



# WALTON RELATIONS

Volume 7, Issue 6

Walton County Genealogy Society

April 2016

## Protect Your Research!

The Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, is well-known for its genealogy collection. Its recent e-newsletter contained some good advice:

Our history is in our hands. That's the way it should be—the way we want it to be. Now let's take responsibility for it.

That was the conclusion to an article about online databases. It reminded us that the Master Genealogist, once considered the “cadillac of genealogical data management programs,” went out of business several years ago. More recently, Ancestry was going to discontinue Family Tree Maker until the outcry forced them to sell it rather than kill it and, very recently, RootsWeb had a hardware failure and was not able to retrieve all of its data.

Please let this be a reminder to back up your digitalized records now if you do not have a service doing so automatically. If you are also concerned about paper records, documents, and photographs, contact the Genealogy Society about making paper and/or digital copies for you. It is always good to have an off-site copy of important papers, including all of the records you spent hours researching!

## Genealogy Meeting

The Walton County Genealogy Society will meet on Thursday, April 21, following the quarterly meeting of the Heritage Association at the Walton County Heritage Museum. The Heritage meeting will start at 6:00, and Ben Ferguson will present “Topological and Geological Mysteries of Walton County.” The Genealogy Society will meet directly after the lecture, probably about 7:00. The public is welcome!

## Upcoming Reunions

**Spence Family** – The 48<sup>th</sup> Reunion of the Spence Family will be on Saturday, May 21, at the DeFuniak Springs Civic Center, 361 North 10th Street. The social hour will start at 10:00 a.m. followed by the business meeting at 11:00. Bring a covered dish to share for lunch. Tea and soft drinks will be provided. Call Irmalee Spence Bass at 850-892-6103 for 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](http://www.WaltonCountyHeritage.org)

[WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net](mailto:WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net)

# The Portland Collection

By Diane Merkel

In February 2016, Betty Earlene Kelly donated a collection of records to the Walton County Heritage Association. The collection includes photographs, birth records, obituaries, and church records from Portland. The names included in the collection are too numerous to list here, so I have selected one family to follow through the records and online sources to illustrate the collection.



miss maggil-an  
lizziemal Fountain  
Picture give to me  
for a Birthday  
Present 1918  
Mary Brown  
04  
Maggie Jane married  
Lizza Mae - Padgett  
Uncle Joe Fountain  
Daughter  
Harley Hamilton

As noted on the back of the photograph, on May 21, 1922, Maggie Jane Fountain (left) married Edward Harley Hamilton. Harley was the son of W. J. and Dililah Hamilton, both born in Alabama. In the 1920 census, he was 19 and living with his parents on Basin Road in Portland, working as a laborer in "Public Work." Their neighbors included the Reddick, Taunton, Jernigan, Kelley, and Shaw families.

We first find Maggie and Harley Hamilton together on the 1930 Federal Census. It appears their first son Ottis was born around 1921 and four other children soon followed. However, as is often the case with census records, some of children's names and ages are incorrect.

MARGIN RESERVED FOR BINDING  
WRITE PLAINLY, WITH UNFADING INK—THIS IS A PERMANENT RECORD  
N. B.—In case of more than one child at a birth, a SEPARATE RETURN must be made for each, and the number of each, in order of birth, stated

1 PLACE OF BIRTH **State Board of Health of Florida** CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH  
BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS  
County Walton REGISTRATION DISTRICT NO. 57107 FILE NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
Precinct or (Write name, not number) \_\_\_\_\_ PRIMARY REGISTRATION DIST. NO. \_\_\_\_\_ REGISTERED NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
Inc. Town or \_\_\_\_\_ (No. \_\_\_\_\_ St. \_\_\_\_\_ Ward \_\_\_\_\_)  
City \_\_\_\_\_

