Agriculture

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Statesboro is the most inviting field for all kinds of small factories of any other town in the South. Here we have cheap labor, cheap materials, good market for all its produce all good facilities for the distribution of that which is manufactured. Those advantages are all offered to manufacturers in Statesboro.

Here we have all the hardwoods necessary to the running of a buggy and wagon factory. They can be built here cheaper than anywhere on the globe, and then we have a great market for them right at our doors. Thousands of buggies and wagons are shipped in here and sold every year and there is no reason why a factory should not be built here. We should have a cotton factory.

This is getting to be one of the main commercial centers in this section of the state. Our lands produce more cotton to the acre than does any other section, and since it has been found to be the policy of cotton mills to get as close as possible to the cotton fields we wonder why it is that this field has been overlooked thus far.

Take the great amount of commercial fertilizers used here and the saving in freight alone would almost equip a fertilizer plant.

We have railroad facilities to ship our produce all over this the best farming section in the state and it seems to us it would be better for the town and just as well for the transportation company to haul the fertilizer away from here to other parts than to haul it on as they do now.

We need an oil mill. Thousands of bushels of cotton seed are shipped out of Bulloch County every year to be ground up
According to a story in the November 28, 1902 issue of the Statesboro News, D.L. Kennedy whose farm was at Jimps, seven miles south of Statesboro, planted two acres in corn and the past season and gathered 138 bushels from it or 69 bushels to the acre. This was done on ordinary pine land. 1,200 pounds of fertilizers were used to the acre and a handful of cotton seed to the hill. On the two acres the cost of planting, cultivating, gathering and fertilizing would be:

- 2,400 Pounds guano... $24.00
- Cost of breaking land and cultivating... 10.00
- Cotton seed... 12.00
- Gathering crop including
  - fodder pulling... 2.00
  - Seed peas, corn, etc. ... 1.00
- Rent of land... 10.00
- TOTAL... $60.00

The proceeds of the two acres sold would sell for:

- 138 bushels corn at 90c... $124.20
- 1000 pounds of fodder... 2.00
- Peas Etc... 4.00
- TOTAL... 136.00

Less Expense and rent... 60.00

This leaves Mr. Kennedy $76.20 as a clear profit on his two acres. This too after deducting for all expenses and $5.00 per acre for his land.
Almost anything can be grown in Bulloch county that can be raised in any portion of the United States. Our lands are fertile and respond liberally to the use of commercial fertilizer or compost. With proper cultivation 100 bushes of corn can be raised to the acre, although this is above the rule. It is not uncommon occurrence for 50 bushes to be harvested to the acre. There is always a home market among the saw mill and naval stores men for all the corn and hay that can be produced a good prices, and the farmer who has corn in his barn is as well fixed as if he had money in the bank. Up to a few years ago very little attention was paid to the raising of any hay, but it is noticeable that during the past three or four years considerable attention has been paid to this very important crop. Farmers have invested a good deal of money in harvesters, mowers, presses etc. One dealer informed us a few days ago that about 100 mowers and harvesters of one brand had been sold in the county this season.

Sugar can is also an important industry in Bulloch county, and Georgia cane syrup takes the premium for purity, and its excellent flavor wherever it is shipped. This however has not been grown as a money crop until quite recently. One farm near Statesboro planted about 100 acres in sugar cane last year and his venture proved to be a money maker. But the average farmer contents himself with from ½ to one acre in sugar cane, this makes all the syrup he can use and some for market also.

SWEETPOTATOES—is another crop to which very little attention has been paid as a money crop. Here to the farmer only cared to plant enough for the use of his
John H. Brannen, Bulloch Countian, Named Master Farmer of 1939

He Has a Diversified Farm Program With Live Stock Playing a Leading Role—He Has Never Bought a Grain of Corn

John H. Brannen, a native of Bulloch county, one of Georgia's four Master Farmers of 1939, has a diversified farming program with live stock playing a leading role. Until a few years ago, Brannen was one of the largest cotton planters of his section, but today things are different on his farm. To a large extent he is following a live-at-home program by producing an adequate supply of vegetables, meats, poultry, and dairy products. Then, too, he is now one of the largest live stock men in the county.

He is able to supply his live stock with a large supply of 1938 wheat on hand, with his 1939 crop untouched. Brannen also supplies all the meat and flour for every tenant on the farm. His meat-curing box will handle thirty hogs at a time.

Brannen plants around 400 acres of corn each year; his average yield is twenty bushels per acre. Runner peanuts, soy beans and velvet beans are planted in the corn as soil-building and grazing crops. He averages planting 100 acres in oats and 115 acres in wheat each year. He uses velvet in about 75 per cent of his oats for grazing. He also has about 100 acres in pastures.

Mr. and Mrs. Brannen are shown above (top, left) with their daughter, Miss Lucille Brannen. Tobacco is one of several important crops on the Brannen farm, and here (top, right), the Master Farmer looks over his crop with County Agent Byron Dyer. The meat in the smoke house (bottom, left) comes from the same herd of hogs which supplies the Brannen bank account with its largest single source of cash income. The comfortable Brannen home (bottom, right) is fully equipped with modern conveniences. The Master Farmer awards are made co-operatively by The Progressive Farmer, the Georgia Agricultural Extension Service, and the University of Georgia College of Agriculture.

John H. Brannen, 64-year-old Bulloch county farmer, has been selected as a 1939 Master Farmer of Georgia. He is shown above (top, left) with his daughter, Miss Lucille Brannen. Tobacco is one of several important crops on the Brannen farm, and here (top, right), the Master Farmer looks over his crop with County Agent Byron Dyer. The meat in the smoke house (bottom, left) comes from the same herd of hogs which supplies the Brannen bank account with its largest single source of cash income. The comfortable Brannen home (bottom, right) is fully equipped with modern conveniences. The Master Farmer awards are made co-operatively by The Progressive Farmer, the Georgia Agricultural Extension Service, and the University of Georgia College of Agriculture.

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FODDER PULLING
THING OF PAST
IN BULLOCH

Why don’t Bulloch county farmers pull fodder any more? There was a time when many hours could be passed away around the country store talking about the “fodder pulling champ” in various communities and how the fodder flew when two or more of these local champs tied up in the same field.

But this past time is no more. The champs have all passed on or the lack of practice prevents any present day champions.

A decade ago, practically every corn field was stripped of its leaves just after the corn passed the “rosten'-ear” stage for “long” feed for cows and horses in the winter months. The 1946 corn crop almost completely escaped this “corn reducing” practice. A close check in the various communities found some half-dozen fields, possibly not more than 80 acres, out of some 90,000 acres of corn where the fodder had been pulled.

During the same 10 years that fodder pulling was on the decrease, hogs were being increased in numbers and cattle in numbers and quality. Agronomist and experiment stations for many years have advocated leaving the leaves on the corn and stated that the yield of grain would be increased. Bulloch county farmers have evidently found this to be true. Hogs and cows need grain. They were increasing their hogs and cows and needed to raise all the grain they could.

Maybe Bulloch county farmers have just adopted another good business method in marketing what they produce by discontinuing fodder pulling.
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ROBERT STRICKLAND
AGRICULTURAL MEMORIAL AWARD
PRESENTED TO
HAROLD H. BANK
NAVETON, GEORGIA
BY WOOD COUNTY OF GEORGIA
FOR Distinguished SERVICE
TO AGRICULTURE IN GEORGIA
1956
Henry Blitch, left, and E. T. Mullis, examine bahia sod in half W-waterway on Mr. Blitch's farm in the Westside Community. "8-1-58"
Bulloch County is pictured as one of Georgia's best counties

Statesboro Rotarians got a good look at Bulloch County through the eyes of W. A. (Bill) Sutton, head of the Agricultural Extension Service, College of Agriculture at the University of Georgia in Athens, as he talked to them at their Monday noon meeting at Mrs. Bryant's Kitchen.

Mr. Sutton was the guest speaker at the club's annual Rural-Urban Day when members invited their farmer friends to be their guests.

Mr. Sutton paid a high compliment to the farmers of this county when he said, "I should like to point out that when a man joins the ranks of outstanding farmers in Bulloch County he also becomes an outstanding farmer in Georgia and in the nation... for Bulloch County long has been recognized as one of the leading agricultural counties in the state and its top farmers rank with the best."

He pointed out that Bulloch County now has a total of ten Master Farmers and that is a larger number of Master Farmers than any other county in the United States.

He commended William H. Smith Jr., who is chairman of the State Agricultural Extension Advisory Committee. "He is doing a superb job," he said.

In citing some of Bulloch County's production records he said, "In 1957 Bulloch County farmers produced an average per acre yield of cotton of 328 pounds which compares very favorably with the state average of 333 pounds. The average tobacco production of Bulloch County growers was 1,172 pounds per acre compared to the state average of 1,290 pounds. Bulloch County farmers beat the state average in both peanuts and corn. For Bulloch the average per acre yield of peanuts was 993 pounds compared to the state average of 910 pounds. Bulloch's corn average was 27½ bushels per acre compared to the state average of 26 bushels."

He pointed out that the 1958 averages were better than those of 1957.

He reported that the county has nine farmers who qualified for the Bale and a Half Cotton Club in 1958, whose average was 815 pounds per acre compared to the estimated county average of 500 pounds per acre. There are five farmers in the county whose acreage in peanuts was 2,144 pounds per acre and who made the Ton Per Acre Peanut Club. This is more than double the county average for 1957 of 983 pounds per acre. Five farmers are members of the 1958 Hundred Bushel Corn Club.

He gave Rotarians something to think about when he projected the possibilities if all cotton, peanut and corn growers did half as well as these top producers.

He explained that the high yield of these farmers was due to good crop management and adhered to farm practices as developed by the experiment stations in the state.

He commended the county for its participation in the Soil Fertility Program which is designed to increase the county's farm income by more than $2,000,000.

He stressed the value of the county 4-H Club program as carried out by the volunteer workers under the direction of the Extension Service. "Our youth is by far the most important element in our hopes and plans for a better tomorrow," he said.

Bulloch County Agent Roy Powell presented Mr. Sutton to the club.

Gerald Groover is president of the Statesboro Rotary Club and welcomed the guests on behalf of the club.
Farmers had tough season; agriculture remains strong

By Larry Anderson
Herald Editor

Farmers had a tough year in ’93, but agriculture remains an integral part of the Bulloch County economy.

“I haven’t seen any numbers yet, but I don’t think it would be a surprise to anybody that it was an awful tough year. The main reason was the hot dry weather we had,” said Mike Anderson, 1993 chairman of the Chamber of Commerce agribusiness committee.

