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VAN BRUNT'S STORE, IAMONIA, FLORIDA, 1902-1911

by CLIFTON L. PAISLEY*

NOT UNTIL JUST before World War II did Leon become an urban county. Tallahassee always had been the only real town in the county, and for more than a century it had been a fairly small community. The 1940 census showed that for the first time more than half the county's population, 16,240 of the 31,646 persons, lived in Tallahassee. The city's growth since World War II has turned Leon into one of Florida's most urban counties. Before that time it shared with its four neighboring counties-Jackson, Gadsden, Jefferson, and Madison-the characteristics of being rural, agricultural, and, for the most part, black. Even in 1940 Leon was part of the "black belt" of nearly 200 counties extending from Virginia to Texas, with a population of 16,106 blacks and 15,540 whites.¹

At the turn of the twentieth century, Leon County was almost totally rural, agricultural, and Negro; the 1900 census listed 3,886 whites and 15,999 blacks. There were 2,981 persons living in Tallahassee, an increase of forty-seven in ten years, out of a total county population of 19,887. The county seat and state capital shared with several crossroads communities-Miccosukee, Chaires, Woodville, and other smaller ones-the trade of a large rural, and overwhelmingly black, population of farmers.

Iamonia, eighteen miles north of Tallahassee on the Thomasville Road, and a mile south of the Georgia line, was such a crossroads community when R. F. Van Brunt opened his country store there in 1902. At the junction of Thomasville and Meridian roads,² the community took its name from nearby Lake

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1. Arthur F. Raper, *Preface To Peasantry: A Tale of Two Black Belt Counties* (Chapel Hill, 1936), 3-7.
2. Interview with Mrs. Jack Gregory, Quincy, July 5, 1969. Mrs. Gregory, Bessie Van Brunt, was the daughter of R. F. Van Brunt. Meridian Road is not to be confused with the Meridian Road leading northward

Iamonia. Called Hiamonee by the Indians, the lake gained a reputation among early white settlers for being a good place to hunt wood duck.³ John Lee Williams, one of the two commissioners who selected Tallahassee as the site for the territorial capital, reported in 1827 that the lake contained "a great number of fish," a reputation which has continued until recent times.⁴ Between 1902 and -1911, when Van Brunt's store was in operation, the open water portion near the eastern end of the lake was a favorite picnic spot, and every Fourth of July people from Tallahassee and Thomasville flocked to what they called "The Basin."⁵

The area around Lake Iamonia was predominantly agricultural. These rolling uplands were much favored for cotton growing by antebellum planters who used the lake margins to graze cattle. Leon, by 1860, was the largest county in Florida and the most agricultural; its cotton production of 16,686 bales even exceeded that of all but seven Georgia counties. Williams in his 1827 account described the Lake Iamonia area as "generally good land." Some of the county's largest and most prosperous plantations were established there. An 1851 visitor described Robert W. Williams, who was farming on the south shore of the lake, as one of Florida's most scientific planters. In 1860 such big cotton planters as Edward Bradford, with a production of 225 bales, William Lester (300 bales), and Fred-eric R. Cotten (825 bales) had adjoining acreages on the south shore of Lake Iamonia, and Dr. G. W. Holland produced 225 bales on his north shore plantation.⁶

Richard Van Brunt bought some 1,000 acres on the north

from Tallahassee. The road from Iamonia, now called State Highway 12, joins the other Meridian Road in a neighborhood which at one time was called Meridian.

3. Ellen Call Long, *Florida Breezes, or Florida, New and Old* (Jacksonville, 1883; facsimile edition, Gainesville, 1962), 224.
4. John Lee Williams, *A View of West Florida* (Philadelphia, 1827), 25; Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, "Fish and Fishing in Leon and Gadsden Counties, Florida" (Tallahassee, 1955), 7. In 1955 the commission noted that pickerel weighing within a pound of the world's record for rod and reel had been taken from Iamonia's waters although open water covered only 200 of the 5,344 acres. The rest was swampland and shallows clogged with lotus pads.
5. Interview with Mrs. Gregory, July 5, 1969.
6. Clifton Paisley, *From Cotton To Quail: An Agricultural Chronicle of Leon County, Florida, 1860-1967* (Gainesville, 1968), 1-12; Williams, *A View of West Florida*, 25.

