



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. 2

March 2015

PAST EVENTS

SUNDAY JANUARY 25 MEETING

Barbara Hines Clark
DeSoto Encampment

WGHS members enjoyed a delightful presentation from Barbara Hines Clark from the Florida Public Archaeology Network. Barbara, who spends her work days in the previous home of Governor John Martin, presented an interesting program about the Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto. Co-located at the Governor Martin House was the historic site of the village of Anhaica Apalache, one of the principal villages of the Apalachee Nation. Here DeSoto selected to spend the Winter of 1540. DeSoto's Winter Encampment Park is located on DeSoto Park Drive in Tallahassee. An interpretive panel and marker tell the story of the site, but there are no other facilities. The park can be

visited during daylight hours. There is no entry fee.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SUNDAY MARCH 22 MEETING

Joseph Maxwell, Photography

On Sunday, March 22, 2015, Mr. Joseph Maxwell, a lifetime resident and photographer of Gadsden County, will present a slide show of various historic places and things found in the Gadsden County area. Many of these photos will bring back memories of the shade tobacco days in which so many of our families were involved. Be sure to mark your calendar now to come see Mr. Maxwell's presentation and enjoy reminiscing with your friends and family. We look forward to seeing you at this meeting. A small reception will be held after the presentation.

SATURDAY MAY 9 NATIONAL TRAIN DAY CELEBRATION 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Train Day celebrates all things trains! From enthusiasts about the humble beginnings of locomotive transport to engineers developing the future of rail travel, groups across the USA gather for events, celebration, education and discovery. This year WGHS will celebrate Train Day at Greensboro Railroad Depot. In addition to a chance to view the WGHS Railroad Museum housed in the Depot, the Big Bend Model Railroad Association (BBMRA) of Tallahassee has agreed to display model railroads in the Patricia Fletcher Vice Meeting Facility. BBMRA was organized for the purpose of promoting and preserving model railroad activities for the benefit of the general public and the members of the Club and for promoting and preserving historical material and information pertaining to railroad transportation. The organization's unofficial motto is:

"Run Trains!" This will be a fun day for all ages. A \$1 hotdog lunch will be available, as well as a bake sale, face painting, games and other fun activities. Mark your calendars now and plan to join us.

SATURDAY JUNE 27 24th Annual Tallahassee Model Railroad Show and Sale

Join WGHS Saturday, June 27, 9 am to 4 pm at the North Florida Fairgrounds in Tallahassee. The 24th Annual Tallahassee Model Railroad Show and Sale is sponsored by the BBMRA and is certain to be an outstanding event. Model train layouts from large "G" scale to the tiny "Z" scale will be on display, along with experts on hand to answer your model train design, layout, equipment and construction questions. A variety of vendors will be on-site offering various model railroad items. WGHS will be represented by several of our members. Our booth will provide information on the Greensboro

Railroad Depot Museum, as well as offer for sale our T-Shirts, notecards, and books. Admission: Adults & Children 13 and over \$6, Scouts in Uniform as well as Children 12 and under are free. Be sure to get on board and join us at this wonderful and fun event!

JULY 4

WGHS Annual Open House

The West Gadsden Historical Society will celebrate its 11th Annual OPEN HOUSE on July 4 from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the historic Dezell House and the Historic Greensboro Depot Museum. Various historical displays will be on exhibit. Our annual bake sale will be a delicious feature as well. We look forward to the return of the ever popular Coastal Seafood Restaurant of Panacea.



ROLAND HARPER

A 1909 View of Liberty and Gadsden Counties

Roland Harper (1878-1966) served as staff botanist for the Geological Survey of Alabama (GSA) from 1905 until his death. A tireless field investigator, he recorded his frequent journeys in extensive notes and photographs. He was one of the last botanists to visit and describe

the native vegetation of the Southeast before it was altered drastically by human activity. In the summers of 1909 and 1910, Harper retraced the trek of pioneering botanists Hardy Croom and Alvan Wentworth Chapman in the North Florida area. Harper was hired by the Florida Geological Survey to locate and identify Florida flora previously noted by Croom and Chapman. Yes, this is Dr. Alvan Wentworth Chapman (1806-1899) who came to Quincy from Massachusetts around 1835 to set up a medical practice. During his summers in North Florida, Harper took fastidious notes. These notes included flora observed, weather conditions and an overview of the buildings, towns and the general geography of the areas he visited. The following narrative is from the book, *On Harper's Trail: Roland McMillan Harper, Pioneering Botanist of the Southern Coastal Plain* by Elizabeth Findley Shores. [Note: The narrative begins in June

1909.]

