

Susie Staton HISTORY OF TALLAHATCHIE COUNTY

CHAPTER III: FLORA

Tallahatchie County, covering an area of 629 square miles, has a total of 402,560 acres of land; 155,260 acres of pasture land, 39,288 acres of woodland pasture, 25,124 acres other pasture, 49,949 acres of woodland and 92,913 acres in timbered land. (1) The forest growth of the county is varied; although the forests have been depleted for both commercial and home use to a great extent, the supply of products is by no means exhausted.

Forests

The woodland of this county consists of both pine and hardwood; the pine being found only in the hill section; the hardwood in stretches along streams and branch bottoms of the Tallahatchie River and its tributaries. The largest wooded area is in the Tallahatchie River bottoms.

Forest Trees and Types

There are three species of conifers native to Tallahatchie County; the SHORLEAF PINE, found extensively in the hill section,

(1) United States Census of Agriculture, 1935

has flexible, slender, sharp pointed leaves, varying from three to four inches in length. The cones are three to four inches long with thick, rough scales. The lumber is much in demand for both home and commercial use. (See Chapter 16, Industry)

The CYPRESS, which grows in the Delta section, has a fruit consisting of a rounded cone or "ball" about an inch in diameter, composed of thick, irregular scales, firmly closed till ripe. Under each scale two seeds are hidden, and the cypress seed or ball is distributed by water. The wood of cypress is light, soft, easily worked, and is especially durable in contact with soil or water, a characteristic which makes it greatly in demand for greenhouse planking, boat and ship building, shingles, posts, poles and cross-ties.

CEDAR, found around old home sites, is used for shade and shrubbery. It has a blue, juicy, sweet berry following the bloom and the foliage is bluish-green. The wood is notable for its durability and is frequently used by farmers for fence posts, homemade furniture, etc. A hot iron rubbed across a cedar branch, which smooths the iron, is a favorite method and one much in use by negro

wash-women.

~~Hardwoods~~

Hardwoods native to Tallahatchie County are: ^{do not all cap} WHITE OAK,

RED OAK, WATER OAK, POST OAK, TUPELO GUM, SWEET GUM, HICKORY,

ELM, ASH, BEECH, PERSIMMON, DOGWOOD, SYCAMORE, LOCUST, SASSAFRAS,

POPLAR, HOLLY, PECAN, BLACK WALNUT, and RIVER BIRCH.)

WHITE OAK, found extensively in both hill and delta sections, has a ragged appearance, large, wedge-shaped leaves of dark green color, and oval shaped acorns which are very palatable for many animals of the forest. The wood of the white oak is heavy, durable, and much in demand for the building of houses and boats, agricultural implements, and many other things. (See Chapter 16, Industry)

POST OAK, native to hill and delta sections, is found in abundance; has dark brown bark, deeply furrowed, dark green leaves, four to five inches long and the wood is hard, heavy, and close-grained, and is used for posts, cross-ties, barrel staves, and

boat-building.

RED OAK, a tree native to the county, has a small, rounded acorn, about half an inch long which is set in a small, saucer-shaped cup. The wood is hard, heavy, strong and coarse-grained.

WATER OAK, found along branch and river bottoms, has acorns about half an inch long. The wood is heavy, hard and strong, light brown in color, with lighter colored sap wood. It is used as piling, cross-ties, and fuel.

TUPELO GUM is found in the Delta section. The wood is light and soft and used for wooden-ware, broom-handles, fruit and vegetable crates.

The SWEET GUM grows in profusion in the lowlands and on the hills. It is one of our more stately native trees, and is used extensively in the manufacture of lumber, furniture and kindred trades. The trees attain to an enormous size and height. It has a spicy, fragrant gum which oozes abundantly from the bark.

The PERSIMMON grows in all sections. Its fruit is round,

pulpy, and salmon colored, and very palatable when ripe. The wood is hard and tough, used for bobbins, golf club heads, pulley turn pins, and many novelties.

SASSAPRAS, a small, aromatic tree, has soft, light, brittle wood, and is used for posts, rails and ox yokes. The bark of the root is very aromatic and used as a flavor for candies and tea.

The SYCAMORE is a beautiful tree of hard texture and suitable for various purposes. It is used in the manufacture of interior finish and furniture. When quarter-sawed, it shows a grain that is curly like bird's eye maple. It grows extensively throughout the county and is much in demand.

RIVER BIRCH is one of the most beautiful trees. When well dried, planed, and sanded it makes exquisite furniture and takes a high-grade finish. It is a very valuable wood but is scarce in the county.

The ELM can be found everywhere, is very tough and impossible to split and is not in demand for utility purposes.

YELLOW POPLAR is one of the most stately of trees; it grows in both sections of the county, but attains to greater proportions in the lowlands, and its commercial value rivals that of any tree. When properly sawed, it makes beautiful and enduring lumber.

BEECH, native to lowlands, attains a huge size and has a smooth gray bark. At a distance it resembles the birch. It produces a small, but delicious nut, which is triangular and conical, each side being about a quarter of an inch wide, and tapering to a point. The wood, when quarter-sawed, aged, kiln-dried, dressed and sanded, makes beautiful and lasting furniture.

BLACK LOCUST grows everywhere under any and all conditions. It has lovely and fragrant blooms, but the wood is used for no other purpose than fence posts. Like sassafras, it has a thin covering of sapwood, the rest being heart of light orange.

HOLLY, an evergreen, grows in every section of the county.

The fruit, which ripens late in the fall and remains on the branches over the winter, is a bright-red berry, which gives the tree an ornamental appearance and makes it much in demand for

Christmas decorations.

The RED BUD is found in all parts of the county and is among the first forest trees to blossom; at a distance it resembles the crepe myrtle. Its wood is valueless.

