



WALTON RELATIONS

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Walton County Genealogy Society

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Genealogy Society Changes

By Diane Merkel

It has been my pleasure to serve as the editor of *Walton Relations* for the past seven years. I very much appreciate all of the feedback and support I have received during that time, but it is time to pass the newsletter on to a new editor. I am very pleased that **Sam Carnley**, who has contributed many articles to these pages including the main article in this issue, has agreed to be the editor effective with the October issue. Sam also serves as Treasurer of the Walton County Heritage Association.

Sam has also agreed to serve as president of the Walton County Genealogy Society for a while so that **Wayne Sconiers** can take a much needed break. Wayne has been president of the Society for eight years and has helped hundreds of people during that time. He will still be keeping up with his genealogy database, but we ask that you contact Sam Carnley first and, if he cannot help you, Sam will contact Wayne. Sam can be reached by email at wsamuelcarnley@gmail.com.

I am sure you join me in thanking Wayne for his years of service to our members and friends and in welcoming Sam as the Society president and newsletter editor!

Genealogy Meeting

The Walton County Genealogy Society will meet at the Heritage Museum this Thursday, September 15, at 6:00 p.m. Members and guests are welcome!

October Reunions

Below is a list of reunions that usually occur in October. Additional information is posted on the Reunions page of our website.

- Campbell/McLean
- Crowder
- Darlington Community
- Day
- Garrett
- Kelly
- Liberty School
- Pitts

Walton County Heritage Museum

Open Tuesday - Saturday, 1:00 - 4:00 PM
1140 Circle Drive, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435

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History of Miller Community Cemetery

By Sam Carnley

Miller Community Cemetery is located on the property of the Trustees, West Florida Congregational Methodist Camp, on Campground Road, in the community of Gordon, off Highway 331, south of Paxton, Walton County, Florida. The property was once the site of Gordon Chapel Congregational Methodist Church.

Until 1889, the property where the Church stood was in the public domain. In July of that year, it was among a large number of parcels included in patent number 12487 issued to Andrew J. Adams and James M. Hall for a cash entry sale. Adams, of Los Angeles, California, appears to have been a land speculator. In 1903, he, and others as trustees, executed a warranty deed for the property to Thomas R. Lyons, of Chicago, Illinois. Lyons subsequently conveyed the land by warranty deed to Stearns and Culver Lumber Company who, in turn, conveyed it to Bagdad Land and Lumber Company also of Chicago.

In 1918, the property was included in 600 acres Bagdad Land and Lumber Company conveyed by warranty deed to D. L. McSwain and Jake Wey. Six years later, McSwain and Wey, whose address was Desoto County, Florida, conveyed the property as part of a 200 acre parcel to G. W. Matthews, of Coffee County, Alabama, by warranty deed dated 9 October 1924.

Matthews remained in possession of the property until 19 May 1945 when he conveyed 32 and 1/2 acres of the 40 acre parcel to Hosie A. Jackson by warranty deed. Jackson's daughter, Leah Ann Jackson Wilkerson, now owns the property. Then, on 7 July 1945, Matthews conveyed the remaining 7 and 2 acres by warranty deed to the Congregational Methodist Church of the Chattahoochee Annual West Florida Conference. The description given for the parcel conveyed to the Church was:

Seven and one half acres of land located in the northwest corner of the NE 3 of the NW 3 of Section 30, Township 5 North of Range 20 West.

Two more warranty deeds followed the latter one above. On 5 December 1967, Connie Pearl Tucker, Clyde V. Beard, and T. M. Lindsey, as Trustees of the Congregational Methodist Church, conveyed by warranty deed to themselves as Trustees of the Gordon Chapel Congregational Methodist Church, the entire 7 and 1/2 acres. On the same date, the above Trustees of the Gordon Chapel transferred 6 and 1/2 acres of the land by warranty deed to H. D. Laird, E. F. Metcalf, and Geraldine Cowan as Trustees of the West Florida Congregational Methodist Camp. The one acre not transferred for use of the camp was reserved for the church, a structure which no longer exists as of the date of this writing in 2016.

Although identified of record as a church camp only since the date of the above warranty deed, that is what the site was known as locally for many decades previously. The name was so well entrenched that when the county named all its roads in connection with the implementation of its 911 emergency phone system, the dirt road passing along the north boundary of the property became "Campground Road."

