

MITCHELL - EARLY HISTORY

Dickens Crossroads was like most other crossroads in **Glascoek County** in the late 1800's. A log cabin nestled back in one corner where the Dickens family lived. On this spot Tim Kitchens later built his home, the house where the Lloyd Hilson family now lives.

it was on the old Indian trail known as "Georgetown Road," **Georgetown** being an old abandoned German settlement on the Ogeechee River past Fords Creek. This property is now owned by Felts Kitchens and is located on what is now known as Shoals Road.

A stagecoach line bringing news from the outside world came by the crossroads. It came from Savannah, through Louisville and on to Milledgeville, the capitals of our state at one time.

Scruggsville was down the road a ways, in the area where Sandy Grove Church is now located. It was named for Dr. Scruggs, the first medical doctor in the community. It had a post office; Sim Hodges was post-master, also a church, a school, and various other buildings.

The Augusta Southern Railway Company came through building a railroad a few hundred yards from Dickens Crossroads, and things were never the same. Circa 1885, the "IRONHORSE" started coming through, going from Augusta to **Tenniville**, and buildings began going up in the area. Some of the early settlers to build were Sim Hodges, Dr. Boze Kitchens, Arthur Kitchens, T. L. Kitchens, Jerry C. Kelly, Charlie Snider and Mrs. Mattie Underwood. This was to about 1900.

Today the old Jerry Kelly House, owned by H. W. Hattaway, is believed to be the oldest house still standing and probably the Arthur Kitchens House, the next oldest. It is now owned by Mr. Kitchens' only grand-child, (Betty Ruth Kitchens).

The post office at **Scruggsville** was moved to be near the railroad and its name changed to Mitchell, for the president of the Railway Company, Mr. Robert Mitchell. This was on February 18, 1887, and now Dickens Crossroads had a new name. Many people had moved in by 1896, so Mitchell was incorporated into a town. The story goes that Mr. Mitchell gave the town a bell, which was used as its first school bell. The school at **Scruggsville** was moved to Mitchell, and a two-room schoolhouse was built. The only church being Methodist was sold to congregation of Negro Baptist; this now Sandy Grove Baptist Church. A new Methodist Church was built in Mitchell in 1886. The Mitchell Baptist Church was built in 1901, Friendship Baptist in 1841, and Mt. Nebo Primitive Baptist in 1886. Griffin Chapel Primitive Baptist was organized in 1915. Prior to this, it had been a Methodist Church and campground. Saint Paul, a Negro Methodist Church, located in Mitchell was built in 1903.

The first Mayor of **Mitchell** was Sim Hodges. Although all are not known, some have been S. Scruggs and Charles Gibson. Later on Cain Johnson, grandfather of Jack Haywood, a local merchant, was mayor. The present mayor is Gus E. Walden.

The first Marshall we're told was Frank Snider --- others have been Sam Walden (father of Gus E. Walden) and Tom Raley (father of Herbert Raley). **Mitchell** has a town policeman who is Otis Williford. The present mayor pro tem is Hubert Pulliam. H. C. Kelly, son of the late Clarence Kelly is the town clerk, and the councilmen are Jack Haywood, J. H. Hutchenson, and J. W. Griswell.

Early merchants were Henry Daniel, Arthur Kitchens, T. L. Kitchens, J. C. Kelly and Sons, Charlie Snider, and Tom (Boss) Scruggs. Mr. Charlie Snider was the first build a brick store in Mitchell; this was also a first for Glascoek County.

Can you imagine hitching posts all over Mitchell? Sounds like a dusty western town doesn't it? The story goes that Saturdays were big days; everyone came to town for their week's supply of groceries and farm supplies; and yes, everyone had to see friends and neighbors and catch up on the news.



Arthur Kitchens operated a general mercantile store from about 1900 to 1904, the first gooseneck soda fountain was also there. It was located in the two-story house where Billy Johnson now lives. Sim Hodges later sold coffins in this same house. Since then this house has been called "The Coffin House."



