

CALERA – ITS PROSPERITY

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One day last week we had an occasion to stop over a few hours at Calera, situated at the crossing of the E.T., V. & G. R.R. with the L & N. R.R., 62 miles from Selma, and 62 miles and 300 yards from Montgomery, and while there we had an opportunity of giving the place a pretty good examination, with the assistance of several good friends of older and better days, among whom we must mention Capt. I.N. Breazeale, formerly of Dallas, but during the past ten years has made for himself a reputation as a Hotel keeper at Calera any man might well feel greatly flattered at, and Mr. J.R. Campbell, formerly of Montgomery, and for years connected with the office of probate of that county, but more recently has had charge of the Hotel at Calera known as the Calera House, both of whom gave us all information and assistance we asked for.

We found some dozen or more stores and places of business in the place, among the businessmen we can mention H.C. Moss, J.D. Hardy & Co., H.W. Parker, S.A. Lyons, Jasper Holcomb, R.H. Martin, R.M. Pilgreen, W. A. Mostello, Wm. Lenard, Dr. J.H. Gunn, with his well-supplied drug store, and by the way a most clever gentleman - he could not be otherwise, because he is a Dallas county man and a son of our once good old citizen and greatly respected man, Col. Jones M. Gunn; some seven or eight of these places of business were quite extensive, and the stocks of goods and merchandise in them would have been credible to any city or town. There are two saloons, where everything is kept to drink, except alcoholic liquors, an article not allowed by a vote of the people to be sold in the place, but in these two saloons the very best quality of lager beer, cider, lemonade, ice cream, and all other temperance drinks and wines with an abundance of ice is to be found, and both seemed to be doing well; Charles Wordman, a native of Germany, is the boot and shoe maker of the place, and really about the most popular man of the place; he is a first-class geologist, and to make boots and shoes is not all he knows, for his collection of mineral specimens are more extensive than at the capitol of the state and far more valuable. Prof. Wordman ought to be the geologist of the state of Alabama.

New buildings are going up all directions of the village, and quite a number already completed and occupied by the many new people who have located there within the last year or so; among them we notice a very handsome church building, nearly finished off with a good bell; there is a Methodist Sunday School every Sabbath of some 60 or 70 scholars under the supervision of Rev. J.W. Bain,

and who also is the stationed Methodist minister. This handsome church edifice was built by all the citizens of the place, and consequently the Baptist, the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians, and occasionally Brother Burrows, from Notasulga, occupies the pulpit, to enlighten the good people of the place, that "act well your part," there all the religion lays. There is no organized church in the place at present, but we were told that that very shortly the Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterians will each effect a church organization, each with a very respectable membership. The Methodist already have a very handsome parsonage nearly completed, which will stand as a lasting memento of the energy and industry of the good ladies of that denomination of the place. Rev. J.W. Bain, Rev. Mr. Thomason, Rev. J.P. Word, Rev. Mr. McCoy, Rev. Mr. Armstrong, Rev. C.D. Oliver, Rev. F.L. Ewing, Rev. Marion Jones, Rev. J.C. Burrows, and occasionally Brother Teague, are the ministers of the different denominations who preach at the place, the last mentioned everybody in Selma knows so well, as the most deservedly popular Baptist minister that was ever in Selma, and we have known the place ever since it was a canebrake.

There is a good, roomy brick academy building, in which a flourishing female and male school was going on under the control of Miss Emma Pilgreen, the township money being almost enough to run the school numbering over 75 scholars almost the entire year.

Besides the immense Lime Kilns of J.D. Hardy & Co. in the town, there are some others in the immediate vicinity almost as extensive, owned by N.B. Dare, R.E. O'Brien and J.W. Hardy; the first turning out about 200 barrels of as fine lime as is made in the world, and the others at least 150 barrels each day, thus near 700 barrels of lime in each day of the year is shipped from Calera, and all finds a ready sale. In connection with this extensive lime manufactory, J.D. Hardy & Co. has a large steam lumber mill, where all the staves, heads, and hoops are sawed and manufactured for all the kilns, and which gives employment along to about 150 people; the hoop poles along is an immense business to the people of the surrounding country, to say nothing of cutting out of the staves. The machinery in the lumber mills of Messrs. J.D. Hardy & Co. is said to be the finest and most complete in the South; and as a sample, a half inch plank, or piece of weatherboarding, can be run through the saw splitting the piece into two-quarter inch boards. At these immense mills all kinds and quality of lumber desired is sawed, and when wanted run through the planing mills, the prices running from \$8 to \$18 a thousand.

H.C. Moss has a splendid steam grist mill and gin, with the most complete apparatus to pack cotton we have seen for many a day; some 500 bales have been ginned the past season. The grist mill is run day and night, grinding corn at the rate of some 100 bushels a day. It is Mr. Moss' intention, we were told, to put in operation within the next few weeks a first class wheat mill, to grind the next large wheat crop of the surrounding country.

