

HISTORY OF BRIGHTWATER PROPERTY *(The Family Farm)*

This county, Gwinnett, was established in 1818 from land ceded from the Cherokee and Creek Indians, and a small amount of headright land from Jackson County. The land herein was distributed in 250-acre lots in the 1820 Land Lottery. Brightwater sub-division Webb Ginhouse Road, Gwinnett County, occupies land in two land lots in the Fifth Land District.

Land Lot 22 was originally drawn by Lewis Turner of Jones Co., GA, and Lot 43 was originally drawn by Henry Smith of Twiggs Co., GA. The land lineage cannot be traced beyond the owners in 1871, because all the land records burned in the arson fire that destroyed the Gwinnett County Court House in that year.

Brightwater sub-division covers all of one farm and parts of two other farms in LL 43 and the western part of the sub-division covers part of a farm in LL 22. I will write about the one farm in LL 43, 5th Land District.

It was bought on 31 Dec 1917 by my grandfather, John Tyler Ewing, from James A. Hutchins, who lived two farms west on what is now Dogwood Road. Grandpa finished clearing the land, built a new house, and finished raising his family of nine children here. He subsequently built two other smaller houses for two of his children. These two were later used as tenant houses for sharecroppers. He farmed this land for twenty years. Then on 15 Jul 1937 at age 69, and with failing health, he sold the farm to his oldest son and my father, Thomas Kelly Ewing (aka T. K. or Kelly). Dad changed the farm operation to include a small dairy of 12 to 20 cows.

The farm was largely self-sufficient. The main cash crop was cotton, until Dad brought in the dairy operation. The cotton was planted with single-row planters, and was hand hoed and hand picked, then hauled to the nearest cotton gin for seed separation and baling. We raised all food for the farm animals and ourselves. Other crops were corn, wheat, oats, hay, peas, melons, butter-beans, both Irish and sweet potatoes, sorghum cane, a variety vegetable garden, an apple, peach, pear, cherry and plum orchard, grape and scuppernong vineyards, and some strawberries. The blackberries and huckleberries grew wild. All vegetables and fruits that we did not eat fresh or sell, were canned, dried, preserved, or made into jelly, nothing was left to waste. We raised our own chickens; Sunday dinner was often southern fried chicken and all the fixings. We raised and butchered our own hogs, and smoke/salt cured the meat, and made our own pork sausage. We sometimes butchered a young steer for beef, or bought beef from local farmers. Even before the dairy operation milk cows were kept, so we always had fresh milk and butter. Breakfast was often smoked/salt pork or sausage, eggs, gravy and biscuits, milk and coffee.

And up until the early 1950's, all food was cooked on a woodburning kitchen range/cook-stove, and all heating was either fireplace or woodburning heater. Then our lives changed significantly in the late 1930's, when REA – Rural Electrification

Association - brought us electricity. We had the house wired for one single light with a pull cord in each room and two in the long hall. An electric pump was installed in the well and we had "running water". One faucet in the kitchen, one on the back porch, one in the milk house, and one to water the mules/horses. We had no other indoor plumbing; an outside privy was still the standard. Mom later got an Electric cook-stove, but she never liked it. She said it did not cook as good as her old woodburning cook-stove.

Social activity was basically limited to visiting friends and families, church and school activities. The nearest church, which my family attended was, and is, Friendship Primitive Baptist Church. "Meeting" was held only once a month. Other families in the area attended Mt Zion, Yellow River or Snellville Baptist Churches, and Snellville Methodist Church. Schools up until the 1930's were of the "one room" variety. The nearest was located about two miles west, just beyond Friendship Primitive Baptist Church cemetery. It was named "Fiveforks School"; it had grades 1 through 7, and was situated on a part of the land the new Walgreen's Pharmacy now occupies. In 1923 a Consolidated School was built in Snellville, including Highschool. By about 1940 all the "one room" type schools were closed and all children attended the Consolidated School at Snellville, grades 1-11, which later became grades 1-12.

Shopping was done at General Merchandise stores at Fiveforks and Snellville. For "ready made" clothing and such one had to travel to Gloster or Lawrenceville. Such trips were usually combined with business trips to the County Court House. Before automobiles, a trip to Atlanta was three days by wagon, an all day trip in, one day for business, and an all day trip back. It was not a lot better in the early days of the automobile for the roads were not designed for automobiles. Little speed could be made on such roads; many streams had no bridges so you had to "ford" the stream, if possible. Improvement of the roads and the cars, as well as the introduction of trucks, gradually changed all that to a one-day round trip to Atlanta, including time for business and shopping.

World War II changed this area permanently. People left the farms and went to "public work", i.e., Defense Plants, etc. Young men went into the Armed Forces, and women went to work off the farm. They learned that a regular paycheck was better than waiting for the crops to be sold. They learned about different foods, and to buy it at the stores rather than raising and preserving it yourself. Most farms increased grain and hay production and maybe put in a few beef cattle and reduced labor intensive row-crop farming.

In the 1950's the number of productive farms decreased. Dad sold the family farm in 1954 due to lack of, and cost of, farm labor and became an Insurance Agent. An era of self-sufficient farm families was soon to come to an end in Gwinnett County.

By Thomas H. (Pap) Ewing
(Written for Brightwater Sub-division)
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