The first livery stable was run by Sim Hodges. Traveling salesmen coming to Mitchell by train would use Mr. Hodge's mules and horses to travel the area selling their products. J. C. Kelly and Sons later bought out Mr. Hodges and ran the livery stable. The Kelly had a surrey used as a taxi for traveling people. Ernest Snider was the taxi driver. At one time Charlie Snider also had a livery stable and a taxi.

Mr. Henry Lockhart had the first blacksmith shop. It was located right below the old Earl Parrish house, where Joseph Griswell now lives. Here all the horses and mules were sold.

The first hotel was located on the corner where the old standard station stands and was run by Mrs. Alick Kelly, being right across the street from the depot, made it most convenient when strangers were in town. Later Carlos Underwood had a hotel located between the depot (now Jack's Station) and old store buildings now owned by Lloyd Hilson. The first millinery shop run by Mrs. Joe Nunn was on the same street. Here some of the fanciest hats in the county were made.

Some early doctors were Dr. Boze Kitchens, who practiced medicine for fifty-seven years (57), Dr. Scruggs, Dr. Tobe Snider, Dr. Nunn, Dr. Brooks, and Dr. Jones Olipant. Dr. William Kitchens was from Mitchell and went to Thompson. Dr. Tom Kitchens practiced in Mitchell for a while and then moved to Jewell. Dr. Neal Kitchens also from Mitchell was President Roosevelt's doctor when he went to Warm Springs. Dr. Tom Gibson was a dentist and Dr. Charles Gibson, a dentist in Mitchell for years, practiced under him.

The first drug store in Glascock County was located in Mitchell and was operated by Dr. Lewis and Dr. Jones Olipant. It was in the storehouse now owned by Mrs. Nell Raley Marsh and located beside the old J.C. Kelly and Sons Bank.

Mitchell had a "theatre," the old movie house was owned by Dr. Charles Gibson. It is still standing as silent as were the movies of its day. We're told that only Paramount Pictures were shown because they were the best; "The Perils of Pauline" was Paramount, but silent. The old movie house on Kelly Street is now owned by Lloyd Hilson.

The first automobile in Mitchell, an "A.E.M.F." was owned by Clarence and O.L. Kelly, the sons of Jerry C. Kelly. About the same year Dr. Boze Kitchens bought a "Baby Maxwell." Dr. Boze would go see a patient (He had a chauffeur) get in a sand bed and probably have to get out and push before he got back to Mitchell. Jim Nunn, Sr. bought a "Brush Car" which had only one cylinder, later he sold it to Arthur Kitchens who used it to carry the mail when the weather and roads permitted.

Tim L. Kitchens had the first guano mixing plant in Mitchell; the mixing machine was turned by hand and then by a small engine. In 1903, J. c. Kelly and Sons built and operated the largest fertilizer mixing plant in Glascock County. They also owned one of the largest general mercantile stores in the county and furnished many farmers a years run of groceries and farm supplies to be paid back when their crops were gathered.

The first gin, operated by a horse going round and round, was on land now owned by J. M. Nunn. It was straight across from where the Griffin Chapel Road comes into Mitchell-Edgehill Road. J. C. Kelly and Sons later built one operated by steam, then by diesel engine and finally by electricity.

A big farmers warehouse once was in Mitchell. Around 1908 a "farmers Union" convention (same as Farm Bureau) was held with a big barbecue dinner. This is said to have been one of the largest crowds of people ever in Mitchell. (Around 1916 a fire of an undetermined origin destroyed stores owned by Jim Braswell,

John May, Mrs. Joe Nunn's Millinery Shop and a hotel owned by Carlos Underwood.

This was the street from Jack's station up toward the old store houses owned by Lolyd Hilson.

