

Here is the official State of GA record -

"Late on Nov. 17, 1864, the 29th Missouri Mounted Infantry [US] seized the ferry at Planter's Factory (Ocmulgee Mills) on the Ocmulgee River at Seven Islands to secure it for the crossing of the Right Wing of Gen. Sherman's army into Jasper County. Next day, the 1st Missouri Engineers laid two pontoon bridges at the site and the crossing began.

"Smith's division, 15th Corps, crossed first and halted two miles toward Hillsboro to wait for Kilpatrick's cavalry division to cross and pass to the front. Blair's 17th Corps crossed and marched via Monticello to avoid Hillsboro.

Early on the 19th, Kilpatrick crossed and took the advance. Smith moved through Hillsboro and camped near the county line. Woods' & Hazen's divisions, 15th Corps & the Artillery Brigade followed and camped in and around Hillsboro. HQ Right Wing (Howard) and HQ 15th Corps (Osterhaus) were established here [Hillsboro] for the night.

"Heavy rains having made the roads extremely difficult, the crossing was not completed until afternoon on the 20th when Corse's division 15th Corps, took up the bridges & encumbered with wagon trains, a cattle herd and the pontoons, moved to Monticello and camped. That day Smith, Woods & Hazen moved to Clinton, and Blair to Blountsville. Corse reached Hillsboro on the 21st."

REF- "Across the Ocmulgee" State Historical Marker located @ Ben Hill School on Ga. Hwy. 11 in Hillsboro, Georgia

Checked the "Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Army in the War of the Rebellion" and consulted the US Army's maps of the "March to the Sea" in 1864. The maps CLEARLY show that Sherman's 15th and 17th Corps crossed the Ocmulgee River on pontoon bridges [plural] @ the location known as "Planter's Factory".

The current name of the crossing is "Lamar's Ferry" or "Lamar's Mill" on the old H.S. White place - a few miles NE of the old "Cork" settlement. The ORA speaks of the November crossing as a time of heavy rains and the western banks were steep hills that the rain made annoyingly 'muddy'.

"On the 17th [Nov. 1864]....camped 3 miles east of Jackson, the county seat of Butts County. Our division was in the advance."

"On the 18th, the regiment at 5 o'clock AM, at the head of the division and army, and reached the Ocmulgee River at half past 8 o'clock in the morning. Crossing the river on a ferry-boat, the command moved about 2 miles beyond it and went into camp at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, having covered 8 miles distance. *The river was crossed just above Ocmulgee Mills, large flouring mills, and near "Planters' Factory," a large cotton*

factory containing about 70 looms. At the point of crossing, the river is about fifty yards wide. It narrows at that point and makes very fine water power. On the 19th, the regiment marched 15 miles, between 9 o'clock in the morning and quarter past 8 o'clock in the evening, and camped one mile south of Hillsboro. Was rear guard for the division train."

REF:

Page 145,

"History of the 93rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Read a 1908 article this morning written by the "GA Dept. of Mining & Geology" that said that they established a river guage to measure low water flow located @ "Lamar's Ferry, one-half mile below [downstream] Lamar's Mill on the Ocmulgee River. The object was to compare it to the low water flow as measured in Macon.

No one every told me that this was the location of Lamar's Ferry!! This might change our ideas for Sherman's crossing of the Ocmulgee. The army seized the ferry [Planters' Factory Ferry] prior to constructing their Cumberland pontoon bridge [a new type in 1864]. In addition, we have the eyewitness account that the pontoon bridge was located "just above [upstream of] the factory". We will need to look into that to determine the precise location of the pontoon bridge crossing.

This place is certainly full of history! That hilltop at Planters' Factory was also the site of the Creek Indian Town of Coweta [c.1690-1715 AD], and the river below was the river crossing area of the Okfuskee Trail aka the Upper Creek Trading Path. No doubt an important site in the historical heritage of Butts County! Today, I consulted Confederate Industry by Harold S. Wilson & found the following data on page 208 -

Planters' Factory [cotton mill] was "*ordered destroyed*" by Maj. Gen'l. Oliver O. Howard, commanding Sherman's Right Wing, November 1864. However, official reports of Gen. Howard indicated it [the cotton mill] was "*partially dismantled to bridge the river.*" At the end of the Savannah Campaign, Howard reported burning 2,000 bales of cotton, most of it from Planters' Factory. The factory contained 1500 spindles & 150 employees used in the making of thread and cloth for the Confederacy. Hence the rationale for it being "ordered destroyed". A trooper from the 81st Ohio remarked on the area; saying there was "...quite a village here, mostly women, employed by the factory...". Of the buildings he said, "...the mill and factory are quite large and neat..." & the "...flour mill [Ocmulgee Mills] is the largest and best I have ever seen..." Gen'l. Howard reported his troops found over 560 bales of cotton in a warehouse near the flour mill.