DOGWOOD is tough and grows mostly in the hills. It is among the first wild trees to blossom, covering its bare branches with blossoms of a snowy whiteness. The wood is exceedingly tough and is used extensively for shuttles in cotton mills, and for various other commercial purposes.

BLACK WALNUT can be found in the county, but not in groups. Some of these trees grow to large size and produce nuts of a very rich quality. These trees are found for the most part in cultivated or abandoned fields, seldom in the wildwoods.

PECAN grows in the Delta section, both wild and cultivated. Some of the wild trees grow to a large size and the nuts are more delicious than the cultivated species.

Various species of HICKORY grow throughout the county: pignut, bitter pecan, scalybark, and others. Each of these, except the bitter pecan and pignut, bears a nut which is palatable to man, the scalybark being the favorite. The lumber is one of the highest priced on the market, and is used for handles of all kinds, and many other commercial uses.

Fruit Bearing Trees

MULBERRY, found in rich soil, has thin, dark, grayish-brown bark. Its early fruit, which resembles a blackberry, is greatly relished by birds and animals, but the wood has no value except as fence posts. In this respect, it is as enduring as the black locust or sassafras.

The WILD PLUM thrives in isolated places, and the fruit is very desirable for making jellies. It is one of the earliest trees to blossom in the spring, coming with the dogwood.

Economic Value of Forests

The economic value of the forests cannot be reckoned in dollars and cents; trees replenish the soil with as much plant food as they take from it and the accumulation of leaves for many years form humus which increases fertility.

Soil erosion is checked by trees. The hillsides would soon be gullied beyond control if it were not for the forest growth.

Trees form shelter for cattle, sheep, and work animals in both summer and winter.

Forests augment farm products which include: building materials, shuttleblocks made from dogwood and persimmon; wagon and auto spokes made from oak, ash and hickory.

All rural people as well as many town residents, obtain fuel from the forests. Many of their homes of this county are built of lumber manufactured locally. (See Chapter 16, Industry)

Historic Trees

A gnarled and twisted old BEECH tree stands on the grounds of the Masonic Cemetery, and is said to be more than seventy years old. Long ago, when school was conducted in the Masonic Lodge building, near the cemetery, children chose the big tree as a scene for play during recess and periods when free from their classes. Overlooking a small bluff and with a background of evergreen and honeysuckle, the big tree stands above the others in the cemetery, which include cedars and oaks. The erstwhile school-house and meeting place for the Masons, destroyed by fire in 1930, was eighty years old at that time. (1)

The beech measures more than seven feet in circumference, and old settlers of this community visit it and seek to determine the faint carvings on the tree, for in the early 1870's school children treasured the fact that their names were "notched" on this big tree. Another interesting tree on these grounds is a WATER OAK ten feet, eight inches in circumference. (2)

(1) S.L. Polk, Charleston, Miss.

(2) Mrs. Hattie Bailey, Charleston, Miss.

Wrapped in historic memories are two RED OAKS, measuring ten feet, eleven feet around and are situated on the old stage-coach road to Tusshome, on property now owned by Mrs. V.A. Bridgers, Cascilla. (1)

On the public road, about one hundred yards from the business section of Cascilla, stands a tall ELM tree, which is a corner-stone or marker for the first public road through that town; it was also used as a boundary when the village was founded over one hundred years ago. (2)

A huge RED OAK stands in the middle of a public gravel road between Swan Lake and Tippe, via Sharkey. This tree was left in the middle of the road for sentimental reasons; when Colonel Tom James permitted the road to be built, he said that the tree would have to be preserved as his father, Tom James, had rested so much beneath it as a boy. The tree measures twelve feet, eleven inches in circumference. (3)

(1) Mrs. V.A. Bridgers, Cascilla, Miss.
(2) W.M. Brunson, Cascilla, Miss.
(3) Mrs. W.K. James, Webb, Miss.

During the overflow of 1882, a young man, Jack Philip, rowed out to a tree in Cassidy Bayou and drove a spike in a tree even with the water. The tree, about one fourth of a mile from the iron bridge at Webb, on the Webb-Charleston road, is about ten feet in circumference. The spike is still in the tree. (1)

About one hundred feet east of the iron bridge at Webb stands an OAK tree about twelve feet in circumference, which was set out by Judge Webb when the place was first settled. Soon after the War between the States there were a number of trees at this point which marked a race track. These were ordinary oak trees, brought from the forest by Judge Webb over fifty years ago. This tree is the only one that is left standing. (2)

An old OSAGE ORANGE tree on the old Bailey lot in Charleston, was one of many others which were planted about the time the Bailey home was built in 1832. This tree forks about three feet above the ground, and one trunk measures forty-nine inches, and the other fifty-three inches. (3)

(1) W.J. Stephens, Webb, Miss.
(2) W.J. Stephens, Webb, Miss.
(3) Mrs. Hattie Bailey, Charleston, Miss.

Largest Trees

Some of the largest trees to be found in the county are located on the old Steton plantation near Swan Lake; an OAK, which was a large tree when Eli Steton built his home there about 1825, measures eighteen feet, seven inches in circumference one foot above the ground, with roots spreading to a circumference of forty-four feet. (1)

On the same plantation is a PECAN tree measuring thirteen feet, eight inches in circumference. (2)

One of the largest trees in Charleston is a WATER OAK, near the residence of Captain Eskridge, a pioneer citizen, who assisted in writing the history of Tallahatchie County. This tree measures twelve feet, five inches in circumference and is said to be more than a hundred years old. Shading a large area, it is located near a local road, and its leafy branches may be seen from a great distance. The roots are big, gnarled and twist-

ed and are above the ground in some places more than fifteen

- (1) Susie Staton, Winona, Miss.
(2) Mrs. Carter, Swan Lake, Miss.

