MISSISSIPPI'S FINE SEAPORT.

GIVES THIS COUNTRY MAGNIFICENT HARBOR RIGHT ON GULF OF MEXICO.

With Its Rail Connections, Opens State's Southern Region to Whole World—Its Now Thriving Tributary Territory Described.

Gulfport, Miss., May 5.—This, the first of a series of articles descriptive of the natural resources, economic conditions and industrial progress of the South, and of the opportunities it offers for the investment of capital and the introduction of manufacturing establishments, and to skilled and unskilled labor of every kind, has to do with the hitherto undeveloped Gulf Coast of the great State of Mississippi, and more particularly that portion of it traversed by the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad, a new road which has reclaimed for the world this vast territory, and has rendered available its invaluable forest products.

The region presents the novel and interesting spectacle of civilization doing pioneer work within its older confines; and with the arts of peace instead of by force of arms, as in the past of this country it extended its borders. In place of the crack of the rifle and the shriek of its victim, the sound of the bugle and the war whoop of the savage, are here heard the hum of machinery, the sound of the hammer and the song of contented labor. Instead of the frontier gentry—immortalized by Bret Harte, Mark Twain and others—marching soldiers and swarming naked savages, are here found the best brain and bone and sinew of the older communities and sections of the States, men skilled and experienced in the arts and industries; and, in place of the border tent and shack, the gambling hell and bar, the stately church and public edifice, the modern commercial establishment and cosey home, and, in fact, all the usual accompaniments and evidences of a comparatively advanced civilization.

The unknown is usually the feared and the misrepresented. Ignorance generally peoples an unexplored territory with danger from animal and reptile life, and disease from turgid stream, impenetrable morass and an inhospitable clime. And so Southern Mississippi has long been considered the land of the stagnant lagoon and the home of malaria, fevers, and ague; and to this may be accredited its, until now, isolated state. Whereas, the real causes were that in ante-bellum days it was almost exclusively a cotton growing State, and its slave owning planters had small use for any but the alluvial lands on the great watercourses (more especially the Mississippi) so well adapted to the production of the staple, and of the fertile high lands bordering thereon and almost as suitable, of both of which they owned such vast stretches; that the Maine forests, and those of the Carolinas and Georgia, on the Atlantic Coast, where the thickly settled area of the country then was, amply supplied the latter's needs; that since the war, civilization extending itself toward the setting sun, the great forests of the Northwest supplemented that supply, and that it is only since the latter have been, to a great extent, denuded that its experienced lumbermen have begun to seek a new source elsewhere.

Then their attention was naturally turned to the largest yet undeveloped forest area east of the Mississippi, when a study of the resources and natural conditions of this revealed to them advantages and inducements not to be equalled by any offered in their own section. The long leafed yellow pine timber of the region and the land upon which it stands are infinitely cheaper, and the forest products, such as naval stores, almost equal in value the timber itself, and find ready markets in every part of the world; the climate is propitious, the country is healthy (the isothermal line of Bermuda, the health resort of the world, passes along this coast, and the mortality here is the lowest of any section of the United States, the average death rate of the latter being 15.00, while that of Mississippi is only 12.80), the proportion, if confined to the whites, is probably not more than 10.00, for the death rate among the negroes of the black belt is much the heavier; and, above all, work can be carried on the year round. Again, though the rainfall throughout the region averages 56 to 63 inches per annum, the region's many swift streams drain it well, and, running between high banks, seldom if ever overflow; while, passing over wide (white) sandy beds and through forest shades, they furnish an abundance of pure and cool drinking water. The lands, characterized for centuries as pine "barrens," need only modern methods of farming to make them produce forty bushels of corn or three-fourths of a bale of cotton to the acre, as fine sugar cane as can be grown anywhere, good oats, and, in fact, most of the staple and small grain crops. They are covered with a growth of from one to two feet of grass the year round, and so are excellent for stock and sheep farming. By raising for the early Eastern and Northern markets fruits, berries and vegetables, from $100 to $600 per acre can be netted; for their warm soil (a chocolate, sandy loam, with red clay subsoil, generally) will produce the early crops that bring top prices. And through mixing the top soil and the clay subsoil by deep ploughing, these lands can be easily and pleasantly worked, as they never come up in clods; and, this subsoil holding the moisture, crops do not suffer in times of drouth—the growing season is so long, though, there are two or three chances at a crop, anyway—in fact, two crops of almost anything, and by diversifying, three crops can be gotten out of the land. It may be well to explain here that soil and conditions improve as one proceeds north on the G. and S. I. R. R., and that the better climate along its southern section equalizes advantages; also, that staple crops and small grain are best adapted to the first, and truck farming and fruit growing to the latter—there is no record of the peach crop ever having failed south of Hattiesburg—while for strawberries it is a "world beater."

Is it a wonder, then, that they came?

And they came, bringing with them the arts, the skill and the experience of their older civilization, plenty of American enterprise and grit and ample capital. What they have wrought is briefly told here. The full story of the difficulties they have encountered, the obstacles they have surmounted, the fortunes they have wrung from the wilderness and the benefits they have bestowed upon the world by their courage, their fortitude and their industry, may not be given at length in the limited space that can be accorded them in the columns of a daily newspaper.