.....From Apalachicola, Harper departed on a typical train-window botanizing trip up the eastern side of the Apalachicola River basin. He recorded everything he saw, collecting the raw data of phytogeography. Crossing territory that is largely in the present Apalachicola National Forest, through swamps and pinewoods and past small sawmill communities situated near the tracks, he made constant notes, including mile markers along the track for reference. Longleaf pines and yellow pitcher plants were the most common species he recognized from the train window. "Hammocks and hills begin about first crossing of Telogia Creek, and continue with some interruptions for twelve or fifteen miles, often with pretty good Tifton topography." Altamaha Grit plateau at Greensboro "a fine neat new town," and after another five miles, began a steep descent

through ravines and hammocks to River Junction, the staging area for his March camping trip with Sellards and Gunter.In the afternoon, he walked north to Chattahoochee on the Florida-Georgia line and found that the town had "twenty or thirty rather neat houses and two or three stores scattered over a high dissected plateau much like that back at Aspalaga, and probably 150 feet or more above the river." Harper walked down a steep bank to an old river landing and then through bottoms and ravines back to River Junction, happily finding "no swamps or briers" but also no stinking cedar. (*Torreya taxifolia*) From there Harper caught the riverboat Callahan to Bristol where he spent the night and joined Harry Floyd. The two men left at seven o'clock in a two-horse buggy for Hosford, eleven miles to the southeast, and crossed Mill and Telogia creeks. At midmorning Harper and Floyd reached Hosford,



March 1909 at a campsite with Elias Sellards and Herman Gunter, geologist with the Florida Geological Survey. The other men sat on campstools, while thirty-one-year-old Harper, with a trim dark moustache, wearing a suit, vest, and brimmed hat, stood, a small satchel over his shoulder. Their tent was pitched beside a spit-rail fence, probably near the ferry operator's house at the top of Aspalaga Bluff.

Photo from FGS Archives

where the stores and houses were new and unpainted. They walked from the depot about two and a half miles down the railroad track and back. The day was sultry, and they stopped to bathe in Telogia Creek. From Hosford, the two men took a train north to Greensboro, where the “made a beeline for the fine new hotel noticed last week.” Harper wrote, “It is partly surrounded by fine pine timber which was evidently round up two to three years ago, and is now turpented by the Herty system.” They marveled at the view of longleaf pines from the hotel’s upstairs porch. Rather than linger and enjoy the view, however, the men set off on another hike. They first walked a mile through “fine dry pine barrens” that sloped “gently southeast off the plateau” and then through a sandy hammock of the Tallahassee Branch, through the sandy bottoms where Harper noted mountain laurel, beech, Florida anise, and sourwood. After walking another quarter mile to the community of Juniper and then “back east about three-fourths of a mile, “they struck a railroad and caught a train back to Greensboro.” Harper ended the day’s diary entry with “Mosquitoes scarce in Greensboro.” Harper and Floyd left Greensboro at 7:16 a.m. on June 16. They walked six or seven miles to Gretna, downhill through groves of

southern red oak and level dry pine barrens. From Gretna, Floyd apparently caught a train back to Apalachicola, while Harper walked west along the railroad track for a mile and back “to investigate a small creek-swamp seen several times from the train.” [Apparently he walked to the headwaters of Telogia Creek.] At the end of this trek through Apalachicola river country, Harper took a train to Tallahassee.



Greensboro Hotel
Notice the “cat faces” on the longleaf pines for the collection of pine tar. Photo courtesy of the Buddy Pitts Collection

A SPECIAL THANKS

Gregory Thompson stopped by the Greensboro Railroad Depot Museum awhile back and happened to mention that he was in possession of some old store display cabinets. Used in his Grandfather’s store, Thompson’s Store in Gretna, the cabinets had been stored on an old back porch for many years. Greg has graciously donated these beautiful

antique oak cases for use within the museum. Complete with the original beveled glass, and currently being restored by John Canetta, they soon will find a new home within the Depot. Thank you Greg for your generous contribution!

JUST FOR FUN

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE FOLKS?

How many of us have inherited that box of pictures from past family members without names identifying those smiling faces? Throughout our 10 year history, WGHS has acquired many photos that have incomplete identification. Maybe one or two people will be identified, but sadly some are just “ride alongs”. Such is the case with this photo. Riding on the bus are students heading to

Sunday School as the bus did double duty. According to notes from Byron Clark, this school bus was built c. 1928 by Alec Presnell of the Hardaway Community. He drove this bus around the area picking up children to attend classes at the new Mt. Pleasant School which was completed in 1928. This school facility is now known as the privately owned Robert F. Munroe Day School. Hardaway Baptist Church is in the background. Seating in the bus was a 12-inch board placed along either side and in the center area there were several boards nailed together so that kids could sit back to back. Mr. Clark continues to note that, “Naturally, back at that time there was not a heating system for a vehicle so we had to be really bundled up to ride in that bus. Talking about rough, rough it was! All the roads in the area were dirt; we didn’t have any paved roads to travel on. The roads would be so



muddy and the bus would have to be put down in the low gear and just grind along. Then in dry weather every time the bus stopped to let somebody on or off, well ---- shewwwwww --- here came the dust in on all of us!!" So riding the school bus back in the early 1930s was really quite an experience. It is believed that the small boy standing 3rd from the left is Reuben Byron Clark. Can anyone identify others in this photo?



