Chapter Twelve

Good Hope Colored Settlement

The Community Expanded

The Early 1910 -1920

Shep Jones is still at large;

Slayer of A. J. Wall has not been apprehended:

Dee Dawkins a friend of Jones meet death at the hands of a mob—church and lodge hall burned:

Although for several days following the tragedy there was considerable excitement in the community where A. J. Wall was murdered last week but the negro Shep Jones things have quieted down somewhat now but so far as known, the negro is still at large. Some think that he was captured and killed but his cannot be confined.

In last week’s paper it was reported that blood hounds were taken to the scene of the killing to try to capture the fugitive. When the party form here reached there, about 2 o’clock the dogs were put on the trail and ran about two hours chasing through a field where it was said that Jones was seen to pass and running into a reed brake on the place of J. B. Chapman a few miles south of here where the trail was lost on account of a heavy rain that was falling.

No more (**words missing**)…til the following day when the news came that he had been seen about 4 miles south of Hickory and the dogs were carried there when they struck the trail again. The dogs then traced him to the home of Bill Fielder his father in law but he was not to be found there.

According to reports from what is believed to be a reliable source, the posse told Fielder that he must tell what had become of Jones. This he refused to do until he was tortured a while and put through what the party called the “third degree” whatever that was - when he divulged the fact that another negro named Dee Dawkins the son of Claud and Sylvia Dawkins had spirited the fugitive away. Not long after this, Dee Dawkins was seen to return riding horseback and leading a horse, and then he was taken in charge. When asked where Jones was, he told the crowd that is none of their damn business. Whereupon he was informed that he would either tell or be killed. His reply was told by a citizen who lives down about Garlandville but did not see the affair was that he would “die and go to hell before he would tell” and made a move to draw a pistol when he was filled with bullets.

Whether this is the correct version of the affair or not is not known but it is know that Dee Dawkins was found dead by the road side Saturday morning with four or five bullet holes in him. Other account state Dee Dawkins was killed about 5 miles south of Hickory on his way home 5 miles south of Hickory toward the Dawkins homestead.

Just what became of Fielder is not known but he was missing for the time and may be missing yet. It was reported at one time that he had been hung but this never could be verified and it is not known where he is. (So the newspaper reported)

(Next newspaper report) following day: The country south of here was alive with people for a day or two following the killing in search of the murderer and they became wrought up that some of the mob element stuck a torch to a large negro church and a lodge hall near Garlandville and burned them to the ground one night. This act was deplored on the part of the good white citizens of Garlandville As it is not believed that the negroes there had anything to do with the killing.

(Newton Register Star)The funeral of Mr. Wall took place last Friday at Garlandville. Where the ceremony was carried out by the Woodmen of the World of which he was member and a large crowed was out to witness the last obsequies. Deceased was one of the county’s best citizens and his death is greatly deplored. He leaves a wife and seven children who have the sympathy of all in their great misfortune.

In the fifty years following the Emancipation Proclamation only and two years after the last lynching in the community. Good Hope farmer had achieved a remarkable effort. They got their own land! Many other Freedmen and many poor Whites were trapped in the terrible sharecropping system. In the ten years between 1910 and 1920 the Colored Settlement had developed to some extent. However, by 1920 the settlement was fully developed. It is said by family elders that the Colored Settlement farmers had a long and challenging struggle to obtain their own land and maintain ownership. Many had worked long years as tenant farmers with a limited and often total lack of opportunity to achieve land ownership. Yet land ownership did happen and the community rapidly expanded in the early years. The population of documented settlers rose from about 100 to 400 during that period. They were no longer bound together as a “slave community”. The residents of the Good Hope Colored Settlement unified themselves as family and community.

By 1930 even more farmers in the community owned land. Several filed land claims on adjacent acreages between the town of Hickory and the Jasper County line to create a large section of contiguous farm and timber land throughout the settlement. (*Salter and other families in the community)*The Federal Government had a program to sell land, plows and tools cheaply and many took the offer. Land ownership increased. By the beginning of 1940 most farmers in Good Hope Colored Settlement had acquired full ownership of their small farms. These new land owners soon realized, with both tenant farming and with land ownership farming, that supporting a family was challenging. Nonetheless, many agreed that land ownership farming fared much better than sharecropping.

An elder, Broomsy Salter, remembered his father, Isaac Salter, saying “Starting a farm took some money and money was hard to come by.” Some remembered, “The first land owners to the Good Hope Settlement had suffered many inconveniences and endured many hardships. Things such as grist mills and saw mills were unknown in the area. Later the Settlement would boast of having a grist mill for grinding corn and a cane mill for making syrup. In an interview with eighty year old Opal Johnson Ford, the granddaughter of Filmore Johnson, she said, “Supplies such as cloth, shoes, nails and other rations were brought in from New Orleans, by Grandpa Filmore, a ten days journey away.” Slowly the area began to resemble a thriving rural community. Most families owned a wagon, a plow and two good mules. Little shanties gave way to substantial small houses.