side of the lake in 1836 and 1837,⁷ and although much of this acreage subsequently became part of the Holland place, about 300 remained in the Van Brunt family. A son, R. F., was born there in 1862. He worked in a Tallahassee mercantile establishment and then for a time farmed the home place just three miles west of the Iamonia crossroads. Van Brunt rented the building that he used as his store from Dr. W. F. Robertson. Strickland's, another country store, was two miles west on Meridian Road, but there was business enough for two merchants. The Robertson's was one of several old established families that became customers of Van Brunt. Others included Andrew Manning, who lived a few miles south of Dr. Robertson, W. T. Bannerman on the western edge of the lake, and the Cromarties, and Dr. J. A. Anders. These families provided substantial store accounts, but most of the customers were black, who greatly outnumbered the white population in the Iamonia area in 1902.⁸

During its heyday, between 1865 and 1915, the southern country store "was more than a place where merchandise was sold; it was, in fact, a community clearing house."⁹ Van Brunt's store was no exception, and its customers came not only to trade -which might be only for a ten-cent box of snuff-but to socialize and to pass the time of day on the two long benches across its ample porch, bargain for tenant contracts, and collect their mail at the small caged-in postoffice inside the store. The mail rig arrived daily, coming one day from Thomasville and returning the next day from Tallahassee. Since Van Brunt was also Iamonia's postmaster, supervised two farms, and travelled to Thomasville occasionally on a buying trip or to trade cotton, he needed help in the store and he employed a clerk. He had sleeping quarters in a rear room next to a large storage area

7. Leon County Deed Records, Book E, 425, and *passim*.

8. Interview with Mrs. Gregory, July 5, 1969. Although a mere crossroads, the Iamonia community's history goes back to the period prior to the Civil War. Dr. Edward Bradford's daughter, Susan Branch Bradford, entered Iamonia Female Seminary at the age of seven; Strickland's School, near the store of the same name, carried on this educational tradition. See Susan Bradford Eppes, *Through Some Eventful Years* (Macon, Georgia, 1926; facsimile edition, Gainesville, 1968), 43. Mrs. Gregory began her education at Strickland's School.

9. Thomas D. Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows: The Southern Country Store* (Indianapolis, 1944), 11.

where merchandise was kept. A fireplace was the only heating unit for the frame building.¹⁰

A ledger, several daybooks, and a stockbook from the Van Brunt enterprise mirror the life and economic arrangements of the time.¹¹ The entries, many in the storekeeper's own handwriting, showed that the store not only fed and clothed its customers, but it also bought their produce and carried most of them on credit for months at a time. The country around Lake Iamonia was in transition at this time. Before the Civil War it had been a part of Leon County's booming cotton plantation economy, but it had now fallen upon bad times with tenantry and primitive farming methods wearing out the soil, and most of the population had a difficult time making a living. The area was no longer a part of the "Cotton Kingdom" as it had been in the past; it was becoming part of a new domain, the "Quail Kingdom." Wealthy northerners were buying up the old plantations at deflated prices and turning them into large "game plantations" where they could live and hunt during the winter. Quail rather than corn and cotton was becoming the principal crop.¹²

By 1900 Leon's once sizable cotton plantations had been fragmented into 2,428 farms, eighty per cent of them operated by Negroes. Only 452 were operated by full owners and 149 by part owners. Cash tenants worked 1,682 of the farms, and ninety-three were worked on shares. Cotton continued to be the principal cash crop and 24,791 acres were devoted to it, although production was only 6,601 bales. Corn was planted on 44,501 acres, and production, just short of that in 1860, was 411,580

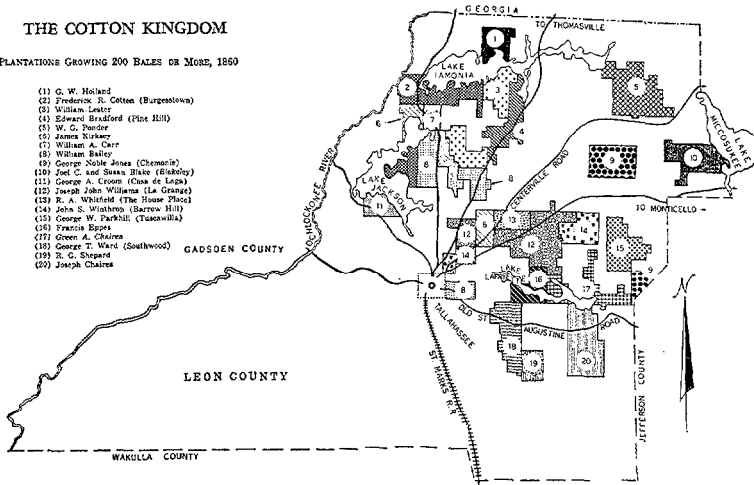
10. Interview with Mrs. Gregory, July 5, 1969. The last to hold the clerk's job, according to her recollection, was Eugene Cromartie. For a time, about 1909-1910, his younger brother, Grady, assisted as clerk and on Saturdays Johnny Green and Andrew Sessions helped wait on the heavy trade. Interview with Grady C. Cromartie, January 23, 1970.

