WALTON RELATIONS

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Attribution of Dogtag to Civil War in Error

In an article I wrote this past January for the Walton County Genealogy Society newsletter, I incorrectly attributed a dog tag found in north Walton County to the Civil War time period. I have recently learned, however, that the item was actually from World War I.

According to Alabama National Guard records, Private Albert H. Cook was mobilized by that organization on June 19, 1916, at Florala. His unit information for Co. E., 2nd Ala. Inf., per the National Guard records, agrees with that shown on the dog tag. His National Guard identifying information gave his age as 16 years and 5 months, height 5 ft. 11 inches, complexion dark, eyes blue, hair dark, born Headland, occupation chauffeur, single, address Florala, and T.M. Gipson (or Sipson), friend. His enlistment expired December 14, 1916. As his National Guard records agree with that shown on the dog tag, it appears likely that the dog tag belonged to him. Lending further support to this is that his residence of Florala was only a short distance from the location where the dog tag was found.

When mistakes of this nature are discovered, it is always best to advise those who were misinformed by published information that an error was made, and that the information presented may be inaccurate. I sincerely apologize for this error and any inconvenience it may have caused.

Sam Carnley

WCGS News

The Walton County Genealogy Society will not meet in September. The next meeting will be on Saturday, October 11, at 10:00 a.m. at the Walton County Heritage Museum.

In Search of Photographs

We recently received requests for the following photographs. If you have one or know where one might be viewed, please let us know.

- **William McPherson**, Commander of the Walton Guards. We are also looking for his burial location, probably in California.
- **Michael Grimaldi**, developer of the area now known as Miramar Beach. We are also looking for information about the military subdivision in that area that the government developed after World War II and sold to veterans as building lots.

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
HeritageMuseum@centurylink.net

The Chisca Palisade
And the Tale of a Mysterious Battle Axe.
*By **Sam Carnley***

The people of the villages around the Spanish Mission of San Luis in the province of the Apalachee Indians near present day Tallahassee were growing weary of attacks perpetrated against them at night by unknown raiders. They had endured the sporadic assaults for decades as inevitable, given the presence of tribes in the region hostile to them.[1] But a sudden increase in the frequency of attacks between 1675 and 1677 engendered greater urgency in the Spaniards and village chiefs to identify the offenders and end the depredations. During an inquiry convened by the Spanish territorial governor at St. Augustine in October 1676, witness testimony pointed to the imprisoned half Chisca, Chacato cacique, Diocsale, as the instigator of the attacks. The Spaniards imprisoned him for inciting a revolt against priests at missions in villages of the Chacato tribe west of the Chipola River in 1674 and conspiring to murder one of the priests. In the absence of restrictions on outside contact allowed at his St. Augustine prison cell, Diocsale had exhorted Chisca kinsmen visiting him to wage war on the Christian Apalachees and the Spaniards. Acceding to his wishes, the Chiscas abandoned their former village on the Chattahoochee River in the northeast corner of today's Jackson County and moved several days west where they built a palisade from which they began sending raiding parties against the Apalachee villages.[2]

Evidence from the inquiry, and other sources, convinced Apalachee chiefs at San Luis of the Chisca's culpability in the raids on their villages. Deciding to organize an expedition against them, Juan Mendoza, Matheo Chuba, Don Bernardo Ynachuba, and Bentura, high-ranking men among the Apalachees, formed a plan of action and took it to Captain Juan Fernandez de Florencia, the lieutenant governor garrisoned at San Luis. He endorsed it and gave them harquebuses, bullets and powder to reinforce their bows and arrows. Appointing the above four as principal chiefs of the expedition, he admonished them to behave like brothers on the journey as well as on the battlefield.[3] He did not, however, offer to go or send any of the Spanish soldiers from his garrison with them. It was strictly an Indian undertaking, initiated, organized, and to be solely executed by them. As non-military citizens of a Spanish colonial province and subjects of the crown, they functioned as an officially sanctioned provincial militia.[4]

