

Lights, camera, action!

Project to promote Oconee takes shape

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NEWRY — Except for one or two souls going in and out of the historic general store that is now a U.S. Post Office, or the passing of an occasional vehicle, the film crew shooting a promotional video of Oconee County had Broadway Street all to itself on a hot Wednesday afternoon at the old mill town.

Founded in 1893, Newry was the first mill village established in Oconee County. The former cotton mill town was selected among a dozen sites of special interest that promoters of the video hope will capture the imagination of visitors, homebuyers or businesses looking to make Oconee home.

Gene and Betty Borman of GBA Productions set up their camera on the front porch of a home across the street from the post office. The towering abandoned textile plant loomed in the background.

Cast as Andrew Pickens' son to narrate the video, Minnesota actor Scott Keely took his position close to the rail. Standing behind the Bormans, Steve Hall held the script he wrote for the production and waited for Keely to deliver his line.

Glancing up at the tower next to the plant, Keely turned to the camera and spoke his lines: "Word has it nobody took that 9 p.m. bell to clear the street very seriously after a while." The Bormans had Keely repeat the line many times until they were satisfied with every gesture and enunciation. At one point, the shooting was briefly interrupted as Keely's wife, Sally, sat



Jessica Neims/Staff

Members of GBA Productions of Seneca spent Wednesday afternoon at Newry filming scenes for 'Oconee, Land Beside the Water.' Actor Scott Keely, center, plays the part of Andrew Pickens' son.

faint on a chair.

Used to Minnesota high temperatures in the 70s during this time of the year, the 90-plus degree heat had finally gotten to her.

Patrick Lee, executive director of the Greater Seneca Chamber of Commerce, which is producing the video, gave a historical perspective to Keely's line. Lee said the "lint heads," as the mill town folks were called, went into their homes when the bell sounded. They would not come out again until the bell sounded again at

4:30 a.m.

After he completes his fourth day of shooting on location today, Keely figures he'll know more about Oconee County history than many who have lived here all their lives.

"It's the same up north," Keely said. "A lot of people travel to see someone else's history, but not their own. This video is all about raising awareness."

Keely, Hall and the Bormans credit Luther Lyle, chairman of the Oconee Arts and Historical Commission, for the important role his contagious love of local history has played in moving the production forward.

Lyle has done it all, from consulting to holding a sun reflector during filming to clearing brush at Treaty Oak, one of the scenes to be shot today re-enacting the first treaty between the Southeastern Indians and the federal government during the 1780s. Lyle held up his right arm to show a nasty rash from an encounter with Poison Ivy while clearing brush.

The crew has shot hours of footage. They will have captured moments at Keowee Town Landing and on Lake

Keowee, the Chattooga River, Fort Hill, Oconee Station and Bethel Presbyterian Church, where Andrew Pickens Jr. attended church. All that work will be edited down to a 15-minute DVD the Bormans plan to preview at Duke Energy's World of Energy auditorium sometime in the fall. Lee said Duke has made a commitment to donate financially to the project.

When completed, Lee said he wants at least 1,000 DVDs to be put in the hands of school officials, and groups and organizations tasked with promoting Oconee.

Anyone wishing to donate to the project should call the Seneca chamber of Commerce at 864-882-2097.