

# SUMMERTON, GEM OF SANTEE

Our Special Correspondent, James Carswell, Writes Interestingly of a Prosperous and Growing Clarendon Town and Her Energetic Business Men.

*The Watchman and Southron Newspaper; Sumter, SC; April 6, 1904; page 2*

**PREPARE FOR EASTER**

We had warmer weather throughout the month of March, but as Easter approaches the cold, sleet and snow are all forgotten and Spring is upon us every where. Spring Goods in profusion as well as the budding trees. If for any cause you have been unable to do your Spring shopping early, don't fail to see our Display of Springtime Merchandise.

**Lace and Embroideries**  
 E. F. Knott's Embroideries

**Wash Fabrics**  
 Among the most attractive in Wash Goods are our Foreign Fine Linens, 37 to 38 inch wide, 20 to 22 in. long, in Light, White, Grey and other colors.

**Lace Gowns**  
 Latest styles in Lace Gowns, 37 to 38 inch wide, 20 to 22 in. long, in Light, White, Grey and other colors.

**White Goods**  
 Washable Linens, Irish Linens, Short-sleeved Linens, Tricot Linens, Linens, Shirts, Collars, Handkerchiefs, etc.

**FROM 15c UP**  
 White Gowns, Vests, Blouses, Fine Cloths, Hats and Accessories.

**Rugs and Matting**  
 All styles in Brussels, Axminster, etc. for and without.

**Children's Dresses**  
 Children's Dresses

**O'DONNELL & COMPANY.**

Summerton, March 29.- Summerton in Clarendon county is in one of the best farming regions in South Carolina, as crops can be depended on—the yield per acre never showing much decrease in most unfavorable seasons. The lands, in loop shape from the Santee river, are exceedingly rich and the plantations are beautiful. Sumter has for many years been the recipient of many favors (commercially) from this region; such houses as O'Donnell & Company, Levi Bros. Schwartz Bros. and the Sumter Dry Goods Company and many other firms still receiving many orders from substantial customers.

Summerton was a resort for planters and is yet—hence its happy appellation, and it is peopled by citizens of refinement and genial hospitality.

Formerly a place for shade, rest and comfort, which advantages it still possesses, men have come who rest best when busy and have made it one of the best business towns in Clarendon county.

Summerton handled something over 6,000 bales of cotton of the 1903 crop and shipped 80 car loads of cotton seed. Sprunt of Wilmington<sup>1</sup> paid out last year \$300,000 at this point, while Inman also bought cotton here at the height of the season.

The Summerton Ginning Company ginned 1,700 bales last year and since the present management has increased each yearly output by several hundred bales. It is suggested by some of the go-ahead citizens that a tram road be built, about 8 miles to Wright's Bluff the only Bluff on this side of the Santee river, and that a much larger boat than that now used could easily steam along. The tram referred to would lead from Summerton through St Paul and would load the boat with cotton and empty it, coming with merchandise.



<sup>1</sup> Part of what is today known as “the Cotton Exchange of Wilmington” North Carolina. Owned by the James Sprunt family of the same city.

Summerton is higher than the surrounding country, and roads diverge therefrom so that you can drive on one road to a town, and come back by another which adds to the delight of an outing. Summerton is made attractive by some beautiful homes with plenty of ground between, not in regular streets, but here and there, as if entirely independent of each other. O. C. Scarborough,<sup>2</sup> who does everything on a big scale, has the best house in town. Major R. R. Briggs,<sup>3</sup> "who can live on his rents," has a beautiful, place just completed.

Mrs. Leo. M. Nelson and Mrs. E. A. Tindal have each fine new two story residences, and Mrs. R. H. Belser has a big handsome structure, and it is worthy of note that the lady has several sons in Columbia who are remarkably successful in professional, literary and commercial life.

J. J. Ragin<sup>4</sup> soliciting Agent for the Atlantic Coast Line has here a lovely home, and a commodious and inviting residence is that built by J. R. Fruse, planter, as an investment. The Dingle estate also owns one that would adorn a plantation or a modern town and Richard B. Smyth,<sup>5</sup> banker, has a love of a cottage with 6 acres in Bermuda pasture, and gardens and orchards, while the rectory and three parsonages are indications of snug comfort and good taste. The D. O. Rhame residence is one of the most pleasant appearing homes in the place, and they are all enhanced in beauty by ample grounds, and the trees which are advanced in seasonable attire.

The citizens are very proud of their handsome two story school house with proportionate tower, and the educational management. There were so many buggies near that the query was made, "Is there an election or a protracted meeting?" "Oh no the buggies brought the children to school" was the reply.