The cemetery is on the portion of the property deeded for the Camp but, curiously, is not mentioned in any of the deeds. It was established in 1850 according to a survey conducted in 1998 and posted to the U.S. Genweb site. The individuals making the survey were Leah Ann Wilkerson, Peggy Walden Martin, Frank Gene Martin, Patrick Schuyler Martin, and Tim Walden. No source, however, was cited for the establishment date. The earliest dated burial there is that of Elizabeth McSwain, born 12 January 1866 and died 29 February 1868. She was the daughter of Alex and Nancy McSwain, who are named on the same headstone as Elizabeth. Alex is also named on a headstone located at Dead River Cemetery in Bruce, south of DeFuniak Springs. His name, birth and burial dates on the headstones are identical in both cemeteries. Possibly, he was buried at Bruce and listed on the headstone at Miller Community Cemetery just to identify him as a member of the McSwain family. There are also several named but undated headstones at Miller, some of which could have been older than 1868. Lacking that information, it cannot be determined whether or not any burials preceded that year.

Another burial at Miller is that of Rev. G. M. Carnley, who died 12 June 1914. About 1905, he became affiliated with the Congregational Church. The National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States of America caused the annual publication of a Year Book. Published many years before and after 1900, the Year Books contained statistical data from affiliated churches all over the world, including lists of churches and ministers.

The 1905 edition, page 138, lists a church at Gordon, Florida, gives its year of organization as 1893, identifies its minister as George Carnley, Lic. and its clerk as Joel (Joseph) Carnley, a son of George. The abbreviation, "Lic.," following George's name stands for Licentiate. According to the Year Book, "Licentiatees are not reckoned as ministers." A review of several Year Books seemed to indicate that a Licentiate was a phase along the path to becoming an ordained minister. On page 139, George is identified as the Sunday School Superintendent at Gordon and is indicated as given no salary and no parsonage.

As of 1908, the Year Book shows George still the minister at Gordon as well as Stella. The clerk at Gordon was Mrs. Mollie Cannon, a daughter of Mack Henry Busbee, and the Sunday School Superintendent was Mrs. Cobb, Florala, Alabama.

In 1909, the Year Book lists Jeff Carnley, Stella, as the clerk at Gordon, and Geo. M. Carnley, Stella, as minister. Jeff, whose full name was Ephraim Jefferson, was another son of George.

The Year Book of 1910 lists Mack Busbee as Sunday School Superintendent at Gordon. The clerk and minister were the same as in 1909 and likewise for Stella.

The clerk and minister at Gordon in 1911 were Jeff and George Carnley, respectively. Sunday School Superintendent was Mrs. McNeal. At Stella, Mrs. F. M. Turner was clerk and George M. Carnley, Gordon, was minister.

In 1912, George had expanded his ministry to Ealum, located a little over three miles almost directly east of Stella. The clerk was C. Thompson. George was listed as the minister and his post office was shown again as Gordon. At Gordon Church, Jeff Carnley was clerk, and J. H. Carnley, Laurel Hill, was the minister. Stella and Gordon were listed together under churches with Mrs. F. M. Turner as their clerk and Geo. M. Carnley, Gordon, as their minister.

George continued as minister at Ealum in 1913, and Clarence Thompson was the clerk. At Gordon, Jeff Carnley, Stella, was clerk, and George M. Carnley, Stella, was minister. In 1914, Gordon and Ealum are not listed in the Year Book. New Life Church, Laurel Hill, is listed and J. H. Carnley, Laurel Hill, is the minister. He is also listed as the minister of Stella. George does not appear in the Year Book because he died that year and, owing to his close ties with Gordon Church, he was laid to rest in its cemetery.

Reverend Carnley, as was not uncommon among ministers in the south, was illiterate. Thus, the function of the clerks referenced in the foregoing narrative possessed of reading and writing abilities was to record church activities and mail them to the department of The National Council of the Congregational Churches responsible for printing the annual yearbooks. Copies of documents mailed may have been retained on file locally, but it is unknown where those for Gordon may be found.

