

## History of Talmo

The small community of Talmo, located some 10 miles north of Jefferson and 13 miles south of Gainesville on what used to be the Gainesville-Midland Railroad Line, was little more than a vast wilderness in 1865 with only a few houses scattered here and there. The first Land Grant was issued to Stephen Whitmire and consisted of 375 acres of good land on January 24, 1816.

The origin of the place named Talmo is somewhat a mystery, yet one reliable source says that the name derived from the Creek Indian word Talomeco, which means Home of the Chief Tallassee.

The first recorded settler in this area was a Mr. Hemphill who arrived sometime prior to 1840. After that time this section of northern Jackson County began to be settled more rapidly. Early settlers included Moses Smith from Union County, Jimmy Rogers settling near Pendergrass, Billy Wood settling near where Mountain Creek now stands, Rev. Jesse Human near Hickory Sideling, and Moses and James Simmons settling where Talmo is now located.

The area was hit heavily by the War Between the States, and the loss of life was relatively high. The small developing community was left with no fewer than 15 widows after the gunfire stopped.

After the Civil War, in 1866, the Rev. W. H. Bridges, Sr. moved into this area. It has been said that this man probably did more to develop and open up the area in those early days than any other person. One of the first things he did was to have the people build a log schoolhouse. Around 1872, when Mountain Creek Church was organized, services were held in this building.

### SCHOOLS

The first school in the Talmo area was located in the Johnnies Hill Mason Lodge in 1882. Members of the Lodge built a two-story building, and the lower part of the structure was used as a schoolroom. It was located two miles west of Talmo where Ted Cook now lives.

The officials of the Johnnies Hill School sought out good teachers for this work. Two of the first teachers were Miss Irene Bailey and F. T. McGee. Eddie Dickson (Mrs. Clifford Storey) graduated from Brenau in 1903 and some of her early teaching experience was at Johnnies Hill. Miss Dickson's home was :

NOTE: THIS DOCUMENT WAS COMPILED BY NELLE K. STONE, CAROLDENE MCFEVER  
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ON SEPT. 19, 2006 *S. Kinney*

Jefferson, so she rode the Gainesville-Midland Railroad to Talmo on Sunday, then on to Jefferson for the week-end. While in Talmo she stayed with the Simmons family.

Talmo's first school was built in 1906 on four beautiful acres adjoining the church lot. J. H. A. Simmons and W. H. Bridges were the leading men in building the \$2500 school. The school was furnished with single patent desks, good blackboards, good maps in sets, good charts, small globes, framed pictures, a library of 75 volumes, an organ, teacher's desk, a well in good condition, a covered water cooler, and individual drinking cups.

There were three teachers--Luther Elrod, assuming the principal's position, with F. K. McGee and Miss Irene Bailey as teachers. There were 99 pupils, a Boys Corn Club, History Club, and a 32 weeks school year in two terms of 24 and 8 weeks.

Luther Elrod boarded with the J. H. A. Simmons family. He was very fond of the youngest daughter, Lunette, then a toddler. He often took her to school with him, where she played with the school books all day.

Our last school in Talmo was built about 1925. It was a beautiful school built on the same lot as the previous one which had burned. It consisted of five classrooms with cloakrooms and a large auditorium with a stage and red velvet drapes. Later a lunch room was added. Pupils attended grades 1-9 and later graduated from Jefferson and other schools.

HOMES

In the early days of Talmo, every man owned his own home. Some of the beautiful homes belonged to: L. C. Fowler, J. H. A. Simmons, John William Whitmire, J. H. Simpson, J. D. Bridges, W. H. Bridges, Sr., Henry Simmons and Clarence Wood.

LATER HISTORY OF TALMO

Talmo had only one store and a railroad line in 1896. By 1905, the little town had grown to include two large stores, a post office, a blacksmith and repair shop, a large ginning plant, railroad depot, two large warehouses, a rock quarry, guano company, and the new schoolhouse mentioned earlier.

