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## THE STORY OF OLD PATTONIA

LOIS FITZHUGH FOSTER BLOUNT

The day was unseasonably warm, with a south wind blowing—that Friday, the second day of February of 1844, when Robert S. Patton's staunch new pole boat, the *Thomas J. Rusk*, left her anchorage at Pattonia on the Angelina River about twelve miles from the town of Nacogdoches. She was loaded with cotton and bound for Sabine Pass.

"It is a beginning," Adolphus Sterne noted in his diary that night, "it will shortly be Small Steam Boats to take cotton to the mouth of the Sabine."<sup>1</sup>

On this, the first recorded voyage of a keelboat down the Angelina River, the *Thomas J. Rusk* was not heavily loaded, having only one hundred and ninety-two bales of cotton on board. Her owners were Robert S. Patton and Company. After months spent in clearing out the Angelina River, Robert Patton had built her for navigation of that stream. Her master was Captain Moses L. Patton.<sup>2</sup> No description, no picture of her has yet been found. She must have been a fine boat of her class since she drew considerable attention in the Texas press of that day. Her burden is now unknown. Estimated, however, by the number of bales of cotton she carried, her burden would have been 45 or 50 tons, placing her among the smaller keelboats commonly in use on the rivers of western North America.<sup>3</sup> Little Susan Ella Day, who lived at Pattonia with her grandfather Moses L. Patton, retained a vivid memory, not of the *Thomas J. Rusk*, certainly, nor of any one particular boat, but of the huge, black Negro slaves walking the cleated footways as they poled the boats upstream or rolling bales of cotton down a ramp to load the boats waiting at the landing.<sup>4</sup>

The first voyage of the *Thomas J. Rusk* was a success, and made in record time. She returned to Pattonia on the twenty-sixth of that same month with a cargo of sugar, flour and molasses, salt, iron, nails, and castings, domestic, calicoes, and ready-made clothing, shoes and hats, and tin ware. A "new establishment" was then opened at Pattonia, the mercantile house of R. S. Patton and Company, which offered for sale for cash or cotton, a general assortment of merchandise just received by the pole boat *Thomas J. Rusk*.<sup>5</sup>

"Good!" commented Squire Sterne.<sup>6</sup>

The boat cleared again from Pattonia on Sunday the twenty-first of April, with a flatboat in company, taking altogether four hundred bales of cotton. Keelboats soon became an accustomed sight upon the Angelina during those seasons when the water ran high. Flatboats continued to be used then and throughout the whole period of navigation of the river. The *Thomas J. Rusk* was in operation for several years, furnishing, in season, a regular system of transportation to Sabine Pass. A few years later, Squire Sterne proudly

recorded in his diary the fact that his son Charles had brought up a keelboat from Town Bluff in eleven days.<sup>7</sup>

The men back of this early venture in navigation of the Angelina were Robert S. Patton and his brother Moses L. Patton. Born in Georgia, their home was in Twiggs County, not far from Macon. Reaching manhood when the "river fever was running high" in that State they had gained experience in navigating the Ocmulgee River from Macon to Darien. Robert S. Patton was part owner of the *American Eagle* and the *Macon Packet*, and had a warehouse and a commission business in Darien. His skill as a river boat captain is attested by an item in the *Macon Telegraph*, July 11, 1829, stating that "the *Ariel*, Captain Patton, made her passage down from Macon to Darien in five days, spent three unloading and taking in freight, and made her passage up in fifteen days, in all twenty-three days since she left Macon—the quickest passage ever made on this river. She carried a full freight each way."<sup>8</sup>

Moses L. Patton stated that he arrived in Texas on April 22, 1835, and that he "landed" in Nacogdoches on May first. He and his brother Robert S. Patton, together with four other emigrants from Georgia, received their entrance certificates in Nacogdoches the following day.<sup>9</sup>

Soon after the Texas Revolution, possibly as early as 1837, Moses L. Patton engaged in shipping with flatboats on the Angelina. According to a family tradition it was he who took the first flatboat down the Angelina, carrying cotton, beef, hides and wool to Sabine Pass, and returned with merchandise for his store. Whether or not this tradition be accurate, certainly it is a fact that both Moses L. and Robert S. Patton had made themselves thoroughly familiar with that stream before their venture with the new keelboat, the *Thomas J. Rusk*.<sup>10</sup>

Although Moses L. and Robert S. Patton were the pioneers in developing river traffic as an outlet for the trade of Nacogdoches and other counties on the Angelina River, there was at the time a very general desire among the citizens of eastern Texas to promote the trade and commerce of their new republic. They believed that the main rivers of East Texas were or could easily be rendered navigable. It was their dream that those streams might carry the products and trade of the country for as many as nine months in the year.

