



The February 2023 Newsletter

The February Meeting will be
Tuesday, February 28 at 3:00pm in
The Meeting Room of the Museum
On the College Campus, Brewton, AL



Our Speaker
Tom
McMillan

The Program: Tom McMillan Will Present a Program on the 150th Anniversary of the T. R. Miller Mill Company

As trustee, former president, author and editor of books about Escambia County history and chairman of various ECHS committees, Tom has carried on his family's tradition of being a key supporter of ECHS. His most recent work for the society was to supervise the reprinting of the Annie Waters History of Escambia County, Alabama.

Tom has presented previous programs to the society. This one will focus on the T. R. Miller Mill Company's achievement of a 150 year history in

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Passengers on a Small Bus in Downtown Evergreen, Alabama, c. 1890-1909. From Ala. Dept. of Archives & History.

There will be refreshments after the Feb. meeting. Bring your favorite finger food. Drinks will be provided by the Society.



Picnic by the Coosa River in Wetumpka. In background Covered Bridge designed by Horace King in 1844 and destroyed by flooding in 1886.

March Meeting: Larry Manning, Potter, Artist, and Former Instructor at JDJC, will present a program on the History of Pottery. He will have samples of his pottery and paintings.



Alabama's State Bible

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The Program

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the lumber mill industry.

An article on this history, “Wood Working: Brewton’s T. R. Miller Mill Celebrates a Century-and-A-Half,” which originally appeared in Alabama Business magazine, is reprinted in the September 2022 ECHOES.

As a former director of the company and one of the present-day owners, Tom is a source of information on the history of the company and is quoted several times in the article.

In addition to the Lumber Company, he is involved in

Trains, Trucks, and Good Environmental Practices.

From Tom, this comment: “T.R. Miller saw the value of trains and trucks and the necessity to reach out to greater distances for timber,” says McMillan.

“He also recognized the value of good environmental practices, which also helped the business. While other mills practiced ‘cut and move on,’ Miller replanted his forests.”

From “Wood Working: Brewton’s T. R. Miller Mill Celebrates a Century-and-A-Half.”

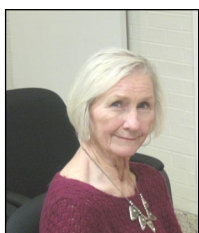
several business enterprises.

He is partner and director of PMT Publishing, a regional publishing and media company that produces a variety of magazines, books and other products.

He is also the owner of Longleaf Energy Group, an exploration and production company that concentrates its efforts in Alabama and Florida.

Tom is on the Board of Regents of Museums of the University of Alabama. He is a graduate of the university with a degree in Business Administration.

ECHS Loses Longtime Member Jacque Stone.



Jacque at a ECHS Meeting

A retired educator, Jacqueline “Jacque,” served as secretary for the Escambia County Historical Society and was a longtime member of the Brewton Arts Council.

As a member of the Damascus Baptist Church, Jacque served as pianist, Sunday school teacher, and community outreach volunteer.

After the death of her first husband, Bill Hoomes, Jacque, a young widow needing to support her family, went back to school, earning bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education at the University of Northwest Florida and Troy University. She was a dedicated educator for

25 years, teaching students initially at North Brewton and Atmore and for many years at W.S. Neal Middle School in East Brewton.

In 1994, Jacque married Charles Stone of Damascus. She and Charles were active members of ECHS. They were regulars at the society’s monthly meetings and enjoyed the society’s Field Trips. Jacque and Charles, also, on many occasions provided refreshments for the social hour after the business session and programs for the monthly meetings were finished.

A beloved wife, mother, member of her community, her church, the ECHS, Jacque often gave friends a hug, and said, “Love you.” And she meant it. We will miss her.

From Sean of the South: East Brewton Angel

Brewton, Alabama (2017)
Camp 31 Barbecue.

A place with pine on the floors, pine on the walls, pork on the plates.

It’s Tuesday, lunchtime. I’m sitting with Miss Jacque. She is a slight, older woman. She has bright blue eyes, and when she opens her mouth, South Alabama comes out.

“You’re a writer, huh?” she says.
“I’ve been called worse, ma’am.”

“I taught writing, you know,” she says. “I was a middle-school teacher in East Brewton, nearly all my life.” I taught ’em, graded ’em, and sent ’em up.”

Miss Jacque had students from all walks of life. The well-off. The not-so-well off. And those living in poverty.

