into the struggle with their brethren. Some people, however, gave in spite of this. Once, after Mr. Nolley

1. Riley, p. 18.

2. Conversation with Mr. Atchison.

3. Riley, p. 34.

had preached from the text "And one of the company said unto him, Master speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me", Mrs. Simpson made two shirts and gave them to Mr. Nolley.

The Beckbee Association was organized in 1816. This was the first Baptist Association organized on Alabama soil. It comprised the first churches in Washington and Clark counties. Later, it extended from the Mississippi line to the eastern boundary of Conecuh County, and from Lowndes County to the Gulf of Mexico.

Soon disagreements arose in the Baptist Church. A lack of social homogeneity was one cause of trouble. Another cause of friction was foot washing. Some insisted upon it as a church ordinance and others opposed it. A third cause for difference of opinion was missions. Some believed the Lord had commanded that the gospel be sent to the destitute. Others insisted that God would secure the salvation of such as he desired. If one were lost, it was because God had ordained his destruction from the beginning.

The Methodists accomplished far more in the county than the Baptists. In 1860, the Methodists had twelve churches while the Baptists had only three. Their slow progress was probably due to the divisions in the church.

Education very early began to have a part in the development of the country. John Pierce, a New Englander, established a school, about 1800, at the boat yard on Lake Tensaw. Here the descendants of

1. West, p. 69.

2. Riley, p. 24.

3. Ibid., p. 30.

4. Eighth U.S. Census Report.

Lachlan McGillivray, the Taits, Weatherfords, Durants, Linders, and Mims were taught to read.¹

Probably, the first school in the present Washington County was a private school, established about 1803, at McIntosh Bluff by Mr. James Johnston. The people were to furnish a building and to pay the teacher ninety dollars per month. He taught such subjects as French, Latin, and "useful" branches of mathematics.²

In 1811, the Mississippi territorial legislature chartered the Washington Academy which was located at St. Stephens. The territorial treasury appropriated, in 1814, one thousand dollars to aid the schools at St. Stephens and Huntsville.³ Again, in 1818, the Alabama legislature incorporated the St. Stephens Academy and authorized its trustees to raise four thousand dollars by lottery. All above ten per cent of the earnings from the banks went to St. Stephens Academy and to Green Academy at Huntsville.⁴ The school at St. Stephens ceased to be important about 1820.

By the enabling act of Congress, March 2, 1819, the county received the sixteenth section of every township for the support of public schools. During the forties, it asked the legislature that the sales of the land be cancelled because of the insolvency of the purchasers.⁵

Private and neighborhood schools became the most important schools of the county. They usually ran two or three months in the year. In

1. Pickett, p. 469.

2. Papers relative to the school of James Johnston, James Johnston to Nicholas Perkins. March 29, 1803; George Cadman to Dr. Sam Flower Jan. 21, 1803.

3. Riley, p. 24.

4. Pickett, p. 616.

5. Weeks, S.B., History of Public School Education in Alabama, p. 27.

most cases, the instruction was very crude. The price was usually about one dollar per month for each pupil but this fee was paid in various commodities. If a woman were teaching, she might be paid in feather pillows or quilts. The children went to school at sunrise and stayed until sunset. The teacher had charge of every one from the time he left home in the morning until he returned in the evening.¹

Few of the children had the advantages offered by these schools. In 1850, there were six one-teacher schools in the county, and there were only one hundred twenty pupils enrolled. Not one of these schools was receiving a penny of public funds.²

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1. Conversations with Mrs. Henry Atchison and Mrs. Sam Simison.
 2. Seventh U.S. Census Report.

CHAPTER V

Old Towns

Old St. Stephens had an important part in the early history of Alabama, and it was the most important town in Washington County for about fifty years. Its history began with the establishment of the Spanish fort in 1789. The Spaniards erected the fort on a bluff called by the Indians Hobuckintopa.¹ The bluff was two miles south of McGrew's shoals which was a rock projecting across the river. Thus the fort was then at the head of navigation on the Tombigbee.

The Spaniards surrendered the fort to the United States May 5, 1799. At that time, it consisted of the block-house, the commandant's house, the church, and a few other buildings.