feet from the tree. The branches of this tree extend in every direction and many birds find a home there. (1)

On the front lawn of Miss Clyde Lindsey's property, stands
an ELM tree thirteen feet, four inches in circumference; it is
at least one hundred years old; in the back yard is another
gigantic tree measuring thirteen feet around, and of the same
age. (2)

A large HICKORY tree on the old Pressgrove place, near
Cascilla, over a century old, measures eleven feet around. (3)

On the Bloodworth place is a large OAK, measuring ten feet, six inches in circumference; it is about eighty years old. (4)

A PINE tree on J.W. Burt's place, planted by J.M. Harris in 1852, is ten feet, seven inches in circumference. (5)

- (1) W.B. Burke, Charleston, Miss.
- (2) Mrs. Lillie Henry, Charleston, Miss.
- (3) Mrs. Blanche Payne, Cascilla, Miss.
- (4) Mrs. Blanche Payne, Cascilla, Miss.
- (5) Mrs. Jennie Burt, Cascilla, Miss.

There are three CEDAR trees on property owned by Miss Modie Trusty, of Cascilla. One tree measures six feet, six inches in circumference; one seven feet; the third six feet; these trees are eighty-five years old and were planted when J.M. Harris, Miss Trusty's grand-father, first settled in Tallahatchie County. (1)

Two trees noticeable for their size and age are on the lawn of Isaac Pattison, Charleston; both were standing when the home was built in 1856. One of these, a MAGNOLIA tree, measures six feet, six inches in circumference. The other tree, which has a tremendous trunk, is an Osage or MURDOCK, and was also standing on the lot when the Pattison house was erected; it is over ten feet in circumference. (2)

On the lawn of P.H. Sherman, who lives about eight miles up the valley from Charleston, stands an old POPLAR tree measuring fifteen feet in circumference; about ten feet from the ground the tree forks into two distinct trunks. Its age is about

(1) Modie Trusty, Cascilla, Miss.

(2) I.C. Pattison, Charleston, Miss.

ninety years.

An old WHITE OAK tree across the road from the Sherman home measures about sixteen feet in circumference, and was here when the county was first settled, which makes it over one hundred five years old. On O.J. Sherman's plantation are two beautiful OAK trees that were there before the county was settled in 1833; Mr. and Mrs. Buntin lived on this place. (1)

An old OAK tree on J.W. Burt's lawn at Cascilla is one hundred years old and measures eleven feet in circumference. The tree has been struck by lightning but is still standing. (2)

On property owned by I.C. Pattison, Charleston, stands an immense PECAN tree measuring twelve feet, two and one half inches in circumference. This tree was planted by I.C. Pattison's father in 1873. The Pattison home, destroyed by fire about twenty years ago, was one of the early landmarks. (3)

A huge PIN OAK, on the old J.J. Webb plantation, one mile
 (1) O.J. Sherman, Charleston, Miss.
 (2) Mrs. Jennie Burt, Cascilla, Miss.
 (3) I.C. Pattison, Charleston, Miss.

northwest of Webb, stands just to the right of the old Webb home. This tree is seventeen and one third feet in circumference; its top spreads about ninety feet and is covered in mistletoe. When Mr. Webb had the land cleared he left this tree for shade. (1)

On Mrs. C.H. Brook's lawn in Charleston, is an old MAPLE tree which measures ten feet, six inches in circumference, and its branches spread over the greater portion of the lawn. This tree is familiar to all Charleston residents, both old and young, and is regarded as a land-mark. (2)

A beautiful MAGNOLIA tree in Mrs. Charlie Harrelson's front yard in Charleston measures six feet, two and one half inches in circumference; the exact age of the tree is unknown, but it is believed it was planted in the 1850's. (3)

There is a beautiful old OAK tree on property owned by B.F. Saunders at Swan Lake which is seven feet, five inches around, and is at least seventy-five years old; decayed parts have

(1) J.J. Webb, Sumner, Miss.

(2) Mrs. Charlie Harrelson, Charleston, Miss.

(3) Ibid

been removed and cement put in to preserve the tree. On the same lawn is an immense OAK tree thirteen feet, eight inches in circumference, and Mrs. Flautt, now residing on the property, believes it to be one hundred years old. (1)

Freak or Unusual Trees

On the lawn of I.C. Pattison, Charleston, is a TEA plant that was brought here from South Carolina about fifty years ago; the plant resembles a huge bush and was planted by Patterson's mother. (2)

An unusual tree on the property of J.H. Caldwell, Charleston, is a WILLOW which forks at the ground into three separate trunks, each trunk bending and growing in a different direction. It is a full grown tree, each trunk having large limbs and branches. (3)

In the yard of Mrs. T.B. Abbey, Webb, there is a BANANA tree which was grown from a root given to Mrs. Abbey by Robert

(1) Mrs. John Flautt, Swan Lake, Mississippi

(2) I.C. Pattison, Charleston, Miss.

(3) Mrs. John Cossar, Charleston, Miss.

Townes of Minter City. In the summer this tree grows to a height of twelve to fifteen feet and shows its best during the months of September and October. The stalk dies down at the beginning of winter, and the roots are then covered with a coating of leaves and fertilizer. The tree comes up each summer from its roots. Although this tree has never borne any fruit, a tree in the yard of Mrs. B.F. Saunders, which grew from a root taken from the tree in Mrs. Abbey's yard, and which is three years old, produced about two hundred bananas last year. (1)

A flowering tree, said to be a member of the catwba family, and imported from England, near the residence of B.W. Embry, Charleston, is unusual because of its pretty purple blossoms, possessing a strong odor, and the large leaves, some measuring fifteen inches in length. Its origin at its present location is unknown, for no one is credited with planting it.