From surrounding villages, the militia mustered a force of 190 men. Included were a few Christian Chacatos who had settled among the Apalachees. On September 2, 1677, the militia departed San Luis with the Chacatos as guides to find the Chiscas.[5] A march of several days brought them to Mission Santa Cruz de Savacola on the Apalachicola River, where the Apalachicola cascique Baltasar waited with 20 canoes to ferry them across. On leaving Santa Cruz, Baltasar and six of his men joined the expedition, bringing its number to just under 200.[6]

On the morning of the tenth day of their journey since leaving Apalachee, they started out along a trail they came upon days before. The Chacatos told them it led from the sea to the village of the Chiscas and was built by the Chacatos and Panzacolas who settled by the sea. Straying from the trail soon after taking it, they continued westward blazing their own. The fourteenth day they traveled in the rain and camped that night by a spring. After marching about a league (2.6 miles) the following morning, they came to a river they called Napa Ubab. Historians think the river was the Choctawhatchee and the spring was that known today as Washington Blue Spring Choctawhatchee. Slowed by dense forests on both banks of the river and possibly flooding, they ended day fifteen crossing the stream. On reaching the west bank, they bedded down for the night. All of day sixteen they marched and, at night fall, arrived at a little river they called Oclacasquis, or Rio Colorado.

Continuing on the next day, the seventeenth of the journey since leaving Apalachee, they camped in the evening by a small pond. The next morning they started out in a westerly direction and, after a time, heard from the Chacatos that they recognized woods by which they knew they were nearing the Chiscas. Scouts dispatched ahead to find the village road reported back that they had found it. Traveling with the scouts in the lead, the militia reached the road about sunset. With arrival at their destination imminent, the chiefs gathered the militia to decide on strategy. Quickly settling on a plan to continue their advance through the night, they started along the road toward the palisade. They had gone about a league when they "heard noise and a drum and saw big fires." Also coming to their attention was the heavily traveled appearance of the road. To that, the Chacatos informed them it was "greatly beaten by people who returned to the palisade of the Chacatos, Panzacolas and Chiscas who lived near the sea."

Stopping again for another strategy session and to make ready for the final assault, they "retired to a height to prepare ourselves, examine our arms, and fit ourselves up." The chiefs once again huddled briefly and decided to attack before dawn the next morning. Putting two men on point to reconnoiter, the militia stole quietly through the dark behind them toward the palisade. When they reached the waiting point men, they sat down to watch the palisade and fires. The two men told them they had looked inside the palisade, which was big and spacious with walls 300 paces long on each side. They saw many people inside who were not sleeping but, on the contrary, clamored noisily and heaped wood on the fires inside and outside the palisade to keep them burning all night.

The chiefs gathered the militia for a final strategy talk. The attack would begin at 3:00 o'clock in the morning. Rather than surround the palisade, which they had too few men to do, they would send the full force of the militia against one wall. Captain Don Bernardo would lead the attack on the east flank with his drum and fife. Captain Juan Mendoza would lead on the west flank, with the remainder of the force in the middle. After a sleepless night by attackers and unsuspecting defenders alike, the appointed time of the attack arrived before dawn on the nineteenth day of the expedition. At the moment the order came and they rose to charge, a Chacato sentry with the Chiscas saw them and sounded the alarm:

> *At this instant a Chacato who was on sentinel duty cried out that we were there. We all attacked at once, giving them a whole charge of harquebus and archery and pulling out the sticks [from the palisade], and through the openings the captains threw themselves in upon the enemy with their harquebusiers, killing our enemies. Within the palisades there were three big houses with their embrasures, where so many of the Chiscas retired and shot so many arrows at us from their shelter that it looked like a dense smoke.*
>
> *As we carried with us small levers, we destroyed, helped by our firearms, many boards, and we killed and wounded so many that the wounded began fleeing and threw themselves into the river to drown themselves. Our cartridges set fire to the houses. They killed five of our men and wounded forty. There was a tree which had caught fire from our firearms and its burning leaves set fire to many houses, and the fact that although it was green it should have caught fire and should burn like tinder greatly excited our attention. When the Chiscas saw that wonder they threw themselves into the river which is in a ravine there, as well men as women with their small babies clasped to their bosoms. Although we wished to save them and keep them alive, they were almost dead and drowned. We found others alive under the corn cribs (barbacoas), and we pulled them out, separating the dead from the burned (or wounded) ones, and in so doing covered ourselves with blood from head to foot. Putting out the fire of the several houses that were burning, we found eighteen men and one boy dead. We did not count the women and children, for as they had hidden in sentry boxes and behind or under boarding many of them were consumed by the fire. All this lasted from three o'clock in the morning until sunrise, when we saw that the Chiscas had all fled and had crossed the river swimming.*