The earliest and seemingly the most insurmountable obstacles they encountered were the absence of any outlet to the sea, the great highway of commerce, and the lack of sufficient rail connection with the interior.

SHIP ISLAND HARBOR.

Mississippi, with an eighty mile coast line on the Gulf, had until lately no port; indeed, there was none between New-Orleans and Mobile. About fifteen years ago a great railroad, entering New-Orleans, appointed a commission to examine this coast and determine the possibility of making a port thereon that it could reach from some interior point on its system, and so save the long carriage of exports and imports by way of the Mississippi River. This commission reported adversely, oblivious of the fact that Ship Island has always been recognized as a good anchorage—it was here that Packenham anchored, with his fleet of transports and war vessels, before attacking New-Orleans—and that, in 1846, a proposition was mooted to construct a railroad to one of several points on Mississippi Sound, within striking distance of it. This project came to nothing, on account of the Civil War; and for a long time subsequent economic conditions in the South prevented either its own people or outside enterprise renewing it. Southern Mississippi has, therefore, been left in an undeveloped state—a great deprivation to the country at large, for here are millions of acres of yellow pine, a fruit section that in time will become the California of the South, and the opportunity for truck farms that would speedily rival those of the South Atlantic.

THE PORT.

A region containing so much of promise to the world could not remain indefinitely unexploited by American enterprise, and in 1898 certain Northern interests revived the railroad project, selecting Gulfport as one terminus, the other being the Hattiesburg of that day.

Captain J. T. Jones, a prominent oil well owner and operator of Pennsylvania, a generally well known business man of Buffalo, largely interested also in gold mining out West, and a man of great means, had in the initial stages of the project made certain loans to its promoters; it was not long before they got into financial straits and had to call on him for further aid, the chief cause of their difficulties being insufficient capital—they could not even afford a business building for the road, had no port and, practically, no outlet at Hattiesburg. Things going from bad to worse, Captain Jones decided that he must either make up his mind to charge off his loans to "profit and loss" account or else take charge of the proposition himself. He hesitated long before adopting the latter course, being at the time in very bad health (most men would, under the circumstances, have abandoned the project, but, as he has since said, he "hated to disappoint the people of Mississippi"—indeed, he knew that the project, properly carried out, would result in vast benefit to the country at large—and he had an honorable ambition to leave as a legacy to his family the distinction of having founded one of the important ports and cities of the United States). But, in spite of his condition, he finally determined upon the sacrifice, and by the exercise of almost unparalleled pluck, unbounded energy and intelligent, systematic endeavor, has practically brought the project to a successful issue. No such general description of his herculean task would do justice to the story, however; therefore it is well to go into details:

The coast of Mississippi embraces its three southernmost counties, and is shielded from the fierce Gulf storms by a chain of islands, Chandeleur, Cat, Ship and Horn, the third of these (Ship Island) being slightly crescent shaped, with its convex side to the Gulf, and looking southeast, the quarter from whence come the hurricanes that scour on this coast about once in every seven years. The waters these storms pile up, and the flood tides, sweeping around the island, form eddies which, after digging out its lee, eventually meet and flow, deepening for themselves a channel, shoreward. United States government records prove that this operation has progressed one and a half miles in the last forty years; thus the harbor originally created in the lee of the island would in time become very deep, and, unaided, extend itself quite to the main shore.

To the west of, six miles distant from and five miles nearer the mainland than Ship Island, lies Cat Island; twelve miles long, it covers Bay St. Louis, with its navigable rivers, the Jordan and the Wolf, which pour into the sound a vast volume of water. This water is deflected by Cat Island into the pass between it and Ship Island, and is constantly deepening it. From these explanations the reader can gather that the State of Mississippi would eventually have been furnished by nature with a port; but Captain Jones was not disposed to await the deliberate process; so, having made an exhaustive study of under-water topography and of tidal movements, he devised a plan greatly to accelerate the operation. With Captain Jones, to determine is to act, and he at once set about dredging for an anchorage basin at Gulfport, selecting this point because there are no rivers to interfere, by forming bars, filling up, etc. He planned a basin to cover an area of over eighty acres, and designed to connect, by ship channel, with Ship Island Harbor. The parties first mentioned had sought government aid to accomplish some such purpose, though on a very much smaller scale, and had secured an appropriation of $150,000 for a channel, to be seven miles in length, 300 feet in width on the bottom and 19 feet in depth; but the appropriation, like the work specified, in no way met Captain Jones's views; he thought both utterly inadequate to the needs of the situation. So he proceeded, on his own initiative, to dredge the channel to the same depth as his anchorage basin (not contemplated in the government plan), 24 feet, sloping the sides of the former so as to give a width of 560 feet. For the protection of his basin he built a stout breakwater, and in place of the little trestle erected by the first promoters he constructed a great pier which is one of the wonders of the Gulf coast—in fact, of the world! It extends the entire length of the anchorage basin, and from the shore to its seaward end, is 5,900 feet long and 300 feet wide. It is substantially built of piling, braced laterally with heavy timbers, bound with 2½-inch iron bars, and filled in with sea sand and oyster shells—the best possible concrete bulkheading, though it has to be retabled in position during construction and until the materials amalgamate by heavy planking, clamped to the inner sides of the piles. This pier rises to a height of some eight feet above high water mark, and at its outer end develops into a commodious wharf, upon which is erected a handsome three story building, 110 by 124 feet, with excellent dance floors and theatrical and club accommodations; it extends along the east side of the ship anchorage, and serves as berths for vessels lading and discharging, which work is facilitated by railway tracks its entire length. On its east side is a broad board walk, a magnificent promenade for the guests of the Great Southern Hotel and the townsfolk of Gulfport.

