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Aurora and the Fertile Section Round About.

ITS DRAINAGE SYSTEM

Rich Farming Lands Reclaimed From the Swamp
Tides to Smile Under Enormous Crops—
An Industrious Intelligent and Progressive People.

(Staff Correspondence.)

Aurora, N. C., Aug. 25.—Aurora, down here is the southeastern part of Beaufort county, is situated in one of the most fertile, attractive and hustling sections of the State. Here are vast sweeps of rich swamp lands that have been thoroughly drained by cutting canals about ten feet wide and four to five feet deep. There are also many ditches through the farms leading into these canals. I never saw a more complete and effective system of drainage. There is much diversity in the soil, here a rich black mold underlain about ten to eighteen inches deep with a clay subsoil, there a gray upper soil also underlain with clay. This is beyond doubt as fine a truck section for all kinds of truck as ever saw. The principal crops for market are Irish potatoes, corn and cotton; but I do not believe there is any section of the State that can grow potatoes, cabbage, peas, beans, cantaloupes, lettuce, asparagus, beans, berries, etc., earlier or in greater abundance for market. I am writing of Richland township and the name is very appropriate. The farms will run from about 200 down to about 20 acres. These swamp lands are at least from 15 to 20 feet above tide water.

It will cost from \$10 to \$12 per acre to clear and ditch them. A fair average of yield of Irish potatoes per acre is from 60 to 70 barrels. A good deal of it will produce from \$5 to 100 barrels. From 10 to 15 barrels of corn is considered an average and from a bale to a half and a half of five hundred pounds of lint cotton, yet much of this land will yield two bales per acre. The farmers know what they have and work the soil for what it is worth. They plant in early spring potatoes, using commercial fertilizers. These are sold from the last week in May to about the second week in June and on the same land with the use of more fertilizer corn is planted. I rode for several miles out in different directions from Aurora and saw fields of from 25 to 50 and more acres of corn not two months old from eight to ten feet high, averaging two full ears to the stalk. This is getting two crops from the same lands with the use of fertilizer, but they got three crops from some of these lands by planting German millet after the first crop of potatoes are dug. The millet is now being cut by mowing machines so as to prepare the land for the fall crop of potatoes. These lands do not need commercial goods to produce cotton. Lime procured by burning oyster shells is used very freely and is about the only fertilizer used for cotton, and the doctors of Aurora say that they are certain that the free use of lime on these lands after being cleared is the prime cause of the healthfulness of this section. One doctor told me that besides a few infants and two old diseased persons, there has not been any deaths in Aurora within the last two years, and he considered this as healthy a section as there is in the State. I see here just as many strong, healthy looking men as in any section of the State, and as healthy and pretty women as are found in any section, and as to culture, refinement, and education, they are equal to any.

The town of Aurora covers about 528 acres. It was first assigned to Levy Tawait, the first clerk of court of Bath county. In 1716 it was granted to Christopher Gales by the Lords Proprietors. He transferred it to Morris Moore, who was in command of the South Carolina troops sent to this section to aid the colonists in the Tuscarora war. The land afterwards passed into the hands of free negroes. It was finally bought under a mortgage by Isaac Respass, who sold it to Rev. W. H. Cunningham, who laid off the town in 1860. In 1840 this land was offered for sale at 10 cents per acre, which was refused. A few years after it sold for 25 cents per acre. Today the uncleared lands outside the corporate limits are worth \$50 per acre, and I am informed that on the west side of South Creek there are no lands for sale. On the east side the Rodman tract of 9,000 acres is being opened up and sold in farms of not less than fifteen acres. Last year some was sold for \$10 per acre, but now it is held at \$22, and for the quality of the land with such a growth of fine swamp timber is cheap at that. In 1896 an uncleared tract of this land of 160 acres sold for \$1,600. Some time last December, or early in January of this year it sold for \$6,000. The rent of this farm will amount to \$50 per acre this year. A few days ago this same farm sold for \$9,600. These lands are fine for grass and clover; therefore cattle raising would be profitable. These people are not corn buyers, but corn sellers, and it is fine firm corn that will bear shipping and keep in any climate. During the last potato season something like sixty thousand barrels of Irish potatoes were shipped from Aurora, and it was done in about two or three weeks.