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From Sean of the South in 2017: East Brewton Angel

(Continued from page 2)

She has stories about under privileged students that would make a grown man leak saltwater.

We are interrupted by our spouses.

Our server asks if we need refills on iced tea. Miss Jacque nods. The girl fills our glasses and leaves the pitcher on the table. She gives Miss Jacque a hug.

Miss Jacque's face loses four decades.

When the waitress walks away, Miss Jacque remarks. "She used'a be in my class, a long time ago. She was a rowdy one, but I sure love her."

Miss Jacque seems to have a lot of love. In fact, she would've taught school forever if she could have. But time caught up with her.

Every cowgirl has to hang up her lasso eventually.

The day after her farewell party, she realized retiring was harder that she thought.

"I was slap miserable. It was horrible. I got so dad gum bored I about died. I'm too old to be bored."

Too old. Though I do not learn how old she is, exactly. Miss Jacque is a sophisticated belle. And the time honored rule is: any Alabamian woman who does not disclose her age—consentingly and of her own accord—is thereby twenty-nine until Jesus comes back.

After Miss Jacque quit teaching, she found other ways to keep busy.

One of her projects; she visits thrift store. Not for

herself.

She wanders the aisles of second-hand selecting middle-school sized jeans, shorts, shirts, skirts, and shoes. She buys by the truckload.

"I take'em home, wash'em, and then I iron'em." Then, she drops them at the school.

I ask Miss Jacque which church program she does this for.

She laughs. "Church? Ain't no church. Just me. I do it outta pocket. I've seen what these kids go through. Some of their parents can't afford decent clothes."

Recently, someone called Miss Jacque. There was a teenage boy who didn't have any underwear. They asked Miss Jacque if she could do anything about it.

Miss Jacque was on the problem like stink on rice. "I rounded up all sorts of brand-new-boy's underwear. Folks donated so much, we had plenty to go around. Boys need clean underwear, You know."

So I've heard.

The waitress brings our bill. Miss Jacque insists on leaving a healthy tip. She slides money toward the edge of the table. She stands.

She hugs me with frail arms.

"Folks tell me I talk WAY too," she says. "They're probably right. Hope I didn't chat you head off. I'm really sorry."

Sorry. Don't be.

You're one of the prettiest things I've ever seen.

Alabama Historical Association 75 Annual Meeting April 13-15, 2023, Prattville, Alabama



Prattville Cotton Gin Factory, Courtesy of Laura Bonner.

The Alabama Historical Association Says:

**"Join us for Presentations from Historians, Tours of Historic Sites,
Keynote Presentations, and an Awards Banquet."**

Prattville: The New England Village Of The South

By Ann Boutwell

This article is from the Spring Newsletter of the Alabama Historical Association for 2023
(https://www.alabamahistory.net/_files/ugd/3aaf16_fa99eefc72ea459ea297757122694b60.pdf).

It is difficult to talk about the town of Prattville without making Daniel Pratt the center of that conversation. Even though 150 years have passed since Pratt's death, his presence continues to be felt in the 21st century. Shadrack Mims, a business partner of Pratt, wrote in 1877 that Prattville was "a town that shall serve as a more enduring monument than any marble slab or chiseled stone." Upon Pratt's death, the editor of the local newspaper, the Prattville Signal, also wrote, "His fame needs no monument to proclaim to coming generations his wonderful works and munificent benefactions.... Look around you, and behold magnificent buildings, noble structures of art and genius, looming up in every direction."

For more than a hundred years, fields of white cotton welcomed visitors as they made their way to downtown Prattville. Other than appreciation for the beauty of that southern staple, few recognized the potent appropriateness of this introduction to the village that cotton built. For it was cotton that drew Pratt to Alabama in 1833 to sell his cotton gins to the expanding market in the west.

Simply stated, Daniel Pratt came to Alabama to build and sell cotton gins. In reality, he became one of the most influential persons in southern history, changing the economic landscape from a purely agriculture economy to an industrial one. This man was ahead of his time in his vision for the South as a self-

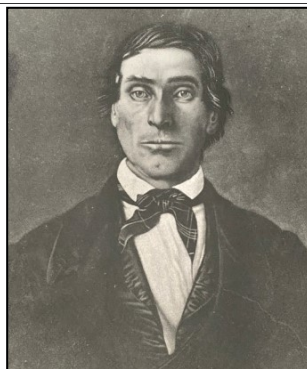
reliant and financially independent region. Thanks to Pratt's multiple industries, in the 1850s Prattville was noted as one of the most industrialized towns of its size by Debow's Review, a business journal that promoted southern advances and enterprises.