11. A stock book covering the years 1902, 1903, and 1907, a ledger for 1904 and daybooks for part or all of the years 1904, 1905, 1906, 1908, 1909, 1910, and 1911 were recovered at the house of the late Miss Annie Bond in Lloyd, Florida, in April 1969. After finding several in a trash pile at the rear of the house and a few inside the house, the author obtained permission from Mr. and Mrs. Thomas O. Bond to examine them and turn them over to a research library. Dr. and Mrs. William D. Miller, sister and brother-in-law of Mrs. Bond, who were soon to take possession of the house and renovate it for their home, concurred in this disposition of materials, and the Van Brunt store books are now in the Robert Manning Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee.

12. Paisley, *From Cotton to Quail*, 74-97.

THE COTTON KINGDOM
 PLANTATIONS GROWING 200 BALES OR MORE, 1850

- (1) G. W. Holmes
- (2) Frederick E. Cotton (Burgestown)
- (3) William Lester
- (4) Edward Bradford (Pine Hill)
- (5) W. G. Pender
- (6) James Riskey
- (7) William A. Carr
- (8) William Bailey
- (9) George Noble Jones (Cherokee)
- (10) Joel C. and Susan Blake (Blackby)
- (11) George A. Loom (Chas de Inda)
- (12) Joseph John Williams (La Grange)
- (13) R. A. Whitfield (The House Place)
- (14) John S. Vothens (Barrow Hill)
- (15) George W. Parkhill (Tusawilla)
- (16) Francis Rogers
- (17) Green A. Chaires
- (18) George T. Ward (Southwood)
- (19) E. G. Simpson
- (20) Joseph Chaires



From Cotton to Quail: An Agricultural Chronicle of Leon County, Florida, 1860-1967, by Clifton L. Paisley. Reproduced by permission of the University of Florida Press.

bushels. Although Leon was Florida's leading dairy county in 1900, the prevailing agriculture was patchfarming of corn and cotton, and the economic level of most farmers was barely above subsistence.¹³

Entries in the Van Brunt daybooks, reflecting the purchase of many farm implements as the plowing season arrived, show that farm technology had advanced very little if at all since the 1880s when a correspondent of the census bureau reported that bull tongue plows and scooters typically were used to plow Leon County cotton land.¹⁴ It is doubtful, in fact, whether it had improved since antebellum times when, according to one writer, only the less progressive farms in the South used bull tongues, shovels, and scooters for ground-breaking and sweeps for clearing out the weeds between cotton rows.¹⁵ The pages of the Van Brunt books are filled with purchase records of bull tongues, shovels, scooters, and sweeps. One of the more primitive of the turning plows used in Leon County was the "twister," and it is evident from the purchase of both plow "points" and "wings"

13. *Ibid.*, 61, 64-65.

14. *Ibid.*, 34.

15. Lewis C. Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, 2 vols. (Washington, 1933), II, 795-97.

in the early part of the plowing season that this type was favored for ground-breaking. Designed for such use probably was the Avery stock on sale in Van Brunt's store for \$1.25 or \$1.35 in 1909. A better turning plow which was coming to the fore at this time was the Dixie Boy, and the Van Brunt records show that this was the most sophisticated and expensive plow in general demand. The Dixie sold for \$2.50 in the 1906-1909 period, but it increased to \$3.75 in 1910.¹⁶

Frequently it was only plow parts, and particularly the inexpensive plow points or detachable shares, which a farmer needed. January saw the beginning of such purchases. For instance, Jim Fisher on January 16, 1909, bought two single-trees, sixty cents; two pair of plow lines, sixty cents; a wing, twenty-five cents; a bar, ten cents; a point, ten cents; a clevice, ten cents; bolts, five cents; and two collars, \$1.20. Wide shovels and narrower bull tongues were in demand as plow points early in the plowing season along with complete plow stocks. Scooters, which are shorter than the bull tongues and narrower than the shovels, were bought during the cultivating season, along with V-shaped sweeps coming in sizes from a few to more than twenty inches wide. In the late spring of 1909 there was a good demand for "gophers," at thirty, forty, and fifty cents apiece. Purchase of cultivating equipment continued into June, and all through the spring farming season there were sales of many collars, plow lines, clevices, handles, bolts, hames, and backbands.¹⁷

There is no indication anywhere in the accounts that plowing had progressed beyond the one-horse variety in that area. Four scooters for sixty cents and four shovels for \$1.00 were the cash purchases of W. F. Quarterman on February 27, 1904. This was probably one year's needs on a single, small plantation.

