



WALTON RELATIONS

Volume 5, Issue 8

Walton County Genealogy Society

June 2014

Local Genealogy Meetings

Many Walton County ancestors discovered our area because of the Florida Chautauqua. Robert Daniel, Historian and Archivist for the Florida Chautauqua, will give a talk about its history on Friday, June 13, at noon at the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, 115 Westview Avenue, Valparaiso. Call 850-678-2615 to reserve a seat, and feel free to bring your lunch to the lecture. FREE.

The Genealogy Society of Okaloosa County will meet on Saturday, June 14, at 10:00 a.m. at the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida. The speaker will be Don Allgood, Director of Records in the Okaloosa County Clerk of Circuit Court office. That office processes passports and marriage licenses, and it manages the county's official records. Allgood will provide a guide to the records maintained there and how to access them. D. T. Smith of Okaloosa County's Information Services will also attend to discuss the Clerk's efforts to digitize records. FREE.

The Baker Block Museum, 1307B Georgia Avenue, Baker, will offer a Family History Workshop on Friday, June 27, which will feature an introduction to familysearch.org, the world's largest collection of family history and genealogy resources. Learn how to search records, collaborate research with others, and share photos and documents. Workshops will begin at 11:00 a.m., 12:00, 1:00, and 2:00 p.m. Call 850-537-5714 for more information. FREE.

WCGS News

The Walton County Genealogy Society will not meet in June, July, or August. Meetings will resume in the fall.

There will not be a newsletter in the month of July, but please continue to send items for future newsletters. Information, articles, and photographs should be sent to Diane Merkel at WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net. We would especially appreciate receiving family reunion notices so that we can let others know who to contact for additional information.

Cosson Family Reunion

The Cosson Family Reunion will be held on Saturday, June 14, at the old homestead on Cosson Road. Family members should contact Harry Cosson for more information.

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

HeritageMuseum@centurylink.net

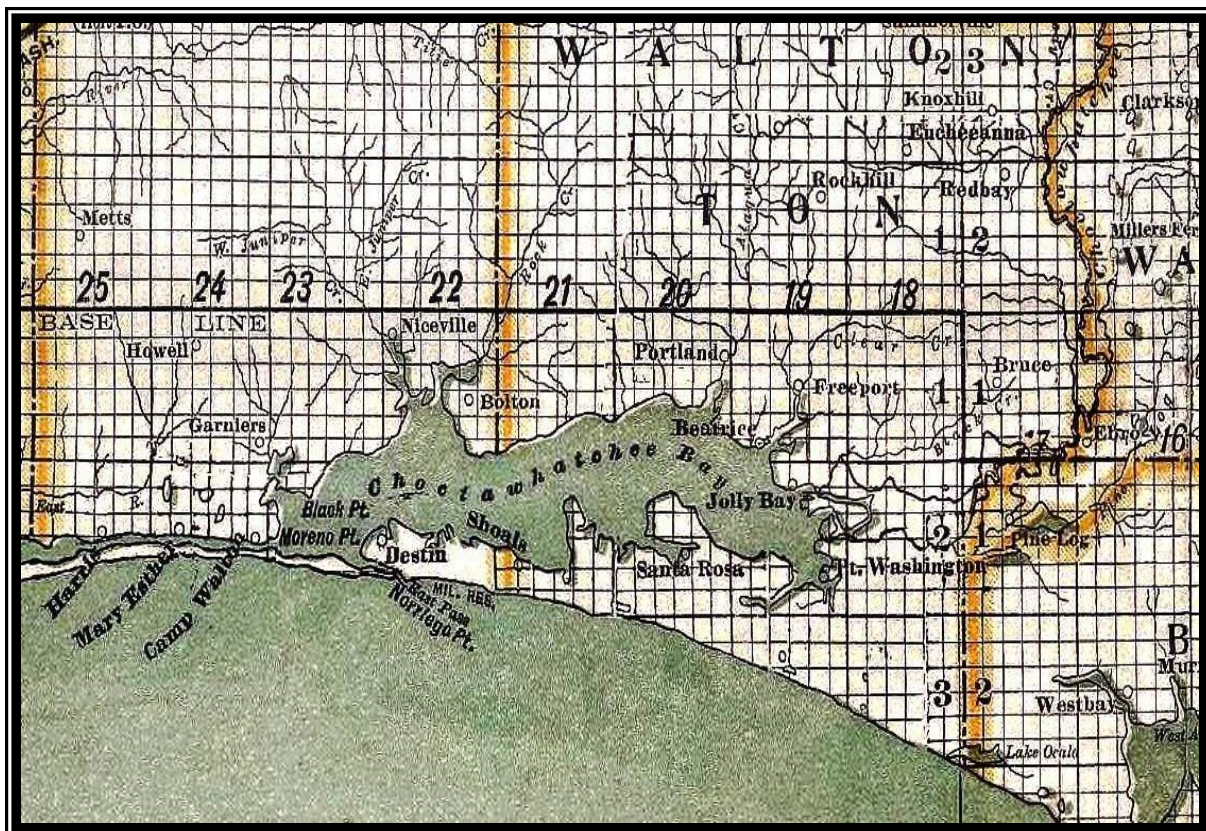
The Mystery Gravestone in the Marler Memorial Cemetery – Part 2