“Cotton probably fared as well or better than any of the other crops. Cotton wasn’t a good crop either, but it seemed not to be hurt as bad by the dry weather,” he added.

Peanuts, in particular, were hurt by the weather.

Livestock survived the weather, but the hay crop suffered. That forced farmers to use more commercial feed during the winter, which drives up the cost of raising cattle.

“It has hurt cattle producers, but I don’t think anyone got rid of their cattle,” Anderson said.

Wheat and other small grains were planted in November and December and have not been affected by the drought. Since early fall, rainfall has increased and has been about average during January, Anderson said.

One crop that typifies the problems farmers face is pecans. “We had a mighty good production year, but prices are awful,” Anderson said. “When you have a bad production year, the prices are good. When you have a good production year, you can’t give them away.”

they are good businessmen.”

Farmers in Bulloch County are using all the tools of modern life to improve their operations. “You have more and more farmers using all the technology that’s available, whether it be faxes, offices, computers — whatever other businessmen use — to have a more up-to-date bookkeeping system. But you have other farmers who haven’t gone to that yet, just like some businessmen have not.”

The challenge for farmers in the future is to continue improving their products, because government programs will decline and competition will increase.

“Anybody who reads the newspapers knows that government programs will become less and less in an attempt to make a freer market,” Anderson said. The best weapon Bulloch County farmers have is high-quality products.

“The quality of our product is a very important asset for us. It’s something we can hang our hats on. If you want good, safe food, Bulloch County farmers can grow it. I think we can use that to market our products,” he said.

Individual farmers will continue to become bigger businesses.

“It takes more acres to make farming feasible now, with the cost of equipment and supplies. It’s so much more of a big business now,” Anderson said.

Even big businesses have bad years, and agriculture struggled during 1993. But agriculture has been a big part of the economy in Bulloch through good and bad years and should continue to be.
Several factors make Bulloch County ideal for agriculture.

What makes Bulloch County so ideal for agriculture? It's a number of factors, including diversity, climate and environment.

Bulloch ranks first or second, depending on which census you use, in the number of farmers, and among the top three general agriculture counties in income, according to Wes Harris, Bulloch County extension agent. Counties that specialize in poultry rank higher in income.

"If you include poultry, it will rank higher than row crops because of the density. But we are very strong," Harris said.

Bulloch's strength is based partly on the variety of crops that are successful here. Last year Bulloch produced 17 crops with a gross value of more than $1 million each. Eight of them grossed more than $5 million each. Another eight crops produced from $50,000 to $1 million each.

The total gross value of farm products in Bulloch County last year was $90.2 million. That included $8.3 million in disaster payments from the government.

Harris said diversity is necessary not only in Bulloch, but throughout the South. The Midwest has a deeper layer of topsoil, which prevents Southern farmers from competing as wheat or soybean producers. Southern farmers make that up by producing a variety of crops.

Despite the lack of topsoil, Bulloch farmers know how to take advantage of the type soil that is available.

"The soil characteristics here are favorable to the crops we produce — corn, cotton, peanuts, tobacco, soybeans. And the emerging crop is cotton," Harris said.

"This is also a very conducive climate for livestock production. We do well with swine and certainly with the cattle industry. We can pretty well graze year-round with the type of climate we have. That builds into our diversity, that we can raise livestock as well as row crops," Harris said.

Another factor in Bulloch's agri-

Wes Harris

cultural strength is rainfall.

"If you look back over the past 20 years in particular, we have been spared the severity of drought that other areas of the state have experienced. There was a heavy impact here, but not as significant as other areas. I would think 1993 was worse
och ideal for agriculture

more, but attracting those industries is difficult.
“You can have only so many peanut butter manufacturers, which is why we don’t have one,” he said.
Of the possible value added industries, a poultry plant would have the most impact in Bulloch, he said.
“It’s not always the most sought after as far as town folks are concerned, but if one were to locate in this area we would have to supply it with poultry, which would put us in the position of increasing our numbers of birds,” Harris said.
An added benefit of farming to the economy is the impact of farm supply and equipment dealers, which comprise about 25 percent of the local economy. These businesses include equipment sales; feed, seed and fertilizer sales; peanut receiving businesses; grain elevators and the cotton gin.
With $90 million worth of farm products in addition to farm supply businesses, agriculture will continue to be a vital part of Bulloch’s economy.

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“With Florida, it’s primarily environmental. It’s not only environmental controls on where they can plant, but also the population density of residential areas have taken prime farm land and converted it to subdivisions. Agriculture is still tremendous there, but for every one percent they lose, we pick up half a percent,” Harris said.
He said vegetable production in Bulloch County has not reached the point of national distribution.
“Most of what we produce is consumed locally. To produce nationally, you have to broker it nationally. If you look at Colquitt County and Tift, that’s what they have done — formed cooperatives where they market nationally. We are just north of the break point where it would be hard to see us going in that direction for the next 5-8 years,” Harris said.
One other factor that makes agriculture so strong in Bulloch County is the “value added industry.”
“When you have a Robbins Packing Company here, it certainly adds value to the pork and beef we produce. If you have a Braswell’s buying produce, it adds value to the produce we grow,” Harris explained.
He said more value added industries in Bulloch would enhance the value of agricultural products even

Bulloch farmers benefit from environmental constraints on farm s in other areas. Vegetable production, for instance, is increasing locally because of environmental policies in other states.
“The vegetable market is limited, so it’s going to be a function of how much shifts from California and Florida. One of the reasons it is shifting from California is the water use issue there has exempted agriculture out of the position it had been in for so long. They are no longer able to use nearly as much water as they did before. That’s another reason cotton has shifted ack here.

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Smith garden has a little of everything
Green thumb gardener grows food and flowers

By Anne Montgomery
Herald Staff Writer

If there were a Garden of Eden in Statesboro, you’d find it at J.R. Smith’s house on South College Street.

Just about every kind of fruit, vegetable and flower grows in his backyard at one point or another in the year, and if you ask right, he’ll send you home with your pockets overflowing with tasty samples.

According to Smith, gardening just comes naturally to him. Before cultivating his home garden, he was a farmer for more than 40 years, and in the dairy business for about seven.

“My wife wouldn’t let me chase women, so I figured I’d just grow vegetables and flowers,” he said.

Peanuts, squash, sweet potatoes, rutabagas, collards, mustard greens, and bright red tomatoes dominate the backyard rows at various points during the year. Right now, the main crop is turnips, and probably the biggest ones you’ve ever seen at that.

Smith’s winter crop also includes beets, potatoes, vidalia onions and the deceptively-named spring onion.

Much of the backyard is shaded by pecan, pomegranate, fig and apple trees - a veritable farmer’s market of a selection.

Stroll over to the side of the house, and you might find sweet basil and mint plants mixed in with the confederate roses and chrysanthemums. There’s even a green and purple cactus trying to dominate the corner by the fence.

Smith says he heard people in Mexico consider the cactus to be an edible delicacy - apparently they pan-fry the enormous leaves.

“I guess they skin the thorns off of them first. I’ll probably try it just to make sure I’m not missing anything,” said Smith, adding that he’ll more than likely cut the thing down this spring.

Along the edges of the garden, bright purple bachelor buttons fight for space with dahlias and morning glories. Everywhere you look, there are blooming flowers and buzzing bees.

Smith doesn’t mind the bees so much, though. To him, they’re a reminder of his younger days.

“Bees are like men,” he offers, “they always want to be around something sweet.”

Flowers, fruit and vegetables aren’t the only things growing in the backyard; there are birds too.

According to Smith, every year a flock of purple martins takes up residence in an assortment of gourds he has strung along some overhead wires. The martins live on the flying insects in the yard, and rarely ever come down to the ground for food.

“You could almost set your calendar by them. They arrive around Valentine’s Day and are gone by the Fourth of July. This year though, they came around the eighth of February. It’s the earliest I’ve ever seen them,” he said.

All of this growing takes a lot of water, and Smith said he was no
Miscellaneous crops mean $3 million to local economy

From watermelons to sweet potatoes, odd crops mean money to farmers

By Larry Anderson
Herald Editor

When you think of agriculture in Bulloch County, you don’t usually think of watermelons and zucchinis and blueberries.

But a group of crops that could be grouped as “miscellaneous” have a $3 million impact on agriculture in Bulloch County.

Among the largest of those crops is watermelons, with total sales of more than $900,000.

There are no watermelon sheds in the county, and most watermelon growers work through a broker to sell their crop. Wes Harris, Bulloch County extension agent, said most of the watermelons grown here are “loaded on trucks and shipped up north.”

Catfish is another small crop in Bulloch County with interesting possibilities. So far only 10 acres of catfish ponds are in commercial production in Bulloch County. They produced 2,500 pounds of catfish for a total of $18,750.

Harris said Georgia is an even better place to raise catfish than Arkansas and Mississippi, which have huge catfish farms.

“The problem with catfish in Georgia is the old chicken and egg problem. We don’t have a catfish processing plant. Without a processing plant, nobody wants to produce catfish. Without catfish producers, nobody wants to build a processing plant. The amount of capital in both those enterprises is significant.

“But from a water and environmental standpoint, we are better suited to catfish than either Mississippi or Arkansas. We have just not been able to attract that kind of investment here. In the long run, though, it’s still a possibility as the public shifts more to that type of meat and protein,” he said.

Other miscellaneous, or small, crops are pecans, peaches, cantaloupes, blueberries, strawberries, and vegetables such as tomatoes, sweet potatoes, sweet corn, zucchini and greens.

Bulloch County produced $75,000 worth of pecans in 1993. Peaches pumped $60,750 into the economy while strawberries produced $95,040 gross sales. Blueberry farmers grew $11,700 worth of fruit. Cantaloupes produced $150,719 in gross sales.

Miscellaneous vegetables, excluding Vidalia onions, sold for just over $1 million.

Tomatoes were the biggest crop with sales of $525,000. Sweet potatoes produced another $209,138. Okra was a $115,050 business.

Other vegetables grown commercially were cabbage, southern peas, snap beans and squash. Greenhouses and nurseries produced gross sales of $1.5 million and turf grass produced sales of $1.2 million.

Harris said environmental factors in Florida, where more land is being shifted from production into residential areas, and in California, where water use restrictions have crimped agriculture, is helping Georgia agriculture.

“Another aspect that developed over the last 10 years is vegetable production. That is a relatively high-income producing commodity,” Harris said.