16. The store books cited, unless otherwise specified, are the 1904 ledger and the daybooks for the other years. According to John Anderson, eighty-nine year-old Negro farmer and landowner in the Centerville community, and his son, Major, the first turning plow to be used was the twister, followed by the considerably improved Dixie Boy. The Chattanooga was an improved model, and this was followed by the Oliver. The Andersons have two one-horse Olivers and a larger two-horse Oliver, but they still use bull tongues and shovels for some cultivating chores. Interview with John Anderson and his son, Centerville, August 2, 1969.

17. John M. Joyner, who has a store on the Thomasville Road five miles into Georgia, has a museum of old farm implements. In addition to several of the plows mentioned, he has a middle buster, a widely-used plow which he said began to be utilized in this area about 1909.

Napoleon Hester bought a shovel for ninety cents on March 14, 1904; later that month he purchased two plow beams for fifty cents each. Only rarely does one see in the records any reference to a plow-maker whose name would be familiar in the midwest or the plains states. There was an entry, however, on March 22, 1910, for the sale of an Oliver point to G. T. Brown, Sr., for forty cents. A heavy purchase by Clement A. Griscom's Horse-shoe Plantation on the south side of Lake Iamonia on May 3, 1910, included wider than usual sweeps: six twenty-two-inch sweeps for \$4.50; four twenty-inch sweeps for \$2.40; and six sixteen-inch sweeps for \$2.40. Griscom also bought two plow-stocks for \$2.40, lap rings for ten cents, heel pins for twenty cents, and two scooters for thirty cents.

Farmers with no cotton seed to plant bought seed at thirty-five cents a bushel in 1904. George Nix ordered five bushels on April 29, possibly to replant washed-out acreage. On September 26, 1904, Nix received jute bagging and metal ties to bale his cotton, paying ninety cents for a "set of B & T." On October 13 he bought another set, and now the price was \$1.10. The number of B & T's ordered during the late summer and fall indicated the number of bales of a farmer's crop, and for tenants this seldom totaled more than three bales and often it was less. Pleas Blacksher bought three sets for \$3.40 on September 2, 1904. Mats Blacksher one for \$1.25 on October 13, 1904, and another for ninety cents on November 29.

Corn was grown throughout the area, but the amount purchased from Van Brunt's indicated that it was frequently in short supply. The price varied between fifty cents and \$1.00 a bushel in 1904. On June 2, Jim Franklin paid \$7.00 for seven bushels, but on July 15, with the summer crop in, he paid only \$2.40 for five bushels. Meat was in demand also at the store, principally salt pork at ten cents a pound. It is doubtful whether more than a few farmers raised the pork they consumed. Sugar, lard, coffee, syrup, and rice were fast-moving staples in 1905, and the store was doing an increasing business in flour, selling a bag for forty cents and a barrel for \$5.90. Flour was an even more popular item in 1910, in sixty-cent and \$1.20 bags.

If Van Brunt's store fed a considerable number of its customers, it clothed practically all of them. Although the store usually was off-limits for the storekeeper's children, the arrival

of a new shipment of checks, gingham, and bright calicos, following the visit by a drummer, was a moment of enthusiastic interest for the Van Brunt family, which lived next door to the store.¹⁸ It was also an exciting time for customers when the bolts of cloth moved out onto the counters. The colors and designs seen first in the Iamonia store later showed up on backs and heads at church meetings, on the roads, and in the fields. A typical entry is the one for July 21, 1904: Napoleon Hester, merchandise by wife, ten yards of gingham, \$1.00; five yards of duck, thirty cents; spool of cotton thread, five cents; braid, five cents; seventeen yards of lawn, eighty-five cents; three and one half yards of lawn and one bit, forty cents. Lile Aikin on December 24, purchased some cloth for what probably was an ambitious Christmas project: eight yards of worsted for \$1.20 and eight yards of lining for forty cents. Heavy purchases of material were most frequently made in the winter, after the cotton crop was in and when credit was more plentiful.

