



# WALTON RELATIONS

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Walton County Genealogy Society

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## History Detectives



**David Nelson** lives in the Glendale Community and is trying to assist the owner of the house pictured above, which is located at 155 Magnolia Avenue, determine its history. It likely was built in 1908 and was possibly the Post Office; however, there is more concrete evidence that it was the telephone exchange. The building has three doors on the front and two on the side, indicating it may have served as a commercial building with a residence attached.

The National Archives has records available for Post Office locations, and David is hoping someone already has the records for the local ones. If you can help, please post on the History Detectives Message Boards or write to [WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net](mailto:WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net). This is History Detectives No. 83.

## Genealogy Meeting

The Walton County Genealogy Society will meet at the Heritage Museum this Thursday, August 18, at 6:00 p.m. Members and guests are welcome!

## September Reunions

Below is the most current information we have about family reunions that usually occur in September. Any updates received will be posted on the Reunions page of our website.

**Burgess** - The last reported reunion was on 4 September 2010 at the Darlington Baptist Church on Highway 2, west of Darlington.

**Ingalls/Wilder** - The last known reunion was on 26 September 2009 at the New Hope Community Center on Highway 163, north of Highway 2, in Westville.

**Monk** - The last known reunion was 12 September 2009 at the Civic Center on Highway 83 in DeFuniak Springs.

### **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)

# **Grannie's Grave**

**By David Luther Woodward of Pensacola**

Do you know that there is a cemetery in Saint Petersburg that's gone missing?

Several years before I was born, in 1940, my grandmother was killed in a traffic crash on Memorial Highway near Oldsmar west of Tampa. She had lived in Saint Petersburg for years but had recently moved to Tampa. I remember visiting the cemetery as a child with my parents and I became interested in finding her grave.

I ordered her death certificate from the Bureau of Vital Statistics, and it revealed that she had been buried in the "Florida Cemetery" in Saint Petersburg. Her obituary—available from the Hillsborough library genealogy section—confirmed that, so I began looking for it on maps, in phone books, and on the Internet, but that revealed nothing. I was referred to a funeral director who offered to assist, and he turned up nothing. The professional organization for funeral directors and cemeteries in Tallahassee had no record of it, nor did the state regulatory department. It never appeared in the deed records in Pinellas County, the county in Florida in which Saint Petersburg lies.

So let me tell you of the saga that took almost three years.

My mother's family were original Scottish 18<sup>th</sup> century Spanish land grant settlers in what is known today as the Florida Parishes in Louisiana—that portion of Louisiana that is on the East side of the Mississippi River and was a part of Spanish West Florida where Pensacola was the capitol. They kept records with the penchant that only the Scots have. Not so with my paternal side.

My dad told me he was born in Freeport, or was it Pensacola? He had no birth certificate. He told me that his father was killed in an accident on the Pensacola and Atlantic Railway while his mother was pregnant with my aunt, and that thereafter she moved to Saint Petersburg. He had no contact with his father's family for years and only made contact in the 1950s after moving back to the Panhandle.

Grannie remarried and bore additional children by her second husband. Dad related that it was a blended family with very little if any differentiation among the half-siblings. He went off to boarding high school in Alabama, college at Mercer, and finally the seminary before becoming an Army chaplain.

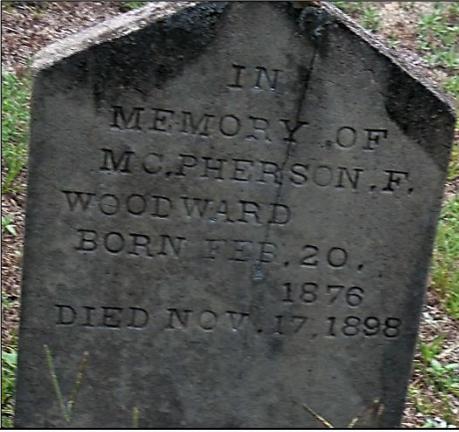
In 1935, Grannie's husband stepped off the curb in Saint Petersburg, was hit by a car and died almost immediately. He was buried in the Old Florida Cemetery in Saint Petersburg. Grannie was driving from Tampa to Saint Petersburg one day in 1940 along the Memorial Highway that links the two cities across the top of Old Tampa Bay, t-boned a truck that pulled out of a side road, and died some days later in what is now Tampa General Hospital. She, too, was buried in the Old Florida Cemetery, alongside her husband.

I lost Grannie's grave—if I ever knew where it was!

About three or four years ago I became interested in tracing the lineage of my father's family. My mother's cousin had done that side all the way back to Scotland, but we knew very little about Dad's side of the family, which will become obvious as I go through this story.

What I did know was that Dad was born in Freeport, or was it Pensacola? And that he was born in 1901, or was it 1897? He had no birth certificate and the family bible entry was really vague. What I did learn was that his family was buried in the Old Holt Cemetery which is in Okaloosa County today but was in Santa Rosa County at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Family lore has it that Grannie, Lydia Webb Woodward, who was born January 8, 1879, in Geneva County, Alabama, moved to Saint Petersburg sometime after the death of my grandfather, McPherson Francis Woodward, who was born in Santa Rosa County, Florida, on February 20, 1876. His gravestone carries a date of death of November 17, 1898.