By **Bill Mills** of Fort Walton Beach, Florida

The Knapp Homestead in Shoals (Washington County), Florida – Edward Knapp’s parents had staked a claim under the Homestead Act of 1862 on land in Shoals, Florida in 1909. On April 24, 1914, his father, John S. Knapp, was granted Land Patent #392038 on Lots 1 & 2 in Section 29 in Township 2 South, Range 21 West. These lots contained one hundred and forty-four and 15/100 acres, and the patent was granted by President Woodrow Wilson. One of these lots could have been where Edward Knapp built his home. ³²

Under the Homestead Act, one had to file a claim for a property, make improvements on the land (build a home and barns; plant crops) and live there for six months of every year. After five years, the homesteader could apply for title to the property. These Land Patents were granted by the president of the United States. This tells us that John Knapp filed his claim in 1909. Edwards’s brother, George D. Knapp, also was granted a homestead on February 21, 1917, by President Woodrow Wilson for one hundred and sixty acres in the northeast quarter of Section 30 in Township 2 South, Range 21 West. This area was known as Shoals, probably because the water in Choctawhatchee Bay in this area was very shallow. ³³

Shoals was located on the south side of Choctawhatchee Bay just beyond the east end of the Moreno Point Military Reservation. In 1913, the land along the Gulf of Mexico in Washington County was divided between what are now Okaloosa, Walton, and Bay Counties. The east end of the military reservation became the county line between Okaloosa and Walton Counties. Shoals was the first city in Walton County, about seven miles east of the village of Destin, as seen in the 1920 map below.