(1) Mrs. T.B. Abbey, Webb, Miss.

It is said to be between three and four years of age. In winter the tree is covered with large clusters of berries which remain all season, giving way in spring to the purple blossoms of exquisite beauty. The tree is of ordinary size, and the peculiar, strong odor exhaled by the plant is very rare. (1)

There is a PECAN tree of unusual formation on the Staton plantation near Swan Lake. This tree, measuring eleven feet, one inch about two feet above the ground near the fork, has one trunk six feet, four inches in circumference; the other, six feet, ten inches. This tree is very old. (2)

FLOWERS

Wild Flowers

Wild and cultivated flowers may be seen at almost any season of the year as the temperate climate is favorable for their growth, but early spring is the time during which more lovely

(1) Kent Butler, Charleston, Miss.
(2) Mrs. Carter, Swan Lake, Miss.

blossoms are on display than at any other. Every road, and the countryside are adorned with numerous varieties of native flowers.

More familiar and more easily recognized by the masses than any other wild flower is the GOLDENROD, which blooms in autumn. The golden cluster of flowers, set on the end of a long, slender green stem, two to six feet long, decorates roadside and field through September and October.

The PRIMROSE, with its delicate pale pink blossoms growing close to the ground on separate stems, blooms during April and May.

Through March and April the tiny, white, orchid and purple DAISIES dot fields and meadows; the flowers have four petals, growing singly on the end of fine, hair-like stems; with oblong leaves set close to the ground.

From May through November the black and yellow circular blossoms of the BLACK-EYED SUSAN, brighten fields, woods and roadsides. The plant has oblong, rough, green leaves growing the length of the slender stalk.

The WILD ROSE, with its clusters of pink flowers that fade almost white, is native to the county, and may be seen in bloom throughout the summer months.

The bright colored blue to lavender blossoms of the wild SWEET PEA can be seen brightening low, damp places during August and September; the small green vines climbing upon shrubs and bushes.

The wild VIOLET, both purple and white, may be found growing profusely in patches in rich soil in hill and delta.

The WATER LILY, with its many large, snowy-white petals, flowers from June to September in ponds or slow-moving water.

MILKWEED, one of the well known summer flowers, grows along roadsides, in the fields and open woods. The lilac colored blooms are followed by seed pods which, when dry, open and send forth a silky, glossy substance which may be seen floating in the air during the dry fall months.

Of wide distribution in the county is the BITTERWEED, easily recognized by its small yellow flowers of disagreeable

Melissa Blanchard, Nature Garden, P. 248
St. Louis Station, Winona, Minn.

odor, which bloom from early summer until frost. The bitter taste of milk caused by cows eating this weed make it little appreciated by many farmers.

The MAY APPLE, found in rich, shaded soil, has three large leaves with one huge white flower, supported by a smooth, green stem and fruit resembling an apple.

The yellow blossom of the MULLEIN, in its setting of large, pale green velvety leaves growing close upon the ground, resembles a huge rosette. The mullein plant is credited with having high medicinal value -- concentrated extract of mullein, mixed with honey, being a remedy for coughs and colds.

JIMSON WEED grows in light soil, fields, wastelands near dwellings and rubbish heaps, reaching a height of one to five feet. The flowers are large, showy, green-white, about four inches long. The fruit is a densely, prickly, elongated burr. The seed and stem of this plant contain a powerful narcotic poison. (1)

Other native wild flowers are: HYDRANGEA, VERBENA, NIGGERHEAD,

SWEET WILLIAM, PASSION FLOWER, DOG FENNEL, BLUE-BELL and BUTTERCUP.(2)

(1) Neltje Blanchen, Natures Garden, P. 248

(2) Susie Steton, Winona, Miss.

Shrubs

SUMAC, an attractive shrub, grows from eight to ten feet tall, and the yellow and white blooms which come in May are not so beautiful as the purple-red and scarlet foliage which is so noticeable in the fall.

The white DOGWOOD is widely distributed in the hill section. Flowering in late March and early April, this large shrub or tree, with its profusion of white blossoms, is regarded as the official harbinger of spring.

The ELDER, common to hill and delta alike, has a long smooth stalk with luxuriant, smooth green foliage and large clusters of white blossoms, which give way to hundreds of small red berries.

These berries and blossoms make delicious wine.

RED BUD or Judas tree, is conspicuous in the woods for its profuse covering of red-purple flowers preceding the leaves in early spring. Widely distributed in the delta section.

asplie	heliotrope	violet
sunflower	vine	portulaca
stocks	larkspur	snap dragon
astibosa	alysum	bachelorbutton

Vines

The wild MORNING GLORY is a familiar sight along roadsides, woods and thickets, and often times in cultivated fields. The blooms which open each morning with the sun, range in color from lavender to blue-pink and white.

The wild HONEYSUCKLE, of wide distribution, permeates the rural section with its sweet odor during the blossoming season in spring.

The TRUMPET VINE, with its brilliant tomato colored, trumpet-shaped blossom, is seen at many points climbing upon trees and fence posts. It is often confused with the POISON OAK, but is a different plant and non-poisonous.

