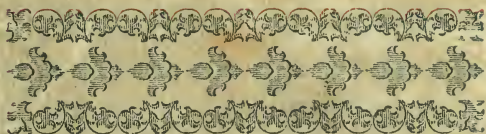


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MACON COUNTY,
North Carolina.



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Macon County,
North Carolina.

BY

HENRY STEWART, JR.

SECRETARY OF THE

BLUE RIDGE AGENCY.

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June 6, 1902
Macon County, North Carolina, is situated among the extreme western counties of the state; its southern boundary being the state line between Georgia and North Carolina, which is the thirty fifth degree of north latitude.

Like the adjoining counties of Jackson, Swain, Cherokee and Clay, it is sparsely settled in its mountain parts. The principal valleys being settled much longer than the mountains, they are of course much more populous. The county embraces an area of 301,270, acres.

The Blue Ridge chain of mountains entering the county from the east, stretches along a course slightly diagonal to the county line, at a distance of seven miles from the south line at its entry and extends westward, running in part with the southern boundary of the county to its western extremity.

This range here assumes bold and precipitous forms, the spurs and peaks of which, Whitesides, Black Rock, Fodder Stack, Satulah, Brushy Face, Scaley and others, breaking down toward the south and west in precipitous and almost perpendicular faces of heights varying from 1,000, to 1,800, feet. The peaks and

spurs having an altitude of from 4,000, to 5,060, feet above sea level.

The eastern half of the county rises rapidly from the state line, at an altitude of perhaps 2,600, feet to an average elevation of about 3,000, feet above sea level, in the plateau country north of the ridge.

The county is traversed, at its western extremity, by the majestic Nantahalal range of mountains, which are projected northward from the Blue Ridge and have an average altitude of 5,000, feet, being the highest range in the county.

West of this range and bounded on the west by the Valley River range, lies a fine valley extending northward across the county, through which flows the picturesque Nantahalal river.

East of the Nantahalal range, lies the valley of the Tennessee, the principal valley of the county, which extends northward for its entire breadth and is traversed by the largest stream of the section, the Tennessee river, a tributary of the great Tennessee, rising at the southern extreme of the county near the Rabun Gap and state line, at an altitude of 2,168, feet.

It flows northward through the valley, on a descending grade not exceeding at

its greatest fifty feet to the mile.

This plain is broad, gently rolling and fertile and into it debouch the principal valleys and streams of the eastern half of the county. It is here that the most fertile farming lands of the county are to be found and the most populous districts are situated.

Here also are located the oldest settlements of the west, several of which having been established for eighty or ninety years.

Here also, in the midst of the county, upon an elevation on the west bank of the river, in a most charming and delightful portion of the valley, is situated Franklin, the county seat, surrounded by a very beautiful and fertile farming region. This valley is filled with small elevations, giving to it a gently rolling and diversified appearance, presenting to the eye a delightful panorama when viewed from the overtowering mountain peaks which mark its limits. It has an average elevation of perhaps 2,000, feet.

The eastern half or the Blue Ridge portion of the county, consists of an elevated, undulating, mountain plateau, rising from 2,600, to 4,000, feet above sea level. This plateau is broken by cross

ranges, laterals of the Blue Ridge and in several instances by ranges parallel to the Ridge, the principal ones being the Cowee system on the north and the Fish Hawk near the mid portion of the section. This plateau is further broken by several narrow winding valleys such as, Tessenta, Sugar Fork and Ellijay valleys, running westerly through the plateau of Highlands and debouching in the greater valley of the Tennessee, having in the instance of the Sugar Fork or Cullasaja valley a length of about 30 miles, beginning at an altitude of 4,000, feet descending in this distance to about 2,000, feet. Through this valley flows one of the most picturesque streams in Western North Carolina, formerly called the Sweetwater or Sugar Fork of the Tennessee river, latterly by the Cherokee name Cullasaja.

To the eastern plateau section of the county we will now direct our attention for it is here in this elevated zone that we find present to the greatest extent those conditions which make it such a very desirable section in which to follow out the pursuits of the herdsman, dairyman and horticulturist.

