



WALTON RELATIONS

Volume 7, Issue 2

Walton County Genealogy Society

November 2015

Forensic Genealogy

According to the Council for the Advancement of Forensic Genealogy, “Forensic Genealogy is genealogical research with legal implications, usually involving living people.” Forensic Genealogists often assist with probate and estate cases, determining next of kin and missing heirs.

Nathan Dylan Goodwin has published three novels that he calls genealogical crime mysteries, *Hiding the Past* (2013), *The Lost Ancestor* (2014), and *The America Ground* (2015). Each casts Morton Farrier as a present-day English forensic genealogist who has a mystery to solve from generations past. All three novels are available in paperback or as Kindle editions from Amazon.com.

Genealogy Meetings

The Walton County Genealogy Society will not meet in November or December. On January 21, 2016, at 6:00 p.m., Hank Klein is returning to the Museum to present, “Publishing and Enjoying Your Genealogy Work” at the Walton County Heritage Association’s Annual Meeting. This will be a combined meeting of Heritage and the Genealogy Society. See Page 4 for more information.

Deaths Without Certificates

Barbara McClellan Moore of Texas, who has contributed several articles to this newsletter, is trying to determine if there are old records somewhere for the Old Dorcas Cemetery in Okaloosa County. She is especially interested in the deaths and burials of her great grandparents, William Elijah Nichols (1874-1915) and Cora Lee Nichols (1890-1929). (See his Findagrave listing for complete dates and family links.) All Florida counties have been checked for death certificates, but none has been found. Barbara would appreciate knowing of any possible mentions of their deaths, such as in doctors’ records and records from churches that were in the Dorcas/Mossy Head area at the time. If you have information or ideas about documents that might substantiate deaths in lieu of death certificates, please contact Barbara at moore5440@gmail.com and let us know also. That information would be helpful to many people.

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 History of Hatcher Cemetery in Freeport

By **Beckie Blount Buxton** of Freeport

On October 18, 2015, members of the Hatcher Cemetery Association and other interested parties gathered to dedicate Phase II of the cemetery. Hatcher Cemetery Association Secretary and Historian Beckie Buxton told those assembled about the history of the cemetery, and she kindly agreed to allow her remarks to be published in *Walton Relations*. Beckie, who is a Past President of the Walton County Heritage Association, is also the Official Historian for the City of Freeport.

Robert Sanders Hatcher, a man of English descent, was born in Warren County, Georgia, in 1792. He was educated as a lawyer, became a farmer, and served as a representative in the Georgia legislature from Wilkinson County, Georgia. He married Elizabeth Ard, an orphan who had inherited three plantations.

Friends of theirs moved to the Eucheeanna area of Florida and invited Robert to come visit them. He did. He fell in love with the area. Overcoming his wife's wishes to remain in Georgia, they followed the Indians trails down to Florida and settled on a site near Alaqua Bayou in 1845. (According to descendent Nell Ree Hatcher Robinson, this site was on the other side of the creek from Waterview Cove.) Life wasn't easy for the Hatcher family in Florida as it had been in Georgia.

Robert Sanders Hatcher died in 1852. According to family history, the family's slaves asked if they could bury him in one of his favorite places. That plot, in the nearby piney woodlands, would later become the first part of today's Hatcher Cemetery.

As Mrs. Hatcher and family began to make plans to return to Georgia, hostilities between the north and south broke out. They never made the move because of the Civil War, and the Hatcher family became one of the prominent families of Walton County.

Hatcher Cemetery, in 1852, as an active burial ground, began providing comfort to bereaved families. Then further descendants realized that it reflected the growth of our area and provided us with an important place to begin genealogical and historical research. Its residents are our ancestors.

