



WALTON RELATIONS

Volume 6, Issue 10

Walton County Genealogy Society

September 2015

September and October 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.
- **Campbell/McLean** - Reunions are held annually on the third Saturday of October at the Eucheeanna Schoolhouse.
- **Crowder** - The last reported reunion was on the 2nd Sunday in October at the Crowder Cemetery in Mossy Head.
- **Darlington** - The last reported reunion was in October 2010, location unknown.
- **Day** - The reunion is the last Sunday in October each year, beginning at noon, at the Eucheeanna Community Center.
- **Garrett** - Reunions are the first Saturday in October at the Friendship Church 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.
- **Kelly** - The last reunion was in October 2009 at the Indian Creek Baptist Church.
- **Liberty School** - The last reported reunion was on 10 October 2009 at the Cluster Springs Baptist Church.
- **Monk** - The last known reunion was 12 September 2009 at the Civic Center on Highway 83 in DeFuniak Springs.
- **Pitts** - The last reported reunion was on 31 October 2009 at the Portland Community Center in Portland.

Genealogy Meeting

The Walton County Genealogy Society will meet on Saturday, September 19, at 10:00 a.m. at the Walton County Heritage Museum. Everyone interested in genealogy is welcome to attend.

Museum Closed

The Walton County Heritage Museum will be closed an additional week for renovations and will reopen on Tuesday, September 15.

Walton County Heritage Museum

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

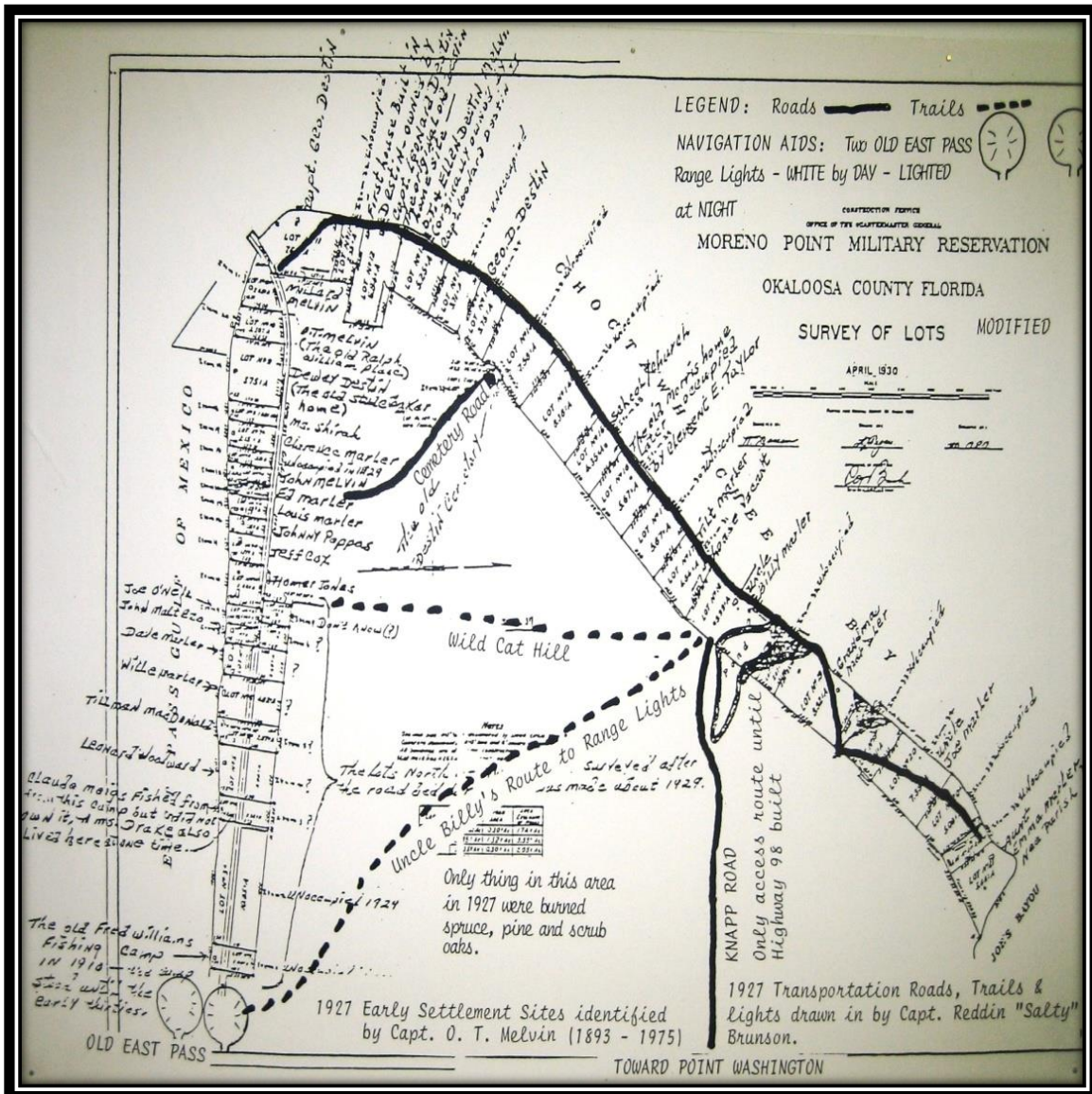
www.WaltonCountyHeritage.org
WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net