In Macon county a larger area of open lands, suitable for agricultural

purposes, is to be found than in any other of the extreme western counties. Farms are more numerous, population greater and soils more generally productive; giving to the county the justly earned title of the "Banner County" of the west.

Highlands, twenty one miles east of Franklin, within six miles of the eastern limit of the county and seven north of the state line, the thirty fifth degree of north latitude, enjoys the notable distinction of being the town of highest altitude in the United States, east of the Rocky Mountains, is next in importance and size to the county seat and is the trade center for the eastern half of the county and the adjacent parts of Georgia and the southern half of Jackson county, N. C.

It is located at an altitude of 3,817, feet and is of recent establishment, being about 20 years old. It was established by settlers from the north and west. The resident population is perhaps 300, whilst the summer residents and visitors have in the past made a summer population of over 1,000.

The town is prettily situated in the midst of an undulating plateau on the

thread of the Blue Ridge mountains, surrounded by an amphitheatre of hills, spurs of the Ridge; which vary in height from one to seven hundred feet above the general level of the town site.

The boundaries embrace an area of one and a half miles square or 1,440, acres, which includes gently rolling lands, ridges and elevations, varying in height from 25, to 75, feet above the general level of the central part of the town, affording a much diversified but very suitable area, pre-eminently adapted by nature for town purposes.

The unusual area of the town site affords the opportunity, which has been embraced by the founders, by the laying out of the town in an open order, with wide streets and ample grounds surrounding the desirable building sites, thus adding a very admirable feature to the general appearance of the town.

The streets, wide and clean, are well graded and drained; the character of the soil being such that within an hour after a heavy rainfall the walks are firm and free from mud. The absence of clay soil affords perfect freedom from disagreeable mud, making the streets passable at all seasons. The soil of the town site is a light, sandy loam, porous, dry and free from swampiness, affording

perfect hygienic conditions.

The nearby mountain slopes and ridges, as also the principal elevations within the town site, afford numerous springs and rivulets of cold, sparkling waters, which issue from the crevices and fissures of the granitic rocks of which the elevations are composed and underlie the town, furnishing an unfailing source of supply of the softest, purest water anywhere to be found.

The equable, cool summer climate, the balmy, exhilarating and invigorating air of the mountains, freedom from malaria, mosquitoes and other noxious and annoying pests; varied scenery of greatest beauty and interest; mineral waters, chalybeate, lithia and sulphur; innumerable springs and streams of the purest water; surpassing healthfulness of country and the great value of its climatic influences as remedial and curative agents in diseases of the throat and lungs, catarrhal and malarial diseases, hay fever, asthma, affections of the nervous system and other kindred disorders, all tend to make Highlands one of the most desirable of resorts in the United States. Highlands is thirty miles distant from railroad connection on the south and east and is approached in either of these directions by good roads

traversing regions of great interest to the tourist.

This entire plateau region is one of the most profusely watered sections in the United States, hardly a tract of land can be found in this district but what is watered by at least several springs and streams.

Notwithstanding this profusion of waters, yet the singular fact remains that not a swamp, lake or pools of stagnant water can be found in the region.


The mountain peaks, with but few exceptions, are clothed with soil and verdure to their very summits; their general contour being gentle, the tops presenting smooth rounded outlines, occasionally rising into sharp pointed peaks, having but few precipitous slopes, excepting on the southern and southwestern faces; here some of the most stupendous cliffs and precipices east of the Rocky Mountains present themselves. From the highest of these, scenes of amazing magnitude, surpassing beauty and grandeur may be witnessed. Here one may look off from elevations of from 4,000, to 5,000, feet over broad expanses of lower lying mountain chains, valleys and low lands, for distances of from forty to seventy five miles, or to the limit of unaided

vision, over territory embracing parts of from three to four states.

The scene presented being that of a vast, billowy, oceanlike, expanse of green and azure, extending as far as the eye has power to penetrate the blue atmosphere or haze which gives rise to the name of Blue Ridge, to this grand mountain chain.

