



The Vintage Rabun Quarterly

Myth Busters

**Six statements, sometimes accepted as fact,
which are in need of closer examination:**

1. The Pony Express route passed through Rabun County.

Those who remember their American history lessons will recall that the short-lived (1860-1861) Pony Express ran between St. Joseph, Missouri and Sacramento, California. Confusion about the route running through Rabun County may have sprung from the fact that, prior to the arrival of the Tallulah Falls Railroad in Clayton (1904) and ultimately to Franklin, N.C. (1907), mail was transported from the railroad's terminus at Tallulah Falls to points north by horse and

wagon. From there, mail was distributed by local carriers on horseback to more than thirty community post offices scattered throughout the county. While some carriers no doubt were fast riders, none were employed by the Pony Express.

2. Rabun County has the most precipitation east of the Mississippi and the second highest in the U.S.

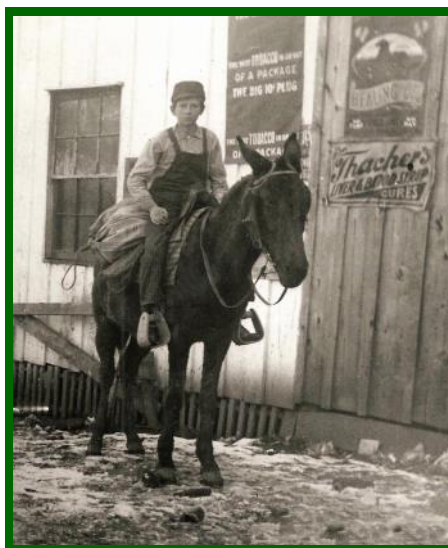
Records published by the National Climate Data Center show that the annual precipitation average for Clayton between 1971 and 2000 was 73.36 inches, the highest in the state. Between 1981 and 2010, Clayton's annual precipitation average was 68.9 inches, again the highest in the state. Second to Clayton during the 1981-2000 period was Mountain City with an annual precipitation average of 68.61 inches.

Despite these state records, there are areas in the Eastern U.S. with higher precipitation rates including, for example, the 1981-2010 annual precipitation average of 96.9 inches recorded at Mount Washington, NH. Both Alaska and Hawaii have loca-

“One of the challenges to presenting history is overcoming the myths and mistakes that sometimes become accepted through time.”

**George J. Armelagos
Professor of Anthropology
Emory University**

**in *Georgia Backroads* maga-
zine, 2013**



Dock King on his mule, Old Jule, carrying the mail from Blalock to Rabun Gap, circa 1910

- Please visit our museum and research library on Mondays and Fridays from 10:00 until 2:00 and on Wednesdays from 12:30 until 4:30.
- Group tours by appointment

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average of 96.9 inches recorded at Mount Washington in New Hampshire. Both Alaska and Hawaii have locations with far more annual precipitation than Rabun County.

3. In 1861 at the Georgia Secession Convention, Rabun County voted against seceding from the Union.

The first crucial vote, on January 18, 1861 in Milledgeville, called for the state's immediate secession from the Union. The resolution passed 166 to 130, with the two delegates representing Rabun County, Samuel Beck and Horace W. Cannon, voting nay. Both men were slave owners. Instead, on the following day, Beck and Cannon voted for a more restrained substitution which sought "guarantees" from the Federal Government aimed at protecting the institution of slavery. Secession was to be pursued only if the grievances of the southern states were not adequately addressed.

On January 21, the final Ordinance of Secession was publicly signed by all the delegates, including Beck and Cannon. Six delegates, not including the Rabun County men, signed under protest.

4. The town of Tiger was named after Cherokee



An excursion train to Tiger in 1903 shows Tiger Mountain in the background and was probably the end of the line for the Tallulah Falls Railroad at that time.

Indians or a wild animal.

Neither of these two oral histories has been confirmed. The first is that the town was named for a Cherokee chief named "Tiger Tail." There was indeed a Native American family on Tiger Mountain whose name was pronounced "Tygah" in English. The town would have been named after the mountain and its residents rather than vice versa.

