



A Spanish landgrant confirmation plat (1820's) showing grants as they were distributed by the Spanish, and in some cases, the British, who ruled Florida before them.



Old Mt. Olive Church

KING'S FERRY

Some years before the American Revolution, a naturalist and noted ornithologist traveled through southeast Georgia and crossed the river into Florida at a St. Marys River settlement known as Mill's Ferry - an early name given to today's King's Ferry.

His name was William Bartram, a pioneer in his field who, over the years, has been praised for his work in cataloging Florida's plants and animals. Bartram's works were first published in 1791 and have been expounded upon by many authors in the years since.

Bartram said that a narrow escape from death at the hands of a renegade Indian on the Georgia side of the river took place just before he arrived at the banks across from the Mill's Ferry stores. He described the river as being some 10 feet deep and a 100 yards across. He also described his warm welcome by the trading company officials of Seagrove & Company, who took him into their homes.

The noted traveler stayed on at the Ferry for several days and wrote of the beauty of the area and of stories told him by Indians and whites. He wrote of the local crops, such as cotton, rice, corn, and indigo. Here he

had found an old settlement which had grown around a river crossing and had become a place where Indians came from the great swamp at the head of the St. Marys to trade with the white man.

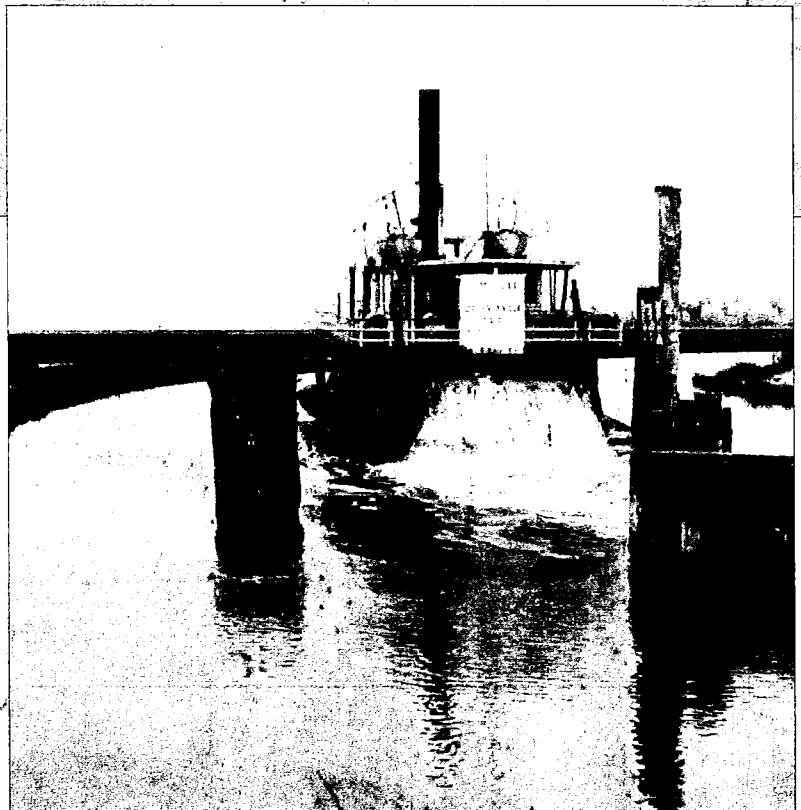
Another place-name linked to King's Ferry was Whitehouse. The Spanish Government, after royal order, relaxed the granting of lands to non-Catholic settlers and granted some 400 acres to Richard Lang on the "4th April 1792 at the place named 'Whitehouse' (Casa Blanca) on the River St. Marys." These lands granted him, which included sections 37, 48, & 49, remained in the Lang name until about 1817, when the land was sold to William Drummond and was then sometimes known as Drummond's Ferry. The state-owned records of land grant confirmations show an original receipt for \$500 which William Drummond paid for the 450 acres around the community on March 7, 1817.

Just to the east of the Ferry crossing, on the east side of a small creek, was the Zachariah Haddock grant. On his land is the first indication of a saw mill in the King's Ferry area. On the map above can be seen a steam sawmill and store in section 39. Zachariah Haddock was among the earliest American settlers in the St. Marys valley. He migrated from North Carolina to

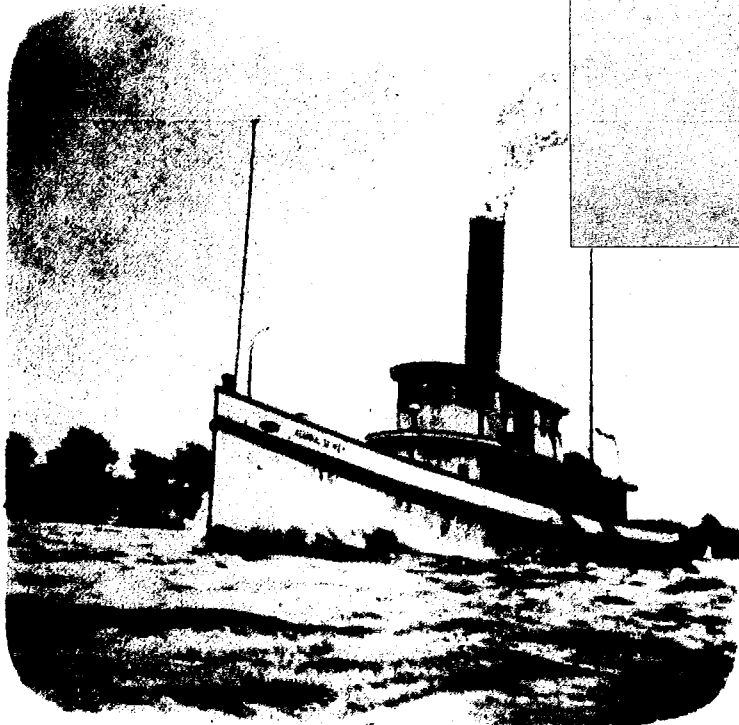


Florida State Archives

*The Sternwheeler
'McNeill', out of
Jacksonville, passing
through the Amelia
River bridge pilings
with a load of freight.*



Florida State Archives



The Admiral Dewey as she
plied the Amelia River. One of
dozens of tugs that have moved
old lumber sailing vessels up
and down the St. Marys River
and into Fernandina harbor.

Camden County about 1790 and in 1803 obtained a Spanish land grant adjacent to the important King's Road ferry crossing. Sometime later he purchased 600 acres around Woodstock Landing. Between 1794 and 1809, some 300 Americans drifted across the border into Spanish Florida. A good number, including Haddock and his son, participated in what is known as the Patriots Rebellion. The rebellion failed, but these few settlers drastically changed the makeup of the struggling Spanish culture. Zachariah Haddock arrived as the progenitor of a large and influential family, centered for many years in the King's Ferry area.

Another of the Haddock land grants was issued about 1817 to Joseph Haddock for "250 acres in Cabbage Swamp on the St. Marys River." This land, several miles south of the ferry crossing, was to become the nucleus of the Haddock settlement which has existed for more than 185 years.

William Haddock, son of Zachariah, was born in Camden County in 1801, and is first noted as having voted at Frink in an election for a member of the Legislative Council in 1826. In 1828, he and 20 others voted at Thomas King's house at King's Ferry. In 1831, he signed a Memorial to the President supporting reappointment of a Superior Court judge. William was conscious of his civic obligations and fulfilled that duty through military and civil elected and appointed positions. He married Esther Crews in Camden County in 1830, and brought her back to Nassau County where they would raise eight children.

In November of 1835, William volunteered for duty with the 4th Regiment, Florida Mounted Militia and served as Lieutenant in support of regular troops at the battle of Ouithlacoochee on the 31st of December, 1835. His service continued as Captain of Haddock's Co., 4th Regiment, until March 5, 1836; as Private of Captain Mason's 1st Co., Warren's Regiment, from May 13 to June 12, 1837; and as Captain of Haddock's Co., Warren's Florida Militia Volunteers, June 19 to December 19, 1837.

William was appointed County Auctioneer in 1834; served as a delegate from Nassau County to the Constitutional Convention held at St. Joseph, Florida, in 1838 and 1839; and was Postmaster at Frink in 1839.

By 1848, the population in the Haddock settlement had progressed to warrant the establishment of the Haddock Post Office.

About a mile south of the Haddock settlement were grants issued to Elijah I. Higginbotham, John Underwood, and members of the Vanzant families. This location is

referred to today as the Middle Road area. It was in the midst of these family lands that a church was organized in 1845 and continues today as the Ephesus Baptist Church. It began as "a log structure about one mile northeast of the present church site ... and was for some 26 years the sanctuary in which the people gathered for worship." The recent church history continues, "About 1876, the church was moved to its present location and a small frame building was erected to take the place of the log house. This served as the place of worship until about 1936 when the present frame structure was raised." Charter members of the original organization were William Vanzant, Lavina Vanzant, Joseph Haddock, Elizabeth Haddock, Eliza McKendree, Mr. and Mrs. Whiting, and Mr. Brown and his wife Rachel. These people were basically farmers who looked to the river for manufactured goods.