Fifty miles to the north one may see, extending in a grand panorama of at least one hundred miles in extent, the magnificent profile of the Unaka or Great Smoky range, along the thread of which runs the line between North Carolina and Tennessee.

Nature here is found in her happiest mood and words, in their poverty, fail to express the matchless beauty and singular impressiveness of such glorious prospects as these.

wing to its sparse settlement, the eastern half of the county presents, from these elevations, the appearance of an unbroken forest, dotted here and there with the clearings or "dead-ings", which mark the small areas of cultivated lands.

This section is not as heavily timbered as the lower lying slopes of the Blue Ridge and in this respect presents some advantages in the thinning out and clearing of the forest lands for seeding to grass for range purposes.

Of the woods and timber trees here found, the oaks predominate, white, black, red, spanish, water and chestnut abound, white and black pine, hemlock spruces are found in the mountain valleys and along the streams of the plateau; the chestnut is another widely distributed tree, white and yellow poplar and white ash, basswood, black cherry, locust, red and white hickory, gum, sourwood, soft maple, birch, cucumber, buckeye and smaller growths as, dogwood, service, silver-bell and sassafrass comprise the list of forest trees.

The lower growing shrubs are found throughout the country in great abundance, as also innumerable wild plants and numerous grasses, which carpet the virgin forests of the section.

The rocky ravines, cliffs and rough mountain faces are clothed with the evergreen kalmia, rhododendron and leucothæ, while in the forest lands the dogwoods, sourwoods, silver bells and cucumber, the numerous azaleas and abundant wild flowers, each in their season, blooming from early spring until late in the fall all add great beauty to the forest scenes.

There are many varieties of wild grasses native to this region, of which some are perineal and a few evergreen, which grow in the forests and clothe the more open land of the mountain ridges and slopes with verdure from early spring until late fall.

These grasses and small undergrowth, supplemented with the winter growing grasses and the usually abundant chestnut and oak mast, furnish sustenance for cattle, sheep and hogs in many instances during the entire year and at any event for the greater part of the year.

This capability of the mountain section of North Carolina has been favorably known to the people of the South for years.

We quote from the writing of General Clingman, a noted pioneer of this region, on this subject. "Horses and

horned cattle are usually driven out into the mountains about the first of April and brought back in November. Within six weeks after they have been put into the range they become sleek and fat. There are however, on top and along the sides of the highest mountains, evergreen and winter grasses on which horses and horned cattle live well throughout the entire winter. Such animals are often foaled and reared there until fit for market, without ever seeing a cultivated plantation."

To the same point we quote from North Carolina and its Resources, a publication issued by the State Board of Agriculture and therefore authoritative.

"The entire transmontane country is well adapted to stock raising. The cultivated grasses flourish everywhere with even ordinary care." "After two or three crops are taken off, the land, if suffered to lie at rest, springs up spontaneously in timothy, herds grass and other rich pasture grasses; once established the grass perpetuates itself. Nor is an entire clearing necessary to establish the land in grass. If the undergrowth is removed, the trees thinned out and the surface stirred and sown in orchard grass it flourishes luxuriantly even while

the forest trees are left standing.

Its capacity as a grazing country has long been known. But formerly the cattle were left to the resources of nature, which indeed in such a country were abundant and rich."

From personal observation during a number of years and a familiarity with the soils of the eastern plateau section of Macon county, we can add to this very favorable statement, that other valuable grasses are indigenous to the section; prominent among these are the Kentucky and Texan blue grasses, and meadow oat grass, which is among the most valuable of the native grasses for forage, Red top is also a native and comes in with white clover whenever land is cleaned and opened up and left to lie uncropped. The cultivated grasses, such as timothy, low red and sapping clovers, orchard grass, turnips beets rape and in fact all vegetable growths which require a cool, moist climate for their development, all thrive here.

While small grains and corn are raised here, yet the high altitude and cool nights, militate somewhat, against the most profitable production of these crops

The soils of this region vary considerably with locality, generally speaking,

they are a light loam; the northern slopes of the mountains and ridges are of a heavier and darker loam, in the valleys the soils have an admixture of clay. In the more extensive valleys and the lower levels of the county, red clay soils predominate.