On April 29, 1913, Robert Sanders Hatcher, Jr., and his wife, Texanna Jennings Hatcher, deeded 23 acres more or less, including the three acres under the fence, as Hatcher Cemetery to the Oak Level Cemetery Association whose active trustees were Sebron S. Kelley, Pharris Permenter, and William Augusta Cuchens, Sr. Because of this deed, Hatcher Cemetery is not the property of Walton County, the City of Freeport, nor the Hatcher family. It belongs to the Hatcher Cemetery Association. All persons and families owning plots here automatically become members of the Hatcher Cemetery Association.

Just like over a hundred years ago, leadership is in the hands of the trustees of the Hatcher Cemetery Association. Though they oversee the cemetery operations, these trustees who administer its use and care are not paid. The By-laws state that the trustees of Hatcher Cemetery shall be composed of members of the general public who are active and supportive of Hatcher Cemetery and who have been recommended by individual trustees and approved by a majority of the trustees in a regular session.

Although Hatcher Cemetery is one of the largest rural cemeteries in the south, it is not a perpetual care cemetery. There is no funding for the operation and maintenance of Hatcher Cemetery other than in the price of a plot. From 1852 until 1969, there was no cost at all for a plot. Then the trustees became aware that people from as far away as Panama City and Pensacola were choosing to be buried at Hatcher because there was no cost for a plot. The By-laws were amended to state that burial in Hatcher Cemetery is limited to Freeport and Portland citizens and their relatives.

Effective in February 1989, the charge for a plot became \$25.00. It became necessary to enclose the cemetery within a fence because of vandalism. In order to pay for fencing, the price of a plot became \$350.00 effective January 1, 2004. A Freeport family whose ancestors rest here loaned enough money to the Association to pay the cost of the fencing and were paid back as gravesites were sold.

(Unfortunately, vandalism continues to rear its ugly head. For instance, twice hit and run drivers have destroyed sections of the fencing. Many fragile old tombstones would have been destroyed if that fence hadn't been there. The first time, it cost over \$1,000.00 to have it professionally repaired. Just last Monday, on Columbus Day, our current trustees, using materials mostly belonging to themselves, repaired a section for under \$50.00 and a lot of sweat and labor.)

Effective February 10, 2007, the price of a burial plot was raised to \$400.00. Why? Very few burial spaces were left available in the original cemetery. Phase II of Hatcher Cemetery became necessary. The surveying, clearing, and plotting had to be done and had to be paid for. With the opening of Phase II, there will be plenty of single gravesites and family burial plots.

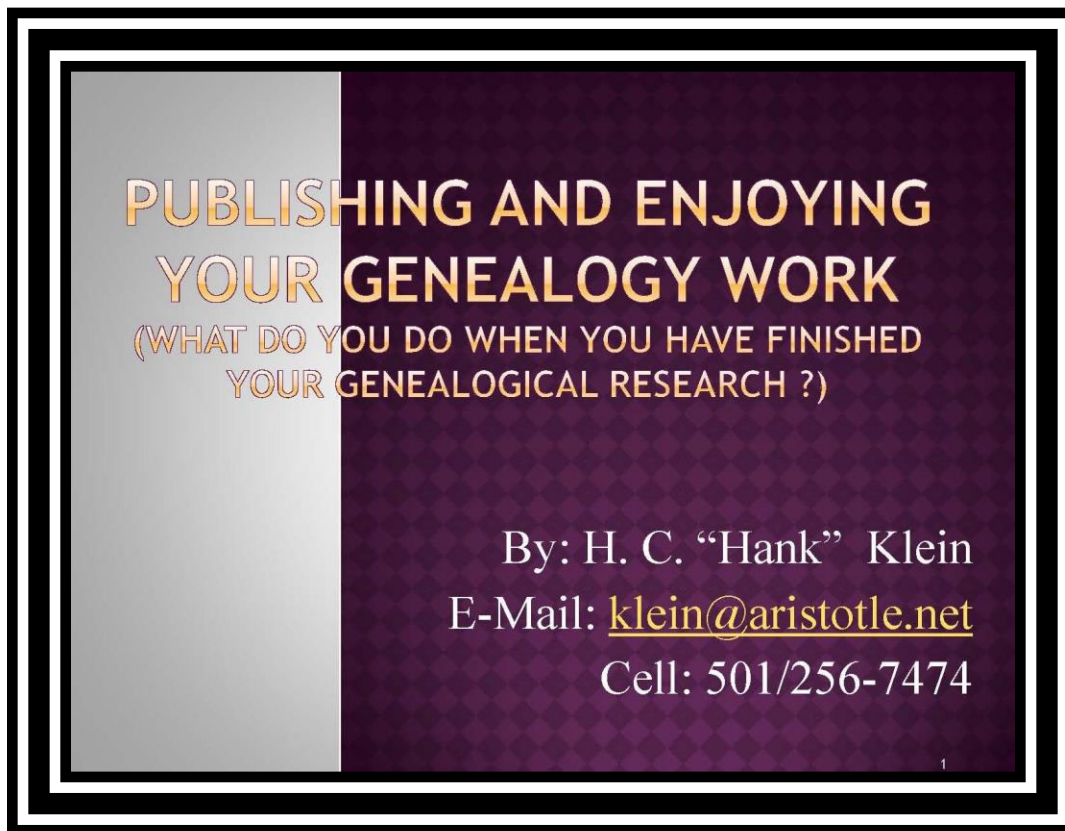
[End of Beckie Buxton's remarks.]