Several other churches established in the King's Ferry area in the last century were Mt. Olive Baptist Church, a black congregation organized in 1873, and the King's Ferry M. E. Church, organized in 1881 holding services until sometime after 1922. No records of the latter can be found.

The black community along the river, both free and bound slaves, had grown to far out number the white population since the 1790's. Slave ownership and involvement in trafficking of slaves smuggled up from Fernandina by many St. Marys River valley plantations and landowners was extensive and continued on until about 1818. Slave ownership and the actual breeding of slaves in the valley continued until the Spring of 1862, when Union forces invaded Amelia Island and began methodically releasing blacks from their bonds.

James S. Silva, in memoirs written of his 1840's childhood on the St. Mary's, told of the sloop *Independence* that plied the waters between Trader's Hill and St. Marys, Georgia. The *Independence* and her Captain Dennis Pacetty were forerunners of a generation of shippers to regularly serve the pioneers of the river landings, "bringing cotton and produce from all the landings on the river which was transferred at St. Mary's for Savannah and other ports."

Two sets of brothers migrated from Georgia to King's Ferry in the mid-1800's and greatly influenced the growth of milling operations here. The first set, Gilbert I. and Franklin Germond, who had come from today's Charlton County, Georgia, area in the early 1850's, set up a small mill just east of the river crossing. Franklin died in 1854, but his brother and father carried on in the milling business

until 1870. At this time the Germond family either moved back to Georgia or returned to their original home on the banks of the Hudson River in New York State.

The second set of brothers operated under the name of J. Mizell & Brother. These two energetic and hard working men began where the Germonds left off and built what was probably the county's largest milling operation of the nineteenth century. Their work started about 1870 with the purchase of what they were to call the "little mill" from Zach Jones. Jones evidently owned it for only a short time after buying it from the Germonds. The Mizells erected a much larger mill, homes for its operators, a commissary for supplies, and docking facilities for the ships which would carry the finished products off to all parts of the world. Jackson and William Mizell, and what they built at Kings Ferry, influenced the growth of the river area as much as anything else in the latter part of the 19th century.



William Mizell, Sr.

The Civil War had come and gone by 1870 and King's Ferry was progressing with stores operated by local businessmen David Herring and Hannah A. Mode. In the later part of the 1870's, the Hilliard and Bailey Lumber Co. moved its operation here from Waycross. It built a dock and mill just to the west of the Mizell compound, at the foot of where Middle Road stops at the river bank.



Jackson Mizell

This company later built a large mill on the mainline of the Savannah, Florida & Western Railroad in 1881 and founded the town of Hilliard. A narrow gauge lumberman's railroad was then built to carry lumber to the Hilliard & Bailey docks. Though the name of the steam engine was *Florida*, it

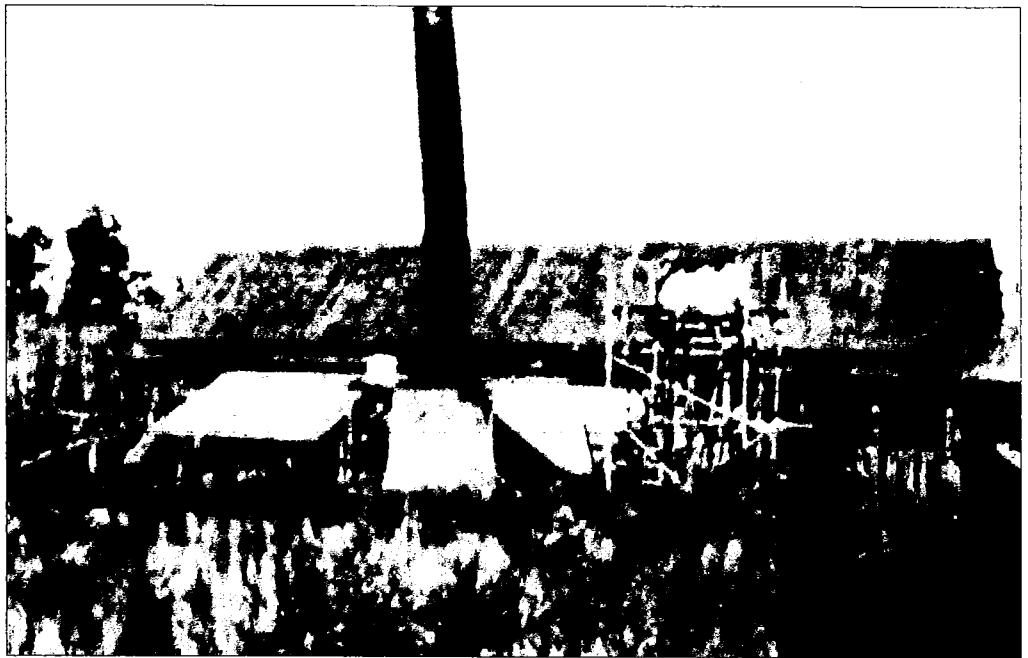
was dubbed *Runaway* following an incident in the 1880's when one of the engineers left a head of steam in its boiler at quitting time, causing it to slowly chug down the tracks toward Hilliard later that evening, alone.



Davis Family Collection

The "little mill" of the J. Mizell & Brothers Lumber Company was built sometime in the 1850's by the Germonds. This was the original mill purchased by Jackson and William Mizell in 1870, just east of the Middle Road landing at the St. Marys River.

This section of the "big mill" at Mizell and Brothers was built in 1880 and operated for more than 30 years in the cutting of longleaf yellow pine. Below center is another view of the "big mill."



Wm. Mizell - Vanished Town of King's Ferry

Wm. Mizell - Vanished Town of King's Ferry



Mizell's Big Mill from the southeast corner.

Below is a view of the Mizell Big Mill from the river.

Wm. Mizell - Vanished Town of Kings Ferry





Wm. Mizell - Vanished Town of King's Ferry

The Mizell commissary, the company store, was just east of the King's Ferry crossing and adjacent to the Russell place. Here could be purchased food goods, candies, tobaccos, and a small assortment of clothing. Supplies to stock the store were delivered on the steamer Hildegard once or twice a week, as were all other needs that couldn't be made locally. Mills such as Mizell and Hilliard & Bailey, had their own script minted and issued it to employees as a portion of their pay to be exchanged at the company store. Though there is no general knowledge of such script issued by either of the mills here, it was a common practice throughout the county and country. The photograph below is another river view of the Little Mill built by the Germonds, the original mill of the Mizells.

Wm. Mizell - Vanished Town of King's Ferry



William Mizell, Jr., in his book entitled *The Vanishing Town of King's Ferry*, described the community of his youth. "Center Street ran south through the town of King's Ferry," he said of the street that today runs past the only commercial business still operated in the community. Mizell continued, "On the left was located the home place of Mr. T.W. Russell. There was also a saloon operated by a Mr. Bush, and here was located the last post office (closed in 1926) for King's Ferry. In the early former years, Mrs. Foster had a millinery establishment here and sold lady's ready-to-wear, and piece goods could also be purchased."

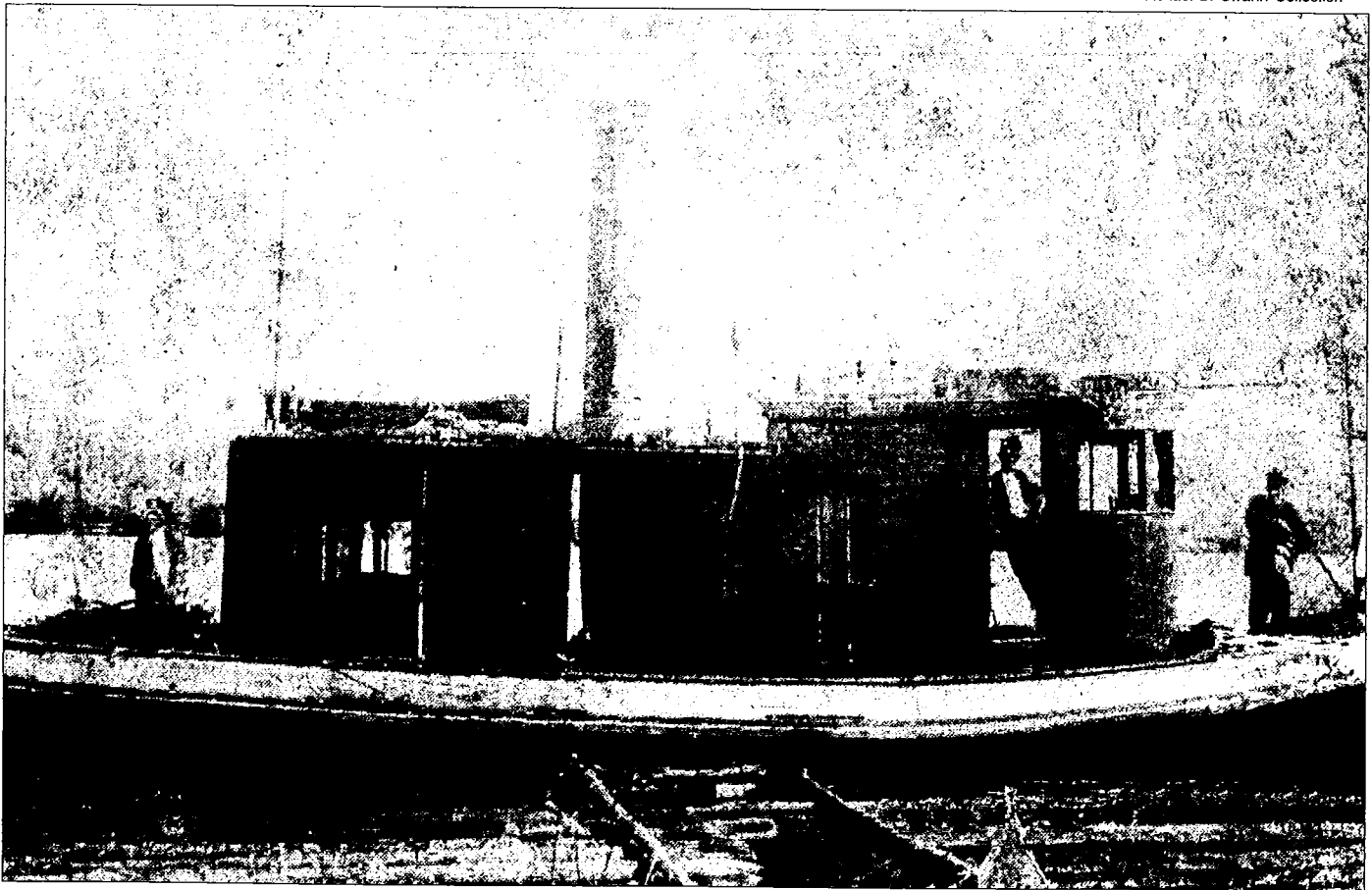
"Across a short street was the last store of Mr. Carleton and in the same block was located an old carriage house - later turned into a dance hall. Across a narrow street, now the site of the home place of Mr. Bailey Haddock, was the two-story combination store and dwelling of Mr. and Mrs. Herring ... adjoining was the home of David Chevers; next door he operated a store and post office. Just beyond and across the street on the same side was a large red two-story building belonging to the Masonic