Miramar Beach Was Once Shoals, Florida – Part 2

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In the early days, the primary way to get to Shoals was through Destin. As the name Shoals implies, the bay side of Shoals had very shallow water, so the folks at Shoals arrived by boat at Destin (8-1/2 miles away) and then took Knapp Road to get to Shoals.

As shown at the bottom center in this April 1930 Survey of Lots in Destin (below), Knapp Road went from William T. Marler's property (he was the Destin postmaster) to Shoals and possibly on to Santa Rosa Beach and Point Washington. Knapp Road was built by John S. Knapp and his sons Edward and Lester, all of whom had been in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. ⁷

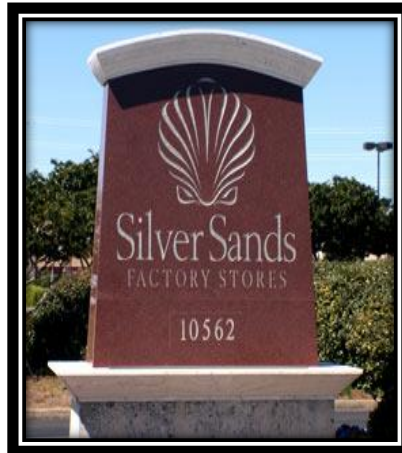


(April 1930 Lot Survey of Moreno Point Military Reservation Showing the Knapp Road)

Homes were built and land was cleared at Shoals. The area grew as a farming community growing citrus trees. Santa Rosa was developed as a planned community with citrus farming as their main crop, while Point Washington grew as a logging community. Then the UNTHINKABLE happened!

In 1924, canker disease hit the orange groves. The farms were in ruins. The trees were uprooted and burned. Unable to pay their debts, many of the area farmers left and returned to where they came from.⁸

The Clement E. Taylor family, who homesteaded two 80 acre tracts in Section 28 at Shoals, moved to Destin after they obtained the Patent Deed to their property. Later, their land was sold to developers and it became the Silver Sands Premium Factory Stores.⁹

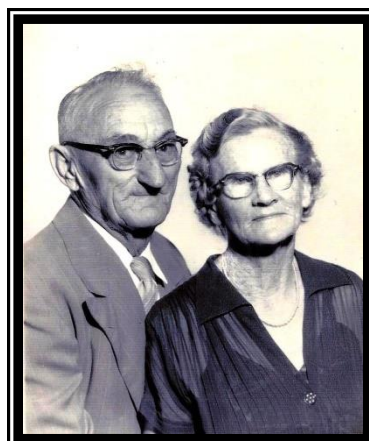


(Silver Sands Factory Stores - 10562 Emerald Coast Parkway)

Homesteader Married the Granddaughter of Leonard and Martha Destin

John J. Rubash homesteaded the northwest quarter of Section 30 in Shoals, and he obtained his Patent Deed in 1916. John was born on February 8, 1883, in Keystone, Polk County, Minnesota. On January 25, 1918, after he got the deed to his homestead, he sold the land to his parents, Barbra and Frank Rubash, and moved to New Orleans. There he went to work on a banana boat for the United Fruit Company.