The east being the storm quarter, the pier has been protected on this side by the deposit (for a half mile out) of material taken from the anchorage basin, and by a bulwark of oyster shells; so, even at the highest tides, there is little water on its weather side. The structure is electrically lighted, as is the pavilion; and an electric car line will be shortly installed for the convenience of hotel guests and the general public. Further, the channel has signals the whole way out to Ship Island. It should be added that the service of the electric car line is to be supplemented by naphtha launches, plying between the pier and all the islands, and making pleasure excursions over Mississippi Sound waters generally; and that all the yacht clubs on the Gulf coast are organized into a yachting union, having the pavilion as its headquarters; indeed, this beautiful structure was erected for its use.

The expenditures for the work thus far done have borne out Captain Jones's opinion as to the cost of adequate facilities for the kind of port he contemplated, for they already aggregate $2,000,000. He has furnished five feet more water than is exacted by the government, and a considerably wider channel, and he has in every way greatly enlarged the plan originally contracted for with the United States government.

The anchorage basin is protected on the west and north by piling, on the east by the pier itself, and between the northern piling and the shore there is still some shallow water, which is to be filled in with material yet to be taken from the basin.

During the severe southeast storm of 1901 Captain Jones subjected the work to the keenest and minutest scrutiny, and could not find that it was impaired in the slightest. So anxious was he to find his judgment vindicated that he was out upon the waters, with his sounding rods, before the storm had fairly subsided. To his great satisfaction (but not to his surprise) he discovered that the waste material in the bottom of the channel, instead of having accumulated, had been washed out, and that the latter had actually been deepened. This, more than all other things combined, determined him to prosecute to its final consummation the great work he had planned. Whereupon he made a contract with the National Dredging Company, entailing an expenditure of $835,000, and built, at great cost, two of the most powerful suction dredges in existence, and these have since been constantly employed upon the work.

This storm forcibly demonstrated the correctness of Captain Jones's theory: that these waters, backing up in flood upon the shore, and rising only eighteen inches, are practically currentless; that, ebbing, their flow naturally finds its way out through the greater depressions, and that his channel, being the deepest of these, would practically serve as their main outlet; and, in sweeping out the waste left in the channel by the dredges, it showed plainly, too, what is going on in a lesser degree in all weathers, and satisfied Captain Jones that, so far from there being any danger of the latter filling, and having to be kept open by dredges, nature will prosecute the work he begun.

This work, now nearing completion, will give the Gulf one of the finest ports along the seven thousand miles of Uncle Sam's coast line, a port with a roadstead in which can ride, safe from storm and stress, all of his navies—and just upon the edge of the Gulf, right at the southern boundary of the great Mississippi Valley; a port only seven miles from deep water, as against Mobile's forty-two and New-Orleans's 110.

"Nearing completion," however, applies to the original plan, for it has already been found that, so great is the world's need for such a port, it was a mistake to remain on one pier answering the requirements of the world's commerce; and, therefore, the building of a second is now under serious consideration. The material still to be taken from the anchorage basin will also serve for this. And that there is shipping sufficient to insure the full occupancy of this pier is evidenced by the number of vessels awaiting their turn to be berthed; also, by the vast increase of business in 1904, there having been since the beginning of the year nearly a million feet of pine lumber and timber loaded, for all parts of the world, each working day. This is phenomenal, when it is considered that the first steamship entered this port less than fifteen months ago! So crowded is it at present that one, looking from the window of a passing train, will think he has chanced upon a transplanted section of New-York, Liverpool or London—there are so many big full rigged ships, barks and ocean steamships, all flying foreign flags.

Such, briefly described, is the splendid port given to the great State of Mississippi by the courageous enterprise and Napoleonic genius of one man—Captain J. T. Jones! It will be noticed that he practically reversed his predecessor's process of reasoning, and that he acted upon his own saner conclusions; they thought the railroad the main factor, and the port but an auxiliary; Captain Jones knew the latter to be everything, and that if he could give that to Mississippi and the world railroads enough would soon find their way to it.

THE PORT'S TRIBUTARY TERRITORY.

