

Gorrie Museum Has Relics Of Cotton-Shipping Center

Not quite as old as San Marcos de Apalache but containing an equally interesting history is Apalachicola, portrayed in the recently opened John Gorrie Memorial Museum by the Florida Board of Parks and Historic Memorials.

Located just beyond the mouth of the Flint and Chattahoochee Rivers, Apalachicola became a U.S. possession with the Forbes Purchase of 1803.

Within 20 years, it had established itself firmly as a cotton-producing and cotton-shipping center. It was named Cottontown in 1824 and changed three years later to West Point.

With the improvement of the cotton gin and the growth of the textile industry, the production of cotton soared during the 1830s and the 1840s.

Cotton hooks, an iron hoe, steel yard and weights, beams for weighting tackle, and blocks and tackle all are displayed, showing the equipment needed by the plantation owners.

Others displays, all of which are prepared by the Florida State Museum at Gainesville, include a steamboat loaded with cotton, another loading from a chute and others loading cotton at major ports.

The opening of abundant new cotton lands and the development of the steamboat made Apalachicola the focal shipping point for the Chattahoochee, Flint, Chipola and the Apalachicola River Valleys, as well as for Alabama and Georgia.

New Orleans outranked even New York in the value of her

exports during the 1830s and early 1840s. The rapid development of Apalachicola resulted for the same cotton-based prosperity.

The provincial life of the people is brought out in the museum with the use of many artifacts: a cowhide ladder back chair, crockery and jugs, a candle mold, a candle mold and holder, a candle snuffer, a small, faded hooked rug, a large cotton spinning wheel and pictures of homes in the plantation country.

The town homes took on a more modern flavor: a hanging lamp, an oriental rug and a grandfather clock are objects depicting this type of life.

In 1831, the town took the name it retains today. Only two years later, Dr. John Gorrie settled there and soon began to play an important role in community affairs. He was appointed postmaster in 1834 and elected to city council the following year.

Other civic achievements by Dr. Gorrie included charter membership of the local lodge, fifth owner of the Mansion House and one of the incorporators of the Trinity Church. He was also president of the Branch Bank of Pensacola. He received his medical degree from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the Western District of New York.

His medical prowess is perhaps one of the things which brought him national fame—both as doctor and as inventor.

Dr. Gorrie was treating many yellow fever patients at the time and had the idea that a lower room temperature

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