2 FULL NAME OF CHILD Ottis T Hamilton (If child is not yet named, make supplemental report, as directed)

3 Sex of Child male 4 Twin, triplet, or other? \_\_\_\_\_ Number in order of birth \_\_\_\_\_ 5 Legitimacy is 6 Date of birth March 3, 1923 (Month) (Day) (Year)

FATHER		MOTHER	
7 FULL NAME <u>Harley Hamilton</u>	13 RESIDENCE <u>Portland</u>	8 FULL MAIDEN NAME <u>Maggie Jane Fountain</u>	14 RESIDENCE <u>Portland</u>
9 COLOR <u>white</u>	10 AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>22</u> (Years)	15 COLOR <u>white</u>	16 AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>18</u> (Years)
11 BIRTHPLACE <u>Portland</u>	17 BIRTHPLACE <u>Portland</u>	18 OCCUPATION <u>Laborer</u>	19 OCCUPATION <u>Wife &amp; Mother</u>
20 Number of children born to this mother, including present birth <u>1</u>		21 Number of children of this mother now living <u>1</u>	

21 CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN, MIDWIFE OR PARENT\*  
I hereby certify that I attended the birth of this child, who was blue at 5 P.M. (Born alive or stillborn)  
on the date above stated.  
(Signature) Eugene Higgins (Physician, Midwife or Parent)  
Address Portland, Fla.  
22 Given name added from a supplemental report \_\_\_\_\_ 19 \_\_\_\_\_  
23 Filed April 10, 1923 Portland REGISTRAR  
REGISTRAR † Post Office Address

Thanks to the Portland Collection, we know Ottis was born March 3, 1923, although he later used March 4 as his birthdate. The 1930 Census had his age wrong by two years.

The spelling and penmanship on the birth records are poor for the most part, so it is necessary to look at other records to verify names. In this case, it took the Florida Death Index to confirm that this was the birth certificate for Ottis rather than his brother Olin. Then the 1940 Federal Census made more sense, showing the boys' ages as 16 and 14, respectively. It listed Ottis as a "New Worker" with 5<sup>th</sup> grade as the highest grade completed. Since 1940 was the last released Census, other sources must provide more information.

Ottis K. Hamilton enlisted in the U.S. Army on March 9, 1943, at Camp Blanding, Florida. The U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, which were accessed on Ancestry.com, list him as single with the civil occupation of fisherman and oysterman. Fold3.com, a paid site owned by Ancestry, had him married and working as a farm hand at a dairy. It was wrong on both counts.



Artificial fishing reefs also came under heavy fire from the fishermen. Shrimp fisherman Ottis K. Hamilton told the legislators that the reef were hazardous for several reasons. "They drop those cars and things on shrimp beds," he complained. "And it becomes a menace to navigation, too." Hamilton explained that many of the things dropped to form the reef do not stay put but are washed along the bottom. Hamilton said he had no objection of closing the bayous for shrimp fishing.

The Florida Marriage Index shows that Ottis married Ruby Lee Grace in 1948. She was born on April 24, 1924, to Carl and Jane Grace of Niceville. Ruby and Ottis had a son, Jimmy Ottis Hamilton, who was born on August 24, 1949.

Ottis Hamilton was quoted in an article (left) in the *Playground Daily News*, Fort Walton Beach, "Fishermen Oppose Choctaw Net Law," on January 16, 1969, so we know that he was, in fact, a shrimp fisherman.

Little else is publicly known of Ottis Hamilton's life or the lives of his parents, Maggie and Harley Hamilton. That is why writing down family stories and donating them to the Genealogy Society is so important.

Ottis K. Hamilton passed before his parents. He died on March 24, 1974, and his wife Ruby died in 1985. Ottis and Ruby are buried in the Early Cemetery in Niceville along with their son, Jimmie Ottis Hamilton, who died on July 26, 2010.

I had to rely on gravestones to learn the birth, marriage, and death dates of Maggie Jane Fountain and Edward Harley Hamilton. Their obituaries provide some more information, mostly genealogical.