Even though vegetable production is growing, it’s still primarily a local market item.

“Most of what we produce is grown locally,” Harris said. “To produce nationally, you have to broker it nationally.”

Although turf grass is producing well, it is not a crop with potential for growth in Bulloch County, Harris said.

“I think we have reached the saturation point on turf farming. But I think they will be fairly stable over the long haul,” Harris said.

One other item that has an impact of almost $1 million alone is pasture and hay production. The county had 5,800 acres in pasture last year and...
Cotton is the lifeblood of many Bulloch Countians today, as it has been for more than 100 years. The word "cotton" translates to "coton" in French, and even sounds the same in Arabic: "Qutun". This very versatile fabric revolutionized the way the world's population dressed, not to mention how they ran most of their daily affairs.

The cotton plant is actually a member of the Mallow family, which also includes milkweed and hollyhock.

There have always been two basic varieties of this plant: the Georgia "Upland", "Asiatic", or "Old World" variety, which is a short-stapled green-seeded plant; and the Georgia "Sea Island", "Persian" or "Russian" variety, which is a long-stapled black seeded plant. In both plants, the staple of the cotton is the filament of cotton which is both silken and delicate.

According to reliable sources, cotton was first recorded as having been planted in the "Trustees Garden" in Savannah as part of a Royal Experiment in Horticulture in 1733. The colony of Georgia was actually the first colony to produce cotton as a commercial crop, although both Florida and Virginia both had established substantial cotton plantations within their borders.

According to most historians, a Frenchman named Francois Levett brought the first Sea Island cotton plants to Georgia in 1807. The seeds were sold to a select group of Georgia planters for four shillings and six pence for a pound of the seed. He planted most of his seeds on Sapelo Island, where he had established a plantation.

In Bulloch County, cotton growing rapidly became a mainstay of the agricultural establishment. Whereas in 1850 only 594 bales (each weighing 450 pounds) were produced, by 1860 there were 1,378 bales brought to market.

Bulloch County began looking for new and additional ways to use cotton in their own daily lives. Cotton prices at market dropped an average of between 70 percent and 90 percent between the years of 1874 and 1894. That meant the price of one 450-pound bale of cotton dropped to a low of only $51 per bale. Bulloch Countians decided to take some action to get more from their cotton crops.

As such, their first major task was the building of the "Mill" in 1902, and the mill became Bulloch County's first industrial plant and first real industry. Cotton gins were everywhere, but most everything else was being discarded. There were three basic parts of the cotton plant that could be salvaged here for the first time: first there were the linters, or the short fuzzy fibers clinging to the seed; secondly, there were the hulls, or the coatings of the seeds themselves; and finally, there were the oil-rich kernels.

Linters began to be used to produce a cellulose substance, the hulls were collected and became an additional source of roughage for area livestock.

Within a short period of time, other counties also established their own oil mills, usually as private ventures unlike the Bulloch County public ownership of the mill. Until its demise, the old Oil Mill played a vital part in the Bulloch County cotton crop, and saved many in the county from unnecessary economic hardships. Without it, the lives of many Bulloch Countians might have been much different indeed.

Roger Allen is a local lover of history. Allen provides a brief look at Bulloch County's historical past. E-mail Roger at roger dodger53@hotmail.com
The rise of tenant farms in Bulloch

There were three basic types of agricultural farm ownership in Bulloch County at the turn of the 20th century. First, of course, was private ownership of the land. Secondly, there were two types of tenancy arrangements: the first, where the landlord collected rent from the tenant; and the second, where the landlord collected a percentage of the crops.

With the shortage of hard currency, many merchants had already created a system of liens so that they could give merchandise to customers without receiving payment in exchange. Unfortunately, many merchants took advantage of the situation and charged excessive interest on these promissory purchases, often as high as 54 percent of the items' values.

By 1872, the state Supreme Court had to clarify the differences as follows: A tenant has possession of the premises exclusive of the landlord and owns his crops, upon which he can take out a lien.

In the case of a sharecropper, the landlord furnishes supplies and equipment with which to farm, and the crop's share of his crops or harvest time is really a way of paying wages rather than any type of tenancy. The sharecropper never actually owns his crops

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While only 42 percent of Georgia farmers were tenants in 1902, by 1912, 77 percent of all Georgia farmers had been forced into some sort tenancy arrangements. There were three basic type of tenant arrangements used in Bulloch County. The first arrangement was a simple cash payment agreement between renter and landowner, which, amazingly, was the least common arrangement.

The second was sharecropping. The landlord would provide the home, land, tools and stock for the farm. The tenant would supply the labor. With the harvest of the crops, the landlord and tenant would split the earnings from the crops. As stated in the Bulloch Questionnaires of 1912, landlords knew their profit or loss depended upon the sharecropper's success, so the landlord made most of the decisions.

In the third arrangement, referred to as the "Third and Fourth" system, the landlord would provide the tenant with the house to live and the land to farm, in return for which the tenant would agree to give the landlord 1/3 of his grain and 1/4 of his cotton once the crops were harvested. The tenant made all the decisions.

In the early 1900s, records show that in Bulloch County, 60 percent of the farms were family-owned, while 22 percent were run on a sharecropping arrangement and 18 percent were run on a cash-renting basis.

In Bryan County, landowners held 68 percent of the farms, while 15 percent were sharecroppers and 17 percent were renters. In Screven County, only 43 percent of farms were family-owned, 31 percent were sharecropped and 35 percent were cash-rented.

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Tobacco turns into money in Georgia

John Rolfe considered the first Virginia planter, established his plantation in 1616 "at West and Sherley Hundred...(with) twenty-five (workers)...employed only in planting and curing tobacco." Two of the first cultivated varieties of Nicotiana Tabacum in the colonies were the Oronoco (which has a strong flavor) and the Sweet Scented (which has a mild flavor).

Not surprisingly, pretty soon, tobacco began to be used as money. All taxes (public, county, and parish) were payable in tobacco. Even the tavern keepers would serve dinner in exchange for a few pounds of tobacco. Ministers were even paid with tobacco, their salary usually amounting to between 16 and 20 thousand pounds of the leaf.

In 1620 a total of one hundred and sixty young women were sent from England as future wives for the settlers. They were very quickly selected by the young men of the colony, who paid for them with tobacco: the price of the first one hundred women was 120 pounds of tobacco each, with the second group of wives-to-be bringing an average of 150 pounds of tobacco each.
Tobacco a huge crop in Bulloch

In the Bulloch Times of August 22, 1895, Nick Foss announced he had planted five acres of tobacco, expected to produce 1750 pounds of tobacco, for which he should get $70. It wasn’t until the twenty-year period between 1910 and 1930 that tobacco growing became a valid topic of discussion.

In 1913, W.P. Smith of Pineora, who had been growing tobacco in Effingham for the previous four years, held a meeting at the Cone farm in Ivanhoe to announce his intention of planting tobacco in the Sinkhole District.

Unfortunately, in 1921, Georgia reported the first attack of “Blue Mold” (or the Downey Mildew Fungus) seen in this country. Central of Georgia Railroad Agricultural Agent J.F. told the farmers “Bulloch County can grow something besides cotton. What are these new crops? There are two on our mind at the moment: wheat and tobacco.”

By 1915, H.M. Robertson was growing tobacco in Brooklet, and Judge Cone was preparing to start growing tobacco on his land in Ivanhoe. In 1918, J.F. Fields began giving away free seed to those interested in trying to grow tobacco. He also gave pamphlets on how to best prepare the land and then grow the crops.

In 1917, E.L. Anderson, T.H. Cook, and others reported they were growing ten acres of tobacco in the Sinkhole District. Then, in 1918, W.R. and J.H. Anderson, along with Dr. R.J. Kennedy and the Starlings announced that they were growing some fifty acres of tobacco.

In 1924, E.G. Cromartie formed the Tobacco Farmers Club, and announced that he would plant at least 200 acres of tobacco. In the same year, J.E. Brannen of Stilson announced that 4 acres of tobacco had produced 4000 pounds of tobacco. By 1927, a move was underway to establish auction houses for tobacco sales.

Cecil W. Brannen, R.J. Kennedy, and J.L. Mathews established the Statesboro Tobacco Warehouse Company. S.J. Proctor was given a contract to build two warehouses for them at a cost of $12,000 each, but they ended up costing nearly $40,000. Other investors were Hinton Booth, Howell Cone, Fred Hodges, S.W. Lewis, S.L. Nevils, C.P. Olliff, J.C. Parrish, and Brooke Simmons. They were almost immediately leased out: one to H.W. Gauchat; and one to W.E. Cobb and H.P. Foxhall.

J.C. Hurdle, a “Tobacco Demonstrator” grew 500 acres of tobacco in Bulloch as a test crop. N.J. Cox of Nevis announced his intention of growing 400 acres. Varieties being grown were Gold Dollar, Bonanza, and Virginia Bright Leaf.

At this time, the first two warehouses opened up. They were the Holt-Cobb facility and the Farmer’s facility. When the market auction opened that year, buyers came from Imperial Export (IE), R.J. Reynolds (RJR), Liggett and Meyers (L&M), J.P. Taylor (JPT), Chino-American (CA), and P. Lorillard (PL).

On the first day of the 1928 sales, 338,980 pounds of tobacco passed through the houses, selling for as low as eight cents and as high as thirty-five cents per pound. Dr. R.L. Cone’s crop was declared the best, with his entire crop selling for an average of thirty cents per pound.

Over four weeks, area farmers sold 2,684,192 pounds of tobacco for $289,199.04. As a result of this success, the Southern Tobacco Journal wrote “Statesboro is an alive and up-to-date city with fine banking and railroad facilities, and it is located in one of if not the best tobacco sections in the State of Georgia.”

In 1929, the Statesboro market prices (averaging at 18 cents a pound) topped every other Georgia market with the exception of Douglas. As business was growing exponentially, S. Edwin Groover of the First National bank was appointed the Chairman of the new Tobacco Board of Trade.
Peanuts become a huge Ga. crop

The peanut (Arachis hypogaea) is actually a member of the legume family (beans, peas), and is not a nut at all. Peanuts are called many other things, including earthnuts, goober peas, jack nuts, pindas or pinders, manila nuts, and monkey nuts.

Originally native to South America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, and Peru), they are grown today in almost 100 countries, the largest producers being China, India and the United States. The peanut plant grows best in sandy soil, requiring warm weather and substantial rainfall or irrigation.

