



WALTON RELATIONS

Volume 3, Issue 2

Walton County Genealogy Society

November 2011

Research Center

One of the ongoing projects of the Walton County Heritage Museum and the Genealogy Society is the Research Center, which is located in the meeting room of the Museum. The Research Center includes the Genealogy Society computer, microfilm reader, genealogy bookshelves full of research aides, and a file cabinet of photographs, maps, and documents organized by people, places, and events. Our goal is to have all reproducible materials in the collection of the Walton County Heritage Association available to the public within the file cabinet. We encourage our members to give us copies of their family trees and genealogies.

One of the newer entries in the Research Center is an article by **Joan Ray Godwin**, a frequent contributor to this newsletter, titled "Some Walton County Families: Hulion." The article is a 16-page detailed genealogy of the Hulion family, complete with census records and photographs. Visit the Research Center to view the article or send an email to us at WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net to request a copy of it in PDF format.

WCGS Meeting

The Walton County Genealogy Society will meet on Saturday, November 12, at 10:00 AM at the Walton County Heritage Museum.

Authors Book Signing

On Saturday, December 3, from 10-3 at the Museum, meet authors from the Panhandle who will be pleased to sign their books.

- W. Charlene Ammons of DeFuniak Springs - *The Plan*
- Olivia deBelle Byrd Cooley of Panama City - *Miss Hildreth Wore Brown: Anecdotes of a Southern Belle*
- Deborah Polston of Tallahassee - *Victor's Dream*
- Brian Rucker of Milton - *Treasures of the Panhandle*

Walton County Heritage Museum

Open Tuesday - Saturday: 1:00- 4:00 PM
1140 Circle Drive, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435
850-951-2127

www.WaltonCountyHeritage.org
WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net

NORTH AND SOUTH COUNTY MILESTONES

Compiled by **Wayne Sconiers**

We all have a general knowledge of American history and perhaps Florida history, but it is also helpful to have a basic understanding of local history in order to understand the lives of our ancestors. Below are some milestones from two areas of our county that may help with your research.

Milestones of DeFuniak Springs

From Notes by the Late **Harold Gillis**

1898 – An ice storm froze animals in the fields.

30 July 1901 – The electors voted to organize the city and incorporate.

For many years, old kerosene lanterns were hung from posts around Lake DeFuniak to provide light for the residents.

1905 – Harry Murray was awarded a 20 year franchise to provide acetylene gas to the public. It was fuel for the carbide lighting systems. It is not known if he exercised this franchise. Most business places had their own gas generating systems.

3 March 1907 – An ordinance was adopted to provide public water works, which was installed where the water tank now stands. \$20,000 was allotted. \$10,000 was also allotted for schools and \$3,000 for the sewer system.

About 1908 – One of the first automobiles in town was a Brush with a one cylinder engine and a chain drive to the rear wheels. It was used to deliver the mail to Freeport and was worn out within the year.

1909 – The first sidewalks were paved in the downtown area.

During the early Chautauqua times, Charles E. Murray operated an indoor merry-go-round at 116 West Baldwin Avenue. In later years, they added a Ferris wheel behind the building. The location has since been stores for Danley Furniture, Heilig-Meyers Furniture, Rooms and More and, currently, Ashley Furniture.

7 January 1910 – The city adopted an ordinance providing \$8,000 for an electric light plant to be installed at the public water station. A steam powered plant was installed, providing 100 KWH of power.

One of the very first electric lights was installed at 7th street and Circle Drive. It was placed in the center of the street to separate north and south traffic. At that time, the L&N Railroad, with all the parking attendants, made this intersection dangerous.

The circular drive around Lake DeFuniak was first named Wright Avenue in honor of T.T. Wright, a builder and developer and promoter of Chautauqua. The name was changed to Circle Drive much later. Wright lived in Pensacola, but he had a home on the drive, which was later known as the old Howard Cawthon home.

1918 – The flu epidemic devastated the country.

The Chautauqua Hotel, later renamed Walton Hotel, was located where the Gulf Power office is now.

About 1927 – The Florida Chautauqua ceased its activities.