On January 31, 1919, John Rubash married Mary Jane Woodward. Mary Jane Woodward was the granddaughter of Leonard and Martha Destin, the founders of Destin, Florida. Mary Jane's parents were Jane (Destin) and Fred H. Woodward. Jane (Destin) Woodward was the oldest daughter of Leonard and Martha Destin.



(John Joseph and Mary Jane [Woodward] Rubash)

On July 25, 1925, after the area of Shoals was devastated by citrus canker and their farm ruined, Barbra and Frank Rubash sold the homestead to Howard L. Cawthon for enough to make the trip back to Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, where Frank had previously worked as a coal miner.

John and Mary Jane Rubash moved on also. They moved to St. Andrew, which became a part of Panama City in the newly created Bay County, Florida, where they spent the rest of their lives. John and Mary Jane Rubash are laid to rest in the Evergreen Cemetery in Panama City, Florida. ¹⁰



(Gravestone of John J. Rubash [1883-1962] and Mary Woodward Rubash [1889 – 1971])

Miramar Beach Was Born in the Late 1930s

While many left, some stayed like Col. Michael Grimaldi, who was actually a latecomer. The Grimaldis did not acquire their land until 1927, just about the time many of the citrus farmers were leaving. Michael Grimaldi wasn't a farmer, but he had other ideas for the land.

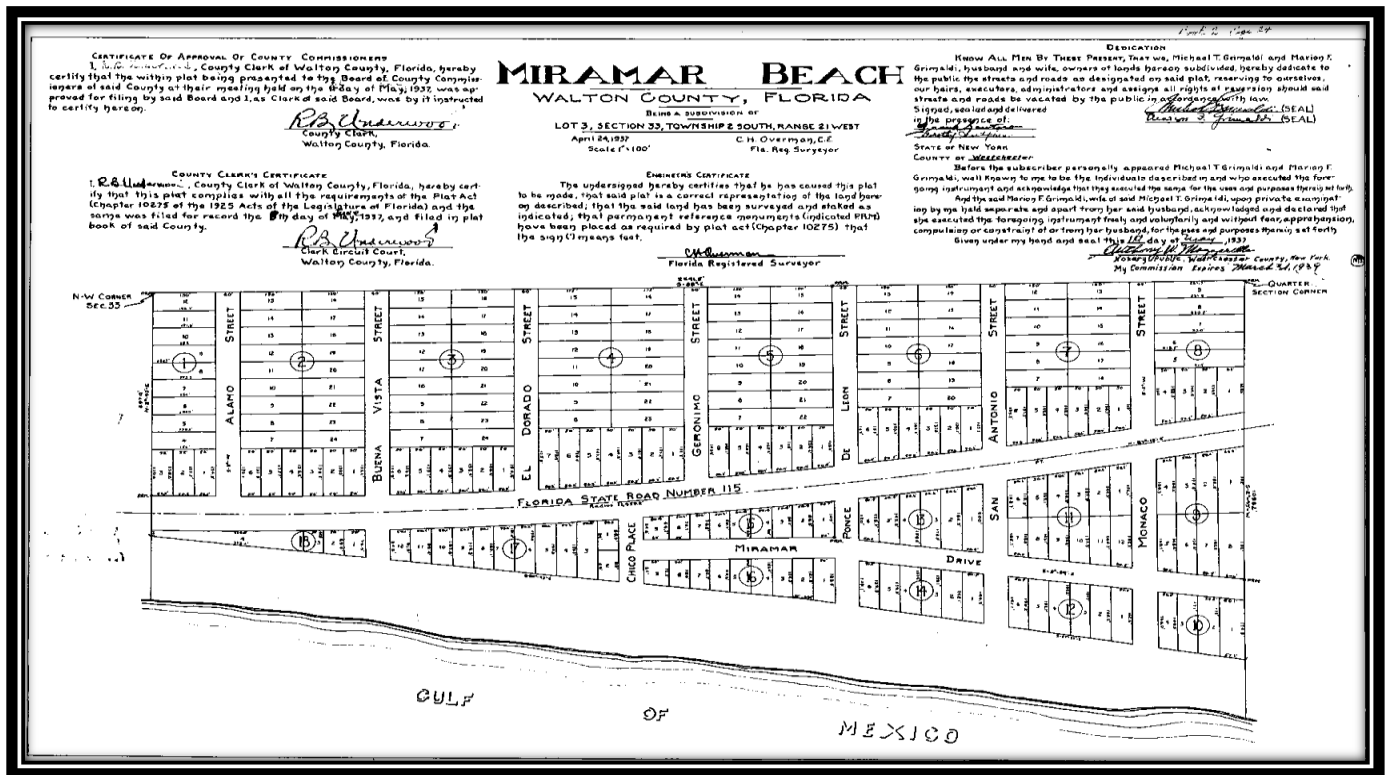
In the 1910s to 1940s, most folks could not see a use for gulf front land. You couldn't grow crops on sand. You couldn't feed cattle on sand. But Michael Grimaldi thought the gulf front land was beautiful. His first land purchase was in 1925. He snapped up land from disappointed farmers and other homesteaders even before he fully obtained title to his own homestead.

