

MEET A PIONEER MANUFACTURER *Anderson Indep. Lib + Educ. Ed 1940*

Col. Sitton Pointed The Way

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Anderson County Native Was Owner Pendleton Company

The population of the upper region of South Carolina has far from forgotten the late Colonel Augustus John Sitton. And the reason is that he was responsible for much of the progress that has come the way of the Piedmont Section and also the state as a cotton manufacturer, wholesale manufacturer of carriages, a leader in the pursuit of agriculture, and an outstanding figure in various other enterprises.

This pioneer manufacturer of the Palmetto State, who for a lengthy period was complete owner of the Pendleton Manufacturing Company at old Auton, now LaFrance, was a native of Anderson County, having been born at Pendleton on December 16, 1838. His ancestors had migrated from England to South Carolina.

His father, John Bradley Sitton, filled the position of postmaster at Pendleton for more than forty years and also served as the mayor of that village. In addition, the elder was the proprietor of a large carriage factory, engaged in farming, and had many other business interests which stamped him as an active and energetic man.

The son passed his boyhood at Pendleton, attending the school which were in reach of his home. From his early boyhood, however, he was so steadily interested in the business of his father that duties at the carriage factory and at the postoffice were allowed to interfere with regularity of attendance at school.

Nevertheless, he received a valuable part of his education from his early acquaintance with the forms of manual labor which were

involved in the manufacturing of the wood work and iron work of wagons, buggies, and carriages. He grew familiar, too, with the materials and the methods used in finishing and painting carriages and wagons. The practical acquaintance with all of the details of the business which he thus secured at a tender age formed the foundation of his success as the head of a large manufacturing establishment.

When the development of manufacturing in South Carolina received so remarkable a stimulus from the determination of the men of the Palmetto State to manufacture on their own soil the cotton goods for which they had long furnished the best of staples to the factories of the world, Sitton was among the far-seeing men who early resolved to engage in this line of manufacture.

Sitton saw something of military service in the War Between the States, acting as Quartermaster Sergeant for four years in the Palmetto Sharpshooters. Still later, in 1876, he participated in the campaign for reform under General Wade Hampton.

The Civil War survivor is credited with the organizing of the first Red Shirt Company in Anderson and has been given the honor of conceiving the idea of having mounted companies of men in red shirts to work for a white man's government. He succeeded, for the Red Shirt movement redeemed South Carolina from Negro rule.

As one of the leaders in that campaign, he could have asked for almost any office and been tendered it. But political honors did not appeal to him, and he remained a private citizen the rest of his life. The only position he ever held, outside of a strictly business nature, was purely honorary, when, after the election of Hamp-

Father Of Textile Pioneer Energetic, And Business Man

ton as governor, he was appointed to a place on the governor's staff, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He served in this capacity for a period of four years.

It was on August 6, 1884, that Sitton married Miss Lella Eugenia Aull, daughter of John Aull of Newberry. The couple eventually became the parents of three children — Augustus John Sitton, Jr.; Eugene M. Sitton; and a daughter, Miss Cema Sitton. The eldest died in the year of 1901.

In time Sitton became operator of the oldest cotton factory in Anderson County: Auton. He acquired sole ownership of the firm, known as the Pendleton Manufacturing Company, on October 10, 1899, when with already two-thirds interest, he bought the third interest from Colonel J. W. Norris.

Upon marrying Miss Aull late in life, he combined her name with his, Au-ton, and so christened the place. After this time it was called Auton, and the factories were referred to as Auton Mills.

As one of the best known and most prominent textile men of the state, Sitton, reached the ripe old age of seventy. For some time he was a sufferer from euremic poisoning, and the lingering illness proved fatal to him in March, 1909.

Following his death, the plant passed into the hands of his heirs, E. N. Sitton and Mrs. Cema Sitton Chrietzburg. Thereafter the surviving son managed the historic factory. Finally, about a decade ago, a northern company bought the establishment, which was set into operation in February, 1838, or more than a century in the past. 11

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