The Bank of Summerton opened on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 1903, and has proven the excellent judgment of its organizers. There are few country banks with such a strong directorate—representing financial prominence and extensive landed interests. The board of directors includes Hon. C. M. Davis, State Senator, planter, and manufacturer. C. S. Gadsden, 2nd Vice President of the Atlantic Coast Line Railway, J. Adger Smyth,<sup>6</sup> ex-Mayor of Charleston, and retired merchant. Henry P. Williams, Cashier of the Carolina Savings Bank of Charleston who is also V. P. of the Bank of Summerton. A. L. Lesesne, extensive planter and real estate owner. David Levi, big merchant and planter, and the President and Cashier is Richard B. Smyth,<sup>7</sup> who was born in Charleston—graduated at Princeton (N. J) University in 1897, and was admitted to the bar of South Carolina as attorney in 1900—succeeding which he practiced with the law firm of Smyth, Lee & Frost, then turned his attention to banking and is making a success of

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<sup>2</sup> Orlando Calhoun Scarborough (1848-1934), farmer and land owner. He was first cousin to Harriet Crosswell, second wife of [Thomas Baskin \(1822-1900\)](#)—these two being my great grandparents (their only son, John S. Baskin, Sr., my maternal grandfather). Orlando was a good friend of Thomas Baskin, and was appointed executor of Thomas' will.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Ragin Briggs (1839-1910), was the second child of [Dr. Thomas Whitaker Briggs, Sr. \(1810-1883\)](#) and his first wife, Sarah Ann Ragin Briggs (1818-1840). Served as a Major in the Confederate Army during the Civil War and was a prosperous farmer in Clarendon County. The above-mentioned, Thomas W. Briggs and his second wife, Margaret Susan Spain Briggs (1822-1885) are my 2<sup>nd</sup> great grandparents.

<sup>4</sup> Likely John James Ragin (1849-1907), husband of Julia Jenkins Crosswell (1851-1925).

<sup>5</sup> Richard Briggs Smyth (1875-1912) son of James Adger and Ann R Briggs Smyth.

<sup>6</sup> James Adger Smyth (1837-1920) husband of Ann R. Briggs (1838-1901). Ann was the first child of Thomas Whitaker Briggs, Sr. and his first wife Sarah Ann Ragin). See footnote above detailing information about Richard Ragin Briggs—Ann's brother—for more details.

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.* Richard Briggs Smyth

it. He is interested in a 2,000 acre plantation in the rich loop of the Santee river, and 4 miles from Summerton, and he is a young gentleman with the education, refinement, ability and ambition to become a man of mark.

The Bank of Summerton building is comely and admirably furnished with modern safe and vault and on its own lot. The capital is \$25,000 of which \$15,000 are paid up, it being yet in infancy, but its first quarterly statement showed \$26,691.97 deposits.

Its correspondents are the Hanover National Bank of New York and the Carolina Savings Bank of Charleston insuring security and dispatch.

The bank has proven a capital impetus to Summerton trade and a great convenience to planters, merchants and cotton men, is increasing its own business rapidly, and is safely anchored in the confidence of the people. The accountant of the bank is a graduate of the Savannah, Georgia, Commercial College. Reference is made to Miss M. E. Walker, a born Georgian and a lady of tact and refinement.

When D. O. Rhame came to Summerton in 1898 it was a woe begone village as far as business was concerned. His capital was very limited financially but he possessed knowledge of his profession as pharmacist and a determination to succeed. He did not sit waiting for a prescription to arrive, he began manufacturing and kept always busy—the result of which is, he owns a fine pharmacy with a \$3,500 stock of all necessary in materia medica in his own brick building measuring 25x75 feet in which he has two bright assistants and a partner.

Besides his prescription and drug trade generally he manufactures lotions, linaments, tinctures, cough syrups, emulsions, elixirs and sarsaparillas<sup>8</sup> and his business is not locally confined. Mr. Rhame also owns very attractive and commodious home which originally cost about \$3,000 and a two story frame store and dwelling combined which he has rented out.

The gentleman was born in Florida and is a son of Judge T. B. Rhame of Lynchburg, (Magnolia) S. C. He has studied medicine as well as pharmacy and graduated as pharmacist 1894 at Charleston and as said became a decided acquisition to Summerton in 1898.

He has been Mayor but has no ambition personally for political preferment, but is a right good citizen and gracious gentleman.

Summerton's claims as a commercial centre did not receive much cognition even locally until about three years ago.

The start of the present Avant Mercantile Company was made then, and that enterprise is now known as a one over the Palmetto State. They do a wholesale and retail trade occupying double stores measuring 50x120 feet with upper story 60 feet and employing 8 busy people inside, and they have taken in as high as high as \$1,000 cash a day.

Besides the grocery and provision departments supplied in car load lots, they have dry goods and fine dress goods in separate departments, and the dressmaking and millinery rooms are presided over by ladies

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<sup>8</sup> Dried root of tropical plant, used to make herbal medicine; similar to root beer.

from Baltimore and other cities, while the aggregate stock includes supplies and raiment<sup>9</sup> and foot and head covering—in fact it is a modern establishment in equipment, stock and management. Hon. C. M. Davis, State Senator is President.