Cultivated Flowers

Flowers from seeds

sweet pea	poppy	pansy
verbena	marigold	hollyhock
zinnia	nasturtium	larkspur
petunias	dianthus	nigellone
salvia	heliotrope	violet
sunflower	vines	portulaca
stocks	kochia	snap dragon
scabiosa	glyssum	bachelorbutton

Perennial Plants

digitalis	hibiscus	shasta daisy
gallardia	hardy phlox	chrysanthemum
golden glow	iris	tritoma
sweet william	delphinium	agilegia

Bulbs and Roots

dahlias	butterfly lily	gladioli
skarylls	osladium	water lily
narcissus	canna	jonquil
day lily	hyacinth	daffodil
crocus	snowdrop	tulip

Shrubs

arbor vitae	juniper	euonymus
box	spruce	spirea
deutsia	beauty bush	kerria japonica
altha	rock orange	flowering almond
butterfly bush	cape jasmine	crepe myrtle
bridal wreath	nandina	oleocanthus
quince	syria	barberry
ocean willow	forsythia	privet
yellow jasmine	plumbago	weeping willow
kikosa	roses	holly
flowering peach	cedars	hydrangeas
lilac	smoor river privet	pittosporus (evergreen)

Garden Club

The Civic Garden Club of Charleston, with Mrs. Allen Neely as President, sponsors city beautification by encouraging its members to added efforts to improve appearances of homes and grounds, cooperates in holding flower shows and garden pilgrimages.

Flower Shows

Home demonstration clubs of Tallahatchie County sponsor flower and vegetable shows. In May, 1936, a lovely exhibit of forty-seven vases of flowers, and 125 varieties of vegetables were displayed. (1)

Beautification Project

A WPA Beautification Project has been in operation in the county for some time. Grounds around churches and school buildings, courthouses, and parks at Charleston, Sumner, Tutwiler, Webb, Philipp, and Glendora have been improved by this project.

(1) Miss Frances King, Charleston, Miss.

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Bailey, Mrs. Hattie	Charleston, Miss.
Bridgers, Mrs. V.A.	Cascilla, Miss.
Brunson, W.M.	Cascilla, Miss.
Burke, W.B.	Charleston, Miss.
Butt, Mrs. Jennie	Cascilla, Miss.
Butler, Kent	Charleston, Miss.
Carter, Mrs.	Swan Lake, Miss.
Cosser, Mrs. John,	Charleston, Miss.
Flaunt, Mrs. John	Swan Lake, Miss.
Harrelson, Mrs. Charlie	Charleston, Miss.
Henry, Mrs. Lillie	Charleston, Miss.
Jones, Mrs. W.K.	Webb, Miss.
King, Miss Frances	Charleston, Miss.
Pattison, I.C.	Charleston, Miss.
Payne, Mrs. Blanche	Cascilla, Miss.
Polk, S.L.	Charleston, Miss.
Sherman, O.J.	Charleston, Miss.
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HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT
Tallahatchie County

Date: May 8, 1936.

Canvassers-Lilly Young
Janie L. Fonda

SOILS AND MINERALS: ASSIGNMENT #7

I. SOILS

1. The principal soil-forming material in county:

The principal soil-forming material in Tallahatchie County is clay, which is the sub-soil.*

2. List soil types, as based on similar origin, similar color, structural characteristics, surface features and drainage:

The different types in Tallahatchie County are sand, clay, and silts.*

3. Series of soils found in county:

The eastern or hilly section of Tallahatchie County consists of Brown Loam and Loess soil. The western section or the delta is composed of the Yazoo Basin soil or Sarpy, fine sandy loam, and Sharky clay.*

4. Value of each type as to crop raising, grazing, timber crop or any other value:

The entire county, especially that up the Yazoo Basin land and the Brown Loam area, is good grazing and timber land.*

5. Commercial stones; building stone; iron sandstones, hydraulic limestone, etc.:

None.*

*Reference: Mr. I. W. Carson, County Agent, Charleston, Miss.
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6. Petrified rock:

None.*

II. MINERALS

1. Metallic minerals:

- (a) Iron:

- (1) Bessemer ores:

None.*

- (2) Non-Bessemer ores:

None.*

- (b) Aluminum:

- (1) Kind of ore:

None.*

2. Non-Metallic minerals:

- (a) Cement resources:

White sand is plentiful in different sections of Tallahatchie County.*

- (b) Lignite:

None.*

- (c) Clays, kinds:

Deposits of white clay are found in the eastern or hilly section of Tallahatchie County.*

- (d) Special clays:

In Tallahatchie County there are deposits of special white clay (probably Fullers earth), which has been analyzed by the Samarie Engineer at the University of

*Reference: Mr. I. W. Carson, County Agent, Charleston, Miss.
May 6, 1936.

TALLAHATCHIE COUNTY, SOILS

Illinois. Many companies from the North have sent men here to examine this clay, and they say it is the best deposit of this type clay to be found anywhere. Letters from Germany and other foreign places have been received inquiring about the clay. Although a clay company has been formed, no work has been begun to make use of the clay. However, experiments have been made which show that it can be used for many purposes: pottery, dishes, base for powder, and numerous others. Exhibits of the use of the clay can be seen in the Mississippi Clay Company office, located in Charleston.*

(e) Bentonite:

None.**

(f) Other minerals (1) Silica (2) Ochres:

None.**

(g) Sands, for glass manufacture and pottery:

There is pure white sand found in Tallahatchie County, which could be used for manufacture of glass and pottery, but as yet this sand has not been utilized.**

(h) Mineral waters:

None.**

*Reference: Dr. J. E. Powell, Charleston, Miss.
Rev. E. P. Hawes, Charleston, Miss.
May 6, 1936.

**Reference: Mr. I. W. Carson, Charleston, Miss.
May 6, 1936.

(i) Oil and gas:

Numerous companies have drilled for oil and gas in Tallahatchie County, but have not been successful. However, geologists state that there are good indications of oil and gas here.*

*Reference: Dr. J. E. Powell, Charleston, Miss.
May 6, 1936.

Mrs. Isabel Summers, Supervisor,
Historical Research Project,
Tallahatchie County.

April 28th, 1937
HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT
Tallahatchie County

Project No. 2984

Canvassers - Mrs. Fairrest Carter
Mrs. Mary Wilson
Birdie Harrison

TREE SURVEY - ASSIGNMENT #25

At The Foot of a Tree

When I come to die I wish to lie
At the foot of a low-limbed tree,
With my head on my arm
And a bend in my knee,
And the falling leaves to cover me!

