

PEN AND INK PORTRAITS

Short sketches of Prominent Citizens of Hampton County.

EDWARD HARDEN PEEPLES

This eminently successful man was born in two miles of Hampton Court house on the 9th of October 1811. He lost his father when only two years old; and remained at the place of his birth until he was four, when his mother married Capt. Nathan Johnston, and then he removed to Lawtonville, near where he now resides. From eight to fifteen he went to the neighborhood schools, sometimes only three months in the whole year; but in that time was laid the foundation of an education which has continued, through a long life, to improve by observation and a wide experience. Though his father died while he an infant, his stepfather made no difference in the family; and thus he had early training under one who was himself a successful man. His first work was feeding a gin which turned out a light bale of cotton each day, and to reach the gin he had to stand on a stool. Then he began to supervise for his stepfather, who was a planter. At seventeen he left home and commenced life for himself. His first work was cutting out clothing by a chart and teaching the same art to others. The he taught school one year, and at eighteen commenced to merchandise and farm.

He married at nineteen Miss Charlotte Esther Lawton, with whom he lived until death did them part, and the wisdom of that union was amply shown in the unbroken current of happiness and success which followed. Fifteen children were born to them. Six reached their majority and are now living; Capt. W. B. Peeples is the Sheriff of Barnwell County, John W. Peeples a successful merchant and planter, resides in Lawtonville; E. H. Peeples, Jr. superintends his father's business; one daughter is the wife of our honored fellow-citizen, Mr. John Lawton. One is the wife of Mr. Joseph V. Morrison, Jr. and one a resident of Barnwell, is the consort of Mr. John Shorten Oswald. Forty-four grand children and seventeen great grand children are now living.

His inheritance was three slaves, and his first land was bought on credit. Through his whole life he has from time to time merchandised and for two years he superintended for Mr. Brisbane, a large planter; but his real work has been planting. His first large purchase of land was where Capt. Nathan Johnston now resides, which was traded for the place near Lawtonville, where he was reared, his unprecedented success now began. Always a buyer of property, in 1860 he owned 12,000 acres of land and 220 slaves, the result of thirty-two years work. His property at that time was worth at least \$170,000.00. His largest crop of cotton was 325 bales. He always sold corn, and never bought but twent bushles for his consumption. In 1857 he finished and occupied the finest house ever erected in this neighborhood, complete in all its appointments; and costing \$12,000.00. While all this property was being accumulated Mr. Peeples was the leader in all things that could advance the interests of the neighborhood. The first church at Lawtonville, build of split boards, was removed, and the neat building now standing erected in its stead by him and others; and a commodious school house on the same grounds went to show the abiding interests of the subject of this sketch in religious, and education. In his home board could be obtained by anyone who desired to go to school, and thus he accommodated many who have since become prominent and successful men in the State.

The WAR*** in which he served as Captain of the men over fifty and chairman of the soldiers' relief fund, which supplied the wives of the soldiers who were at the front***ended, and left him with his land, a few mules and a debt of \$90,000.00 incurred in the purchase of real estate.

He came home in May 1865 to the ruins of what had been a princely estate. He ploughed the first year; soon paid the whole debt; and owes no man a cent. He has never planted as extensively as before the war; 120 bales of cotton is his largest crop since the freedom of slaves. But the yield per acre has been doubled, though the largest yield to an acre was before the war 1,026 pounds of lint, for which he received a prize cup. This crop was made from land which the previous year only yielded 400 pounds of seed cotton. This year he has made nine bales on a patch of eight acres. His largest average yield of corn was twenty six bushels per acre; and of cotton, five bales per hand.

All through life he has met the losses incident to business-- once seventeen mules and stables by fire. Since 1865 he has had a full share of loss-- store and goods, gin house and barn, but over this was no vain regret; the future always opened up something to urge him and press every energy. Mr. Peeples never cared how high the wages he had to pay if he could only get the equivalent, and never hired a single white man who did not marry before he left.

One might indeed think we were writing about a giant. Mr. Peeples is five feet four inches high, does not weigh 100 pounds, has dark hair and brown eyes. He is content and comfortable with six hours sleep; never gave way to weariness; but was ready to respond to any call at any hour.

He has seen wonderful changes in the country. His first house was of logs, floor of puncheons, clapboard windows and doors-- hung with wooden hinges; and mantel drawn with drawing knife. All houses were of pretty much the same style. Every one spun and wove their own clothes in those days. Sugar and coffee were the only article bought for table use. There was not as much intemperance then as now; much advance has been made in religion and education since that time. But there was not as much trickery and shrewdness then as now. All lived a plain and simple life--content with what they had. In all those years Mr. Peeples felt every wave of progress and was a leader. He attributes his great success to industry and perseverance, and above all, to the goodness and mercy of God, who has been with him all these years; and whom he has tried to serve since his sixteenth year.

Mr. Peeples enjoys life, gives an eye to his business, and is a Senior Deacon and with one exception the oldest member of the Lawtonville Baptist Church. He is never absent on Sunday and at prayer meeting always takes an active part. Age has abated none of his interest in current events. Like Joshus, having been a leader among men, his parting benediction will be; "Take good heed, therefore, unto yourselves, that you love the Lord your God".

Written by Rev. Hamilton Dowling c. 1887/8.