



WALTON

RELATIONS & HISTORY

Volume 13, Issue 7

Walton County Heritage Association

May 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
Phone: 850-401-2060

Website: <http://www.waltoncountyheritage.org/#>

Email: heritagemuseum@brighthouse.com

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Vice President: Carolyn Brown

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Vacant

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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. *Floralia 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 Floralia 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.

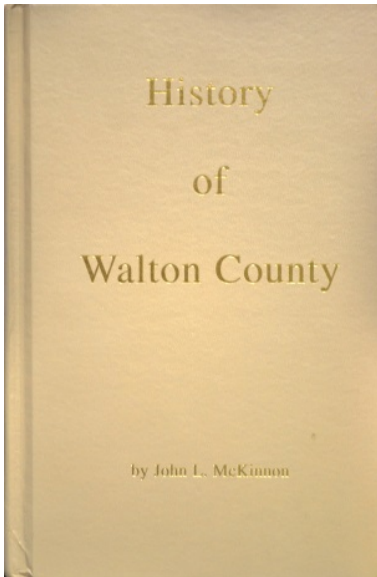
Member Benefits:

- 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.

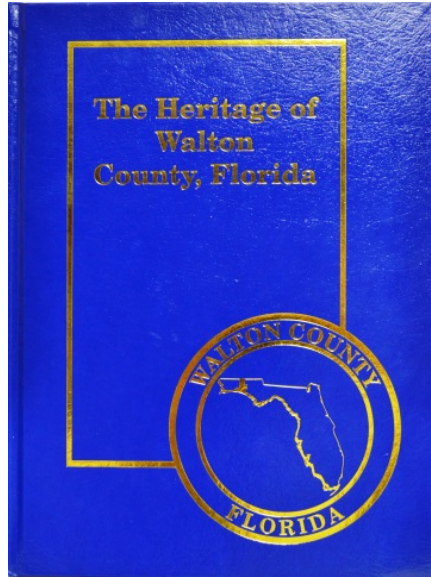
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From the Museum Gift Shop

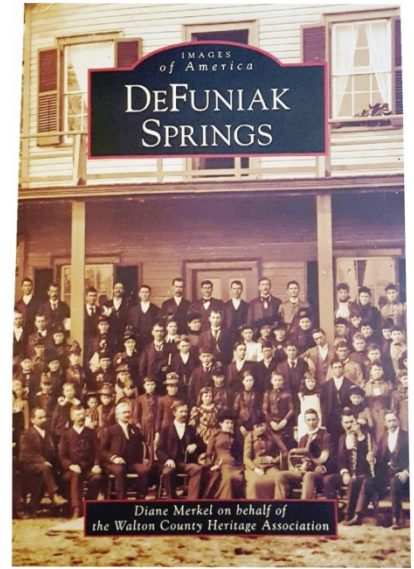
Our most popular books



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.
\$21.99 plus tax and shipping.

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.



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Website: <http://www.waltoncountyheritage.org>

Email: HeritageMuseum@brighthouse.com

ANNUAL DONOR/MEMBER APPLICATION 2022

Name:

Individual/Family _____

Sponsor/Business/Company _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Donor/Member Category:

() Individual \$25.00, () Family \$40.00, () Silver Sponsor \$500.00, () Gold Sponsor \$1,000.00, () Platinum Sponsor \$2,000.00, () Additional Gift/Donation \$ _____ *

*Gift earmarked for: _____ Total Enclosed \$ _____

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 (or any amount) 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, please contact us.

OUR SPONSORS for 2022

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

SPONSORS (\$100-\$499.00)

George and Margaret Little (\$100.00)

Douglas W. Rogers (\$100.00)

Bob Beasely, Supervisor of Elections (\$100.00)

David Bludworth (\$260.00)

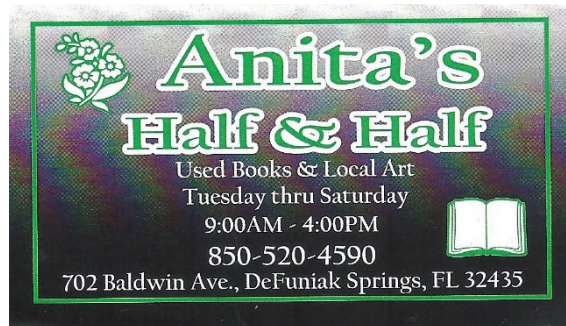
DFS Landmarks, Inc. (\$100.00)

Merrifield & Pilcher Realty (\$100.00)

SILVER SPONSORS (\$500 to \$999.00)

(None at present time)

GOLD SPONSORS (\$1,000 to \$1,999)



Anita's Half & Half (\$1,000.00)

PLATINUM SPONSORS (\$2,000 and up)

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.