Aurora has a population of about 500 as clever, law-abiding citizens as are to be found anywhere. There are no saloons here and not likely to be. These are sober, moral people. They will vote soon for an additional tax of thirty cents on the \$100 for a graded school. A petition

has been circulated to get the sentiment of the voters, and out of eighty odd over fifty have pledged themselves to vote for the school, and out of the remainder to be seen there will be at least twenty or more to agree to vote for the school.

Aurora is soon to have a bank of about \$10,000 capital stock. The brick for the building is now on the ground. The town's business consists of about eight general stores, three groceries, two millinery and fancy goods, one real estate and land company, two telephone exchanges, with long distance connections, two churches—Episcopal and Methodist, and two cultivator factories, one of which makes a hame hook, an invention of Mr. F. F. Cherry, a merchant of Aurora. It is a good thing and commands a big sale. A well attended public school has been conducted here for a good many years. The Litchford Hotel is a pleasant place at which to stop and mine-lever hostess, Mrs. M. Litchford, knows well how to make all feel at home who stop at her house.

Mr. J. B. Whitehurst, the efficient agent for the Old Dominion boat line, has a combination saw mill cotton gin barrel factory and grist mill. He ginned 1,263 bales of cotton last season and manufactured 42,000 potatoes barrels. There are two physicians here, Dr. W. T. Staley and Dr. H. M. Bonner.

Aurora is a short distance from the Pamlico River and Sound, abounding in all varieties of fish. The oyster beds begin a distance of about ten miles from the town. Large tracts of swamp timber, such as Juniper, gum, ash, poplar, beech, buckhorn, are to be found from two to six miles from Aurora. So it seems to me any one desiring a place at which to locate furniture factories, or any other industry for which such timber are required, could not do better than to come to Aurora and look around. Here also would be a good place at which to build a cotton seed oil mill and cotton factory.

The one great thing that would do most to push Aurora on to growth and prosperity, and at the same time be profitable to the company is a railroad. I believe I voice the sentiment of nearly every man, woman and child in this community when I say they are deeply interested and willing to do almost anything in reason to aid in getting a road here, especially the Raleigh and Pamlico Road. There was to be a meeting a few days ago of the citizens of the place and surrounding country for the purpose of taking action to confer with Messrs. Turner and Bee, and before closing this letter I will say to these gentlemen, that from what I have seen and heard of this section from Washington to Aurora, and thence on to deep water, I know of no territory in the State to be opened up and developed by railroads that promises richer rewards. The trucking business would very naturally increase enormously; thousands of bales of cotton could be hauled, the fish and oyster business would be carried on here; manufacturers alluded to would be encouraged to locate all along the route, and to sum it all up it is but reasonable to predict that the railroad would make big interest on the capital invested for years to come. So in conclusion I would say to the promoters of the Raleigh and Pamlico Railroad, keep an eye on this section. Come here and investigate for yourselves. You will meet a clever, congenial people, anxious for a railroad.

Meetings at Lakewood Park.

(Special to News and Observer.)

Durham, N. C., August 25.—All this week there will be a series of meetings in progress at Lakewood park. The first service was held tonight, Rev. John T. Edmundson filling the pulpit. Rev. A. D. Hunter will also preach during the week. The two ministers are conducting a series of meetings at Yates' Baptist church, a mile from Lakewood park, preaching morning and evening. The choir of the city are assisting in the song service at the park. On Friday of this week Dr. H. A. Royster, of Raleigh, will be here for the purpose of organizing the Durham County Medical Society. All physicians of the county have been invited to attend the meeting, which will be held in the court house. When organized it will become a branch of the State society.

The Francis Hilliard School

Will open for its twelfth annual session on September fifteenth, 1903. Small classes. Individual care. Fine climate, pure water. Specialties: Voice culture, French, German and English. For catalogue address, MISS MARGARET BURGWIN HILLIARD, Principal, Oxford, N. C.

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