So, only after he had put the port in commission did he turn his attention to the reconstruction of the road, to its extension through to Jackson—to connect with the great trunk roads to the East, to the North and to the West—and to building branch roads to protect it from paralleling by rivals, and, also, to enable it to tap sixteen thousand square miles of the finest yellow pine timber yet remaining on the American Continent. Getting this under way, he devoted himself to the upbuilding of supply and distribution depots on his road; reversing the old and unwise railroad policy, which was to promote termini at the expense of intermediate territory, he gave most consideration to the latter, extending unstinted aid to all legitimate enterprises offered therein, sure that the port and the said territory would affect the prosperity of the terminal cities. And, in locating these stations, true to his practice of working along the line of least resistance, he, in a great measure, abided natural selection; thus his towns are most effectively placed. His road traverses a territory, the products of which are considerably diversified, and, so, he has sought to give to each locality that most needed, or best adapted. Thus, the country along the northern division of his road producing corn, oats, cotton, sugar cane, the more staple crops, in fact, he has sought to bring there farmers experienced in their culture; and, striking country south of Hattiesburg, best adapted to fruits, berries and vegetables, he endeavored to people it with those trained in these branches of farming. In visiting the towns and stations on this road, one is particularly impressed with the suitableness and effectiveness of their manufactures; these appear to be designed not only to use the products of contiguous territory, but the by-products, and even the waste—so that nothing is lost. Thus, the saw and planing mills have (as adjuncts) turpentine distilleries, to use their waste (there are still others that utilize even the dead wood of the pine forests), this being converted into turpentine, rosin, wood alcohol, tar, creosote, and the very finest charcoal—that seen by the writer being at least 95 per cent pure carbon. It must not be supposed that Captain Jones has yet brought everything into his territory that will utilize all its products; it is merely sought to be shown that he has planned to encompass this eventually.

In the endeavor to describe the several parts of Captain Jones's plan in their proper sequence, it is possible that the idea has been conveyed that the various divisions of his great work were taken up in turn; but such is not the case, for he seems to have successfully attempted to carry all of them forward at once, and not to have waited to let one accomplished task suggest another. In other words, he conceived a beautifully rounded out plan, the efficiency of which time is demonstrating—indeed, events seem invariably to establish its integrity. Like the skilled architect, he laid out a symmetrical scheme; like the good builder, he worked to it; with the result that he has promoted no one town at the expense of another.

CHIEF TOWNS OF SYSTEM.

Of course, advantages of location have caused some towns to forge ahead of others, and, so, to earn the distinction of being "chief towns," like McHenry, on the main line, with its population of twelve hundred souls, its sawmills, its two naval stores, its brickyards, its bank, its number of large stores and its several well stocked ones of less consequence (in substantial brick buildings) and its new hotel now going up, and Wiggins, with its two thousand inhabitants, its great Finkbine Lumber Company, its bank (quartered in its own two story brick building), its canning factory (capacity 15,000 cans a day), its demonstration farm (supervised by the United States government), its four stores with stocks of $20,000 each, and its big naval store plant. The Finkbine plant and the demonstration farm will stand some further description, the one as an important representative of the present chief industry of this region, and the other as the pilot of that which will eventually replace it; together, they show what makes for the present prosperity of this territory, and insures its permanence. The former is turning virgin forests into the coin of the realm; the latter is preparing for the day when these forests have disappeared. The Finkbine Lumber Company, an outgrowth of the Green Bay Lumber Company, of Des Moines, Iowa, has a plant here, the masterly and scientific arrangement of which is a most remarkable feature—gravity so largely economizes the use of power: it represents a cost of about $150,000, turns out 120,000 feet of lumber a day, and carries a stock of about five million feet. (To the above costs must be added that of the railroad, eleven miles long, $49,500; rolling stock, $18,000; cattle, wagon, gears, etc., $7,000; in all, $89,500.) In addition, the company owns about 55,000 acres of timber lands in the immediate neighborhood of the mill, and 38,000 near Jackson. Of its output, car sills (sold to the railroads) are a large part; about 20 per cent is shipped for export, through Gulfport, and the balance is yard stock. This twenty-acre plant does its own electric lighting, has waterworks, pumping stations, standard fire service, etc.; its rough dry shed stores four million feet of lumber, and it pumps its water for its log pond and for mill supplies from a creek one and a quarter miles distant. It houses its 450 employes in 156 neat cottages. Two years ago where the mill now stands was a virgin forest; last March the mill shipped 200 cars of lumber!

These businesslike Northerners, taking time by the forelock, are intelligently seeking to discover the soil values of their ninety-odd thousand acres, which, when cut over, they will sell; last January they started an experimental farm, to determine the crops best adapted to the soils of these lands. Later, Uncle Sam took a hand, furnishing seed, plants and expert management, the company continuing to foot the expense. The farm, 640 acres, is to be put in staple crops, small grain, truck stuffs, potatoes, etc., and is also to be devoted to the raising of food for hogs and cows. It was started on the poorest land, as a test, and is, the government expert thinks, best adapted for trucking. It was also selected because the depth of its surface soil varies considerably. Thus far only about twenty acres are cleared; but ten more will shortly be put in tomatoes, to supply the canning factory, an institution for which the capital stock ($5,000) was subscribed locally—every $100 of stock is backed by an acre of tomatoes!