Lodge No. 59 (F&AM), who held their meetings upstairs and where the Masons, we were told, kept their goat."

"Adjoining the lodge property was the one-teacher schoolhouse." The schoolhouse was purchased by the Baptist Church and together they were used as a summer camp grounds for the boys and girls. In 1999, the property and buildings are in private ownership.

"On the right of Center Street, beginning at the river, was located the apothecary shop of Dr. T.D. Hawkins." Mr. Mizell continued in his text, "Next to these, and fronting on Center Street, was a red two-story building occupied by Mr. W.J. Carleton as his first store. The upper story was used as a skating rink, and I am told, a shooting gallery. Beyond the Carleton store was a large vacant lot on which traveling shows erected their tents and gave performances for the amusement of people for miles around. Further up the street was a blacksmith shop, and across from it a saloon and later a grocery store operated by Bob Houston. Nearby was the old residence of Mrs. Foster, one room of which was used for the office of the *Nassau County Star*, a weekly local paper which

Michael B. Swann Collection



The tug Bull Frog was owned and operated by Hilliard & Bailey mills at their King's Ferry mill operation. Its primary purpose was towing rafted logs from spots along the river to the mill at Kings Ferry.

flourished for a short time, with Herman Smith as editor. At one time this place was also the post office."

In an article on river stops printed by the *Florida Mirror* in February of 1881, there is the following account. "There are more signs of life and improvement at this point than at any place on the river. New buildings are going up, the wharfs are covered with lumber and naval stores, the arrival and departure of the trains of Hilliard and Bailey's lumber railroad, and the buzzing of the saws of the mills of Mizell Brothers, all combine to make up a scene of activity very pleasing and gratifying ... Baker, Jones, & Co. have extensive naval store farms and distilleries 3 miles from the river. They keep several sailing vessels chartered by the year to transport their resin and spirits of turpentine to New York. There are quite a number of stores at King's Ferry, all doing a flourishing business."

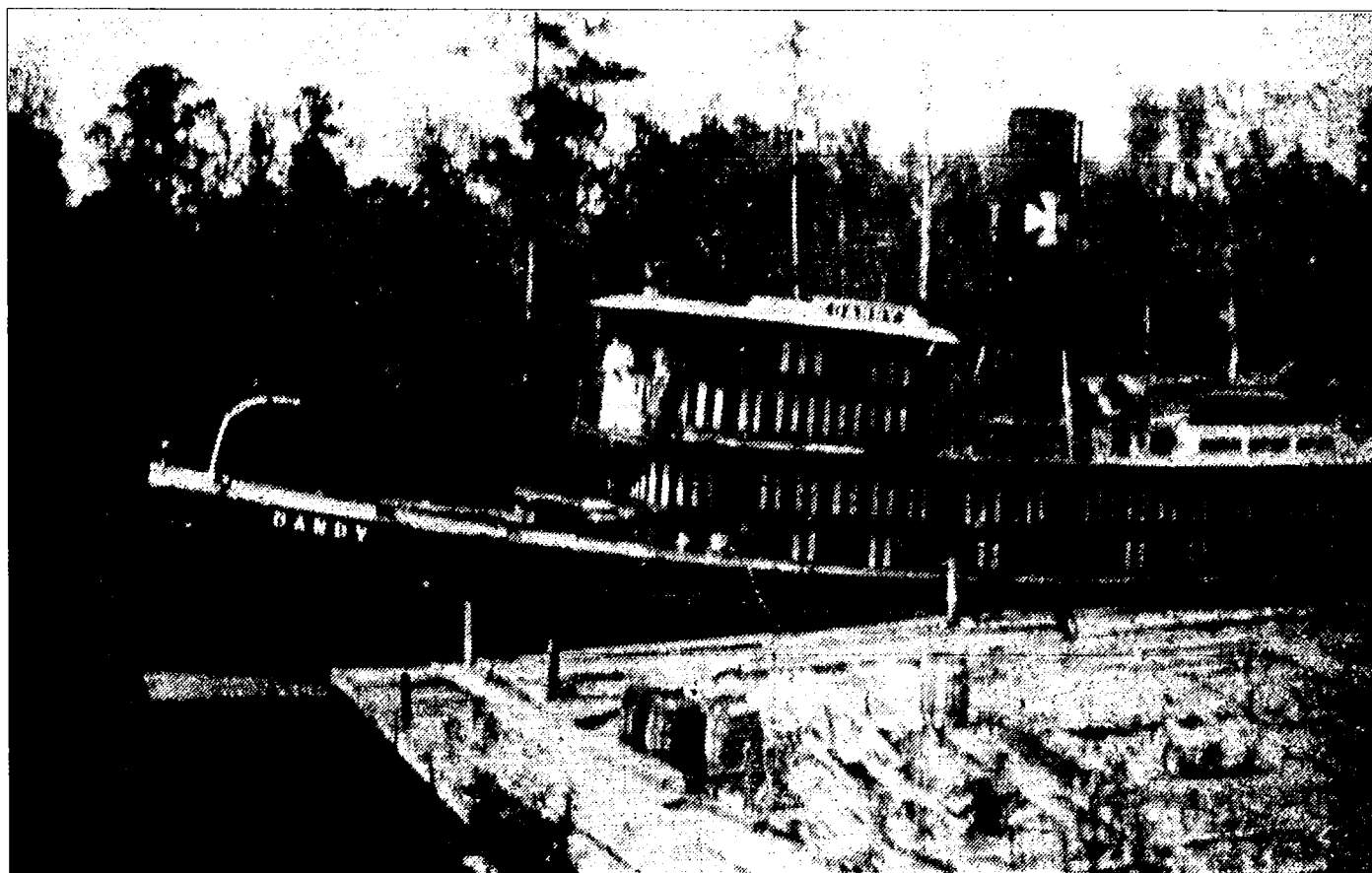
"The Methodist Church was dedicated in 1883," according to William Mizell, "and it seems reasonable to conclude that the schoolhouse was there at that time. Miss Moon was a teacher there in 1888 and Mr. Eatherly from

Georgia taught in 1893; Miss Texas Liscomb from Texas in 1894-1895; and a man in 1896, at which time a terrific storm came with such wind force that it made the bell ring. The schoolhouse was used only for school purposes and never for a church, as it was built by the county for a schoolhouse only."

In 1885, the license to operate the ferry passed from father to son, the son being County Commissioner J. T. Higginbotham. It remained in the commissioner's name for a number of years.