I would love for the life
From my dying hands
To be drawn to the heart of a tree;
That I could feel sun, and wind, and rain,
And the tree could breathe for me!

From dust we come, to dust we go,
It is dust I wish to be.
Oh, let me lie where the birds flit by,
In the quiet spot where I chose to die,
At the foot of a living tree!

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HISTORIC TREES.

Another visit was made to the old Staten home to measure the trees there. These trees were standing on the site when Mr. Eli Staten built his home about 1825; the house itself is as it was originally constructed.

There was an oak tree measuring sixteen feet thirty-one inches in circumference; its roots spread to a circumference of forty-four feet - this measurement being taken about a foot from the ground.

Tallahatchie County
Page #2

There was a pecan tree twelve feet twenty inches around; and twin pecan trees grown together measuring eleven feet one inch about two feet above the ground near the fork: one trunk was six feet four inches around, the other six feet ten inches.

All these trees, in spite of their antiquity, are fine specimens of trees and create a perfect setting for the old Staten residence. *

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There is a beautiful old oak tree on property owned by Mr. B. F. Saunders at Swan Lake (on the lawn of Mr. and Mrs. John Flautt) which is seven feet five inches around and is at least seventy-five years old; it contains cement as a preservative.

On the same lawn there is an immense oak tree twelve feet and twenty inches in circumference. Mrs. Flautt believes this tree to be one hundred years old. **

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One of the largest trees in this section and one with a great deal of historic interest is the large water oak near the residence of Captain Es-
kridge, one of the pioneer citizens who helped write the history of Tal-
hatchie County. This home/^{was} located in the eastern section of the city
of Charleston, but was burned several years ago

The giant water oak is in a wooded section and is the largest in that area. Measuring twelve feet and five inches in circumference, the tree is

*Reference: Mrs. Carter, Swan Lake, Mississippi

**Reference: Mrs. John Flautt, Swan Lake, Mississippi

***Reference:

said to be more than one hundred years old. Shading a large area, the tree is located near a local road and its large and leafy branches may be seen from a great distance. The roots are big, gnarled, and twisted and are above the ground in some places more than fifteen feet from the tree. The big branches of the tree expand in every direction and many birds find a home within the tree's large spread. *

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There is a beautiful magnolia tree in Mrs. Charley Harrelson's front yard in Charleston; it measures six feet two and one half inches in circumference. The exact age of the tree is unknown but it is believed that it was planted in the '50s. **

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A bird flits merrily among the leafy boughs of the big beechnut tree on the grounds of the Masonic Cemetery and its chirp brings back memories of the yesteryear. For this large tree is a landmark in the old burial ground and is said to be more than seventy years old. Situated near the center of the grounds, the big tree is gnarled and twisted and shows signs of the years.

Long ago when school was conducted in the Masonic Lodge Building near the cemetery, the children chose the big tree as a scene for play during recess and periods when free from their classes. Overlooking a small bluff and with a background of evergreen and honeysuckle, the big tree stands above the others in the cemetery which includes cedars and oaks. The erstwhile

*Reference: W. B. Burke, Charleston, Mississippi

** Reference: Mrs. Charley Harrelson, Charleston, Mississippi

school-house and meeting place for the Masons, was destroyed by fire in 1930 and was eighty years old at that time.

The large beechnut tree has few limbs but its branches are big and of a white color. The beech measures more than seven feet in circumference. Old settlers of this community visit the tree and seek to determine the faint carvings on the tree for in the early '70's the school children treasured the fact that their names were "notched" on the big beechnut. The tree's historic setting is more interesting for the Masonic cemetery is one of the oldest burial grounds in this section. *

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The old Masonic Temple site in Charleston is a place of many historic landmarks. The Temple was destroyed by fire in 1930, and all that remains there is a few aged trees and a small burial ground.

Two of the largest trees are: a beechnut tree measuring eight feet one inch in circumference and a water oak ten e feet and eight inches around. **

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In the front lawn of Miss Clyde Lindsey's property stands an immense elm tree thirteen feet four inches in circumference; it is at least one hundred years old. In the back yard there is another gigantic tree measuring thirteen feet around and of the same age. ***

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On property owned by Mrs. V. A. Bridgers, Cascilla, are two old trees wrapped in historic atmosphere. They are red oaks, measuring ten feet and eleven feet around and are situated on the old stage coach road to Tusahoma.

*** *Reference: S. L. Polk, Charleston, ** Mrs. Hattie Bailey, Charleston
*** Mrs. Lillie Henry, Charleston, Mississippi *** Mrs. V.A. Bridgers

There is an old Osage orange tree on the old Bailey lot in Charleston. This tree was one of many others which were planted about the time the Bailey home was built in 1832.

This tree forks about three feet above the ground and one trunk measures forty-nine inches around and the other fifty-three inches. *

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There is a large Hickory tree on the old Pressegrove place near Cascilla which is over one hundred years old and measures eleven feet around. **

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There is a large oak tree on the Bloodworth place; it is ten feet five inches in circumference; it is around eighty years old. ***

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A pine tree located on J. W. Burt's place; it was planted by J. M. Harris in 1852 and is ten feet seven inches in circumference. ****

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The lawn surrounding the home of Mr. Isaac Patterson, Charleston, proved to be a scene of historic interest. Among various kinds of flowers and numerous types of trees, there were two trees which were especially prominent

- * Reference: Mrs. Hattie Bailey, Charleston, Mississippi
- ** Reference: Mrs. Blanche Payne, Cascilla, Mississippi
- *** Reference: Mrs. Blanche Payne, Cascilla, Mississippi
- **** Reference: Mrs. Jennie Burt, Cascilla, Mississippi

for their unusual size and age. One of these was a magnolia tree which has stood since 1856 and was on the lot when the Patterson home was built there; it measures five feet and eighteen inches in circumference.