In the battle aftermath, the Apalachees attended their casualties and secured their position in the palisade against a Chisca counter attack. They heard loud shrieking from the Chiscas on the opposite bank of the river where they had fled and, during the day, rained arrows on the palisade, as its site by a narrow place in the river put it well within their bowshot. Because of its large number of wounded men, the militia declined an attack across the river to dislodge them. That soon became unnecessary anyway when the Chiscas ran low on arrows. Remaining there for two days, the militia sent men in search of provisions to sustain them during the return trip home. On the third day, they torched the palisade and set out, carrying their wounded on litters. Within a short distance, they encountered a party of menacing Chiscas blocking their path. But the downing of two of them by militia captains who shot them with their harquebuses sent the others running. Six days into their return march, the militia met a party from Apalachee bearing sorely needed provisions, the like of which they had too little of throughout the expedition. Satiated by the nourishment, they continued light of heart and arrived back at Apalachee on October 5, 1677.[7]

Where the Chisca palisade was is a mystery. Historians have long thought it was somewhere along the west bank of the Choctawhatchee River.[8] But it is clear from translations of the account of the expedition, written in Spanish by Captain Juan Fernandez de Florencia in 1678, that the militia traveled twenty miles or more west of the Choctawhatchee to reach the palisade. The only two land marks described in the account which can be identified with certainty are the Choctawhatchee River and Washington Blue Spring Choctawhatchee. The spring establishes the approximate location where the militia crossed the river. Beyond that its route becomes a guessing game.

Using largely the guessing approach in gaining an idea of the site's location yielded two different places. One is at the forks of Alaqua and Little Alaqua Creeks on the Eglin reservation a bit less than three miles northwest of Freeport.[9] The distance traveled from Choctawhatchee River to this site is probably less than thirty miles. The other is on Shoal River near its confluence with Pond Creek at Dorcas in the eastern edge of Okaloosa County. To reach this location from Choctawhatchee River requires about thirty-six miles of travel. These locations were determined through reconstructions of the Apalachee expedition route to the site based on clues gleaned from translations of the de Florencia account, historical records of centuries-old Indian trails of Walton County, and archaeological evidence on or near each site. The fact that there are two different reconstructions attests to the ambiguity afflicting the translations.

Ultimately, archaeological evidence will determine the location of the site. Prehistoric and later American Indian archaeological sites are present in the vicinity of the Alaqua Creek location. Archaeologists have surveyed them, but it is unknown if they turned up any evidence of a palisade, battle ground or a particular Indian tribe. Spanish artifacts have been discovered on lower Alaqua Creek.[10] If anything is known of how they got there, it has not been reported.

Whether any Native American artifacts are at the Shoal River location is unknown. Other than a reconstruction of the Apalachee expedition route pointing to it, what makes it notable is a story that in the 1950s or 1960s, a farmer living at Dorcas less than a mile north of the river plowed up an object in his field that was identified as a Spanish battle axe. A weapon of this description would not seem unusual in the arsenal of the Apalachee militia, which also included Spanish firearms. Local newspapers published articles and photos of the artifact before its owner donated it to the Smithsonian Institution, where it now resides.[11] Efforts to obtain copies of the articles and photos to substantiate the story have thus far proven unsuccessful. Neither have there been any responses to inquiries submitted to the Smithsonian regarding the item. In the absence of authoritative information on the artifact, any attempt to classify it as to type or identify it to a particular historic time period would be questionable.

