

The Southern Democrat

Oneonta, Alabama

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A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

By Lemuel Bryson

In 1856 my father and my mother and mother's sister and her husband, J. T. Price and family, moved from Georgia to the Brinlee Mountain, Blount County, Alabama and settled about two miles South of Holly Pond. 1857 was a very dry year, so that fall father and mother moved back to Georgia. In 1858 pretty good crops were made in Blount, so in the early part of 1859 my parents moved back to Brinlee Mountain. This country was thinly settled at that time, small settlements here and there about over the mountain. The settlement in which we lived was composed of about six or seven families in a radius of about two miles. Our neighbors were Will Mullins, George Lowe, Hamp Ivey, James Powell, Coral Mullins and my Uncle, J. T. Price and family. We lived five miles from Blountsville, that was our post office. Some of the people lived ten miles or more from their post office. There wasn't a post office on Brindlee Mountain at that time that I know of. Our nearest grist mill was eight miles away. J. H. Chamblee owned a mill six miles West of Blountsville. James Carnes owned a mill in the head of Browns Valley. One other mill, three miles South of Blountsville, all were run by waterpower. As to sawmills, they were unknown here then to the writer.

In the early 60s the Civil War was on hand which caused hard times. The people were frustrated and discouraged. About the end of the war all old settlers in the settlement where we lived moved away, but new settlers came in their place. At the end of the war in 65 was a very dry year and not much crops were made that year. They had nothing much to work at or to work with. It was a plow, an old scrub horse or mule or jenny or oxen. Their farming tools consisted of a wooden plow stock and a scooter plow with holes through the beam to hold a cutting colter in front of plow and a block of wood nailed on one side for mold board They raised some corn, some wheat, oats, rye, potatoes and pumpkins and a small patch of cotton. They raised some sorghum and they ground the cane on wooden mills and cooked the sorghum in large kettles. It was a little dark but would sweeten bread. The woods were open here then, not much undergrowth, mostly large timber. Anyone could drive almost anywhere through the woods with a wagon and team. The woods were burned off every year about February or March, then when the grass got up a little the woods would look as green as a wheat field. Cattle and sheep would get fat on the grass. Hogs would get fat on acorns and chestnuts. Hogs would sometimes go wild, would have to shoot them or catch them with dogs. Along In the 60's we had to pen our sheep every night. Late one evening we had just drove the sheep up and the wolves began to howl. They followed the sheep in sight of the house and then turned howling. One night we failed to get the sheep up. The wolves broke in on them and killed several of them and just scattered them from Dan even to Beersheba.

The wool of sheep was used for clothing. Women folks would make cloth and clothing. The men folks would make the shoes, some of them tanned their own leather. In the 60s the merchants of Blountsville had their goods hauled from Decatur, a distance of about 50 miles. It would take about five days to make a trip with ox wagons. They did their hauling with oxen in those days. In the 60 s and-70's there were a good many deer here, some turkey and a lot of fox squirrels. Deer would sometimes go in flocks like sheep.

As to churches and schools in the 60's, there was one small log house east of Holly Pond on Mud Creek that was used for a church and schoolhouse. There is where the writer first went to school. It was through the woods all the way and oh how I was afraid the wolf would catch me. I only went to school about eight days when the teacher took sick and died. In 1872 the settlement South and the one North and the one East came together and built a schoolhouse at Holly Pond. It was a log house. The seats were made of split logs with legs put in them and set around the wall of the house for the children to lean back against the walls. David Hood taught the first school there in the summer of 1872. At that time the nearest house was one mile away from the schoolhouse. About 1871 or 72 the train began to run from Decatur to Birmingham. On the road leading from the Ketchum Ford on Mulberry River to Cullman Town there were about seven or eight houses in sight of the road, a distance of about sixteen miles. In the early 80s the Georgia people began to move to Brinlee. round about Holly Pond. They built houses, cleared land and plowed oxen, raised cotton. Now is looks almost like a Brindlee Valley. L. M. Bryson.

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