



# WEST GADSDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

## NEWSLETTER

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West Gadsden Historical Society, a small, volunteer, local non-profit with a 501(c)(3) designation, depends solely on the generosity of our members, local businesses and all others interested in the preservation of Gadsden County's history to help us remain financially strong. As always, your donations and membership dues are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. Your consideration and help will truly be appreciated!

Vol. 10, No. 3

September 2015

### PAST EVENTS

SATURDAY, JUNE 27

24<sup>th</sup> Annual Tallahassee Model  
Railroad Show and Sale

WGHS participated in the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Tallahassee Model Railroad Show and Sale sponsored by the BBMRA, June 27 at the North Florida Fairgrounds in Tallahassee. Our booth provided information on the Greensboro Railroad Depot Museum and was well received by the many visitors to the show. As a result, the number of visitors to the Depot Museum has had a significant increase. Be sure to set aside a time for your visit. The Greensboro Railroad Depot Museum is open the first and last weekend of each month 1-4 p.m.

Saturday, JULY 4

WGHS Annual Open House

Once again we had a wonderful turn out to our Annual open house, with visitors enjoying the Dezell House and the Greensboro Railroad Depot Museum. We received positive responses to our new displays which include several original trophy display cases from Greensboro High School, and a Kids' play area at the Depot. Coastal Seafood Restaurant of Panacea served a delicious lunch. If you missed out this year, there is always next year!

### UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, September 28

History of Gadsden County Court  
Houses

Joe Munroe, Executive Director of Quincy Main Street and Gadsden County Historian, presented a wonderful history of the Gadsden County court houses. Joe traced the origins of the (5) Gadsden County court houses from 1824 to 1913 as researched in the territorial court minutes 1824-1837 and the Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners' minutes 1845-1914. With Joe's unrivaled insights of Gadsden County, we look forward future presentations.

Saturday, November 14

Annual Meeting

Is everyone ready for our annual wash pot pilau super? This year's event is scheduled the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of November. In addition to having an opportunity to view the Greensboro Depot Railroad Museum, you can participate in a silent auction including antiques and collectables. Also we will be releasing a CD of ANRR Memories and Railway Songs. The CD will feature *The St. Joe Line*, an original song written and performed by George Johnson. George and his family will be performing during this event. It will be an afternoon and evening you will not want to miss. Festivities begin at 4:30.

October 6<sup>th</sup> and October 13<sup>th</sup>

The State Library & Archives are  
Celebrating American Archives Month  
in October with Two Special Events

On October 6<sup>th</sup> and October 13<sup>th</sup>, the State Library & Archives reading room will be open from 9:00am to 8:00pm. This would be an excellent opportunity for a group to go over for an extended research session. They will be fully staffed for the entire period to address questions about using the various databases, print resources, and archival materials. A few other less conventional sources that can be very helpful for tracing Florida families will be discussed during the events.

Visit [myflorida.com/library-archives/research/explore-our-resources/genealogy](http://myflorida.com/library-archives/research/explore-our-resources/genealogy) for a list of most of their genealogical resources.

In addition, on both 10/6 and 10/13, they will be conducting tours of the restricted stacks area upstairs where stores of priceless archival treasures are found. Some of these items set out for display, include the oldest object in the Archives, a 1589 map of Sir Francis Drake's raid on St. Augustine, Florida's original Ordinance of Secession, sharecropper contracts, hand-colored maps from the Spanish colonial era, records of marks and brands. The tours will be conducted on the half hour after 5:00pm or as interest demands.

Further, three workshops are planned to coincide with these two open house nights. They are as follows:

Thinking Outside the Census: Non-traditional Sources for Genealogical Research (Oct. 6 @ 6:30pm) – Census returns are a vital tool for tracing family history, but they're far from perfect. Many other sources exist for reconstructing the lives of ancestors, including land records, professional licensure records, educational records, business records, and tax records. In this workshop, State Archives historian Joshua Goodman will demonstrate how to find these diverse sources and extract valuable genealogical information.