The Indian factory, in 1803, was the first United States' establishment at St. Stephens. Joseph Chambers of North Carolina was made superintendent and Thomas H. Williams, also of North Carolina, was the assistant.² The parsonage of the old Spanish church was used as the skin house, and the old block-house was used as the government store. For a number of years, St. Stephens was only an Indian trading post. It is true American settlers began coming, but the growth of the community was slow.

However, the town was laid off, in 1807, on the property of Edward Lewis. The part near the fort was reserved for public use.³ They must

1. Pickett, p. 417.

2. Ibid., p. 465.

3. Hamilton, p. 348.

have had visions of a large city as all the streets were made one hundred feet wide.

In the same year, a land office was located at St. Stephens. Thomas Maury of Virginia was appointed register, and Lemuel Henry was the receiver.¹ But with all these activities, the town consisted of only three houses in 1811.² Yet more settlers were being attracted by the letters and other publications of the United States officials in that country.³

The Creek War, in 1813, retarded the progress of the community for a time. Although the Creeks did not cross the Tombigbee, there was great uneasiness in St. Stephens. Captain Scott was sent with a company of soldiers to St. Stephens, and he immediately occupied the old Spanish block-house.⁴ There were two other block-houses partially completed. Colonel Carsons abandoned Fort Madison and marched with all his forces accompanied by five hundred settlers to St. Stephens.⁵ These refugees were crowded into the fort. It was indeed the good fortune of St. Stephens that Pushmataha influenced the Choctaws to fight against the Creeks.⁶

In 1813, one hundred sixty-six lots had been sold in St. Stephens. The maximum value was one thousand five hundred dollars. By 1814, the number of lots sold had increased to one hundred eighty-eight. Benjamin Smoot owned one hundred forty-six, two of which were valued at two thousand dollars each, and the other hundred forty-four were

1. Hamilton, p. 348.

2. Abernethy, p. 38.

3. Transactions of Ala. Hist. Society (1899) Vol. III p. 188, George S. Gaines Letters (1805-1814).

4. Pickett, p. 526.

5. Ibid. p. 547.

6. Ibid. p. 548.

valued at twenty-five dollars each. George S. Gaines owned two lots worth twenty-nine hundred dollars. Thomas Malone's seven lots were¹ valued at twenty-four hundred dollars.

Now the town was becoming more prosperous. In 1811, Washington Academy was organized, but it was not established until 1814. It was the only institution of learning in the country and was well attended for a number of years.² In the same year, Colonel Thomas Eastin printed a newspaper, "The Halcyon". For several years, this paper³ gave the community the meager news of the times. Mr. Eastin was selected territorial printer by the first legislature.⁴

When St. Stephens became the territorial capital, the boom of the town increased. A colony of French refugees, stopping there in the summer of 1818, spoke of the town as being a place of some size⁵ with refined and lively inhabitants.

On January 19, 1819, the first territorial legislature convened at St. Stephens. The meetings were held in two rooms of the Douglas Hotel. The house was composed of thirteen members, but James Titus was the only member of the Senate. He sat alone and decided upon the acts of the house. Governor Bibb's message to the assembly recommended the promotion of education and the establishment of roads, bridges, and ferries. He encouraged the legislature to look to Congress for aid in building roads. At this legislature, the St. Steph-

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1. Washington County Tax Record, (1813-1814)
 2. Riley, pp. 20, 24; Ball, p. 170.
 3. Conversation with Mr. Sam Simison.
 4. Pickett, p. 616.
 5. Ibid., p. 615.

ens Academy, the Tombeckbee Bank, and the St. Stephens Steamboat Company were incorporated.¹

The trustees of the Academy were authorized to raise four thousand dollars by lottery, and the Academy was also to get all above ten per cent of the bank's earnings.²

The capital stock of the bank was limited to half million dollars. Israel Pickens was elected president and George S. Gaines was selected cashier. In September, 1818, the bank went into operation with only seven thousand seven hundred dollars of its stock subscribed. The second legislature gave the bank the privilege to increase its capital stock.³

The directors of the steamboat company were Israel Pickens, B.S. Smoot, Silas Dinsmore, David Files, Henry Bright, and D.P. Ripley. St. Stephens became an important cotton market for the surrounding country, and also a distribution point for supplies.⁴

The town could also boast of its tailor and silversmith. Both of these plied successfully their trade among the wealthy.