There are also, among the chief towns of the road, Hattiesburg, fully described later on; Collins, with its two thousand people, its two large saw and planing mills, its two naval store factories, its electric light plant, its waterworks, its new hotel, and its canning factory; Mount Olive, a competitor of Collins in population and enterprise, with its cotton compress, its canning factory, and its water and electric light plants.

Laurel, the terminus of the Laurel branch, will be described more particularly later on; Taylorsville, equidistant from the main line and from Laurel, and perhaps the most important station on this branch, has about twelve hundred population, two sawmills, several naval store factories, brickyards and very important mercantile establishments, and is surrounded by a good farming country and vast quantities of timber.

On the Columbia Branch there are Columbia and Lumberton, described elsewhere.

(While no mention is here made of the smaller towns, they are in a most thriving condition, have one or more industries each, and are rapidly increasing in population.)

A GOOD CLASS OF SETTLERS.

Though some of the towns described are old, they slumbered until awakened by the Gulf and Ship Island Road. The remainder are creations of yesterday; but they must not be considered frontier towns, their people having come from almost every part of the Union, and being generally well informed, thrifty, lawabiding and enterprising. Their society will compare favorably with that of any of the larger towns of the United States, as is evidenced by the many newly erected churches and schools, most of these being far superior to what would be expected in places of their size. One is struck, in passing through these towns, with the appearance of their people; they are generally well dressed, well groomed, and quite up to the fashions of the day; are courteous in their manners, intelligent looking, and bear unmistakable evidence of the healthfulness of the country. It is also very surprising to the visitor to see the character and volume of stocks their stores carry. Strangers invariably express grateful surprise, too, at the kindly and cordial reception they meet with—to a man they testify to the hospitality extended them. And it is the universal testimony that, "here no man need be without employment at remunerative figures," and that "mere lack of means will not prevent his receiving the same treatment accorded the wealthiest."

The country offers splendid opportunities to the young and enterprising, and experienced men of affairs are at a premium. As a resident tersely put it, "All along the line, there is opportunity for a man to make more money, with less capital, than in almost any place in the country." By "all along the line" is meant the counties of Harrison, Perry, Marion, Jones, Simpson, Smith, Lamar, Rankin and Lawrence, more particularly, as the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad traverses these, but the whole of Southern Mississippi, between the Illinois Central and the Mobile and Ohio railroads, is really tributary to the first named.

LAND VALUES.

"Cut over" land within five miles (and along the main line) of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad, is worth $3.50 to $10, according to character and location; along the branches, $3 to $7, and at a greater distance $2.50 to $5 an acre. Long leafed yellow pine timber land (near transportation) is worth about $2.50 to $3 a thousand feet stumpage, which includes timber and land—the average stumpage is about eight thousand feet an acre—and when the timber is cut off, the purchaser will have the most valuable asset left, for the land (with intense farming) may be made to produce $100 to $500 an acre. Cash is not demanded, very favorable terms being usually extended, and, where the parties can assure improvements, they can pay wholly on time.

LABOR AND WAGES.

Wages range from $1 a day for the unskilled to $2.50 (even $4) for journeymen, according to the class of work. Labor, however, especially agricultural, is very scarce. Skilled and unskilled can readily find permanent and remunerative employment at mills and factories. In clearing up the "cut-over" lands, and in the fields. The necessaries of life are exceedingly low; fuel costs next to nothing; the climate is mild and healthful, entailing slight expenditure for clothing, medicines and doctor's bills, and the soil produces a crop of some kind every month in the year (almost any man can get a little patch to work); so wages are relatively higher than elsewhere.

OUTSIDE ENTERPRISES WELCOMED.

All along the system special industries are springing up, capital for them being subscribed locally; indeed, so confident are these people of the future they would subscribe to many more if the cultivation of the surrounding country, now retarded by scarcity of labor, would warrant. It must not be supposed, however, that these people do not welcome outside enterprises, when desirable, and their promoters will contribute money as an evidence of good faith; they will cordially aid even to the extent, in certain instances, of donating sites, and taking considerable stock.

THE CITY OF JACKSON.

Perhaps, before proceeding to describe this territory's feeder, the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad, it will be in order to say something of its northern terminus, Jackson, and of the effect the opening of the road has had on that town. Although the capital of the State and the centre of a good farming district, it made no progress until the road entered it, six years ago. Its population had grown scarcely any since the census of 1880; neither had its business. To-day, it has a $1,000,000 State House that would be considered handsome in any city of the United States, and was paid for without the issuance of a bond, and in the last few years it has expended on public buildings, streets, churches and electric railways over $1,500,000. There is invested in recently acquired manufacturing enterprises probably $2,500,000. The Gulf and Ship Island Railroad, having opened up one of the largest and best supplies of timber in the country, has added largely to Jackson's woodworking enterprises. The city does a wholesale and retail grocery business of over $6,000,000 annually, and its drygoods trade is nearly $14,000,000. It is growing so rapidly rental houses are scarce, although a large area of ground along the electric line has recently been converted into a residence neighborhood. Through the Illinois Central, the Alabama and Vicksburg, the Yazoo and Mississippi Valley and the Gulf and Ship Island railroads, the latter bringing Jackson within 160 miles of Gulfport, it reaches out into the State in seven directions, and, tapping sections producing a great variety of products, promises in a few years to greatly increase in importance.