The other tree, which has a tremendous trunk, is an Osage or Murdock and was also standing on the lot when the Patterson house was erected; it is over ten feet around. *

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Located in Cascilla on the public road about one hundred yards from the business section of the town, stands a tall elm tree which is a corner stone or a marker for the first public road through Cascilla; it was also used as a boundary when the village of Cascilla was founded over one hundred years ago. **

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There are three cedar trees located on property owned by Miss Modie Trusty of Cascilla. One tree measures six feet six inches in circumference, one seven feet, and the other six feet; these trees are eighty-five years old and were planted when J. M. Harris, Miss Trusty's grand-father, first settled in Tallahatchie County. ***

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- * Reference: Mr. I. C. Patterson, Charleston, Mississippi
- ** Reference: Mr. W. M. Brunson, Cascilla, Mississippi
- *** Reference: Miss Modie Trusty, Cascilla, Mississippi

A huge red oak tree stands in the middle of a public gravel road between Swan Lake and Tippe, going through Sharkey. This tree was left in the middle of the road for sentimental reasons. When Colonel Tom James permitted the road to be built, he said that the tree would have to be preserved as his father, Tom James, had rested so much beneath it as a boy. The tree measures twelve feet eleven inches around. *

At Sharkey where the famous old ante-bellum home (recently destroyed by fire) of T. G. James stood, there are a magnolia tree, a pecan tree, and a cedar tree the ages of which are unknown. *

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During the overflow of 1882, a young man by the name of Jack Phelip rowed out to a tree in Cassidy Bayou and drove a spike in a tree even with the water. The tree is located about one fourth of a mile from the iron bridge at Webb on the Webb-Charleston road and is about ten feet in circumference. The spike is still in the tree. **

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About one hundred feet east of the Webb iron bridge stands an oak tree about twelve feet in circumference which was set out by Judge Webb when Webb was first settled. After the Civil War, there were a number of trees which ran along where the tree stands that marked a race track. These were ordinary oak trees brought from the forest by Judge Webb over fifty years ago. This tree is the only one that is left standing. ***

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* Reference: Mrs. W. K. James, Webb, Mississippi

** W. J. Stephens, Webb, Miss. *** W. J. Stephens, Webb, Mississippi

On the lawn of Mr. P. H. Sherman, who lives about eight miles up the valley from Charleston, stands an old poplar tree measuring fifteen feet in circumference; about ten feet from the ground, the tree forks into two distinct trunks. Its age is about ninety years.

On May 10th, 1916, Mr. Sherman's daughter, Mary, and Mr. Thomas Shelton Taylor, of Como, were married on the Sherman lawn.

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An old white oak tree across the road from the Sherman home measures about sixteen feet in circumference. This tree was here when the county was first settled which makes it over one hundred and five years old.

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On O. J. Sherman's plantation are two beautiful oak trees that were there before the county was settled in 1833; Mr. and Mrs. Buntin lived on this place. *

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Largest Trees:

There is an old oak tree on J. W. Burt's lawn at Cascilla which is one hundred years old; it measures eleven feet in circumference. The tree has been struck by lightning but is still standing. **

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*Reference: O. J. Sherman, Charleston, Mississippi

** Reference: Mrs. Jennie Burt, Cascilla, Mississippi

On property owned by Mr. I. C. Patterson in the town of Charleston, stands an immense pecan tree measuring twelve feet two and one half inches in circumference. This tree was planted by Mr. Patterson's father in 1873. The Patterson home, which was destroyed by fire about twenty years ago, was one of the early landmarks in Tallahatchie County. *

A huge pen oak tree is located on the old J. J. Webb plantation one mile northwest of Webb, Mississippi, which stands just to the right of the old Webb home. This tree is fifty-three years old and is seventeen and one third feet in circumference. The top spreads about ninety feet and is covered with mistletoe. When Mr. Webb had the land cleared, he left this tree for shade. **

On Mrs. C. H. Broom's lawn in Charleston stands an old maple tree. It measures ten feet and six inches in circumference and its branches spread over the greater portion of the lawn. This gigantic tree is familiar to all Charleston's residents both old and young and is regarded as a conspicuous land-mark. ***

* Reference: Mr. I. C. Patterson, Charleston, Mississippi

** Reference: Mr. J. J. Webb, Sumner, Mississippi

*** Reference: Mrs. Charlie Harrelson, Charleston, Mississippi

The giant red oak tree on the place of W. H. Wiggins, Cascilla, route 2, has gone the way of many trees - destroyed because it was in the way. The big oak was shading land that is being cultivated this year and Mr. Wiggins found it necessary to kill the tree by cutting into the heart of the tree and rendering it unfit for further service insofar as budding. The large tree is beautiful in the spring of the year but in a short time will shed its buds. Mr. Wiggins is on land owned by W. E. Carpenter in Beat 3, Tallahatchie County.

The old adage is each ring on the stump of a tree will indicate a year and in this way its age may be determined. The giant red oak is old, about one hundred years old, according to Mr. Wiggins and measures four feet in diameter and more than twelve feet in circumference. The tree presents many unique characteristics and upon cutting into the red or heart of the tree, Mr. Wiggins found two prongs or stems which showed two oak trees had grown together when young and forked when about five feet above the ground. He says that a tell-tale sign for the two stems inside the heart were easily distinguished.

The big oak was located at the point of a v-shaped gully and land on either side was being cultivated and its big branches hindered proper cultivation of the land. The tree was a landmark in that section of the country and in the springtime presented a scene of picturesque beauty but submitted to the will of a progressive spring farming program. *

*Reference: W. H. Higgins, Cascilla, Mississippi

Freak or Unusual Trees.