Col. Grimaldi's land was on the Gulf of Mexico side of Shoals. In 1936, the Federal Government built US Highway 98, the Gulf Coast Highway, from Apalachicola to Pensacola, Florida. The new highway came right through Col. Grimaldi's land and provided access to the area for the first time by automobile.

Lt. Col. Grimaldi was born in Bari, Italy, on March 5, 1895. He immigrated as a child to New York City with his parents. In 1915, he joined the Army's Engineering Corps and served during World War I. In the early 1920s, after the war, he visited Walton County, loved the sugar white beaches and the Gulf of Mexico, and applied for his homestead land. Michael and his younger brother Tony cleared the land and built a home of hand-hewn timbers and homemade bricks. ¹¹

Because Michael Grimaldi served in the Engineering Corps of the U.S. Army, he understood road building, land development, and general building construction. His time in the U. S. Army prepared him for his idea of developing his land in south Walton County.

Michael and Marion Grimaldi also acquired property in 1925 from failed farmers. They platted their Miramar Beach Subdivision in Walton County on April 24, 1937, from farm land they had acquired. They actually signed the document on May 10, 1937, from Westchester, New York, where they were living at the time. ¹²



(April 24, 1937, Plat of Miramar Beach Subdivision, Walton County, Florida)

Because Michael Grimaldi kept getting called back into the military to serve in the U.S. Army, it was hard for him to relocate his family to the far away panhandle area of Florida, but he kept his dream alive. When the United States entered World War II, he was called back into the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and served in the 3rd Army under General Patton.

