



WALTON

RELATIONS & HISTORY

Volume 13, Issue 6

Walton County Heritage Association

April 2022



WALTON COUNTY HERITAGE ASSOCIATION, INC.

OFFICE LOCATION

Walton County Heritage Museum, (Old Train Depot)

Hours: Open Tuesday – Saturday, 1:00 – 4:00 PM

Postal Address

Walton County Heritage Association, Inc.
1140 Circle Drive, DeFuniak Springs, Florida 32435
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Website: <http://www.waltoncountyheritage.org/#>

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Back Issues: <http://www.waltoncountyheritage.org/GenSoc/newsletters.htm>

Cover Design: Sam Carnley

Newsletter Cover Collage Photos

Clockwise from top left:

1. Darlington, Florida, early 1900s, Courtesy of Baker Block Museum, photographer unknown. Edited by Sam Carnley.
2. *Henderson-Mathis turpentine still in Glendale or Gaskin*. 1904. Black & white photoprint, 4 x 6 in. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/42107>>, accessed 28 June 2017 by Sam Carnley.
3. William Lewis (Luke) Hurst Family, Fleming Creek/Clear Springs area, north Walton County, ca 1894, from “The Heritage of Walton County, Florida,” p. 190.
4. Old Paxton High School, “1961-62 Paxtonian” Year Book, photographer unknown. Edited by Sam Carnley
5. Walton County Heritage Museum, photo and editing by Sam Carnley.
6. Gladys D. Milton (1924-1999), Midwife, Flowersview/Paxton, photo by her daughter, Maria Milton. Also in “The Heritage of Walton County, Florida,” p. 249, and the September 2018 Newsletter at <http://www.waltoncountyheritage.org/GenSoc/NL2018Sep.pdf> Edited by Sam Carnley.
7. Lake Jackson, South Side, in Paxton City Limits, photo and editing by Sam Carnley.
8. Paxton Water Tower, Paxton, Florida, photo and editing by Sam Carnley.
9. Old Freeport School, constructed ca 1908, burned 1943. Photo from “The Heritage of Walton County, Florida,” p. 45. Photographer unknown. Edited by Sam Carnley.
10. *Floralta Saw Mill Company's engine number 3 - Paxton, Florida*. 1907. Black & white photonegative, 4 x 5 in. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. Photographer unknown. <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/146972>>, accessed 7 September 2019 and edited by Sam Carnley. [Built in 1873 and Originally owned by New York, Ontario and Western Railroad Company as engine number 60; then owned by Southern Iron and Equipment Company as engine number 568 in 1907; then owned by Floralta Saw Mill Company as engine number 3 on March 3, 1907; returned to Southern Iron and Equipment Company and number changed to 915 on March 13, 1913; then owned by Louisiana Saw Mill Company as engine 50 in May, 1913.]

The **Walton County Heritage Association, Inc.** is a 501 (C) 3 Florida Not for Profit Corporation Recognized by the IRS as a Public Charity Organization for Tax Deductible Donations.

The Walton County Heritage Association was organized for four main purposes:

- To promote the preservation and restoration of buildings and other landmarks of historical interest within Walton County;
- To maintain the Walton County Heritage Museum to preserve the heritage of Walton County for the education and enjoyment of current and future generations by collecting, preserving, and exhibiting artifacts and information from the time of its original inhabitants to the present;
- To foster and enhance the development, education, and sense of history which is unique to Walton County; and
- To secure cooperation and unity of action between individual citizens, businesses, and other groups as may be necessary to fulfill these purposes.

The Association depends upon the support of its members and the business community to accomplish its goals. Annual dues are \$25 for individuals, \$40 for families and varying amounts for donors as shown on attached Annual Donor/Member Application for 2022. Donor logos are also shown on the attached Donor page in the monthly newsletter.

Annual Member/Sponsor Application 2022; See attached.