In 1835, when Daniel Pratt chose what is now Prattville in south-central Autauga County as the site for his business ventures, he designed areas that would be devoted to manufacturing, retail businesses, churches, schools, and residences. Since 1984, this "planned community" has been listed as the Daniel Pratt Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places.

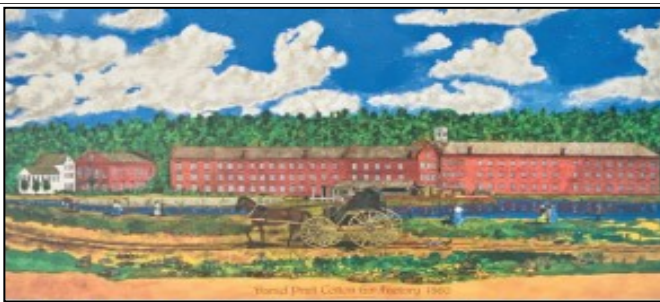
The city of Prattville is also recognized as the "Birthplace of Industry" and was home to the first industrial village in Alabama and pretty much the entire South. It might be said that Pratt introduced the Industrial Revolution to his adopted state. Pratt initiated and built many industries essential to an economically developing region.

Pratt quickly realized that southerners had little experience with large industries, much less worked in them. His workforce included free white men and enslaved African Americans. To train and manage his workers, Pratt recruited and partnered with skilled managers from New England states and brought them to Prattville. These early Yankee citizens not only trained southern workers to be effective employees in the factories, but they also brought with them their culture and traditions, henceforth Prattville's nickname, "The New England Village of the South."

(Continued on page 5)



Photograph of Daniel Pratt, 1851.



This 2020 Painting by Artist Tommy Brown of the Daniel Pratt Factory Complex Is Based on an 1860 Engraving that Is Similar to the Pratt Company Letterhead.



Cotton Mill as Seen from the Front Garden of Pratt's Home.

Prattville: The New England Village Of The South

(Continued from page 4)

The design of Daniel Pratt's new town mimicked industrial towns in his native New Hampshire, placing the factories at the heart and center of the town. His successes encouraged other towns to follow Prattville's example. In 1847, Dr. Basil Manley, the president of the University of Alabama, awarded Pratt the honorary degree of Master in the Mechanic and Useful Arts, writing: "Without having devoted your life to literary pursuits, you have attained, in an eminent degree, that which is the end of all letters and all study—the art of making men around you wiser, better, and happier."

Unfortunately, like many modern towns, Prattville has tragically lost many historic buildings over the years, typically as a result of expansion and ignorance. Despite these losses, the essence of Pratt's New England Village can still be experienced and seen in what remains. The expansive view from the hillside overlook at Pratt Cemetery offers a view of the town that Pratt built.

Here you will find the final resting place not only of Pratt, his wife Esther, and their two infant daughters, but also other family members as well as Thomas Ormsby, an early Civil War casualty at the Battle at Shiloh. Most notable is the monument to George Cooke, a southern artist who was a friend and beneficiary of Pratt's patronage. Cooke's paintings are held

at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and at the White House.

The original Daniel Pratt Gin Company/Continental Gin Company buildings are nationally recognized and regarded as some of the most historically significant industrial buildings in the country, not only because of their past, but also for the impact Daniel Pratt had on bringing industry to the South. The Daniel Pratt Gin Company, the largest cotton gin company in the world, merged in 1899 with five other gin companies to form Continental Gin Company (CGC) with headquarters in Birmingham. Headquarters for CGC returned to Prattville in 1961.

Manufacturing plants were located in Prattville; Birmingham, Alabama; Dallas, Texas; Atlanta, Georgia; and Bridgewater, Massachusetts; and later Memphis, Tennessee. Continental Gin Company continued the strong tradition of producing the world's finest cotton gins and shipping them around the world. Throughout its history, the company purchased, merged, or absorbed some 25 other cotton-related companies.