## HAMILTON

DEFUNIAK SPRINGS — Mrs. Maggie Jane Hamilton, 74, of Route 1, Freeport, died late Saturday evening at an Okaloosa County hospital.

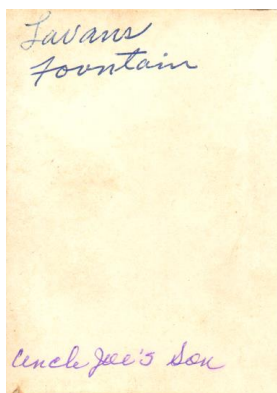
Mrs. Hamilton was a native and lifelong resident of Walton County.

Survivors include her husband, Edward Hamilton of Freeport; three daughters, Ophella Bianci of St. Petersburg, Bernice Griffin of Vero Beach and Kitturah Amison of Apalachicola; a son, Olin Hamilton of New Orleans; a sister, Mae Padgett of Pleasant Grove community; four brothers, J.E. Fountain of Mobile, Ala., Rayburn Fountain of DeFuniak Springs, Carl Fountain of Niceville, and Lavin Fountain of Rockville, Md.; 18 grandchildren; and 12 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will be 2 p.m. Monday in the Comander Funeral Home chapel with Jack Parks officiating.

Burial will be at the Hatcher Cemetery.

Comader [sic] Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.



This is the "Lavin Fountain" of Rockville, Maryland, listed above as one of Maggie Hamilton's brothers.



## COMANDER FUNERAL HOME HAMILTON

DEFUNIAK SPRINGS — Mr. Edward Harley Hamilton, 87, of Portland, died late Saturday evening in a Niceville hospital.

Mr. Hamilton was a native and lifelong resident of Walton County and was a retired carpenter.

Survivors include three daughters, Ophella Bianche, of St. Petersburg, Bernice Griffin, of Vero Beach, and Kitturah Amison, of Apalachicola; a son, Olin Hamilton, of Freeport, and 18 grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will be at 2 p.m. today from the Comander Funeral Home chapel with the Rev. Terry Van Gilder officiating.

Burial will follow in the Hatcher Cemetery.

Active pallbearers will be: Don Miley, Lorice James, Kenneth Taunton, Talmus Brown, Ebin King, and Damon Brown.

Honorary pallbearers will be: Clinton Wright, Irvin Godwin, Burress Godwin, David Kelley, and Conley Martin.

Comander Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

In addition to some photographs, birth records, and copies of obituary notices, the Portland Collection also has the Church Roll Record Book of the Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church of Portland. The book lists members of the church and some notations, such as when someone was baptized. For example, it shows that Maggie Hamilton and her sister, Lizzie Mae Fountain, were received in the church in July 1924. J.D. Hattaway received a salary of \$60 that year as its Pastor, and it had 58 members. According to court documents, the church, which was also called Portland Baptist Church, ceased to exist around 1940.

Many of the records in the Portland Collection are very fragile, but I will be pleased to check copies of them for you. Please write to me at [WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net](mailto:WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net) with as precise a request as possible. For all other genealogy questions, I suggest you contact Wayne Sconiers at [WayneSconiers@embarqmail.net](mailto:WayneSconiers@embarqmail.net). He has a database of over 50,000 Walton County names and is always willing to help with research.

## Free Online Genealogy Lessons

FamilySearch's Learning Center — FamilySearch offers hundreds of free courses, using videos, slides, and voice narration. Most have PDF handouts that provide additional information and links to web sources. If you are new to genealogy, they offer 21 five-minute genealogy lessons. Intermediate and advanced courses are also available, covering dozens of topics in 14 languages.

The Ancestry Learning Center has several dozen free research guides but most appear to promote use of the Ancestry.com website.

The Genealogy Center of the Allen County (Indiana) Public Library now offers two how-to videos and hopes to add more soon. The current videos are "Gathering Home Sources" and "The Research Process."

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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](mailto:WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net) or call 850-897-4505.