Spanish conquistadors soon discovered what the Indians called the tlalcacahuatl (or earth cacao) being sold in Tenochtitlan’s marketplace (modern-day Mexico City). Carried by traders to Africa, they were then brought by slave traders to the southeastern United States.

In the eighteenth century, a leading gentlemens magazine decried the peanut eaters, who “munch them everywhere...on the cars, in the stages, and aboard the ferries, scattering the shells about with an utmost indifference and littering the dress of every person in their neighborhood.”

Furthermore, “Pea-nuts impart a pungent odor to the breath, which makes the eater almost as great a nuisance in a crowd as one who indulges in the luxury of Limburger cheee...The pea-nut is not recognized in polite society. It is never found at dessert.”

At first, peanuts were mainly grown in the deep South by blacks as a garden crop. However, the shortage of food in the South during the war led to peanuts being by both white Southerners as well as Union soldiers. The unfavorable reputation of the peanut soon began to fade away.

During Reconstruction, peanut cultivation was encouraged in the South to replenish the soil that had been depleted of nitrogen by years of cotton cultivation. In the United States, peanuts are consumed mostly as peanut butter. One-half of the world’s peanut crop is used for oil, one-third is consumed as food, and the rest is used for seed.

Today, there are four basic varieties grown: “Virginia” and “Valencia,” both of which are primarily used for roasting; “Spanish,” for candies and snacks; and the so-called “Runners,” which are used primarily for making peanut butter.

Unfortunately, some people are highly allergic to peanuts (which contain 11 known specific allergens), and can suffer a fatal reaction just by eating a single peanut or by eating foods processed with machines that came into contact with peanuts.

Peanut oil is used to make paint, varnish, leather dressings, furniture polish, soaps, cosmetics and even nitroglycerin. Peanut shells are used to make plastic, wallboard, abrasives, cellulose, mucilage (glue) and fertilizer.

Georgia produces half of America’s total peanut crop, amounting to more than two billion pounds worth nearly $400 million annually. In Bulloch County, that amounted to nearly 72 million pounds of peanuts worth more than $17 million.

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Cotton: Lifeblood of Bulloch County

With cotton fields all around and bolls about to bloom, cotton remains the lifeblood of many Bulloch Countians today, as it has been for more than a 150 years. The word “Cotton” translates to “cotton” in French, and even sounds the same in Arabic: “Qutun”. The cotton plant is actually a member of the Mallow family, which also includes milkweed and hollyhock.

There have always been two basic varieties of this plant: the Georgia “Upland,” “Asiatic,” or “Old World” variety, which is a short-stapled green-seeded plant; and the Georgia “Sea Island,” “Persian” or “Russian” variety, which is a long stapled black-seeded plant.

According to reliable sources, cotton was first recorded as having been planted in the “Trustees Garden” in Savannah as part of a Royal Experiment in Horticulture in 1733. The colony of Georgia was actually the first colony to produce cotton as a commercial crop, although both Florida and Virginia both had established substantial cotton plantations within their borders.

According to most historians, a Frenchman named Francois Levett brought the first Sea Island cotton plants to Georgia in 1807. The seeds were sold to a select group of Georgia planters for 4 shillings and 6 pence for a pound of the seed. He planted most of his seeds on Sapelo Island, where he had established a plantation.

Two wealthy Georgians had already established cotton plantations on Skidaway Island: Josiah Tattnall and Nicholas Turnbull. Another countryman of Levett, John Du Bignon, had established his own cotton plantation on Jekyll Island. In Bulloch County, cotton growing rapidly became a mainstay of the agricultural establishment.

As cotton became a major crop shipments were hauled to towns on the fallines of the areas major rivers, including the Oconee and the Ogeechee. Macon was a major trans-shipping point for some fifty years, as was Augusta. Bulloch County farmers, however, usually just carried their cotton directly to Savannah.

Whereas in 1850 only 594 bales (each weighing 450 pounds) were produced, by 1860 there were 1378 bales brought to market. Caravans of wagoners and their teams of mules would line the roadways to Augusta and Savannah, sometimes stretching for as much as a half-mile.

The value of cotton lands, thought by many to be dead and unproductive, soon jumped in value with the discovery that fertilizers made the land perfect for this plant. The earliest fertilizers used on Wiregrass plantations were alkalis and limestone.

These were soon supplemented by the use of “night soils”, in which human excrement was collected from the areas slave populations and spread on the field. Most of the Bulloch cotton was planted at first for home consumption. The short staple variety was used to produce wool or cotton batten for stuffing mattresses, while the long staple cotton was used to produce warp or thread.

It wasn’t until the discovery of almost inexhaustible supplies of guano (bird droppings) from the western coastal areas of South America that cotton yields jumped to near where they were at the peak of cotton production in Bulloch County. Bulloch County inventors created many new machines for the area’s cotton crop, including cotton planters, chippers, and even cotton gins.

With the creation of these mechanical devices, such as the 36 saw toothed cotton gin, enough cotton could be cleaned per day to produce one 400 pound bale a day. This machine’s engine had one horse power – meaning it was run by using one horse.

With the onset of the Civil War, cotton became a rare but also largely unsaleable commodity, largely because of the Union blockade of Confederate ports. Thus began what became known as the “Cotton Famine” in Georgia:

First, there was an abundance of cotton stocks in England, the state’s biggest client; secondly, the production of cotton garments in New England factories was meeting the Union’s needs; thirdly, there were now competing producers, in both Egypt and India, who were more than happy to supply Britain’s future cotton needs.

Finally, and most importantly, what manpower hadn’t been drafted to fight against the North that still lived near the cotton plantations was incapable of harvesting the existing crops of cotton. After the war ended, the situation didn’t improve.

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Bulloch organizes Farmers Alliance

In Georgia, the effort to organize a Farmers Alliance was led by two men: Oswald Wilson and J.B. Wilkes. Wilkes set up the first four local groups (or sub-alliances) in Carroll, Heard, Coweta, and Troup Counties, starting in the fall of 1887.

In December 1887, the very first State Alliance Assembly was held in Fort Valley, Georgia, and was attended by members from 15 counties. Reverend Robert H. Jackson of Heard County was elected the first State Alliance president.

In 1888, the leadership of the Southern Farmers Alliance decided to exercise its muscle and boycott the "Jute Trust." Jute, used for bagging cotton, was sold by a single St. Louis firm which had an effective monopoly on supplies, and charged exorbitant prices.

Southern Alliance farmers, therefore, stopped buying jute, devised alternative methods for securing cotton bales, and in less than a year the cartel was forced to drop the price of jute to below pre-boycott prices.

In June of 1888, the Georgia State Alliance set up its first Cooperative Exchange in Atlanta on the corner of Fulton and Forsyth Streets. Its purpose: "Conduct a general merchandise business, to act as agent for the purchase and sale of all kinds of farm and orchard products and as general forwarding agent for all kinds of commodities."

In Bulloch County, there were several Alliance newspapers. The Bulloch County Banner (an Alliance paper) was run by H.G. Everett, R.L. Moore, J.N. Woods, J.E.C. Tillman, and R.H. Cone. The Statesboro Eagle, run by J.A. Brannen and his sister-in-law Florence Williams, ran an editorial in December of 1890 supporting the Southern Alliance's official positions.

They were: keep all new public lands for more settlements and not for foreign or Eastern investors; lower or remove agricultural tariffs; have sufficient silver coinage available for the public use and establish a gold standard; and repeal all unfavorable national bank laws.

In Bulloch County, sub-alliances were established throughout the county: in Statesboro, George Emmitt was president; in New Castle, G.T. Brewtor was president; in Nellwood, T.F. Brannen was president; in Echo, R.E. Stone was president; in Haileyville, John I. Lane was president; In Eureka (meeting at Smith's Chapel) C.R. Davis was President; and in Mill Creek, W.E. Gould was president.

Alliance men gained political power: 192 of 219 candidates for state representatives and six out of ten state senators in the 1890 campaign were Georgia Alliance members. At this time, the Southern Alliance eventually formed a new political party which they named the "People's Party."

Party delegates approved the ideas of railroad regulation, national bank closures, unlimited coinage of currency, a tax on earnings, fewer and shorter working hours, and limits on immigration as their platform.

General James Weaver became the Alliance presidential candidate, and in the national election received over one million popular votes and 22 electoral votes in the presidential race.

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According to the Bulloch County newspaper, local livestock breeders and the county's 4-H and FFA youth had been participating in the Savannah Fat Cattle Show as early as 1930. However, after Savannah's yard announced that the 1940 show was postponed indefinitely, White's Provisions and Cudahy Packing, the two largest meat-packing companies in the state of Georgia, requested that Statesboro's stockyards hold one of their own. The date of April 11, 1940, was chosen.

There were three main livestock auctions held in Statesboro: one at the Bulloch Stockyards, owned by O.L. McLemore; another at the Farmer's Daily Livestock Market, owned by Homer Parker; and another at the Statesboro Chamber and Junior Chamber of Commerce. Elected as general chairman of the event was Bulloch's J.E. Hodges.

Selected to be the lead auctioneer of the event was Pierce Leonard of Swainsboro, acknowledged by many as the premier livestock auctioneer in all of coastal Georgia. Local businesses soon had pledged more than $400 worth of cash and goods for prizes for the event.

The rules were simple: Everyone could participate in the event, as long as their cattle were taken off of water and fed 12 hours before the auction. A 1 percent fee would be assessed on all cattle sales. The prizes ranged from $1 to $10, depending on the class in which the cattle were judged.

A dinner was held at the Statesboro Women's Club on April 10 where all participants were honored. The next morning, local schoolchildren were given a tour of the animals. After the school groups were finished touring, the Statesboro High School band played from 11:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. while anxious participants and an eager audience ate lunch. Then, the real fun began.

Sharply at 1 p.m., auctioneer Leonard smoked his gavel and the auctions began. After the last gavel sounded, the 304 head of cattle entered into the first Statesboro Fat Cattle Show had netted a total of $18,788.62 in sales to White's and Cudahy's buyers.

The buyers paid between $9.75 and $10.50 per hundred-weight for choice-quality graded beef, while they paid between $9 and $9.50 for good-quality beef and between $8.50 and $9 for medium-quality beef.

The Grand Champion award for the show went to Stilson's own Montrose Graham for his 1,080-pound Hereford, and the Reserve Grand Champion award was given to Garner Hall Fields for one of the four steers he entered in the show.

In the 4-H Division classes, the lightweight winner was Merriam Bowen and the heavyweight winner was Montrose Graham; for the FFA Division classes, the lightweight winner was George Thomas Holloway and the heavyweight winner was Garner Hall Fields.