There are two splendid hotels and several private boarding houses; and one very well kept boarding house for the colored people; one of the hotels, the Calera House, the main one in the place, is in charge of Mrs. J.D. Campbell, assisted by her nephew, who is so well and favorably known in years past as a successful public caterer in Montgomery and other places, is situated on the E.T., V. & G. track some 200 yards from the crossing of the two railroads, is now on slides and is being moved to the crossing of the tracks, and when completed, which will in a few weeks, will be much more convenient to the travelers of both railroads. The other hotel is kept by Mr. H.C. Moss, situated immediately on the L. & N. railroad tracks, some 75 yards from the crossing, is well kept and liberally patronized. But the grandest thing in the way of a first-class hotel, not only at Calera, but in the State of Alabama, is now being put up by I.N. Breazeale, who has been so many years in the hotel business at Calera, upon a grand and an extensive plan on the northeast crossing of the two railroad tracks and accessible to the passengers and trains of each of the two roads, by wide and handsome walks. This building is to front on each of the railroad tracks 100 feet, about 75 feet from each track, wide and covered plank walks leading from each track to the hotel verandah or the porch, which completely goes around the building, thus giving a 15 feet promenade of 400 feet. There are 40 large and well ventilated bedrooms, neatly and comfortably furnished with cottage furniture, both cold and warm water to each room, with four stairways, by which a safe escape is afforded in case of fire; block tin roof covered with fire proof paint, and a wide aisle or hall of 10 feet on upper floor running 200 feet, the entire length of the building; on the first floor, on entering from either railroad track, is a large and pleasant public recreation room, connected with a handsome parlor, for both ladies and gentlemen, and attached is a ladies private dressing room; with the public reception room and parlors there is a large public dining room, and with the parlors there are two ladies private dining rooms; there is a large office room, a smoking room, a ballroom, and a baggage room, a call bell, connecting the office with each room, an annunciator, all illuminated with Electric light, all new features in hotels in the South; a large and handsomely arranged barbershop, with cold or warm baths; and, in a word, he who calls first from necessity will call again from choice. It will be in full blast by the first of June.



Vanderbilt Hotel, built by Isaac N. Breazeale in 1882, destroyed by fire in 1907.

INSERT: *The Centerville Press* (Centerville, Alabama), Thursday, November 21, 1907. The Vanderbilt hotel was burned at Calera. It was owned by A.B. Evans, who recently bought it from I.N. Breazeale. There was only a small amount of insurance on the building and furniture. Buck Cowan, a drummer, discovered the fire in a room over the kitchen. It is supposed to have originated by a defective flue.

Black & Davidson, two experienced and practical mechanics, are carrying on extensive and thriving blacksmithing and wagon shops, and we were told these gentlemen could not keep up with the orders they receive.

The neat and tidy apartments of Mrs. Fannie and Miss Anna Bristow attracts the attention and patronage of all the ladies who may want any articles in the millinery and dress making line, where the most costly and fashionable, or the cheapest or common hat or dress will be supplied at once. We were truly glad to hear these ladies were doing so well, for they are Dallas county girls, and spent a large number of the years of their girlhood in Selma.

Among the carpenters who are doing well, and we understood get as much work as they do, we take the privilege of naming Messrs. Alexander, Morrison, Whatley, E.H. King, Mathews, Wesley Crim, and several others we could mention, and among them is our greatly esteemed and old fellow citizen and personal friend, J.L. Cloughton, Esq., who is "the boss" on the grand Breazeale House, which itself is sufficient to establish the fact that he will be alright.

There is an express office in the place, Robert Dare, agent; and telegraph office, used by both railroads, Wm. Wall, agent, and a post office, J.P. Teague, post master; the only drawback to the place, some of them claimed, was that there is one lawyer in the town, but who stays at Columbiana most of his time.

While Dr. Gunn is a splendid physician and a gentleman of ability, his practice, he told us, was very light, the health of the town and the surrounding country being so good that his services were seldom needed, only in numerous cases of obstetrics.

There are quite a number of fine orchards in the town and vicinity, among them is the extensive and very fine pear orchard of J.D. Adams in the town, who has over 1,000 flourishing trees of the Bartlett pear. No country in the world is better for all kinds of fruit, especially apples and pears, than that surrounding Calera.

There was, years ago, a great objection to Calera and account of water; if it ever was an objection certainly that objection is now overcome, for every private residence has its well of good, cool limestone water, none over 30 feet deep. Free stone water, if preferred, can be procured from a bold spring about one half mile from the railroad crossing.

In looking over the place we could not see why a splendid and flourishing town can not be built at Calera. The surrounding country is populated with a thrifty people, and the lands are productive and healthy. Calera Brick can be made profitable for \$5 a thousand, cheaper than any other place in Alabama, and all other building material equally as reasonable, living is cheap, as fine a quality of anthracite coal as can be found on earth, can be got for family and manufacturing purposes at from \$2 to \$4 a ton, iron in all forms at from \$6 to \$12 a ton, the produce of the vicinity, such as poultry and such other articles to live on is very cheap in the town; the most choice lots can be purchased from \$50 to \$100, and to the right kind of people on a long credit; there is a large depot building where now the charges alone on the transferred freight by the two railroads amount to near one hundred thousand dollars a month, to say nothing of the immense freights now shipped from the place, and there is scarcely at any time either day or night one hour but the belching or puffing of a locomotive on a railroad or of some of the steam mills can be heard. The crossing of two or the largest railroad interests in the state, the crossing of two important public dirt roads, one from Montgomery and Wetumpka to Birmingham and Huntsville, and the other from Selma and Montevallo to Shelby Springs, Talladega and Rome, Ga., only 4 miles from the famous Shelby Springs, a place that could be made the grandest and most popular resort in the state of Alabama; and all in all, we cannot see why Calera is not a good place for a man to go to, who wants to accumulate property honestly, secure health for himself, his wife and children, and live as long as he can anywhere else.

We may allude to Calera again soon.