St. Stephens was well supplied with professional men. Especially were the lawyers numerous. Many were the claims settled by the bankrupt law. Among the lawyers of the town were Abner Lipscomb, Israel Pickens, William Crawford, Henry Hitchcock, Samuel S. Houston, and Ptolemy T. Harris.⁵

1. Pickett, p. 624.

2. Ibid., p. 616.

3. Abernethy, p. 94.

4. Ball, p. 174.

5. Ibid., p. 445.

The teachers had an important part in the development of St. Stephens. D.H. Mayhew, of Massachusetts, taught in the old town and was buried there in 1822. William J. Alston, Charles L.S. Jones, and Mr. Duncan taught there during the twenties and thirties. Although there was much sickness in the place, few physicians located there. Dr. T. Dean was the only one in the early days. After his death, Dr. H. Huber, a Frenchman, was the physician for the town and the surrounding country for several years. He lived in the hills about ten miles from the town. It is said of him that he never fastened his horse, but would order any child or servant, who might be in sight, to hold the bridle and let the horse graze. Woe unto the one who disobeyed, for the doctor would use his riding whip. Dr. Middleton Daugherty and Dr. Houston both practiced a short time in St. Stephens and both died there. Dr. Hawkins was the last doctor of the old town.

The homes of the society of St. Stephens differed from those of any other place in the county. Here most of the homes were built of brick or limestone rocks. The limestone blocks, smooth and white as marble, were quarried from the hills nearby. The foundations were laid and the cellars were walled up of the same durable material. Many of the houses were finished with a half story and a dormer window. The houses were well lighted by large glass windows, but all lacked the spacious hall through the center. Many of the business houses had rooms in the rear and above for the family. Major Reuben Chamberlain had a hotel in connection with his store. The family's

1. Welsh, Mary, Reminiscences of Old St. Stephens.

rooms were in the rear, and the guest rooms were above the store.

In the prosperous days, the little town was a gay place. A theatre flourished, balls were frequent and places of all kinds of amusements were to be found.

But there was a prevailing indifference to religious activities. With the exception of the old Spanish church built about 1789, there never was a church or a church organization in the town. It is said that once a Baptist preacher visited the thrifty town and expressed a desire to preach the gospel. He was immediately put in a skiff and set adrift on the river. He was also told that if he came back again, he would be tarred and feathered. While the skiff was floating down the river, he was heard to proclaim that the owls and bats would one day make the city their home, and pestilence would soon drive the inhabitants from the city. If this prophecy were made, it was truly fulfilled.¹

There were no provisions for regular religious service of any kind. Sometimes a minister would make an appointment to preach there, but he always used a private residence or a school room. Once Mr. Duncan gave Mr. Shoemaker, a Baptist preacher, permission to use his schoolroom. One Sunday morning, the minister gave an opportunity for church membership and two colored women presented themselves. Without regarding the fact that some of the children's parents were present, Mr. and Mrs. Duncan immediately carried all their pupils upstairs. Mr. Duncan forbade any more preaching in his schoolroom. According to his belief,

1. Hazard, Myra. Old St. Stephens ; Riley, p. 14.

negroes had no more souls than monkeys. No person who treated them¹ as responsible beings could have the use of his house. After that, Mr. Shoemaker preached a few times in Mrs. Elijah Gordy's house.

The people took more interest in education than they did in religion. In order to show their gratitude to Pushmataha for his services during the Creek war, the citizens of St. Stephens offered to educate his son, Mingo. The old chief was pleased at their suggestion and Mingo entered Mr. Mayhew's school. But every time Indians came near the town, Mingo would slip out and spend the night in the wild orgies of his tribe. Mr. Mayhew's wise counsel or even his punishment had no effect. Finally, he gave up the task and let Mingo² return to his tribe.

The St. Stephens Academy flourished for a time but ceased to function during the twenties. The other schools of the town were private or neighborhood schools. There were no school buildings, but the teaching was done in a private residence or a deserted building.

The children had such crude supplies, as pencils made of bullets, pens made of goose quills, copy books made by stitching unruled paper together. However, it was not all dull at school. They had two hours at noon and recess as often as they could get permission or slip out. Many times the larger boys were allowed to study under the trees.