In the immediate vicinity of Highlands the lighter loams prevail, but in the course of several miles distance in any direction from the town, the soils are much heavier, being mixed with clay. On these lands from twenty to fifty bushels of corn to the acre have been raised. From the high elevation, greater amount of rainfall, equable climate, cool summers and character of the soil, our mountain plateau lands are pre-eminently adapted to the cultivation of grasses, root, forage and other feeding crops. In this we excel the lower lying portions of the county.

The extensive areas of wild land, never failing supply of pure cold water, qualities of soil and climate, freedom from ticks and noxious insects and poisonous plants, absence of cattle diseases and a system of range laws, very favorable to the herdsman, cause this region to be a most desirable one for the stockman, dairyman, shepherd and

farmer.

These lands being elevated above the influence of those germs which are so destructive of animal life and the climatic conditions being so unfavorable to the existence of germ life generally, this country may be considered as a natural sanitarium, the practical advantage of which will be readily appreciated by the stock raiser and shepherd.

As a safeguard to this region, stringent quarantine regulations, prescribed by the United States and the states of Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina, effectually prevent the introduction of all contagious cattle diseases. The cattle tick cannot exist here, thus a prolific source of infection is avoided.

In the lower lying and more extensive valleys of the county, farm crops are produced abundantly, From fifty to seventy bushels of corn have been raised on these lands under favorable circumstances, such as good season, proper fertilization and modern methods of cultivation,

On the other hand, these lands are not nearly as well suited to the growth of grasses, vegetables and forage crops, as the higher lands.

In this plateau region the orchardist

will find the conditions most favorable to his pursuit.

At this point it is only just to say, that not in every instance are the lands of this section adapted to fruit raising.

This arises, not from the poverty or inadaptability of the soils, but from the frosts in early spring, which affect this section in a very unequal manner. The mild open winters have the effect, in the least exposed situations and on the mountain slopes and coves having a direct southern exposure, of advancing the blossoming time of the trees. It is no uncommon thing to see peach trees in bloom, in some localities in the county, early in March, these blooms are, of course, destroyed by frost.

In the mountain plateaus, the climate being cooler than in the lower valley lands, vegetation does not start quite so early in the season and notably so on the northern, eastern or western flanks of the mountains and ridges.

A feature peculiar to mountain regions, which is present to a very marked degree in this plateau country, is the thermal, warm or no frost belts, as they are variously termed, These bodies of warm air, wherever they occur, prevent damage to vegetation by late frosts in the spring and the early ones of the fall.

This phenomena is produced by the cold

damp and heavier air of the upper strata displacing the warm and consequently lighter airs of the valleys and natural depressions of the country, causing the warmer air to rise and remain at higher levels. This condition occurs shortly before sunset, continuing through the night and until after sunrise.

The location of these warm belts of course varies greatly. The contour of the country determining the level in in each particular instance.

The mountain sides, ridges and elevations, wherever these belts occur, are free from the late and early frosts which have destructive effect on lands along streams and in the basins and depressions of the plateau, leaving the vegetation of these thermal zones unharmed. This condition continues until the freezes of approaching winter occur.

There is no great regularity or general rule in the establishing of these localities and no general level to be observed, local conditions alone governing an experience and observation of at least one season, is necessary to accurately delimitate the area of each individual location. When located with accuracy however, these zones afford the greatest advantage to the fruit culturist and when coupled with northern and western exposures, ensure almost

unfailing results from orchards planted therein.

While it is true that fruit bearing trees thrive anywhere in the country, yet it is only in these especially favored localities, where immunity from frost is practically had, that the most profitable annual results are obtained.

This region being sparsely settled, but few orchards were planted until recent years, the most of these being of less than twenty years planting. Quite recently however, larger areas have been planted, some of which are just coming into bearing. These new orchards, wherever they have been located with judgment, are thrifty. Another feature of importance in this connection, is the existence of a ready market for all the fruit of the region, especially apples, almost at one's door.