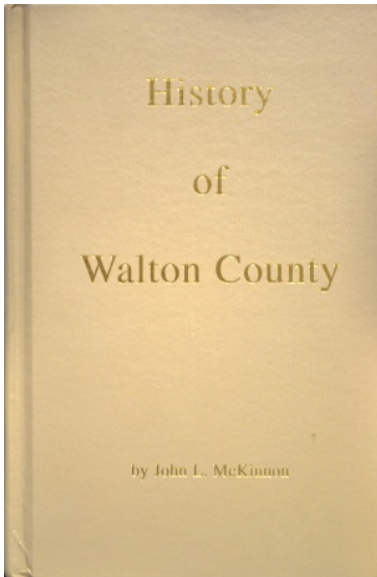
Member Benefits:

- Automatic membership in the **Walton County Heritage Museum** and the **Walton County Genealogy Society**.
- Invitations to Quarterly Members Meetings
- **Discounts** on Special Events
- **The Museum Research Center:** Members get free copies of documents and use of the Genealogy Society computer when the Museum is open.
- **The Museum Gift Shop:** Members receive discounts on books, special publications, postcards, photographs, CDs, DVDs, videos, and gift items.
- Free **subscriptions** to the WCHA Newsletter.

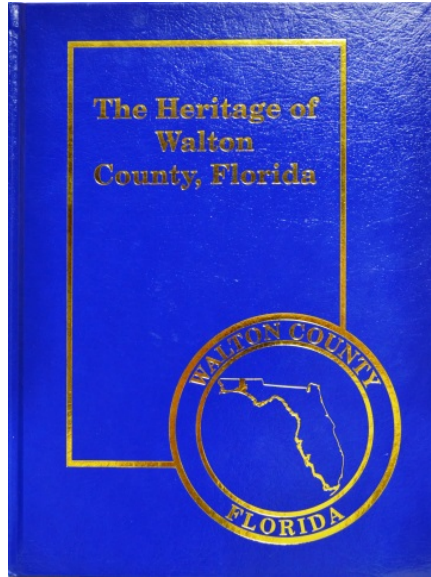
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From the Museum Gift Shop

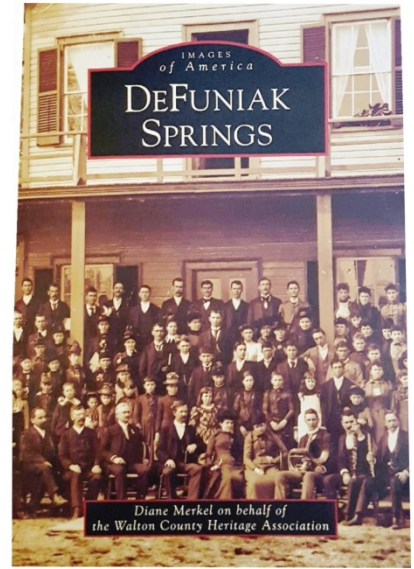
Our most popular books



History of Walton County
by John L. McKinnon. The Museum has sold out of this book and it is out of print, but it is available on line free of charge at this link,
<https://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/georgiabooks/pdfs/gb0503.pdf>



The Heritage of Walton County, Florida. Item code **B13.** History of Walton County's organizations, churches and people. Hard cover, 316 pages, indexed.
\$59.00 plus tax and shipping.



Images of America, DeFuniak Springs. Item code **B06.** By Diane Merkel. Softcover, 128 pages, 185 photos, indexed.
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BOOK MAIL ORDER FORM

Walton County Heritage Association
1140 Circle Drive
DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435

Customer Name: _____
Address: _____
Ph./Email: _____

Quantity	Description	Item Code	Price Each*	Amount
	The Heritage of Walton County, Florida	B13	71.13	
	Images of America, DeFuniak Springs.	B06	31.53	

*Price includes tax at 7% and shipping of \$8.00 per item.

Total _____

Sorry, credit cards not accepted. Please send check or money orders only. Do not mail cash. Please allow two weeks for delivery.



Walton County Heritage Association, Inc.

1140 Circle Drive, DeFuniak Springs, Florida, 32435, Ph. 850-951-2117

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ANNUAL MEMBER/SPONSOR APPLICATION 2022

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Individual \$25.00, Family \$40.00, Sponsor \$100.00, Silver Sponsor \$500.00, Gold Sponsor \$1,000.00, Platinum Sponsor \$2,000.00, Additional Gift \$ _____ * Total Enclosed \$ _____ *Gift earmarked for: _____

Our Mission

The Walton County Heritage Association is a nonprofit organization that was organized for four main purposes:

1. To promote the preservation and restoration of buildings and other landmarks of historical interest within Walton County;
2. To maintain the Walton County Heritage Museum to preserve the heritage of Walton County for the education and enjoyment of current and future generations by collecting, preserving, and exhibiting artifacts and information from the time of its original inhabitants to the present;
3. To foster and enhance the development, education, and sense of history which is unique to Walton County; and
4. To secure cooperation and unity of action between individual citizens, businesses, and other groups as may be necessary to fulfill these purposes.