Phase II was consecrated on an earlier date by Captain Anthony B. Cuchens, 73d Ordnance Battalion Chaplain, who also gave the invocation at the ceremony on October 18. The current Trustees signed the following message:

WHEREAS this piece of land, adjoining the original historical Hatcher Cemetery, has been appropriated for the burial of the dead, we declare that it shall be set apart, consecrated and dedicated forever that those buried here may rest in peace. We ask blessings for all the families who will lay loved ones to rest here. May it forever be a comfort to the living.

Current Trustees of Hatcher Cemetery: Nancy Brown, Becky Blount Buxton, Tony Buxton, Eric Cadenhead, Howard Cuchens, Robbie Childers Cuchens, Donnell Davis, Jimmy Dunaway, Charles Knight, Robby Mess, and Olive Cuchens Watson.

Former Trustees of Hatcher Cemetery: Bobby Bates, D.D. Crosby, James Kaymon Cuchens Jr., Ken Cuchens, W.A. Cuchens Sr., Dwayne Davis, Eddie Farris, Helen Flaws, John S. "Jack" Flaws, Sebron Garrett, Earl Godwin, Joseph A. Guss, Maldon Hatcher, Charles V. "Chuck" Helton, Mike Helton, Jewel Cuchens Hughes, Russell Earl "Tim" Johnson, Evelyn Jones, Johnny Jones, Olen Chester Jones, Wayne Jones, Ginny Julian, Sebron S. Kelly, Judy Marse, Wayne Miller, P. Permenter, Hilda Turner, and Warren Wilson.



Date: Thursday, January 21, at 6:00 pm
Walton County Heritage Association and Genealogy Society
1140 Circle Drive, DeFuniak Springs, Florida
Title: *Publishing and Enjoying Your Genealogy Work*

As genealogists, we have all spent many, many hours, weeks, years (and some cases decades) searching for our relatives and trying our best to piece together their lives in the hopes of better understanding our own lives.

At some point it is time to stop the research and share what we have found with our spouse, children, brothers and sisters, grandchildren, as well as our other relatives.

Hank Klein will share with us a little about his searches for answers about his family roots and, more importantly, what he did with the information so that it will last beyond today . . . or even his lifetime. Hank has published three books about his and his wife's families and is working on his fourth book. He will tell us how and why he did it.

His presentation is called **Publishing and Enjoying Your Genealogy Work or What do You do When You Have Finished Your Genealogical Research.**

©2015 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.