



WALTON RELATIONS

Volume 5, Issue 1

Walton County Genealogy Society

October 2013

Sixth Anniversary

The Walton County Genealogy Society (WCGS) was formed in October 2007. **Wayne Sconiers** agreed to serve as President and **Carolyn Pitman Brown** agreed to be Secretary, positions they continue to hold. In November 2007, the Walton County Heritage Association “adopted” the Genealogy Society as part of its organization, and it certainly has been an asset to Heritage. WCGS has been meeting regularly ever since and has accumulated a wide variety of resources available for use by the public at the Museum.

WCGS Meeting

The Walton County Genealogy Society will meet at the Museum on Saturday, October 12, at 10:00 AM. Bring your Walton County research questions and see if you can stump **Wayne Sconiers**! You do not need to be a Heritage member to attend.

Lakewood-Paxton Field Trip

We will be traveling up to Lakewood and Paxton on Saturday, October 26. We will leave the Museum at 10:00 and return before 4:00. **Martha McNeill Bradford** and **Tom McNeill**, whose grandfather owned the Britton Lumber Company, will join us at Britton Hill and share their memories of Lakewood. We will have lunch in Paxton, and **Bruce Cosson** will take us to some old mill sites there and talk about metal detecting.

We will be taking the Trolley, so seating is limited. The cost is \$15 for Heritage members and \$20 for non-members, plus the cost of your lunch. We will be getting off the Trolley at several locations and walking on uneven ground, so dress appropriately.



Where Was This?

Scott Clary discovered the envelope pictured above. It is postmarked December 27, 1893. If you know anything about the Cockcroft family or their stable, please let us know.

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

THE BRITTON LUMBER COMPANY

From the *Floralia-News Democrat*, August 13, 1914

Submitted by **Thomas M. McNeill**

But for the incessant murmur of the many machinery wheels in the new and model plant of the Britton Lumber Company, two miles east of Florala in alluringly located Lakewood in Walton County, Florida, one might well fancy, judging by the charming and substantial buildings, all pervading cleanliness, and the sightlines and shade of the stately sycamore and water oaks that grace the park which the company has provided for its employees pleasure and edification, and the purity and pleasing vista of the green carpeted and shade, embowered environment of this ideally located manufacturing enterprise, that one was in a college town and strolling through its campus and classic grounds rather than in the home of a busy hive of industry that affords employment in its various ramifications to between 350 and 400 hands.

And this thoughtful consideration for the care and comfort and health and hygiene of its employees, which extends in relative degree to the more remote Negro quarters, and this cultivation of the aesthetic and beautiful in the surroundings of the plant, but reflects the course of the Britton Lumber Company, in the conduct of its business affairs and its methods and process of manufacture. High standards and ideals and correct business methods have marked all its years of corporate life, and as a result it has never lacked a market for its output which today, as when it was established a decade ago, is in the New England states, and its officers enjoy the respect and esteem of employees with whom the company has never had any wage or other difficulty, or experienced any discordant episode to disrupt the mutually pleasant and cordial relations that have existed.

The Britton Lumber Company was established in 1904, its founder and first president being W.H. Britton, since demised, a personality and name that is still well remembered and honored by the Alabama-Florida lumber trade and in Florala. It manufactures all kinds of yellow pine lumber, making a specialty of rift saw flooring, is a large naval stores operator, conducts two general merchandising stores, one at Lakewood and a commissary at its logging headquarters, is capitalized for 500,000.00 and has a capacity in its saw mill and planer of 100,000 feet daily.

The plant as will be seen from the accompanying engravings, is model and modern in every regard and consists of a saw mill, planning mill, shingle mill, dry kiln, two stock sheds, office buildings and commissary and with the company dwellings, there are 101 buildings on the slightly hill where the industry is located and which comprise the company's holdings in improved property.

The company owns in fee simple between 18,000 and 20,000 acres of fine Florida stumpage, owns and operates 22 miles of railway and with spurs and side tracks, some 30 miles, and has sufficient virgin uncut timber, even should more not be acquired by purchase, to insure it at least a decade longer of industrial life.

The company's officers are: President, E. P. Rodwell; Secretary and Treasurer, T. J. Britton; General Manager, D. A. McPhail. All these gentlemen are native to the old north state, which more than any other commonwealth, has furnished the successful Southern leaders in the lumber and naval stores lines. Albeit a North Carolinian, Mr. Rodwell takes an abiding interest in the upbuilding of this section, particularly Florala, and his purse and influence are always behind any movement looking to this worthy end. Of Mr. Britton, a brother of W. H. Britton, one of Florala's earliest and best friends, the same can be said with entire candor, and Mr. McPhail, general manager of the company and past master in every intricacy of the saw milling business yields not a jot or title to his confreres and associates in this regard.