During the reign of "King Cotton" Talmo prospered and continued to grow producing a very fine short staple cotton known far and wide. As a matter of

(9/15/66 NOTE BY CAROLDENE MCEVER DIV)

FRARY  
Long staple (Elrod's Historical Notes)  
Short staple - Wilson's Early History of Jackson Co. Georgia

fact, Talmo enjoyed the distinction of being located in the midst of a section that has historically been noted for its fine cotton. In the cotton trade, it is known as the "Talmo Cotton District." This little city is surrounded by some twelve or fourteen square miles of gray--nearly white--lands that produce the finest short staple cotton in the world. In fact, most of Jackson County lands produce a fine grade of cotton. When the Pacolet Cotton Company was looking for a location suitable for their dismantled mills, they chose Gainesville, Georgia in order that they might be in close touch with this section of Georgia--Jackson and surrounding counties.

However, the prosperity brought to the area because of Talmo cotton was to be short-lived. Around 1919 and 1920 the region was tragically hit by the boll weevil, with devastating results. Countless jobs were lost, and some of the community's most prosperous families were forced into bankruptcy. It took years to recover from the effects of this natural disaster.

The Talmo Militia District #1691 was created in 1909, and since that time local Justices of the Peace have included: R. C. Wood (1909), J. W. Walker (1913), W. A. Roberts (1917), L. R. Pettyjohn (1924), W. P. Pettyjohn (1945), James L. Pethel (1957), A. J. Irvin (1961), and Ted Cook (1965). Notary Publics have included Leon R. Pettyjohn (1901), James L. Pethel (1952), and Jimmy Shaw (1957). Jewell Maddox and J. C. Sosebee, Sr. have served as Constables.

The town of Talmo was incorporated August 9, 1920 with the corporate limits being defined as extending four-tenths of a mile in every direction from the depot. The first city officials were: Dr. W. C. Kennedy, Mayor; A. J. Murphy, D. E. Murphy, J. W. A. Davis, and J. H. A. Simmons, Councilmen. The charter was reactivated in 1987 and officials at present are: Larry Wood, Mayor; Myra McEver, Dot Kinney and Wylie McEver Council members.

PHYSICIANS

Dr. Wiley C. Kennedy

Dr. Wiley C. Kennedy was the first doctor to practice in Talmo. He was born in Hall County at the Kennedy place on Candler Road. His father's name was Harrison Kennedy and his mother was Sidney Bliss Smith.

Dr. Kennedy attended Vanderbilt University and then went to the Atlanta Medical College (now Emory University). He practiced in Belmont before moving to Talmo where his first office was located on Mountain Creek Road a few yards from the railroad on property now owned by John William Kesler.

In Talmo, the building presently occupied by Kinney's Store was initially his office. As well as these medical facilities, the building also housed a drug store, pool table, bank, Frank Gee's barbershop (in the basement) and, on a part-time basis, housed the dental office of Dr. Ed Pirkle of Jefferson who was known as "Uncle Ed."

Dr. Kennedy was married to Cora Lee Merritt on October 17, 1894. Two daughters were born of this marriage, Carrie and Irene.

Dr. H. E. Crow

Dr. H. E. Crow, Talmo's second doctor, graduated from medical school in 1916 and worked for two years with Dr. Kennedy in the latter's drug store/doctor office. Dr. Crow served as a doctor in France in World War I and afterwards worked until his retirement at the tuberculosis sanatorium in Alto, Georgia. He was married to Julia Murphy, daughter of Abe and Victoria Murphy of Talmo.

CHURCHES

Talmo Baptist Church

On September 5, 1911, a number of earnest Christians of Talmo met at the old schoolhouse, where the present schoolhouse now stands, for the purpose of organizing themselves into a Baptist church. Sixty-two people were at this meeting and became charter members of this church. Many of these members came from the Mountain Creek Church. The Rev. Mr. C. A. Strickland was called as the first pastor, and he served until 1914.

