

# HISTORY NOTES

Jones County History & Heritage, Inc.

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## About the Newsletter

This issue focuses on Juliette, in Jones County's northwest corner on the banks of the Ocmulgee River (the county line). Jones County claims East Juliette, and across the river, Monroe County claims tourist-oriented West Juliette, the film site of "Fried Green Tomatoes." Fifty years ago, these quiet little sister communities were bustling with industry and ringing with the sounds of Juliette Milling Company's cotton mill and commercial grist mill powered by the Ocmulgee.

The editor would like to thank Rhett Spencer McMurray, who so generously has shared his love and knowledge of the Juliette area for this newsletter. Rhett grew up in East Juliette in the mid-1900s, when the mills were at their peak. A few years ago, he retired from the U. S. Public Health Service (registered nurse, rank of Navy captain), and happily, has returned home to East Juliette. Rhett is working on a history of Juliette, which he hopes to have published. He is a valued, active member of Jones County History and Heritage (JCHH).

The spring newsletter will feature the Wayside community. ❖

*JCHH is running a Christmas special on the History of Jones County, with the price reduced to \$65 (a \$10 savings) until December 25. See "how to purchase" on page 2, bottom of box. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*

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## History of Juliette

Flowing through the heart of Juliette, the Ocmulgee River separates East Juliette (and Jones County) from West Juliette (and Monroe County). The story of this once busy and populous mill town begins around 1839 with Arcebald Leary's and Gideon Johnson's vision of harnessing the river's power to operate a commercial grist mill on the west bank. After the two had acquired land for the mill complex, Wilson Leary (Arcebald's brother) bought out Johnson. By 1845, the Leary brothers had built the first of three successive commercial grist mills in West Juliette's history. Businesses and housing soon followed.

In 1856, Joseph and Isaac Smith acquired the Leary grist mill and purchased land on the east bank, where they built a saw mill and custom grist mill (for local farmers' use). They obtained a loan from Nathaniel S. Glover for further expansion, and by the time of the Civil War, the Leary mill's fine cornmeal and grits had a national reputation. After the war, Glover foreclosed on the loan and assumed operations. The mill community became known as Glovers.

In 1879, Glover's son, Dr. W. P. Glover, assumed leadership. Dr. Glover continued the grist mill operations on the west side, and on the east side, he added a cotton gin, cotton seed storage barn and oil press, and brick works (eventually demolished). In 1882, further prosperity came with the construction of the East Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia Railroad on the west side. Glovers was renamed Juliette, possibly for Juliette McCrackin, whose engineer father supervised the laying of the tracks. A post office was established at West Juliette in 1883, incorporating the nearby post offices at Iceburg and Brownsville (now-vanished communities).

In 1899, Dr. Glover built a cotton mill on the east side, and began construction of a village for the workers of about 115 houses, a church, and a school. The mill produced string, twine, and yarns. He acquired partners S. R. Jacques, Sr. and T. D. Tinsley of Macon, and the holdings were incorporated as the Juliette Milling and Glover Manufacturing Company. Tinsley eventually left the partnership.

In 1906, the partners replaced the old 1845 Leary grist mill in West Juliette with what was considered to be the largest water-powered stone-grinding mill in the world. Corn and wheat were crushed into meal, grits, and flour for national distribution. A toll bridge was constructed the next year to replace the ferry. In 1911, Glover sold out to S. R. Jacques, Sr., who reincorporated the properties as Juliette Milling Company, with John Neville Birch, Sr. as vice president. In 1921, the present dam complex was built, and in 1927, the third mill (still standing) was built on the site of the previous mill, which had burned the year before. This mill leased production to such milling companies as Dixie Lilly.

After Jacques's death in 1927, Birch Sr. became president. The cotton mill flourished for more than 30 years under the leadership first of Mr. Birch, Sr., and then that of his son, J. N. Birch, Jr. Jacques's son, S. R. Jacques, Jr., was also active in the company. These employers were perceived to be benevolent and caring, and they earned the love and respect of their workers.

Market changes eventually forced closure of both the grist and cotton mills. The grist mill ceased production in 1957; however, the grist mill was retrofitted with twister frames to support the cotton mill operations. Cotton mill

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Jones County History & Heritage, Inc.

(JCHH)

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Gray GA 31032

JCHH is a private, non-profit organization formed in 2002 to promote an appreciation of Jones County's historic resources and foster their preservation, restoration, and revitalization.

If you are not currently a member, we invite you to join us by sending a check payable to JCHH to the address above.