Preserving Historic Documents and Photographs at Home (Oct. 13 @ 6:00pm) – Photographs, letters, diaries, and scrapbooks are staples of the family archive at home. If properly stored and cared for, these precious memories can be preserved for generations to come. In this workshop, archivist Adam Watson will explain the basic principles for preserving documents and photographs at home, as well as options for stabilizing especially fragile items.

Researching African-American Ancestors (Oct. 13 @ 7:00pm) – Genealogy can be a challenging task for African-American families, especially when searching for information about ancestors who lived prior to emancipation. In this workshop, archivists Miriam Gan-Spalding and Delbra McGriff will explore creative strategies for tracing African-American ancestors using a variety of online and unpublished records.

## GRANT WILL FURTHER RESTORATION OF THE DEZELL HOUSE

The WGHS Board of Directors decided to submit a grant application during the Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation's May-June, 2014 submission cycle. A \$50,000 Small Matching Grant was requested; however, during staff evaluation the application was reduced by \$11,400; reducing the size of the rear deck. Through generous funding from the Florida Legislature all of the grant requests were funded for a second year. WGHS received notification in July. All of the necessary paperwork and contracts were completed, signed and submitted by mid-July. WGHS will receive \$38,600 to complete the restroom, providing handicapped facilities, remove the T-111 siding from the exterior, replacing it with historically correct cypress shingles; and build a small rear deck with a handicapped ramp. We look forward to getting this project underway and completed by June 2016. This current grant is the second one received by WGHS. Our first \$50,000 Small Matching Grant was received in 2007. WGHS appreciates this assistance from the State of Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation. It is through this Small Matching Grant program that WGHS will complete the Dezell House Restoration.



The following is Part II of a 2 part series entitled The HISTORY OF JOHN "VIRGINIA" SMITH & HIS DESCENDANTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY IN GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA AND DECATUR COUNTY, GEORGIA.

Written in mid-1920s by: D. D. Smith, with help from James Love and W. E. Smith.

**NOTE:**  
Remember, this article was written in the 1920s. All the people mentioned have long

been gone. Mr. Smith noted at that time that over 500 descendants of "Virginia" and Martha Smith were living. It's now about 90 years since then --- just think how many thousands of Smith descendants there must now be in 2015. Mr. Drane Smith of Bainbridge, GA very graciously gave permission to the West Gadsden Historical Society to print this tobacco history written by his grandfather.

Immediately after the war, tobacco culture was almost abandoned. However, there were a few farmers who had learned to enjoy a good smoke who still planted small patches of the Havana type of tobacco, and had cigars rolled for themselves and friends. In this way the Cuban seed was preserved. About 1885 an official of the F.C. & P. railroad, (now Seaboard Air Line) took some of this tobacco to New York to try to interest some capital in its production. Several became interested and representatives of Northern capital came in and revived the production of tobacco. This marked the beginning of a new industry. Mr. George L. Storm came to Quincy and brought with him Mr. William M. Corry. They purchased a number of farms around Quincy and Mr. Storm, being from Germany, gave these farms German names, many of which have been retained until today. They organized the Owl Cigar Company and began planting tobacco. Mr. Corry bought the identical tract of land up which John "Virginia" Smith planted the first seed of tobacco in 1830.

W. B. Smith had practically retired in 1887 and was running a water grist mill two miles west of Attapulugus. Mr. Corry hired him to come down and teach them what he knew about raising tobacco. He was at LaCamelia one year and on South Santa Clara for three years. He was associated with Jason G. Curry, his son-in-law, who took over when he left and afterward became General Superintendent for The Owl Cigar Co. When Jason G. Curry was appointed

Superintendent for The Owl Cigar Co., his brother Mr. Horace Curry became Superintendent of South Santa Clara. Mr. Horace Curry later was one of the Firm of Shaw and Curry; then sometime later he was General Manager of the American Sumatra Tobacco Corporation.