Garner Hall Fields In the Negro Division, the winner was George Cone. Finally, the Home Bred and Fed Division winner was Garner Hall Fields.

Everyone agreed the event was a roaring success. Over the next decades, it grew in stature and broadened into three separate shows: one for fat cattle, one for fat barrows (uncastrated male pigs) and one for fat gilt (female pigs who hadn't yet born litters).

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Sugar becomes profitable product in Georgia, Bulloch

(Note: The following is part of a series of articles looking at the history and evolution of agriculture in Georgia and Bulloch County.)

The name for sugar is derived from the Sanskrit word sarkara (or Sarkara). Sugar cane is a member of the family of large grasses, and, believe it or not, was first traded as "Italian Salt.

Georgia's Royal Governor Sir James Wright, upon assuming leadership of the colony in 1760, immediately began expanding the colony's agricultural efforts to include the growing of sugar cane.

Planter Thomas Spalding of Glynn County reported that John McQueen of Savannah was the one who actually brought sugar cane to Georgia (and British North America) in 1805. He distributed the plants to his friends.

This is the earliest known effort in any of the original 13 colonies to grow sugar cane. One of these friends, a Roswell King of Saint Simon's Island, sent a schooner loaded with cane to his good friend John J. Coroin of Louisiana.

Spalding wrote to the magazine "Southern Agriculturalist" in 1828 to inform them that he had begun planting sugar cane on his Sapelo Island plantation in 1805 with 100 plants he had acquired from McQueen.

He stated that by the end of the War of 1812, some 100 sugar cane plantations had been established between Darien on the Altamaha River and Milledgeville on the Oconee River.

In 1814, his crop, tended to by 50 slaves, earned him $12,500. He soon expanded his sugar cane cultivation by planting sugar cane on land along the Savannah River.

James Hamilton Couper of Hopeton Plantation on the Altamaha River built the first real sugar processing plant in Georgia. Couper then published those designs in the 1831 "Southern Agriculturalist."

Domestic sugar production in America soon exploded. In 1860, Georgia alone produced nearly 1.2 million pounds of sugar and more than half a million gallons of syrup or molasses.

Thirty years later, in 1890, Georgia's production had shifted, now producing 1.2 million pounds of sugar and nearly 3.3 million gallons of syrup or molasses.

The sugar cane production in Georgia in 1890 came from some 20,000 acres scattered across 50 or so counties. Bulloch County recorded the highest yields in the state with an average of 700 gallons of sugar harvested per acre.

Curiously, a Tennessee entrepreneur began combining Georgia sugar syrup with glucose and branding it as "Georgia White Syrup," which soon became very popular in other regions of the United States.

America's consumption of sugar per person had become higher than anywhere else in the industrial world.

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(Note: The following is part of a series of articles looking at the history and evolution of agriculture in Georgia and Bulloch County.)


Matthews used the 1912 cotton crop for comparisons. The prices for "Upland" cotton that year were 12.05 cents per pound. Meanwhile, Florida and Georgia's "S.I." cotton sold for 19.50 cents per pound and South Carolina's "S.I." cotton sold for 25 cents per pound.

He reported that of the some 30,000 bales of S.I. cotton shipped in 1912 from Savannah, 18,886 bales went to domestic mills, 8,977 bales went to Great Britain's mills and 2,076 bales went to continental European mills. Savannah's Sea Island cotton exceeded everyone else's totals combined: Charleston shipped 7,000 bales of S.I. cotton; Jacksonville, Florida, shipped out 12,000 bales; Brunswick shipped 2,000 S.I. bales; and "Inland" markets shipped 7,000 bales.

The crop of Sea Island cotton in 1911-12 was 122,724 bales, but the crop for 1912-1913 amounted to only 73,777 bales. Meadows stated the decrease in overall production had three main causes.

The first was that there was no "futures" market for Sea Island cotton growers, who could not lock prices in in advance, as they could with the cheaper Upland cotton.

In addition, there was a new variety of Egyptian long-staple cotton entering the market: Sakellaridis. Not as soft as the best American S.I. cotton, it was, however, stronger than most Sea Island cotton.

Matthews stated that S.I. cotton growers would not sell their seed. Certain planteres had sold large quantities of their Sea Island seed earlier to West Indian cotton farmers. That competition in the marketplace had been unappreciated, to say the least.

Matthews reported that one of the most common uses of the Sea Island cotton at the turn of the century was for use in making "tire cloth fabric."

Today, tires have polyester and steel construction, but in the earliest days tires were made with the strongest cotton cloth. There was none better than that made with S.I. cotton.

Unfortunately, the price of tires dropped precipitously (up to 50 percent) as producers started switching to cheaper cottons. Apparently, they thought customers wouldn't get too upset if their tires didn't last nearly as long as before.

Matthews also makes another startling claim: "Sea Island cotton crops are made chiefly by 'negro' labor, but in Bulloch County, Georgia especially, and to a less extent all over the Georgia area, white labor is largely used."

Matthews encouraged the use of a new strain of cotton, "Meade," which was not only almost indistinguishable from Sea Island plants but matured early and was very prolific.

Growers throughout the region were given seed to test plots of this cotton against S.I. cotton for use in several products, including the brand new market for 'airplane fabric' for use in making the new-fangled airplanes' seats.

Roger Allen is a local lover of history. Allen provides a brief look each week at the area's past. Email Roger at rwass1955@bellsouth.com.
A plague of boll weevils falls on Georgia, Bulloch County

(Note: The following is part of a series of articles looking at the history and evolution of agriculture in Georgia and Bulloch County.)

By 1914, more than 5.2 million acres of Georgia farms were planted in cotton. But the cotton crop then experienced a devastating visitor from Central America: the boll weevil.

First discovered in Texas in 1892, by 1915, this pest had traveled more than 1,000 miles to the Georgia border. Discovered in Thomasville in 1915, the devastating effect of the weevil was quickly noticed on cotton production.

The first solution to weevil infestations was the destruction of infected plants, use of early-maturing varieties of cotton, a standard row spacing of at least four feet in the fields and the use of fertilizers to help produce an earlier crop.

The first Georgia State Board of Entomology publication on the history of control and biology of the boll weevil was written by Wilmon Newell, Georgia State Entomologist and Secretary of the Board of Entomology.

Newell suggested dusting cotton plants with a formulation of powdered lead arsenate instead of spraying them with liquid insecticides. He created a new powdered form of lead arsenate that was manufactured by the Grassetti Chemical Company.

Newell also suggested several other options for fighting the boll weevil, including defoliating cotton plants in the fall to interrupt the weevil's life cycle.

Newell also reported the first discovery of a known predator of the bug, the carabid beetle.

His final determination was that Georgia farmers needed to diversify, stating that "our trouble since the war has been the craze of our people for cotton production to the exclusion of food crops."

In addition, the United States Department of Agriculture warned the area's cotton farmers that "The large growth of the plants and the late maturity of the crop render Sea Island cotton particularly susceptible to injury by the (Boll) Weevil."

Georgia's losses of their cotton crop harvests to weevil damage had grown to 45 percent in 1921. The Air Service of the United States War Department used battle-tested pilots to perform aerial spraying of crops.

In 15 years, the harvested cotton acreage declined 35 percent, down to under 3 1/2 million acres in 1930. While not as severe as at first, the losses of Georgia's cotton crop to boll weevils continued.

By 1983, only 115,000 acres of cotton were planted in Georgia. There is a threat of re-infestation even to this day. To combat the threat, the Georgia Department of Agriculture has partnered with the Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation of Georgia, Inc.

Each year, cotton fields are diligently monitored for boll weevils—you may have seen the green plastic traps near fields. If weevils are found, foundation employees respond within 24 hours to install additional traps and apply insecticide treatments if needed.

Even today, Georgia remains a major player in cotton production. Of the 2012 U.S. cotton harvest of 17.3 million 480-pound bales, Georgia produced 2.9 million. Of that, Bulloch County produced 2,000. For the 2013 harvest, the number showed the U.S. produced 16.5 million bales, Georgia 2 million, and Bulloch County 66,600 bales.

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Tobacco becomes huge crop for colonies, Bulloch County

(Note: The following is part of a series of articles looking at the history and evolution of agriculture in Georgia and Bulloch County.)

John Rolfe, who is considered the first Virginia tobacco planter, established his plantation in 1616 "at West and Sherley Hundred ... (with) twenty-five (workers) ... imployed onely in planting and curing tobacco" (sic). Colonists soon discovered that tobacco was a hardy annual plant. It ranged in size from the dwarf variety at 18 inches to as much as seven or eight feet in height. Tobacco even began to be used as a form of payment. In many areas, public, county and parish taxes were payable in tobacco.

Soon, the crop was being introduced into other colonies: first to North Carolina, then Maryland and then into Kentucky. Ironically, Georgia was one of the last colonies to begin growing tobacco.

In the August 22, 1895 edition of the Bulloch Times, Nick Foss announced he had planted five acres of tobacco. He expected the land to produce 1,750 pounds of tobacco, for which he should get $70.

In 1913, W.P. Smith of Pineora, who had been growing tobacco in Effingham for the previous four years, held a meeting at the Cone farm in Ivanhoe to announce his intention of erecting a tobacco warehouse at Pineora.

By 1915, H.M. Robertson reported he was growing tobacco in Brooklet and Judge Cone announced he was preparing to start growing tobacco on his land in Ivanhoe.

In 1917, E.L. Anderson and T.H. Cook reported they were growing tobacco in the Sinkhole District. Then, in 1918, W.R. and J.H. Anderson, Dr. R.J. Kennedy and the Starlings announced that they too were growing tobacco.

In 1918, J.F. Fields began giving away free seed to those interested in trying to grow tobacco. He also gave pamphlets on how to prepare the land and then grow the crop.

Central of Georgia Railroad Agricultural Agent J.F. Fields told his farmers, "Bulloch County can grow something besides cotton. What are these new crops? There are two on our mind at the moment: wheat and tobacco."

In 1924, E.G. Cromartie formed the Tobacco Farmers Club and announced that he would plant at least 200 acres of tobacco. In the same year, J.E. Brannen of Stilson announced that his four acres had produced 4,000 pounds of tobacco.

By 1927, a move was underway to set up auctions in the area for tobacco sales. Cecil W. Brannen, R.J. Kennedy and J.L. Matthews established the Statesboro Tobacco Warehouse Company.