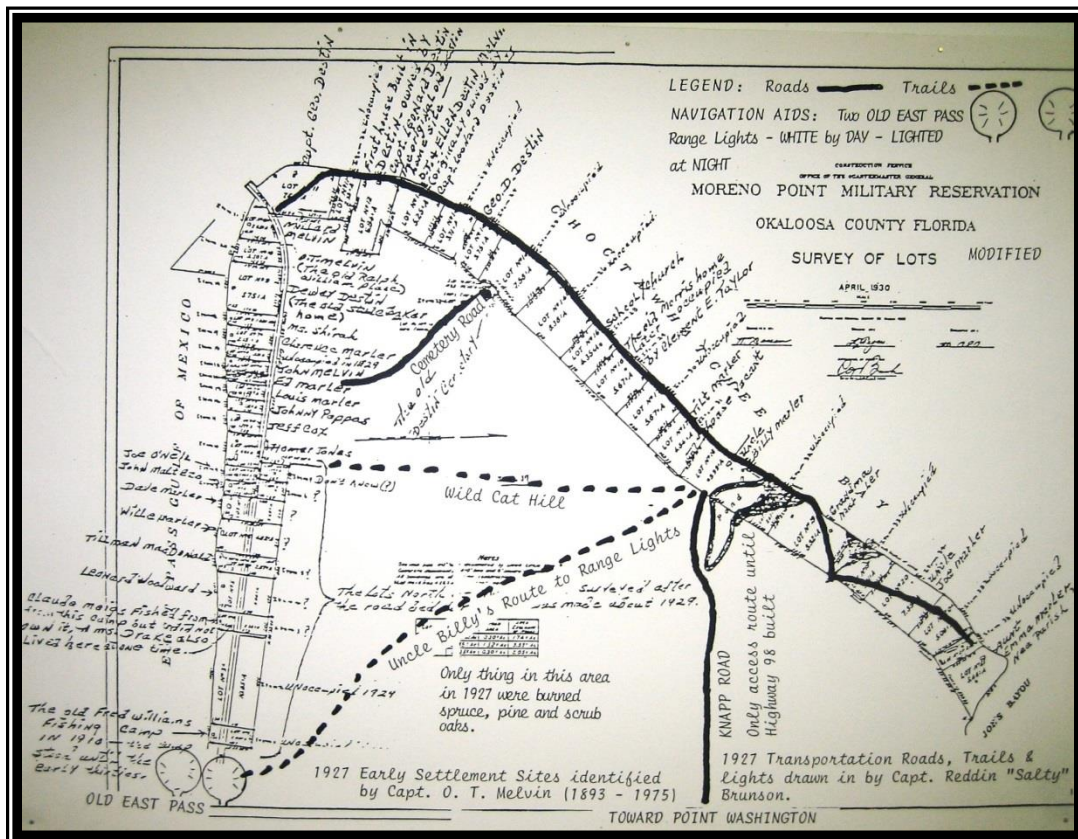


Another well-known future Destinite who homesteaded land in Shoals, Florida, was Clement E. Taylor. Taylor homesteaded two 80 acre parcels in Section 28, Township 2 South, Range 21 West. That land is where the Silver Sands Premium Outlet Mall is located today. 34:35

How did Edward Knapp hear about Florida and why did he come here? Could it be that he met people from Destin? Was it the Homestead Act, or maybe both? It happens that before 1910 Andrew Destin was also in Cuba just like Edward Knapp. Andrew was stationed as a lighthouse keeper at the Guantánamo Bay naval base. His brother, Alfred Destin, was 90 miles north in Boot Key, Florida, as the keeper of the East Washerwoman Shoal Beacon near present day Marathon, Florida. These were the youngest sons of Leonard Destin, the founder of Destin, Florida. Both eventually settled in south Florida, had families, and died in the Miami, Florida, area in 1941. 36:37

Edward Knapp's Relocation to Shoals, Florida - Edward Knapp resigned on November 30, 1910, from civil service and relocated to Shoals, Washington County, Florida, on land that his parents owned. It does seem that he was in the area before 1910 because he was well known to the locals in Destin, Florida. In 1925 the population of Shoals was 32 and Destin was 32. They were the same size. Destin had a post office and a store run by William T. "Billy" Marler. Billy was the postmaster, store operator, and the light tender at the old East Pass, which was the inlet to Choctawhatchee Bay.

From a map drawn in 1927 of the Destin pioneer settlers, we find one mention of the Knapps. On this map is the Knapp Road that went from Billy Marler's post office to Shoals. One of the Knapps probably built this road. Edward and Lester Knapp were with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. George or his father, John Knapp, also could have built it. It was the only road into Destin until Highway 98 was built in the mid-1930s.



(1930 Government Survey with homes and roads written in by O. T. Melvin and Capt. Reddin Brunson.)

Edward M. Knapp's Death and Burial – After years of living in foreign countries and working in the U.S. Army's engineering department both as a service member and as a civil servant, Edward Knapp decided to resign his position on November 30, 1910. Edward and Cecily decided to move with their two children to land homesteaded by Edward's parents at Shoals, Florida.

On December 26, 1910, four weeks after Edward retired from the government, he was in Florida moving his family to Shoals when he drowned in Choctawhatchee Bay between Santa Rosa and Shoals. From an affidavit from William T. "Billy" Marler, we know what happened to him. Edward fell off a motor boat while moving furniture to his home in Shoals and died. He was pulled from the water, but no one knew how to resuscitate him. ³⁸

There wasn't a cemetery in Shoals, and everybody who came to Shoals came through Destin because the water around Shoals was so shallow. Billy built the coffin, helped conduct the funeral service, and ordered the Woodman of the World gravestone. The gravestone came over from Niceville, Florida, where the local chapter of the Woodsman of the World fraternal organization was located. According to an affidavit handwritten by Billy, he had been the postmaster of Destin since 1899 and had been the light keeper for East Pass for 34 years. Billy and his son, William E. Marler, both knew Edward and were friends of his and both were at his funeral.

The whole community of Destin came together to take care of their neighbors and allowed this man from another community to be buried in their cemetery. Edward's family was there, too: Cecily, his wife, son Nathan, daughter Rhoda, and Edwards's parents. After Edward's death, Cecily and the children moved back to St. Louis. The children grew and married but had no children of their own. Cecily remarried and outlived her husband; she died in St. Louis, Missouri in 1954. ^{39,40}

Edward's father John stayed in Shoals, Florida, on his homestead as did his children George and Josephine. Before 1914, John and his wife Christina went into the old soldier's home in Quincy, Riverside Township, Adams County, Illinois, where they both stayed until their deaths - John in 1921 and Christina in 1937. Josephine went on to St. Louis, and George went on to Nebraska in 1917. ^{41,42}

Over the years, at one time or another, both homesteads were owned by all members of the Knapp family named here, even Edward's children. They tried for years to sell the homestead property at Shoals. They sold it back and forth to each other for \$1. The property was finally sold by George D. Knapp and Harry H. Knapp on February 11, 1937, in Douglas County, Nebraska, to the DeFuniak Naval Stores Company for \$100.00 for 304 acres. There was blight on the orange trees in this part of Florida, so most of the trees were burned to stop the spread of disease. This could have led to the decrease in value of the homesteads. ^{43,44,45}

This ends the mystery of who Edward M. Knapp was and why he is buried in Destin's Marler Memorial Cemetery. It also shows how the young community of Destin came together to take care of even an outsider in need.