Recounting all river & stream crossings along the March - Poe recalls, "...over the Ocmulgee, at Planters' Factory, 200 feet,..."

"Right Wing - pontoniers, First Missouri Engineers, Lt.Col. Tweedle, commanding; strength, 530 men.
Materials: 28 canvas pontoon boats complete, 28 boat-wagons, 600 chesses, 15 chess-wagons, 196 claw balks, 1 forge, 1 battery wagon, 2 tool wagons (a general assortment), 7 forage wagons

and a sufficient quantity
of harness, ropes, etc. Length of bridge, 580 feet; total length of bridges, 1,430 feet...."

Lamar's Mill

That gentlemanly gentleman, Mr. J. B. Saunders, who is in charge of this picturesque and historic place is ever ready to give information that is at once interesting and instructive.

One hundred and fifty yards above where the mill now stands once stood the first cotton factory that was ever built in Butts county. It was owned by a rich yankee by the name of Nutting. At the Nutting factory, in anti-bellum times, cloth of all colors was turned out in great quantities and of the finest fabrics. In Sherman's march to the sea, his fire bogs applied the fatal torch to this magnificent property, actuated by the hellish design to persecute a subjugated foe, they caused the property in as ashes to flow where only waste waste waters were intended to go to the rich river bottoms spread out below. Only the day before this anarchistic arson was consummated Mr. Nutting had put in seventy-five thousand dollars of new machinery in an addition or extension to his building of which a single wheel never turned. All this occurred right in the face of the placid and smooth Ocmulgee, who was only giving her self freely to propel the man's device, and only resented by an angry blush, as the made flames scorched the forest along her banks, and she is still running on inviting man to venture again.

But many, many years before this occurred, yes, when each Sabbath was made hideous by the cries of the red man as his dogs chased the bear over the hills around, a man whose name is gone down unsung and unknown to this scribe, built a mill where the factory afterwards stood. He built it there for the very good reason that nature had built the dam. Conceiving that there was a dam by a mill site, he forthwith built a mill by a dam site, and out great-grandmothers baked ash cakes with the meal he made with our great-grandfather's corn. Opposite this factory site, whose tremendous foundation rocks are still intact, out in the shoals are two of nature's wonders. They are two pots or well in the solid granite as round as a compass could scribe, one of which is bottomless. They were no doubt left there when our Lord was crucified, as no sculptor could approximate their smoothness, his chisel marks would show that art had taken a hand.

Except right at the mill, desolation now reigns supreme. Many houses mostly vacant, and in a semi-dilapidated state, marks the spot where once all was busy happy, families. But to modernize, the people there now are in high glee, anticipating the coming of a railroad, which will tie all this vast water power and find granite beds to the whole business world by the way of the Southern system. The old houses will be repeopled and new ones built for the great crowd of laborers who would flock there to undo the South's hidden treasures.

This great body of wealth lies nearly due east from Pepperton cotton mills, and a road could start at the McDaniel crossing and reach the place in a six mile run. There would be no grading to do worth mentioning as the level lands in line are already at grade points for miles and miles in a direct courser

Jackson Argus - Butts County

Week of May 14, 1897

News about the Smith's Mill section of the county. Here is my version of events in general as compared with data so far published.

I taught summer school just north of the creek then called Wise Creek, now Kinards Creek, some 65 years ago. I went home with some pupils to spend the night, and as we walked down a hill a hundred yards or so from the house there lay a mass of land completely choked with small bushes, some twelve feet from the river bank. Clear water ran over rock, and as he water was no more

than six inches On November 17th, 1864, the Right Wing marched from McDonough to Jackson, Enroute to Planter's Factory on the Ocmulgee River, where it wasto cross into Jasper County the next day. South of Locust Grove, Woods' and Hazen's divisions, to facilitate the movement, took a road to the west of Jackson and camped near Liberty Church. Smith's and Corse's divisions continued their march through Jackson and camped east of town.