That did not, however, deter speculation regarding its source. When news of its discovery broke, the story goes that locals attributed its being there to a Spanish mission said to have been in the area centuries ago.[12] But the western most mission according to Spanish records was San Carlos, about thirty-five miles west of the Apalachicola River, in either today's Jackson or Washington County.[13] Other possible sources are the Apalachee expedition and the Governor Torres y Ayala expedition from San Luis to Pensacola Bay in 1693. The expeditions of Narvaez, Soto, and Luna are also possibilities. Absent evidence of their direct contact with the area, the artifact could have fallen into the hands of Indians who transported it there from someplace else, or it could have come from an unknown expedition. The Ayala expedition's jumping off point across the western panhandle was the abandoned mission, San Nicolas de Tolentino, near the present day Town of Jacob in northwest Jackson County.[14] From there it traveled in a generally westward direction, bypassing the head of East Bay before terminating further west on the north shore of Escambia Bay. Along the way, it crossed Holmes Creek and upper Choctawhatchee River, passed an unidentified spring, and forded Yellow River above its confluence with Shoal River.[15] Traversing the present day counties of Holmes, Walton, Okaloosa, and Santa Rosa, its route conceivably took it through the area where the battle axe story originated.

The expedition consisted of one hundred and twelve men and seventy-six horses.[16] The men included seventy-four Apalachee Indians,[17] five Choctaw (Chacato/Chatot) Indian guides,[18] thirty infantry soldiers, the Governor, and two priests.[19] If the battle axe did not come from the Ayala expedition or the Apalachee militia, then its source remains a mystery. An advance party sent to break trail ahead of the Ayala expedition consisted of five soldiers and twenty Indians. The leader of this party was none other than the priest, Friar Rodrigo de la Barreda (Barrera),[20] who the cacique Diocsale was imprisoned for conspiring to murder following the Chacato revolts of 1674.[21] It is also possible that some of the Apalachee and Chacato Indians with Ayala participated in the expedition against the Chiscas sixteen years earlier. Even if the Chisca palisade was not on Shoal River or Alaqua Creek and little is known of the battle axe, the stories surrounding them, whether imagined or real, make a fascinating tale.

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1. John Reed Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors* (Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 73, Washington D. C., 1918), p. 299.
2. John H. Hann, *Visitations and Revolts in Florida, 1656-1695,* (Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research, Division of Historical Resources, The Capitol, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250, 1993), pp. 60-65.
3. Swanton, p. 300.
4. John H. Hann, *APALACHEE, the Land between the Rivers,* (University Presses of Florida, University of Florida Press/Florida State Museum, Gainesville, FL, 1988), p. 186.
5. Swanton, p. 300.
6. Swanton, p. 301.
7. Swanton, pp. 302-304.
8. Hann, 1993, p. 32.
9. Dale Cox correspondence, 2014.
10. *Ibid*.
11. Pamela Pursely, personal interview, Dorcas, Florida, 2014, and Ann Spann, Baker Block Museum, Baker, Florida, 2014.
12. *Ibid*.
13. Hann, 1988, p. 356.
14. Journal of Governor Torres y Ayala, August 5, 1693, in Irving A. Leonard, *Spanish Approach to Pensacola, 1689-1693, Translated,* p. 231 (hereafter Ayala, 1693).
15. Ayala, 1693, pp. 231-236.
16. Ayala, 1693, p. 231.
17. Ayala, 1693, p. 229.
18. Ayala, 1693, p. 230.
19. Instructions issued to Governor Laureano de Torres y Ayala, January 2, 1693, in Irving A. Leonard, *Spanish Approach to Pensacola, 1689-1693, Translated,* p. 213.
20. Journal of Friar Rodrigo de la Barreda, August 3, 1693, in Irving A. Leonard, *Spanish Approach to Pensacola, 1689-1693, Translated,* pp. 267-268.
21. Hann, 1993, pp. 43-44.

Walton Relations is a publication of the Walton County Genealogy Society. Wayne Sconiers, President.
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