THE GULF AND SHIP ISLAND RAILROAD.

The G. & S. I. R. R. is single tracked, its main line being 160, its Laurel branch 41, and its Columbia branch 49 miles in length. It is one of the best roads for its age in the country; in fact, it rides as smoothly as many of the old and expensively built roads, having 3,200 heart pine ties to the mile, and having been recently reballasted with a very superior quality of gravel peculiar to this region, and having had the 60-pound rail first used replaced with 75-pound steel its entire length. It has very few (and those short spanned) bridges, most of which are of steel; all will be, as fast as new ones are needed. The right of way is 200 feet, and is being rapidly fenced and brought to standard. All the physical and mechanical requirements for the operation of the road are up to date, and will compare favorably with many of the older and larger systems.

Its more important stations have substantial one story houses architecturally well designed, comfortably proportioned, and arranged for the division of races customary here.

ITS EQUIPMENT.

The rolling stock, like the road, is new, and is kept adequate to both freight and passenger demands; no light task, as these are increasing at a rate an idea of which may be gathered from the fact that the road now operates three passenger trains of three to four coaches, each way, daily, and that it hauls to market, for domestic consumption and export, 1,500,000 to 2,000,000 feet of lumber a day, to say nothing of its large transport of general produce and merchandise. It runs passenger coaches and sleepers—the demands of the Great Southern Hotel's guests, if nothing else, would insure that these be well appointed. There are certain trains that make fast time; but, as Captain Jones is very tender of the country between termini, and has placed the stations only three and a third miles apart, frequent stops prevent most of the trains running on quick schedules.

The railroad shops, machinery and general equipment represent an investment of some $400,000 and are quite modern. Last year, during the car famine, additions were made to these which enabled them to turn out eight complete freight cars a day, until 450 were placed on the road, and also 150 box freight cars, to relieve the great accumulation of business along the G. & S. I. R. R. Even passenger coaches have been built at these shops; all rolling stock, including engines, are there repaired and kept in first class condition. They employ an average of 275 hands, and the plant is being constantly increased in capacity. The immense boiler, fourteen feet in diameter, for the powerful dredge boats built by the road, was, and had to be, as it could not pass the bridges and tunnels, constructed at these shops.

ITS SUPERIOR OFFICE BUILDING.

The general offices are installed in a very handsome brick and stone structure, 60x128 feet, designed especially for them. It has electric service, steam heat, hot and cold water and baths and toilets throughout. The rooms are commodious and well lighted, and it would compare favorably with the buildings of most of the large railroad systems of the country. The local postoffice and the telegraph office are there installed. It is beautifully and conveniently located on Thirteenth-st. and Railroad-ave., just within the grounds of the Great Southern Hotel, unusually elegant surroundings for a building of its character.

RAPID GROWTH OF BUSINESS.

A comparative statement of the mileage owned and operated by the G. & S. I. R. R. for the last three years will prove interesting, as will the figures showing its income for the same period. In 1901 the road operated 248; in 1902 and 1903, 251, and at present, about 270 miles, which include the Silver Creek Branch, begun in 1903, that will unite Mendenhall, on the main line, with Columbia. When this is completed a double track will be built between Mendenhall and Jackson, giving the company two tracks between the latter and Gulfport. These tracks, however, are thirty miles apart, and, consequently, control a larger body of timber than if laid side by side.

The gross earnings of the road in 1901 were $1,090,848 77; in 1902, $1,374,684 22; in 1903, $1,705,047 04. The net incomes as follows: For the first mentioned year, $4,548 70; for the second, $258,858 49, and for the last, $433,717 72, a most remarkable showing. Still, the figures of the first quarter of 1904 promise a much larger ratio of increase. It is not within the scope of this article to give all the items that appear in the railroad's annual statements; but, rather, to present such as will most clearly, to the layman, indicate the rapid growth of the territory through which it passes. Nothing shows this more plainly than the difference between the number of tons of freight originating on the system in 1902, 825,892, and that received from other carriers in the same period, 78,026, and the corresponding figures for 1903, 962,213 and 85,820.

Another interesting feature is the fact that the summer shows very little variation from the other seasons in volume of business. October, November and December, generally thought to be the best months, only surpass the gross earnings, in 1903, of June, July and August, by some $23,000; indeed, throughout the entire year, month by month, the freights vary little in volume, while, curiously enough, the passenger traffic of July is greater than that of any of the other months, though, as with the freight business, there is no very great differences between any of them. The large number of passengers carried one mile would be a matter of surprise to any one who had not travelled the road, which, owing to the short distances between stations, the many accommodation trains and the absence of interurban electric traction, is used, night and day, by the people as a sort of street-car line. It looks very odd to the stranger to see a woman, dressed as for visiting, with a baby in one arm and a toddler by the hand, climb on a railroad train at one station and get off at the next at, say, 10 o'clock at night.