Thomas R. Smith built a home and lived where Amsterdam head-quarters now are. Very little tobacco was grown immediately after the war. The industry seems to have almost died out; however, both Thomas R. and W. B. Smith continued to grow a small amount. Thomas R. Smith developed a cancer in the early eighties and had to give up his business. He sold his lands to George W. Haynes, his son-in-law who had married Laura F. Smith. This land was sold in 1886. The Haynes reared one daughter, Ethel, who married Peter Miller, who in later years was prominent in the tobacco business in Quincy. Thomas R. Smith died in 1887. After selling his lands to E. J. Mast, in 1891, Major George W. Haynes died in 1892. Associated with Mr. Mast was a young man, Mr. Louie Leopold, who married a Bainbridge girl and later was President of the American Sumatra Tobacco Corporation. Mr. Mast in 1891 sold to Abraham Cohen, who founded A. Cohen & Co., and began growing tobacco on a large scale.

When the industry made its return, most of the tobacco planted was of the Havana type. This tobacco was allowed to ripen to the top, and the stalks were cut and speared on sticks. This was allowed to cure and then it was stripped off the stalk. There was a small amount of Old Florida leaf tobacco grown at this time, and this was primed off the stalk. The stems were split and slipped over sticks. Stringing the leave on thread attached to a stick came into vogue about 1895. At that time, we made our needles out of umbrella ribs and had each needle long enough to hold a stick of tobacco. In about 1891, Schroeder & Arguimbau bought a small place west of Quincy and grew tobacco so

successfully that they bought several larger places. These three companies, namely The Owl Cigar Co., A. Cohn Co., and Schroeder & Arguimbau operated on an extensive scale until 1894 and all of the small farmers who were planting tobacco at that time made some money. In that year, the bottom seemed to have "dropped out" of the tobacco business and there was nothing doing. In 1895, J. L. McFarlin thought that if he could get some of the Old Florida seed that was planted before the War that he could grow a wrapper that the trade would admire. He rode all over this section looking for these seed and with the assistance of the writer's Father, W. E. Smith, found that Mr. L. W. Griffin had some of the old Florida seed and he gave them practically all that he had. In spite of the fact that these seed were grown several years before, many of them germinated and made a beautiful wrapper when planted on virgin soil. The same year A. Cohn & Co., planted about one acre from Sumatra seed, which made the most beautiful tobacco that had been grown in this section. However, it was impossible for any of the farmers to get any seed the first year, but the second year the seed were more plentiful and the farmers made a lot of money in 1896. In 1896, they had begun to learn that the tobacco was too heavy and dark for desirable wrappers. The market was poor in 1897 and 1898.

In 1896, a new phase of tobacco business began. All through the years the highest prices had been paid for that part of the crop which was light in color and silky in texture. It was, of course, desirable that a larger percentage of the crop have these characteristics. Having this fact in mind, the late D. A. Shaw, who had followed Mr. M. L. Floyd as Manager of Schroeder & Arguimbau, experimented with the artificial shading of tobacco, by erecting a small structure made of wooden frame work, with nailed on wooden laths, within the present city limits of Quincy. This experiment was such a great success that in 1897 Schroeder &

Arguimbau planted five acres of shade tobacco, and decided on considerable expansion. They planted over 100 acres on their own farm in 1898 and contracted about 100 acres to small farmers for 27 cents per pound. My Father planted five acres of this tobacco which was the first shade tobacco grown in the State of Georgia. In 1898, A. Cohen Co. experimented with a "bush arbor". The first 100 acres of shade built was with wooden stringers one way and wire the other. The wooden stringers were twenty-four feet apart and the slats shoved as close together as possible. The heavy shade sagged so much that there was added to this structure a wooden stringer every twelve feet with a wire on top, with a guy wire at both ends to keep the shade from creening. We made eleven crops under this shade with no disease except knot root. This idea of building a shade of this type was originated by Mr. John L. McFarlin and Mr. R. K. Shaw. As a boy, I remember Mr. R. K. Shaw riding out on his bicycle to watch the progress of the shade. Mr. J. W. Woodward had charge of building the shade.