The First Congress of the Republic of Texas undertook to offer some encouragement to the development of navigation of the rivers. Since funds or resources to make appropriations for the work were lacking, an act was passed on December 9, 1837, which authorized the county courts of Nacogdoches, Angelina, San Augustine and other counties contiguous to and adjoining the Attoyac, Angelina, and Neches rivers to provide for clearing out those streams, and rendering them navigable. The courts were given authority to appoint three commissioners to examine the streams and give an estimate of the expenses necessary to render them navigable; to assess and collect a tax, which was not to exceed two cents per acre, upon the lands along the streams; and to hire hands and appoint one overseer in each county to superintend the work.<sup>11</sup>

If any such action was taken in the Nacogdoches County Commissioners Court, no record of it can be found. Adolphus Sterne, a member of the Court, took a personal interest. In 1839 he wrote in his diary, "The Angelina could be made navigable." He, Charles Chevaillier, John M. Dor, and others laid out the Town of Travis on the Angelina above the mouth of the Carrisso, with the expectation that it would become a river port.<sup>12</sup>

The first action taken to clear the river was that of Robert S. Patton. In late December of 1840, he came up to Nacogdoches with the intention of getting subscribers to clear the Angelina for keelboats by the next season. A large meeting of citizens was held on Monday, January 11, 1841. John Hyde, Sr., was chosen chairman and Sterne was appointed secretary. Patton submitted a proposal to clear out the Angelina from Travis to Sabine Bay for \$10,000. General Thomas J. Rusk addressed the meeting in an eloquent and forceful manner, pointing out the advantages that would arise from the opening of that river to navigation. Near \$3,400 was subscribed.<sup>13</sup>

Patton continued to work with great energy and success, raising funds by private subscription, and clearing out the stream. The *Journal and Advertiser*, a San Augustine paper, observed on January 28, 1841, "Nacogdoches will be a seaport town, nearly, that is, if they have the Angelina cleared out this summer, which they are sure to do—navigation will be at their door."<sup>14</sup>

It was a long, hard job that could not be accomplished in one season or even in one year. On August 9, 1842, Adolphus Sterne recorded the progress made.

"Patton has succeeded in clearing the Angelina from a point twelve miles from here to the mouth of Irish Bayou, this will bring navigation only twelve miles from Town—above the mouth of the Carrisso is situated the Town of Travis . . . who knows but that it may become a valuable speculation, after having been laughed at by everybody."<sup>15</sup>

It was Pattonia, however, not Travis, that developed into a river port for the county. Known first as Patton's Landing from the fact that it was the site where Robert S. Patton first docked his keelboat in January, 1844, it soon developed into a small community. Moses L. Patton made his home there, and there was the new mercantile store of Robert S. Patton and Company. A pavilion or shed for storing cotton and warehouses to store other products until the river was high enough for the boats to arrive were soon constructed.

The little port was located on a tract of land which later was patented to Thomas J. Rusk by virtue of a bounty certificate issued him by the Republic of Texas for the military services he had rendered from October 8, 1835, to February 5, 1836.<sup>16</sup> Early in January, 1844, Adolphus Sterne was appointed one of the commissioners to "review out a road to where Patton has landed with his boat at the Angelina."<sup>17</sup> The name Pattonia first appeared in print in the *Red-Lander*, January 6, 1844, in the advertisement mentioning the "new and staunch Pole Boat, *Thos. J. Rusk*."<sup>18</sup>

That paper also carried an editorial praising Robert S. Patton, "a man of great energy and sound integrity," and expressed the hope that he would "reap abundant rewards for his exemplary efforts to direct the commerce of Eastern Texas through a different channel from that which it heretofore passed." The editor urged the citizens of San Augustine County "to patronize this laudable effort to afford better means of transportation of the commerce of the county to market."<sup>21</sup>

With successful navigation of the Angelina in prospect, business in Nacogdoches picked up that year. "Doctor More came . . . to rent a store and dwelling for Mr. Dunn who is coming here with his family . . . also Mr. Tom Barret from San Augustine came up to rent a store."

"Hurrah, for old Nacogdoches," chortled Squire Sterne.<sup>22</sup>

By November 2, 1844, the Angelina was again at a good stage, navigable for keelboats and flatboats. The *Thomas J. Rusk*, then considered a regular packet in the trade, was plying between Pattonia and Sabine Pass. The *Red-Lander* now recommended that the Attoyac River be made navigable as high up as necessary. Again in December of that year the *Red-Lander*, in an article on navigation of the Angelina, praised Robert S. Patton for his "untiring efforts in directing our trade into its legitimate channel, and in a manner compelling our citizens to see their own interests." The editor pointed out the advantages of lower transportation costs, of avoiding the payment of the United States' tariff by shipping to Galveston instead of New Orleans, and also of avoiding the charges of commission merchants in New Orleans.<sup>23</sup>

With this successful beginning at Pattonia, Robert S. Patton soon turned his attention to building a steamboat expressly for use on the Angelina. On March 2, 1846, he wrote to General Rusk,

You will learn today if you have not heard sooner that I have sold out at Pattonia. This is not the case. I have only sold my interest in the store and Boat, and have not thought of selling my interest in the land. I have worked too hard to bring the place into notice to take a trifle for it and nothing more could be had at present. I hope you will not sell your interest for a while, but should you be disposed to do so I wish you to give me the refusal. . . . I will be up on Sunday and see you it is likely I will want to have the place run into town lots this summer.<sup>24</sup>

Early in 1847 Captain Robert S. Patton brought his new steamboat, the *Angelina*, up the river to Pattonia. And Squire Sterne's prophecy was fulfilled.