* Additional gift of over \$2,000.00 (any amount in excess of that number) would be greatly appreciated. You may earmark this gift for a specific expense/purchase of gift items for our museum.

- All donor categories are entitled to membership in the museum and Genealogy Society and 10% discount on museum gift shop purchases.
- For all levels of Sponsorship, the Walton County Heritage Association, Inc. will acknowledge sponsors on our website, in our newsletter and on a permanent plaque in the Museum. Sponsorships are on an annual basis from January to December. This is an acknowledgement of your gift only and does NOT constitute advertisement or the promotion of any individual, business or organization by the WCHA.

Please mail your check and this form to:
WALTON COUNTY HERITAGE ASSOCIATION, INC. 1140 Circle Drive, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435.
THANK YOU!!!

The Walton County Heritage Association, Inc., is a 501(C)(3) charitable organization as defined by the IRS Code. Gifts may be tax deductible as defined by the Federal Income Tax Regulations. To request a receipt for your tax-deductible membership in the WCHA, or donation, please contact us.

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. REF: WALTON COUNTY HERITAGE ASSOCIATION, INC., DTN3054584, CH52108.

OUR SPONSORS for 2022

We dedicate this page to our sponsors in recognition of their generous support of our mission.

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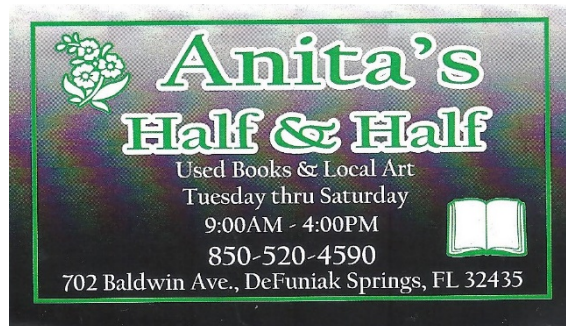
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City of DeFuniak Springs



In the past the city has generously supported us with cash donations of \$2,000.00 annually, but due to changing budget priorities, was unable to do so in 2022. We wish to recognize the city's generosity however, for its in-kind donation of the RR depot which serves as the Walton County Heritage Association, Inc., Museum and administrative facility. The city provides maintenance and upkeep on the facility, and payment of electrical, water and waste disposal services as well. The value of this facility to us is far in excess of \$2,000.00 annually, for which we are deeply appreciative. Thank you, City of DeFuniak Springs.

FISHING THE CHOCTAWHATCHEE

(Written primarily in 1978-1979)

By
Neil O. Myers

Edited by
Sam Carnley

Neal O. Myers is a native of Samson, Alabama. He did not share his birth date with me, but says he is approaching 90, which indicates a birth year in the early 1930s. He grew up in Samson where his daddy owned two stores during which time he took Neil as a boy on many memorable fishing trips on that part of the Choctawhatchee River south of Bruce, Florida. Neil began college in 1949, but dropped out to serve a tour in the Navy in 1950 during the Korean War. After that, he returned to college and earned a B. S. degree with a major in Business Statistics in 1958, having married the previous year. Also, in 1958 he began a career with the E. I. DuPont de Nemours Company which lasted until his retirement in 1987. During his career, he worked in Delaware, Tennessee, Virginia and North Carolina and ended up in Aiken, South Carolina, where he now lives. The stories that follow are from his memories of boyhood fishing trips on the Choctawhatchee River. **Sam Carnley**



Neil O. Myers. Photo courtesy of Neil.

One day in the late 1930s, Daddy was driving from downtown Samson out to the cemetery on a Sunday afternoon. He had heard that Lee Connant was on his 'death bed', very sick and expected to "cross the river" very soon. They had known each other but were not really good friends at that time. In years past Daddy had stopped by Uncle Lee's Cafe for a cup of coffee but he had closed his shop years before.

Daddy thought he'd stop at 'Uncle' Lee's house this Sunday and just visit; maybe cheer the old man up a bit. He apparently cheered him up. Gave him something to live for and look forward to. He told Uncle Lee that if he would hurry up and get well, they'd go to Smokehouse fishing.

The very next week, Uncle Lee walked down to see daddy at one of the stores and said he was 'ready to go'. That was the beginning of many years of fishing together. They fished a lot alike and respected each other. And, Uncle Lee was always ready to go when daddy could find the time since he was still running the stores.