Notes for Part 1 (May 2014) and Part 2 (June 2014)

- ¹ 1880 Federal Census – Westchester, Scott County, Illinois
- ² U.S. Army Service Record of Edward M. Knapp – National Archives and Records Administration, St. Louis, MO
- ³ Passenger Arrivals New York City (Ellis Island 1892-1924)
- ⁴ 1920 Federal Census - St. Louis, Missouri
- ⁵ 1910 Federal Census - St. Louis, Missouri
- ⁶ 1920 Federal Census – Davenport, Scott County, Iowa
- ⁷ 1930 Federal Census - Kansas City, Missouri
- ⁸ Findagrave.com - Forest Hill Cemetery, Kansas City, Missouri
- ⁹ Marriage License – Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska
- ¹⁰ 1910, 1930, and 1940 Federal Census – Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska
- ¹¹ Findagrave.com - Forest Lawn Cemetery, Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska
- ¹² Marriage License – Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska
- ¹³ Draft Registrations WWI - Walton County, Florida
- ¹⁴ 1930 and 1940 Federal Census – Wilbur, Saline County, Nebraska
- ¹⁵ Findagrave.com - Sunnyside Cemetery, Wilbur, Saline County, Nebraska
- ¹⁶ Draft Registrations WWI - Pike County, Illinois
- ¹⁷ 1920 Federal Census – U.S. Armed Forces, Germany
- ¹⁸ 1935 Pennsylvania State and 1940 Federal Census - Bucks County, Pennsylvania
- ¹⁹ Social Security Death Index – Lester Leroy Knapp, 1967
- ²⁰ Findagrave.com - Baltimore National Cemetery, Baltimore, Maryland
- ²¹ 1900 Federal Census – U.S. Armed Forces, Havana, Cuba
- ²² Declaration for Widows Pension by Cecily Knapp
- ²³ 1930 and 1940 Federal Census - St. Louis, Missouri
- ²⁴ Findagrave.com - Oak Hill Cemetery, Kirkwood, St. Louis County, Missouri
- ²⁵ War Department Pension Record - Edward M. Knapp dated April 8, 1919
- ²⁶ *USS Maine* (ARC-1), Wikipedia - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Maine_\(ACR-1\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Maine_(ACR-1))
- ²⁷ Cuba-American Treaty 1903, Wikipedia - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban%E2%80%93American_Treaty
- ²⁸ Passenger Arrivals, Ellis Island 1892-1924 – Ships *Colon* and *Panama*
- ²⁹ 1920 Federal Census - St. Louis, Missouri
- ³⁰ History of Panama Canal, Wikipedia - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Panama_Canal
- ³¹ Cecily Knapp's Declaration For Widow's Pension - Dated March 5, 1919
- ³² Patent Deed #392036 – Book 39, Page 83, Walton County, Florida, Dated March 13, 1914
- ³³ Patent Deed #568658 – Book 39, Page 146, Walton County, Florida, Dated February 21, 1917
- ³⁴ Patent Deed #920862 – Book 39, Page 203, Walton County, Florida, Dated October 15, 1923
- ³⁵ Patent Deed #869146 – Book 62, Page 357, Walton County, Florida, Dated June 21, 1922
- ³⁶ 1910 Federal Census – U.S. Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba
- ³⁷ 1910 Federal Census - Florida Reef Light Houses, Monroe County, Florida
- ³⁸ Affidavit Filed with Cecily Knapp Widow's Pension Papers by William T. Marler, Dated August 24, 1936
- ³⁹ Affidavit Filed with Cecily Knapp Widow's Pension Papers by Nathan Knapp, Dated August 31, 1939
- ⁴⁰ Rhoda Rose, Daughter of Cecily - Administratrix for Cecily's Estate Filed November 10, 1955
- ⁴¹ 1920 Federal Census - St. Louis County, Missouri
- ⁴² 1920 Federal Census - Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska
- ⁴³ Land Transfer Trust by Christina Knapp for her Five Children - Dated Sept. 18, 1920, Hidalgo County, Texas
- ⁴⁴ Warranty Deed – Book 79, Page 92, Walton County, Florida, Dated February 11, 1937
- ⁴⁵ "The Town That Canker Killed" – *Destin History...and the Roots Run Deep* by Vivian Mettee ©1970 – Pages 1-6

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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.