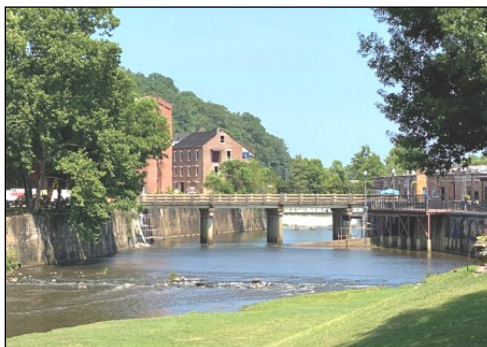
This world renowned company was in business until 2012. The remaining industrial site in Prattville is composed of five historic brick buildings, each featuring the premier building styles of the time of its construction. Daniel Pratt built the 1848–1852 and the 1854 industrial buildings, which featured

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**At Left,
Daniel Pratt Home.**

**To the Right,
Cotton Gin
Advertisement,
1856.**



**At Left,
Creek Walk with
Gin Buildings
in Background.**



Prattville: The New England Village Of The South

(Continued from page 5)

mortise-and-tendon construction. A portion of the belt-driven power system, with its belts, drums, and pulleys, is still housed in the buildings.

These buildings feature a totally open free-span third floor, an unusual characteristic in industrial buildings at that time. The 1898 building, designed by noted architect Frank Lockwood, features the iconic “Daniel Pratt Gin Co.” brick arch. A brick warehouse was added around 1899.

After CGC formed, the company added the four-story building in 1912 and later added the shipping and loading dock building in 1957 as well as several metal connecting buildings. These historic brick buildings are being redeveloped into residential lofts.

At the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, Thomas Ormsby and other young men in the community met in the parlor at George Littlefield Smith’s house on Main Street to form a mounted cavalry military unit, the Prattville Dragoons. Daniel Pratt supported the Dragoons by providing horses, uniforms, and munitions. Pratt, a member of the Alabama State Legislature during the Secession session, spoke against seceding because he knew the South was too economically dependent upon the North. But when the state leadership could not be persuaded from secession, he supported his adopted state.

Smith’s home is now the Prattaugan Museum and Heritage Center, established in 1995. The museum is a treasure trove of local artifacts and contains an archival library for genealogy research. The Prattaugan Museum is managed by the Autauga County Heritage

Association (ACHA).

Pratt’s cotton mill, established in 1846 and the largest antebellum cotton mill complex in Alabama, also supported the Confederacy with needed textiles. That mill remained in business until 1997. In 2002, Prattville sadly lost its historic buildings to arson. Across Court Street from the mill lot is the old Autauga County Courthouse, built in 1870. Pratt was instrumental in bringing the county seat to Prattville from Kingston in 1868. Today the mill lot is now the Village Green, where numerous festivals and celebrations are held. Adjacent to the mill was the mill village of small homes and garden spaces, fondly called “Paradise” and provided by Pratt to the mill workers.

Though the mill village no longer exists, examples of a mill house and the foreman’s house can be seen at Old Pratt village. Two local citizens preserved the architecture of Prattville in this special village along with a quaint chapel relocated from rural Autauga County and a lovely garden maintained by the Master Gardeners. Prior to coming to Alabama, Daniel Pratt had already made a name for himself as an outstanding architect/builder in the Milledgeville area of Georgia, constructing beautiful plantation homes.

He continued his trade as he laid out his town and constructed homes for its citizens. Several of the antebellum homes he built for local planters remain. One such home Buena Vista, is owned by the ACHA and is managed as an event venue. Many of the same architectural features, including the magnificent three-story circular cantilevered stairway found in his Georgia homes, can be found at Buena Vista as well.

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Prattville Male and Female Academy, built in 1859.
Picture and Text from Spring Newsletter of the Alabama Historical Association for 2023.



The Little Chapel in Old Pratt Village on First Street, Daniel Pratt Historic District.

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/324681454372285761/>



Downtown Prattville, c. 1900.
Picture and Text from Spring Newsletter of the Alabama Historical Association for 2023.

Prattville: The New England Village Of The South

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A devout Christian, Pratt assisted in building churches for his community. These early denominations were originally located on the south side of Autauga Creek in the area of the gin factory today. As the town expanded and the population grew, new sanctuaries were built on the town side of the creek. The original Presbyterian church was moved and became the First Missionary Baptist Church for the black community and still has an active membership.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church was built in 1909 and was designed by 15-year-old Erin Chapman, organist at the Church. The church has 27 beautiful stained-glass windows. It is the oldest of the four church structures on "Church Square" in historic downtown Prattville. Across Washington Street from this church is the former site of the Prattville Male and Female Academy, erected in 1859. Poet Sidney Lanier was hired by Pratt to be headmaster of the school. The bell from the school's cupola stands proudly on the site and is rung daily by current students and on New Year's Eve by residents who live in the Historic District. In 1861, Prattville citizens gathered at the Academy to ceremoniously send the Prattville Dragoons off to battle. A monument on the property commemorates the event.

