



WALTON RELATIONS

Volume 6, Issue 9

Walton County Genealogy Society

August 2015

Funeral Home Records

The Walton County Genealogy Society has been granted access to the former Comander Funeral Home's extensive records, which start in 1962. We have been making digital copies of the records in hopes of making them available at some point in the future after Social Security numbers have been removed.

This project involves scanning literally thousands of images. If you would be willing to assist us for a couple of hours a week, please contact Wayne Sconiers. Minimal computer knowledge is necessary because Wayne can train you on the use of the equipment.

Genealogy Meetings

The Walton County Genealogy Society will not meet in August but will resume meetings in September. In the meantime, please feel free to send us articles and questions. We always look forward to helping people with their research.

Museum Closed

The Walton County Heritage Museum will be closed for renovations from Monday, August 17, through Monday, September 7.

August and September Family Reunions

See our Reunions web page for contact information, if available.

- **Burgess** - The last reported reunion was on 4 September 2010 at the Darlington Baptist Church on Highway 2, west of Darlington.
- **Hobbs** - The last known reunion was on 16 August 2009 at the Civic Center on Highway 83 in DeFuniak Springs.
- **Ingalls/Wilder** - The last known reunion was on 26 September 2009 at the New Hope Community Center on Highway 163, north of Highway 2, in Westville.
- **Monk** - The last known reunion was 12 September 2009 at the Civic Center on Highway 83 in DeFuniak Springs.
- **Thomason** - They met in August 2010 in Andalusia, Alabama. We have not heard anything since then.

Walton County Heritage Museum

Open Friday & Saturday, 1:00 - 4:00 PM
1140 Circle Drive, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435

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Miramar Beach Was Once Shoals, Florida – Part 1

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Miramar Beach is just an extension of Destin, Florida, or so it seems today. As we ride through Destin on US Highway 98, we pass Destin Commons and approach the sign that we are entering Walton County. Destin seems to just continue on with more shopping centers, high-rise condos, golf courses, resorts and residential areas. Some of us notice that we are entering the unincorporated area called Miramar Beach, but it seems that busy Destin, Florida, just continues on into Walton County.



(Modern map of part of Destin and the Beaches of South Walton County)

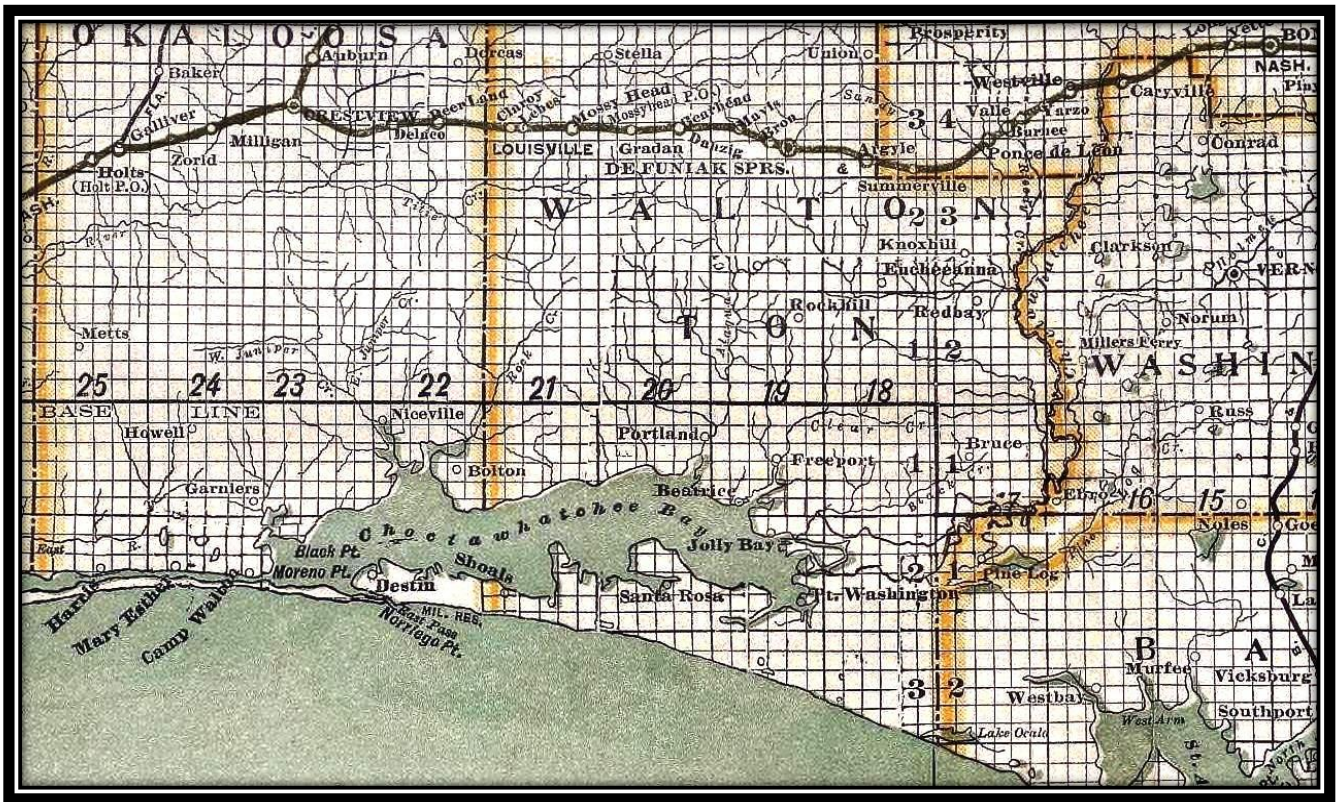
Well, it wasn't always that way. The area that we know as Miramar Beach was once known as Shoals, Florida. Nobody seems to remember Shoals – not even the history buffs. In this article we hope to give the reader some history of this area, discover what happened to Shoals, and learn who actually named the area we know today as Miramar Beach.