The *Angelina* was a light draft boat only ninety feet in length having a burden of 350 to 400 bales of cotton. The *Telegraph and Texas Register* commented, "the new steamer that this enterprising and public-spirited citizen has lately completed, is admirably suited to this stream, and will, we trust, yield a fair profit on the sum he has thus invested. A new town has been laid out near the head of navigation on the Angelina named

Pattonia, in honor of the successful attempt of this gentleman to navigate this river."<sup>22</sup>

The article continued to point out the advantages to be derived by the opening of navigation of this river: cotton and other agricultural products of the fertile region around Nacogdoches could be transported to market at less than half the cost of transportation by the old routes; the extensive pine forests of the section, now almost valueless, would become copious sources of wealth when the lumber they would produce could be readily transported to market.<sup>24</sup>

The initial success of Patton's steamboat, as well as the high hopes generally held for steamboat traffic on the Angelina, were soon thwarted. A severe and prolonged drought remained unbroken through the Summer and Fall of 1847 and most of the year 1848. The *Angelina* was grounded at Pattonia. Many bales of cotton piled up in the warehouses there, awaiting shipment. It was not until December 9, 1848, that the river was reported "on top of its banks" and notice given that the steamboat would leave Pattonia with a full freight of cotton for the Pass.<sup>25</sup>

The enforced delay in getting the cotton to market that year was not considered too serious because the prices had been so low. At the date of the *Angelina's* departure, cotton was quoted at Low 4½, Middling 5-5½, Good 5½-6¼ cents.<sup>26</sup>

And now a good season followed the bad. By January 13, 1849, the *Angelina* had made two trips from Pattonia to Sabine Pass, carrying some four hundred bales of cotton at a trip. It was expected that she would continue her voyages until late in the Spring.<sup>27</sup>

The *Nacogdoches Times* was impressed with the great importance to the County and to adjacent counties, "that the continuation of this means of communication with New Orleans and a market" be assured. It was then held that Captain Patton had established beyond a doubt that the Angelina River was perfectly suitable for steamboats. "He has struggled with one difficulty after another, conquering by his energy, what would have disheartened many men . . ." wrote Editor Floyd H. Kendall. "He must be supported and maintained . . . emigration will take this route, placing the emigrant in close proximity with the finest lands in Texas, of easy access and reasonable price."<sup>28</sup>

On April 28, 1849, the "Times" reported that the Steamer *Angelina* arrived at Pattonia that morning, "seven days from the Pass." *Seven days from the Pass!* Surely, this must have been a record voyage. The length of time taken by another steamboat to go down river from Brown's Ferry (some miles below Pattonia), to the Pass, was reported to be from 18 to 22 days.<sup>29</sup>

The constant rains that had kept the rivers high that season had been most detrimental to the unimproved roads. Many complaints were heard: the mail coaches were delayed for days; some of the mail failed to arrive for weeks, some none at all. Steamboats were then suggested as a practical

alternative means of transporting the mails in the wet seasons. Demands were made for a line of mail steamers from New Orleans. Kendall of the "Times" held:

The natural route and one that must ultimately prevail, is by way of the Angelina and Sabine Pass. Whenever a regular line of Mail Steamers from New Orleans to Galveston and along the coast to the Rio Grande is established—and that must be done before long—the mail for Eastern Texas can be left at the Pass, from whence to the termination of tide water on the Sabine or Snow river, there is always navigation; and from that point to this place, there is, we are told a ridge, dry at all seasons; free of bottoms and ravines, and susceptible of being opened at small cost. When the Angelina is high the boat could bring the mail, and at other times a line of stages could connect with the tidewater point. . . . If people along the river would unite and petition Congress, we believe this route could be established as a postroute, and a start given to the project. . . .

Cheaper and easier channels for the traffic must be opened, or we cannot go ahead, and these channels are our rivers to the Gulf. We have the Angelina open and in use. The same is perfectly practical with the Sabine and Neches; and then what a country will be drained of its products. . . .

Can anyone show in Texas, a finer, more productive and *healthier* (we italicize that), section of land than that watered by these streams?<sup>20</sup>

The decade of 1850 to 1860 has been called "the golden era of the steamboat age in Texas." Pattonia, then at the head of navigation of the Angelina, reached its peak between 1847 and 1857. Robert S. Patton's steamboat *Angelina* was plying regularly, in season, between Pattonia and Sabine Pass for several years, and other river boats came up to the busy little port.<sup>21</sup>

The ties of friendship between General Rusk and the Patton family were now more closely drawn by the marriage of his son, John Cleveland Rusk, to Harriet Ann Patton, daughter of Captain Robert S. Patton, in Nacogdoches on November 1, 1849. Rusk then deeded to his son the tract of Bounty land consisting of 320 acres on the Angelina, reserving to himself, however, ten lots in the Town of Pattonia.<sup>22</sup>

In 1850 John Cleveland Rusk was associated with his father-in-law in the shipping business, and he, too, became a steamboat captain. Robert S. Patton, feeling assured of the successful navigation of the Angelina, then turned his attention to the Sabine where he was as active in clearing that stream, building steamboats, founding a port at the head of navigation, and promoting shipping, as he had been on the Angelina.<sup>23</sup>

As these changes were taking place, Moses L. Patton remained the one constant factor at Pattonia, maintaining there his residence and business until several years after the close of the Civil War. The changing pattern

of business relationships at Pattonia is not clear for there is scant record of formal partnership agreements and dissolutions in the county archives, and no private papers have been located.