In the latter part of the 19th century most families earned their living in the lumber industry, growing, harvesting, and delivering timber to the various mills. Many families, black and white, were full-time farmers and grew most everything needed to exist. Nina Catherine Thompson recalled that her father, George, started his early life in the late 1800's tending horses for the Mizell mill. After marrying and with a young family, he quit his job and went strictly to farming. He grew rice, cane, corn, vegetables, and in later times was heavy into dasheens. Their meat and produce came from their hogs,

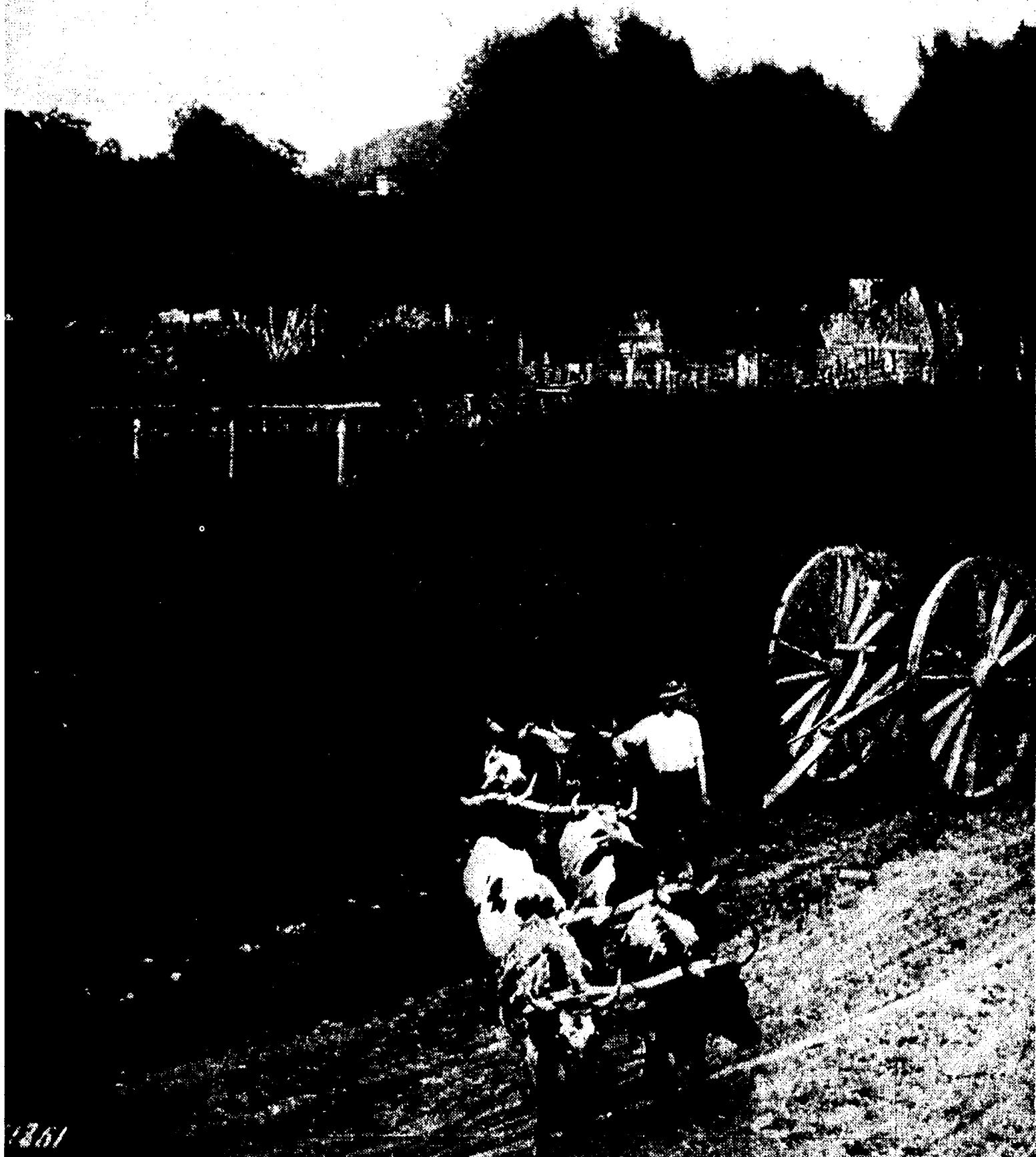
Davis Family Collection



Davis Family

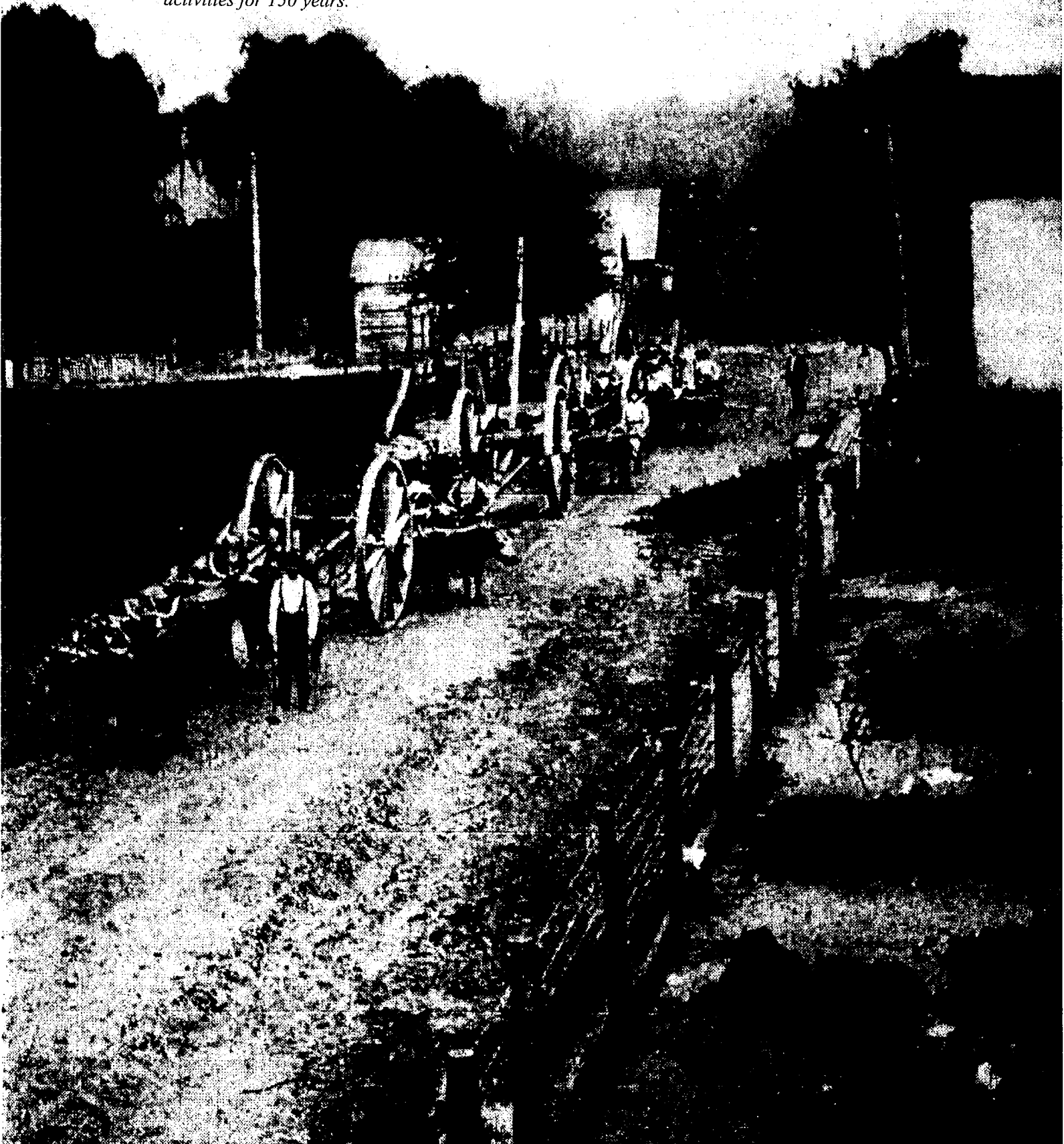
The tug Dandy steamed from Fernandina pulling a three or four masted lumber schooner. The sailing vessels were loaded with lumber and the Dandy would return and pull the ship back to open waters. Other tugs that were seen along the river were the Gladiator, Wade Hampton, and the Athlete.

Ready for Work, Kings Ferry, near Fernandina,



Fla.

By 1905, King's Ferry's lumber industry was drawing near to an end. Dominated by the community's populous Haddock family, this scene of Center Street catches teams of oxen as they leave the town docks for the county's interior. This turn of the century post card shows, beyond the grape vineyard on the left, a home built prior to the Civil War, occupied over the years by Conners', Haddocks, and several of the community's doctors and their medical businesses. This home remains on the river banks today. On the right along Center Street was the Russell home, a saloon, and the site of the community's last post office. A community millinery was there run by a Mrs. Foster; and carriage house, dance hall, and a general store. This was the center of community activities for 150 years.



cattle, goats, and chickens. The only thing that they usually didn't have was flour and sugar which they bought at the mill commissary. What the family didn't consume was sold out at the road in a small country store or marketed at Hilliard, Callahan, or Fernandina. Lena recalled that in her earlier years at what is now Kale's County Store was a wood store owned and run, at one time, by Bailey Haddock.

In a 1901-1902 *Florida State Gazetteer*, Kings Ferry was noted as having a population of 250, a Methodist church, a public school, two saw mills, and telephone service. The postmaster was T.W. Russell. Five general stores were operated by Messers. William J. Carlton, S.D. Chevers, David Herring, T.W. Russell, and the Wilson Mattox Company. Robert Houston had a grocery.