The next year Mr. J. W. Upson from Baldinsville, N. Y. came into the tobacco industry (he bought a farm and named it Del-Hi-Laingkat, now Landcat, after a farm on Sumatra Island) built and contracted with other farmers for over one hundred acres of shade. My Father built six acres of this type shade on his place. At that time, there was a large amount of long leaf yellow pine in this section and only heart lumber was used in this shade. We used four by fours, placed sixteen feet apart, for posts, tied each way with two by fours. With a two by four cross stringer, the slats were sixteen and one-half feet long and nailed down with shingle nails. This shade, not being guyed, was inclined to lean over as it settled. I think we made six crops under this shade. All slats were shoved close on top of the structure making one-half shade and small boys nailed them down. Mr. Upson also introduced a type of barn which had sheds on both sides, some of these are

still in use at Amsterdam, Landcat and on my Father's old place.

In 1900, Mr. M. L. Floyd of the Division of Soil in the United States Department of Agriculture took samples of Gadsden County tobacco to the World Exposition in Paris, and won first prize. Mr. Floyd was reared in Gadsden County and was an Uncle to the Gregory and Ellinor Families. He was formerly with Schroeder & Arguimbau. In 1901, Mr. Floyd left the United States Government and was very instrumental in establishing the cheesecloth shade tobacco in the Connecticut River Valley. His efforts are fully described in the Tobacco Journal.

By 1901, slat shade tobacco had become an established industry. All shades were built half shade with slats touching. This tended to make the tobacco too light and farmers began to experiment by widening the slats on the wire and also by planting tobacco under cheesecloth. By 1902, there was considerable tobacco planted under cheesecloth shade. Our growers of shade tobacco, both slat and cheesecloth, felt that their tobacco was a good as any grown in the world. The fact remains that our best wrapper brought less than the duty on Sumatra grown wrapper.



Workers with newly planted tobacco under slat shade - Quincy, Florida early 1900's.

By 1907, the tobacco industry had become so prosperous that Jewelers, Doctors, Lawyers, Lumbermen, Turpentine men and others considered entering the industry. At this time, my Father, W. E. Smith, together with a

group of these men organized the Southern Sumatra Company and increased the acreage of my Father's tobacco from thirty-five to one hundred acres. There were a number of other men in the tobacco business who did the same thing. There was an over production of tobacco for the next three years. By 1910, the over production was so great that the industry was threatened. In desperation, a big percent of the growers and packers joined together and formed The American Sumatra Tobacco Company. This saved the industry, and by 1915 it was back at its highest.

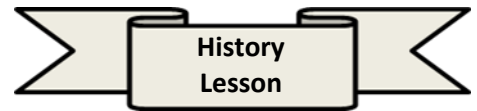


Tobacco being delivered to American Sumatra Tobacco Company packing house no.11 - Quincy, Florida ca. 1913

The tobacco industry drifted along with its ups and downs until 1921, when the black shank hit. This looked like the "beginning of the end" and the writer "quit the tobacco business". However, a number of farmers continued to plant tobacco. The North Florida Agricultural Experiment Station was established at Quincy, Florida. Through the efforts of Dr. Wilmon Newell and Dr. W. B. Tisdale, a seed was developed that resisted black shank, by moving the shade every two years, the industry was enabled to continue to grow. One phase of this industry is the fact that 90% of those growing tobacco today, are men who started in it as young men, or descendants of these men. Very few men come into the tobacco industry from the outside. There are today, by actual count, thirty-five descendants or those who have married descendants of John "Virginia" Smith, who are directly engaged in growing

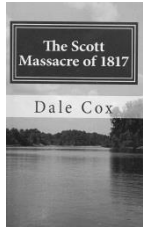
tobacco, or working for concerns in this business.

In closing this article on tobacco culture, I feel that some of the men who spent their lives in the industry should be mentioned. Most of them have gone on, but we still have them to thank for the industry. Mr. M. L. Floyd; Mr. W. M. Corry; Mr. D. A. Shaw; Mr. J. L. McFarlin; Mr. J. W. Woodward. Mr. Corry came here a young man from New York. The other four were born here and spent their lives pushing the industry. All but Mr. Woodward have gone on. Last, but not least, Mr. Mark W. Munroe, President of the Quincy State Bank, Quincy, Florida. Long ago he adopted a policy of backing the tobacco industry. It made very little difference to him about a man's financial condition, if he was honest and upright and in the tobacco industry.