Autauga County is also fortunate to be home to a historic Rosenwald School, the Mt. Sinai School, constructed in 1919. Julius Rosenwald, a part-owner of Sears, Roebuck & Company, matched funding raised by locals to provide schools to serve the local African American community. The school is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as well as the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage. It currently serves as a community center for local residents.

Autauga Creek, running through historic downtown Prattville, not only powered Pratt's many industries for a hundred years, but today offers refreshing recreation opportunities. The Autauga Creek Canoe Trail,

a part of the National Recreational Trails, is an exciting thirteen mile trail perfect for kayaking, canoeing, tubing, fishing, and just plain old creek splashing! Kayakers can "paddle through history," as the numerous historic sites are marked along the broad stream.

Prattville Creek walk is a series of walking trails that circle downtown and offer a charming respite to sit a spell or to picnic while watching blue herons and flocks of birds. Another walk back in time is available at the Wilderness Park, the bamboo forest preserve located near downtown. More than 26 acres of exotic Asian bamboo was planted by a local citizen in 1940. The majestic site, with an environment so similar to the one found in the plant's native China, provided training ground for the U.S. Air Force during the mid-century conflict of the Vietnam War.

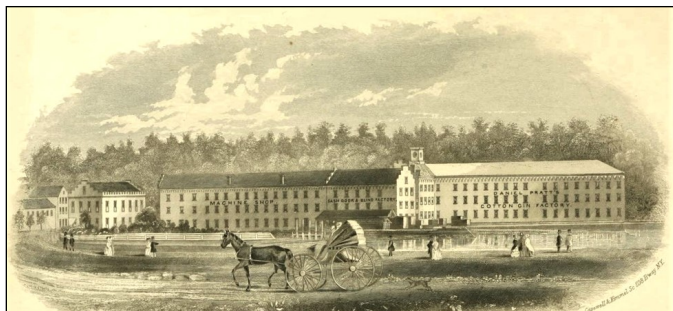
In 1977, the Spinners, a local women's civic organization, purchased the property, and in 1979 the City of Prattville purchased the parcel. The park opened to the public in 1980.

Prattville offers the best of America's small towns! Noted Robert Trent Jones Golf courses, pro championship fishing on the Alabama River, and the nationally ranked Bass Pro Shop await visitors to Prattville.

The Daniel Pratt Historic District, a charming walkable downtown, attracts many visitors to view and enjoy its historic sites, its shops and restaurants, and its unique outdoor adventures.

The city offers numerous entertainment festivals and events throughout the year, including a Mardi Gras parade, the Wilson Pickett Music & Arts Festival, City Fest, the Alabama Poppy Project, the Independence Day Celebration, the Creekside Concert Series, the Way Off Broadway Theatre, Veterans Day, Parade of Pumpkins, Farm City Week, and festive decorations and events for Christmas.

Civic and cultural life is vibrant in Prattville! Since its small beginnings in 1839 to now, Prattville offers a significant history and a richness of life today and in the future.



**1848, 1852 & 1854 buildings of the
Prattville Cotton Gin Manufactory. 1860.
Engraving by Capewell & Kimmel of
New York.**

All Pictures and Texts in this Article on Prattville, are from the Alabama Historical Association Spring 2023 Newsletter
(https://www.alabamahistory.net/_files/ugd/3aafi6_fa99eefc72ea459ea297757122694b60.pdf).

The ECHS *Journal* Section

History of T. R. Miller Mill Until 1990

The following history is from Green Gold: Alabama's Forests and Forest Industries By James E. Fickle.

1848-Original Mill. Founder Ira Bond.

