

In the early days of Gibsonville a store was conducted by Capt. Jas. M. Sutton in the old building later owned by the late H. W. Steele. This was a good general store, and Captain Sutton later erected an attractive building about where Burke's store now stands, and did a flourishing business for some years. The site now known as the Rufus Summers corner was for long years given over to a bar room which did an unusually large business, and did much to place Gibsonville on the map; especially in the matter of fights, Saturday evening rows, etc. The best known landmark of these earlier days was not a landmark at all, but a watermark consisting of a large pond of red, muddy water that stood throughout the year, covering an acre or more from the present Masonic hall, near the property of the Gibsonville Hardware company, and back to the railway track. This pond was drained by the late H. W. Steele with the help of the railroad company which opened underground ditches running under the tracks towards the south.

Gibsonville lost several fine opportunities in those early days that would have made her a modern city. It is said that at one time Blackwell's Tobacco company was looking for a location before building in Durham, and had this place under favorable consideration; but there was no one to encourage, and no chamber of commerce to take hold of the matter, and this chance of a lifetime went forever past. Later this company became world-famous, and did much to create the present city of Durham.

Gibsonville's business life, and moral status, may, perhaps, be said to begin with the decision of Berry Davidson and H. W. Steele to locate there. Berry Davidson had sold his mill at Altamahaw, and chose Gibsonville for his new location. He built the first section of the Minneola mills, and, together with J. A. Davidson, gave the business a fine start. H. W. Steele, with a long look into the future bought the "old pond" and drained it, began building, and opened a large mercantile business. Both "Uncle Berry" and H. W. Steele were men of high moral type, and they, with others, began a struggle to "clean up" the town, drive out strong drink, and uplift the public morals. This warfare was never allowed to stop, until other strong characters joined in, and the victory was finally won for law, morals, and good order.

When finally the Davidson mill interests were sold to the present owners Berry Davidson continued to show his faith in the town, and to invest his money in other constructive enterprises that did much to develop the place, and make it a manufacturing town of importance.

Dr. G. E. Jordan was a pioneer with faith. When the town was still uncertain of its growth he erected a splendid three-story brick building that still stands as a monument to his faith in the place. Others came along to help the progress of the place. The Gibsonville Hardware company opened its first store; a credit to a much larger place, and a hardware business that has meant much to the surrounding community. The place was fortunate in having a number of young, progressive business men—among them J. A. Davidson, who did the first real work to secure good roads for eastern Guilford; F.

M. Smith, always ready to help with everything that gave a step forward; **J. L. Whitesell**, who kept his shoulder to the wheel of all forward movements and others now all passed away who could always be counted as being for progress.

The older settlers were wise enough to divide up their lands and make development possible; the **Cummings**, **Curtis**, **Smith**, **Lewey**, **Boon**, and other lands thus got on the market, and building rapidly followed. The factories enlarged; more people were constantly required for the operation of the mills; lumber yards were opened—the **Vortex** and others, new stores and new residences went along together; roller mill and chair factory came in; and the town was on its way. From the first church, the Methodist Protestant, there rapidly followed the Baptist; the Lutheran, and the Methodist Episcopal. The old shack of a school was laid aside, and a charter obtained from the legislature under which the town still operates its public school in a building which was thought to be sufficient for a long time, but which has been outgrown by the progress of the town, making it necessary to begin plans for one vastly larger and better at an early date.

A bank, a newspaper, paved streets and more soon to come, an increase in business houses, new industries, hard-surfaced roads leading into town and putting the place on the great highways of state travel—all of these are beginnings of a greater future.

The place first began to be known as **Gibsonville** about 1850, and coming on down for 40 years to 1890 we find it created with a population of 120 in 1890. It had taken 40 years to reach this number.

Thirty years ago mail went out from this place to **Alamance** post-office kept by the late **D. P. Foust** at his store two miles south; to **Brick church**, six miles south; and to **Shaw Mill**, six miles southwest. The service was irregular and was by occasional passing. Some of the well known names of that day receiving mail at **Gibsonville** postoffice were: **A. G. Clapp**, **Gideon DeVault**, **Mebane Ingle**, **Peter Michael**, **Jacob Sharp**, **E. Lafayette Smith**, **Mrs. Dilla Shepherd**, **Robert Sockwell**, **Maj. A. Summers**, **W. N. Wright**. Back in that day **Greensboro** was credited with a population of 8,125, **Burlington** with 1,150 and what is now known as **Elon College** was then called **Mill Point**. The postoffice was not yet created for **Whitsett**, and the mail for **Whitsett** all came to **Gibsonville** and was called for at this office. **L. C. Winchester** was then chairman of the **Guilford** county board of commissioners, and **J. R. Wharton** was superintendent of public schools. **Dr. Nereus Mendenhall**, of **Guilford College**, was chairman of the county board of education. The county commissioners from eastern **Guilford** were **Caleb A. Boon** and **Zimri M. Foust**. **J. H. Millis** was a member from **High Point**, and **W. E. Bevill** from **Greensboro**. **James W. Forbis** was mayor of **Greensboro**.

It can be readily seen from what has been said that the growth and development of all this section including **Gibsonville** has taken place during the last 25 to 30 years. It took the south as a whole from 20 to 30 years to recover from the losses of the Civil war, and growth and development were not possible until the scars of war had healed, and the losses had been somewhat restored. Poverty stared the south in the face for 30 years after the Civil war, and expansion and growth had to wait until the period begin-

ning about 30 years ago.

The real story of Gibsonville's growth is like that of almost every other place in this section; it had to wait for a generation that had not suffered the shock and loss of a great war. Here and there a survivor of the war succeeded, but the great majority had seen their wealth and ambition swept away by the red tide of the great struggle.

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