From the Laws of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida is found the approval of an act to incorporate the Tallahassee and the Quincy Jockey Clubs, for the encouragement (improvement) of the breed of horses. Dated February 11<sup>th</sup> 1834. The act allowed the club in Quincy to lay out a race track, and enclose the same, erect gates, and set up tolls. Additionally, it authorized the election of officers and the right to assign servants. From William Watson Davis *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* is found the following description of the Tallahassee and Quincy Jockey Clubs: Life was not over refined with the upper class. There was considerable gambling, drinking, horse-racing, and betting. Each town soon had its own jockey club. Fatal duels were often fought in formal fashion. Fast horses and bright colors were in evidence.

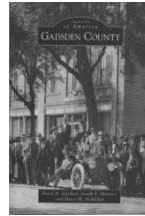
**BOOKS & MERCHANDISE**  
All prices include 7.5% FL Sales Tax



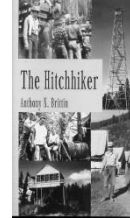
**Scott Massacre**  
**\$22.00**



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**Images of Gadsden Co.**  
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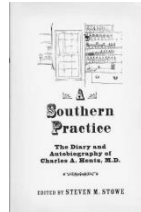
**Note Cards**



**Greensboro Depot, Barns, Dezell House or Greensboro School. Sold in sets of 8 - \$10.00**



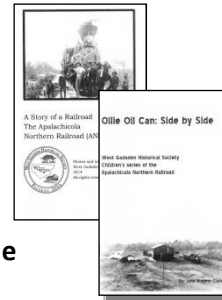
**James Stewart Autobiography**  
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**\$50.00**

**CHILDRENS BOOKS**

**A Story of a Railroad – The Apalachicola Northern Railroad**



**Ollie Oil Can: Side by Side**  
**Sold As a Set \$5.00**



**Gadsden: Florida County In Word And Picture – 1976, Miles Kenan Womack Jr. This book sells for \$150-\$185 on the internet; we have 3 copies available for \$100 each. Purchase yours today!**

**OUR DONORS**  
*Other than Memberships, Memorials & Honorariums*  
Donors as of 09-25-14 – Present

**MEMORIALS & HONORARIUMS**  
3/26/15 – 6/20/15

**DONATION LEVELS**

Heritage Circle	\$25,000 - and above
Legacy Builders	15,000 to 24,999
Patrons	10,000 to 14,999
Founders	5,000 to 9,999
Explorers	2,500 to 4,999
Trailblazers	1,000 to 2,499
Homesteaders	500 to 999
Settlers	250 to 499
Pioneers	100 to 249
Friends	up to 99

**EXPLORERS**

**Adrian C. Fletcher & Annie Muriel Fletcher Foundation, Inc.  
Byron & Emily Clark Family Trust**

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John O. & Margaret Ann Clark  
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In memory of Elizabeth Cantey**

**Honorariums**

**Amy & Louis Burns  
Melvin L. Miller (Birthday)  
  
Melvin & Louise Jones  
Bascom & Betty Mahaffey (60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary)**

Layton Bookkeeping Service  
 Adrian C. Fletcher & Annie  
 Muriel Fletcher Foundation  
 Patricia B. Anderson  
 Shari Richardson Arrington  
 Midge Howell Askew  
*Ann Blount*  
*Evie Blount*  
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 Rosalyn Fletcher Fenn  
 Samuel J. Fenn  
 H. Max Fletcher, Sr.  
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 Joe Ann Hansford  
 Suzanne Fletcher Hood  
 Pollie J. Howell  
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*(New Members are Italized)*