The “official” account of T. R. Miller Mill’s history traces the original mill back to 1848. It is described as a “small water-driven mill” whose “location still commands admiration.” Noting that little is known of the mill, the account goes on to say that Cedar Creek powered the mill and was used to transport logs from the forest and to float the sawed timbers down to Pensacola for export. The mill site was a few miles from the area’s first mill site, some eighteen miles from Brewton, where a settler named Mendenhall had dammed the creek to power a gristmill and sawmill.

c. 1868-Ira Bond Sells Mill to Rev. Andrew Jay

1872-Andrew Jay Sells Mill to Elisha Downing

After some two decades of operation, its founder, Ira Bond, sells the original mill to Rev. Andrew Jay, who in turn sells the mill and its woodlands to Elisha Downing in 1872. Downing is a Civil War veteran and former prisoner of war who returns to the western Florida-southern Alabama area after the conflict to cut timber for railroad construction and export. Downing’s enterprise grows during the 1880’s, and in 1885, he begins the construction of three additional mills.

1892-Elisha Downing Builds A New Steam-Powered Mill in Brewton.

By 1891 the Cedar Creek mill had twenty-three workers and processes about one hundred logs daily. Downing controls some thirteen thousand acres of timberland, and the mill is valued at \$75,000. He seeks to link his operations with the national railroad system by building a spur line from Cedar Creek to Brewton, which is on the main line of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad. However, rather than building to the line, Downing determines that moving the mill itself will be more cost effective, so in 1892 he builds a new steam-powered mill adjacent to the L & N line in Brewton.

1897-Elisha Downing Buys the Timberland of the Peters Lumber Company.

1899-Wiley Downing, Thomas R. Miller and Francis C. Brent Purchase Downing’s Mill.

Downing continues to amass timberland to support his mills. His largest acquisition comes in 1897 after Peters Lumber Company mill in Alco is destroyed by fire. The Michigan owners decide not to rebuild. Downing purchases their thirty-six thousand acres of longleaf timberland, building his landholdings to over seventy thousand acres. However, along with the land, Downing accumulates considerable debt.

Downing operates the mill for nine years, takes on partners, with his son Wiley and a man named Maddox joining the firm, and begins to build canals and flumes to transport logs. He also invests in additional mills at Castleberry and Kirkland, Alabama. Downing remains active in the operation until the end of the nineteenth century.

At that point, in 1899, Wiley Downing, Thomas R. Miller and Francis C. Brent purchase the mill. They improve the facility and continue to operate as the Cedar Creek Mill until 1913.

Thomas Richard Miller

The Miller family settles in Alabama’s Conecuh County in the late nineteenth century. Robert Miller is a small farmer who has twelve children. Thomas Richard Miller, the fifth child, has little or no formal education and apparently a dislike for farming. He enlists in a Civil War cavalry company and is captured and imprisoned at Ship Island and Vicksburg, Mississippi. After the war, he marries Mary Elizabeth Foshee. The couple have ten children, two of whom die shortly after birth.

1868-Thomas Miller Purchases the Wesley Blacksher Property on Cedar Creek

The Millers struggle to survive economically, and in 1868, Thomas purchases the Wesley Blacksher property, which includes a small gristmill and a water-powered sawmill on Cedar Creek. Miller has an early associate named “Buck” Dixon, and they hire men to cut timber and work in the mill.

The men are paid twenty-five cents daily, and when cash is short, they are compensated with corn and

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

History of T. R. Miller Mill Until 1990

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cornmeal. The mill produces sawed timbers that are sized and floated down the creek to Brewton. They are then rafted down the Escambia River to Pensacola.

1876-Financial Setback and Recovery. Miller and Brother-in-Law, S. J. Foshee, Buy Out Miller's Previous Partner. Firm Of Miller and Foshee Is Born.

While Miller prospers, his mill is deep in the woods, and in 1876 a severe drought makes it impossible to float timbers to market. After momentary financial troubles, rains again make shipment possible, and by the end of the cutting season Miller has some \$8,000 in cash.

He purchases a nearby mill run by his brother-in-law and additional forestland. Unsatisfied with the way the operation is run, Miller approaches another brother-in-law, S. J. Foshee, who joins him in buying out the partner, and the firm of Miller and Foshee is born.

Miller and Foshee prosper, and in 1883, they buy out Clements. They also loan money to the Blacksher family, who are building a large sawmill in Brewton. Foshee is married to a Blacksher, yet another family connection.

1887-Miller Invests in a Mill in Brewton Near Burnt Corn Creek.

By 1887 Miller decides to move his base to Brewton from Cedar Creek. He invests \$50,000 in a mill operated by the Blacksher brothers near Burnt Corn Creek leaving Foshee behind to operate the Cedar Creek property. The Burnt Corn Creek operation is renamed the Blacksher Brothers and Brewton Mill Company, with T. R. Miller becoming the operating and financial manager and the Blacksher brothers handling the logging.