Lakewood, Florida, Post Office

By **Thomas M. McNeill** of Shalimar, Florida

The post office at Lakewood, Walton County, Florida was established September 9, 1903, soon after organization of the Britton Lumber Co. Postmasters serving were:

Charles S. Kelly	September 9, 1903 – March 11, 1910
Valley L. (Anna) Bannister	March 12, 1910 – August 22, 1912
Erie C. Kelly	August 23, 1912 – March 31, 1943
William A. McNeill	April 1, 1943 – December 30, 1965
Hazel S. Britton	January 1, 1966 – October 11, 1975
Avis Stephens	October 13, 1975 – March 8, 1977
Carol Geoghagan	March 9, 1977 – July 1, 1977

In 1966, it became a rural station of the Florala, Alabama, post office with the continued use of Zip Code 32566 until it closed in 1977. Today area mail is distributed through the DeFuniak Springs, Florida, postal service.

These are the "official" statistics; however, my memories go much deeper than names, dates, and numbers and are summarized as follows:

I arrived in Lakewood, at the tender age of six months, in December 1936. My parents (A. M. & Martha B. McNeill) and I moved to Lakewood (my mother's birthplace) from Douglas, Georgia, and I have considered Lakewood "Home" ever since. I can well remember the last days and closing of my Grandfather Britton's lumber company there, but that's the subject of another story! The Lakewood Post Office had three locations during its 74-year history. The original location was a small building behind the Britton Lumber Co. Store. As a child, I have "stumped" many a barefoot toe while walking the dirttrails from our home to mail letters or pick up mail from "Miss Erie" (Kelly) as we knew her. In April 1943, the post office was moved into the Britton Lumber Co. office building and remained there until June 1953. At that time, the post office was relocated to a boat house that had been moved by my uncle from his property in Florala to Lakewood. It remained in this building until it was closed in 1977.

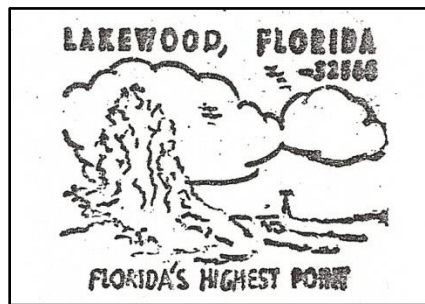
In 1946, we were living with my Grandmother Britton when her home burned to the ground. We then moved the original post office building to a pecan grove near her home site and renovated it for us (my brother Donald, my-parents, and me) to live in. It consisted of one bedroom, one kitchen/dining room, and a bathroom. I remember how concerned I was that we had no chimney and wondered how Santa could visit us that year! Strange, the things you remember, isn't it? We later purchased and moved into my aunt's home across the street (our "Home Place" today) and my grandmother moved the old post office building to her original home site for extensive additions and renovations. The post office portion then became her two bedrooms and a bathroom. The old post office building served us well!

A high point in the day at Lakewood was joining the quite colorful group sitting on the post office porch and waiting for the daily "mail run." More tales were told than one could imagine! I think

more quail were shot and more fish caught there than ever existed! There was also talk overheard about something called "lightning," and I never could tell if they were addressing the weather, the speed at which most did not move, or some clear liquid concoction that was rumored to have been manufactured in the local woods!! Usually, only a few folks actually received mail, and the rest of the afternoon was spent sharing it with the others!



The postmasters, "Billy" McNeill (a distant relative on my mother's side) and later my grandmother, "Hazie" Britton, seemed to truly enjoy the challenge of their jobs and the companionship offered by their customers. Hazie was always eager to keep Lakewood "on the map," and did so as long as she was able. She used her own designed Lakewood stamp to hand cancel every piece of mail. My sister, Martha McNeill Bradford, her husband Ron, my wife Janice, and I still own our home place, country store, and surrounding property. Hopefully, we can keep Hazie's dream alive.



Postmaster Hazel S. Britton and the Cancellation Stamp she designed.

A Note about My Grandmother: Hazel ("Hazie") Kirke Slaughter Britton was born near Crab Orchard, Kentucky (South of Lexington) in 1888. She was descended from a long line of prominent Kentucky statesmen, two of whom were Governors of the State. She moved to Montgomery, Alabama, at an early age to live with her aunt Kate Slaughter McKinney, and husband James, Superintendent of the L & N Railroad. Aunt Katy (pen name "Katydid") was a well-known artist, writer, composer, and Poet Laureate of the Federation of Women's Clubs of the State of Alabama. As a young girl, Hazie worked in the Florala Railway Station with Tully A. Goodwin (later State Senator). She then worked for the Britton Lumber Co. in Lakewood, Florida, where she met my grandfather Britton.

At the time of my birth, all my grown relatives preferred to be addressed by their first names only with no "Aunts, Uncles, Grandmas," etc. I am told that I generated the nickname "Hazie," being the first grandchild and unable to pronounce the name "Hazel" clearly!

A remarkable lady, at the age of 78, she grew tired of time-on-her-hands and became the Lakewood Postmaster, a position she held for nearly ten years! She once wrote, "Youth is not a time of life, but a state of mind." She demonstrated that fact throughout her life. She died in a Florala hospital in 1976.

©2013 Walton County Heritage Association, Inc.

www.WaltonCountyHeritage.org

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

Distribution is encouraged! For more information or to submit an article, please email its editor,

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