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 Stewart Parsons  
 Eva Mae Whittle Peters  
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 Evelyn Pickett  
 William K. "Buddy" Pitts  
 Patricia Jean Pitts  
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 Lynne Layton Poucher  
 Charles Allen Poucher  
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 Isaac Simmons, Jr.  
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 Richard L. Thompson  
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 Mari VanLandingham  
 William Vice  
 Carolyn Earnest White  
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W. Oziel Whittle  
 Lota Griffith Smith Coffel\*  
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 Kathryn McFarlin Fletcher\*  
 Jack Freeman\*  
 Sondra Lee Green\*  
 Kay Davis Lay\*  
 Devane Mason\*  
 Edward R. Sansom\*  
 Patricia Fletcher Vice\*  
 Julia Munroe Woodward\*

\*Deceased

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 Yearly memberships expire January 1

Faye H. Alcorn  
 Robert H. Alcorn, Jr.  
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 Michael E. Allen  
 Anna Lois Clark Antemann  
 Gaile Bass  
 Gene Bass  
 Mark W. Bates  
 Patsy Bates  
 Nettie Bentley  
 Jane F. Bodiford  
 Saradee Davis Bowen  
 Debra Brandon  
 Holden Brandon  
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 Ella Kennedy  
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 Harvey Sweeney  
 Jeanette Sweeney  
 Talquin Electric Cooperation  
 TDS Telecom  
 Martha S. Taylor  
 James Harold Thompson  
 Mary Alice Timmons Tiller  
 Johnnie B. Toole  
 Ken W. Vargas

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 Donna Warlick  
 Sandra Fletcher Whetstone  
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 Patsy Willis  
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 Mary Jane Woodward

# WEST GADSDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

## 2014 ANNUAL REPORT

**Our Mission Statement:** To preserve the history of Gadsden County, emphasizing the western area.

**Our Accomplishments:** In May, 2014 WGHS & The Greensboro Depot Railroad Museum received recognition & an award from the Florida Heritage Foundation, Inc. & the Tallahassee Trust for Historic Preservation, Inc. in the Restoration Project of Regional Impact classification. Many compliments were received regarding the beautiful restoration work. In addition to the many railroad artifacts donated in 2014, we received a loan from Margaret "Midge" Howell Askew of "The Billy Howell Collection". Many visitors have commented about our museum saying how wonderful it is. It truly is a treasure! If you've not seen it, please visit soon. Hours of operation are 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. the first & last weekends of each month. Regrettably, not all of our news is good. Reflected by the numbers below are **36% decreases in donations & 33% decreases in dues** from last year. Expenses **decreased only 10%, so reserves had to be reduced \$3,053.89**. It is crucial for you to act immediately. Only with your monetary support can WGHS continue the public education work, keep the museums open & continue our service to the community. We beg you, please, open your check books & give generously!

**Officers & Directors:**

Lynne L. Poucher, President  
Rosalyn F. Fenn, Treasurer  
Ricky Brandon

Jane Wagner Clark, Vice-President  
Linda C. Smith, Secretary  
Dale Cox, Honorary

John W. B. Canetta  
Ellen S. Clark

### FINANCIAL STATEMENT as of December 31, 2014

**INCOME:**

Donations		\$ 7,943.11
Dues		5,000.00
Sales		459.61
Dividends & Interest		206.43
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$13,609.15</b>

**EXPENSES:**

**Administration:**

Insurance	996.07	
Office Supplies & Postage	213.91	
Taxes, Licenses & Permits	3.13	
Utilities	1,021.14	
Bank Charges	65.00	2,299.25

**Fundraising:**

Purchase T-shirts	757.50	
Postage & Sales Tax	261.27	1,018.77

**Programs:**

Historic Markers-Chattahoochee	2,385.00	
Newsletter Expenses	1,616.23	
Supplies-Meetings & Events	1,036.20	
Insurance	2,988.20	
Telephone, Internet & Website	1,281.61	
Utilities	3,063.41	
Depot Furnishings & Equipment	974.37	13,345.02
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$16,663.04</b>

**NET (LOSS)** **(\$ 3,053.89)**

As of 12-31-14 Asset Value was \$180,182.49. This amount includes cash, stocks, the Dezell House & 3 lots, the Greensboro Depot Railroad Museum, the Patricia Fletcher Vice Meeting Facility & .33 acres.