Miller and Foshee sell the Clements mill, and Foshee also moves to Brewton, accompanied by his nephew, Alex McGowin, who is a cousin of both Miller and the Blackshers. McGowin becomes the sales manager.

The company, now called Blacksher-Miller Lumber Company, is owned by Miller, David Blacksher, and Alex McGowin. It now has thirty-five thousand acres

of timber, a large sawmill, a planning mill, five dry kilns and thirty miles of ditches. Logs are brought to the mill by ditches until 1905 when the ditches and flumes are abandoned, and the company turns to railroads. The mill has a steam-powered circular saw, which can cut sixty thousand board feet daily. The mill is valued at \$175,000 and employed 175 workers.

1889-Miller's Wife Dies and He Remarries

Miller adopts an increasingly extravagant lifestyle. In 1889 his wife dies and Miller remarries. He and his second wife have three children. Miller's marriage and his new persona trigger resentment from his first wife's family, the Foshees, and in 1891, Stewart Foshee breaks with Miller and sells his interest in the mill.

Soon after Alex McGowin also leaves, leaving Miller and David Blacksher to run the company. Miller soon begins to rely on a young man named William Thomas Neal for labor and advice.

Finally, in 1889, with Miller planning to retire, David Blacksher leaves to join a new Blacksher family logging operation in Baldwin County, and Miller sells the Blacksher Miller Company

1899-Miller, Downing and Brent Form the Cedar Creek Mill Company.

Miller joins W. W. Downing and F. C. Brent in purchasing the holdings, companies, of those in the Brewton operations, forming a new company called the Cedar Creek Mill Company. They improve the facility and continue to operate as the Cedar Creek Mill until 1913.

Fate interferes with Miller's retirement plans as he is approached with a new offer from Elisha Downing. By this time, Miller has developed a business relationship with Francis Celestine Brent, a Pensacola banker and investor in several lumber companies.

Between 1910 and 1914, Miller and Brent are involved in several business relationships, including the purchase of a sawmill at Foley, Alabama, which is operated by three of Miller's sons.

Miller and Brent also acquire Downing's Cedar Creek Lumber Company. The two men each agree to pay Downing \$100,000 in cash. They also

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History of T. R. Miller Mill Until 1990

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assume Downing's debt of another \$200,000 and agree to bring in Downing's son Wiley as a third equal partner.

Miller President of Cedar Creek Lumber Company.

Miller becomes president of the Cedar Creek Lumber Company, and a top management officer is William Neal. One of Miller's sons manages the sawmill. The company has labor difficulties. The Miller family and the Downings clash, and Miller becomes distanced from active management as his health begins to fail. William Neal becomes the driving force. He brings a cousin, Ed Leigh McMillan, a young lawyer and T. R. Miller's son-in-law, into the management structure.

1902 –1913 Miller and Brent Open Businesses in Brewton. 1912-Company Becomes T. R. Miller Mill Company.

Miller and Brent open a company store in Brewton and expand the company's operations to include a sash, door, and window plant in 1902, a logging railroad in 1904, a veneer plant in 1910, and a box factory in 1913.

As south Alabama and north Florida move into the twentieth century, there is a rapidly growing population and strong demand for housing. Area builders are designing and constructing large neoclassical, neo-Tudor, Queen Anne, and Victorian houses with ornate features that require fancy millwork, providing a market for the sash, door, and window plant.

In 1911, Miller buys out Brent, and the following year the company becomes the T. R. Miller Mill Company. By 1913 the Miller organization employs over eight hundred people.

Miller Develops Business Relationships with Company Headed by William and Albert Rosasco.

Miller also develops close financial relationships with a Florida and Alabama lumbering and export company headed by William and Albert Rosasco. The Rosascos are timber export agents based in Pensacola. In the 1890's, Miller begins to negotiate

some of his shipments to Europe through the Rosasco Brothers' Pitch-Pine Export company and when the Rosascos begin to operate their own fleet of ships, Miller sends many of his shipments on their vessels.

Later, the brothers enter the timber business and cooperate with Miller's operations. Eventually, after a storm destroys much of their standing timber, the Rosascos close their lumber mill, and later Miller purchases timberlands, possibly in the amount of three thousand acres, from the Rosasco heirs.

1914-Thomas R. Miller Dies.