Moses L. Patton was associated with Hayden S. Arnold, probably in his earliest flatboat venture as Arnold died in 1839. From the time that Robert S. Patton sold out his interest in the boat and the store at Pattonia until several years after the close of the Civil War, Moses L. Patton maintained a general merchandise store at Pattonia, and possibly ran the keelboat *Thomas J. Rusk* as well. Family tradition states that he was a steamboat captain. No mention of his ownership of a steamboat has been found. He could have chartered a boat for use at times or have captained a boat belonging to some of the men or companies with whom he was associated in business at Pattonia—James R. Arnold and David Muckleroy, William Barret and James S. Linn of Nacogdoches, and K. B. Stallings of Melrose.<sup>24</sup>

James R. Arnold and David Muckleroy, partners in business in Nacogdoches, also advertised their business in Pattonia in 1852, 1853, and the early part of 1854. On January 28, 1854, Holloway Lee Power noted in his diary, "Went to town and sold my cotton to Arnold and Muckleroy at seven cents—payable 1st June with interest at 10 per cent from date. I am to have the privilege to draw one or two hundred dollars at any time I wish."<sup>25</sup>

On the dissolution of the above partnership, Arnold united his interests with the firm of Barret and Linn, a prominent and successful firm selling drugs, medicines, oils, paints, dye stuffs, and Dr. Irion's pills in Nacogdoches. In addition to a large and extensively advertised mercantile business in Nacogdoches which was located on the northwest corner of the public square, this company maintained a large establishment at Pattonia engaged in shipping cotton and other products and in importing supplies for their stores at Pattonia and Nacogdoches. At Pattonia they also owned numerous warehouses, cotton sheds and wharves. When this partnership was dissolved, March 9, 1857, among the assets were several lots in the Town of Pattonia and the three hundred fifty-acre tract formerly possessed by Thomas J. and John Cleveland Rusk.<sup>26</sup>

Another firm doing business in both Nacogdoches and Pattonia in the early 1850's was that of Bondies, Rohte and Company. Captain George Bondies, a native of Denmark, was the owner and captain of the steamer *Kate*, 600 bales. If this "*Kate*" came up the river to Pattonia, she must have been the largest in the trade plying the Angelina in that decade. In December, 1852, the *Nacogdoches Chronicle* noted that the "steamer '*Kate*' has been withdrawn from the Sabine River, and will run hereafter regularly as a Trinity Packet." And in November, 1853, the "*Chronicle*" took note of the departure of Captain Bondies and Mr. Rohte,

Two of our most social and enterprising citizens left us during the past week in the persons of Messrs. Bondies and Rohte, the former the Captain and the latter the Clerk of the steamer *Kate*. They go to take command of her and will commence business immediately on their arrival. She will make regular trips from Magnolia on the Trinity to Galveston. As a good-humored, whole-souled gen-



tleman, the captain is beyond our commendation. As for Mr. Rohte, we can say on the score of personal acquaintance and attachment that his warm hearted and generous qualities will continue to make him a favorite on the river. No "Kate" could be in better hands.<sup>37</sup>

The company of Bondies and Rohte continued in business at Pattonia and at Nacogdoches through 1854 and until April 3, 1855, at least. There are few issues of any local paper after 1854 now available for reference.

Even though the *Kate* with her enterprising captain and popular clerk, was no longer upon the scene, Pattonia and Nacogdoches County still had transportation for their cotton and other products. Captain John Clements, Master of the *Pearl Plant*, bought the large and commodious warehouse at Sabine Pass which had formerly been owned by Col. John G. Berry and Judge William B. Ochiltree. The *Pearl Plant*, having a capacity of 450 bales, usually came up the Angelina only as far as Bevilport where she was met by the Lighter *Melrose*, H. C. Hamil, Master, which ran from Sabine Pass, to Bevilport. No storage was charged between Pattonia and Sabine Pass. In the Spring of 1854 the *Pearl Plant* was making regular ten-day trips from Bevilport to Sabine Pass. At Sabine Pass she made connection with the Schooner *Emily Louisa*, Captain Woods, thus, according to Clements's advertisement, furnishing Nacogdoches "a through line to New Orleans." No charges were to be made for storage on up freight shipped by this line.<sup>38</sup>

The success achieved at Pattonia inspired plans to make the stream navigable for steamboats as high up the river as Durst's bridge, a toll bridge chartered to James H. Durst, at the place where the present State Highway 21 crosses the river. A meeting was held in Douglass on Saturday, June 7, 1851, which was attended by many citizens of Nacogdoches as well as those from Cherokee and other counties adjoining the river. General Rusk, ever advocating internal improvements particularly on state and local levels, addressed the meeting with his usual force and eloquence.<sup>39</sup>

A company was organized at Linwood—a small community on the west bank of the river—for the purpose of clearing out the Angelina from Pattonia to Linwood. The distance was estimated at one hundred and fifty miles by water. A contract was let to Solomon Wolfe, Esq., at twenty dollars per mile. After one month's work he had completed about fifty miles, having removed all timber from the bed of the river, all overhanging timber, and all standing within twenty feet of the bank on either side. Charles Chevaillier and Henry W. and Charles Raguet established stores in Linwood in addition to those in Nacogdoches.<sup>40</sup>

Two flatboats, built by Captain Wolfe, left Linwood March 8, 1853, for Sabine Pass, carrying upwards of 400 bales of cotton consigned to New York. They were to complete their cargoes to 700 bales at Pattonia, about twenty miles below. A keelboat building at Linwood was to be launched the following week. Citizens were urged to patronize this effort to improve transportation in the country. Misfortune occurred. One of the above flatboats sank in the Angelina on April 3, 1853. No further mention of the keelboat has been found, and no statement that steamboats actually

reached Linwood. However, it is quite possible that the *Dr. Massie*, 400 bales, was "the boat belonging to Captain Wolfe" which the "*Chronicle*" reported was expected to reach Linwood about Saturday, April 8, 1854.<sup>41</sup>