The increase in the carriage of cotton by this road may fairly be considered an index of that in other products. In 1901 it handled 15,000 bales, in 1902, 75,000 bales; in 1903, about 120,000 bales, and is looking for 1904 to prove a record breaker, on account of the high prices of cotton.

THE ROAD'S EFFICIENT STAFF.

While the remarkable progress of this railroad, like that of the port and country of which it is the main artery, is mainly attributable to Captain Jones's foresight and judgment in planning, to his great executive ability and to the fertility of the soil in which he sowed his seed, it is also due in no small degree to the quality he shares with most great soldiers, statesmen, financiers and merchants—that of unerringly selecting as his lieutenants the men best fitted for the tasks imposed upon them. Thus, his aides, all comparatively young men, are fully equipped with the knowledge of, and experience in, their several lines, and are quick, energetic, forceful and enterprising. His first vice-president, Mr. Joseph A. Jones, has had the best of schooling as a man of affairs in his father's many important enterprises; his second vice-president, Mr. Thomas P. Hale, received his in the service of the Great Southern Railway; his consulting engineer, Mr. J. H. Thompson, long chief engineer of the Central Railroad of New-Jersey, has had a world of experience in all branches of railroading, for he has been connected with operating and traffic departments as well; his chief engineer and the majority of that official's associates have also received their training with the Central Railroad of New-Jersey; Messrs. George F. Gardner, general superintendent (formerly with the Lake Erie and Western, the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburg and the Pennsylvania railroads); S. D. Boylston, general freight agent, and Elisha Gee, auditor (formerly with the Seaboard Air Line), are practically railroad men who have gained their experience in the South, and who thoroughly understand the needs of her roads and traffic. That Mr. J. H. Bouslog, his industrial and immigration agent, who gained his experience in the service of some of the larger systems of the Southwest—a territory which, in the last quarter of a century, has offered the best schooling in his department—is remarkably efficient, is shown by the many accessions to the list of industries in this territory since he has been at the helm.

GULFPORT.

The Gulf & Ship Island Railroad's objective, the prospectively great seaport, and present magically growing town of Gulfport, which merits an extended description as the chief factor in the system, and because of its inestimable value to Mississippi, and to the valley States, indeed, to all commercial nations, is located at its junction with the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, sixty-eight miles east of New-Orleans and seventy-two west of Mobile, is equidistant fifteen miles from Bay St. Louis and Biloxi, and only three miles from Mississippi City on the one side and Long Beach on the other, and occupies the highest stretch of shore on Mississippi Sound. This particular part of the coast has, for the past one hundred years, been considered, and used, by residents of New-Orleans, Mobile and other Southern cities as the most salubrious and healthy site for their summer seats. The fact that this is the highest and the most continuous stretch of high land along the entire coast has also made it the permanent residence of at least twenty-five thousand people. This coast is not merely used as a summer resort; for the past fifty years all its available hotels and cottages have been filled in winter with people from farther north—as far north as Dakota and Minnesota. The town is built upon undulating land, about twenty-five feet above Sound waters, and drains well; this is perfected by the grading of the streets and the installation of a partial sewerage system. The town's rapid growth will soon necessitate, however, the introduction of a complete sewerage system, which will be built as soon as the water works, for which bonds are already issued, and pipes nearly all laid, are installed; these are being put in by the town itself, and will cover its plotted area.

ITS BROAD STREETS.

Gulfport streets cross at true right angles, run due east and west, and north and south, except that on the beach which follows the coast line, and range from eighty to one hundred feet in width, contrasting favorably with those of most Southern cities, which are generally quite narrow. As fast as the water and sewer pipes are laid the streets are shaped up, the sidewalks being of artificial stone, and the roadways of shell and gravel, excellent for heavy traffic as well as for light driving; this material is right at hand and costs nothing, except labor.

ITS HANDSOME BUILDINGS.

Dwellings here are very like those usually found in the better suburban neighborhoods of New-York; even the smaller ones make some pretension to architecture. Perhaps, more attention has been paid to ample plazza, or as it is termed down here "gallery," room, than in Northern suburbs. Most houses have large grounds, in which the beautiful Southern shade trees, semi-tropical plants and flowers and the humble products of the kitchen garden are conspicuous.

Gulfport's Court House would do credit to many larger places; it's a massive and highly ornamental structure, of Alabama pressed brick, stone trimmed. It presents a very imposing appearance, and is set in handsome grounds. Bonds have been voted for a public school building to cost $25,000, and to be located in ample grounds. Congress has reported favorably on a bill for the erection in Gulfport of a custom house for the revenue collection service of this entire district, all of which will be moved here from the well established points between Mobile and New-Orleans. It will be a costly and handsome building, of a size to accommodate the future Gulfport, and will probably be located in its business centre, at the corner of Twenty-fifth-ave. and Thirteenth-st., on rising ground. Her church edifices are commodious, well built and nicely furnished, and of proportions to meet the demands of rapidly growing congregations.

