

G U N N I S O N ,

THE VILLAGE OF AND THE TOWN OF

According to information recorded by our town's first historian, Dr. John B. Pease, Jr., in his "Souvenir of Gunnison, Birthday Greeting of Gunnison, Mississippi, Tuesday, November 18th, 1890," Gunnison is now 75 years of age. He relates the interesting story of its birth in a cotton field in 1889, attended by Price Blanchard, Jeff Williams, Arvin Gunnison and E. B. Fitzgerald.

After Gunnison received its charter, Price Blanchard was probably its first station agent. He was the village's second postmaster and its third mayor. Arvin N. Gunnison, Jr., was the first postmaster, his commission being dated November 18, 1889. He was a son of the man for whom the village was named, Arvin N. Gunnison, Sr. E. B. Fitzgerald was the first elected marshal of the Village of Gunnison. As for Jeff Williams, the writer was unable to find out much about him other than that he was probably a carpenter.

As to how the particular location was selected and the intriguing way it received its name is an amusing and delightful story, although there were some hard feelings about it at the time.

But let us first go back to the early 1800's. At that time there were two little river communities two or three miles north of the present site of Gunnison — one known as Carson's Landing (or upper Concordia) and the other Concordia, about one-half mile south of Carson's Landing. There are maps of both recorded in the chancery clerk's office in Rosedale. Concordia was finally incorporated in the early 1870's.

One of Gunnison's first doctors, Dr. J. B. Pease, Sr., owned a home and drug store at Carson's Landing.

Both of these little settlements grew into thriving villages after the War Between the States. However, the Mississippi River was practically the only link between them and the outside world. Then when the river played a malicious prank on them by moving its channel westward, and almost simultaneously the L. N. O. and T. R. R. completed its line to the east, these 'villages appeared doomed. Therefore, the inhabitants, with almost one accord, decided to move to a new site.

So George L. Wrenn, a large plantation owner, offered the distressed though undaunted people such a site on his land. When it was agreed that this site was satisfactory, Mr. Wrenn proposed to the railroad people that he would give them a free right-of-way through his property provided the depot building would be located thereon, and that the village be named Wrenn or Wrennvile.

Adjoining the Wrenn Plantation was a large plantation owned by the heirs of Arvin N. Gunnison, Sr. The night before the carpenters were to begin work on the depot, the sly Mr. Arvin Gunnison, Jr., and some of his friends, with the aid of their Negroes and mules, rolled the lumber bearing flatcars onto the Gunnison Plantation.

When the carpenters arrived the next morning, they unquestioningly built the depot where the lumber was located. Hence, the town was dubbed Gunnison. Mrs.

Wrenn, widow of G. L. Wrenn, in a letter written in later years, relates how she was told that Mr. Gunnison jokingly bragged at the Gayoso Hotel in Memphis about "the trick he played on old man Wrenn." She apparently never forgave him for it. The same story about how the village received its name was handed down in the Gunnison family according to Mr. John V. Gunnison of Signal Mountain, Tennessee, a grandson of Mr. Arvin Gunnison, Sr.

When the Concordians re-established themselves in Gunnison in the 1890's, they rolled quite a number of the buildings from the old town to the new one on logs. Among them were S. C. Blanchard's home. The Concordia Masonic Lodge building and the Methodist church building were rolled down to Gunnison from old Concordia Cemetery.

Gunnison, with a population of 376, was incorporated May 7, 1892, by proclamation of Governor J. M. Stone. The first meeting of the mayor and board of aldermen appointed by Governor Stone was held June 7, 1892. Those present were His Honor Sol Cohn, mayor, R. T. Torian and Price Blanchard, aldermen, J. J. Montgomery, clerk, and John T. Williams, marshal.

At a subsequent election, the following officials were chosen: Sol Cohn, mayor, S. C. Blanchard, Price Blanchard and Dr. J. B. Pease, Sr., aldermen, E. B. Fitzgerald, marshal, and G. F. Wingfield, clerk. Then on July 22, 1896, after a census had been taken and it was found that the population had grown to 507, Governor A. J. McLaurin issued a proclamation changing the name of the "Village of Gunnison" to that of the "Town of Gunnison." At this time Sol Cohn was mayor, T. J. Yarbrough, L. E. Plymale and Dr. W. H. Nance were aldermen. J. W. Butcher was marshal and J. J. Montgomery was clerk.

With the reclassification of the municipality, the law specified two additional aldermen. Whereupon, the governor appointed N. C. Blanchard and J. A. Burt to the posts.

During the horse and buggy era, J. H. Zadeck and J. C. Radjesky operated livery stables in the town. The second floor of Zadeck's Livery Stable was known as Zadeck Hall. It was one large room. On the east end there was a large stage with flanking dressing rooms. It had various and sundry uses, such as, concert hall, school room, dance hall, and skating rink. In a special magazine edition of the Bolivar County Democrat in 1905, in a write-up of Gunnison, it was referred to as Mr. Zadeck's "Opera House."

Later, after the automobile had made its advent, Mr. R. W. Nash operated a taxi service during dry weather between Gunnison and its neighbor towns. He owned a number of cars, keeping three in active service at all times.

The first minute book, first ordinance book and mayors docket are quite interesting reading. Among some recorded improvements are: the first calaboose was built in 1893; the first wooden sidewalks; the first wooden water trough; the hitching racks; Cumberland Telephone and Telegraph Co. granted franchise in 1898; plans for waterworks considered in 1900 with windmill to be used as power; in 1903 a calaboose was built while Captain J. W. Shattuck was mayor, the building committee was composed of Marshal E. M. Allen and Town Treasurer A. F. Goza, cost not to exceed \$125.00; 1904, advertised for bids