The State of Texas now undertook to improve navigation of the Texas rivers. A law was passed, August 1, 1856, appropriating \$300,000 for the improvement of navigable streams. Contracts were let for the clearing of the Sabine and other streams but unfortunately the Neches and Angelina rivers did not share in this appropriation. The *Nacogdoches Chronicle* expressed regret that the Angelina had not experienced the benefits of the River Bill since navigation would then be a much more certain matter and devoid of some of its present risks. However, it was some satisfaction that the river was then open to Pattonia, and at that particular season in 1858, it was expected that steamboats would be able to reach that point for several months to come. The "little but staunch steamer *Mary Falvey*" with a capacity of 450 bales, operated by Captain Falvey, was even then loading at Pattonia and several hundred bales of cotton had been shipped on her by Nacogdoches merchants and planters. The *Mary Falvey* continued to ply the Angelina and Neches rivers until 1861. Then the veteran little steamboat, "after a long career and a long list of captains," was at last "laid up, tied up, stopped."<sup>42</sup>

There were no steamboats on the river during the Civil War. Indeed, there is no mention of them in the few existing copies of the local newspapers before 1870. Some of the river steamboats were turned into "cotton-clads" and used to defend the Pass. One of these was the *Uncle Ben* of which Robert S. Patton, before his death in 1857, had been captain and part owner.<sup>43</sup>

Moses L. Patton remained in residence at Pattonia through these years of national and personal tragedy. His three eldest sons soon joined volunteer forces raised in Nacogdoches for the Confederate Armies.

Ellis L. Patton and James Buford Patton enlisted on May 31, 1861, in a company raised by James R. Arnold. Arnold himself, soon promoted to the rank of major and made controlling quartermaster for Texas, served in that capacity until the end of the War. His company was next led by Henry C. Hancock, sometimes guest editor of the *Nacogdoches Chronicle*, and an attorney and teacher in Nacogdoches. This company became a part of the 4th Brigade, Texas Militia. James Buford Patton died in Richmond, Virginia, November 27, 1861; Ellis L. Patton was killed in the Battle of Mansfield in a charge upon the enemy's battery. Henry Pace Patton enlisted in Nacogdoches on March 22, 1862, in Captain William Clark's Company, which became Company G of the Twelfth Texas Regiment. He survived the war for some twelve years, dying in Nacogdoches County, February 21, 1877, and is buried in the Patton Cemetery near Oak Ridge.<sup>44</sup>

After the death of Robert S. Patton in 1857, Moses L. became the guardian of his brother's minor son, Robert C. Patton, who lived at Pattonia for several years. Moses' eldest grandchild, little Susan Ella Day, became a member of his household, too, after the death of her mother in 1865. Her

memories of Pattonia were happy ones which years later she related in vivid detail to Branch and Bill Patton, great-grandsons of Moses L. Patton.<sup>45</sup>

A few years after the war was over a third attempt was made to promote the use of Texas streams for traffic, communication, and commerce. Steamboats began to use the Angelina again early in the 1870's. The *Jasper News Boy* announced the arrival of the steamer *Kate* from Sabine Pass, and stated that she would run regularly in the Neches and Angelina as long as the river was navigable. The *Texas Almanac for 1870* carried an article on the "Navigation of Our Rivers," urging anew the saving to be gained by shipping cotton to Galveston instead of hauling it overland to Shreveport. It was here estimated that the savings would amount to several hundred thousand dollars in the pockets of East Texas farmers. The author declared, "We make a great sacrifice by throwing away the natural channels of transportation that God has given us. . . ."<sup>46</sup>

And in this decade of 1870-1880, the State of Texas made its final effort to improve the navigation of the Sabine, Neches, and Angelina rivers, and Pine Island Bayou. The act, approved April, 1874, provided for a board of commissioners to be appointed from among the largest shippers of the counties of Tyler, Jasper, Jefferson, Orange, Newton, Hardin, Angelina, Nacogdoches, Sabine, San Augustine and Shelby . . . to superintend, contract for and control the opening and cleaning out the said rivers, clearing a channel at least 90 feet in width by cutting, sawing off, or otherwise removing all obstructions considered too low for navigation, and by cutting down all trees likely to obstruct navigation. A State engineer was to approve the work and pass on each and every mile of it. When the work was finished and approved he was to file a certificate with the Comptroller of Public Accounts who should then issue to each contractor eight certificates for 640 acres for each mile completed. On the Angelina the points between which the work should be done were to be Pattonia and the mouth of the Angelina.<sup>47</sup>

A contract for this work was let to A. C. Alexander, Giles B. Crain, J. B. Harris, and F. T. Brooks. Giles B. Crain and J. B. Harris were residents of Nacogdoches. A portion of the contract was sub-let to Giles B. Crain, A. J. Simpson, and John T. White, who were to clear the river from Pattonia to the mouth of Mast Creek.<sup>48</sup>

It was during the early 1870's that Susan Ella Day remembered the sometimes gay little port of Pattonia—the excitement when a steamboat's whistle was heard as it came up the river and neared the landing. The sound reached as far inland as Woden where a few persons are still living who can remember those times. Most of the nearby families rushed to the port, the ladies especially anxious to have first choice of the calicoes and other dress patterns, of the bonnets and shoes. They came in wagons and on horseback by the road and along trails through woods. The fresh supplies of coffee, sugar and flour were in great demand. The men wanted nails, tools, iron. There were friends and loved ones to greet, travelers and newcomers to see, all bringing news of the outside world.

