

The 1890s Heritage Village at the County Park in Dallas was born with the gift of the mule barn. We celebrated Gaston County's 150 year "Sesquicentennial" as we set the barn on its new site adjacent to the 1904 County Home. The Master Plan for the Parks and Recreation Board had called for an historic area, and the GAMTRA organization had begun a very successful Cotton Ginning Days program. As more buildings were added to the area the plan evolved to portray our county's early textile history by interpreting the story of the cotton farmer's life, before he had a tractor.

So what was it like to grow cotton using mules and a hand plow, a guano fertilizer spreader, and pure muscle power. Water was drawn up from a nearby creek or the well. Cotton pickers drug a large sack and picked by hand all day in the hot sun. The year's crop was delivered to the cotton gin in a large wagon.

Some cotton farmers couldn't afford to buy the land they farmed and had to rent from other land owners. They were our tenant farmers and sharecroppers. Life was pretty hard and success depended heavily on the weather.

The cotton farmers and their families were pretty self-sufficient. They raised their own meat and cured it in the smoke house. They had a chicken coop and a vegetable garden. The children were expected to help in the fields and in the house. Electricity hadn't reached the countryside, so the refrigerator was the ice box, the stove was fired by wood, and lighting was by a kerosene lamp. Plumbing needs included the well and the outhouse, back of the house.

Additional things that were needed by the farm family caused the need for other structures which eventually made a small village. There was the need for a blacksmith shop, a machine shop, a country store, a post office, a school, and a church. Even though these little crossroads towns were small, they allowed the farm families to lead a happy, interdependent, and close knit existence. They helped each other in time of trouble, and celebrated together during life's good times.

Times have changed in the last 125 years and modern technology has made some great advances. However, if we accept the present without understanding how we got here, we might forget all the hard work, the commitment to purpose, the cooperation that preceded our fast, frantic lifestyles of today. Let's make our plans for the future with gratitude and with the thought of keeping the meaningful things from our past.

GASTON COUNTY *Heritage Village* CIRCA 1890



1. MULE BARN – Dates to before Civil War. Formerly located on White –Jenkins Rd. Donated in 1996 by Tom White.
 2. COTTON FARMER’S HOUSE – Late 1800s Flume family house from Crowders Mtn. State Park. Moved to this site in 1998.
 3. BLACKSMITH SHOP – Constructed by G.A.M.T.R.A. group on this site in 2000.
 4. CHAPEL – Was built in 1967. New Hope Presbyterian Church donated structure. It was moved here in 2002.
 5. COL MORRIS KITCHEN –Pre Civil War Donated by Penny & Danny Wilson & moved from Ratchford Rd., Dallas in 2006.
 6. SMOKE HOUSE –Pre Civil War. Donated by Judith Dellinger Johnson, moved from S. Main St., Stanley in 2008.
 7. MACHINE SHOP – Built here as an Eagle Scout project by Devin Holland in 2010-11.
 8. SCHOOL HOUSE – 1920s. Dismantled & moved in 2011. Gift of Clyde Smith & family.
 9. PROPOSED COUNTRY STORE & P.O. – To be located in the near future.
 10. PROPOSED PARSON’S MANSE – To be located in the near future.
- MISCELLANEOUS – Stone trough and upping block gift of Charles M. Faires family, well, outhouse, garden, cemetery, temporary school yard.

VILLAGE COORDINATED BY:
 G.C. Historic Preservation Commission
 Gaston County Parks & Recreation
 G. Agricultural, Mechanical, Textile Restore Assn.

For information call 704/922-2160 ext. 5

