

"A MUD HOLE"

Imagine a scene of unpaved paths called "streets;" a single store next to the railroad; an upright plank shack used for the depot; black smoke rolling over the trees onto freshly washed sheets, carrying with it cinders and smut from the wood and coal fires in the chuffing steam engines; all of this could describe what Flomaton was like in its formative years.

James A. Wilkinson came from Illinois to Evansville, Alabama, a town just north and east of Canoe. Wilkinson was the bookkeeper at the sawmill there until it burned and the owners decided not to rebuild. He eventually came to Flomaton and became one of its doctors. R. W. Brooks worked at the sawmill in Evansville, too, and was well acquainted with Wilkinson.

Brooks decided to move to Bluff Springs and was employed by a mill there. While living there, he became friendly with Brown Bowen and Bob Hardy, two desperados mentioned later on in this book. In his later years he became a prolific historian and writer. He even started a newspaper in Century, called the Century News, in that town's seminal years of the early 1900s.

He began writing a column for The Flomaton Journal and wrote primarily of his own experi-

ences while in this area. In December of 1939, he commented in the Journal on what he recalled from 1872 of the condition of the settlement eventually called Flomaton. This is his writing, just as it was printed in that newspaper:

"I stood on the streets of Flomaton a few days ago and looked at the nice paved streets and fine

sidewalks and splendid brick business buildings, and the fine residences, and as I stood and looked at these improvements, my mind ran back to 1872 when the Pensacola contractor, Major Reuter, drove the last spike on the 9th day of April of that

year, which connected it with the main line of the Mobile & Montgomery Railroad.

"As I thought of these improvements, I marveled at the change and if I was to put down here just how it looked at that time many of the younger generation would think I was overdoing the thing and that the town of Flomaton could never have been that bad looking, but I want to assure the younger generation of Flomaton that it can't be over drawn.

"The south wye was the last to be connected with the main line and an upright plank makeshift of a Depot was placed just about two car lengths [off] the main line and there the freight and tick-

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