

## Artesia's Railroad History

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The first bale of cotton to be shipped over the Mobile & Ohio Railroad was grown in Lowndes County by John Martin. Up to the time the Railroad was completed from Mobile to West Point, the farmers shipped their cotton by boat on the Tombigbee River, but sometimes transported it by means of wagons. One day, Mr. Martin was enroute to Mobile with a load of cotton, when he got to Citronelle, Alabama, much to his surprise he found the railroad completed from that town to Mobile with flatcars bringing material for the construction of the road. The cars were returning to Mobile empty, so the engineer jokingly asked Martin if he wanted to ride down to that point. He eagerly accepted the invitation and hurriedly drove the wagon loaded with cotton and the mules on to the flat-car and rode into Mobile.(1)

Artesia, fourteen miles, southwest of Columbus, is located on the main line of the M&O railroad, at the junction of the Montgomery Division, and the Starkville branch.. The town was originally one mile east of Jackson Military Road, on the old Stage Coach line, and was called Farmville.

When Columbus objected to the M. & O coming through the town on account of the "smoke and noises" of the trains, the planters around Artesia gave the "Right of Any" and the main line was built around 1858-59, making Artesia a town of many trains.

The old hotel in Artesia, owned and operated by the Railroad, and managed by Mr. Chidsey, was famed up and down the road for the splendid meals served there, which were "the best the country afforded." Produce from St. Louis (western meats, etc.), and fish of all kinds from Mobile were brought to this point by the M & O, furnishing good "fit for a king." Traveling men from everywhere would make it convenient to stop over at the "Chidsey House" to enjoy splendid meals. It is said that a business man from the East, vacationing at one time in Columbus, would go to Artesia every afternoon just to have a perfect supper at this famous hotel. Over a period of twenty-five years, the railroad operated this hotel, but after a time, the old building burned and the hotel ceased to exist.

(1) Rowland's Heart of the South, P. 560

Information furnished by the Artesia Historical Committee, Mr. Harvey Cook.