Several prominent doctors practiced at the Ferry during its thriving years Doctors Scott, Hawkins, and Wright, the latter probably being the first mainland Nassau County

physician. Dr. Elijah H. Wright was born in Massachusetts in 1820. He had graduated from Amherst College and moved to Hinesville, Georgia, where he set up his first practice in 1847. In 1862, after a few interim years in Camden County, Dr. Wright moved with his wife and four children to King's Ferry and began a practice which lasted until the mid-1880's.

His existence here was very likely revered by all those settlers of the surrounding country. He was a well educated individual, knowledgeable in his profession and tolerant of those who could not pay. At the Ferry, as did Drs. Hawkins and Scott, Dr. Wright had his office and a drug store to dispense the medicinal articles of his trade.

A son, James C. Wright, had taken to his father's love of medicine and at an early age traveled and worked along side to learn firsthand the methods of his father.

The peak years of the river community were primarily those of the Mizell mill operation from the early 1870's



Sidney H. Hilliard, Jr., Collection

The Hilliard & Bailey mills at Kings Ferry and Hilliard cut an immense amount of timber from 4 miles southwest of Hilliard to approximately 4 miles either side of the tracks from Hilliard to Kings Ferry. The locomotive above pulled two chords of wood for its firebox, had a 36-inch boiler, four 36-inch driving wheels, and with tender weighed 55,000 pounds.

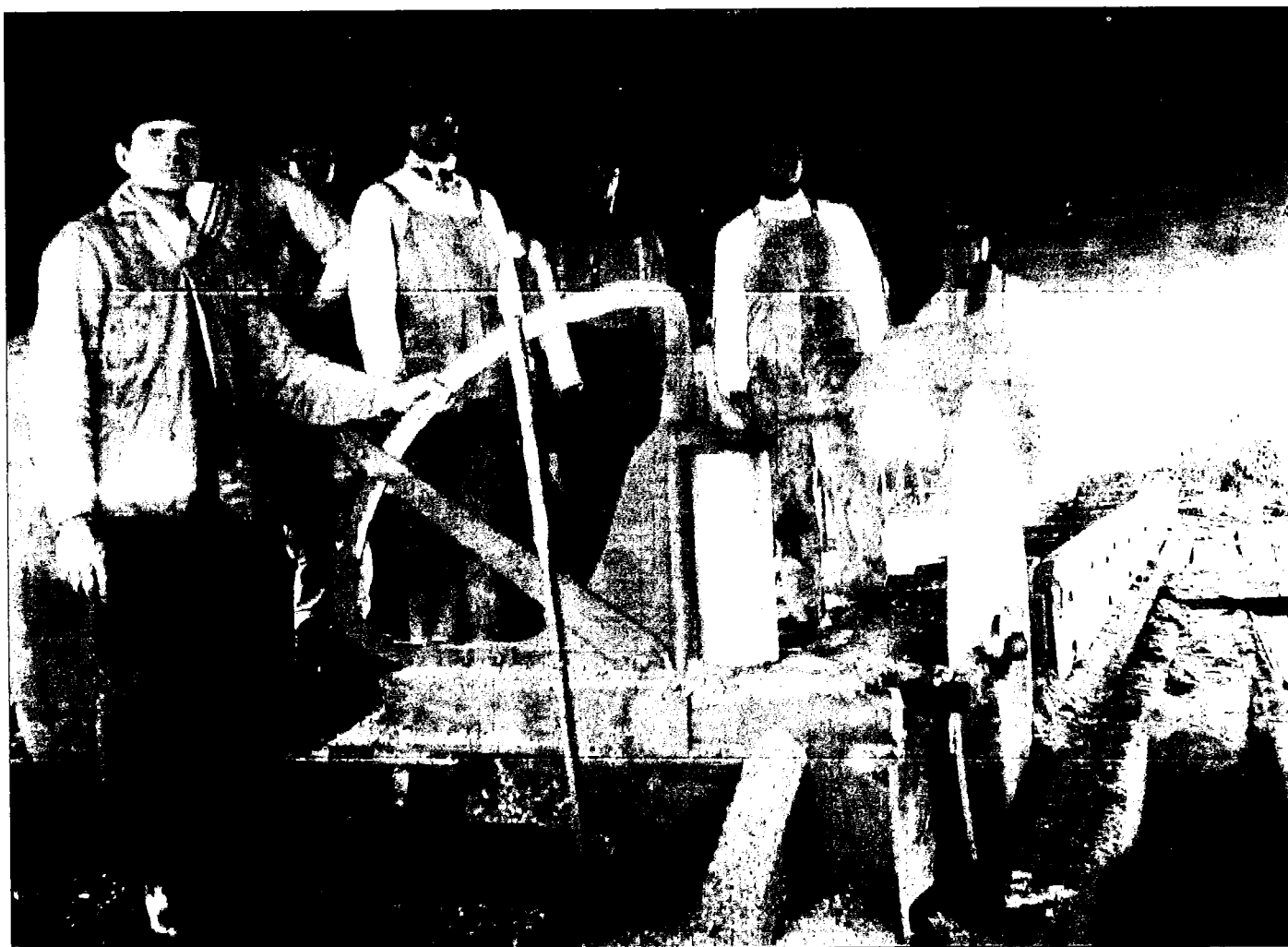
until 1912 when the mill shut its doors for good. Jackson Mizell retired to Fernandina and his brother William Sr., moved to Folkston. Both men became well known and respected citizens of their new homes before passing on more than 65 years ago.

The Mizell mill was abandoned and so were many homes and buildings of families associated with the mills. Docks were left to rot and the old shad shack on the community dock fell into the river.

The old community now shows few visible signs of the past. The old wooden sidewalks are gone, the pubs have vanished, most of the churches have closed and the stores have long since taken businesses to other communities. The last year that regularly scheduled steamers visited the town dock of King's Ferry was 1916. The *Hildegard* was sold that year and ended almost 100 years of shipping along the St. Mary's by ships of many names and sizes.

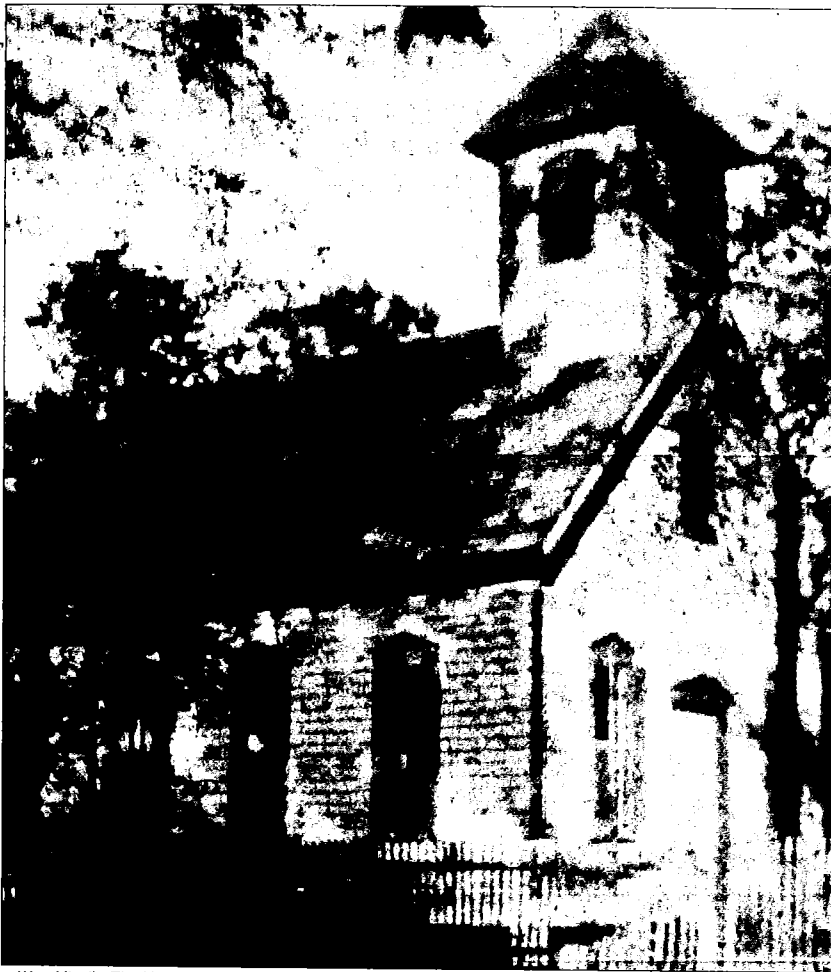
Like many other communities, King's Ferry would lie idle until the 1930's when the timber industry again took shape through the development of synthetics from wood pulp. Mills were constructed in Fernandina, thousands of acres of land were purchased by Rayonier, Container Corporation, and Gilman Paper Company, and much of the land up and down the river that had been stripped of the virgin longleaf yellow pine was replanted. The large ox carts were replaced with trucks and most of the local lumber mills closed in lieu of the Fernandina mills. But even with this new industry, the community never again would take on the importance of its 18th and 19th century role of river crossing and mill site.

All of the old pioneers of the Ferry are gone now - most buried at the King's Ferry, Haddock, Ephesus, Pigeon Creek, or Brickyard cemeteries. The old black pioneers are resting at Benam, Mt. Olive, Woodstock Mills (Farm) and Brickyard cemeteries.