THE RETURN TO THE CHOCTAWHATCHEE

By
Neil O. Myers

Edited by
Sam Carnley

In the April 2022 edition of our newsletter, we introduced the writings of Neil O. Myers, originally of Samson, Alabama. In this month's newsletter, we are pleased to feature another of Neil's stories about fishing on the Choctawhatchee River. It is a sequel of sorts to his earlier stories in that he tells of returning to fish on the river many decades later. **Sam Carnley.**

I have written several stories about fishing on the Choctawhatchee River as a boy so I won't repeat any of those stories here. When I wrote those stories in approximately 1979, I stated, "if you want to have some fun in the year 2000 or 2050, just follow the instructions I've provided, go to Stumpmouth, camp and fish 'til your heart's content.... Many of the things I described will be the same except there will be more people on the river."

So, for at least 40 or 50 years I had wanted to go back to see where we fished and camped on the Choctawhatchee River. Around 1999, friend Tommy Dunn and I drove to Smokehouse Fish Camp. I took my motor and we planned to rent a boat like daddy and I used to. Rather than a long sandy road from Bruce to the fish camp, it was a fine paved road.

The distance was much shorter. I saw a number of trailers with lots in the woods along the way. As we entered the fish camp area a number of trailers had replaced the few cottages that had been there years before as rental property. The large screened BBQ area with roof and tables was gone. At the place where we used to park to unload the car there was a sign warning of blocking the path of school buses!

There were no boats to rent, but there was a boat ramp. I talked with a man that I think was the manager and we discussed the changes that had taken place. He said so many people had bass boats that he couldn't afford to keep the type of rental boats I remembered. Disappointed, we went on to Black Creek where a fine man named Johnson that had grown up in Samson took pity on us and loaned us his boat for the day. He told us that if we knew the way we could follow Black Creek to Mitchell's river and then through various canals we could get to the Choctawhatchee far below the Stumpmouth area.

We certainly didn't plan to try it that day. This area is close to the bay and there are many tributaries that novices shouldn't try without plenty of time to find their way out before dark. Two or three years after that, Samson was to have another All Class Reunion. Several months previous to that big event I started trying to arrange for a boat and motor to rent for a couple of days after the reunion so Tommy and I could launch it at Smokehouse Fish Camp and take the path I took so many years before. Although I came close to getting two boats, one was sold before we got down there and the other deal fizzled out. I again contacted Mr. Johnson at Black Creek and he agreed to loan his again.



Neil O. Myers. Photo
courtesy of Neil.

On Saturday afternoon I left the reunion early and drove to Black Creek to put things in the boat. Bradley took me out trolling for speckled trout and I caught a skipjack, but lightning and dark clouds ended that. Bradley mentioned that he had hit a log and tore up his motor a year or two previously while going to Smokehouse. I asked if it was the deadhead at the mouth of the second canal from Smokehouse Fish Camp to the river and he said it was, that he knew it was there but forgot about it.

I was pretty proud of myself for my memory to pick the exact log from the billions down there after being away 50 years. At 5:30 AM Sunday Morning, the day after the reunion, my friend Tommy arrived at my room at the Ebro Motel and we drove to McDaniel's Fish Camp at Black Creek, drank coffee, ate a sausage biscuit, finished loading the boat, and with Tommy in the bow using two maps I had ordered to navigate and the early morning sun in our eyes I started the motor and we were on the journey back into time. The distance we had to travel appeared to be about eight miles by water.

I knew that I would have no trouble once we reached the Choctawhatchee as I can still see in my mind's eye hundreds of stumps, logs, deadheads, inlets, canals and rivers along the path we fished when I was a boy. After only three disagreements over the navigation and with me talking about lost and 'gator bait' if we're wrong, Tommy managed to direct us to the Choctawhatchee.

I recognized the broad river as soon as I saw it, but was surprised at the color of the water and the low current. I had never seen it as low and, although not completely clear, it was dark and not muddy red as I always saw it as a boy. We entered the river not far below familiar territory. Fifty years earlier if the river was too muddy to fish, we would sometimes travel down the river to the Twin Sisters Rivers. These were controlled by the tide from the bay and were generally fairly clear.