The Early Settlers at Shoals were Homesteaders

President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act of 1862 into law on May 20, 1862. The act granted FREE land, of up to 160 acres (a quarter of a section), to any citizen or anyone who wanted to become a citizen of the United States. ⁱ

The applicant had to live on the land for five years and make improvements (build a home, clear the land for farming, etc.) before the title would pass to the homesteader. The Homestead Act was the United States' first real welfare program that made land ownership available to anyone who wanted it for FREE. Homesteading brought immigrants to our young country in droves. Homesteading grew the south, and the west, and helped expand our young country to the Pacific Ocean.

Much of the land in what is today Walton County was available for homesteading, and the availability of FREE land brought homesteaders from North and South Carolina. They migrated through Georgia and Alabama. Some stayed in those states while others pushed on and eventually settled in Florida.



(Portion of a 1920 Map of Northwest Florida Showing Townships, Ranges, and Sections)

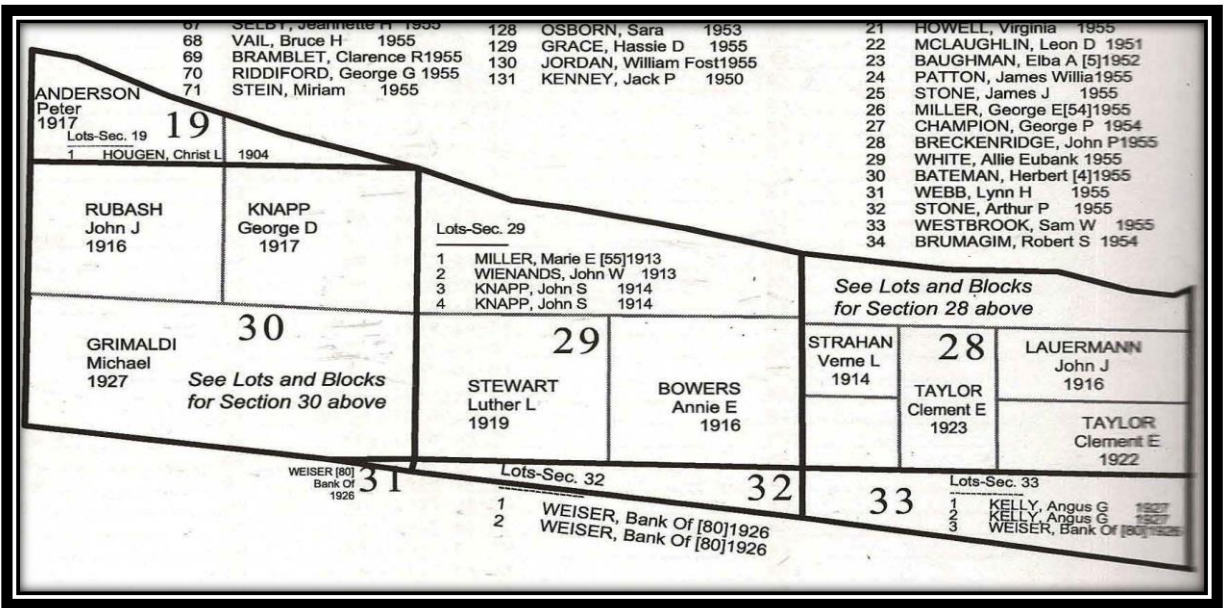
The land south of Choctawhatchee Bay in Walton County was available for homesteading. As we can see from the 1920s map above there were three towns in Walton County south of the bay as follows:

- Point Washington - (Township 2-South, Range 19-West) was available for homesteading.
- Santa Rosa - (Township 2-South, Range 20-West) was available for homesteading.
- Shoals - (Township 2-South, Range 21-West) was available for homesteading.
- Destin – (Township 2-South, Range 22-West) was NOT available for homesteading.

Destin, Florida, which is now in Okaloosa County, was in Washington, then Walton County and was NOT available to be homesteaded. On February 9, 1842, President John Tyler had taken Destin – or Moreno Point as it was first called – out of the public domain and set it aside for the War Department's use as Moreno Point Military Reservation. ⁱⁱ

All of the small squares you see in the 1920 Northwest Florida map above are the Sections that each Township and Range was divided into. A homesteader could get up to 160 acres, or a quarter of a Section. Homesteaders received what were called "Patent" deeds for their property once they complied with all of the stipulations for the free land.

A Patent Deed is a deed given by the United States to the first owner of the land after it was taken out of the public domain. The patent map shown below contains the name of the homesteaders and the year they obtained their deed to Sections 19, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33, which made up Township 2, south, Range 21, west. ⁱⁱⁱ



(Patent Map of Township 2- south, Range 21- west, Walton County, Florida)

The first homesteader in the Shoals area was Christ L. Hougen who acquired Lot 1, in Section 19 on December 20, 1904. This meant that he would have applied for his right to homestead and moved onto the land at least by 1899, as he had to live there for five years before he could obtain a Patent Deed from the President of the United States.

The names of Grimaldi, Rubash, Knapp, Lauerman, and Taylor we know a little about. Later we will talk about Michael Grimaldi who obtained a Patent Deed to his property in 1927, which was the southwest quarter of Section 30, which fronted on the Gulf of Mexico. ^{iv}

On May 17, 1949, the Bureau of Land Management re-surveyed the land in Township 2 - south, range 21- west Tallahassee Meridian that they had not issued Patent Deeds on and subdivided them into lots to be sold under the Small Tract Act of 1938. The northern portion of Section 28, on the bay side, was divided into twenty-eight 2.50 acre building lots. They were sold between the years of 1951 to 1955.

At the same time the Bureau of Land Management also subdivided the southeastern quarter of Section 30, on the gulf side, and it was also divided into one hundred twenty-three 1.25 acre building lots. They were sold between the years of 1949 to 1958. Those 28 lots in Section 28 and 123 lots in Section 30 were part of a government subdivision that was developed after World War II and sold as building lots to ex-servicemen. ^v

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Let's return to the time before modern day development of this area of Walton County when it was called Shoals, before it was known by its current name of Miramar Beach, Florida.

The Shoals Post Office Was Established in 1914

The application to establish the first Post Office at Shoals, was completed by John J. Lauerman on March 30, 1914. He drew the map below which was attached to the application and stated: ^{vi}



(Gerald Knapp, left, and his father George Delbert Knapp, right - Courtesy Lynn McGoogan)

The photo below is a picture of Del Knapp's homestead in 1911. You can see a very simple pine cabin that has a window with no glass. There is someone standing on the front porch. His cattle and horses are corralled in the front yard.



(George Delbert Knapp's Homestead in Shoals, Florida - 1911 - Courtesy Lynn McGoogan)

On March 1, 1919 the post office was discontinued at Shoals and was merged into the Santa Rosa post office, ten and one half miles to the east. This closing of the Shoals post office in 1919 and merging it in with the Santa Rosa Beach post office is probably why no one today remembers Shoals as a separate community.

To be continued. . .

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

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Diane Merkel, at WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net or call 850-897-4505.