In the thirties, Mr. and Mrs. Duncan, English people, taught the last school of the old town. They lived and taught in what had been the old store of Coolidge and Bright. Mr. Duncan taught the literary

1. Welsh, Mary, MS. Reminiscences of Old St. Stephens .
2. Welsh, MS. St. Stephens.

branches, Mrs. Duncan artistic needle work, and the eldest daughter music and art. Mr. Duncan tried to introduce steel pens, but the parents insisted on his making goose quill pens for the children.

When the business of the country increased, the obstruction to navigation at McGrew's shoals was removed. This marked the beginning of St. Stephens decline. A serious epidemic of yellow fever in 1833 spelled its doom. The people began moving away in large numbers. Many of the buildings were torn down. Some were moved to Mobile and some to other places.¹

About 1845, another site, new St. Stephens, was selected a few miles from the river. Many of the residents of the old town moved out in a body to the new site. By 1850, little was left of the old town. The brick building used by the bank was torn down during the Civil War. The brick were used in making salt furnaces.

St. Stephens was the main town of the county, but other smaller places had a part in the early history. The territory along the Alabama and Tombigbee were defenseless and isolated. The few settlers were surrounded on three sides by the Indians and on the other by the Spaniards. The Federal Government wished a fort to be built near the line of demarcation. Consequently Captain McClary marched from St. Stephens and built Fort Stoddert on the first bluff below the confluence of the Alabama and the Tombigbee Rivers. Captain Shaumberg marched from Natchez with two companies of soldiers and took command of the fort.²

On Lake Tensaw the people were living in 1800, without laws and

1. Conversation with Mr. Joe Pelham.

2. Pickett, p. 461.

without the rite of matrimony. Lovers paired off and lived together with a promise of a marriage ceremony at the first opportunity. Daniel Johnston, a poor boy and Elizabeth Linder, of an aristocratic family, had for some time loved each other. But Elizabeth's parents objected to the pairing. Finally on Christmas night they went in a canoe down to Fort Stoddert and asked Captain Shaumberg to marry them. At first he refused to perform the ceremony and assured them that he did not have the authority to make them man and wife. At last he agreed and pronounced the ceremony as follows: "I, Captain Shaumberg, of the second regiment of the United States army and commandant of Fort Stoddert do hereby pronounce you man and wife". Go home! Behave yourselves. Multiply and replenish the Tensaw country."¹

In 1804, Fort Stoddert had become a prominent fort. Captain Shaumberg had retired and Captain Schuyler of New York took charge of eighty men. Edmund Pendleton Gaines was lieutenant and Lieutenant Reuben Chamberlain was paymaster. Here they held the court of admiralty and important questions were solved.

Congress formed a revenue district of the country on the Tombigbee. It was called the district of Mobile. The most watchful and annoying searches were made on all the ships passing by Fort Stoddert. The settlers paid import duties on everything that they imported.²

Fort Stoddert was garrisoned by the United States until just before the war with Great Britain. The location at Fort Stoddert was unhealthy. Many of the soldiers died with fever. Therefore about 1811, they built an arsenal about two miles back in the hill

1. Pickett, p. 464.

2. Ibid., p. 482.

country. However, at that time it was a part of Baldwin County.

McIntosh Bluff a high point on the Tombigbee River was an English grant to Captain John McIntosh, a Scotchman. It was given to him as a reward for his service in the English army of West Florida. ¹ He built his home near the river about 1778. While his daughter was visiting here in 1780, her son George McIntosh Troupe was born. It is said that he was possibly the first white child born in Washington County. ² Captain Troupe and his wife later moved to Georgia. Here George McIntosh became a distinguished governor of the state.

In the early nineties, other settlers began coming to McIntosh Bluff. Farming became an important occupation, and the cultivation of cotton took the place of that of indigo. By 1803, a cotton gin was established in the settlement.