Upon organization, this group of Christians began immediately constructing the first church building on a plot of land given by Mr. J. H. A. Simmons and upon completion, the church was dedicated on May 14, 1913. In the years following additional rooms and a Baptismal Pool were added. Still later, in August 1944, the church voted to build additional rooms for a Sunday School. These were dedicated August 4, 1946. In 1953, the church voted to provide, through rearrangement and new construction in the basement, fourteen class rooms, a pastor's study, a library, and two rest rooms. These were finished and dedicated in January 1955.

The first B.Y.P.U. was organized on November 17, 1917. The Pond Fork Sunday School was organized in 1924, then in 1926 this became the Pond Fork Church. In 1928, Talmo withdrew from the Mulberry Association to join the Chattahoochee Association. In 1948, Talmo Church began Wednesday evening prayer services and the next year began full-time worship services with the Rev. Mr. Joe Fullbright as pastor. By 1956, a pastorium had been erected on land donated by R. H. McEver, Sr. By 1959, need for a newer and enlarged building was seen and plans were made to build. Unanimous approval was given to the plans, and in 1965 the old building was torn down and a new building was erected and dedicated on December 12, 1965. The following is a list of the charter members.

J. H. A. Simmons	C. C. Simmons
Mrs. J. H. A. Simmons	Paul Walker
H. T. Simmons	J. J. Simmons
J. W. A. Davis	Mrs. J. J. Simmons
Mrs. J. W. A. Davis	J. E. Thomas
W. H. Bridges	Mrs. J. E. Thomas
Mrs. W. H. Bridges	C. B. Humphrey
Z. J. Bridges	Mrs. C. B. Humphrey
Clyde Simpson	D. E. Murphy
Smith Whitmire	Mrs. D. E. Murphy

Charter Members of Talmo Baptist Church (cont.)

R. C. Wood  
Mrs. R. C. Wood Thrasher  
J. B. Stewart  
Mrs. J. B. Stewart  
J. M. Gee  
Mrs. J. M. Gee  
J. A. Simpson  
Mrs. J. A. Simpson  
Wilburn Simpson  
Elmer Simpson  
J. E. Bridges  
W. T. Clark  
Mrs. W. T. Clark  
Grover Clark  
Julia Gee Whitmire  
J. H. Smith  
Mrs. J. H. Smith  
Nettie Smith Moore  
Ada Smith Morgan  
E. L. Gee  
Mrs. E. L. Gee

A. J. Murphy  
Mrs. A. J. Murphy  
Mrs. W. S. Murphy  
T. W. Murphy  
Mrs. T. W. Murphy  
W. M. Thomas  
Mrs. W. M. Thomas  
Frank Thomas  
Mrs. Frank Thomas  
W. J. Morgan  
T. W. Gee  
Mrs. T. W. Gee  
Mrs. W. J. Walker  
Ruby Walker Hargrove  
Bessie Walker Bloodworth  
Ida Graves  
Mrs. H. E. Crow  
Helen Clark Waddell  
Jesse Murphy  
Mrs. Jesse Murphy

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE

A U. S. Post Office was opened in Talmo in 1898 and the building this post office was housed in is still standing although it is in need of repair. In 1940 the post office was moved to the train depot, located just across the road. And in 1965, a new and spacious brick building was erected to house the Talmo Post Office which was built to exacting government standards.

Since 1898 the Talmo community has been served by only six postmasters: William J. Hawkins (October 1898), J. H. Simmons (November 1898), William S. Murphy (April 1940), Mrs. Flora Morgan Irvin (February 1947), Mrs. Jennie Lee Murphy Blackstock (August 1954), and Mrs. Jane Hendrix Kinney (March 1972-1986).

The first mail carrier in Talmo was Claude Roberts who assumed the position in April 1917. Roberts was succeeded by John W. Kesler in March 1920. Kesler held the position until November 1955. Kesler first carried the mail over its 26.10 mile route in a mail cart hitched to a mule; later, an A-model made the route easier and faster for Kesler to cover. Cecil Blackstock assumed the position upon the retirement of Mr. Kesler in 1955. Today, Talmo's rural route mail is delivered by Clette Kinney and Donald Cooper operating out of the Pendergrass, Georgia post office. The U. S. Postal Service has designated Talmo as a Third Class post office with the Zip Code number 30575.