Sidney H. Hilliard, Jr., Collection

Cuyler W. Hilliard, Jr., overseeing sawing operations at what is believed to be the Kings Ferry mill sight. Timber was railed to one of the two mills owned by Hilliard & Bailey where it was cut and curred prior to shipment by rail out of Hilliard or shipped by large lumber schooners down the St. Marys River.



Wm. Mizell - The Vanished Town of King's Ferry



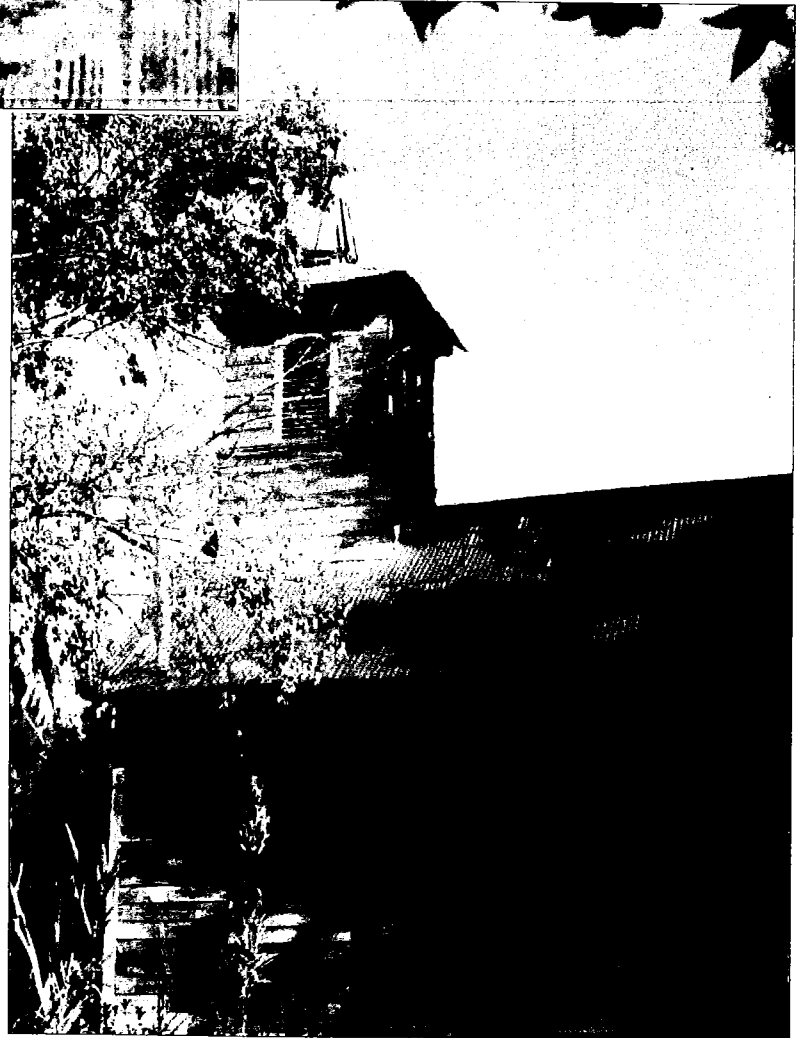
Davis Family

The Reverend and Mrs. N. R. Hamer of the King's Ferry Southern Methodist Church. The Reverend was an Oxford graduate whose father was a friend of John Wesley.

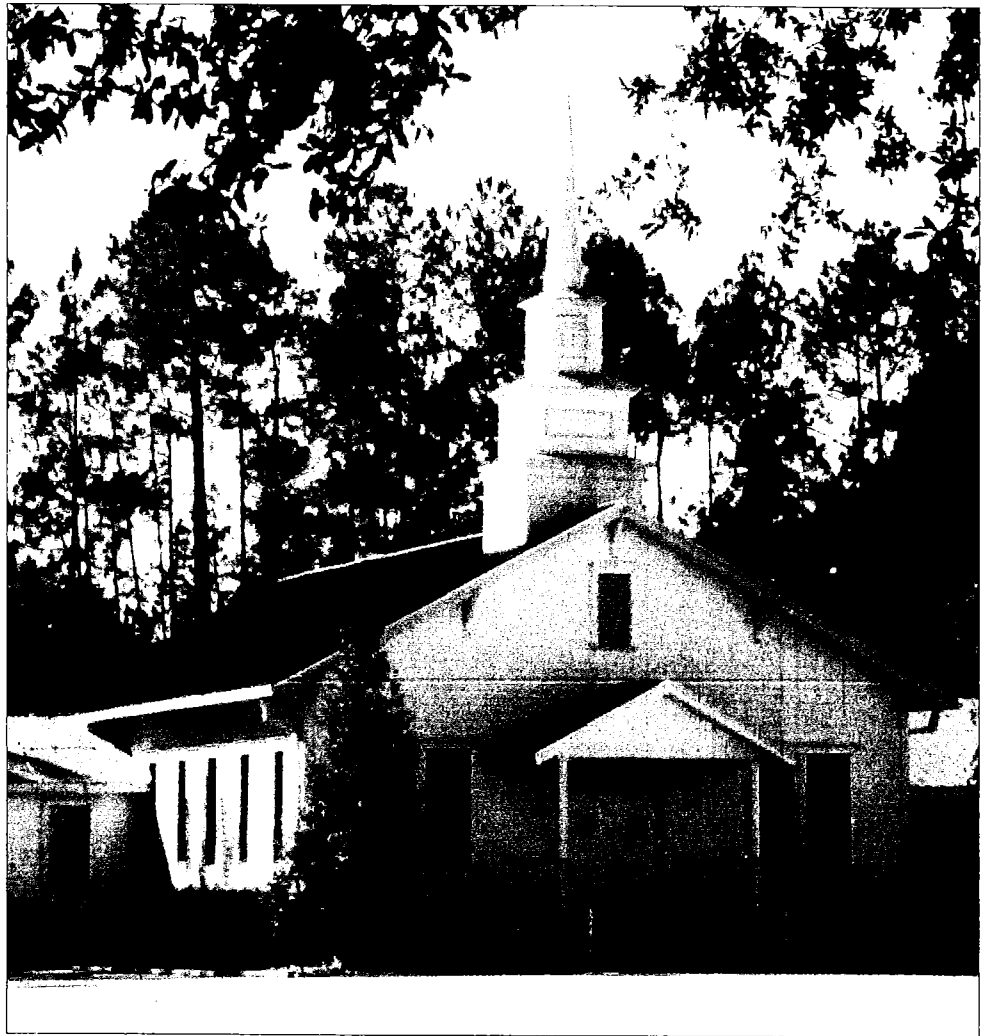
At left is the King's Ferry Southern Methodist Church which has survived more than 115 years since its construction.

Author's Collection

From a history of the church written 75 years ago, "In the Spring of the year 1873, Mt. Olive Baptist Church was originated from Zion Sister Baptist Church, Greenville, Georgia. After their dismissal they marched out of Zion Sister Baptist Church....and the leader started a song "Child of Thy Heavenly King" and it was sung until they reached Mt. Olive," King's Ferry. The Rev. Jim McGee was first pastor; and charter members were Brothers Elic Webber, Mose Benton, Ned Taylor; Sisters Martha Dummon, Judie Saddle, Nellie Taylor; Sarah Williams, Ida Washington, Peggy Trison, Mary Savage, Susie Andrews, Bill Trison, Henry Benton, Adams Armstrong, James Readmon, Rev. C.L. Readman, Bill Saddle, and James Saddle.

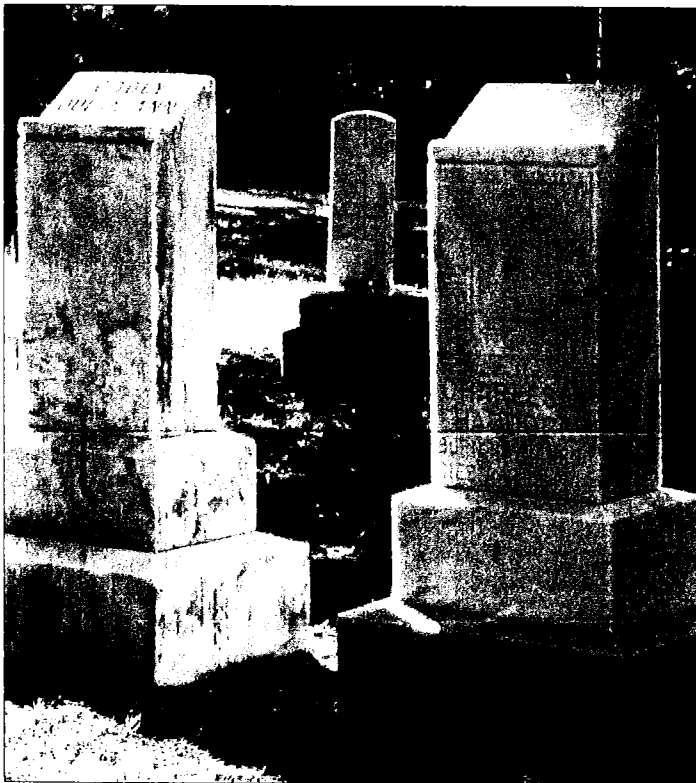


Ephesus Baptist Church was organized in 1845, the same year that Florida became a state and the Southern Baptist Convention was organized in Augusta, Georgia. The original church building was a log structure about 1 mile northeast of the present site. It remained there for 25 years. In 1876, the church was moved to the present site on Middle Road.