One's eyes smart at the thought of the long hours of sewing ahead for the womenfolk in the household of Grant Brinson after these purchases on January 25, 1906: thirty-two yards homespun, \$9.02; thirty yards calico, \$3.00; thread, fifteen cents; and twenty yards bed tick, \$2.20. On January 29, 1906, R. E. Atkinson secured ninety-seven yards bleach, \$4.85; three and one half yards damask, \$1.30; twenty yards percale, \$2.50; twelve and one half yards bleach, \$1.00; twenty yards silks, \$2.10; thirteen yards denim, \$1.30; four yards ribbon, sixty cents; thread, twenty-five cents; thimble, five cents; and ribbon, ten cents. A. Hadley on January 10, 1906, ordered sixty yards gingham, \$5.40; twenty-five yards calico, \$1.50; twenty yards calico, \$1.80; twenty-four yards homespun, \$2.40; twenty-three yards calico, \$1.15; five spools thread, twenty-five cents; and needles, five cents.

Many clothing items sold in the store were ready-made. On October 17, 1904, Mats Blacksher bought a pair of shoes for \$1.40, two pair of overalls for \$2.00, and a pair of leggins for seventy-five cents. Hats ranged in price from ten or twenty-five cents to \$1.50. The most expensive clothing item of all in 1904 was a suit, \$6.00, and several were sold around Christmas time. This season of year also saw the sale of several women's skirts: Lula Young paid \$3.00 for one on December 20, 1904; James

18. Interview with Mrs. Gregory, July 5, 1969.

Paisley: Van Brunt's Store, Iamonia, Florida, 1902-1911



A photograph of R. F. Van Brunt taken in the spring of 1910. He is holding his son Richard. (Courtesy of Mrs. Marcia Van Brunt, Tallahassee).



Grady C. Cromartie of Tallahassee who was a clerk in the Van Brunt store around 1908. He stands beside the grave of R. F. Van Brunt on the Van Brunt place. (January 1970).



"Strickland School," the one-room, one-teacher school for the Iamonia community. The teacher, Mrs. Louise Strickland, presides at a picnic for patrons on the last day the school was in session, May 1950. It had only seven pupils when it closed.

McCoy bought three skirts for \$7.00 on November 22, but later returned one, receiving \$2.35 credit. Shoes were available at from \$1.25 to \$3.50 a pair in 1904. The store owner's son later recalled the heavy sale of shoes, generally when the crops were in and the accounts paid: "After the settlement, the farmer usually bought such items as a pair of yellow shoes and clothes for his kids. The end of the day was spent satisfying the inner man with sardines, crackers, and cheese. He departed for home on his bare feet with his shoes tucked securely under his arm."¹⁹ The stock book records 164 pairs of shoes available for sale in 1902.

In 1905 a pair of stockings could be bought for ten or twenty-five cents; an undervest cost ten cents but an osnaburg vest sold for fifty cents; a pair of drawers was fifty cents, and a jacket cost the same. A pair of pants sold for \$1.50, and suspenders twenty-five cents. Most frequently the customers, both black and white, divided their purchases between cloth and ready-made clothing. The store had increased its variety of yard goods by 1909, as indicated by the following sales: six yards lining, sixty cents; six yards bleach, thirty cents; three yards denim, forty cents; sixty yards homespun, \$4.80; three yards duck, seventy-five cents; three yards percale, forty-five cents; eighteen yards bed tick, \$2.70; five yards table cloth, \$2.50; four yards gingham, thirty-two cents; twelve yards satin, \$1.80; twenty yards silk, \$5.00; eight yards Indian head, \$1.20; five yards lawn, seventy-five cents; twenty-four yards chambray, \$2.40; five yards linen, seventy-five cents; sixteen yards calico, \$1.28; three yards muslin, thirty-eight cents; and seventeen yards organdy, \$2.15.

The store did a brisk business in such "luxury" items as candy, cigars, cheroots, plugs of tobacco, and snuff. Ten cents

19. Letter from Major General Rinaldo Van Brunt to author, June 5, 1969. Educated at West Point, Van Brunt was chief of staff of the Eighty-third Infantry Division in 1942-1943, the Twenty-first Corps in 1944-1945, and the First Corps in Korea in 1950-1951. He was deputy commanding general of the Second Army when he retired from the military in 1962 and became director of civil defense for Maryland. When queried about his father's store, Van Brunt referred the author to his older sister, Mrs. Gregory, who, he said, remembered much more about it. General Van Brunt and Mrs. Gregory are the son and daughter of Van Brunt by his first wife, Annie May Anders, whom he married in 1892. She died shortly before he opened the store, and in 1905, he married Kate Bond. One child of this second marriage survives, Dr. William O. Van Brunt, a dentist at Clearwater.

