REPORTS ON WILMINGTON TRADE 1815-1872.

The following reports on the trade of Wilmington at intervals of about thirty years, beginning with 1815 and ending with 1872, will give some idea of the domestic and foreign commerce for the half-century preceding the War between the States and the period immediately following it, when every effort was made to recover from the paralyzing effects of the great struggle.

The Trade of Wilmington, 1815.

By Joshua Potts.

(A commercial statement which came into the possession of the Chamber of Commerce, Wilmington, North Carolina, through the courtesy of Mrs. W. H. C. Whiting, widow of General Whiting.)

Wilmington, though but a small port, affords in season and in proportionate quantities nearly all the various kinds of produce that are to be found in the growth of the United States, collectively—such is the effect of an intermediate climate, an extensive territory of different soil, and diversity of occupation of numerous inhabitants.

Portable articles of produce are brought from the interior country by land carriage to inland towns at the head of boating navigation; thence they are carried down to Wilmington in large flatboats, calculated for that purpose.

In the lower part of the country transportation of lumber, naval stores, timber and spars is facilitated by rafts, conducted by a few hands down numerous rivers and creeks.

In times of uninterrupted commerce, many ships and vessels of considerable burthen were annually loaded here and bound for European ports with cargoes of naval stores, tobacco, flaxseed, cotton, rice, and large timber of pitch pine; their cargoes were dunnaged and stowed with staves.

Our produce is particularly adapted for the markets of the West India Islands, and when we have a free trade, many vessels of Wilmington and the Northern States during winter and spring load here, and depart for the West Indies in as many directions as there are islands, their cargoes assorted with lumber, flour, rice, pork, bacon, lard, butter, tobacco, tar, livestock, etc.

A proportion of our produce is transported coastwise to various ports, but that of New York the principal—and vice versa,

the merchants and dealers of Wilmington and Fayetteville are generally furnished with a variety of merchandise from sundry ports on the northern coast, especially from New York. Regular packets ply between Wilmington and New York.

Excellent crops of various kinds of produce are annually produced throughout this country. Our market opens in November, is brisk in December, increases in January, February, and March, slackens in April, declines in May, and ends in June. The summer and fall months in regard to trade, are dull, and the fall sickly.

Those kinds of our produce of the first importance are noted for the present year as follows:

Tobacco is raised only in the upper country; it is brought and inspected at Fayetteville, at the head of boating navigation, ninety miles above Wilmington. It may be had at Fayetteville at almost any time of the year; but it is more plentiful between December and March. Of late years the quantity has been reduced, and the culture of cotton substituted, as being less precarious, less toilsome, and of more profit than tobacco. Within the last fifteen years, tobacco has been lessened in culture more than one-half of former crops. Its quality is said to have been inferior to that of Virginia, but of late it has been produced of amended goodness, and some of it prime. In the first place, it is uniformly purchased from the planters by merchants of Fayetteville, and by them either exported to Europe or sold again in the United States.

Cotton, upland, is but of recent cultivation in this State, and is increasing in quantity; the quality is said to be equal to that of South Carolina or Georgia. The planters at first put up their cotton in round bags, but of late much of it is packed in square bales. There is no inspection of cotton.

Rice: A fine crop is raised chiefly in the vicinity of Wilmington, near tidewater, of quality equal to any in the Southern States; and a charge for the rough casks which contain it is always made by the planters.

Flour: The usual crop of considerable quantity; of late years subject to a good inspection and marked under several qualities; the superfine is said to be equal to that of the Middle States.

Corn is seldom either plentiful or cheap in Wilmington. The country around does not produce it in sufficient quantity for exportation.