The second theory is that British immigrants who settled in the area became alarmed upon hearing cries from the nearby mountain. The cries supposedly reminded many of the Bengal tigers they had heard while serving as British soldiers in India. Of course, the cries heard by the settlers would have come from mountain lions, not tigers.

Until the turn of the twentieth century, the community was called Kerbytown after a general store

owner named Kerby. It is highly unlikely that there were British immigrants after 1900 in the town who had served in India.

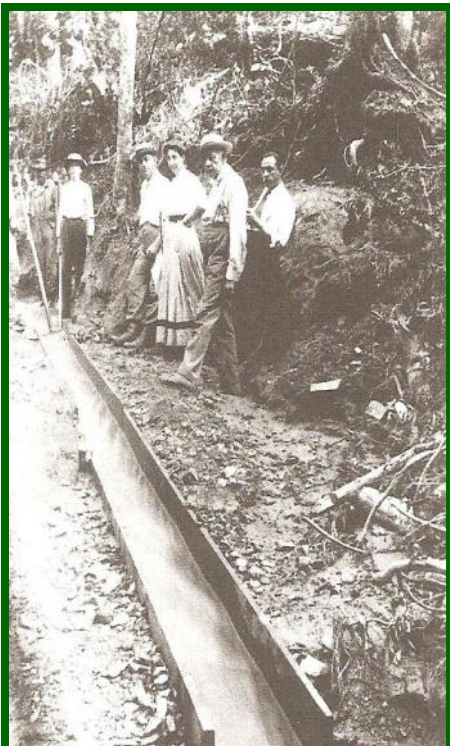
5. Valuable deposits of gold are waiting to be found in Rabun County.

Not likely. The gold rush in Georgia took place in the 1820s and 1830s, with local newspaper accounts documenting some mining still underway at the turn of the twentieth century.

The first discovery of gold in the county was made by John Morris on Dick's Creek in the early 1820s. Other discoveries occurred in the same area along Moccasin Creek, Wildcat Creek and all along the west side of the Tallulah River. While the success of various gold mining ventures in Rabun cannot be documented with certainty, one local historian, Andrew J. Ritchie,

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Visitors to the Burton area, circa 1900, view a Placer method gold mining operation.

noted that, in aggregate, it is likely that more money was put into the ground in mining operations than was ever taken out of it. By 1934, a report from the Georgia State Division of Conservation concluded that "...there is no present basis in fact for the statement that the gold belt of Georgia contains a second 'Mother Lode.'"

6. The town of Burton was the largest community in Rabun County prior to its flooding in 1917.

For many years, the village of Burton served as the center of community life for families living along the Tallulah River. This

changed in 1917 when the Georgia Power Company began buying homesteads along the Tallulah as a precursor to building the Lake Burton Dam. By 1920, the town of Burton was fully submerged beneath the peaceful waters of Lake Burton.

Before dam construction, those living in the Burton community farmed the rich river bottom land. Some also engaged in mining, logging or moonshining. The town's most prominent structures included two churches, both of which served as schools, two general stores, one of which housed the post office, a gristmill and sawmill.

Burton surpassed Clayton in neither infrastructure nor population. Rather, by the time of Burton's demise in 1917, Clayton had long held sway as the economic and population center of the county, in large part due to the arrival of the Tallulah Falls Railroad in 1904. In

fact, the viability of Burton's general stores depended upon their owners hauling in goods retrieved at the Tiger or Clayton railroad depots. The railroad also aided the growing tourist industry by transporting tourists to Clayton, who lodged at the town's many hotels. By comparison, Burton was much more isolated, with a round trip to Clayton by wagon taking a full day.



The Foster and Derrick General Store in the town of Burton was one of two, circa 1910.



Rabun County Historical Society
81 North Church Street
P.O. Box 921
Clayton, GA 30525

Phone: 706-782-5292
E-mail: historicalsociety@rabuncounty.ga.gov



TOWN TALES: Rabun's Unique Town Histories

We're on the web!
www.rabunhistory.org



Mountain City Depot with the Cathey Apple Packing House in background, 1928

In the museum, we are featuring a series of displays on Rabun towns.

Now showing:
Mountain City

Coming soon: Tiger

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