Susan Ella remembered also the dances and gay picnics in the summer

time when the water was low and the boats could not come up the river. Sometimes then the merchandise remaining in the store was pushed back against the walls and to the music the darkies made with their fiddles, the young people of the countryside enjoyed their improvised dance hall as much as though it were the finest ballroom. Pattonia was also a favorite spot for fishing and picnic parties, some of which Susan Ella recalled so vividly that she could name the young men and women who made up the group with their chaperones.<sup>49</sup>

Houston King of Woden recalled having seen five steamboats tied up at Pattonia at one time, discharging their cargoes and taking on freight for points below. In 1916 he was still able to remember the names of three of these steamers, the *Kate*, the *Carmargo*, and the *Laura*. Each was well known on the Neches and Angelina.<sup>50</sup>

The *Carmargo*, Captain A. F. Smyth, carried only 300 bales. G. A. Medford describes her as being "built like a barge with a square nose and un-managable when there was a strong current in the river." On one voyage she was swept into the bank and an overhanging gum tree fell on her. After that accident Captain Smyth sold her and went to Cincinnati to have a boat built that would be better suited to navigate the East Texas rivers.<sup>51</sup>

He found the *Laura* and purchased her for \$11,000 in 1873. She was 115 feet long, 32 feet in beam, and carried 525 bales of cotton or 1700 barrels of other freight. She had a 40-horsepower pocket valve engine. Wood was used to fire her. A one-way trip from Brown's Ferry, which was just above the mouth of the Attoyac River, to Sabine Pass took from 18 to 22 days. The boat traveled only during the day and tied up at night, as was true of most of the river boats. The *Laura* was the last steamboat to go down the river from Pattonia. The exact date of her final trip is unknown, but was probably 1882 or 1883.<sup>52</sup>

Moses L. Patton had moved from Pattonia to his farm home near Oak Ridge in 1873, and then ran a mercantile business in Nacogdoches. The last person to keep a store at Pattonia was Uncle June Harris. He came up to Nacogdoches in 1887, promising friends to bring fish soon. That date marks the last mention of Pattonia in a contemporary newspaper.<sup>53</sup>

The last flatboat to leave Pattonia was built in 1876 by George L. Baxter, a son-in-law of Dr. Lycurgus Griffith of Nacogdoches. Young Thomas Bond Griffith was employed as clerk. The voyage was fraught with trouble from the start. Griffith was in charge of loading the boat. He had two Negro loaders rolling the bales of cotton down a ramp from the steep bank while he and a small Negro named Brown stacked the bales on a bed of switch cane in the bottom of the boat. Baxter sent one of the loaders on an errand. The other, a big Negro named Charlie, sat down on a bale of cotton. Griffith ordered him to help stack the cotton in the bottom of the boat. Instead he rolled another bale down the ramp. When ordered to stop, he did it a second time. Griffith told him if he did it again he would knock him from one end of the bale of cotton to the other. The big Negro came to Griffith with a stick. Other Negroes came

out, ready for trouble, but were quieted by Brown. Before they started down the river with the flatboat, however, Griffith hired a "nester" to go with them because he had a pistol.

When finally loaded, the flatboat carried 400 bales of cotton. Guided by a long paddle in the end of the boat, it floated down the river. It soon ran into difficulties. Rafts of logs were floating down the river. The flatboat got into the rafts and went aground on the wrong side of the river. A raft hit the boat and knocked it farther up the bank. Baxter gave up, but Griffith made a Spanish windlass and got the boat off of the sand bar. A few days later they had another accident. The boat hit a cypress stump that very nearly caused a total loss. Finally they reached Beaumont, having taken over six weeks to make the trip.

There Griffith sold the flatboat and shipped the cotton by rail from Beaumont to Galveston, going to Galveston himself to attend to its sale. While there he bought himself his first suit of store clothes, then went to Houston where he got a job as commission clerk for Bremond's railroad, the Houston, East and West Texas."

The causes of Old Pattonia's decline and the end of navigation of the rivers are well known. The very methods used to make the rivers navigable by clearing the banks of trees, increased the washing and eroding of those banks. Timber that fell into the river, as well as the many logs which sank while being rafted down river, caused obstructions behind which the sand gradually piled up to form a bar. As more and more lands were cleared of trees and put into cultivation, the springs and creeks feeding the rivers dried up. The rivers ceased then to carry the amount of water for a season of eight or nine months which they had carried in the earlier days. The final blow to river traffic was the building of the railroads. The "Iron Horse" proved a more dependable and predictable means of transportation. The State spent much more money in promoting railroads than it had ever spent on improvement of the rivers. Private enterprise turned to the railroads also, and the river ports were forgotten.

Today, steamships on the Angelina seem little more than legend. Pattonia is a name known only to a few. The site of the little old port can still be reached though no road now extends to the spot. One must walk through the pines down a long low hill that slopes to the river. There, from a high rounded bank one sees a wide curve where the river winds down from the West. The water is low—the stream seems shallow, and on the opposite side the ground is flat and muddy. Is it possible that five steamboats were ever anchored there? On either side of the rounded bank, somewhat like a small promontory, a few old moss-covered, iron-ore rock steps, a few stones that once may have been part of the foundation of a building, an old brick or two, these and only these, mark the spot where the Patton brothers pioneered in an important phase of the early economic history of the Republic and State of Texas.

And tomorrow? Tomorrow, as the waters rise behind the Sam Rayburn Dam and a great lake forms in the valleys of the Neches and the An-

gelina, men may once again consider the practicability of steamboat traffic for East Texas. Tomorrow will the sound of steamboat whistles stir echoes and memories at Old Pattonia?