S.J. Proctor was given a contract to build two warehouses for them at a cost of $12,000 apiece, but the buildings ended up costing nearly $40,000.

Other investors were Hinton Booth, Howell Cone, Fred Hodges, S.W. Lewis, S.L. Nevis, C.P. Olliff, J.C. Parrish and Brooke Simmons. The warehouses were almost immediately leased out: one to H.W. Gauchat and one to W.E. Cobb and H.P. Foxhall.

J.C. Hurdle, a "Tobacco Demonstrator," grew 500 acres of tobacco in Bulloch as a test crop. N.J. Cox of Nevils announced his intention of growing 400 acres. Varieties being grown at this time were Gold Dollar, Bonanza and Virginia Bright Leaf.

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Statesboro's tobacco market becomes the state's largest

(Note: The following is part of a series of articles looking at the history and evolution of agriculture in Georgia and Bulloch County.)

By 1928, the first two tobacco warehouses had opened in Statesboro. They were the Holt-Cobb facility and the Farmer's facility. Buyers came from the Imperial Export, R.J. Reynolds, Liggett and Myers, J.P. Taylor, Chino-American and the P. Lorillard Companies.

On the first day of the 1928 sale, 338,980 pounds of tobacco passed through the houses, selling for between 8 and 35 cents per pound. Dr. R.L. Cone's crop was declared the best overall and sold for an average of 30 cents per pound.

Over four weeks, area farmers sold more than 2.5 million pounds of tobacco for nearly $300,000. As a result of this success, the "Southern Tobacco Journal" wrote, "Statesboro is an alive and up-to-date city ... and is located in one of if not the best tobacco sections in the State of Georgia."

In 1929, the Statesboro market prices (averaging at 18 cents per pound) topped every other Georgia market with the exception of Douglas. S. Edwin Groover of the First National Bank was appointed the chairman of the new Tobacco Board of Trade.

Between the years of 1929 and 1932, an overproduction of tobacco, an infestation of "Blue Mold" and the start of the Great Depression caused Statesboro's tobacco prices to fluctuate dramatically. In 1931, the average price for cotton was down to 6.2 cents a pound. To curtail the obvious overproduction of tobacco, the Kerr-Smith Tobacco Act was passed in 1934. Farmers were penalized if they didn't limit their cotton acreage.

Gov. E.D. Rivers himself opened the 1938 tobacco auctions in Statesboro, praising Bulloch Countians for "their enterprise in developing tobacco."

Three more tobacco warehouses had opened up: one on Zetterower Avenue, operated by R.E. Sheppard and Aulbert Brannen; a brick warehouse built by Walter Aldred Jr. on South College Street; and another operated by Cecil Wooten and Norman Swain.

By 1947, the Statesboro tobacco market was the largest in all of Georgia, and the Cobb & Foxhall Company was the biggest company operating in the Statesboro tobacco market.

In 1953, Statesboro's tobacco market was the northernmost market in the entire state. It was also the top producer, with 18.6 million pounds of tobacco passing through its warehouses.

In 1959, Aulbert Brannen had built two more warehouses.

By 1960, J.T. Sheppard, H.E. Akin and Hardin Sugg had opened the new Sheppard-Sugg Tobacco Warehouse, and Akins had acquired the controlling interest in the Cobb and Foxhall Company after both of the original owners died.

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American Farm Bureau honors Bulloch's Lannie Lee

Special to the Herald

During a leadership lunch held at the American Farm Bureau Federation Convention in Phoenix, earlier in January to recognize Farm Bureau volunteers, Bulloch County Farm Bureau President Lannie Lee was recognized for his many years of service as a county Farm Bureau leader.

Lee, 96, joined Farm Bureau in 1947 after returning home from serving in World War II. He served as president of the Brooklet Farm Bureau Chapter in his community in the 1950s and served as a director of the Bulloch County Farm Bureau for a number of years. He served as the vice president from 1973 until 2007 when he became president and continues to serve in that position.

Founded in 1937, Georgia Farm Bureau is the largest general farm organization in the state. Its volunteer members actively participate in local, district and state activities that promote agriculture awareness to their non-farming neighbors. GFB also has 20 commodity advisory committees that give the organization input on issues pertinent to the major crops and livestock grown in Georgia.

GFB membership is open to the public and offers a wide variety of benefits to its members including insurance and discounts for health services, travel and family entertainment. Enrollment in any of the member benefits is optional and not a requirement for membership.

Becoming a GFB member helps support local farmers and ensures that all Georgians will continue to have access to locally grown and high-quality food.

For more information about GFB membership or to join, visit www.gfb.org.

Bill T. Akers.
Bulloch ag icon Lannie Lee dies
Friends remember his smile, love of tractors

By HOLLI DEAL SAXON
hbbragg@statesboroherald.com

Lannie Lee, an icon of Bulloch County agriculture, passed away Wednesday after a brief illness. The 96-year-old was a longtime member of the Bulloch County Farm Bureau, joining in 1947 and serving as president for the past 10 years.

Known for his love of farming, fascination with tractors and amiable nature, Lee began farming his family's land on Pretoria-Rushing Road in the late
Ag center now a reality

County to hold groundbreaking ceremony for facility

By HOLLI DEAL SAXON
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Many Bulloch County voters have waited 18 years for construction of the long-awaited multipurpose arena on Langston Chapel Road.

It is happening. Materials are on site, the area is being prepared and Thursday, June 1, Bulloch County Commissioners will host a groundbreaking ceremony to kick off construction.

Billy Hickman, head of the multipurpose arena committee that was formed in 1998, said he hopes for a large crowd at the groundbreaking ceremony, which will be held at 10:30 a.m. at 44 Arena Boulevard, a road connecting Highway 301 South to Langston Chapel Road, where the facility will be located.

The arena is expected to exceed any similar facility in the area and be comparable to such arena facilities as the one at the Georgia National Fairgrounds in Perry, he said. It will be used not only for livestock events, but for a multitude of other events such as car and truck shows; trade shows; concerts, exhibitions and more as well as rodeos, horse shows, kennel club shows, and other entertainment, he said.

The arena facility will be
Dignitaries move some dirt as the multipurpose arena committee and Bulloch County commissioners hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for the new ag-based facility Thursday. About 250 people attended in support of a project that has taken more than 18 years to come to fruition. The multi-use facility is expected to be completed by December and will have a covered performance arena with bleacher seating for 3,000, a covered practice arena, 218 stalls, grooming and bathing bays, and RV hookups, with additional camping space for self-supporting camps.
'Never too busy to help'

Wade C. Hodges III named Farmer of the Year

By HOLLI DEAL SAXON

Wade Hodges was named Farmer of the Year during the Bulloch County Farm City Week Luncheon at Ogeechee Technical College Friday.

Bulloch County farmer Wade C. Hodges III was visibly overwhelmed Friday when his selection was announced as the 2017 Statesboro-Bulloch County Chamber of Commerce Farmer of the Year.

The announcement came at the end of the annual Farm City Week luncheon, held this year at the Ogeechee Technical College Natural Resources building. The featured speaker for the event was Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black, who was introduced by Raybon Anderson, past recipient of the Chamber’s Farm Partner of the Year.
By Anne Montgomery  
Herald Staff Writer

It may seem obvious to you that the farmers need the farm-equipment suppliers and that the suppliers can’t do business without the farmers, but you may not realize the extent to which they work hand in hand.

As Michael Joiner of Joiner International explains, the process of growing peanuts, for instance, requires the efforts of not only the farmer, but several other agribusiness agencies as well.

Starting in early February, farmers will begin harrowing the land, which means breaking up and turning under the clods of soil, then leveling the ground to prepare it for seeding.

At the same time, the farmer will also take soil samples to check the pH and nutrient levels of the soil. He will add any chemicals or lime as needed.

Already, a farm equipment store has supplied the harrow and another business such as Bulloch Fertilizer has supplied the chemicals.

The peanuts will be planted around late March or early April, and the farmer will need a planter for this. As the peanuts start growing, the farmer must keep them plowed, and spray for weeds and pests. The plow will make the third or fourth piece of farm equipment a farmer will have had to purchase — just to grow peanuts.

Around the end of fall, he will need a special plow to dig up the plants and turn them upside down. This way, the peanuts will be exposed to the outside air and will dry properly. The plow digs up two rows of peanuts at a time, shakes the loose soil off them, and flips the plants over into one row. After the peanuts have dried, they must also be run through a combine which picks each peanut off the vine.

From the harrowing to the picking, several different agribusinesses are involved, but there are other industries that work hand in hand with the farmer as well.

“Almost every piece of the farm equipment has some type of tire on it, plus you have to consider the fuel needed to run them,” explained Joiner.

The future in farming

“I think the trend in farming is we will see fewer and fewer small farms in the 200-300 acre size. There will most likely be much bigger farms, but less of them,” he continued.

Joiner said the family farm is the trademark of America, but there are less and less of them across the country.

“A lot of people overlook the importance of agriculture in our lives. Too many people have no idea how their food gets to the grocery store, other than on a truck, but someone has to grow that food,” he explained.

Agriculture at a glance

According to the latest figures from the 1993 Georgia County Guide, published by the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Office, Bulloch County has 592 farms, ranking it ninth in the state.

Bulloch ranks first in the state with harvested cropland: 104,582 acres, with an average farm size of 366 acres. 50 percent of the county’s land is classified as farmland. The average age of farmers is 52.

Out of the 592 county farmers, 33 are black and 32 are women. There are 13 farms over 2,000 acres in size and 57 over 1,000 acres.

**Bulloch County crop yields**

- Corn: 1,726,000 bushels
- Soybeans: 1,054,000 bushels
- Peanuts: 66,460,000 bushels
- Cotton: 15,300 bales
- Tobacco: 3,180,000 pounds
- Wheat: 419,000 bushels
- Oats: 29,000 bushels
- Rye: 68,000 bushels
- Sorghum grain: 21,000 bushels

In addition, there are also 16,010 acres of irrigated farm land, ranking Bulloch County 30th in the state.

In the livestock and poultry business, there are 15,000 cattle and calves, and 41,000 hogs and pigs.

The Statesboro/Bulloch County Chamber of Commerce promotes cooperation between the rural and urban areas of the community through its annual Farm Tour and its Farm-City Week observance.

Both those events are sponsored by the Chamber’s Agribusiness Committee. Mike Anderson was chairman of the committee in 1993 and Dave Brown is chairman this year.

Agriculture is beginning to have a positive effect on another segment of the Bulloch economy — tourism. The Statesboro Convention and Business Center has a farm tour available for organized groups that are visiting the county.