Daddy and I used to catch what I referred to as little green trout at the end of the short Twin Sister River and since there are not supposed to be any fresh water trout in those waters, I wanted to first stop there. We needed fish for dinner anyway. I motored to where the end used to be. It used to open up almost like a small lake with water lilies and reeds at the very end. This time, however, the end was where the river became so narrow, I would go no farther.

I figure during floods the last 50 years it had been extended. Anyway, I did catch one of the little green trout, took a picture, and even though it was only about 7 or 8 inches long, I put it on ice to eat for dinner. (Even sardines are good if you're hungry and have nothing else.) To clear this part of the story up so it won't have to be revisited later, I did try to eat this fish and it was neither a bass nor trout. It had more bones than a sucker. Even though it struck like a bass or trout, it was some type of rough fish. Scratched that itch! Not a trout.

From the Twin Sisters we went up river past Gardner's Canal, past the end of the second canal from Smokehouse (the way we normally would have come), on up past Buzzard's Roost, to Stumpmouth. (This took about 20 minutes from Twin Sisters with the 25 HP motor vs. over two hours with daddy's 5 HP pulling an extra boat behind.) This is where we used to camp. By the way, the direction of the flow of water in Inside Lake has reversed I think since I was a boy.

At the entrance the stream used to be about 40 yards wide. It now is about 25 yards wide. At one time daddy got tired of sleeping on the hard ground and we took bed springs down to Stumpmouth and always boated them across the little lake and hid them before we left. The place we took our bed springs has filled in so much that I could not locate the spot to see if any springs remained. I suspect all had rusted away after 50 years anyway.

The spot where we camped was still there and looked just as it had 50 years earlier except that most of the trees along the water's edge had been cut away, a crude dock built, a wooden table nailed between two trees, and the ashes and beer cans from camp fires were where we used to put our tent and where Uncle Lee always said he wanted to be buried. The small sweet gum tree that grew at the back of the camp area was a fully grown tree. I took a number of pictures and then we left to go catch our dinner.

We went up to East River, about a quarter mile above Stumpmouth, and I pulled into the Alligator Hole (which I previously described). It had also changed considerably. Rather than being an old slew about 30 yards long, it is now a small stream which I'm sure was washed out during floods. Where it ran into the East River the water was full of limbs and logs making it difficult to fish without getting hung (or impossible is closer to the truth). The worst part though was that the water was coated with heavy oil. I don't know if someone spilled some or if it is seeping from the ground. I suspect the latter due to the large quantity of it. Anyway, we could not catch dinner there and old gator was not there either.

We went back into the Choctawhatchee and the second place we fished was at the inlet of the place I had tried to catch the small gator on a log sixty years previously. The place where this entered the river looked promising although we had much difficulty getting anchored due to the current. After Tommy tied to a tree and I tied to a cypress knee we began to catch shellcrackers of modest size. From there we went back to Stumpmouth, unloaded the boat, and began preparing dinner on the spot daddy and I had cooked so many years ago.



Where Neil and his daddy cooked on the Choctawhatchee River when he was a boy and again many years later. Phot courtesy of Neil.

I started cooking corn bread and potatoes while Tommy cleaned the fish. (I got the better part of that deal). We had taken a folding table, chairs, and all the trimmings. I don't know if the food was as good as my memory indicated it should be, but it was certainly wonderful. After dinner, having done all that we intended and since we were far from Black Creek and still potential gator bait, we started back and arrived about mid-afternoon, just ahead of some thunder clouds.

I did not see a gator nor snake on the trip. I saw many turtles hugging logs and trying to keep from falling off when the motor wash hit them. The previous day while fishing for speckled trout closer to the bay, I saw ospreys and two osprey nests and all up and down the river I saw many water birds and various flowers growing. It is still a wonderful place to visit. And, I didn't attract a single mosquito or yellow fly. (I knew Bradley would not accept payment for the use of his boat so I put a good sum in the back of a picture frame with the map of the area I had ordered and left it at his store. I hope he found it.)

Now I want to go again. As I write this, Tommy has located a boat we can use next trip so we can launch at Smokehouse Fish Camp.

(Note: We never made it again. Tommy left us and is fishing off the Golden Bridge.) That was over 20 years ago.

Neil O. Myers

nml@atlanticbb.net

Aiken, SC 29801, formally of Samson, Alabama.