Is that a faint whisper in the Pines? A whisper? Words?

. . . and, sometimes,  
The things that I remember rise, and hover,  
A sharper perfume in some April dusk.<sup>55</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Diary of Adolphus Sterne," ed. by Harriet Smither, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (July, 1933), XXXVII, 55; The *Red-Lander* (San Augustine, Texas January 6, 1844, Texas. State Archives, Austin, Texas.

<sup>2</sup>"Navigation of the Angelina," and two advertisements in the *Red-Lander*, January 6, 1844.

<sup>3</sup>Leland Dewitt Baldwin, *The Keel Boat Age on Western Waters* (Pittsburgh, 1941), 44-45.

<sup>4</sup>Mrs. Susan Ella Day Halderman, *Memories of Old Time Customs* (MS. [n.d.], in the possession of Mrs. Ruth Branscom, Nacogdoches, Texas, courtesy of Mrs. Branscom and Mrs. Orland Patton); interview with Mrs. Patton, 1965.

<sup>5</sup>"New Establishment on the Angelina," advertisement in the *Red-Lander*, March 23, 1844.

<sup>6</sup>"Diary of Adolphus Sterne," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (July, 1933), XXXVII, 61.

<sup>7</sup>The *Red-Lander*, April 27, 1844; "Diary of Adolphus Sterne," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (January, 1934), XXXVII, 216. Town Bluff was on the Neches River between Jasper and Woodville.

<sup>8</sup>Ellis Merton Coulter, *Georgia, A Short History* (Chapel Hill, 1960), 250; The *Georgia Messenger* (Macon, Georgia), October 20, 1824, January 26, 1825, March 16, 1825; The *Macon Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), February 7, 1827, March 19, 1827, July 11, 1829. Research in the above Georgia newspapers was made in Macon, Georgia, by Mrs. Albert L. Fisher of Decatur, Georgia. Mrs. Fisher to author, November 22, 1965.

<sup>9</sup>Moses L. Patton, Nacogdoches, May 9, 1873, to J. B. Robertson, Houston, Texas (MS. L. now in the possession of Mrs. Orland Patton, Nacogdoches, Texas—courtesy of Mrs. Patton); *Certificates of Entrance Relative to the Admission to Settle in Texas under the Colonization Laws*, tr. by R. B. Blake, 42-44. East Texas Collection, Stephen F. Austin State College, Nacogdoches, Texas.

<sup>10</sup>Robert Bruce Blake Research Collection (75 bound vols. of type-scripts), LXIX, 74. East Texas Collection, Stephen F. Austin State College.

<sup>11</sup>H. P. N. Gammel, comp., *The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897* (Austin, 1898), I, 1388.

<sup>12</sup>"Diary of Adolphus Sterne," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (July, 1927), XXXI, 83; *Ibid.* (July, 1930), XXXIV, 74.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.* (October, 1927), 182-183.

<sup>14</sup>The *Journal and Advertiser* (San Augustine, Texas), January 28, 1841. Microfilm copy, East Texas Collection.

<sup>15</sup>"Diary of Adolphus Sterne," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (July, 1930), XXXIV, 74. The Ayish Bayou, a small stream rising in San Augustine County, is a tributary of the Angelina. The name was frequently misspelled.

<sup>16</sup>The Republic of Texas to Thomas J. Rusk, certificate for 320 acres of Bounty Land, December, 1837, and State of Texas, P. H. Bell, Governor, to Thomas J. Rusk, patent no. 794, May 8, 1852. General Land Office, Austin, Texas. Photostats in East Texas Collection.

<sup>17</sup>"Diary of Adolphus Sterne," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (October, 1931), XXXV, 151.

<sup>18</sup>*Red-Lander*, January 6, 1844.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>"Diary of Adolphus Sterne," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (October, 1931), XXXV, 151.

<sup>21</sup>*Red-Lander*, December 21, 1844.

<sup>22</sup>Robert S. Patton, Pattonia, March 2, 1846, to General Thomas J. Rusk, (MS.L. in the Thomas J. Rusk Papers, The Archives, The University of Texas); no plat of Pattonia can be found although a lot or lots in Pattonia are mentioned in several deeds of record in Nacogdoches County.

<sup>23</sup>The *Democratic Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston, Texas), March 22, 1847, Texas State Archives; Ben C. Stuart, Texas Steamboat Days, 97. Typescript, Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas.

<sup>24</sup>*Democratic Telegraph and Texas Register*, March 22, 1847.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, December 9, 1848.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, January 13, 1849.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>The *Nacogdoches Times* (Nacogdoches, Texas), January 20, 1949. Floyd H. Kendall, Editor.

<sup>29</sup>The *Lufkin Daily News*, January 27, 1935.

<sup>30</sup>*Nacogdoches Times*, January 20, 1849.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.* What was the fate of the *Angelina*? No record of sale has been found, and no mention is made of her in the few extant Nacogdoches newspapers of the 1850's.

<sup>22</sup>R. T. Jaynes, *Thomas Jefferson Rusk* (Walhalla, S. C., 1944), 45; Marriage Records of Nacogdoches County, Book B, no. 28, Nacogdoches, Texas; Deed Records of Nacogdoches County, Book J. 434.