Fifteen months ago there was not a brick in Gulfport; now there are many brick commercial structures of very respectable size, including two bank buildings which present no mean claims to architectural beauty; these number twenty-six in all, having twenty-five feet frontage each, average one hundred feet in depth, and are one to three stories in height. There are also a number of one and two story frame buildings of considerable size; they were the pioneers, and are rapidly being replaced, so that now whole blocks present a solid brick front.

AREA AND POPULATION.

The city's original plot embraced an area of about two square miles, but this long since proved inadequate, and has been added to, until now Gulfport stretches over four miles, all of which is rapidly being built on.

Its population, reported by the commercial agencies as 1,000 in January, 1902, was conservatively estimated in the same month of 1904 at 3,000, and is now 6,000, though most real estate men here put it at 7,000; so rapidly is it increasing it is impossible for any one to keep the count.

ITS ACCESSIBILITY.

By water it is within striking distance of all Gulf ports, and its great foreign trade, evidenced by the number of foreign flags flying in the port, includes all maritime nations. Its rail connections have been given.

THE CLIMATE AND WATER.

The minimum temperature is 28°, and the maximum 95° and the average in winter 60°, and in the summer about 85°; but the Gulf breezes prevail throughout the heated portions of the day, beginning usually at 9 a. m. and lasting until about 5 p. m., so the heat is never unbearable, not nearly so great in fact as in countries a thousand miles to the northward. Sunstroke is unknown. The nights are always pleasant, and it is rare that one can sleep without covering.

Water obtained from artesian wells 840 feet deep; it contains a trace of sulphur, magnesia and soda, is very palatable, and exceedingly healthful; among old inhabitants, who have used it for years, a case of kidney affection is almost unknown. It aids digestion, and has restored to health many people from limestone and other regions where stomach and kidney affections prevail. This water, the odor of the resinous pines, and the salubrious Gulf breezes, form nature's trio of healers; in fact, everything that kind mother can offer and man introduce to secure sanitary conditions seems to obtain here.

MUNICIPAL CREDIT AND TAXES.

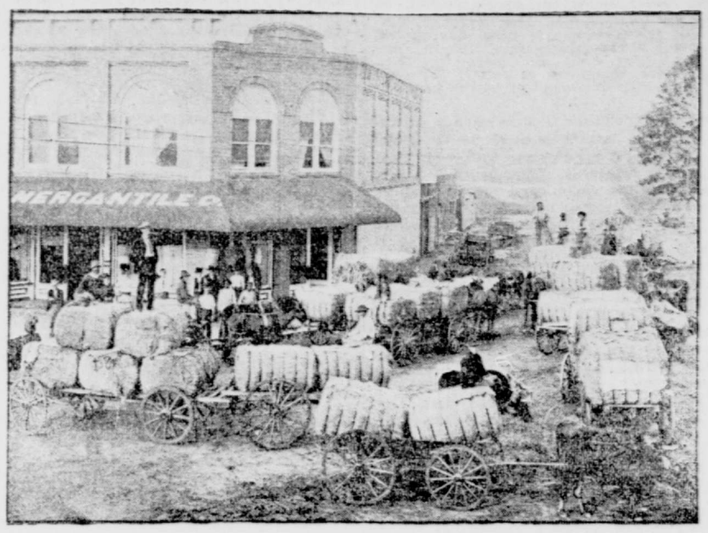
Bonds issued by the ably and honestly administered municipality have invariably sold at a premium, many of them having been taken locally. The ratio of taxation is fourteen mills, but appraisements being exceedingly low, taxes are not burdensome.

BANKING FACILITIES.

Gulfport banks are the First National, capitalized at $250,000, and, though only a little over a year old, having deposits of three quarters of a million dollars and a handsome surplus, and owning the building it occupies, which has considerable pretensions to architectural beauty; and the Bank of Commerce (State), which owns the newly erected block of buildings in which it is installed, at the corner of Fourteenth-st. and Twenty-fifth-ave., is capitalized at $75,000, and has deposits of some $400,000.

COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS.

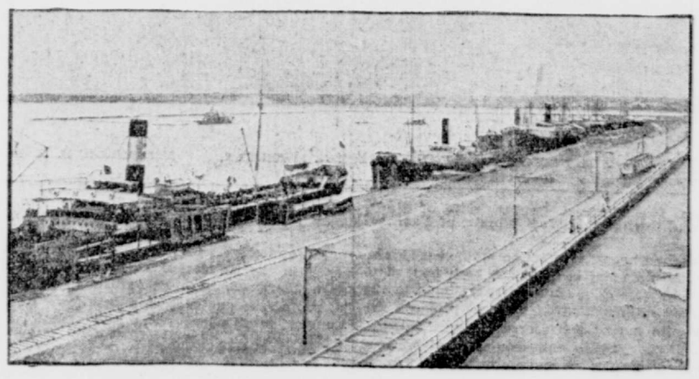
It has five wholesale grocery, produce and commission houses, each 120 by 240 feet, and carrying



MARKETING "WAGON COTTON" IN SOUTH MISSISSIPPI.

SCOOPI. TURPENTINE IN A LONG LEAFED YELLOW PINE FOREST.

CITIZENS' BANK, HATTIESBURG, MISS.



THE GREAT PIER FROM THE SEAWARD END.