In the early twenties, R. W. Coleman Motor Company sold cars in Mitchell, where the Mitchell Paint and body Shop is now located. He started selling Fords, then Buicks and Chevrolets. He also had a large repair shop. It is told that new cars would come in on the train and some of the men would be paid one dollar to help unload them. At one time there were six trains a day going through Mitchell, two passengers to Tennille and two to Augusta, and a freight going each way.

The community had outgrown the two room schoolhouse and around 1928 a new one was built of brick. It was large with a beautiful auditorium; the town and community were very proud of it. It burned in February, 1931, and another one was built, which was the last schoolhouse in Mitchell. When the school was moved to Gibson, all was torn down but two rooms and a hall, which was left for a community house and a reminder of all the memories of long ago. At one time Mitchell had eleven teachers and an accredited 9th grade school. Around 1911

Mitchell was host to "The County Wide Field Day," a big day for the whole county. The town and school had a baseball team, the first about 1914 was reported as being very good.

The town had two banks in its history. In 1905 The Bank of Mitchell came into being and was run by Tim Kitchens and later by Charles Gibson. It went caput in 1923. The J. C. Kelly and Sons went into the banking business in 1920 and continued until 1954. The old bank still stands next to H. N. Raley's filling station.

In 1903 Sim Hodges retired as postmaster and Terrel Kitchens became postmaster followed by Dr. Charles Gibson, Virgil Snider, Nell Raley Marsh and Lillie K. Raley, the present postmaster. Mrs. Marsh retired in 1970 with 36 years service. Rural carriers have been Arthur Kitchens, Jim Nunn, P.M. Cawley, B.C. Kitchens, Sterling Gibson, John f. Wilcher, Alvin T. Downs, Jr. and Marion L. Snider, the last two being the present carriers. Mr. Gibson was transferred to Mitchell from the Argicola Post Office.

The first post office was in Sim Hodges store, then in a little frame building where Mrs. Nell Marsh's old furniture store is now located. When Nell Marsh became postmaster, it was moved where Cathy's Ceramic Shop is located. The story goes that Dray Bell (Lawrence Bell) who hauled all the freight from the depot years ago around to the stores, moved all the equipment in the old post office to the new location. Long ago Lawrence Bell had an ox and cart and this was known as The Drey Freight Line. Mr. Bell was of the Negro race.

At one time Mitchell had a newspaper, The Mitchell Banner, published by Arthur Kitchens. Mr. Kitchen's pen name was "Abe Dennis." This was in the early 1900's. Mr. Kitchen's later wrote the Mitchell news under the same pen name in the Gibson Record.

Electricity first came to Mitchell in 1926. The records are still intact, showing that Dr. Charles Gibson (Mayor) and Mr. Albert Wilcher (Town Clerk) signed the essential papers that Mitchell might have electric lights fifty years ago this year.

he first pea cannery in the county was in Mitchell from 1930 to 1942, owned by Roy Kelly, son of O.L. Kelly. It employed mostly women; this was probably the first work outside the home for most women other than field work.

The first telephone line in Mitchell was built by Paul Swint of Gibson and R. M. Coleman. Then old fashion telephones were used with a crank to ring the bells. When the line came to Mitchell, lines were also built in other parts of the country side. People wanting telephones built their own lines. Southern Bell came to Mitchell in 1951, and this was a new day in telephones.

The first Coca cola truck, a Model T. Ford stripped down to make a truck, to come to Mitchell was run by R. R. Raley who hauled them from Wrens.

Mitchell has about half the population it did 40 years ago. An eye witness says negroes by the train car-load left Mitchell years ago going north. Also, farmers in the area left the soil and moved to town to work in factories and other places to make better livings for their families.

Written by: Mrs. Margaret J. Wilcher --- 1976

Told by: B. C. Kitchens, Sr.

Additionally: H. N. Raley- John Wilcher, Mrs. Ursy Wilcher, Gus
Walden & Nell Marsh

Note: This history and more can be found at the LDS FHC with the inscription: "Donation by "The Kitchen/Kichen/Kitchens Family Historian - Oregon".