Cooperation is vital to agriculture

A big part of agriculture in Bulloch County exists outside the actual farm. All farmers need equipment, such as the combine shown above, to plant and harvest their peanuts, cotton, soybeans, corn, wheat and other crops that grow well in Bulloch. Farm supply businesses provide feed, seed, fertilizer and equipment such as that shown at right. Tobacco warehouses, brokers, peanut destination points and the cotton gin in Brooklet are also important in the overall agribusiness picture in Bulloch County.

Even grocery stores that buy local produce, and several seasonal produce markets and roadside stands also figure into the agriculture economy. Finally, banks which finance the farmers’ and the agribusiness owners’ operations, are a necessary part of the agricultural economy of Bulloch County.

Those elements working in cooperation make Bulloch County one of the state’s top agricultural counties. Even in an off year such as 1993, agribusiness in Bulloch County was big business, and it should be even bigger business in 1994 if more favorable weather conditions prevail.
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Friends, family gather for traditional cane-grinding

Friends and neighbors stood in the small shed huddled happily against the cold and rain. The centerpiece of the gathering was a huge vat of liquid, hot, steamy and sweet-smelling. Ricky Miller stood by the vat and stirred the liquid with a dipper fashioned from a long piece of wood with an old bucket at the end.

They were gathered to observe an old Miller family Thanksgiving tradition. A cane-grinding.

“We started talking about it a while back,” said Miller as he tended his post. “It used to be we always had a cane-grinding at Thanksgiving time. We decided we should have one this year.”

The location of the grinding, the Miller place on Macedonia Road in Bulloch County, was built in the 1970s by Harry Miller. Around 1970 Miller, now deceased, decided to clear a piece of land. Not wanting to waste the timber, he decided to build a barn. By 1978 the land had become home to what looked like a pioneer settlement that included a grist mill, a cane grinder and the shelter where the syrup is boiled.

“You see, the wood goes in back under the chimney. The way the fire works is it forces the heat around the vat then up the chimney,” said Lavon Newsome.

The chimney, the warmest spot in the shed, was built of brick made in Rocky Ford about 70 years ago, according to the Miller family.

Outside Lavon’s brother, Jerry, drove a tractor around in circles as one of his many helpers forced long stalks of sugar cane into the grinder.

The juice from the cane flowed into a huge barrel. Miller explained that it takes 50 gallons of the sweet-tasting juice to make about five gallons of syrup. The liquid must boil three and one-half to four hours before it is the proper consistency.

Jerry, referred to as “Boss Man” for the day, was dressed to the hilt for the occasion. He sported a big black western hat, jeans belted with a piece of rope and boots decorated with a couple of feathers. He said there hasn’t been a cane-grinding here since 1978.

The all-day event took some preparation, said Miller.

“We scrubbed the metal vat for three days,” Miller said. “I found the old brick daddy used to clean it and we went to work. We’d heat and sand, heat and sand.”

Lavon said the old vat was made at the ironworks in Savannah in 1935.

Jerry recently bought a second vat that lies on the ground outside the shed.

The day began with a hearty breakfast cooked by Lavon. At noon a turkey in a bag carved with Italian dressing still smacked on a makeshift grill on a table outside the shed. A metal tent protected the grill and bird from the rain. Faded red letters on one side of the tent spelled “turkey shout.”

After cooking for three to four hours the sweet liquid boils down to a sweet, thick syrup.

Lavon and Jerry’s mother, Olivia Newsome, greeted a man who had come to join the group.

“This is Lannie Lee,” she said. “He supplied the cane for the grinding.”

Lee said he grows some sugar cane each year on his Bulloch County farm, but not for commercial purposes.

“Make a little syrup, sell a little and give it away to neighbors,” he said. “That’s what it’s good for. Guess they have about 800 stalks here today. It’s grain sugar, but I don’t know what variety.”

Olivia Newsome chatted with her friend Katherine Brannen.

“Remember syrup cake?” she said.

“Oh yes,” Brannen replied. “We used syrup instead of sugar and put whipped cream on it.”

“It sure was good,” Newsome said.

At the vat the syrup is pronounced ready, the pouring begins. Jerry fastens each Ball jar after it is filled with the hot liquid.

“It has a good shelf life,” commented Lavon.

Once the vat was emptied of the sweet, thick syrup, buckets of newly squeezed cane juice were brought in to be poured into the hot vat. Wood was added, the foam was skimmed and Miller began to stir.

There would be more syrup in three and one-half to four hours.

And there would be turkey to eat, sweet cane juice to drink and memories to be shared.

Harry Miller would be proud.

—Nancy Welch

—Photos by David Rogers
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Two Bulloch County farms were selected recently to receive the prestigious Centennial Family Farm Award given annually by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

On Friday, the J. Leahmon Akin farm and the Garfield Hall farm will be recognized as farms that have been owned by members of the same family for 100 years or more that are not listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The award was established in 1993, and 359 farms across the state have been recognized since that time.

“It is important that we...
look at these farms in both economic terms and cultural terms,” said Steven Moffson, Georgia Centennial Farm committee chair. “There was a time when all of the farms being recognized were important in sustaining their communities. Many had a store or a grist mill which served as the heart of a community.”

James Garfield Hall’s granddaughter Sandra Cummings remembers very well working in the store on her grandfather’s farm. “We sold gasoline from Gulf Oil, and had a little store as well,” she said. “My grandfather let us take turns operating the store and collecting the money. It was so great. We would sell a lot of what we harvested in the store from fruit to peanuts.”

Bordering Highway 80 just east of Portal, Cummings said her grandfather purchased the 169 acre farm from his cousin R. D. Saturday for $3,980 in 1928. “It had been in the family since 1904 when Adolphus Saturday purchased the land from the J.W. Deal family,” she said. “We are very proud that we have been able to keep it in the family all of these years.”

Cummings said the land is no longer being farmed for row crops, but has been planted with trees.

“In 1972, we leased out the land for farming, because my grandfather had passed away a few years earlier, and there really wasn’t anyone to farm it,” she said. “During the time he was alive, it was a very productive farm. Now it is planted with pines.”

Edwin Akins and his family also have been able to keep their ancestors farm-land in the family. “My grandfather John Benjamin Akins began acquiring land in the eastern part of Bulloch County in 1908,” Akins said. “He eventually owned as much as 2,100 acres. With the exception of 25 acres or so, that land remains in the Akins family.”

Akins said he owns 289.3 acres that was left to him by his father, J. Leahmon Akins. “John Benjamin Akins had 10 children,” he said. “Most of the land ended up with his four sons. My father was one of those sons.”

Akins said he is very proud of what his grandfather was able to accomplish. “The community where he lived is called the Akins Community,” he said. “My grandfather passed away in 1950 in his rocking chair on the front porch. He loved farming, and he loved his land. He passed that onto each of us.”

“Akins said a priority of his this past year was to get his family farm certified. “I love our family farm, and the history that comes with it,” he said. “Just knowing what my grandfather and father did to preserve this land means a lot to me. It is my hope that it will stay in the Akins family, but you never know. Right now, I just enjoy riding on and looking at my land. I can just be on it, and not infringe on anyone else’s rights. Also, I love going fishing there.”

Cummings said she also feels a very special connection to the land that she used to harvest.

“Because my grandfather was such a big family man, he didn’t like to leave anybody out of the fun or the work,” she said. “We got out there and worked, from picking peanuts and cotton, to picking tobacco. It was hard work, but we loved it.”

Cummings said her grandfather was unusual in that he paid her and her siblings and cousins to work.

“That was unusual at that time,” she said. “But we got paid, and were fed very good suppers. Two of my favorite memories are catching fish out of the pond and having a big fish fry. The other was picking pecans, and then eating them.”

J. Leahmon Akins is shown in a photo taken earlier this year.
MELON INDUSTRY.

Bulloch county is noted far and wide for the excellence of the flavor of her water melons. Along the line of the Savannah and Statesboro Railway, the melon industry has grown to considerable proportions. Hundreds of acres are planted every year, and both the local and the northern market are supplies. The profit on a crop of water melons is something that cannot be estimated. When the conditions are favorable and the crop is marketed early the planters almost invariably make money. When a car of melons is shipped to market, a man does not have any way of knowing whether he will receive a check for $100 or a demand for freight which the melons failed to pay.

During the past season or two however the planters have organized themselves into what is known as The Bulloch County Melon Growers Association and they have been able to handle their produce much more successfully. The large per cent of the crops are now sold on the track of the home station which is much more satisfactory to the shippers and since this method has been in vogue our planters have all made money.

A one horse farmer can cultivate about 40 acres in melons. They are planted early in the spring about the middle of March and are off and the money in hand by the middle of July, hence four months is all a man wants to plant, cultivate and market a crop of water melons.

We give below a rough estimate on what a man can do under ordinary circumstances on a one horse farm with water melons giving the cost of production, price obtained etc.
Local breeders include Flame Kissed Farms, Ben-Del Farms and Lois Beasley Quarter Horses in Metter.

Miniature horses are popular in Bulloch County. This buckskin Paint gelding named Banjo enjoys fresh spring grass.

Bulloch County ranks seventh in Georgia in terms of boarding, training and breeding horses.

A drive through rural Bulloch County shows evidence of a quickly-growing equine industry. Whether citizens are breeders, professional showmen, horse brokers, operate boarding and training facilities, offer lessons or just have a few horses for pleasure, it is obvious the number of horses in Bulloch County is growing.

This is also evident in the number of businesses offering feed and tack — a term used to describe equipment used in riding or driving horses. Several agricultural businesses offer feed, health products and equestrian equipment, while a few stores focus mainly on equine products and equestrian-related clothing and gift items.

For the past several years, the Bulloch County Horseman’s Association has entertained a rich membership. The family-oriented group consists of folks who own a variety of breeds. Members include those who prefer Western style riding as well as English style.

There are several other area riding clubs and organizations as well, many of whom have connections with the Bulloch County Horseman’s Association. The South Georgia Arabian Horse Association, The Georgia Wranglers, and others form smaller, special-interest groups.

Bulloch County is home to farms specializing in raising a variety of breeds of horses. One of the most popular breeds in the area is the American Quarter Horse.

Dennis and Joy Pope of FlameKissed Farms near Portal focus on breeding quality American Quarter Horses. So does Bennie Earl Deal of Ben-Del Farms. These horses are versatile and muscular, used for everything from racing to cattle work, pleasure showing to barrel racing, and trail riding.