There is a tea plant on the lawn of Mr. I. C. Patterson, Charleston, which was brought here from South Carolina about fifty years ago; the plant looks like a huge bush and was planted by Mr. Patterson's mother. *

In Mrs. T. B. Abbey's yard in Webb there is a banana tree. Mr. Robert Townes of Minter City, Mississippi, gave Mrs. Abbey the root from which it was grown. In the summer, this tree grows to a height of twelve or fifteen feet and in the months of September and October shows its best. The stalk dies down to its roots through the winter and is covered with leaves and fertilizer. The tree comes up each summer from its roots.

This tree has never borne any fruit but Mrs. B. F. Saunders was given a root about three years ago and it produced about two hundred bananas last year. **

There is a very unusual tree on Mr. J. H. Caldwell's property in Charleston. It is a willow tree which forks at the ground into three separate trunks, each trunk bending and growing in a different direction. It is a full grown tree and each trunk has large limbs and branches. ***

*Reference: Mr. I. C. Patterson, Charleston, Mississippi

**Reference: Mrs. T. B. Abbey, Webb, Mississippi

***Reference: Mrs. John Gossar, Charleston, Mississippi

Fine Specimens of flowering trees.

The flowering tree, said to be a member of the catalpa family and imported from England, near the residence of B. W. Embry in Charleston is a curiosity because of its pretty purple flowers possessing strong odor and the large leaves, some measuring eighteen inches in length. Its origin at its present location is unknown for no one is credited with planting the tree but its beauty is more noticeable because of its location in one of the prettiest flower gardens in the city. The tree is said to be between three and four years of age.

In the winter large clusters of berries covered the tree and remained all season and in the the spring was transformed into purple blooms of rare beauty. The tree is not of extraordinary size and the peculiar, strong odor exhaled by the plant is very rare. *

As we drive through the hill section of Tallahatchie County in the spring the woods are full of red-bud and dog-wood trees in full bloom and the ground dotted with sweet williams. This natural beauty of the land-scape creates a scene of pulchritude and color that would inspire an artist.

Mrs. Isabel Summers
Mrs. Isabel Summers, Supervisor
Historical Research Project
Tallahatchie County
District Four

*Reference: Mr. Kent Butler, Charleston, Mississippi

Susie Staton

HISTORY OF TALLAHATCHIE COUNTY

CHAPTER IV: INDIANS

Introduction

Very little is left in Tallahatchie County to remind one of its first citizens, the Indians. A few mounds, Indian arrows, old land grants, names of streams, or towns are permanent monuments which stand, but too much is lost.

Their expressive language, wholesome outdoor life, their good morals, bravery, endurance, disregard of physical discomforts, and contempt for those of their race who lacked the spirit of good sportsmanship are qualities that may well be treasured as a legacy by those who now possess the land.

First Inhabitants

The first inhabitants of what is now Tallahatchie County were Indians of the Choctaw tribe. In 1830 the Choctaw Nation assembled at Dancing Rabbit Creek and agreed to a treaty, by which they ceded to the United States the remaining lands which

they held east of the Mississippi. Tallahatchie County was included in this cession. (1)

Customs and Characteristics

"The Choctaw were a branch of the Muskogean stock who seemed to have entered the South from beyond the Mississippi at a considerable period before the other divisions....The Choctaw in historic times lived in Mississippi, locating their towns mostly on the Pascagoula and Chickasawhay rivers. They had some twenty thousand people and were the most numerous of the Southern tribe.

"The Choctaw differed in many respects from the other Southern Indians.....All the Southern Indians were agricultural, The Sioux and Choctaw most of all. The principal crop everywhere was corn, of which they had several varieties including popcorn. They raised beans, pumpkins, squash, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and melons, and what surplus they had at the end of the summer they stored away in cribs, of which each family had one. Around

(1) W. L. Riley, History of Mississippi

TALLAHATCHIE COUNTY, INDIANS

each village were the cleared fields where lay the garden strips of the individual families. It was the custom to make the planting a communal enterprise but after that each family worked and harvested its own strip. A certain amount of the crop went into the common storehouse, which was a central feature of the town, and under the care of the chief. Tobacco was also raised, but it was of inferior quality. The Southern Indians were pipe smokers, but their use of tobacco was chiefly for ceremonial purposes. When the cleared fields of the Indians became exhausted, their only recourse was to move their village to some other site....

"Salt was an important item of commerce. It was made at the salt water springs, numerous throughout the South, by boiling off the water in huge clay kettles....The Choctaw procured most of their supply from the springs in Noxubee County." (1)

"The Choctaw-Chickasaw language was a fairly typical Indian language, simple in structure and guttural in sound, though many of the words are pleasant to the ear. Their expressions

(1) Robert Spencer Cotterill, The Old South, pp. 45, 50, 52 53.

were simple and often beautiful. There is quite a bit of literature in the Choctaw tongue. It is a credit to these Indians that their language contained no profanity, and to call an enemy a "long-eared rascal" would be about the strongest anathema one could hurl against him.

"The Choctaws were, generally speaking, a law-abiding race. They were famous for keeping their word, and there was no need for jails.

"In earlier days, the Choctaws and Chickasaws had a peculiar, and in some respects, a revolting manner of caring for their dead. At death the bodies were wrapped in their robes so as to protect them from vultures and wild beasts, and placed on elevated platforms, where they were left for some months. After stated time, an official known as a "Bone-Picker," carefully removed remaining flesh from the bones, set fire to the platform, placed the skeleton in a wooden box, and removed it to a building known as the "Bone-House." From time to time, the accumulated

TALLAHATCHIE COUNTY, INDIANS