<sup>23</sup>Captain Bob Weir, "Navigation of the Sabine River" (newspaper clipping, no name of the paper, but probably from the *Semi-Weekly Farm News*, Dallas, Texas, November 26, 1920). "The author, Robert Willis Weir, born 15 September, 1835, died in Panola County, 25 March 1922. He was the son of Dr. Andrew Weir and Sarah Georgeann Shepherd. After the death of his wife, Dr. Weir and his children emigrated to Grand Bluff, Panola County, Texas, in 1846. Mrs. Mary Franklin Dunn, Henderson, Texas, March 1, 1965, to Mrs. Lois Foster Blount.

Will Woldert, Belzora, from Woldert Papers, Smith County Historical Society, courtesy of Miss Mary Jane McNamara, Tyler, Texas, March 9, 1965; *The Handbook of Texas*, I, 145; *The Texas Almanac for 1858*, 191; Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, IV, 967.

<sup>24</sup>Haldeman, *Memories of Old Time Customs*, 1; Interviews with Mrs. Orland Patton, Branch and Bill Patton, of Nacogdoches, 1965; R. B. Blake Collection LX, 111; Richard W. Haltom, *History and Description of Nacogdoches County, Texas* (Nacogdoches, 1880), 66; Giles Haltom, "Story of Old Pattonia," the *Daily Sentinel* (Giles M. Haltom's 50th Anniversary Edition, Nacogdoches, Texas), December 8, 1928.

<sup>25</sup>*Nacogdoches Chronicle*, October 9, 1852, March 15, 1953, November 8, 1854; Diary of Holloway Lee Power, Book II (January 1, 1854-August 31, 1854), 5 (MS., East Texas Collection, Stephen F. Austin State College).

<sup>26</sup>Deed Records of Nacogdoches County, Book J, 434, Nacogdoches, Texas.

<sup>27</sup>Stuart, *Texas Steamboat Days*, 98; *Nacogdoches Chronicle*, December, 1852, November 8, 1853, April 3, 1855.

<sup>28</sup>*Nacogdoches Chronicle*, May 2, 1852, December 1, 1853, August 29, 1854.

<sup>29</sup>"Diary of Adolphus Sterne," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (July, 1934), XXXVIII, 59.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*: The *Galveston Weekly News* (Galveston, Texas), *Nacogdoches Chronicle*, August 28, 1852.

<sup>31</sup>*Nacogdoches Chronicle*, March 15, 1853, April 5, 1853, April 4, 1854; Stuart, *Texas Steamboat Days*, 98.

<sup>32</sup>Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, IV, 427-428; *Nacogdoches Chronicle*, March 2, 1858; The *Galveston Tri-Weekly News* (Galveston, Texas), April 6, 1861; *Texas Almanac for 1858*, 191.

<sup>33</sup>Additional Inventory of the Estate of Robert S. Patton, November 4, 1959; R. W. Chapman, Clerk of County Court, Smith Co., Tyler, Texas; Return of sale of steamboat "Uncle Ben," sold to John G. Berry, 1859, Probate Papers, Estate of Robert S. Patton, Smith County; Captain Bob Weir, "Navigation of the Sabine River."

<sup>34</sup>Muster Roll of Captain James R. Arnold's Company of Infantry Rifle-



men, Texas Militia, May 13, 1861 (Texas State Archives, no. 1178, Photostat, in Stephen F. Austin State College Library); Family Bible Record of Moses L. Patton, courtesy of Mrs. Orland Patton; Muster Roll of Captain William Clark's Company G, 12th Regiment, March 22, 1862 (Archives of the War Department, Photostat in Stephen F. Austin State College Library); Cemetery Records of Nacogdoches County, comp. Mrs. Joel Barham Burk, courtesy of Mrs. Burk.

<sup>44</sup>Probate Records of Nacogdoches County—Guardianship of Minor Robert C. Patton (Nacogdoches County); Family Bible Record of Moses L. Patton.

<sup>45</sup>*Galveston Tri-Weekly News*, January 21, 1870, quoting the *Jasper News Boy* (Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas); *Texas Almanac for 1870*, 191. Was this the same "Kate" as that owned by Captain Bondies in the 1850's?

<sup>47</sup>Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, VIII, 171.

<sup>48</sup>Articles of Agreement between Giles B. Crain, A. J. Simpson, John T. White, and A. C. Alexander and F. T. Brooke for cleaning out the Angelina River from Pattonia to the mouth of Mast Creek, September 5, 1874. (MS. courtesy of Aaron Cox, Nacogdoches, Texas. Photostat in Stephen F. Austin Library); General Land Office, 8 Certificates—Land Script—640 acres to A. C. Alexander, G. B. Crain, J. B. Harris, and F. T. Brooke, Contractors for opening and cleaning out a channel in the Angelina River, January 22, 1875. (Photostats in Stephen F. Austin State College Library).

<sup>49</sup>Halderman, *Memories of Old Time Customs*, 1-3; Interview with Mrs. Orland Patton, Branch and Bill Patton, 1965.

<sup>50</sup>Giles Haltom, "The Story of Old Pattonia," *Daily Sentinel*, December 8, 1928.

<sup>51</sup>"Sailing Down the Neches on the Steamboat Laura," *Lufkin Daily News*, January 7, 1935.

<sup>52</sup>*Memories of Old Time Customs*, 3.

<sup>53</sup>*The Nacogdoches News* (Nacogdoches, Texas), May 13, 1887.

<sup>54</sup>Interviews with the late T. B. Griffith of Dallas and Terrell, Texas, 1951-1952.

<sup>55</sup>Karle Wilson Baker, "Nacogdoches Speaks," *Dreamers on Horseback*, 143. Courtesy of Mrs. Roger Montgomery, Nacogdoches, Texas.