However, Paint horses are becoming increasingly popular. A few breeders, such as Querencia Arabians and Flattich Arabians, focus on the graceful Arab, a smaller but hardy breed known for its stamina and unique conformation.

Robert Anderson’s Cricket Hill Paso Finos near Portal and Denton Rouge’s farm at the southern end of the county feature the fiery Paso Fino breed.

Mill Creek Ponies offers...
The equine industry contributes about $10,150,000 to the Bulloch County economy each year.

quality Dartmoor ponies as well as other pony breeds and crossbreeds. They also offer horseback riding lessons, as do many other equestrian facilities in Bulloch County.

Johnny and Dale Deal have been teaching young folk to ride for years, adhering to Western style riding. Quanah Stables in Stilson offers Western riding as well, focusing on horsemanship. And Eleanor Ellis at Evermore Farm in Brooklet hosts the Bulloch County 4-H Horse Club as well as offers English-style riding lessons.

Many of these farms offer boarding, too. Some provide stall space and paddock space as well as pasture, while others may only provide pasture boarding. Many horse-loving citizens without the land to keep a horse take advantage of the boarding facilities in Bulloch County, where they can enjoy their horse at their leisure.

In recent years, the Statesboro Kiwanis Club decided to allow horses in their annual Kiwanis Ogeechee Fair parade. Previously, the issue of cleaning up after the animals led to their being banned from the parade, but more recently club members devised a plan for riders to pay a small fee to fund a “clean-up crew” to follow behind the horses.

Bulloch’s strong interest in horses has been reflected in the most recent parades, with groups of riders showing up en masse to ride down the streets of Statesboro in their best.

One group dresses in authentic period costume, while others “go native” with war bonnets and beaded dresses. Others ride decked out in show finery, while others are more casual with their everyday trail gear. People have even walked in the parade, leading miniature horses.

The equine industry has grown such that in a few years the Bulloch County Center for Agriculture will include a covered arena. The facility will be multi-use, according to county officials, but equine events are expected to be a major part of events scheduled.

Area feed stores, which once offered a minimal choice of products, have expanded over the past few years to include a variety of feed products, full lines of equine health products and vast assortments of tack and equipment.

These are all signs that the equine industry in the area is alive, thriving and growing.
South Georgia leads cotton production

(Note: The following is part of a series of articles looking at the history and evolution of agriculture in Georgia and Bulloch County.)

The post-war “Cotton Famine,” as it was known in Georgia, ruined many farmers. First, there was an over-abundance of cotton stocks in England, Georgia’s biggest client. Second, the production of cotton garments in New England factories was now meeting the North’s needs.

Further muddying the economic forecasts, there were now competing cotton growers and producers elsewhere around the world, particularly in both Egypt and India. Those regions were more than happy to supply many of America’s cotton clients with their cotton needs.

Cotton prices at market dropped an average of between 70 and 90 percent between the years of 1874 and 1894. That meant the price of one 450-pound bale of cotton dropped to only $51 per bale.

Up until now, most cotton mills had been established in the Northeastern United States. Curiously enough, the Georgia Cotton Company built a plant outside of Providence, Rhode Island, in a community they then named Georgiaville.

Out of necessity, Georgia once again soon took the lead in cotton manufacture in the South. By 1889, there were 442,000 cotton spindles in operation in Georgia out of the nation’s 1.6 million spindles.

The cotton products produced primarily in Georgia mills consisted of sheetings, shirtings, drills, cottonades, Osnaburgs, cotton duck, yarns and twines. These coarse cotton fabrics sold well in local markets and were not exported.

Of the 1895–96 through 1900–01 cotton harvests, Georgia led for 5 of the 6 years in the nation, only falling behind Mississippi’s production in 1897–98 by some 100,000 bales.

In the United States in 1878, Professor C.V. Riley was appointed as chief entomologist of the United States’ Department of Agriculture. He immediately began studying the effects of certain insects on cotton crops.

At the same time, scientist J.H. Comstock published the Department of Agriculture’s first official cotton research report entitled “Report on Cotton Insects.”

At least partly as a result of his findings, the U.S. Entomological Commission was established in 1880 under the direction of the U.S. Department of the Interior and led by C.V. Riley.

When the U.S. Congress passed the Hatch Act on March 2, 1887, the sum of $15,000 was granted to each state for the purpose of establishing and operating an agricultural experiment station.

In Georgia, the Agricultural Experiment Station at Rock College was created Feb. 18, 1888, by the Trustees of the University of Georgia. It was attached to the State College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts.

This experimental station, and the State College, are now what we know as the University of Georgia and their College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

Roger Allen is a local lover of history. Allen provides a brief look each week at the area’s past. Email Roger at rwasr1953@gmail.com.
Statesboro is king of cotton

Between the years of 1929 and 1932, an overproduction of tobacco, an infestation of "Blue Mold", and the arrival of the Great Depression, Statesboro’s tobacco prices dropped dramatically: 8.9 cents a pound (1930), 6.2 cents a pound (1931), 7.8 cents a pound (1932), and 10.9 cents a pound (1933).

Whereas there were 32,000 acres planted in tobacco in 1929, by 1932 there was less than 1700 acres planted in tobacco. In order to curtail overproduction of tobacco, in 1934 the U.S. Congress passed the Kerr-Smith Tobacco Act that penalized farmers who didn’t restrict their plantings.

Bulloch County’s tobacco allotment for 1935 was 1,674,634 pounds. Two new warehouses opened in Statesboro that year: J.G. Tillman’s facility, on Holland’s lot; and E.A. Smith’s facility, in Brannen’s Park. In 1936, the allotment was 2,319,424 pounds.

Numerous national buyers showed up for the auction: in addition to L&M, IE, RJR, CA, there were newcomers Venable, Dixie Leaf, L.B. Jenkins, and W.T. Clark Tobacco Companies present. Once completed, it was announced that this was the best year ever: 3,629,528 pounds, at an average price of 18.7 cents per pound.

In 1953, the Statesboro market was the northernmost market in the entire state and was the top producer as well, with 18.6 million pounds of tobacco passing through its warehouses, at an average of 47.14 cents a pound. In 1954, two more warehouses opened up: the New Statesboro Warehouse building; and the Farmer’s Warehouse, operated by Guy Sutton.

By 1959, Aulbert Brannen had built two more warehouses, which he called Brannen #1 and Brannen #3. J.T. Sheppard (the son of R.E.), H.E. Akins, and Hardin Sugg opened the new Sheppard-Sugg Tobacco Warehouse at the site of the old Sheppard Warehouse. By 1960, Akins had acquired the controlling interest in the Cobb and Foxhall Company, when both of the men died.

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Bulloch County still grows tobacco. In 2007, longtime tobacco farmer Bob Brannen told the Statesboro Herald that the tobacco crops in Bulloch, Screven, Candler, Jenkins, and Bryan Counties were the best he had seen in the last fifty years. Brannen stated that it was "the best...in both quality and yield per acre...because this little area got the right amount of rain at the right time."

Roger Allen is a local lover of history. Allen provides a brief look at Bulloch County’s historical past. E-mail Roger at rogerdodger53@hotmail.com
The Potatoe Crop.

There is no crop grows upon which there is a larger percent of net profit than that of sweet potatoes. Our lands are especially adapted to the growing of both sweet and Irish potatoes, and hundreds of barrels of them are now shipped to all the parke markets, as stated in the outset there is more clear money in potatoes than anything else a man can paint as will be shown by the following table. We are going to take 5 acres of common pine land and give you an estimate of what can be done with in the first year with a potato crop. The following is an estimate of its cost and its production there figures will be substantiated by any up to date farmer.

Rental of 5 acres........ $10.00
2 tons fertilizer........ 40.00
15 bushels seed potatoes 45.00
Planting and fertilizing 18.00
Cost of cultivation..... 20.00
Cost of harvesting...... 20.00
Cost of 100 barrels..... 20.00
TOTAL COST............ 173.00

This land will make 100 bushels which will sell at any market 40c per bushel net, $400.00 leaving a profit on the first crop of $227.00. Then when this crop is off you have your land in fine shape and ready fertilized for a sweet potato crop. We will give you some figures on them. You will remembr we have already put 800 pounds of fertilizer to the acre. This will be quite sufficient for both crops, 5 acres of in sweet potatoes will cost to plant and cultivate and harvest about $75.00.

They will produce fertilized as above fully 100 to 300 bushels which will be 500 bushels of sweet potatoes they can be sold.
Vidalia onion becoming bigger part of Bulloch farm economy

The state vegetable of Georgia is the Vidalia onion and it’s a high-profit margin crop.

Bulloch County is one of a handful of counties in the state designated an official Vidalia onion county.

Yet fewer than 10 farmers in Bulloch County grew Vidalia onions last year. They planted 670 acres of onions and produced a gross value of more than $5 million worth of their product.

Even with just 670 acres in production, that is a significant increase in Vidalia production in the past five years, Wes Harris, University of Georgia Extension Agent, said. That rapid growth could continue.

“Vidalias are a big margin crop in the winter,” Harris said.

One reason more people have not gotten into onion farming in Bulloch may be the high start-up cost, said Joe Hart, a local onion farmer.

He said plants cost $350-400 per acre, fertilizer $90-100 per acre, labor for transplanting at least $275 per acre and pesticides and fungicides about $77 per acre. With the labor cost of harvesting, the expense of onion farming is $2,000-$2,500 an acre, not counting the cost of the land.

And like most other crops, onions depend on favorable weather conditions.

But the payoff can be substantial if the weather and market conditions are right. In 1993, onion farmers made $25 a bag for onions at the beginning of the season, but the price dropped to about $10 per bag near the end of the season because of the high production.

A farmer on a fair year can produce 300 bags of onions per acre.

Harris said another problem for onion farmers, or for any vegetable farmer, is a consistent labor source.

“Vegetable production is extremely labor intensive. We can bring labor in, but it will be extreme-ly fluid and that can get to be might speculative,” he said.

Bulloch is one of 19 Georgia counties that are permitted under state law to grow and sell Vidalia onions. The 19-county area planted 8,700 acres of onions in 1993.

Land produces money from leases, insurance

When you compute the total farm income in Bulloch County, you have to include several items that are not crops.

For instance, Bulloch County landowners leased 70,000 acres at an average of $3 per acre for a total of $210,000.

In addition, the government paid Bulloch County farmers $8.3 million in disaster payments related to dry weather conditions.

Also, farmers collected $5.7 million in crop insurance payments.