

GWINNETT GAZETEER

Buford

Gwinnett County, Georgia



Buford

Soon after the Civil War several prominent Atlanta citizens conceived the idea of building a railroad from Atlanta to Charlotte, North Carolina. Among the original stockholders and directors of the road were Thomas S. Garner, Thomas Alexander, Amos Fox, B. Y. Saye and Larkin Smith. T. S. Garner was chosen to ride through the country on horseback and buy the right of way. The obstacles and dangers from farmers who thought a railroad through their property would ruin it are traditions that are remembered to this day.

When the road was under construction, a camp for the hands was established on a knoll on the property of Silas King. Garner decided to make it a waiting place for trains and thereby established a depot. Then came the idea of a town. Garner and Larkin Smith bought the property of Silas King and some adjoining property, had it surveyed and divided into lots. They gave the place the name of Buford in honor of A. S. Buford, president of the railroad. The depot was built and C. H. Smith, son of Larkin Smith, was given the job as agent, a position he held for several years.

The next building was a hotel a hundred yards back of where the King log cabin stood, the cabin being rolled back and used as a stable. Mary Bell Garner, mother of T. S. Garner, her four sons and a daughter were brought from Oxford, Alabama, and Mrs. Garner took charge of the hotel. The second building was a store across the railroad from the hotel, owned and managed by Mellville S. Garner.

T. S. Garner bought the interest of Larkin Smith. Mindful of the interest and needs of a growing town, Garner gave land for white and colored churches, schools, streets and city park, with the proviso it must be used as such or revert to him. In this manner Buford was established in 1871.

When the first train was scheduled to reach the new depot, a large crowd had assembled to see the sight. Many of them had never seen a train. Both sides of the track were lined with men, women, boys and girls, the whole population for miles around apparently gathered to witness the unusual event. The day was hot and many umbrellas were raised. The train finally came snorting in. The engineer, having a funny streak in his veins, exclaimed in a loud voice: "You folks lower your umbrellas or you'll scare this thing off the track." It is said that all the umbrellas were instantly closed. The town began to grow. Adam Pool and Wyatt Wilson erected a store and so did J. N. Thompson and J. A. Patillo. Cotton to the amount of 53 bales were sold there during the first fall.

The next event worthy of note was the construction of a tank by the railroad company just north of where the depot now stands. What made it an important event was the impetus it gave to the business of the town. A man was employed at \$15.00 per month to keep the tank, which was a vast sum turned loose to the hungry merchants. Then some one suggested the idea of getting up a scheme to advertise the town. A few citizens got together and decided to give a free barbecue, employ a

brass band, secure a number of noted orators, run an excursion from Atlanta and invite the public generally. They incurred an expense of \$487.00 and their only hope of cash remuneration was the sale of tickets to Buford. But owing to conditions they could not control, it was a bad day for an excursion from Atlanta' and when the train rolled up it had only 57 passengers at a dollar each, which made the promoters lose \$430.00 in the experiment. But they were all like the fellow who went to town and got on a spree, was arrested, fined \$10 and locked up, and who on his way home told a friend that he had a big time and lots of fun while in town. Those promoters had a big time, lots of fun and each man sustained his part of the loss without a murmur. That, however, has always been one of the characteristics of Buford's population. If it was a matter of advancing the interest of the town, they would not stop to consider the cost, but would respond with the necessary cash; and if they lost, it was without a murmur.

During the next year or so a number of good citizens located in Buford. Among them were R. H. Allen, Dr. W. W. Power, J. A. Johnston, J. W. Spencer, W. B. Haygood, J. E. Cloud, J. F. Espy, Bona Allen, Dr. N. C. Osborn, W. W. Wilson, T. C. Burton, D. F. Vance, J. T. Smith. In the meantime J. A. Patillo, Adam Pool, R. N. Blackwood and J. T. Smith had located their families here. A little later came John Posey, D. A. Farr, J. B. Chapman, W. T. Hendrix, the last mentioned being the first marshal of the town and a good one, too. The town then began to put on village airs. C. H. Smith, Agent, figured in an episode of interest at this time.

Fresh from a military school, it appeared to the public that he tried to adopt the strictest methods in his business, known to military law. Having an interest in a store, he is said to have been so strict that he would not allow his own freight to go out of the depot until all the charges were paid.

During this time he married and at the birth of his first son it so happened that a large party of railroad officials and capitalists from the North and East were to pass over this road. A special train of the finest sleepers was put at the disposal of the party and orders were issued for all trains between Atlanta and Charlotte to give this special the right-of-way, and to all stations to keep the track clear, as the special would make but one stop between the points and that at Greenville for water. The special left Atlanta on time and came flying through at the rate of a mile a minute.