Daddy was 47 when I was born. You might think that we had little in common due to our age difference. You would be wrong. He and mother were the best parents anyone could ever hope for. They both spent a lot of time with my sisters and me and raised us right; or tried. There was never any problem with discipline with any of us. None ever got into trouble with the law or with neighbors. I got a few spankings from mother as I grew up and earned everyone, but daddy never hit me but once. He slapped me when I made a comment in front of the clerks at the store and he misunderstood what I meant that time.

Daddy enjoyed fishing and was patient enough to teach me. We had Flat Creek and Pea River within five miles of Samson, but fishing was not too good there. We usually went 65 miles down into Florida to the Choctawhatchee River to fish. We would turn right off the road between Bruce and Ebro, Florida on the West side of the river and drive a few miles to a fish camp called Smokehouse. It got the name from a body of water nearby called Smokehouse Lake--which is not a lake--but a larger body of water between two canals.

The day before going fishing we would go to some field near the piney woods where the ground was a little damp and dig field worms. They were supposed to be bigger and tougher than city worms. Daddy dug and I picked them up. We always got far more than was ever needed. We would then pack the car with most everything that could be imagined. It was almost a joke when people saw what we put in the boat, especially if we were going to take a tent and bedding to spend a couple of nights on the river.

Daddy never set an alarm clock. He always woke up at the right time to get up. Roughly 3 or 3:30 AM. (I often wondered if he even went to sleep). Mother always got up and fixed daddy's usual breakfast of freshly made biscuits, bacon or ham, and eggs over easy followed by biscuits, butter, and syrup. He'd get me up and tell me to eat because it would be a long time before the noon meal (usually around 2 PM). It was difficult for a kid to eat at that time of morning I can assure you.

After breakfast we'd put the worms in the car (due to the heat they were happier sitting behind a tree until we were ready to go) and tie the poles to pole racks that slipped onto the top of the car doors. We'd then drive to Uncle Lee's house where his front porch light was always on and his fishing tackle and poles next to the street. After loading him we'd be off.

On the way to the fish camp, we would usually stop to buy ice and sometimes we would need to get a license. Usually, we stopped at a restaurant where daddy would get coffee, I would get a coke, and Uncle Lee would drink a quick beer and buy another to drink on the way. Daddy was always very much against any drinking but tolerated Uncle Lee getting his beer.

Then, everyone would start singing "Way Over Yonder Right By Myself" and "Can't Dance Chicken Foot You Can't Dance Nothing." Both of these were the latest thing back at the end of the 1800s but their resurrection for a fishing trip was OK. Sounded normal once you got used to them.

We always timed our departure so as to arrive at Smokehouse just before the first light of day. After using flashlights to select a couple of boats, we would load them with enough equipment to keep a company of troops in the field for a month. First, the motor went on daddy's boat-- a 5 HP Johnson.

Then, the gasoline can, tent, cane poles for fishing, tackle boxes, Catawba worm boxes, worm cans, ice box with a block of ice, water to drink and make tea and coffee with, food and dish box, cooking utensils, cooking oil, tent poles, rain wear, oil cloths for the "table" (on the ground), bedding (no sleeping bags then), tarps to go under the bedding in the tent to keep the moisture out, small shovel to put dirt on the tent side to keep the snakes out, axe, small tool box for the motor, hats, fly spray for the mosquitoes and yellow flies, gas lantern, and sometimes even dry wood to help start a fire to cook over and to sit around at night.

These wooden boats were about 14' long, open, and once loaded the stern would be about 4" above the water. We would chain the second boat (Uncle Lee's) to ours. If it was not light enough by that time, we'd slowly paddle down the first canal (manmade canal) until it was light enough to crank the motor and really be on our way at perhaps 10 MPH going downstream.

At the end of the first canal was the larger body of water named Smokehouse Lake. Just to the left when you entered Smokehouse Lake was a small stream that went off through the woods called Inside Lake. Inside Lake could be paddled (over and under logs and through limbs, etc.) roughly two or three miles to the same place we put up our tent at Stumpmouth but we only did that a couple of times as I recall. With a motor it was much easier to go by way of the river. We have fished Inside Lake a lot, however, and it is good fishing--if the water is right.