Membership levels are:

Individual	\$ 25.00
Family	\$ 35.00
Patron	\$ 75.00
Bronze	\$ 125.00
Silver	\$ 300.00
Gold	\$ 600.00
Platinum	\$1000.00

JCHH Board of Directors

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Publications: Memorial editions of Carolyn White Williams' *History of Jones County, Georgia 1807-1907*, with a new index of names by Margaret Heard Stephens, are available for \$75 (or \$80 if shipping is requested). Send mail orders to the address above. Copies also may be purchased at the Jones County Chamber of Commerce in Gray, Georgia.

operations were discontinued in 1965, and the community declined.

In 1990, Hollywood discovered the little mill village's charm, and brought new life to West Juliette with the filming of "Fried Green Tomatoes." Today tourists come from far and wide to stroll McCrackin St. and enjoy fried green tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café, formerly Ed Williams' grocery store. ❖

## East Juliette School Teachers (1940-1964)

*Following is Rhett McMurray's tribute to the teachers of his youth:*

In the mid-1900s, East Juliette School (Grades 1-9) boasted four dedicated and talented teachers. Mr. J. H. Aldridge was the principal, junior high teacher (grades 7-9), and the highly competitive basketball, baseball, and softball coach, with a reputation for winning. The school hosted annual Middle Georgia basketball tournaments in their fine gym, and routinely won championships in all sports.

Miss Jeffie Russell came from a long line of teachers. She taught the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades, and strongly believed that the first impressions are the lasting ones. Accordingly, she stressed personal appearance and grooming, and held morning inspections to determine if teeth were brushed, hair was combed, clothes were neat, and shoes were polished.

Mrs. Valula Bostick was the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, and the school music director. She held rehearsals and played the piano for all musical events, and was a patient and good teacher. She and her husband, Curtis, had one of the first televisions in Juliette, and their living room was often full of children who had been invited in to watch the early evening shows.

Miss Allene Jarrell was the outstandingly talented 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher, who lit the flame of creativity in her students. She produced school play extravaganzas, writing the scripts, making the costumes, and building the sets. She picked up several kids each morning on her way to school from her home at what is now the Jarrell Plantation State Historic Site. After devoting her life to her family and her students, she married quite late in life, near age 80. ❖

## Mrs. Mary Frances Ussery

Mrs. Ussery is an honored resident of Juliette. She is a tall, slender, and elegant African-American woman in her mid-70s who has spent most of her life close to where she was born in Juliette. She has warmth and integrity, and enjoys close ties to her family and church (Zion Hill Baptist). Her passion is quilting—she's made too many to count.

She was born in the Juliette area on October 28, 1928, to Minnie Card and Ross Goolsby. The family was a large one. She attended the school at Bethesda Baptist Church where her nephew, whom she raised, is now pastor. Her father farmed the rich bottomlands along the Ocmulgee River. He was a deacon at Zion Hill Baptist Church, and her mother was a church mother.

She is the widow of James Ussery, who worked at Juliette Milling Company. Her 13 children attended the school at Zion Hill Baptist Church. For many years, she was a beloved companion and nursemaid for the Russell family (who called her "Frank"), helping to raise Bobbie and Jeff Russell. She also worked for a time at Juliette Milling Company. She is a church mother at Zion Hill Baptist Church, and has been tireless in her efforts to complete the new church building. ❖

## Driving Tour: Juliette via Round Oak-Juliette Rd (west of Caney Creek Rd)

*Tour time: 3 hrs, to all day if visiting the Jarrell Plantation. The tour begins on Round Oak-Juliette Rd, which winds through the forested hills of the 35,000-acre Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge. When the Refuge was established in 1939, eroded and infertile croplands stretched for miles. The cumulative effects of the Civil War, the boll weevil, and the Depression had forced many families to abandon their farms. The home sites and cemeteries on the tour represent just a few of the many families who lived here between the early 1800s and early 1900s. For more information on the cemeteries, see References on p. 4.*