Author's Collection

Author's Collection



Much of King's Ferry's history is found amongst the pines and oaks of Haddock Cemetery. These are a few of the names engraved in stone that lived through bitter Civil War or struggled in dirt poverty of the early 20th century: Burris L. Higginbotham 1864-1924, Eliza Jane Higginbotham 1874-1916, Eliza Jane Higginbotham, 1841-1920, Elizabeth Green 1871-1926, Thomas Haddock 1818-1902, Julia Ann Haddock 1822-1876, John T. Haddock 1857-1930, Everlena Haddock 1863-1907, Harry Haddock 1871-1892, Donald T. Haddock 1840-1925, Wilbur Haddock 1882-1949, Donny T. Haddock, Jr. 1872-1959, Charles E. Haddock 1850-1938, wife of C.E. Haddock 1853-1882, Jane Haddock 68 years (nd), Joseph Haddock, Jr. 82 years (nd), Jeff D. Haddock 1861-1951, Mamie Haddock 1865-1945, Clarence Ellis McKendree 1889-1954, Vila McKendree 1872-1958, John C. McKendree 1861-1941, Benjamin Libby 1817-(nd), Eliza Haddock Libby 1822-(nd), George W. Libby 1849-1892, Virginia B. Libby 1857-1924, and Lizzie Libby 1872-1900,

The King's Ferry white school is one of only a few buildings remaining from the old milling days. It measures 30 feet by 48 feet and had as many as 40 students. William Mizell's recollections of the old school were that "the authority of the teacher was impressed upon the pupils by several long switches kept in the corner on the stage, or a long ruler on the teachers desk. Parents did not interfere with the authority of the teacher, and a child knew that a whipping at school would often mean another at home." The old school closed about 1947 after which students were bused south to Hilliard.

Harold M. Haddock Collection



Charles and Mary Haddock, a mail handler at King's Ferry and store owner. The first of the Haddock reunions were held at their home in the early 1920's.



Wm. Mizell - The Vanished Town of King's Ferry

From a brochure on Hilliard dated 1910



Mrs. Clara Haddock Smith (left) and an unidentified companion on a Sunday stroll in this 1905 photograph. Shaded by the limbs of an ancient oak, the ladies fashionably display the latest attire of the era. The old oak remains today next to the community's only remaining general store, and is affectionately known as the "symposium tree." If the old oak could only talk.

At right is Louis Haddock and a team of oxen headed for the mill or the river. This was the most widely used "vehicle" that transported most of logs out of the forest.



Eddie and Barbara Libby Collection

Below is (l to r) Fleming, Drew and Louis Haddock who also found reason to rest while the camera records their place in history. Their load is a cart of cross ties destined for the docks at Fernandina.



Eddie and Barbara Libby Collection

Gathered for this 1920's photograph are (left to right) Ola Murphy, Lizzie Roddenberry, Ruth Wolfe, Virginia Wolfe, Ruth Haddock, and Mary Frankie Haddock. Sitting left to right are Edith Murphy, Marie Haddock, and Johnny Roddenberry.



Harold M. Haddock Collection



Blanche Taylor Milton Collection

Irving Taylor (left) of King's Ferry and Lem Cooper from Cooper's Neck at Lessie.



Blanche Taylor Milton Collection

As generations pass, so too do names and stories attached to our ancestors. The two unmarked tintypes above are known to be 19th century Taylors that, many years ago, had lived at Woodstock Mills, having been freed from slavery there more than 130 years ago. The names attached to the images have been forgotten by time. Blanche Taylor Melton recalls her grandparents, Edward and Annie Taylor; he born at King's Ferry about 1875. He was most likely the son of slave parents. Edward's son, Francis Lee Taylor; married Mary Williams and to them came Blanche, Annie, Eldora, and Lee Frank.

In this 1910 view of the river community are the beautiful moss-laden oaks near the old Hilliard & Bailey docks and the once-abandoned home of the Russell family, now beautifully restored. This was the center of the onetime thriving lumber mill settlement that is so rich in nineteenth century history.

Haddock Family Collection





June 1999



Above is the Hildegarde at the town dock, and below is the same dock area looking east toward the distant Mizell mill where there is a three-masted schooner docked. At the right is the T. W. Russell home which was between the Mizell mill and the Hilliard & Bailey docks. Circa 1908.

Mizell - The Vanishing Town of Kings Ferry



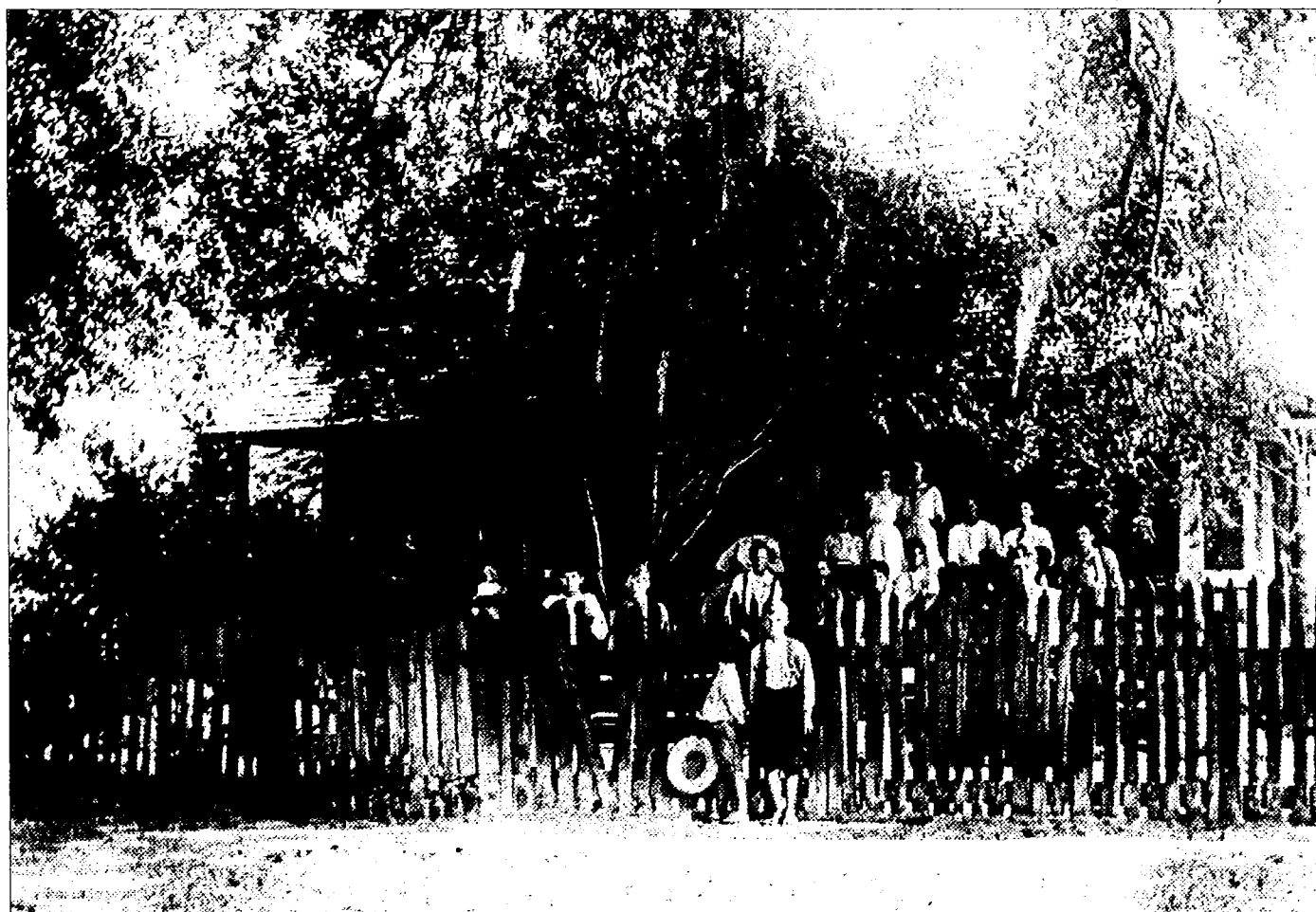


Davis Family Collection

Hunting and fishing along any of the St. Marys tributaries has always been a bountiful experience - always bringing home more than enough to feed the family.

A Haddock family Sunday afternoon with a crowd for dinner. Pictured are Broward Vanzant, David Miller Haddock, Ben Conner, Harley Haddock, Paul Haddock, James Vanzant, Bernard Vanzant, Bartow Haddock, Harvey Vanzant, Herman Conner, Thomas Libby, Rufus Haddock, Theresa Haddock, Eva Haddock (Conners), Lillian Libby, Irene Vanzant, Sophronia Haddock, and Jeanette Libby.