In the history of the Talmo Post Office, substitute rural mail carriers have included: Thomas G. Kesler (1935), Lonnie J. Fuller (1937), and Z. J. Bridges (1946). There have been numerous temporary substitute mail carriers since 1898.

M. E. (Ellis) Murphy

The production of broilers on a commercial basis in the United States began in the Del Marva region of Delaware about the year 1923. The beginning in Georgia happened in the early 1920's. A resident of Talmo is generally credited with being the father of commercial broiler production in this northern area of Georgia. His name is M. E. Murphy, or Ellis as he usually was known. His parents were T. W. Murphy and Victoria Simmons Murphy. His brothers and sisters were Jack, Scott, Julia, King, Hoyt and Jennie Lee.

As stated before, Ellis began producing broilers in the early 1920's and began on a large scale in 1924. Large scale, or commercial production, means growing broilers in the thousands instead of hundreds. The feed was bought from J. D. Jewell, a feed dealer selling from his store in Gainesville. Lamar Murphy tells of hauling feed for his Uncle Ellis from this source. He also tells of bringing dried buttermilk and cod liver oil for the chickens along with other feeds.

Chickens were grown on floors as well as in tiers, or batteries of cages stacked upon each other. The cod liver oil was fed the chickens to take the place of sunshine when the chickens were produced out of doors. Robert McEver also tells of helping his father, R. H. McEver, Sr., to load railroad cars with broilers. Some of the chicken houses were heated by the use of steam.

Ellis was also an inventor. Model T Fords were the very popular family cars of the twenties and thirties. Ralph Freeman remembers the tie rod that fastened the first fenders together to keep them from vibrating. He was also the inventor of a water wheel. He died in 1933 and his wife sold the business and moved away.

Ellis also hatched the eggs that were then delivered as baby chicks to the producers.

Several sources are given as means of information. Some are people who were familiar with Mr. Murphy and others are materials in which there is some information:

1. A quotation: "One of the first farmers who could be considered a commercial broiler grower was M. E. Murphy of Talmo, Jackson County, who started growing off-season fryers as early as 1924. He made good money, and the business caught on with his neighbors. In time, Talmo became a broiler production community."---The Agribusiness Poultry Industry, Gordon Sawyer, 1971, p. 50.
2. Market Bulletin
2. Robert McEver
4. Lamar Murphy
5. Paper: Arthur Gammon, Extension Poultryman.

BUSINESSES

McEver Packing Company

McEver Packing Company was born of adversity in 1925. A sick wife, doctor's orders and necessity caused the founding of McEver Packing Company, in 1956 North Georgia's largest and fastest growing meat packing business.

In 1925, more than 60 years ago, Mrs. R. H. (Florence) McEver, a [REDACTED], [REDACTED], fell ill out on a farm on the lower end of Hall County some four miles south of the little town of Talmo. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
R. H. McEver, then a farmer attempting to grub a living from the soil, finally was forced to call a doctor from Gainesville who prescribed medicine and a diet of lean pork meat for Mrs. McEver.

To a farmer in 1925, that was quite an order. The farm supported only a few pigs and a milk cow or so. But doctor's orders must be followed. Mr. McEver strung his first hog up to a tree and slaughtered it. This was the beginning.

In order to buy more hogs for more lean meat, Mr. McEver began making pork sausage. This homemade sausage he sold to Gainesville grocery stores a pound or so at a time. Later he began to buy vegetable parchment paper and had his name printed on the pound packages as people began to call for his pure pork sausage by name.

From this humble beginning began McEver Packing Company. In 1929 he moved his farm home to within half a mile of Talmo, where he began making his now-famous sausage in a garage adjacent to his home. Later in that year, he purchased an 8'x10' walk-in cooler. Five years later he built a second plant in a 20'x40' two story building. Three additions were made to this building: the first in 1946, the second in 1948, and a third in 1953. In 1955 the wooden two story frame building with all its many additions was torn down, and a new brick and concrete, fireproof modern building, with 15 cold storage rooms, modern and sanitary, was constructed, standing as a monument to R. H. McEver and his wife Florence and seven children who pride themselves on honesty, fair dealing, and who offered the consuming public the finest and best meat, prepared under sanitary conditions. The entire process involved about 225 people.

