



WALTON RELATIONS

Volume 6, Issue 7

Walton County Genealogy Society

May 2015

History Detectives

Below are some requests for help we have received recently. The full question, including whatever background information we received, can be viewed by clicking the link. Please let us know if you can provide answers—or if you need help with your own research—by writing to WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net.

76. Alton Watson married Mavis Nadine Adams. They had a son named James Ferrin Watson and lived in the Gaskin/Darlington area. Any information about the family and their ancestors will be appreciated.

77. A woman has heard family stories about the Wilcox Family having lived in the Point Washington and Choctaw areas of south Walton County in the 1830-1930 time frame. She would appreciate any information.

Previous “mysteries” can be viewed from the History Detectives pages of our website.

Genealogy Meeting

The Walton County Genealogy Society will meet on Saturday, May 16, at 10:00 A.M. at the Walton County Heritage Museum. The public is welcome.

June Reunions

See our Reunions web page for more information.

- **Cosson Family:** Saturday, June 13, at the Harry Cosson house in Alaqua. Contact: Harry Cosson
- **Evans/Lindsey/Brown Family:** Saturday, June 6, at the Euchee Valley Community Center. Contact: Carolyn Brown
- **Jones Family:** Usually meets the last Saturday in June at the Cluster Springs Church in Liberty. Contact: Marsha Cox
- **Mitchem Family:** Usually meets mid-June at Ponce de Leon Springs. Contact: Ella Smith
- **Nelson Family:** Saturday, June 13, at the Sportsman’s Club in DeFuniak Springs. Contact: Marie Rhodes
- **Sunday Family:** Usually meets the last Saturday in June at the Chautauqua Hall of Brotherhood. Contact: Dorothy Sunday

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 Holtons of Wisconsin

Compiled by Barbara Pascoe of Earlysville, Virginia

Edward Holton of Milwaukee was representative of the men who brought their families from the Midwest and Great Plains regions to DeFuniak Springs. Holton built the "Magnolia House" on Circle Drive and owned other property in the city. J. T. Sherman of Brodhead, Wisconsin, built "Sunbright Manor" on Live Oak Avenue as the winter home for his family. Lewis Irving Smith, who once owned the Gulfview Hotel in Camp Walton, was from South Dakota and had a home on Circle Drive. Similarly, Willis H. Butler moved his family to DeFuniak Springs from South Dakota. He eventually purchased land in Grayton Beach and built the first hotel there. These and other pioneers left a rich imprint upon Walton County. -- DM

The following excerpts are from a collection of writings by Lucinda and Edward D. Holton recording their visits to DeFuniak Springs and the Chautauqua.

The personal diary of Lucinda Holton dated December 26, 1884, begins with Lucinda and Edward's departure from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on December 18, 1884, with a temperature reading in Milwaukee of 26 below zero. This diary chronicles their travels in the south, which included travel to Cuba. She wrote on March 15, 1885:

. . . [A]fter spending a day in Orange Park, . . . [w]e came to De Funiak Springs. This is the Southern Chatauqua [*sic*] and the springs fed a lovely lake of a mile circumference with beautiful banks dotted with verdure. The exercises at the Tabernacle are very interesting all the time. Heard Miss Hamill the finest Elocutionist I ever heard. March 18 left De Funiak last evening and reached New Orleans this morning.

From a newspaper clipping from The Evening Wisconsin published in Milwaukee, Edward Dwight Holton wrote:

De Funiak Springs, Fla, Jan 31 1887.....This spring, [DeFuniak Springs] comes closer to the ideal that Ponce de Leon sought than any that has yet been found. I must tell you about it, as it is my winter home. For several years I have found it necessary . . . to go with the birds from our Wisconsin climate and stay with them in these warmer climes until they return.

In making our way home from Jacksonville via New Orleans, we chanced to stop off at this place to pass the night and rest on our journey. Upon coming into the hotel we found ourselves surrounded by a large number of highly respectable looking people. Upon inquiry we learned that the Florida Chautauqua was in session and this place was the seat of its operations. It was a surprise to us and we stayed over two days and found ourselves in the midst of an admirable set of scientific, literary and religious workers. At its head as manager and superintendent was the Rev. A. H. Gillett, D.D, of Cincinnati O. backed by a long list of officers, persons of influence in different part of the country. In these two days we attended the lectures, the singing exercises, the kindergarten exercises, the cooking school, etc., and found here in the South a plant of great apparent usefulness. . . .

... and following the example of many Northern people that came here to Florida, to find Ponce de Leon's fountain of health, bought us a spot of the sacred soil on which to make us a little winter home, and here I am working out every day sometimes with coat off, fencing in my little field, so that I can keep a cow and a mule. I am told by the oldest inhabitant, from whom I have taken careful advice, that the enclosure of the twenty acres will keep the cow and the mule. There are two good springs upon the premises one

of which I have named the “Raphael,” and the other “Kline” flowing forth good and strong, sustaining on their spongy margins a bountiful growth of green bay trees and magnolias--while upon the higher land stands a thousand hard-pine trees, whose lofty evergreen-head are scarcely less beautiful than the queen palm of Cuba. . . . The water is white, clear and gurgling and will no doubt do for the cow and the mule.