was, the price of a sack of tobacco in 1905, a pound cost forty cents and a pipe twenty-five cents. Rare sales during 1910 were an entire box of cheroots for \$3.85 and a box of candy for \$4.25. Soda water was available in several flavors-strawberry, lemon, ginger ale. It was cooled with ice brought in from Thomasville which was kept in an icebox; sawdust was packed around the ice to keep it from melting too rapidly.²⁰ The store stayed open even on holidays like the Fourth of July and Christmas when candy sales were heavier than usual. Oranges and nuts occasionally were sold at Christmas time. Some of the heaviest trading occurred on May 20, a day celebrated by Negroes throughout the area as Emancipation Day.²¹ On May 20, 1909, forty-seven customers passed through the Van Brunt store, four of them purchasing a crate of soda water costing \$2.60, and one buying twenty pounds of candy-confections which likely were destined for an Emancipation Day picnic.

Guns and ammunition were also very much in demand. In 1904 a shotgun-probably a breach-loading, single barrel gun-could be purchased for \$4.00, and a box of shells for forty-five cents. Few male customers failed to buy at least one box of shells sometime during the year. Occasionally a box of cartridges sold for eighty-five cents. The first chill of autumn brought a heavy business in guns and ammunition. Around Thanksgiving Day, 1904, Elias Brinson was in the store twice to purchase three boxes of shells. The only purchase made by James McCoy on October 31, besides shells, was a box of snuff for ten cents. William Pappy bought a gun and shells for \$4.15 on September 22, and Norman Garland a gun for \$4.00 on November 19. Jerry Nash secured ten boxes of shells and three boxes of cartridges between March 6 and December 31, 1904, although his total purchases in the store amounted to only \$15.39. Leggins, evidently used in hunting, sold heavily for seventy-five cents a pair in the fall.

Excellent hunting and fishing and the winter climate had

20. Letter, Mrs. Gregory to author, July 10, 1969.

21. Paisley, *From Cotton to Quail*, 29-30. Florida was formally surrendered to Federal troops on May 20, 1865. Even in recent times it has sometimes been observed as a holiday. In former times farming operations came to a halt and big picnics were held at the churches, one of the largest being at Hickory Hill Church near the Beadel plantation entrance. Interview with Grady C. Cromartie, January 23, 1970.

begun to attract wealthy northerners to the Lake Iamonia area who were buying up the old cotton lands about the time that Van Brunt opened his store. Thomasville, Georgia, a winter resort during the 1870s and 1880s and the terminus of a rail system connecting with the northeast and midwest, became the hub of a complex of game plantations which eventually covered large areas of Thomas and Grady counties, Georgia, and Leon and Jefferson counties, Florida. Edward Beadel, a New York architect, was the first game plantation owner to enter Leon County by way of Thomasville. In 1895 he bought 2,200 acres on the north shore of Lake Iamonia, much of it part of the old Holland place, and named it Tall Timbers Plantation.²² For several years before opening his store, Van Brunt had taken care of Tall Timbers Plantation, which adjoined his own farm on the west, for Beadel, who ordinarily spent only about three months each winter in Leon County. Beadel had an account at the store, and his purchases there reflect the economic impact of the quail-hunting newcomers. Beadel bought farm supplies and substantial amounts of building supplies at the store, hired labor for special jobs on the plantation through the store account, and made a variety of other purchases. Entries in the daybook for November 20, 1905, and afterward, showed weekly purchases of gasoline-frequently in five-gallon lots at twenty-five cents a gallon-a commodity so unfamiliar that it was misspelled "gassolin."²³ In December 1905, the daybook shows a debit for Beadel for eighty-eight chickens, \$17.60; ten turkeys, \$14.25; and "charity," \$39.00.

Another of the game planters who made sizable purchases at the Van Brunt store was Clement A. Griscom of Philadelphia, who, in 1901, began consolidating the cottonlands along the south shore of Lake Iamonia into Horseshoe Plantation, which eventually covered 10,000 acres.²⁴ Typical of Griscom's purchases were the ones on January 21, 1910: seven chickens, \$1.00; three hens, ninety cents; twenty-three dozen eggs, \$5.75; and two turkeys, \$2.00. Still another large customer was Sydney E.

22. *Ibid.*, 77-79.