This country, from its geographical position, is within from two to three, days time removed from the principal cities and towns of the south. The thirty miles of distance intervening between it and the railroad point, counting as one day in time of transit.

To the stock raiser similar market conditions are afforded for the products of the range. The dairyman also shares in this favorable market condition and is further favored by the abundant range

and the facility with which forage crops can be grown, the temperate seasons and the abundant springs, the waters of which are sparkling and cold the year around.

The altitude of the most prominent mountain peaks of the eastern half of the county are, Whitesides, in the Blue Ridge chain, 5,060, feet, breaking down to the south in precipices of from 1,000, to 1,800, feet in depth. In the Cowee chain, Shortoff, 5,039 and Yellow mountain, the highest peak in the eastern half of of the county, 5,133.

Satulah, the peak of which is but three quarters of a mile distant from Highlands, its northern slopes being included within the corporate limits of the town, above which it towers to an altitude of about 700, feet and to 4,506, feet above sea level. Dog Mountain, 4,450. Scaley, 4,835. Fish Hawk bald, the highest of this range, 4,749.

The highest altitudes in the county are found in its western part. In the Nantahal range are Pickens' Nose, 4,926. Albert Mountain, 5,254. Cartoogajay 5,064. Wayah Bald, 5,494. Toketah, 5,372. Rocky Bald, 5,323. The Blue Ridge at Rabun Gap near the western extreme of the county, has an elevation of 2,168, feet.

The native population of the county is very orderly and law abiding and are hospitable to a marked degree, entertaining no prejudices, political or otherwise, toward settlers from other states.

In this county the negro element is numerically so small, that it is hardly worthy of consideration from either a social or political stand point, hence the racial questions which obtain elsewhere in the South, do not affect this mountain region.

The rate of taxation for State and County purposes is reasonably low, taking into consideration the nature and extent of public improvements in the county.

In all the country settlements schools supported by County and State funds are held and in the towns, both town and township terms are held, aggregating in these localities about eight months school annually. Private schools are also held in the towns.

Many religious denominations are represented, most prominent among these are the Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal and Presbyterian.

Macon county recently voted a county bond issue of \$ 60,000, for railroad purposes; the bonds to be issued only

upon the completion and operation of a railroad through the Tennessee valley to Franklin, the county seat.

Inducements of a similar nature having been offered by several counties in the neighboring state of Georgia. This coupled with the prospective freight traffic of the region has induced the formation of a company for the extension of the Tallulah Falls Ry, from Tallulah Falls Georgia, the present terminal of that road, northward forty miles through the Tennessee valley to Franklin. Work is now in progress on this extension and the road will, in all probability, be completed in 1903.

This road connects with the main line of the Southern Ry at Cornelia, Ga.

This road was originally projected to run through Knoxville, Tennessee, there connecting with the western trunk lines. There is but little doubt that this will be accomplished in the near future.

When completed to Franklin, this road will place Highlands within 17 miles of railroad.

On the east Highlands is approached by a spur of the Southern Ry, the Transylvania Ry, which has been completed to Toxaway, thirty miles distant.

Toxaway is a new health and pleas-

ure resort, established several years ago by northern capitalists, in the heart of the Blue Ridge mountains. It is charmingly situated in the midst of a beautiful and picturesque section. A large area of mountain and valley lands are here laid out and improved, forming a very attractive health and pleasure resort, as well as a hunting and fishing preserve. There are here several finely appointed hotels, which with the accompanying high class boarding houses, afford to the tourist the comforts of the best city hostelries.

It is among the finest and best equipped of our mountain health and summer resorts. A well graded turnpike road, winding through a delightful and romantic section of the Blue Ridge mountains for a distance of thirty miles westward, connects Highlands with this place.

The following averages of annual mean temperatures for the State have been established from the records of the U. S. Weather Bureau, extending over a period of thirty years.

For the State at large, 59 degrees F. The mountain region; spring 56, summer 72, autumn 56, winter 40.

The annual mean for Highlands is, 50.

For a corresponding period of time, the average precipitation in the mountain region is, spring 13,69, inches, summer 14,95, autumn 10,61, winter 14,07; for the year 53,32 inches, all, including the snows of winter, being measured as rainfall.

