

## **Excerpt from “On Solomon’s Porch”**

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In the late 1880s, Jakin was a wild girl, nameless and boundless. The government, young too, and unorthodox, offered the land for sale. Native daughter, Mrs. Jo S. Webb transcends the walls of her room in a Donalsonville, Georgia retirement home, roaming the Wild Lands (as Jakin was then known), the thickly forested, brilliant darkly green land of her father’s stories. Her father, C.A. Minter, a physician, purchased three lots, roughly 750 acres of land for \$10 and a traded shotgun in May of 1878. Businessmen arrived, such as Alec Fort, confirmed bachelor and turpentine man, making his way down the Chattahoochee from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, vowing to stop only once he spied pine trees with no “cat faces”, the v-shaped incisions which marked turpentine fields. Major Bivings named her Jakin, a revision of one of the columns of Solomon’s temple (Jachin), and a geographical identity was born. The lumber company followed in 1898 built by the Flowers family, and Jakin boomed. Mrs. Webb recalls the descriptions of early Jakin, “the forest had never been harvested in any way, just wild lands and they were magnificent, tall virgin pines, the long leaf yellow pines and they’ve all been cut now except a few”. The town swelled to about 200 people between 1898 and 1918. New construction sites dotted the cleared-out forests. The town like some of her inhabitants was fresh and new. Excitement filled the air, literally. Mrs. Webb recalls the time the first airplane arrived in Jakin.

When I was a very small child about 1912 one of the first type of jenny planes landed in a field not too far from the school and my grandmother’s house. It caused quite a sensation ‘cause no one there had ever seen a plane and few had ever heard of one. The population of the town started running across the field to see it. Donalsonville was to pay \$100 to have the plane land at the agricultural fair there where crowds had gathered to see it. Having no road or air maps the plane had followed the railroad as a guide. It ran into difficulty and had to land in Jakin. Shade and Deanna, an old, old childless couple, lived in a little log shack across from the field near where the plane landed. With all the roaring noise and descent of the crash, both who had never seen such a thing as a plane began shouting and trembling with fear, calling loudly on the Lord with every running step. Literally scared out of their wits they were the first to arrive. When the pilot stepped out of the craft, the old cockpit type, with his flying helmet, muffler, duster, and large flying goggles resembling a man from outer space somewhere, Shade trembling like

a leaf, mumbled, 'Good morning, Mr. Jesus. How's your Pa?' He spoke the thoughts of many there, but when the pilot assured him he was a man and the plane was man-made, he heaved a great sigh of relief and toppled over in a dead faint. Daddy was especially privileged when the pilot gave him the bad sparkplug which had to be replaced so he could resume his flight. For many years Daddy guarded it as a treasured souvenir and proudly displayed it between mammy's hand-painted urns at either end of our reception hall.