One of the early families of Towns County was the Elisha Townsend family. Before writing of his descendants, a brief description of his ancestry is given.

The earliest known ancestor was Repentance Townsend in Augusta County, VA. He was born about 1725 of possibly Quaker parents. Repentance had five known sons, Thomas, Samuel, Andrew, John and Henry. The family migrated to what was believed to be Tyron County, NC, but which was later determined to be in the Camden District of SC.

This area became York County in 1798. Repentance died there between 1790-1800. All the sons served in the Revolutionary War.

One son, Thomas, settled in a part of Habersham County, GA, which later became Lumpkin County, GA. He died there in 1836. He had sons Andrews, Edward, Thomas, Jr. and daughter Eleanor. His wife was named Susannah.

Thomas’s son, Edward, settled in Cherokee County, GA. This was the original Cherokee County consisting of most of the territory northwest of the Chattahoochee River. This large county was later divided into ten smaller counties including a smaller Cherokee County. Further division brought the number of counties to twenty-four. Edward wound up in Pickens County which had been formed from the smaller Cherokee and Gilmer counties.

Courthouse records show that Edward amassed an estate of over two thousand acres and eighteen slaves at the time of his death in 1860. He is buried, along with his wife, Anna, and daughter Elizabeth, in the family cemetery at Tate, GA, near one of the marble processing plants.

Edward also amassed a large family of six sons and ten daughters. The oldest son, Eli, who had been born while Edward lived in Habersham County, married Sarah Elizabeth Dyer. They wound up in Union County, GA. Eli served in the war with Mexico. No
record of his death and burial place is known.

Eli and Sarah had seven children. Andrew married Malinda Ingram and is the progenitor of most of the Townsends of Union County. Thomas disappeared after the 1850 Census. Mary Ann married Arthur Owenby. Caleb married Sarah Holcomb and migrated to Monroe County, TN. William married Sarah Eliza Bowers. After his death in 1880, his wife and children migrated to Oklahoma Indian Territory. Betsy married Leander McCreary and migrated to Monroe County, TN.

Elisha was born in 1828 and died in 1897. He married first Sarah Caroline Anthony, the daughter of William Anthony and ? Williamson. They had ten children. Elisha’s second wife was Sarah Lorena Fleming, the daughter of John Fleming and Mary Crawford. They had two children.

Elisha saw early how wrong and futile the South’s cause was during the Civil War and thus chose to go to Cleveland, TN and join the Federal forces.

After the War, Elisha, through hard work and strict frugality and wise trading, accumulated several tracts of land in Union and Towns Counties. He was able to provide all of his children with farms.

Elisha’s offspring, all who settled in Towns county unless otherwise notes were: Martha Ann, born 1849, married John Alexander McClure; Mary E., born 1851, married Joseph Monroe Shook; William Jasper (Bill), born 1853, married Martha Jane Henry and Matilda Catherine Thompson, settled in Murphy, NC and was the progenitor of the Townsons (sp) of that area; Margaret Louise, born 1856, married Thomas Jefferson Bell, migrated to west TX where they were successful in farming, ranching and oil; Mercilla Luma, born 1858, married Thomas Martin Raper, settled in Turtletown, TN; Joseph Marion, born 1860, married Sarah Crain and Laura Duckworth, settled in Union County, GA; Sarah Elizabeth, born 1865, married James M. McGaha, migrated to Oklahoma Indian Territory; Nancy, born 1867, married William Alexander Coker; Thomas Charles, born 1869, married Mary Magdalene Hullender; Andrew Jackson, born 1873, married Cordelia Jane Vandiver, his family migrated to Oregon after his early death; John Elisha, born 1887 married India Jane Howell; and George Hines, born 1889, married Ollie Ann Bryson.

All of those that settled in Towns County had large families and many of their descendants still live there and are connected through marriage to the Daniels, Nichols, Berrong, Plott, Justice, Stevens, McKeehan, Sherriff, Hyatt, Souther, Collins, Sullivan, Rivers, Cloer, Jenkins, Davis, Ross, Ingram, Prater, Satterfield, Anderson, Hooper, Kuykendall, Hughes and many, many more families.

By Edward Townsend.
ELISHA TOWNSEND

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The earliest known ancestor was Repentance Townsend in Augusta County, Virginia. He was born about 1725 of possibly Quaker parents. Repentance had five known sons, Thomas, Samuel, Andrew, John, and Henry. The family migrated to what was believed to be Tryon County, North Carolina, but which was later determined to be in the Camden District of South Carolina. This area became York County in 1798. Repentance died there between 1790-1800. All the sons served in the Revolutionary War.

Elisha and Lorena Fleming Townsend and Family

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