McIntosh Bluff had an important place in the early political life of Washington County. Here, the first election was held in 1800 and the first court convened in 1803. It also became the first county seat of Baldwin County. ³

The county seat of Washington was established in 1804, at a point a few miles north of McIntosh Bluff. This place was named Wakefield by Judge Toulmin and here in 1804, he held the first United States court of the county. The town was incorporated in 1805 and laid out on the land of Richard Brashears. George Brewer, John Armstrong, James Denby, Edmond Craighton, and Thomas Bassett were

1. Pickett, p. 476.

2. Brewer, p. 575.

3. Owen, T.M., MS. Washington County.

1

appointed commissioners to regulate the town.

It was at Wakefield, in 1807, that Aaron Burr was recognized while he was trying to make his escape from Washington City, Mississippi territory. He stopped at the Wakefield tavern, about 10:00 o'clock at night and enquired the way to Colonel Hinson's residence. At the tavern, Nicholas Perkins and Thomas Malone were playing backgammon. Perkins recognized him from the description given in the President's proclamation. He and Sheriff Brightwell tracked him to Hinson's house. As Perkins had already been seen at Wakefield, he thought it best that he remain in the woods until Brightwell went to the house and made the necessary discoveries. But when the sheriff failed to return, Perkins secured a canoe and paddled down to Fort Stoddert. He induced Captain E.P. Gaines to take the road to McIntosh Bluff with a file of mounted soldiers. They met Burr two miles from Captain Hinson's house and he was taken prisoner without resistance. Burr was kept in honorable captivity at Fort Stoddert for two weeks and then he was carried to Richmond Virginia for trial.

2

Mineral springs were discovered in the northern part of Washington County. The place was settled by a Mr. Bladon and the springs became known as Bladon Springs. By 1838, the curative property of the springs had become well known and they were opened to the public. In 1845, Prof. Richard T. Brumby, state geologist, analyzed the water.

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1. Brewer, p. 275.
 2. Hamilton, p. 341; Pickett, p. 488.
 3. Conversation with Henry Atchison.
 4. Owen, Vol. I, p. 155.

When the report was published, wealthy planters who had formerly visited northern resorts flocked to Bladon Springs. The place became a very fashionable resort. The visitors were entertained with such amusements as dancing, tempping alley, and hunting. When Choctaw County was organized in 1847, Washington lost her health resort.

The little place, Deer Park, on the western side of the county was settled about the time the Mobile and Ohio railroad came through. It was named Deer Park on account of its being an old place where the deer would rest and hide. This was the first settlement in the western side of the county and it was only twelve miles from the Mississippi line. All the visiting of these settlers was done over in Mississippi. They never came to the eastern side of the county except on court duty.

The place became a famous hunting ground. Many rich hunters from Mobile and Mississippi visited it quite often. Deerskins became a valuable article of trade. The people were also engaged in
1
lumbering and turpentineing.

1. Conversation with Mrs. R.M. Rawles.

INDEX

46

to
Map of the City of Old St. Stephens

As it appeared

A.D. 1841

1. Fort Republic
2. Spanish Fort
3. Earth Breastworks
4. Steamboat Landing & Ferry
5. Ferryman's House
6. Bank Building
7. Government Building
8. Store-House
9. Store-House
10. Store House
11. High Hill, Supposed Government Buildings on Top
12. Land Officer's Residence of - --- McGoffin
13. Residence & Private Grave yard of Malone
14. Suicide's Grave
15. Jones School Building
16. Store, Bright & Cool
17. Unknown
18. Unknown
19. Gordy Hotel
20. Residence & Store of Major Chamberlain
21. Unknown
22. Unknown
- 23 Market
24. Unknown
25. Residence of David Brantley
26. Residence of Governor Pickett
27. Residence of Aunt Hager, a free negro
28. Welsh Residence
29. Residence of Wm. Crawford
30. Residence of Mrs. Ripley
31. Monument of C. Brown
32. Welsh Graves
33. Welsh Residence
34. Sulphur well
35. Hayse Grave

All Not Numbered are Unknown's Residences.

Land Office

St. Stephens, Ala.

May 1, 1841

I do hereby certify that the amassed & foregoing diagram is correctly copied from the official township map in this office - Witnessed by hand & private seal having no seal of office.