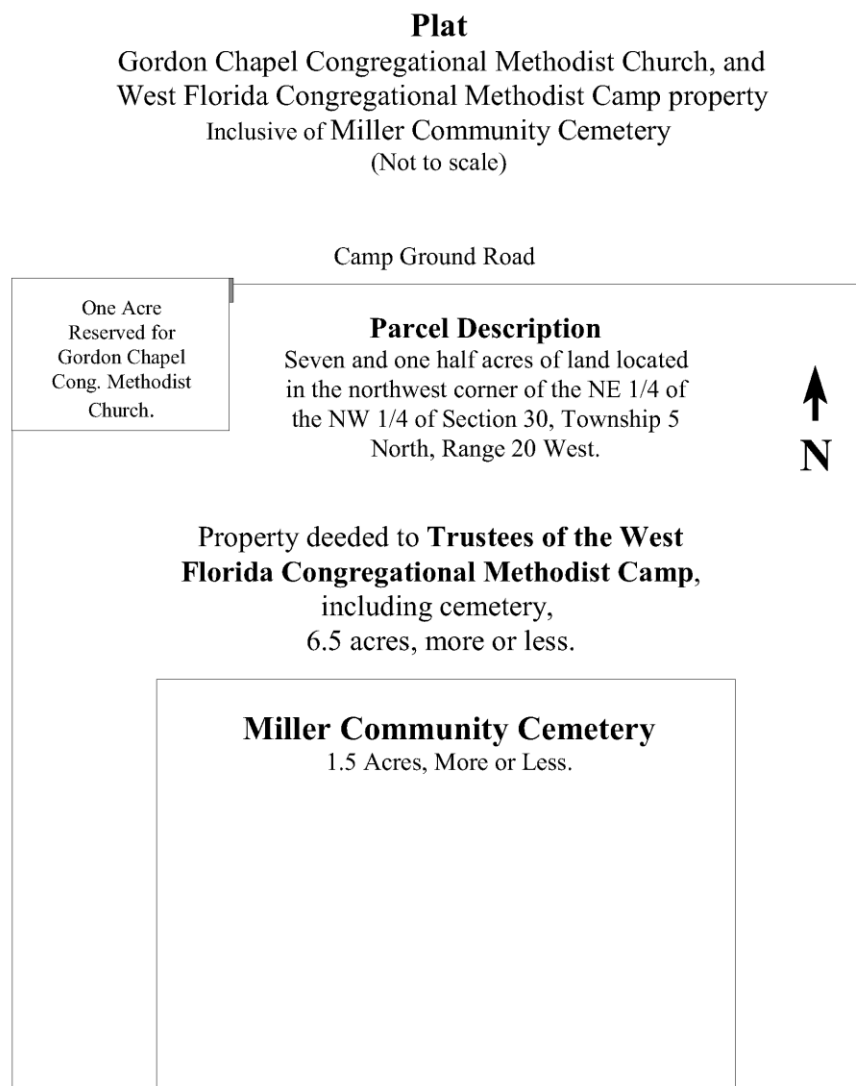
The next cycle of church activities at Gordon for which records are available began in 1938. They show that Gordon Chapel was constituted July 1938 in the "old Gordon School House, a white square, bungalow top, frame building erected in 1920, as a community building." It was located four miles south of Paxton, Road #40 (now U.S. Hwy 331), Stella, Star Route, Florala, Alabama. Although Gordon is in Walton County, the post office providing the mail service was in Florala, about a mile north of Paxton just inside the Alabama state line.

The church denomination was Congregational Methodist. The organizational bodies to which it was connected were: General Conference, Mt. Pleasant, Texas, at the national level; the West Florida Annual Conference at the

state level, for which J. M. Beasley (Beasley) of Sampson (Samson), Alabama, was secretary, and the Choctawhatchee (Chattahoochee per the 1945 deed) Conference at the next subordinate level, with Grady Stringfellow of Florala as secretary. The principal officials were: Reverend J. L. Byrd, Pastor, Milton, Florida; Mr. J. F. Johnson, Deacon; Mr. Grady Stringfellow, Church Clerk, and Mrs. Myrtle Adams, Sunday School Secretary. The church records, described as “good,” were then in the possession of Mr. Stringfellow at his home in Florala. No attempt was made to access them for purposes of this article.

The foregoing information came from a historical records survey of churches conducted by the Washington, D. C., based Works Progress Administration begun in 1937, which can be found online. It is unknown whether records were kept continuously from 1938 until Gordon Chapel gained ownership of the property in 1945 and afterwards. None of those accessed made any reference to the cemetery.

The cemetery remains in use as of 2016 and contains 101 interments, according to the “Find A Grave” website. Its south boundary is contiguous with the south boundary line of the Camp property. The other three sides are well inside the parent property boundaries. Its east-west dimensions measure about three hundred feet, and north to south it runs two hundred, twenty-five feet, containing one and a half acres, more or less, as shown on the following plat:



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Walton Relations is a publication of the Walton County Genealogy Society. Wayne Sconiers, President.
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