9/5/06 - THE M'EVER PACKING PLANT IS NOW THE LOCATION OF AGRI CYCLE AND MULLINAX NURSERY bnr

In 1970, McEver Packing Company merged with Gold Kist, a farmer owned cooperative headquartered in Atlanta. Gold Kist operated the meat plant until 1980 when it closed the plant. In the fall of 1982, Gold Kist sold the plant to Motts Food Company, and it was opened back up as a processing plant for chicken products.

#### J. H. Kinney and Sons General Merchandise Store

Kinney's store has been in operation six days a week since November 17, 1955. Since the outset there have been only two faithful employees: Annie Lou Kinney and her younger brother Harold. (Other members of the Kinney family have operated a hardware and farm supply business in Jefferson for over 30 years.) Local folks have shared many a conversation and lots of good times around the warmth of the pot-bellied stove in this general store where a wide range of items--from groceries to overalls to pipe fittings--can be found

Since the Kinney's opened their store, Mary Thomas has operated a beauty shop in the small basement, and later Clelle Kinney operated a local barbershop where haircuts went for 75 cents.

#### Pardue's Antique Auction

Antique enthusiasts from around Georgia have been coming to Talmo for years to attend Claud and Margaret Pardue's successful public antique auctions. At one time the Pardue's also operated an 80-unit trailer park, car wash, strip mall, laundromat, and wood yard. Pardue even built a small chapel to accomodate the religious needs of his many trailer renters. Ronny Hopkins and his family now own and manage all of these enterprises with the exception of the antique auction which the Pardues moved just up the road toward Gainesville from the old Pardue Auction Room. However, the Hopkins family has also begun their own antique auction business on the site of the Pardue's old auction location.

## RAILROADS

The Gainesville Midland Railroad developed from the Gainesville, Jefferson and Southern Railroad which had been organized in 1872. By 1883 a 20 mile, 3-foot gauge track from Gainesville through Belmont to Talmo and Jefferson had been completed. During 1883 and 1884 tracks were laid for a 34 mile branch line from Belmont through Hoschton and Winder to Monroe. This branch was known as the Jug Tavern route, as Winder had been known until the Jug Tavern name was changed in 1894. Another 10 miles of track to Social Circle were acquired soon after. The newspapers of the early 1900's displayed inviting ads for Sunday round-trip excursions from Gainesville to Social Circle with time spent there to see a baseball game.

In 1904, the line was declared bankrupt, and after reorganization was complete it became the Gainesville Midland Railroad. Soon after, standard gauge tracks led south from Jefferson and residents of Talmo could travel to Fowler Junction, two miles from Athens, on Gainesville Midland.

This railroad served Talmo until 1959, at which time Seaboard Air Line Railroad took control. The branch line to Monroe had been abandoned in 1948, and Gainesville Midland became one main line running from Gainesville to Fowler Junction only.

Until this year, all locomotives on the line had been steam powered, but at this time diesels were coming into use. The last run of the Gainesville Midland Steam Engines 203 and 301 was on September 19, 1959. This special excursion of 14 coaches carrying 600 passengers was led appropriately enough by Leland Byrd, engineer, and Wiley Cronic, conductor. Both had close relatives in Talmo and both had years of service on the line.

By the time of retirement Mr. Cronic had served as brakeman, conductor, and finally yardmaster. After three years as fireman, Mr. Byrd had been engineer for a total of 51 years.

Gainesville Midland and its predecessor served well for many years, and the old tracks, much improved now, shuttle long lines of freight cars between Gainesville and Athens.

NOTE: THE FOLLOWING 2 PAGES ARE ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL NOTES  
ON THE RAILROAD IN AND AROUND TALMO, GA. D/R

