

# WILLIAM ERNEST CHESWELL

*Ideals of American Life, A Collection of Biographies of Leading Men of the State of South Carolina, Volume 2* edited by James Calvin Hemphill, Men of Mark Publishing Co., Washington, D.C. 1908.

CHESWELL, WILLIAM ERNEST, president of the Cheswell Cotton mill, of Westminster, South Carolina, is a type of the adopted sons of South Carolina who, coming into the state with the development of manufactures in recent years, have

added so largely to the business enterprise and prosperity of the commonwealth. He was born at Newmarket, Rockingham county, New Hampshire, on November 11, 1858, the only son of his parents, Charles Allen and Sarah Rogers Cheswell. His great-grandfather, Wentworth Cheswell, served in the Continental army. The Cheswell ancestry in America dates back to Paul Cheswell, a native of New Hampshire in 1720.

After studying at Newmarket high school he began work in his chosen line of life (that of the manufacture of cotton goods) in the number four mill of the Newmarket Manufacturing company, as oiler and band boy of the ring spinning room. From the first he was a critical observer of all the processes of the mill, and he interested himself in visiting as many as possible of the mills of New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Maine, while he was still a very young man. After a few years of mill work, he took a position with the Saco Water Power company, in erecting cotton machinery, that he might fit himself more fully to become a manager of mills and a manufacturer. In 1885 he was engaged as overseer of spinning and dressing in the Gibson Cotton mills, at Marysville, New Brunswick, remaining there until July, 1888, when he went to the St. Croix Cotton mills, at Milltown, New Brunswick, a mill with a very large range of pattern work.



*Respectfully Yours  
Wm. E. Cheswell*

Attracted by the opportunities offered in the South for young men of ability in the line of cotton manufacturing, Mr. Cheswell accepted the position of superintendent of the Georgia Manufacturing company, at Whitehall, Georgia, in January, 1890, and remained with them until November, 1892. He was superintendent of the Laboratory mills, at Lincolnton, North Carolina, from November, 1892, until January 1, 1894, at which time he accepted the position of general manager of the Courtenay Manufacturing company, Newry, South Carolina, of which William A. Courtenay was president and promoter. He took charge of the work at Newry before the mill buildings and the dam were completed. He superintended the completion of the buildings and the installation of machinery, and started the mill on print cloths. Those who have watched the development of cotton manufacture in the South will remember that the Courtenay Manufacturing company was one of the first mills in the South to start manufacturing on number 28 warp, number 36 filling.

On December 12, 1899, the Cheswell Cotton Mill company, at Westminster, South Carolina, was organized by Mr. Cheswell, who was elected president and general manager of the new mill and company, while he still retained the superintendency of the Courtenay Manufacturing company, but fourteen miles distant. In July, 1900, as the result of overwork and exposure, from his double duties while he was completing the Cheswell mill and installing its machinery, Mr. Cheswell was taken seriously ill, and was compelled to resign his connection with the Courtenay company.

September, 1900, saw the Cheswell mill ready for its equipment. Few, if any, of the cotton mills in the South, of anything like its size, have been built so quickly. Mr. Cheswell designed the entire plant, and has equipped it with all the known modern appliances for producing the best goods at a minimum cost. He personally superintended the construction, equipment and starting of the mill; and although it began to turn out goods at a time when old-fashioned firms found it difficult to sell their goods in an overstocked market, the Cheswell mill soon secured a ready market for its entire production, and at remunerative prices.

Mr. Cheswell is still (1907) president and general manager of the mill which bears his name. He devotes himself with singleness of purpose to the business enterprise he has in hand. And he conducts that enterprise by methods and upon principles which he believes will inure to the economic profit and the social welfare of the state and of the community in which the mill is situated.

Identified with the Democratic party, in his religious convictions he is affiliated with the Baptist church. He is a Mason, an Odd Fellow, a Knight of Pythias.

Those who are interested in the prosperity of his community and his county regard Mr. Cheswell as a strong addition to the citizenship of his adopted state, since he is one of the best equipped, strongest and most practically successful of the managers of the new cotton mills in the South.

His address is Westminster, South Carolina