H. T. Avant who has built up the enterprise, is general manager. He is now in Horry county, where the company has several thousand acres of pine and cypress timber and options on many more tracts, and he has just started their new milling plant, capacity 250,000 feet of pine per day, between Sanford and Loris, Horry county, with Sanford as post office. He will add a planing mill<sup>10</sup> right away.

His son W. Ashley Avant, is Secretary and Treasurer, but does not confine himself entirely to the office as is all over the establishment. He has been with several commercial houses and is at home in sales as well as clerical departments and is also recognized as a buyer of ability and young gentlemen who can keep business on the hop.

The Avant Mercantile Company has accomplished wonderful progress in less than three years, but the management believes the future will exceed the past.

A. A. Strauss, of Mayesville, has a big wholesale and retail house in Summerton carrying from \$8,000 \$16,000 worth of goods according to season—the brick building being 90x25 and "L" 40x20 feet and in the rear an ice house is being built for ten tons of frozen liquid.

The Mayor of Summerton, T. S. Rogan, is also manager of the Strauss interests at Summerton, and he built them from their inception. Now, at the dull season, he has only 5 clerks and he has four men on cross tie contract wood and seed, and in the fall 25 men in the village attending to cotton gin, grist mill and store duty and has had as high as 150 men in summer getting out ties and wood and in other avenues of industry. Mr. Rogan is also general manager of the Tindal Furniture Company in which he has half interest, and he is general manager of the Summerton Ginning Company and has a third share therein, he owns individually a square of lots, and has interest with the Hon. J. C. Lanham, member of the legislature, in 40 valuable acres adjoining town, and is one of the most successful in this land of bright men.

Besides the foregoing he has shipped for Strauss Company 40 car loads of cotton seed for Independent Oil Co., and handled car loads of machinery and nearly 40 car loads of fertilizers and meal. Mr. Rogan was the man who secured Summerton its telephone exchange and he is manager thereof and as His Honor the Mayor (2nd year) he is progressive and popular. The gentleman was born in England and came to the United States in 1864 to Pennsylvania, and about 30 years ago to South Carolina.

He was with W. L. Webb in wholesale crockery business in Charleston then in like houses in Richmond and Baltimore, succeeding which he travelled South Carolina and Georgia then established the Sumter China Hall, which he controlled until coming to Summerton six years ago and placed life in its nostrils. Mr. Rogan has able and ever willing lieutenants in A. P. Burgess, son of the late Dr Burgess as accountant—and H. A. Richburg in charge of shoes and notions—Gus Fischer, groceries and hardware

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<sup>9</sup> Clothing (archaic)

<sup>10</sup> Facility to convert cut boards into finished lumber.

and Miss Alene Richburg in charge of Ladies Department, in fact all of the interests of which Mr. Rogan is manager move in happy harmony.

One of the most enthusiastic Summertonians is unquestionably Dr. W. W Anderson,<sup>11</sup> who was raised in old Stateburg, Sumter county. He studied at South Carolina College until the war clarion sounded when he joined the gallant 7th South Carolina Cavalry, was eventually placed on detached service as Department Scout from Richmond.

It is of interest that when Grant caused the fall of Fort Donelson in 1862, the students met in mass meeting and concluded it was time to take up guns instead of books and this closed the South Carolina College.

After the war, Dr. Anderson studied medicine, practiced successfully, then took to farming in which he was engaged for many years, and ten years ago began buying instead of raising cotton and for nine years has been one of Sprunt's best buyers. Six years ago he came to Summerton—fell in love with the place and made it his home. Dr. Anderson owns land in Sumter county yet and nice property in Summerton and is a representative southern gentleman in mind and manner. His son, W. H. Anderson, is in the cotton market at West Point, Mississippi, excepting in Summer when he is in Summerton, and his son John F. Anderson is manager of a cotton agency at Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Geo. F. Epperson, of Sumter, has a business branch here—live stock sales and machinery and wagon departments, the firm being Epperson and Richburg. It was established about a year ago. The managing partner, H. Augustus Richburg, in that limited time has sold over 3 car loads of buggies and wagons, a car load of mowing machines and nearly 100 sets of harness and many other sales. H. Aug. Richburg is also the manager of the firm of Richburg Brothers, owning the Summerton Livery with 15 good horses and good rigs, and their buildings put up a year ago can accommodate thirty head. They also own a plantation 5 miles N. E. of town and farm 75 acres one and a half miles out, J. A. Richburg managing the farming and H. Augustus Richburg the business in town. Augustus is emphasized, as there are other H. A. Richburgs.

Those young men were born at Summerton and for business zeal, enterprise and upright character have no superiors in Clarendon county.

—James Carswell.



*Surrender at Fort Donelson  
Harper's Weekly*

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<sup>11</sup> Dr. William Wallace Anderson (1844-1916).