

Found in the June 26, 1924 Aberdeen Progress (Monroe County Courthouse) and submitted by Jim Murphy, jmurphy@knology.net to the Lowndes, MS Genealogy Website at <http://lowndesmsgenealogy.org>. All Rights Reserved.

A small glimpse of daily living is given by Mrs. Nancy Dilworth (no relation) who at age 93 gave an interview in 1924 in which she describes the daily life of those in the community of Cotton Gin Port, close to Hamilton in Monroe County. She was born in 1831, spent twelve years in Tennessee and Alabama, moving to Cotton Gin Port in 1844. They traveled across the country in wagons, bringing household effects with them, camped in the woods at night and lived in the wagons in the day. Following are other matters of interest which she gave.

As a little girl, I wore homemade shoes and clothing. Dresses were of cotton or wool, spun and woven on the looms at home. Walnut stain dyed them brown, indigo made them blue, sumach red, and copperas set the colors in the dyes. 'Linsey' was a woolen cloth, sometimes woven in stripes of different colors. Wool jeans was woven for the men's clothing, which was cut and made at home, often sewed up at night by the light of candles and pine knots. Our little dresses were made with Peroda waists, plain and tight; big sleeves, short full skirts, and pantalets. Our stockings were home knit, sometimes with gaystripes running around the legs. Later hoops were very stylish. We wove our own woolen blankets and woolen coverlids at home too. Our shoes were made on the plantation of dogskin, and other leathers, laced up with buckskin thongs. We rode around the countryside on side saddles with long riding skirts.

Cooking was done in the kitchen fireplace; a long potrack with hooks would hold several kettles over the fire. Baking was done on flat-bottomed iron vessels called ovens, with legs that were placed over red hot coals on the hearth. We lived well with plenty to eat. Game was plentiful - deer, wild turkey, and geese. Fox hunting was a great sport. At night the hills and hollows resounded with the music of the horns and the baying of hounds.

At night we lighted the homes with candles we made ourselves. They were made in iron or brass molds, and then melted tallow was poured in and allowed to harden. Other forms of light were 'slut' in which a string was boiled in beeswax and tallow, then wound around a bottle, and the end lighted. Another was an egg shell filled with lard with a string wick stuck in it, and the eggshell placed in a tumbler of sand. Everybody had 'ash hoppers' in the back yard, a V shaped covered with oak boards that had been split at home. When it was full from ashes from the fireplace, water was poured through the ashes and they were caught in the trough underneath. Lye was then boiled in the pot until it could eat a feather. Meat skins were put in and boiled until it was thick as mud. This was our soap; soft soap was stored in gourds. Gourds were used to store much seeing that earthenware, etc. were not very common until later. There was a salt gourd, sugar one, lard one and drinking one. The drinking gourds had long handles and were cut open and scraped out until the bad taste was gone.

Drinking water was kept in cedar bucket on a shelf near the door. The water bucket had brass bands that were rubbed by 'darkies'. They scrubbed down the floor, tables, chairs, etc. every week. We always had company on Sunday.

When a new couple married or moved in, the whole community pitched in and had a log rolling and quilting. Logs from fields were rolled in piles and burned and the land cleared of brush. Quilts were of gay colors with many designs which included rising sun, doublebow knot, basket, ninepatch, log cabin,

Irish chain, Jack-in-the pulpit, etc.

When the horn was blown men came in to eat at long tables outdoors under the trees. Boiled ham, flour bread, corn light bread, old-fashioned pound cake, home made preserves, cucumber pickles, pies of various kinds, pot of cornmeal or chicken or greenapple dumplings, chicken pies as big as dishpans, baked potatoes by the half bushes, butter and milk brought in from the cool spring running through the milk shed, coffee, homemade persimmon beer, and more was there. Men had an eggnog.

The War (Civil War) changed all of this. All able-bodied men were gone and women managed the farms. Little merchandise of any kind was found. Many substitutes were used. People plated their own straw hats, persimmon seeds were used as buttons, herbs were used for medicine, parched sweet potatoes were used in place of coffee (sweetened with a bit of sorghum).

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Lowndes County, Mississippi Genealogy Site

Hosted by [C. L. Herrick](#) , and [Ruth Ann Faris](#) , Assistant County Coordinator. This genealogy website is dedicated to providing and disseminating free genealogy research data to everyone.

Regrettably, I do not live in Lowndes County or even the State of Mississippi, and cannot do your research for you but will try to point you in the right direction to get the help you need. Also, check the [Local Researchers](#) for the names of local researchers.

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