1. From the railroad tracks in Gray, take **Hwy 11 north through Round Oak**, about 11 miles. Past Round Oak (at firetower), **turn left onto Round Oak-Juliette Rd., henceforth called Juliette Rd.**
2. **3 miles from intersection, on right.** Refuge Visitor's Center entrance. Stop to pick up a map of the Refuge, and to tour the wildlife exhibit.
3. **Back on Juliette Rd, continue about ¼ mile to the Caney Creek Rd intersection (on left).** SET ODOMETER TO 0 HERE TO AID IN IDENTIFYING HOME SITES AND CEMETERIES DESCRIBED IN TOUR NOTES 4-18. MILEAGE IS CUMULATIVE.
4. **Continue on Juliette Rd.** The Crutchfield family has owned the land surrounding the intersection since the 1800s. In earlier times, there was a store at the intersection (left corner), and a grist mill (bottom of the hill, on right).
5. **0.5 miles, on right.** McGee homesite in the 1930s. A Gordon family cemetery is in the tree grove in the field. Across Juliette Rd (on left) is a footpath that led to the schoolhouse and Liberty Church on Caney Creek Rd.
6. **0.7 miles, on right.** Road to Homer Jackson Place.
7. **0.9 miles, on left.** Driveway to William Walter Jackson Place (up hill).
8. **1.0 miles, on right, past the curve sign, chained road, Post #15.** Driveway to the Williams Place.
9. **1.2 miles, on right.** Elmo Jackson Place was nearby.
10. **1.4 miles, on left, at gravel road with "Do Not Enter" sign.** Will Pippin Place. Nearby was a store and Pippin's post office.
11. **1.8 miles, on left, cabled road with yellow dot on post.** J.M. Maynard cemetery approx. 300 yds back, on left side of foot trail.
12. **2.1 miles, on left, cabled road.** Lucey Johnson cemetery. Walk about 100 yds back on the road; her grave is about 75 ft off trail, on right. Across from the cabled road (left side of Juliette Rd) there was a c. 1880s African-American one-room school standing into the mid-1900s.

13. **2.5 miles, on right, gravel road, Post #15. NOTE: Road has a creek ford.** Ridley family homeplace and cemetery. Drive about 1.2 miles back to a path to the right, and walk back to the homesite; cemetery is visible after reaching the homesite. *Dr. C. L. Ridley purchased land here in 1836. Many of his descendants have shone in the fields of medicine, public service, and business in the Middle Georgia area.*
14. **2.6 miles, on right.** Rock Creek (Little Rock) Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery (African-American) and cemetery.
15. **3.7 miles, on left, past bridge and curve sign, diagonal road at end of slope, Post # 19.** Childs cemetery. Take left fork immediately after chained entrance and walk about 150 yds. Cemetery on right.
16. **4.1 miles, on right, at cabled road, green dot on post.** Blasingame home site.
17. **4.4 miles, on right, GA Bulldog mailbox.** Adams homesite.
18. **4.5 miles, on left.** Turnoff to Jarrell Plantation State Historic Site (3.5 miles to entrance). *A must-see, either today or another day (allow 2 hrs or more). It is a well-preserved cotton plantation owned by the Jarrells for more than 140 yrs. There are 20 buildings dated between 1847 and 1945, and a large collection of original family artifacts.* Just after the turn, on the right, is Zion Hill Baptist church (African-American), founded in 1909. To the left of the church is the old schoolhouse.

NOTE: THIS ENDS THE CUMULATIVE MILEAGE.

19. **Continuing on Juliette Rd, turn left on Jackson Hill Rd, about 0.8 miles from Jarrell Plantation turn-off.** Drive about 0.4 miles and turn right at the fork, then right at the Stop sign. Continue to the nearby 1909 Mitchell family home (387 Old River Rd), which stands on the site of the family's grand antebellum home, destroyed by fire in 1908. *The Mitchells were early settlers here, and owned 1,000+ acres in this vicinity, adjacent to the Jarrell Plantation. Siblings Amanda (Mandy), Georgia, and James (Jim) Mitchell, lived here into the 1950s. All remained single, but had many nieces and nephews. Jim was a progressive and prosperous farmer, Georgia skillfully ran the household and garden, and Mandy was one of the first women doctors in Georgia. After a career as a teacher, she completed her MD degree in 1909 at the College of Eclectic Medicine in Atlanta (forerunner to Emory's medical school). She and her cohort, Dr. Smith, were loved and respected in the Juliette area.*
20. **Return to Juliette Rd and proceed about 0.2 mile west to Miss Jeffie's Farm (1920 Juliette Rd.), on right.** This c. 1890 house was the home of Miss Jeffie Russell. (See East Juliette school article, p. 2).
21. **Continue to Clayton Woods Rd (right).** On the corner

is the home of Mrs. Mary Frances Ussery (see article, p. 2). The Newby/Mitchell cemetery where Miss Jeffie and the Mitchell siblings are buried is about ¼ mile up this road.

22. **Continue 0.8 miles on Juliette Rd, and turn right on Barron Russell Rd.** About 2.4 miles from here, there is a beautiful granite outcropping and creek area (in Refuge). *This prime recreation spot has been enjoyed by generations of locals. The creek is Little Falling Creek, also called County Line Creek. Look for the partially completed grist stone still attached to the granite.*

On the way to the outcropping, notice the turn-of-the-century Hardin-Russell home (on right, address #292 ) and Bethesda Baptist Church (on left), founded in 1880, where previously stood an early African-American school.