That same night, November 17th, the 14th Corps (Left Wing), commanded by Maj. Gen. J. C. Davis, had camped on the west bank of the Yellow River. Both the railroad and wagon bridges over the river having been destroyed The Right Wing camped around Jackson the night of November 17th. That night Osterhaus (15th Corps) sent the 29h Missouri Mounted Infantry to seize the ferry at Planters' Factory on the Ocmulgee River at Seven Islands

and to secure both banks of the river at that point for the passage of the troops on the next day.

On the morning of the 18th the Right Wing moved from its bivouacs to effect the passage at Planters' Factory on pontoon bridges to be laid by the 1st Missouri Engineers. Smith's division (15th Corps) moved first. Upon arrival, the 1st Brigade (McCowan), with the 4th Minnesota Infantry in advance, crossed on the ferry and entrenched on high ground east of the river. At 11:00 a.m. the pontoons arrived and, by 1:00 p.m., two bridges were ready.

Smith completed his crossing that afternoon and camped two miles from the river on the Hillsboro road, to wait for Hoods' and Hazen's divisions and to permit the cavalry to pass to the front. During the night Blair's 17th Corps crossed and moved via Monticello and Blountsville to avoid congestion on the Hillsboro road.

On the 19th, Kilpatrick's cavalry crossed and took the advance. He was followed by Woods and Hazen and several wagon trains. Heavy rains had made the steep hills on the east bank extremely difficult and the passage was not completed until the afternoon of the 20th when Corse's division of the 15th Corps

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cleared the bridge site. Smith moved through Hillsboro and camped near the Jasper-Jones county line. Woods' and Hazen's divisions, 15th Corps, and the Artillery Brigade followed and camped in and around Hillsboro.

Headquarters Right Wing (Howard) and Headquarters 15th Corps (Osterhaus) were established there for the night. On the 20th Smith, Woods and Hazen moved to Clinton and Blair to Blountsville (southeast). Corse, who was crossing the Ocmulgee that day, did not reach Hillsboro until the 21st.

Kilpatrick, who had crossed the Ocmulgee on the 19th, reached Clinton that day and turned toward Macon, the Right Wing continuing toward Gordon. The infantry had marched from Atlanta almost unopposed but Kilpatrick had skirmished steadily with Wheeler who was now contesting his advance toward Macon.

The next morning he attacked the defences of East Macon. Repulsed by Wheeler and the Georgia Militia, he retired east to Griswoldville where he found Walcutt's Brigade, 15th Corps, posted there to protect the passage of the wagon trains of the Right Wing. They destroyed several miles of track, and burned the pistol factory, a soap and candle factory and other facilities in Griswoldville, but no further attempt was made on Macon during the

March to the Sea.

The Right Wing was moving southeast toward Gordon where it would be in communication with the Left Wing at Milledgeville, to receive orders for the next move. The more direct roads to Gordon were already crowded with the troops and trains of the 15th Corps and with Kilpatrick's cavalry. So Blair's 17th Corps marched via Monticello and Blountsville toward Gordon. On the night of the 20th, the 17th Corps camped at Blountsville and along the road to Haddock with its advance guard near Fortville, well abreast of the 15th Corps which had reached Clinton that day.

On the 21st

Monticello News
MORE ABOUT SMITH'S MILL AND SEVEN ISLANDS

During the past year as we have gathered information on Smith's Mill and the Seven Islands area, we have received much help and information from a gracious lady, Mrs. J. B. (Clara) Ellis. We are pleased to have Mrs. Ellis as guest columnist this week with more data on the mills and their history. (John P. Harvey)

By CLARA T. ELLIS

I have been interested in the articles that have appeared in The Monticello deep, the children waded out. I removed my shoes and followed suit. A twig was in my way and when I broke it off it disturbed a wasps nest. I received a bad sting or two. I did not get to explore the island, but I am sure that it was the large island as it seemed to be sitting on top of the rocks. I was not sure but that they have eroded away in the last 70 years. I guess the creek first known as Wise's later Kinard's was near by, but I don't recall seeing it then, though I had waded in it as a child.

