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## **MR. J. F. GRESHAM**

Mr. James Files Gresham was a native of Alabama, having been born in the northern portion of that State in 1820, and at the age of eighteen moved to old Tishomingo County, Mississippi. In the early '40's Mr. Gresham and his father, Mr. George Gresham, erected a saw and grist mill at Bay Springs, on Mackey's Creek, some twenty-six miles south of the present town of Iuka. This mill being the only one in that portion of the county equipped for the manufacture of flour, the pioneers hauled their wheat there for quite a distance; while the saw mill supplied the neighborhood with lumber, and also sawed a large portion of the material used in the construction of the large factory and bother buildings erected later. In 1850 Mr. Gresham organized the Bay Springs Union Factory Company, there being associated with him Messrs. John Briggs and John Robertson. The company was incorporated in February, 1852. When first organized, the company erected a factory for the manufacture of cotton yarns commencing with 360 spindles and increasing the number to 744, the original saw and grill mill being torn down to provide a suitable location for the new structure. After incorporation, the company added a set of wool cards and a saw mill. A little below the factory they erected a grist mill, with two sets of stones, and a cotton gin; also a blacksmith shop and general store and postoffice. A dam 11 feet high across Mackey's

Creek, and a breast wheel twelve feet in diameter furnished an abundance of power for the large amount of machinery. This immense business was under the immediate management of Mr. Gresham and the great success achieved by the company was owing to his superior business capacity and untiring efforts. Shortly before the beginning of the war, Mr. Gresham disposed of his interest in the Bay Springs property, and when the first call for troops was made, organized a company known as the Cape Horn Grays, of which he was elected captain. The company was mustered into the 26<sup>th</sup> Mississippi Regiment of Infantry and Mr. Gresham elected regimental quartermaster. He was on sick leave when the regiment surrendered at Fort Donelson; was at the battle of Baker's Creek, and in the siege of Vicksburg, being paroled when that city was surrendered. After the war, Mr. Gresham served one term as sheriff of Tishomingo County, and during the remainder of his life was engaged in merchandising in Booneville, and in the saw mill business near that place. Mr. Gresham was the pioneer manufacturer of North Mississippi, an honest and worthy citizen, and hundreds of the men of Alcorn, Prentiss and Tishomingo counties today hold his memory in the highest respect.