Back to the present though. We would motor some distance on Smokehouse Lake, perhaps a quarter mile, and the entrance to the second canal would appear on the left (which had a large deadhead sticking out of the water just before the entrance, the nemesis of many motors when water hid it. A deadhead is where one end of a Cyprus log sank into the mud on the bottom and left the top sticking up to hit boats and motors and this was one of the worst).

After traveling down the second canal we entered a larger body of water that then lead to the Choctawhatchee River. We'd go up the river two or three miles, past Buzzard's Roost, to an inlet on the left, a place called Stumpmouth. (Yes, a stump in the middle of the entrance.)

At Stumpmouth there was one piece of high ground (i.e., 4 or 5 feet above the river) beside a small body of water where Inside Lake entered the river. This bit of ground was/is completely surrounded by very heavy swamp and was created when loggers pulled logs and mud from the swamp about 100 years previously so the logs could be floated down the river to saw mills to be made into lumber. It made an excellent camping place.

We had an old canvas tent and we took bed springs down one time and left them to put the quilts on. The shovel would be used to put dirt around the sides of the tent to keep snakes from sliding under and to keep mosquitoes from getting in also. (You can't imagine how loud a mosquito can sound inside a tent when you're trying to sleep).

We had a large wooden box with a wooden lid buried that served as our icebox. We'd take a block of ice to put in it when we got there. And, we'd cook over an open fire and it was my job to go into the woods and bring out firewood.

But first, we had to catch our dinner and we were all anxious to start fishing. Often, we'd go back out into the river and motor upstream a half mile to East River. The Choctawhatchee split into two rivers somewhere upstream and East River is the eastern prong. If the river was too muddy for the bait to locate a fish, East River had many small streams entering it that had fairly clear water. It didn't usually take too long for us to catch a good-sized mess of bream with an occasional bass thrown in. In winter a cat or sucker beat catching nothing. Then we'd return to camp for that dinner I was starved for.

Uncle Lee ran a restaurant for many years and knew a lot about cooking and I learned from him. When the three of us were there, he always did the cooking and everything had to be done just right. (And everything had to be kept spotlessly clean). Daddy would clean the fish. I would peel the 'taters' and serve as the "goffer". As I learned I was permitted to make the tea and chip the ice to put in the glasses. Uncle Lee would start cooking the corn bread, followed by the potatoes and then the fish. There has never been better eating anywhere, especially if you're starved.



Photo courtesy of Neil O. Myers

This is a picture of that hallowed ground at Stumpmouth; Uncle Lee often said he wanted to be buried there!

After a big meal we'd clean up, wash dishes by heating water over the fire, and get back to fishing before it got too late. Any fish caught after dinner would be cleaned and put on the ice in the ice-box. After such a large meal at two or three PM we wouldn't want to eat much at evening time.

I would light the Coleman lantern, hang it on a limb, and we'd sit around the campfire and I would listen to the two of them tell stories of their youth. (Uncle Lee said when he was a small boy both boys and girls wore what looked like dresses. He liked to tell about lifting his dress and running

through fields of dog fennels. Made me feel like I missed something!). We'd kill the fire and go to bed early--tired and very happy. Daddy would then say that Stumpmouth was one of the safest places in the world.

It reassured me, especially on rainy nights when the gators were bellowing in the swamp. I can remember him saying we were 20 miles from the nearest human but that was a small exaggeration--the small motor made it seem like 20 miles. The coffee for breakfast would be made by putting coffee grounds in a tobacco sack and dropping it in boiling water and a small can of pet milk added just for good measure. You got the milk whether you wanted it or not.

Uncle Lee would put some ham in the skillet while daddy broke eggs into a bowl and we'd soon have scrambled eggs, ham, and some "light" bread heated over the fire plus the coffee. I wasn't allowed to have coffee at an early age at home but when fishing it was OK.

Uncle Lee could not see too well. For this reason, he always sat in the bow of his boat to paddle. The stern would swing one way and the other but he didn't care. At least he could see where he was going. And, he used a very large cork, painted white, so he could see it. He would often let the end of his poles rest in the water and daddy could never understand how he would catch so many fish while doing everything wrong! But he did.

Daddy passed away in 1979 and I didn't get back to Stumpmouth (taking my friend, Tommy Dunn) until about the year 2002, a wait of about 38 years. Yet, in my mind's eye, I felt I could visualize every log, stump, inlet, canal, patch of water lilies, and good fishing hole that I knew about 38 years previously.