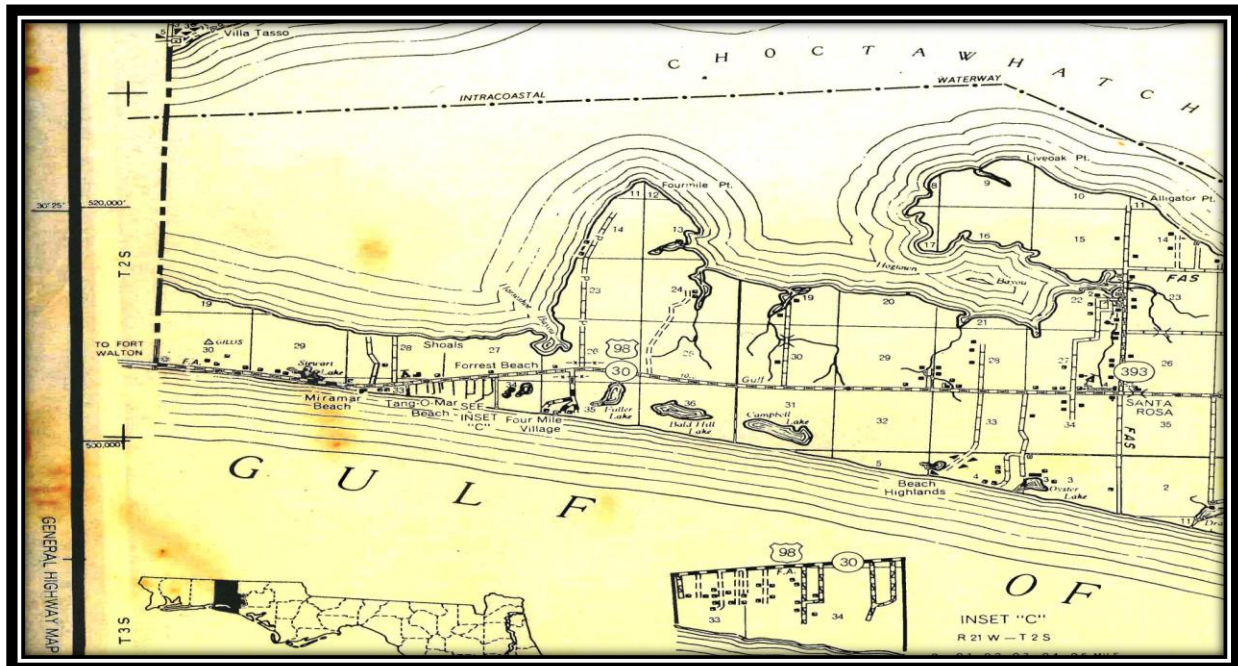
Grimaldi retired as a Lt. Colonel on March 31, 1951. After his military retirement, he and his family finally got to move from New York to Florida permanently, where they always dreamed of living on the beautiful beach along the Gulf of Mexico in Walton County. ¹³



(Lt. Col. Michael Grimaldi, Retired - 1895-1968)

The portion of a June 1950 Florida general highway map shown below indicates the location of the old town of Shoals. It also shows the new town of Miramar Beach and US Highway 98 running from the Okaloosa/Walton county line to the town of Santa Rosa.

When US Highway 98 was originally built, the road hugged the beach along the Gulf of Mexico before it was re-routed to the north to make way for development along the vast area that was once Shoals, Florida. On this Florida road map you can see the Okaloosa/Walton county line, the town of Miramar Beach, Shoals, Tang-O-Mar Beach, Forrest Beach and Four Mile Village. Today, most of those areas are long forgotten except Miramar Beach, which still remains along that now busy stretch of highway in south Walton County.¹⁴



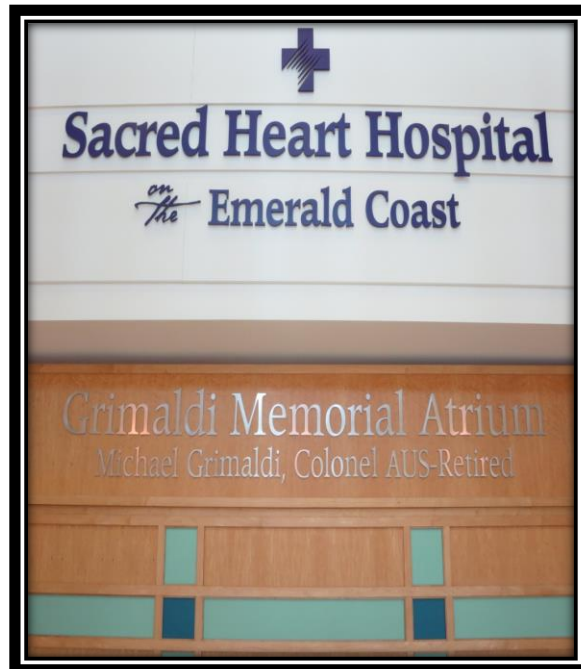
(June 1950 Florida General Highway Map - showing US Highway 98 in South Walton County)

Today, as we drive along US Highway 98, we pass the signs for the Mid-Bay Bridge and pass the Regatta Bay Golf & Country Club. Then we enter Walton County and pass the Emerald Bay Golf Club, the Seascapes Resort, the Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort, the Silver Sands Premium Factory Outlets, Highway 331, the signs for the 331 bridge to Freeport, and signs for all of the small communities on Highway 30-A.

