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### Possumneck History

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THE HISTORY OF POSSUMNECK-ATTALA COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI  
(5 Miles East of West)  
by Nonnee Weeks Hollingsworth

The hamlet of Possumneck is located in the western part of Attala County state of Mississippi. Five miles East of West. The community of Possumneck is found in parts of twenty five sections of land; more or less; with the most part of it being in Township 15 North; Range 5 East and a few sections in Township 15; Range 6 East. This unusual community is a neck of land lying between Big Black River on the west; Sharkey Creek on the East; Sharkey and Apookta Creeks on the south. On the north the generally accepted boundary is the northern line of township 15 north. (There is some difference of opinion on this.) The Possumneck Community is about four miles wide and six long. Carved from a part of the territory of the Choctaw Indian Nation which was ceded to the United States in 1830 by the "Treaty of Dancing Rabbit".

The early settlers came, chiefly from the Carolinas, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia. We have no definite record as to the time these people began to come into this community, but the land records in Attala show a land grant was made June 25, 1835, to Duncan McMillan for land in section ten. Back before the Civil War there was a place on a bluff of the Big Black River known as Rock Port. This was where travelers crossed the river. At one time, there were several stores, a saloon and possibly other buildings; it was here that the travelers, sometimes had to camp and wait for the over flow water of the river to "run down" in order that they could cross the stream. This information leads us to assume that it was here in section ten that this community had its beginning.

During the fall of 1835, we find that Elisha Sharp came to Section 14. Byron Whitehead and William Pickens to section 21; Thomas Coopwood to section 22 and up the river; Anthony Winston went to section three and William Ferriday into section two. I have been told that there was a road that left the village of Rock Port and followed a northerly and easterly route across the county. This road was called The Old Rock Port Road.

The southern part of Possumneck was at one time a part of the Pierre Durante Indian Reservation. Land records and abstract deeds in the possession of Mrs. Annie Mae Kettle show the first original entry in this reservation was made by Olive Woods in 1841 for some over 158 acres of land for the price of \$199.64. Later W. M. Herod purchased land in this section twenty-six. There is an Indian cemetery in this section as well as one of the largest springs to be found anywhere. In fact several cows have fallen into the spring of water and drowned. Many of the older people can remember plowing in the fields and seeing pottery and arrow heads. One of the first steam saw mills was in this section twenty-six, not far from the large spring. This mill was run by a Mr. Russell and it is said that he paid men ten cents a cut to fell the big Virgin pine trees off the hills to be run through his mill. In later years in this same section there was a hree cotton

gin, which was owned and operated by Tom Allison. The first gin in Possumneck was in section 14 and run by Colonel Davis.

During the period between 1835 and 1859, almost every section of land in the community had applicants for land. Dickersons, Davis, Zolleffer, Ellington, Cherry, McAdory, Olive, Wilkerson, Martin, Guess, Evans, Kelly, Murff, Hyman, Armstrong, Dunford, Cudd, Scarborough, White, and Herod. As well as many others, whose names appeared on the land records. Most of this land was bought for one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre.

Section twenty four, which seems to be the hub of the community today had seven different land grants; the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  to William H. White--January 20, 1847. The NW $\frac{1}{4}$  to John M. Dickerson--October 19, 1847. The W $\frac{1}{2}$  of SE $\frac{1}{2}$  to John Dunford--October 19, 1847. The E $\frac{1}{2}$  of SW $\frac{1}{2}$  to Lawrence Scarborough--October 27, 1847. The NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$  to John L. Dickerson--January 19, 1850. The SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$  to James Dickerson--April 18, 1853 and the SE $\frac{1}{2}$  of the SE $\frac{1}{2}$  to John Cudd--August 25, 1853. This is the section that has the community club house--the Stables--the Store--the Holloway home--Allen Weeks home--J. A. Weeks home--A. W. Weeks home, the Hollingsworth home and a number of tenant houses.

Prior to 1847 this community was generally known as "The Neck", taking its name from the shape of its land. Land records show that the community was thickly settled by 1847 and during each year there was a square dance every Friday night held at the large log school house or in some home. From all reports some of these social gatherings were rough and wild and anyone outside of the community did not have a chance, as outsiders were not welcomed in The Neck. They were not only told so but shown so.

W. M. Herod was living in The Neck about this time and for reasons unknown he was called "Old King Herod" by many of the people of the community. During a term of Court in the County a case was called up before the Judge which involved some of the men and boys of The Neck, whom some one referred to Herod as "King Herod" the Judge asked, what he was King of and the witness replied, "Oh Judge, you know The Neck where we catch all dem possums". The old Judge gave a big laugh and said, "Oh yes, King of Possumneck" and thus the name of Possumneck originated about 1847.