An old pupil of mine and two cousins were in a group who picniced on the large island some years ago. They said that there were many bones there then. (Many wounded horses were reportedly destroyed there during the Civil War.) I was told that there was only the old Crittendon home still standing near the site of the old Lamar mills then, though it was deserted. I understand that the buildings at Lamar's were all burned except the Crittendon home. The Lamar family moved to Macon and one of them I.C.Q. Lamar, went on to Texas to prominence as the Chief Justice of the Texas Supreme Court.

My father, reared in this area, said that there were several ferries along this part of the river: Giles, Halls or Hollands. Wise's, Smith's and Goodman's. Several counties coming together near here was a factor in the growth of the area. Mention has been made in earlier articles of crowds waiting to cross at Wise's ferry. This was at the time of the 1826 land grants. In an article written by my father for the Butts County Sentinel he stated that people camped on our land.

My grandfather, William Balaam Thompson, born in 1792, came to the Smith's mill area in 1847. I feel sure that he had some part in building the rock race and the rock house. He was mainly a contractor and he built the roadbed and laid the tracks for the railroad between Union Point and Greensboro in 1842. He was a poor man as worldly things go, but must have had a good education for the times, as it is said that, after moving into the undeveloped area when his children were young, he undertook to teach them all to read and write.

When Mr. Smith bought the mill he had equipment put in that ginned wool to remove trash and then moved it on down to spin it into finger-sized 2 1/2 foot rolls ready for women to spin. Mr. Smith had bought the mill as an investment. He lived in Butts County in the vicinity of Lamar's Mill, not far

down the river. This was also near the Seven Island area where the Indians had crossed for lo, these many years. As Mr. Smith's health waned he turned the farm over to his son and moved to Flovilla some four miles over in Butts County.

It happened that several well-to-do families lived on the Butts County side of the river and, as the area was too far from a town for convenient shopping, a village came into being and a clothing factory was established to give employment to workers from Butts, Jasper, Jones and Monroe counties. There was a grist mill known as Lamar's Mill, and most such villages also had a blacksmith shop, a woodshop, perhaps a gin and a store.

The clothing factory gave farmers a chance to make cash money. As a rule, cotton was sold in the fall and otherwise all the cash a housewife ever had was from the sale of a few eggs, or perhaps she would barter them for coffee, sugar, etc.

Additional Comments:

Transcribed by Suzanne Forte (suzanneforte@bellsouth.net) from copies of articles contained in the Monticello News. These articles were prepared by Mr. John Harvey and published in this newspaper during the 1970's time frame. Permission has been granted by Mr. Harvey for use of these very valuable and informative articles.



DIRT TRAIL CUTS DEEP INTO PAST by Bill Osinski, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 14 JUN 1998



Traces of a road deep into the nation's Indian, Revolutionary, and Civil War history are still around in Jasper county, and historians want to bring it back to life. They believe it belongs on the National Register of Historic Places.

It's not just another stretch of Georgia red clay. "It's the oldest dirt road known to Western man," said Pam Hammonds, executive director of the Jasper County Chamber of Commerce, who's part of an effort to have a dirt road not just placed on the National Register of Historic Places but also made into a tourist trail.

The Seven Island Stagecoach Road runs through much of Jasper County and cuts to the very core of Georgia history. Before there was a recorded history of this continent, American Indians formed and used the trail for hunting trips from their settlements at a shoals area of the Ocmulgee River that came to be called Seven Islands.

The Seven Islands of the Ocmulgee was mentioned as a trading point in accounts of Carolina fur traders that go back as far as 1670. In 1730, famed naturalist William Bartram described the area in his journals as having an Indian settlement of about 1,400 people.

Up until 1790, when George Washington negotiated a treaty with the Creek Indians ceding land for a stage coach trail that would connect Augusta with Mobile, Ala., Seven Islands was where America ended and the Indian lands began.

Stagecoach stops became settlements and, later, a few grew to towns. Throughout the early 19th century, the road was important to regional commerce. Seven Islands marked the upriver end of the navigable part of the Ocmulgee, so cotton growers would send their product to the mills near Seven Islands, to be processed and then shipped downriver.

Even after the railroad supplanted the river steamer, Seven Islands remained a commercial and historic hub. Jasper County historian John Harvey said there were cotton gins, grist mills, sawmills and textile mills at Seven Islands. During the Civil War, Sherman's armies crossed the Ocmulgee via a pontoon bridge at a spot not far upriver. The story is told that the Yankees slaughtered hundreds of their spent mules and horses on one of the river islands rather than leave the animals for the Rebels.

