



## **A Detailed History of North Augusta**

Contributed by: Don Rhodes & Milledge Murray, January 2022

James U. Jackson and Walter Jackson are considered the founders of North Augusta because they had the commitment, vision, and follow through to complete property acquisition and make arrangements with the Milwaukee (Wisconsin) Bridge Company to erect a bridge to cross the Savannah River between the Augusta, Georgia and the future North Augusta, South Carolina.

James U. Jackson, of Augusta, worked in the Bond and Brokerage business with Marion Verdery, out of New York City, NY. Both Mr. Verdery and Mr. Jackson held connections with financial markets and northern-based investors. The attraction to the Augusta area was the large hotels, land availability favorable climate, the City and County of Aiken, South Carolina and its horses, the new sport of golf, and railroad access to Augusta. The opportunity was great but the requirement of financial capital was significant. James U. Jackson was previously successful in raising capital for railroads in Marietta, GA and his brother Walter knew the construction industry well. Each of the Jackson brothers had skills that complemented each other in the founding and developing of North Augusta.

The founding of the North Augusta Land Company took place in 1890 with the Jackson brothers, Marion Verdery, Ernest Groesbeck, Patrick Calhoun and other investors from New York who helped arrange financing for the development. The key early actions that took place were the purchase of a 5,600-acre tract of land for \$100,000 from Mattie Butler Mealing. Ms. Mealing had inherited the land from her father, Robert Butler, who owned the land for many years. Other smaller parcels were acquired, with the final parcel being the Getzen property totaling 93 acres – bringing the total land acquired to 6,500 acres.

Other important early decisions included the construction of the steel across the Savannah River into South Carolina, and construction of the 26-mile long trolley line that ran through North Augusta, and into the Valley towns and City and County of Aiken. The bridge was able to handle horse-drawn carriages, a pedestrian walkway, electric passenger trolley cars and freight trolley cars.

Charles Boeckh, a civil engineer in Atlanta who designed Grant Park in Atlanta, was hired to lay out the North Augusta streets and waterworks system. He previously had worked with major civil engineering projects in Cincinnati, Ohio. The City was incorporated in 1906.

Among the early buildings of the city were the Jackson brothers' homes – two-story mansions with white columns at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Carolina Avenue. Walter's house was built in 1895, faced towards the river and Augusta and called Lookaway Hall. James's house was built in 1902, facing east on Carolina Ave. and called Rosemary Inn. It was named for the rosemary pine wood used in the interior of the home. Both homes are now used as bed and breakfast lodging. The homes have historically been used for housing visitors, having housed the Detroit Tigers baseball team in 1922 and 1923 during their spring training at



Augusta's Warren Park. The accommodations were arranged for by baseball hall of famer Ty Cobb, a longtime resident of Augusta.

The Jackson brothers also built the former Hampton Terrace Hotel at the top of Carolina Avenue near Martintown Road. The massive hotel was constructed of wood, had five stories and 300 rooms. The hotel had a panoramic view of Augusta and the Savannah River. The grounds contained an 18-hole golf course, ballroom, fine dining hall, luxurious accommodations, sitting area, gardens, walking trails, tennis courts, horseback riding, tea rooms, men's lodge, hunting club, and natatorium swimming facility. The hotel burned on New Year's Eve 1916 apparently due to faulty wiring and ill-fitting fire hydrants. Prior to its destruction, the Hampton Terrace attracted famous celebrities as "winter visitors" or guests including U.S. President William Howard Taft, Chicago store owner Marshall Field, Pullman Car Company President Robert Todd Lincoln (son of President Abraham Lincoln), stage and movie actress Billie Burke (Glinda the Good Witch of the North in "The Wizard of Oz"), Mrs. General George Armstrong Custer, and John D. Rockefeller.

Throughout the years, famous North Augusta residents have included singers Brenda Lee and Sharon Jones, actor Jim Nabors (Gomer Pyle of "The Andy Griffith Show") along with many professional athletes and business leaders. Singer James Brown recorded his hit single "Get on the Good Foot" at a North Augusta recording studio.

The City of North Augusta was preceded by two other towns that were once located in the area: Campbelltown and Hamburg. Both towns were eventually abandoned, and the land over time annexed into the City of North Augusta municipal limits.

#### Campbelltown

Campbelltown, founded by John Hammond more than 200 years ago, was the second town settled in the area on the Savannah River just below the rapids. It was also established as a trading center for furs, tobacco and other goods. Campbelltown prospered for about 60 years before the lucrative tobacco market succumbed to the Georgia side of the river due to increasing competition between tobacco warehouse owners. In fact, the General Assembly of Georgia, seated in Augusta, took legal steps to establish Augusta as a tobacco center. Competition between tobacco growers and warehouse owners grew so intense that river boat ferries were destroyed. John Hammond was killed and his house burned. With the tobacco and fur trade bypassing Campbelltown, the community did not survive. The community was located approximately where the Hammond's Ferry residential neighborhood and North Augusta Activities Center now exists. Prior to the riverfront housing and municipal developments, the City of North Augusta commissioned an archaeological report called the Chicora report that documented Native American activity and Campbelltown ruins, dating to 1760.

#### Hamburg

Hamburg, founded in 1821 by a German native who went by "Henry Shultz," became a home port for thriving steamboats traveling from Savannah, GA on the Savannah River. The business was co-owned by Henry Shultz and Henry Thomas Willis Lubbock. The downriver tobacco and cotton trade was so good that Charleston merchants financed and built in late 1830



a railroad from Charleston to Hamburg. Shultz also constructed a 26-mile wood plank road to Edgefield, South Carolina to enable the wagons to keep moving during the rainy season. Augusta businessmen started devising ways to take business away from Hamburg including enlarging the Augusta Canal to allow upcountry planters to use the river and pass above the rapids into Augusta. Bad business deals including the loss of his toll bridge over the Savannah River and the extension of the Hamburg railroad line over the river to Augusta led Shultz to die in poverty in Hamburg in 1851. His grave location is unknown.

From 1865 to 1877, Hamburg was a town that existed during Reconstruction in America. With the end of the Civil War and the passage of the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, slaves were given their freedom, full rights as U.S. citizens and the right to vote. The town of Hamburg came occupied with free Blacks and recently freed slaves from South Carolina plantations. In 1868, the State of South Carolina adopted a new state constitution which guaranteed voting rights and the right to an education for all youth. In 1871, Aiken County was formed from four counties (Edgefield, Orangeburg, Barnwell and Bamberg). Aiken County was the only county formed in South Carolina during Reconstruction. Between July 4 and July 9, 1876, the Hamburg Massacre took place in which eight men lost their lives – seven Black men and one White man. This event drew national attention as an outrage against the Whites who unjustly murdered the Black men. This tragedy helped to end Reconstruction in the South.

The town of Hamburg managed to survive on the banks of the Savannah River until the flood of 1929 which led to the U.S. Red Cross to quit paying for flood damages. Residents moved to higher ground at an area off Barton Road known as Carpentersville. The land of Hamburg is now part of the North Augusta city limits with the main residential and business portion located at the Shoreline Drive residential area, the front nine of the River Golf Club, and the area between the 5<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge and 6<sup>th</sup> Street Railroad Bridge.