

Gin Plant in Year 1904 Gave Nashville A Start

Editor's Note: The following article is being reprinted from the 1956 Centennial Edition of *The Nashville Herald*.

Prior to 1904 Berrien County was sparsely populated, and Nashville was a mere village of probably no more than 100 to 150 souls. It had muddled along since being made the county seat in 1856, with just two or three wooden store buildings. The chief claim to being a town was the fact that it was where court was held.

From around 1870 the main town in the county was Alapaha, a station on the present Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. Most of Nashville's merchandise was hauled by ox-team from Alapaha.

Nashville however took on life and showed signs of growth in 1904 when two men started the first industry to provide employment and to get cotton growing really underway.

They were the late W.P. Tittle and the late C.G. Starling, later joined by the late D.D. Tittle.

The Tittle brothers and Starling were farm boys in the neighborhood of Hutchinson's pond near Cecil, and had operated a small gin. Looking for a better field, W.P. Tittle and C.G. Starling came to Nashville in the fall of 1903, contacting business men and farmers relative to the erection of a modern gin plant.

Previously a small gin had been operated by the late S.T. Tygart, ginning 150 to 200 bales yearly. Starling and Tittle were told that a new plant, modernly equipped, they would possibly get an increase up to around 450 to 500 bales.

Encouraged and believing the field much more lucrative, Tittle and Starling plunged ahead and built a gin plant, the original building still standing.

Surprising to "well wishers" among business men, the new plant in 1904, the first year of operations, ran through the gin over 2,000 bales, and each succeeding year upped the number to a peak of around 5,000 bales yearly, both long and short staple.

The new industry enhanced farming operations, and by providing a new payroll really started Nashville on its way. In fact, Nashville actually began to grow in 1905.

Numerous new brick business buildings appeared on the public square, and new homes began to spring up. In 1908 the main line of the Georgia & Florida railroad was completed, and from then on more stores and homes began to appear. Nashville's peak years of growth was from 1908 to 1912.

The firm was known as W.P. Tittle & Company from 1911 to advent of the boll weevil came along about 1915, when gin operations began to slacken. Old man weevil wrecked the concern, and later the company turned to sawmill operations and farming. It was dissolved around 1925.

W.P. Tittle & Company was Nashville's first automobile agency, handling Maxwell cars. The first gasoline station was operated in connection with a garage.

That's a partial history of one of Nashville's pioneer concerns, the first to provide a payroll of any consequence, proving that industry actually pays a big role in the growth of any community.