And, of course, the small village of Destin has extended itself well into Walton County. Although there is a sign on the side of the road indicating you are leaving Okaloosa County and entering Walton County, folks today consider it all just Destin. No one remembers that at one time the area as you entered Walton County was called Shoals and the farmers grew orange trees.

So, who exactly named the long forgotten area of Shoals, “Miramar Beach,” you may wonder. Well, according to a recent conversation with Barbara Grimaldi, it was none other than her father and mother, Michael and Marion Grimaldi. They named their property Miramar Beach and Col. Grimaldi envisioned a seaside community of retirees enjoying the sugar white beaches of south Walton County. Their daughter, Barbara Grimaldi, still lives at Miramar Beach and has sold what remained of the 156-66/100 acres Michael Grimaldi homesteaded in 1927 — free land the United States government gave him and other early settlers who staked out their claim in this remote area of Florida.

Shoals, Florida, is no longer remembered, but the founder of Miramar Beach is remembered in the lobby of Sacred Heart Hospital on the Emerald Coast where you can see the name of Col. Michael Grimaldi prominently displayed.



(Grimaldi Memorial Atrium in the Lobby of the Sacred Heart Hospital on the Emerald Coast)

Michael Grimaldi wasn't a farmer; he didn't develop his land to grow orange trees. But Michael Grimaldi was a developer of the land he owned. Both he and his daughter Barbara had a vision of retirees living on residential lots on the beautiful gulf front land they owned — and today that vision has come true.

End Notes:

1. Homestead Act of 1862 - <http://www.nps.gov/home/historyculture/upload/mw.pdf,homestead%20act.txt.pdf>
2. Presidential Executive Order dated February 9, 1842.
3. *Family Maps of Walton County, Florida*, by Gregory A. Boyd, Arphax Publishing Co.
4. Patent Map of Walton County - Township 2-south, Range 21-west, Tallahassee Meridian.
5. Small Tract Act of June 1, 1938 (52 Stat. 609).
6. Shoals, Florida - Proposed Location of Post Office - Florida State Library.
7. Knapp Road as found on Survey of Lots, Moreno Point Military Reservation - dated April, 1930.
8. *Destin History...and The Roots Run Deep*, by Vivian Foster Mattee – “The Town That Canker Killed,” Pages 1-6.
9. Two quarter sections, Section 28, Township 2-south, Range 21-west, Tallahassee Meridian.
10. Family Tree of Jane Destin line of Leonard and Martha Destin Family by Patty Sikes.
11. Obituary, *Playground Daily News*, May 4, 1968 – “Colonel Michael Grimaldi, Pioneer Developer, Dies.”
12. Miramar Beach Subdivision, Plat Book 2, Page 24, Walton County, Florida.
13. Telephone conversation with Barbara Grimaldi on May 30, 2014.
14. Florida General Highway Map, June 1950 - State Library of Florida, Tallahassee, Florida.

The author of this article, H. C. “Hank” Klein, has long been interested in the history of Northwest Florida and the genealogy of his father-in-law’s and mother-in-law’s families (Marler and Shirah). Both came from pioneer Destin families and both were related to Leonard Destin, the founder of Destin, Florida.

Hank’s father-in-law’s aunt, Emma Marler, married George Destin, the first born son of Leonard and Martha Destin. Hank’s mother-in-law’s sister, Alice Shirah, married George D. Destin, the son of George Destin and grandson of Leonard and Martha Destin.

Klein has written books documenting he and his wife’s family genealogy. Hank recently published a historic book about Destin's pioneer settlers. *DESTIN Pioneer Settlers . . . A Land History of Destin, Florida from 1819-1940*, which can be obtained from Tony Mennillo of Arturo Studios at 850/585-2909 or from Amazon.com.

Klein lived for many years in both Okaloosa and Bay Counties. He is now retired from his credit union management career, and he and his wife (the former Muriel Marler of Destin, Florida) live in North Little Rock, Arkansas. He can be contacted at klein@aristotle.net or at 501-256-7474.

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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.