23. **Return to Juliette Rd and cross over to J. H. Aldridge Drive.** This begins the tour of the East Juliette village area. At the intersection (bluff on left) is an abandoned store formerly operated by the Russells. *Note: The history of Juliette, p. 1, provides background for the rest of the tour. Quiet little East Juliette was once crowded with houses, and humming with activity. Many houses were torn down after the cotton mill closed.*
24. A short distance ahead (on left) is an abandoned store (blue paint, #270) last operated by John Bostick. J. J. Glover built it in the late 1800s for the mill workers.
25. Continuing on Aldridge Dr, the 1960s-style residence on the right was the former lunchroom for the last school at Juliette (grades 1-9, 1941-1964). The football and baseball fields were to the right, and the school, to the left.
26. A short distance on the left is the site of the second school built by Juliette Milling Company after 1915. The Mill also established the cemetery ahead. Any resident of Juliette may request to be buried there.
27. Across from the cemetery (on right) is Rosa Maes Circle. On the left slope was the Mill Superintendent's home (now gone), a beautiful white house with stained glass windows and a large library.
28. The Baptist Church ahead on the right is the only village church. Its forerunner was an inter-denominational church built in 1898 by Dr. Glover. It was across the street from the cemetery.
29. The wing addition of the house on the left past the church was formerly the village barber shop, moved here from a spot near the cotton mill complex.
30. **Continue straight down the hill onto Old River Rd, at the curve.** Just ahead on the right is the 1936 mill water tower. The road just beyond (on right) led to the mill complex on the river below (mill offices were upstream from here). The mill woodshop still stands at the road end. The hollow to left of Old River Rd was the children's baseball field; spectators sat on the bank. *Note: there was also a professional ball diamond for the mill employee's team. It was on the left of Old River Rd, past the mill complex.*

31. Continue downhill to the canoe launch and fishing area (on right). Park here and take the trail to see the dam and water raceway (watch your footing!). *Note: In the late 1800s, a gristmill, cotton gin, cotton seed storage barn and oil press, lumber mill, and brick works stood south of here.*
32. **Return to J. H. Aldridge Drive, turning left. Proceed to Juliette Rd, turn left, and cross the Ocmulgee River to West Juliette.** *The first bridge (1907-1971) was just to the north. Its footings are still visible on River Rd (to right). A toll was charged until 1942 (5¢ for pedestrians and 10¢ for vehicles). The toll keeper's residence was to right of bridge.*
33. **After the railroad tracks, turn left at McCrackin St.** This is the movie site for "Fried Green Tomatoes." Some early buildings still stand here, though Hollywood has added a few touches. The c. 1880s depot (on left) was moved from the tracks for the filming. Whistle Stop Café was formerly Ed William's grocery store and service station, built in 1938. Inside there are interesting historical photos and movie memorabilia. The buildings opposite (end of block) date from the 1800s.
34. Continue up McCrackin. To the left is Juliette Milling Company, once considered the world's largest water-powered stone-grinding mill. Ahead at 240 McCrackin (right) is Dr. Smith's c. 1890 home. He was the community's much-revered physician in the early 1900s.
35. Continue to Juliette Methodist Church (on left). This was the first church built in Juliette, in 1885. Scenes in "Fried Green Tomatoes" were filmed here.
36. **Turn around at church, and take the first right (Bowdoin St).** The dilapidated building on the left is the old West Juliette schoolhouse. *Note: The early settlements of Iceburg and Brownsville were on the river south of here. Turn left to return to McCrackin St and West Juliette. End of tour. ❖*

### Newsletter Sources

Thanks to the following for their contributions to this newsletter: *Earl Colvin, Margaret (Jackson) Crutchfield Greene, Rhett McMurray, Evelyn Simmons, Mary Frances Ussery, Charlotte (Crutchfield) Wilson.*

### References

- \*Colvin, Earl and Beth. *Fields of Stone: Cemeteries of Jones County, Georgia*, Milledgeville GA. 2004.
- McMurray, Rhett. Unpublished history of Juliette, including material from 1) Juliette history survey by John L. Hopkins for the Middle GA Regional Development Authority 2) Mitchell Family History by Martha Frances Mitchell Jarrell.
- \*Williams, Carolyn White. *History of Jones County Georgia*. Macon GA, 1957.
- Websites: [www.friendsofcems.org](http://www.friendsofcems.org) (cemetery survey); [www.gastateparks.org/info/jarrell](http://www.gastateparks.org/info/jarrell) (Jarrell Plantation).
- \* Available at Jones County Library. *Fields of Stone also may be purchased there for \$35.*