. . . De Funiak Springs lies eighty miles east of Pensacola and about an equal distance west from Tallahassee . . . and 289 miles west from Jacksonville and is near the northern line of the state. Its altitude is 275 feet above the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The forests are pine and oak . . . and abounding with springs and brooks. . . . The spot is made very noticeable from the peculiar beauty and singularity of the spring and lake itself. . . . It is basin with a rim of land rising with a gradual regular and even slope for say twenty rods until the slope is lost in the table land beyond. . . .

The Chautauqua Assembly, for the South, after long and careful survey of the whole country, prosecuted by some of the most experienced and trusted promoters of this modern school of popular education fixed upon this spot and here have driven their stake for a wide and important work in this needy section of the country. On the 19th of February the second assembly commences its session and will continue until the end of March fully six weeks. The program running through the entire period shows many names of distinguished lecturers and teachers who are to be present. The superintendent of public instruction from Florida I am told says 1,000 teachers from Florida, Georgia and Alabama will be in attendance. A large number of people other than teachers are expected from all sections of the country.

Since I was here last March there has been a large growth in the place. Many persons principally from the Northwest have built residences. The hotels have been largely increased, so that the accommodations for the occasion are supposed to be adequate.

The railroad running from Pensacola across the state to Jacksonville was completed and put to use only three years ago. Until then this whole section was an uninhabited wilderness save here and there a lonely settlement. The lumber interest now looms up all along the line, and agriculture and horticulture are attracting attention and Florida shall in time be made a land of flowers and fruits and beauty. . . .

A subsequent letter to the editor that combines two dates, February 26 (an interrupted letter) and March 26, by Edward Holton to the same Milwaukee paper in which he expands on his home building and other activities in and about DeFuniak Springs.

[February 26] My wife went to Jacksonville. The extraordinary excellence of the Windsor Hotel had attractions for her. . . . She needed to go to the Indian River country “below the frost line,” where she could pic [*sic*] the orange from the tree. . . . I had my lot to fence. . . .

Meantime I have bought me a horse instead of a mule. I purchased her of Hall and paid him \$75 for the animal. . . . [Hall said] “he was raised in Alabama. . . .” [My horse] would stand quietly in the open field of “Piney Park” where we were cleaning up the rubbish. . . . Well now I needed nails for the fence-building, and came to Mr. Cawthorn’s [*sic*] store

to make the purchase. Just around the corner of the store stands Mr. Hutchinson's livery stable, where [the horse] boards.

[March 26, the letter continues] . . . An orange farm. . . The twenty acres have been well fenced, a barn 16x24 has been built there on, of which I myself was the architect and boss carpenter; a ditch of seventy rods has been cut up the "Bay," down which flows the "Kline spring" thus draining what was otherwise a sippy place. A strong fence has been put around the five lots [next to the block on which the court house is being built] in which is planted forty two pear trees. The two beautiful lots, fronting the spring, or lake, on the "Ring Strassa," have been plowed, grubbed and fenced and fifty six trees, magnolia, hollies, figs umbrella chinas, etc. have been planted. . . . Among the habitués of the Chautauqua Hotel I am "dubbed" farmer. . . . Some of the days the thermometer has stood at 80 degrees; . . .

. . . [T]he distinguished feature of this location is the establishment here of the Chautauqua assembly. . . . First and last, thousands of people have been in attendance. Very able lecturers from all parts of the country have appeared before the large audiences daily, beginning with the Rev. Sam Jones, who drew audiences of 1,500. . . . The most instructive were the lectures of Prof. Richards, of Chicago, upon chemistry, electricity, etc., with very elaborate experiments before the audience. Educational work in the public school by Mr. Knapp of Iowa and assistants; kindergarten work by Misses Searing of Chicago and Fitz of St. Paul; singing under Prof. Case, of Cleveland; elocution by a master of the art; the study of Greek under Dean Wright of Boston; Normal School work under Prof. Brooks of Philadelphia, etc., etc., so that the time has been constantly filled. . . . The magnificent brass band from Goshen, Ind., has been in constant attendance. . . .

Many travelers stop only to pass the night and go on in the morning---such as Mr. Brockway, of our city, who stopped here last night and went on to Tallahassee this morning.

The proprietors of the place donated at one time forty acres of ground to the Rev. Dr. Adams a Presbyterian clergyman of Augusta Georgia on condition that it should be used for the establishment of a college of that denomination. . . .

My neighbor asks me in his letter of yesterday the price of acre of land and the price of lots—acre land adjoining the city plat is probably to be purchased from \$10 to \$100 per acre. Lots in the city plat from \$50 to \$1,000. The size of lots is generally 50x140 feet. . .
. EDH

[To be continued . . .]

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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.