Smith, thinking of his new babe and knowing about the time the train would pass Buford, gathered up an armful of torpedoes and put them on the track, put out all danger signals known to railroad rules, gathered a red flag and getting on the track waved it vigorously as the train approached. As the train pulled up and the train officials and distinguished guests rushed out excitedly to ascertain if there was a wreck ahead, Mr. Smith bowed low and said: "Gentlemen, it's a boy."

G. M. Tuggle was the first contractor that located in Buford. H. H. Allen was the first manufacturer, Dr. W. W. Power the first doctor, Jas. A. Johnston the first blacksmith, Bona Allen the first tanner, J. D. Chapman the first mason. The first apparent dude that entered the town was that Christian gentleman, Joe Chapman. He was attired in a Prince Albert coat, silk hat, piccadilly shoes, kid

gloves, a gold headed cane, and his hair parted in the middle; but his fine clothes did not wear as long as his fine character, for at all times and on all occasions Joe Chapman was on the right side of every question where sobriety and morality were involved.

Buford was incorporated in 1871 and the municipal government organized. W. B. Haygood was the first mayor and he proved an efficient officer. Perhaps the best advertised mayor the town ever had was J. E. Cloud. He was a merchant and during his term as mayor some of the societies in Atlanta had a picnic down at the spring. Some of the party were boisterous and violated the municipal law. Mayor Cloud believed in law and order and had those who violated the law arrested and brought before him for trial and fined them heavily. A young lawyer was one of the party from Atlanta and volunteered to represent the defendants in the trial, but all were convicted and went away sorely grieved, the young attorney feeling possibly worse than his clients. He came out next day in a long article in an Atlanta paper, headed in large letters: "Scenes in the high court of Buford" in which he said the judge of the high court of Buford sat on the counter of a store and let his legs hang down to hold his court; and when he, the attorney, appeared as defendants' counsel and demanded a copy of the town charter, the judge of said court informed him that the clerk of the court had gone twenty miles in the country and carried the charter and all the records with him to try a case out there. He stated further in his article that he demanded the bill of indictment and that he was furnished with a small slip of brown wrapping paper with some names written thereon to which he demurred; and the learned judge again informed him that if he used that outlandish language in his court any more he would send him to the penitentiary. The mayor replied in an afternoon paper and defeated the attorney as badly in the press as in the court.

The first newspaper published in the town was the Buford Gazette with Will Hendrix editor. The Buford Plowboy by W. W. Wilson won wide attention as long as he was its editor. The Buford Advertiser is issued by E. W. Wilbanks.

With a population of nearly 4,000, with one of the largest industries in the South located within its limits, with a strong financial institution, with many live merchants, with beautiful churches, a splendid school system and a live, progressive citizenry, Buford looks forward to a future of still greater achievements.

A fine post office building was erected in 1941. Evelyn Simpson is postmaster.

Buford has four women's clubs. It has also a live Kiwanis Club. There is a library of several thousand volumes.

Current Day:

Today's Buford would still be considered

quite historical, and is in fact billed thus by its officials. Currently in 2004 plans are underway to add onto the Fair Grounds Building. The Gwinnett Daily Post reported that... In 1955, Doris Snell made her first venture to the Gwinnett County Fair for an admission price of 50 cents, and she's been a devoted visitor and volunteer ever since. Her six children won ribbons for their horses, ponies, cows and pigs in 4-H livestock shows, and her 15 grandchildren enjoyed the carnival rides and other amusements. Her great-grandchildren are, too, young to go, but Snell said soon they too will become part of the family tradition.



Although the fair still pays homage to its roots each year with rodeos and shows for livestock and agriculture, a new two-story addition will improve its curb appeal, allow space for technology exhibits and take the 52-year-old fair from farming into the future.

about Buford: Buford is located at 34°7'1" North, 83°59'55" West (34.117080, -83.998535)

According to 2000 year census there were 10,668 people, 3,794 households, and 2,579 families residing in the city.

Suggested Readings: The History of Lake Sidney Lanier -

In 1946 as Army Engineers surveyed a narrow river valley at the boundary of Gwinnett and Forsyth Counties. Mason J. Young, then South Atlantic Division Chief, looked out over the open expanse from one hillside to the next. This site was special and one that had been visited many times before over the years. "This is a storybook site for a dam. I've seen similar sites in the Northeast but there



is always a city a few miles away. Here we have the site with no such complications. I don't think I've ever seen a better site for a dam".

Photo courtesy of David Couglin

The present location of Buford Dam is not the only site that was considered by the Corps of Engineers. One was near Roswell, some approx. 30 miles downstream from the present locale.

Our thanks and appreciation to the following:

Photo courtesy of Gwinnett Daily Post - <http://gwinnettdailyonline.com>

Photo courtesy of David Couglin for History of Lake Sidney Lanier

Visit David's site @: <http://www.lakelanierhistory.com/>

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