26 January 1928 – Circle Drive, a very dusty drive, was set to be paved by a city ordinance.

By 1933, it was deemed necessary to institute the Federal Welfare program to help meet the needs of many in our community. However, for many years the county had operated a poor farm about half of a mile southeast of the East Baptist Church. Many needy families were given food and housing. They were expected to farm to defray the cost of their keep. A Mr. McCollough operated and managed the farm; later his son John took over.

The Beach and Rogers sawmill had a tram to Glendale.

The first operator of the commissary at Glendale was Bill Jones.

Local attorney S.K. Gillis had his business office where Marie's Hitching post is now on the corner of Baldwin Avenue and 6th Street.

DeFuniak Springs had a rehabilitation center called the County Road Camp located near where the DeFuniak Springs Shopping Center was later built.

21 January 1985 – The temperature got down to -2 degrees.

Milestones of Point Washington

From *Sandpiper Journal: Memories of Old Point Washington* by **Peggy Bailer**

The area was named Point Washington because it was located in Washington County at that time.

1880 – Two sawmills were in the area, owned by I. N. McLane and W. L. Crigler. The mills produced in excess of one million feet of lumber each.

1884 – It was a thriving community. Henry Faust was Justice of the Peace. The general store was operated by Thomas Hannah, and his brother William Hannah was the doctor.

Simeon Strickland later operated a lumber mill. He was a confederate veteran who came to Point Washington in 1871 from a prisoner of war status. The mill later became known as Strickland-Wesley after the marriage of Strickland's daughter to W. H. Wesley.

About 1889 – Rev. John Wesley, who was living in the upper part of Washington County, was invited to come and preach at Point Washington. He and two of his sons came in January of 1890. He organized and set up the Methodist Church. Later, Mrs. Wesley and their other five sons came from Georgia.

Some of the original members of the Methodist Church were Mr. and Mrs. Frank Gunn and children, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Kinney and their daughter, Addie Holley, Lilla Russ, John Russ, Katie and Nettie Strickland, Mr. and Mrs. Dixon Jones, Victoria Modrill, and others.

The Strickland-Wesley lumber company donated lumber for the church.

General William Miller, a Confederate hero, donated land for the church, cemetery, school, and a park, which was located near W. H. Wesley's home. The home is now part of Eden Gardens State Park.

The *Captain Fritz*, a paddle wheeler, and the sailboat *Magnolia*, which was owned and operated by George Houseman, were two of the most prominent boats to call upon Point Washington. They carried passengers and freight to Pensacola.

The small freighter called *The Jewel*, owned by George Houseman's son Harry, called on the port. Its engine had a very distinctive sound that traveled over the water for miles so people could hear it and know *The Jewell* was arriving.

Late 1930s – President Franklin Roosevelt, with war looming and looking at defense, decided to pour money into digging the inland waterway and paving U.S. Highway 98.

Eglin Field was activated and, with the declaration of war in 1941, the shipyard in Panama City was built.

Before Highway 98 was paved in 1938, the only way to reach a doctor or attend to matters in town was to cross the Choctawhatchee Bay on the Jolly Bay ferry. *The Lark*, as it was called, was owned and run by W. H. Wesley's sons, Willie, Edgar, and Arthur. *The Lark* was built of timber from the steamer *Charles E. Cessna*, which carried passengers from the north to Santa Rosa Plantation, which is now the Hogtown Bayou area of Santa Rosa Beach. It cost a dollar to make the trip and took over an hour. *The Lark* ran at least twice a day but had no real schedule.

A free ferry was put in by the state and made several trips per day on schedule. A draw bridge replaced the ferry in 1941, and Captain Joe Shelly of the free ferry was transferred to be the caretaker of the draw bridge.

The J. J. McCaskill sawmill was in operation from 1908 to 1931 at Jolly Bay.

©2011 Walton County Heritage Association, Inc.

www.WaltonCountyHeritage.org

Walton Relations is a publication of the Walton County Genealogy Society. Wayne Sconiers, President. Distribution is encouraged! For more information or to submit an article, please email its editor, Diane Merkel, at WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net or call 850-897-4505.