1Behind the houses were smoke houses used for curing and storing meat. Also there were chickens in the yards for eggs and eating, hogs for butchering, cows for milking and a large truck patch that provided vegetables for eating, canning and preserving. Fruit and pecan trees and wild berries were plentiful. The majority of farms were family run and provided subsistence and a small income through the sale or trading of any surplus goods. The families often shared livestock, tools and labor as well as worked, played and prayed together. They had long established networks of support among themselves. These networks, consisting of blood relatives and beyond, it most often took the form of an extended family. Family helped family and neighbor helped neighbor. Within such a framework, the settlement increased despite all odds*.*

Chapter Thirteen

Timber and Sawmills Impacted

The Good Hope Colored Community

After World War I cotton prices began to drop. To decrease their dependence on cotton Mississippi farmers, both Colored and White, turned to timber. During this period timber created one of the most important crop productions. The sawmills and lumber camps that multiplied in the areas near the Good Hope Settlement created, for the local population, ample opportunities for employment. To help sustain their families many left the farm and went to work for the lumber companies and sawmills in the area. Few natural resources impacted the lives of Mississippians to the degree which timber did. In particular, the southeastern and south central regions of the state received the label "piney woods" because the dominant features of the region consisted of longleaf, shortleaf, loblolly and slash pines. Their use of timber, in particular the pine, influenced the economic, cultural and environmental development of the entire region. *(Researched* ***By Reagan Grimsley)****(Timber Related Source Materials about Mississippi’s Piney Woods: An Archival Survey of the McCain Library and Archives at the University of Southern Mississippi)(Some information in this chapter was taken from work researched* ***By Reagan Grimsley)***

In 1910 and 1920 sawmills operated by: George W Griffin, J R Buckwalter Lumber Company, Jim Massie, Martin Carson and the Hogue Lumber Company were all operating in Newton County. In the 1930s, 1940s and into the 50s Eugene White owned and operated sawmills in the near vicinity of the Good Hope Colored Settlement. One sawmill operated by Eugene White was located in Northeast Jasper County and in 1940s he operated sawmills in Chunky. Several descendants still living in Good Hope Community remember working with their parents at the mills. Others recalled hauling timber to the mills in the area. When the men and women who had grown up working on the farm took jobs in the lumber industry some became loggers, truck drivers, sawmill and planning mill workers, and cooks.

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Mrs. Bernice Chapman Mitchell, a Good Hope resident, said in an interview in the summer of 2016, “I met my husband, Oscar, in a sawmill camp.” She continued, “my” father worked in the camp and took me sometimes. Oh, my daddy was very strict with me,” she continued, “so Oscar

had to be somebody and a hard worker so we could get married. The men working in the camps did hard and dangerous work. Folks got hurt a lot and some got themselves killed. “Planning Mill workers,” Miss Bernice said, “there was always the chance that a man could get an arm or legs cut off.” As a teenager in Jackson, Mississippi during the 1920s future novelist, Richard Wright, sought work in a local sawmill. While observing men at work, he nearly had his head crushed by a runaway log and while there he talked with a man who had lost several fingers on the job. Wright said, “That incident sent him running back to town. An option most men with families did not have.” Forty five year old William Walker lived many years in the Good Hope Colored Settlement before he relocated with his family to the Decatur area for work. William Walker had been working in logging camps as a log cutter for many years when a falling tree hit him on his back. William died in the camp on January 15, 1914.

Essie Jay Toles, the seventeen year old cousin of the author, worked as a teamster at the sawmill camp operated by Martin Carson in Newton County. Essie Jay died on May 15, 1925 after falling under the wheels of a moving truck at the camp. His death records attest to his death: “Cause of death trying to board a moving truck… fell beneath the wheels and his head and body were crushed.” Ward Nelson Anderson another seventeen year old student in the community, the son of W. J. Anderson, died on May 21, 1923 of a ruptured urethra due to a fall while working at the Hogue Lumber Company. Twenty year old Colman Wash, the son of Rolly Wash and Ida Box, worked in a sawmill operated by Jim Massie in Newton County. It is not clear how Wash died. His death record only shows he died on February 14, 1925 and his occupation was listed as “a sawmill worker”.

Safety continued to be an issue in sawmill camps as late as the 1940s. Eighteen year old Jeff Brown, the son of Dave and Virginia Wells Brown of rural Hickory, Mississippi, was injured when he fell from a log truck. He was taken to the Newton Infirmary where he died on December 1, 1941 of fractured lower spine and left pelvis and right upper arm.

Settlement Timber Land Owners

The timber could not last forever; and by 1930 many areas of the piney woods were devoid of the once plentiful longleaf pine. The lumber industry came to an end. Lumber companies were clear cutting trees. Since the practice of reforestation had not yet taken root in the South, proliferation of the pine distinguished the landscape for many years to come.

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When this occurred, many White land owners in the areas near the Good Hope Settlement had land for sale cheap. Daniel Johnson and other Settlement members were able to take advantage of the offers and many community members were able to buy the unproductive land.

In the early 1940s when Reverend Daniel Johnson, a large landowner, was advancing in age, he gave each of his children forty acres of land that he held in the Good Hope Settlement. Most of the land had large areas of long leaf pine trees. By the late 1940's the efforts at reforestation began to pay dividends; the harvest of second growth pine forests again brought economic opportunity to a number of Settlement members. After the resurgent of timber in the piney wood area the land Daniel Johnson gave his children was now much more valuable than a decade ago. The efforts of reforestation had lured large corporate investors to the region. Many Colored property owners in rural Hickory and all over the state were struggling to protect their timber land from local White land owners and corporate investors.

Many Good Hope Community members had ownership of timberland including the children of Daniel Johnson. All of Daniel Johnson’s sons, except General and Archie, had relocated up North to Freeport, Illinois. General (known as “Pender”) moved to Freeport the following year. By 1942 only Archie Johnson (known as “Peck”) stayed on in Good Hope and made a fair living cutting timber and hauling logs. Archie was married by this time to Edna Hayden, a teacher in the Good Hope Community School, and they had five children: Alline, Emma, twins Doris and Daniel and the youngest child, Joyce Johnson.