The precipitation for Highlands and the plateau region of the county, lying northward of and just beyond the crest of the Blue Ridge, reaches the greater mean of 76,29 inches. To this circumstance is to be attributed the bountiful supply of water in this plateau region and the peculiar fitness of the section for the growth of grasses, vegetables, and forage crops generally.

The mildness of the climate and uniformity of temperature is due to the low degree of latitude, 35 and high elevation; cool in summer because of

elevation and mild in winter by reason of its southern latitude and the warm air currents which flow from the Gulf of Mexico and contribute to the mildness of the season. The pure, cool, balmy and invigorating air of the mountains, the extreme purity of the waters, elevation above the zone of germ laden miasmatic airs, partial rarefication of the air by high altitude, the surpassing beauty and attractiveness of natural surroundings, immunity from tornadoes and destructive storms, all unite to make this plateau region the peer of any other section of the United States as a resort.

From the manufacturing point of view, the abounding streams of the region which afford numbers of the finest water powers, coupled with the quantity, quality and proximity thereto of valuable timbers and ornamental woods, afford excellent opportunities for the establishment of profitable manufacturing industries. The advent of the railroad is all that is now lacking to open this country to the manufacturer. Day by day this approaches nearer this very promising field.

Our oak, hickory, white ash, basswood and other hardwoods, invite the attention of the carriage maker, wagon builder, handle trade and all those who require an abundance of tough, fine grained woods, of great strength and elasticity. The yellow locust furnishes material for telegraph brackets and pins and with the white oak the treenails so extensively used in ship building. The abundant laurel and rhododendron roots for veneers, pipes and ornamental turned work; the dogwoods for shuttle blocks, piano keys and all other work, where a hard fine grained wood is required. Pine and hemlock spruces, poplar and other woods for general purpos-

es and especially when coupled as they are with ample water power in close proximity, the business of paper pulp making is suggestive of large profit.

The cherry, birch and other ornamental hard woods, afford opportunities for the carpenter, cabinet maker and turner.

As previously stated, the advent of the railroad opens up this section, with its wealth of raw material to the manufacturer. There is not an acre of land in our mountains but what has a double value to the investor, one for the timbers, which in most instances is double or treble the present value for farm or range and the other its value for farm and range purposes.


There is no time like the present for investments in this section. Lands will never be lower in price than they now are. The completion of the railroad will inevitably result in advancing the valuation of all classes of property in this section.

Walhalla, in Oconee county, South Carolina, is the most convenient railroad point from which to approach Highlands. The intervening thirty miles of the journey being completed in hacks and stages, which run daily to and from the railroad during the season.

Visitors from the northern and middle states, should come by way of Washington, D, C via the Southern Ry, to Seneca City and Walhalla, S, C, from there by stage to Highlands.

Those from the west and northwest, should come by way of Atlanta, Ga, to Walhalla.

Those desiring to approach Highlands through the mountains, can come by way of Knoxville, Tenn, through Asheville, N, C, to Hendersonville and Toxaway, the present terminal of the Transylvania Ry, from here by conveyance thirty miles, over a new turnpike road, passing through one of the most picturesque portions of the Blue Ridge mountains, to Highlands.

ur Agency has for sale range, farm, and timber lands, town properties, water powers &c and has for rent, farms, range lands and town properties. We also make a specialty of the care and management of the properties of non residents and the careful selection of lands for orchard purposes.

We do not publish a general land list. The various properties we offer are classified according to the purpose to which they are best adapted, hence it will be necessary for our correspondents to advise us of the particular class of property they may be seeking to purchase, in order that we may be able to present to them lists of suitable properties. We invite correspondence regarding our country, people, lands and all other information that we may be able to give, guaranteeing to present no overdrawn pictures and to give the exact facts, in each instance, to our clients.

Parties desiring to purchase or rent town or villa properties in Highlands, for summer or winter occupation should write us for another of our publications entitled, "Highlands and Vicinity".

BLUE RIDGE AGENCY.

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