23. Mrs. Gregory does not recall sales of gasoline at the store nor does she recall Beadel having an automobile. She remembers that he traveled in a buggy and that the Beadel buggies could be identified by their yellow wheels.

24. Paisley, *From Cotton to Quail*, 79-80.

Hutchinson, also of Philadelphia. In 1910 he began a series of land purchases around Foshalee Slough, which became Foshalee Plantation.²⁵ He was trading at the Van Brunt store as early as 1909, when he twice ordered 100 pounds of beef, costing \$6.50. In 1911 he made a series of purchases for a house he was constructing, buying \$46.35 worth of shingles and paying \$9.90 to haul the shingles on October 3. In November he ordered \$47.70 in labor on the house, and purchased \$54.86 worth of lumber. Accounts such as Beadel's, Griscom's and Hutchinson's were welcome at the Van Brunt store, which did largely a credit business, because a purchase was usually followed shortly by a check or by a cash payment. On some occasions Van Brunt also got the county's business. In December 1909, and January 1910, for instance, he sold corn to Leon County in quantities of seventy-five, 160, 165, and 100 bushels at fifty cents a bushel.

Among the items in the store in the winter of 1905-1906 were lanterns at sixty cents each; lantern chimneys, fifteen cents; axes, seventy-five cents; axe handles, twenty-five cents; whips, twenty-five cents; and locks, dippers, and pitchforks, fifty cents a piece. A tooth brush cost ten cents, a slate, ten cents, and a pencil, five cents. "K-oil" always was in stock, usually for twenty cents a gallon. Several umbrellas sold at seventy-five cents and \$1.25 a piece in 1910, and in 1911, shoe polish and talcum powder were available for ten cents each. The store did a fairly good business in saddles in 1911; one sold for \$7.00, another for \$7.50, and a third for \$12.00. A cook stove cost \$15.00. When Van Brunt did not have an item in stock, he tried to secure it from Thomasville, or he attempted to order it elsewhere. An entry for January 11, 1909, reads: "Order Handy Walker an accordion, price \$2.63." He sold a wagon to Jim Fisbee for \$58.00 on September 4, 1911, and another to Jim Blair for \$63.00 on September 25. On November 2, 1904, he sold a buggy to Henry Hancock for \$30.00, and on October 3, 1905, Ben Davis purchased a coffin for \$12.50.

Medicine was a luxury nearly everyone tried to afford if he had the "misery," and Van Brunt sold a lot of it. Among the medical items available for sale in 1904 were liver regulators, "666," eye water, "Black Draught," cough syrup, paregoric, and

25. *Ibid.*, 83.

liniment. The price was usually twenty-five cents a bottle for each. Liniment was particularly in demand during the cotton chopping and picking seasons. The store sold some laudanum but apparently only in small quantities and not very often. Calomel and quinine were available in ten cent bottles in 1905, and so was sulphur. Turpentine was another remedy frequently sold. Something called "hot tonic" was available at fifty cents. In 1910 something identified only as "medicine" on the day-book sold at \$1.00 a bottle, and some customers ordered two bottles.

A few customers paid by cash or check through the year, but most of the business was on credit and accounts were usually not cleared until the close of the year. A little cash was sometimes paid during the year, or labor or produce were exchanged for merchandise. Everyone was expected to settle up by the end of the year, however, and sometimes there was an entry for interest on a delinquent account. Hamp Shatton made his first 1904 purchase on April 30, and was billed \$9.73 for an unpaid account brought over from 1903 along with eighty cents in interest. Mathis Hardy was charged thirty cents interest on April 1, 1904, on \$3.98 in merchandise purchased the previous year. Entries in the 1908 daybook show that on some occasions Van Brunt entered justice of the peace court to attach the property of a delinquent customer.

Small debts carried over into the new year were sometimes paid off with labor. Thus, on January 4, 1905, Sam Young worked out eighty cents of Mary Young's debt, leaving sixty-five cents unpaid; on January 18, 1905, Nancy Hester settled her account with seventy-five cents worth of labor. Some customers earned varying amounts which were credited on their accounts by hauling cotton to market in Thomasville. Henderson Jones earned \$4.24 for hauling on December 8, 1904, and Frank Bryant \$5.40 on December 7. Other customers paid their bills with produce, supplying a few bushels of corn or oats, eggs, a few hundred pounds of hay, or some bundles of fodder. In one instance, three ducks were credited. Baskets, apparently made by some customers, were sold to the store at twenty-five cents each and were resold probably to hold cotton. The universal commodity which was used to settle accounts, however, was cotton, and cotton ginning time saw the yard around Van