OLD GATOR

Although most of us think that if it happened then it happened in Samson. However, for this story dated about 62 years ago we are back at the Choctawhatchee River fishing. We were fishing just off East River at a spot later to be known as "The Gator Hole".

Back then, there were lots of gators on the river and in the swamps around it but since I had not been fishing with daddy very long, I had not seen one. This particular day we were catching a few bream and throwing them in the bottom of the boat since we planned to cook them in a short while and these were a little small to take home to Mama. I saw a small dome with two eyes moving in the water about ten feet from our boat. I pointed him out to daddy and he said it was a small alligator, about three feet long. We watched him a while. The fish had suddenly stopped biting anyway.

He could smell the fish in the boat and hear them jumping. We must have been the first man and boy he had seen up close because he seemed to have no fear of us. Daddy asked if I'd like to catch him. "Sure", I said. He had some set hooks in a roll in the boat and pulled off three of them. For more civilized youths or modern type fishing folks that aren't familiar with them, they consist of heavy lines, heavy weight, big hook, and you tied them to limbs baited to catch catfish. The lines were about five or six feet long.

Daddy tied all three to the end of a real heavy cane pole that he used to help tie the boat over a fishing spot (called a "jottum down pole"), put the three hooks into a bream so there was no way the gator could get the bream without getting at least one of the hooks in his mouth. He held the bream over the water not far from the little gator and the gator immediately swam up to the bream.

I thought sure we would get him. But the gator just put his snout against the bream and pushed it around some. He wouldn't put it in his mouth. Finally, daddy put all three of the hooks in one end of the bream and held it over the water. The gator immediately grabbed the end of the bream that didn't have hooks and started off with it. Daddy lifted it almost out of the water before the bream broke in half. After that, he again would put his nose against the rest of the fish that had the hooks, but wouldn't take it.

The gator had gotten really close to my end of the boat so I took my oar and slowly raised it and came down hard trying to hit the gator. (PS... I wouldn't hurt the gator today). Well, before the oar hit the water, the gator went under and almost immediately came up about 15 feet from the boat. I had never known they could move so fast. We soon left this fishing hole and went elsewhere to finish catching enough for dinner.

After that, during the next several years I saw a number of alligators but the larger ones were rather shy around people and generally went under water and stayed until we left.

Up Inside Lake on several occasions I saw "slides" in the mud where large gators would have a place to sun (or perhaps have a nest or bed or whatever they called it) on a small mound of dirt at the side of the stream. You could judge the size of the gator by the width of the place in the mud where they would slide into the water.

One time, as we rounded a bend in the river, I saw the largest gator I've ever seen in the distance crossing the river. I won't put the estimated length here because you wouldn't believe it anyway and would tend to have doubts about the rest of my stories. But it was really huge. Big enough to swallow a grown man if it could catch one.

ANOTHER GATOR STORY

Roughly fifty yards below the place where East River joined the larger river and two or three hundred yards from the location of the previous story, there was an inlet to an old slew that had water deep enough to fish on one side and water lilies and reeds on the other side. When I was 12 or thereabouts, I pulled into that old slew

to fish. I had the motor on the back of my boat (5 HP Johnson) and daddy had a separate boat which he paddled short distances and I pulled behind mine for longer distances.

When I went into the slew, I saw an old log running from the bank down into the water lilies. On the log, resting in the sun, was a gator about a foot long. Had his eyes closed. Enjoying himself. Fat and sassy. I had not disturbed him one bit. I got my paddle and pushed the boat through the water lilies up close to the shore without disturbing the little fellow. Wanting to catch him, I got my rod and reel that had a lure with two sets of treble hooks on it. I reached over and put the lure right next to the little gator and jerked sideways so as to catch a hook in the gator's side. It knocked the gator a few inches over the side of the log but didn't catch him. (They're tough). He woke up, hissed, and climbed right back where he had been.

Again, I put the lure next to him and jerked and he hissed and went right back where he was. (I had never heard one hiss before but this was a real hisser!). About that time daddy came paddling down the river and saw me. He grabbed a limb to stop his boat and asked me what I was doing. I told him I was trying to catch a little gator by hooking him on my lure.

He said, "OK, fine. Now when you catch that little fellow and he yells for his mama and you're caught in those lilies and your motor's tangled up, and that ten-foot gator goes to find out who has her baby, what are you going to do?" He then turned the limb loose, smiled, and paddled on down the river. I put the rod and reel down, pushed out of the lilies, and went down the river right after him. I left the gator for somebody else to catch.