Haddock Family Collection





Collection of Eddie and Barbara Libby

*John Alexander
"Dutch"
Braddock, his
wife Sarah Jane
Haddock and
children John
and Sally.*



Collection of Eddie and Barbara Libby - William Mizell

*Jefferson Davis Haddock
July 14, 1861*

King's Ferry's Masonic Lodge No. 36, (F & AM) St. John's Day celebration June 24, 1912, hosting Masons and their families from Folkston, Woodbine, Kingsland, St. Mary's, Fernandina, Callahan, and Hilliard. There was a large picnic and barbecue followed by a well selected speaker. Here friends met friends, long ago.

Wm. Mizell - The Vanished Town of King's Ferry



A Bit of King's Ferry Genealogy.... Charles Timmons left his parents and cousins in the Carolinas after the Civil War where his ancestors, years before, had arrived by ship and had been enslaved in the plantation system of the South. Charles came south to Kings Ferry where he met and married Mariah Albertie and bought 80 acres just north of Haddock Road. This was where they lived out their lives. A son, Robert, born about 1895, married Lela Benjamin and was an ox and mule teamster. Robert and Lela's sons George and Adolphus remain at King's Ferry, George having married Cora Lee Frederick and Adolphus marrying Helen Taylor.



George Timmons Collection

Robert and Lela Timmons

Cora Lee Timmons was the daughter of Owen and Celia Pearson Fredrick. Celia's parents were Lola Underwood Pearson and Gus Underwood, who came to Kings Ferry from the Satilla River area of Georgia. Gus, according to Cora, is the Underwood family's connection to slavery, but where they lived as slaves is unknown to the family.

Not many years after the Civil War, a young James Thompson came south to King's Ferry where he married a Taylor. His parents had been slaves in the Carolinas. Son George Edward Thompson was born March 30, 1882. He is said to be the first black at King's Ferry to have owned an automobile - a 1916 Ford Touring Model which he paid \$387.25 cash for in Fernandina. That included transportation charges but there were no taxes at that time.

In the 1910 to 1940 era, potato-like dasheens were grown as one of the primary crops on mainland Nassau County. Pictured is George Edward Thompson on his 22 acre farm a mile south of King's Ferry on the Lessie Road. Photo circa 1915.



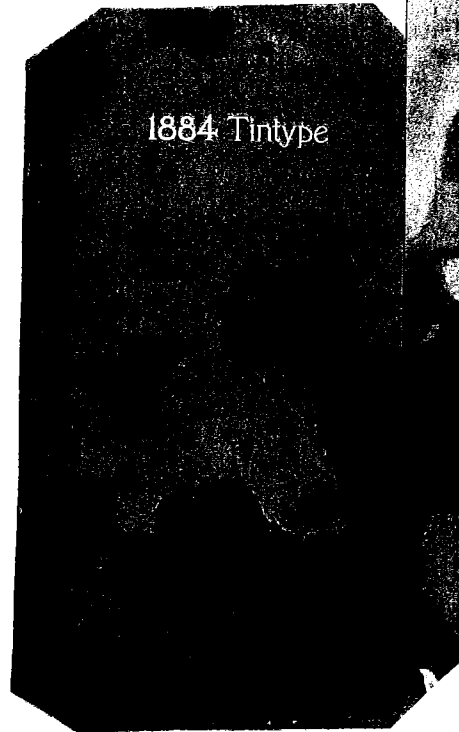
Lina Catherine Thompson Collection

Agnes Scipio Collection



Robert Scipio

Years before the American Civil War, a ship, name and port of origin long since forgotten, was sailing west across the Atlantic loaded with black Africans intended to be sold in the American slave market. One particular family onboard was made up of a mother and her three children, all of African, German, and Indian descent. The ship would flounder at sea with its passengers being picked up by a nearby vessel which brought the survivors on to America. One of the mother's children would take the name Robert and eventually the surname of Scipio from a source unknown to his descendents. Robert, his mother and siblings were settled on Cumberland Island and later were sold to the owner of the Cole Plantation at Colesburg, Georgia. There, according to family lore, Robert met Maria, another slave with roots at Thomasville and Brunswick, Georgia, and were united in marriage. In time came the Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation, and release from their bonds. Robert and Maria found their way south across the St. Marys River to Kings Ferry and eventually bought land and raised ten children. Descendents of Robert and Maria are now spread across the nation and enjoy a proud heritage.



Light restoration of an old tintype dated March 9, 1884, of George Edward Thompson, born at King's Ferry March 30, 1882.

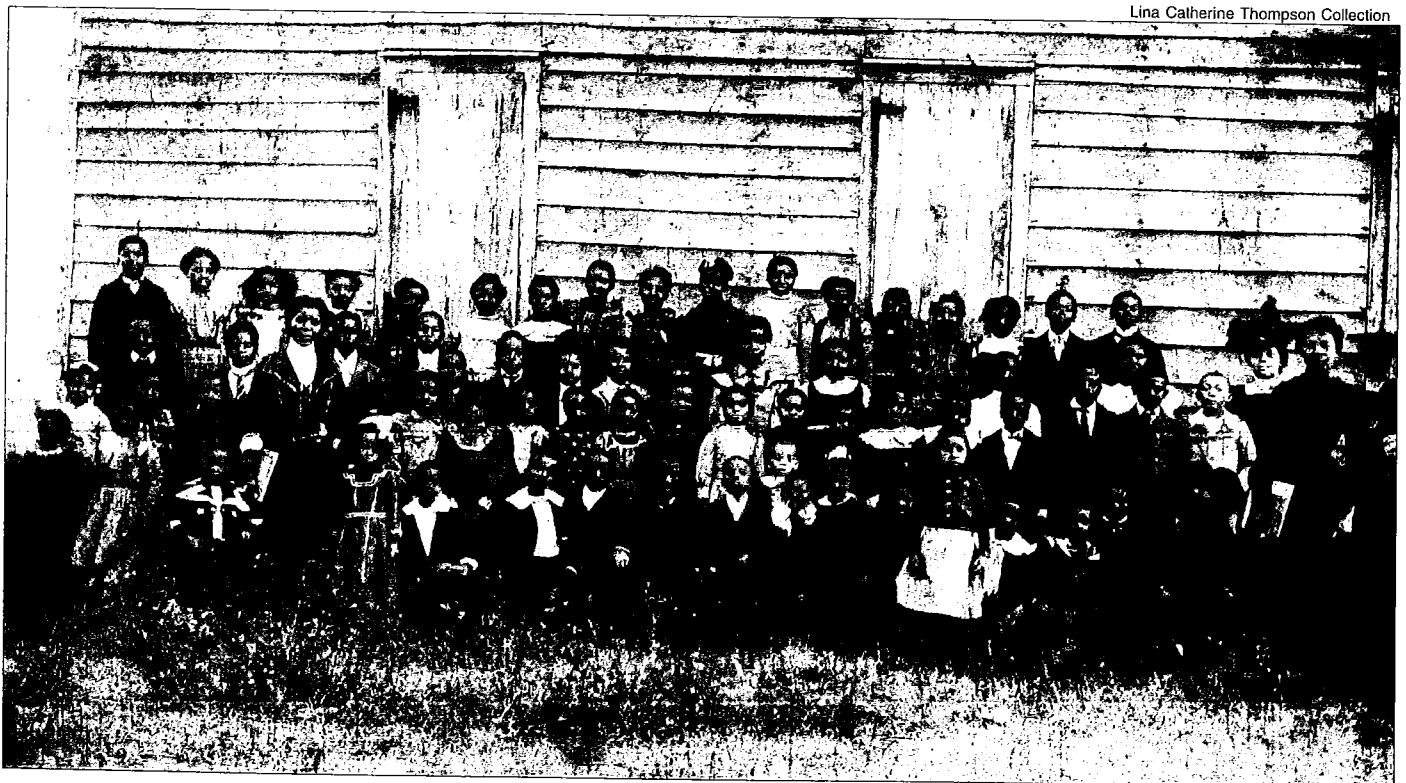


Lina Catherine Thompson Collection

George Thompson's wife Grace Johnson Thompson and daughter Lina Catherine Thompson.

King's Ferry's school for the colored was located on Middle Road (CR121A), on the right, just beyond Lessie Road and the old white cemetery. Like all of the rural schools, black or white, it was a one room woodframe building measuring about 30 by 40 feet. Sometime prior to 1950, that school burned. The county school board then built another on the Hilliard Road at what was called the Sampson curve. When the county closed that school, they bused the black students to the Hilliard black school and sold the school house to a local congregation to be used as the Kings Ferry M.E. Church. In the years to follow, students were bused on to the Callahan black school. Eventually, with families moving away and the older members passing on, the M.E. Church congregation dropped to just a few members. The building fell into disrepair and was eventually torn down. The photo below was taken before 1920 by Richard S. Roberts, an accomplished black Fernandina photographer.

Lina Catherine Thompson Collection





Descendants of one of the first King's Ferry families, the Haddocks, are pictured on the King's Ferry "flat."



John Henderson (standing) and an unnamed friend lived out their lives in the farming and timber business in and around the Ferry.

Baseball was the community pastime at the Ferry in 1910 just as it is today.