AN INDOOR BASKETBALL COURT
(copied from *The Bulldog Growl*, a Paper by Students – For Students)

NOTE: *The Bulldog Growl* was published weekly by the 10th grade students of Greensboro High School. The staff was as follows: Editor-in-Chief: Howard Fletcher; Ass't. Editor-in-Chief: William Cowan; Athletic Editor: Lucian Dones; Ass't. Athletic Editor: Altie Mae Teems; Society Editor: Martha Mae Roach; Literary Editor: Mildred Jones; Joke Editor: ____; Publicity Manager: Tiny Hope Hines; Business Manager: Hal Fletcher; Feature Editor: Henry Dones; Faculty Sponsor: James E. Harbin. It would be assumed that either Lucian Dones, Athletic Editor, or Altie Mae Teems, Ass't. Athletic Editor, wrote these articles for the school newspaper.

March 12, 1936--(author unknown)
Why doesn't our basketball team ever win in the tournament? Every year since Greensboro has been playing in the tournament, they

always loose out in the first game. Many people wonder why this happens. It is a known fact that teams who play on out-door courts are not nearly as proficient in the fundamentals of basketball – dribbling, passing, and shooting – as teams who have had access to indoor courts. How, then, can our teams compete with teams that play and practice constantly on indoor courts? As long as our teams are compelled to play and practice on clay courts, we may expect them to loose in the tournament. We had a rather successful season this year against teams who also did their playing on clay courts, but as soon as we played a team accustomed to a hardwood floor, we were hopelessly out-classed. An indoor court gives added speed, skill, and poise to players. They can dribble, pass, and shoot better on an indoor court. We think our team deserves this much and we also think that it is possible to have one. In several of the early issues there will appear articles on how we might procure an indoor court.

March 20, 1936--(author unknown)
Several schools in West Florida have been able to secure indoor basketball courts. Why can't Greensboro have one too? Marianna, Malone, Cottondale, Chipley, Bonifay, Graceville, and others have shells and now produce teams that compete with those in

any section of the state, on equal terms. Prior to building these shells, teams in West Florida were almost unheard of in other sections of the state, but now a team from that section of the state is generally a seeded team in the state basketball tournament, and one that makes a creditable showing for itself. The West Florida tournament held in Marianna produces a brand of basketball equal to any in the State of Florida. All this recognition, we think, is due to the fact that all these teams have indoor courts, regardless of how small the school they come from. If Greensboro is ever to have a basketball team of any worth, it will be when we have an indoor basketball court. We would like to suggest one method of securing one. Why not have a few of the prominent citizens in Greensboro try to secure federal funds and have it built as a government project, coming under one of the numerous alphabetical orders? Since it was possible for Quincy to spend eighteen thousand dollars on an almost perfect football field and since it has been possible for other schools to secure funds for similar projects, why can't we have an indoor gym? **WE WANT AN INDOOR BASKETBALL COURT!**

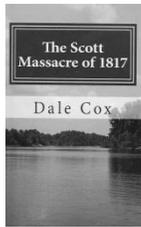
April 30, 1936--(author unknown)
For our article on the indoor basketball court that we have continually been writing about to

create interest among the students and the people of the community, we shall enumerate the points given in its favor in a debate at a recent PTA meeting.

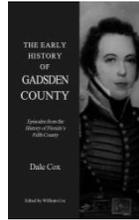
1. An indoor basketball court would benefit a greater number of people than any other government project that could be constructed in this community.
2. An indoor basketball court would benefit the older people of the town and community as well as the younger people.
3. An indoor basketball court would provide a place to hold wholesome entertainment for the young folk of the community.
4. An indoor basketball court would put GHS on the map athletically. (An indoor court would in time produce a winning team.)
5. It could be used as a gathering place for the people of the community on various occasions, creating community spirit.
6. It would be less expensive to the people and the government than any other, and would do the most good. Now that school is about out, let us not forget our indoor basketball court. Keep it foremost in your minds because we need and **WE ARE GOING TO HAVE AN INDOOR BASKETBALL COURT AT GHS.**

As we now know, the BEST was yet to come!! **GO BULLDOGS!**

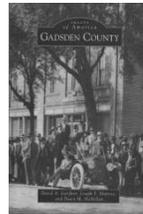
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All prices include 7.5% FL Sales Tax



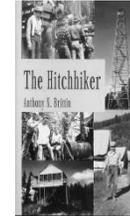
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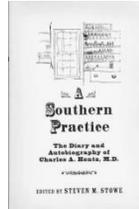
The Hitchhiker
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Note Cards
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James Stewart Autobiography
\$27.00



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A Story of a Railroad – The Apalachicola Northern Railroad



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