During the Civil War a Federal Ammunition Train stopped south of West. The Federals were annoying the women and children that had been left alone at home. Word reached across the river to Possumneck for help. Captain David Love was at home on leave. This Confederate officer learned of the situation. He knew of two other Confederates on leave in Possumneck so he contacted a Mr. Davis and Mr. Love and the three men rode into West on their horses making as much noise as they could. When the Federals saw these bold men approaching they were confident there were more men on the way, so the frightened northerners quickly disconnected the engine, hopped on it and went down the track, leaving the rest of the train and all

the ammunition behind. So the army of three men dumped the ammunition into the Big Black River. (This incident was told by H. A. McCre, one time prominent merchant and financier of West). Even today many of the cannon balls and minnie balls can be seen as ornaments around homes in Possumneck.

In January of 1875, Allen Rhodes Weeks came to Possumneck to make his home. He bought three quarters of section twenty four. His brother, John Weeks moved to Possumneck in 1878 and bought land from Allen Weeks. These brothers acquired much more land in and near Possumneck during the years that followed.

A water mill cotton gin was built and operated by a Mr. Kimes. Just across the creek from Possumneck. (Better known as the Musselwhite Mill Pond). This gin and the Allison gin were where the farmers had their cotton ginned. Then the farmer had to make the long trip to Yazoo City to sell their cotton.

Some time in the late 1880's the first store was opened at the site where the present store stands today. This was operated by Mr. Cochran. (An uncle of Mrs. Joe Weeks). About 1890, J. A. Weeks was operating a saw mill and needed supplies to furnish the mill hands, so he opened a small stock of goods in the front side room of the Allen Weeks home. Then in the fall of 1890, Allen Weeks and his nephew J. A. Weeks bought out Cochran's store and for years the store was operated under the name of A. R. Weeks and Company. A cotton gin was operated along with the saw mill.

The post office was established in Possumneck in October 18, 1893. J. A. Weeks was the postmaster. This post office was discontinued September 14, 1905. During the early nineteen hundreds there were telephones in many homes in Possumneck with a switch board at the A. R. Weeks and Co. Store. (This old equipment can be seen at the store today). The Bell Telephone Company bought out the other companies and soon the old telephones hung silent on the walls in many homes. The first private air port in the state of Mississippi was in Possumneck and was owned by J. A. Weeks.

There is no air port in Possumneck today. A Ford automobile was the first car in Possumneck and it was owned by J. A. Weeks.

Should you have visited Possumneck Community in the 1800's you would have met Dickersons, Palmer, Love, Kimes, Guess, Cherry, Haywood, Evans, Pope, Dunford, Ammons, Armstrongs, Hill, Guyton, Musselwhite, and Weeks, and many others that are no longer among our people of the community.

W. A. Henley, Possumneck store owner has had the store for more than thirty years; and has seen the year the store did a volume of business as high as \$100,000. During these flourishing years in the furnish season a ton of rice, two tons of lard, two hundred barrels of flour, as well as many other items would be needed. The population and good roads have greatly changed those days and the cotton farming

in the valleys around Possumneck is not the big business that it once was.

The saw mills that made a fortune, during World War I, for J. A. Weeks are gone and so is the Possumneck gin. In fact, Possumneck has witnessed many changes during the last fifty years. Today most of the homes have telephones, there are numerous gravel roads in the community; with paved Highway 19 from West through Possumneck into Kosciusko. Rural electrification has brought many modern conveniences to the homes and farms; Butanne gas gives the families of the community a better heating system for their homes. Rural Free Delivery brings mail to all homes six days in the week. A Book Mobile gives our people reading opportunities each month in the year. The children in Possumneck are carried by bus to larger schools where they have every opportunity with their city cousins.

The Possumneck-Unity Community boast a brick church, built by local men, no indebtedness and a full-time pastor living in the community. The Possumneck Development Club is a very active and cooperative organization promoting projects for the betterment of the community. All of the people of Possumneck Community own their home and planations. Instead of looking out over red clay hills, you can see bottom lands of timber and cotton. Also, you can see beautiful herds of cattle grazing in contentment, land owners practicing diversified farming, many home-owned fish ponds, abundant supply of wildlife and in general you see a land of prosperity.

Possumneck has become widely know in recent years because of the out-standing horses trained and shown from the Stables in Possumneck.

The people are friendly, cooperative, God fearing and proud of their community--the place that has excited the curiosity of every one that hears the name of Possumneck.