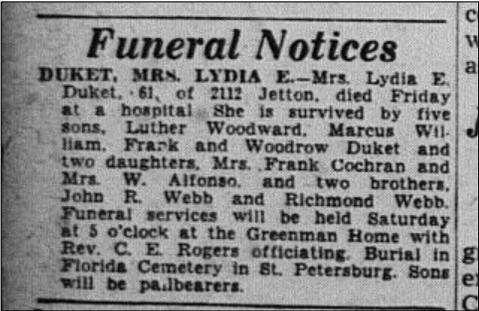


Gravestone for the author's grandfather in Old Holt Cemetery.

She married Sam Duket. According to Dad, they had four more children and the family was a fully functional blended family. The children turned out great: Dad went to Mercer and the Seminary in New Orleans and became a military chaplain before retiring to DeFuniak Springs; one brother became a pharmacist and owned a drug store in the Palm Ceia area of Tampa; and a third brother went to medical school in Chicago and practiced ophthalmology around the corner from the pharmacist. Both of the girls married well.

The tragic result of Grannie's move to Pinellas County was that all contact with the Woodward family in the Panhandle was lost. Dad and his sister grew up with no knowledge of their father's family. It was not until Dad retired from the Army and we moved to DeFuniak Springs that his research led him to the Old Holt Cemetery and a few remote cousins in Pensacola. Only his father's youngest brother Amos was still living.

My father and all his siblings are now dead and, about three years ago, after going through some of his papers and locating information about the Old Holt Cemetery, I became interested in finding Grannie. I recalled as a six-year-old child that my aunt and my mother, along with my cousin and me, went to Pinellas County from Tampa to put some flowers on Grannie's grave.



So I set out to find Grannie.

From family lore I knew that she had been killed in an automobile crash sometime in the late 1930s or early 1940s. I also knew that she had moved to Palm Ceia to be close to her children. I inquired of the genealogy section of the Tampa Public Library, now known as the John F. Germany Public Library, to see if they could find an obituary for Grannie—and they did! It related that she was buried in the Old Florida Cemetery in Saint Petersburg. I thought I had hit pay dirt.

I went online to try to find the cemetery with Google with no result. I contacted Pinellas County Genealogy Society, Inc., which keeps shop in the Largo Library. They had never heard of it. I checked the land records for Pinellas County in the Court House in Clearwater, taking the index all the way back to when Pinellas was split off from Hillsborough County and still no luck. I ordered Grannie's death certificate from the Florida Bureau of Vital Statistics, hoping that it would reveal that the obituary might be in error over the place of burial. No such luck. The obit was correct.

My next tack was to try to locate the funeral company with which the funeral director whose name appeared on the death certificate was connected. I contacted the Florida Division of Funeral, Cemetery and Consumer Services, a division of the office managed by Florida's treasurer and chief financial officer, and they had no record of the undertaker or of the cemetery.

Next, I contacted the Pinellas Public Library to see if they had a copy of Polk's Directory for the years around 1940, but they didn't. I was referred to a public library in Indiana that maintains a full collection of the Polk Directories and provides a search service. I inquired of them, and they sent me copies of the pages referencing cemeteries. No Old Florida Cemetery, but I did have a list of funeral homes existent at the time. I searched for them, but they had either closed or been acquired by a current operator.

Then I ordered a death certificate for Sam, Grannie's second husband, to see if anything could be determined from it. Sam was killed in 1935 as he stepped off a curb in Saint Petersburg and apparently looked the wrong way! He, too, was buried in the Florida Cemetery.

At this point I really was stumped. If I hadn't been to the cemetery as a child, albeit 65 years ago, I might have given up. But then I had a brainstorm.

I took a map of the City of Tampa and Saint Petersburg and traced the probable route we would have taken in 1948 from my aunt's house in Palm Ceia to the cemetery. The only bridge across the bay at that time was the Gandy Bridge, so I traced the route across it into Northeast Saint Petersburg and I located the first cemetery en route.

I phoned the cemetery and asked if they knew of the Florida Cemetery which was in existence in 1940. The person on the other end of the line professed ignorance but referred me to a sister cemetery on the west side of town—certainly 'way out in the country in 1940. I gave them a call, and the telephone receptionist denied any knowledge but then said she had been in the area only a couple of years. I held on for the manager and repeated to her my tale.

She replied, "I think you have found it." She had an old Rolodex file, indexing the graves in the Old Florida Cemetery. At some point in time the Old Florida Cemetery had been surrounded by and incorporated into Woodlawn Memory Gardens off Central Avenue and 51<sup>st</sup> Street in Saint Petersburg.

In April last I had a hearing in Collier County, so I flew into Tampa, rented a car, and drove over to Woodlawn and visited Grannie's grave after some 65 years. The saga was complete.



*David Luther Woodward graduated from Walton High School in 1960 and then from Florida State University with a B. A. in 1965 and a J. D. in 1969, in the law school's charter class. He earned the master of laws from the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1982. He lives in Pensacola with his wife Louisette and finds himself fascinated by local history.*

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