

Today in Columbus History: On Monday, May 11, 1855, an ad for the Rock Island Paper Mill appeared in the *Daily Sun*. This business had been established in 1849 on an island in the Chattahoochee River, upriver from Columbus, near the Alabama shore. John Gano Winter, a wealthy New Yorker and a group of associates were the owners. Winter was probably the wealthiest man in Columbus; at one time he lent the city of Columbus \$30,000 out of his own pocket! An abolitionist, Winter returned to New York during the Civil War and came back to Columbus only after the war had ended – in a coffin. He's buried in Linwood Cemetery. The mill was destroyed by Wilson after the Battle of Columbus. A detailed account of the Rock Island Paper Mill was written by Jesse Williams for *Muscogiana*.

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Our snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.

Clipping from Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO).

<https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu>

PRINTING & WRAPPING PAPER.

**ROCK ISLAND PAPER MILLS,
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA.**

THESE MILLS are prepared to furnish the best article of Printing and Wrapping Paper. The paper on which The Daily Sun is printed, is made at these Mills.

The need for an affordable and constant supply of paper on the southern frontier was probably one of the driving factors behind the group of men who together formed the Rock Island Paper Factory corporation in Columbus. ..Headed by Columbus' wealthiest citizen, John G. Winter, the group purchased 146 acres of land in Lee County, Alabama, from Major R. S. Hardaway of Muscogee County, Georgia. They built the factory on a four-acre island in the Chattahoochee River, two and a half miles above Columbus. The factory became a very successful paper mill. The three-story building seventy-five feet long by thirty-six feet wide was located on the island with a finishing room, warehouse, and accessory structures on the Alabama land. By 1850, the company employed seven girls, two boys, thirteen men and a teamster. A foreman was paid \$100 dollars per month, a machinist \$60, two operatives \$40, and the girls \$8. The remaining laborers were possibly slaves. With a capital of \$40,000, by 1850 the factory operated a Fordenier machine and could make paper to equal the quality of any made in the North. The Rock Island Factory manufactured printing, letter and wrapping paper.

--From "The Rock Island Paper Mill" by Jesse Williams, published in *Muscogiana*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Fall 2010), p. 35+; accessed May 11, 2020 at

<https://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=muscogiana> .