Thomas R. Miller dies in 1914 and is succeeded by his son George as company president. His son-in-law, Ed Leigh McMillan, is named corporate attorney. W. T. Neal, whose family had moved to Brewton when he was eight years old, becomes vice-president and general manager. Neal had first gone to work for T. R. Miller in 1887 at the age of fourteen and had risen to successively more responsible positions, leaving at one point to run his own lumber business.

George Miller serve only until 1924, when he leaves the company and is succeeded by W. T. Neal.

Tom Neal.

W. T. Neal's only son is born in 1929. Tom Neal attends Indiana's Culver Military Academy and Cornell University and then becomes a bomber pilot flying missions over Germany during World War II. After spending little time in Brewton for some twelve years, Neal joins the T. R. Miller Mill Company in the forestry area and then moves to marketing in the treating division which produces utility poles.

W. T. Neal Dies in 1950.

When W. T. Neal dies in 1950, Ed Leigh McMillan becomes company president and Tom Neal serves in a number of positions mostly involving marketing. Over time Tom Neal, Adrian Downing, and John Miller handle operations management, and Ed Leigh McMillan functions largely outside of line operations, but as he ages, McMillan moves to the position of board chairman, with John Miller now becoming president and Tom Neal executive vice president.

(Continued on page 11)

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History of T. R. Miller Mill Until 1990

(Continued from page 10)

Basis of the Company's Longevity

The company's longevity is predicated in part on its timber management practices. In the early years as a water-powered mill, economics dictate cutting only large, mature trees. Later in the twentieth century the trees left behind in the original logging mature, and by that time the company has become actively involved in reforestation. Eventually the company has a timber base of some 200,000 acres. James Boyd said that no section of the country "was blessed with a greater supply of longleaf timber" than the area within a hundred-mile radius of Brewton.

Neal Lumbering and Manufacturing Company.

Miller's successors purchase hardwood operations and forested land in Alabama and western Florida and organize the Neal Lumbering and Manufacturing Company with Neal as president.

By 1950, they own some 75,000 acres. In 1952 they purchase another 5,300 acres in Santa Rosa County, Florida. Then, as a ten year "waiting period" specified in T. R. Miller's will neared its end, they broker various stock sales and transfers among Miller's heirs and the T. R. Miller Mill Company stockholders.

Neal Land and Timber Company

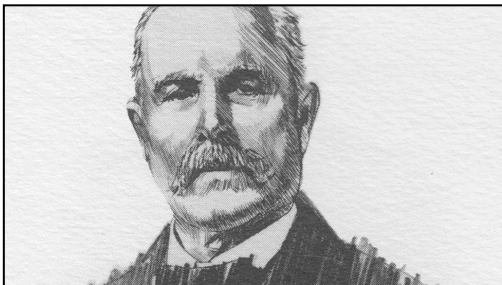
In the meantime, the Neal Lumber Company moves out of manufacturing and becomes the Neal Land and Timber Company, with landholdings of some 82,000 acres in northwestern Florida by 1997.

1990, Tom Neal Dies.

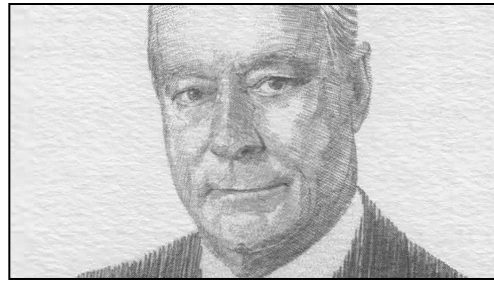
In 1990 Tom Neal dies, and leadership passes to yet another generation.



Ed Leigh McMillan (1888-1977)
In 1950, McMillan was named president of T.R. Miller Mill Company. He was quick to recognize the advantages of the scientific forestry approach to the timber industry; advocate the protection of forests from fire, disease, and insect infestation; and utilize artificial reforestation by planting seedlings. He played a key role in the creation of Conecuh National Forest.



Thomas R. Miller (1843-1914)
In 1899, Miller and Partners formed the Cedar Creek Mill Company which became the T. R. Miller Mill Company in 1912. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Miller had built a small sawmill into a timber empire.



John R. Miller, Jr. (1920-2014)
T.R. Miller Mill Company was Vice President and Director from 1947-1967, then assumed the Presidency, which he held through 1986 when he was then named Chairman.

Pictures and Text from Alabama Business Hall of Fame
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