One of the mills at Seven Islands was powered by water channeled through a mile-long canal, Harvey said. When the river water was diverted into the canal, the river was usually lowered to the point where people could cross it from the Butts County side by stepping on river rocks. "They said you could walk across the river without getting the tops of your shoes wet," Harvey said.

The mills operated until the cotton collapse of the 1920s and '30s. The abandoned buildings were torn down in the 1980s. Robert Jordan, a Monticello engineer and city councilman, has plotted the route of the old stagecoach trail over a current road map of Jasper county. "Very little of the original road is on existing roadways; some of it is out in the middle of fields," he said.

But there are still a few stretches of county-maintained dirt roads that actually may be part of the historic trail. Except for the gravel, the settings seem much as they might have been in the

early 1800s, when traveling 25 miles was considered a good, hard day.

Along the route, there are also a few remnants of those who lived there. At a place called Bethel Corners is a building that originally was a log cabin stagecoach stop. It was later bricked over and used as a country store.

Mostly, though, the stories of the lone-gone past are to be found in overgrown graveyards.

Dennis Dean, who identifies himself on his business card as a "Grave Seeker of Historical Relevance," has taken on the assignment of identifying the grave yards as a retirement avocation. So far, his explorations through the records and the woods have located more than 230 graveyards.

Dean's research has been transferred into books available to genealogical researchers at the Jasper County Chamber of Commerce in Monticello.

In one graveyard not get from the Seven Islands Trail are more than 10 headstones marked only with "RS"; Dean believes these are the graves of Revolutionary War soldiers.

That same graveyard may have been part of one of the county's original churches, St. Martha's Methodist Church. Dean said he thinks a stone wall within the graveyard might be the base of a monument to James L. Darden, the man on whose plantation the graveyard was built.

Darden was a Union sympathizer who rose to the rank of general in the Union Army and then returned to Jasper to farm cotton. One reason the monument is now missing, and why the church mysteriously stopped functioning, was that local sentiment ran heavily against the general and his home church, Dean speculated.

Hammonds said the plan for the preservation of Seven Islands Stagecoach Road would be to improve some of the stagecoach stop points along the way and make the route available to visitors. Ultimately, she said, they hope to build a historical interpretive center on the banks of the Ocmulgee near Seven Islands.

Not a bad future for a country road that leads to the distant past.



General Howard soon reported by letter the operations of his right wing, which, on leaving Atlanta, had substantially followed the two roads toward Mason, by Jonesboro' and McDonough, and reached the Ocmulgee at Planters' Factory, which they crossed, by the aid of the pontoon-train, during the 18th and 19th of November. Thence, with the Seventeenth Corps (General Blair's) he (General Howard) had marched via Monticello toward Gordon, having dispatched Kilpatrick's cavalry, supported by the Fifteenth Corps (Osterhaus's), to feign on Mason. Kilpatrick met the enemy's cavalry about four miles out of Mason, and drove them rapidly back into the bridge-defenses held by infantry. Kilpatrick charged these, got inside the parapet, but could not hold it, and retired to his infantry supports, near Griswold Station. The Fifteenth Corps tore up the railroad-track eastward from Griswold, leaving Charles R. Wood's division behind as a rear-guard-one brigade of which was intrenched across the road, with some of Kilpatrick's cavalry on the flanks. On the 22d of November General G. W. Smith, with a division of troops, came out of Mason, attacked this brigade (Walcutt's) in position, and was handsomely repulsed and driven back into Mason. This brigade was in part armed with Spencer repeating-rifles, and its fire was so rapid that General Smith insists to this day that he encountered a whole division; but he is mistaken; he was beaten by one brigade (Walcutt's), and made no further effort to molest our operations from that direction. General Walcutt was wounded in the leg, and had to ride the rest of the distance to Savannah in a carriage.

> Change

Forage of every description - such as Pork Sweet potatoes Honey & c [et cetera] & c [et cetera] - We went into camp 3 mile from Jackson the county seat of Butts Co [County] in an oak grove. - Distance marched 19 mile - It is still a mystery where we are going. I think we will cross the Ocmulgee River tomorrow and then we will either go down the east bank of the River to Macon or go direct to Milledgeville - We can reach either place in 3 days - Along our route today we surprised the citizens very much they were not expecting us so soon. Had some splendid persimmons today - the best I ever ate - A fine day for marching.