Brunt's store fill up with bales of cotton, which then were hauled off to Thomasville, Cairo, or Metcalf, Georgia. Three or four wagonloads were shipped at one time, and usually the store-keeper himself went along in his buggy.²⁶

One of the larger cotton growers among Van Brunt's customers was Charlie Ford, who often was the first one in the store in January to buy farm equipment for the year. On January 7, 1909, he ordered a pair of plow handles, one beam, four bolts, two cleavices, and two curry combs. On March 24 he secured two plow points; two days later he got two hoes; and the following day a shovel. Ford also had to buy five sets of bagging and ties for a total of \$4.25, but he was able to bring in \$142.40 worth of cotton. He ended the year in a very healthy condition so far as his Van Brunt account was concerned; he had purchased \$54.30 in merchandise and he had earned \$45.85 by hauling cotton for the store. Ford was in the store again on January 8, 1910, to buy better plowing equipment: a Dixie plow for \$3.75; two singletrees, seventy cents; three pair lines, \$1.05; two plow points, twenty cents; lap links, ten cents; a back band, thirty-five cents; three pads, \$1.35; a pair of hames, seventy-five cents; and a pair of traces, seventy-five cents. He returned the next day for a sixty-cent collar, a ten-cent bit, and a twenty-cent curry comb. Few were able to match Ford in cotton growing or in his favorable store balance. The account of Randal Hayes in 1909 shows only \$48.00 worth of cotton brought in, and that of Byrd Isham none at all, although the latter paid some cash at the year's end, indicating that he may have marketed his crop elsewhere. His store account showed \$35.60 for purchases of corn at scarcity prices during the year. Van Brunt did a land office business in bagging and ties during the late summer and fall of 1911, and he took in a record amount of cotton, just over 100 bales valued at \$3,804.56.²⁷ In that year he offered six cents a pound for cotton seed and secured large quantities of this also. He paid several of his customers to haul the seed and cotton to Thomasville.

Van Brunt's cotton business had become so large by this time that he decided to close down the Iamonia store and open one at Miccosukee in the northeastern part of the county. The

26. Interview with Mrs. Gregory, July 5, 1969.

27. Computation from the 1911 daybook.

latter community had the advantage of being on the Florida Central Railroad, the newly-built rail line, which connected a considerable farming territory in eastern Leon County, along with the communities of Capitola and Miccosukee, with Thomasville. Van Brunt could ship his cotton from Miccosukee instead of hauling it as he had been forced to do from Iamonia. For some time he had advocated construction of a line through the central part of Leon County, including Iamonia, to connect with Thomasville. This idea, the dream of Tallahasseeans since the 1870s, had never materialized. The Florida Central even for a time had passenger service, and travelers could board a coach at Miccosukee, transfer to the Seaboard Airline at Capitola, and travel on to Tallahassee.²⁸

Van Brunt opened his new store at Miccosukee in January 1912. Although he continued to trade in cotton, this commodity was on a decline in Leon County. Production in 1900 was 6,440 bales; by 1915, it was an estimated 3,600 bales; and in July 1916, with the boll weevil on the scene in Leon County, production declined still further. The acreage around Miccosukee shortly followed the same path as the land around Iamonia, moving into big game plantations. Governor Walter E. Edge of New Jersey began his purchases in the area, and in 1913 Lewis S. Thompson of Red Bank, New Jersey, began the development of Sunny Hill Plantation which covered about 20,000 acres. A dozen game plantations eventually embraced about 100,000 acres of Leon County, and raising quail for winter hunts became the most important agricultural enterprise of the area.²⁹ R. F. Van Brunt did not live to see all of this, however. He died on December 29, 1914, and was buried in the family cemetery on the Van Brunt place.³⁰

28. Interview with Mrs. Gregory, July 5, 1969.

29. Paisley, *From Cotton to Quail*, 38, 83, 87-88.

30. Interview with Mrs. Gregory, July 5, 1969. There is still a large rural population in the county and there are still many country stores. The Van Brunt building at Iamonia continued to be used as a store for some years, but it has since been demolished. Across the road from the site, on the north side of Highway 12, are three business enterprises including a store. One of the largest country stores is Bradley's at Moccasin Gap a few miles west of Miccosukee. According to L. E. Bradley, Sr., the proprietor, it has operated since the 1920s and presently (1970) does an annual business of around \$100,000. Bradley says he cashes several thousand dollars in relief checks - the present-day counterpart of cotton bales - every month.