

Arcadia Mill Archaeological Site

Joseph Forsyth, a Pensacola merchant and shipper, purchased the Arcadia property from Juan De La Rua in 1828 for \$400.00 and began his work at Arcadia by quarrying ironstone for the Pensacola wharf. Soon thereafter, he undertook construction of a dam and sawmill. When he ran short of money for his venture, he enlisted the financial help and mill experience of Ezekiel and Andrew Simpson. In 1830, the firm of Forsyth and Simpson was established and a sawmill on Pond Creek was soon completed. They built a water-powered, two-story sawmill and then constructed a lumber mill about 350 feet downstream. About 1830, Timothy Twitchell bought the northeast quarter of Arcadia from Forsyth for \$121.00. He dammed up a small creek and excavated a flume to connect his new millpond to Arcadia. He then built a sawmill and shingle mill and established the Arcadia Pail Factory in 1841.

A variety of products were manufactured at the Arcadia Mill complex including lumber, shingles, staves, buckets, meal and flour. In 1836, the Arcadia mills were shipping about 5,000 square feet of lumber a week, and as the industrial output from Arcadia increased, an improved means of transportation became necessary; thus, the Arcadia Railroad was born.

Between 1840 and 1845 the Arcadia mills lay silent, as Forsyth and Simpson had since moved their mills to Bagdad to avoid transportation problems; however, they were unable to completely let go of their beloved water-powered complex at Arcadia. In 1845, the partners formed the Arcadia Manufacturing Company and began to build a cotton textile factory. They constructed a brick textile mill, operated by 40 young female slaves who produced as much as 1,300 yards of cotton cloth a day. By 1853, the Arcadia mill was the largest textile factory in Florida, but despite its size, it still made very little money. In 1855, after the death of Forsyth, the textile mill burned and the surviving partners turned their complete attention to the very profitable lumber mills at Bagdad. Arcadia Mill was abandoned.

The Arcadia industrial complex lay silent for 109 years. Then, Mr. Warren Weekes, a local historian, rediscovered the Arcadia Mill site in 1964. Through the cooperative efforts of historians, archaeologists, West Florida Historic Preservation, Inc., the University of West Florida, and interested citizens, this unique piece of Florida history has been preserved for the education and recreation of future generations. Arcadia can now be enjoyed for its natural beauty, and historical and archaeological significance.