James Magoffin

(Copy)

Registra



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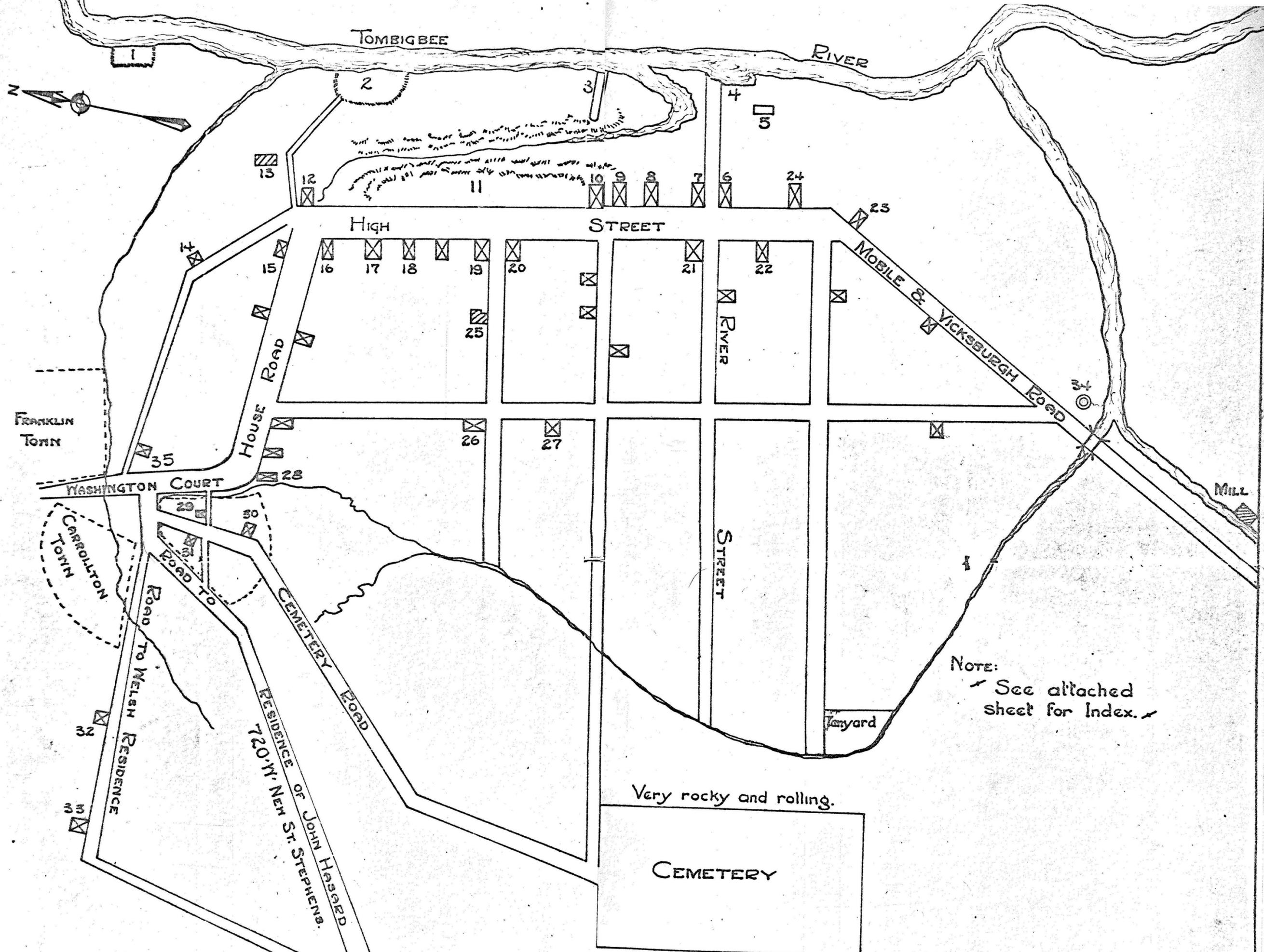
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INDEX TO MAP OF
THE CITY OF OLD ST. STEPHENS
AS IT APPEARED IN 1841

1. Fort Republic
2. Spanish Fort
3. Earth Breastworks
4. Steamboat Landing and Ferry
5. Ferryman's House
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NOTE:
 ↗ See attached sheet for Index. ↖

NOTE:
 Original drawing by
 E.M. Slaughter & Mary J. Welsh
 in 1899.

↗ OLD ST. STEPHENS ↖
 As it appeared in
 1841