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Fall Quarter 2007

# Old Berrien Newsletter

Vol. 1, No. 1

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UUID: 318F8D69-F338-B090-4CB3-59C6A32175E1

**Recommended Citation:**

Berrien Historical Foundation. *OLD BERRIEN Newsletter of the Berrien Historical Foundation*  
vol 1, no. 1. Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections, *Community*  
*Archives: Old Berrien Newsletters Collection*,  
<https://vtext.valdosta.edu/xmlui/handle/10428/7528>.

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# OLD BERRIEN

Newsletter of the  
Berrien Historical  
Foundation

Volume 1 Number 1

Fall Quarter 2007

## TRACES OF 1908 NASHVILLE TO TIFTON ROAD STILL EXIST

**T**hough many of today's Berrien County highways and county roads have portions of their roadbed based on their historical predecessor, there are few of the original roads remaining that were once the thoroughfares of commerce in the county. Usually the roads have been widened, straightened, or paved. But there is one piece of the old Nashville to Tifton Road that still exists today, left pretty much as it appeared on the map of Berrien County published by the Hudgins Publishing Company in 1908.

You may have thought that you are following the original road that connected the two communities, and much of the way you are, excluding some of the little bends that were converted to improved county roads. But there is one stretch of the highway that was diverted from the the original road, and its severed length was not used again as a public road.

The mile or so stretch is located about a quarter mile west of Highway 125, just west of a dry creek bed, crossing the Earnest Sumner Road on the south and north sides. The road is now a farm service road on private property. And though the road is used for farm equipment travel, it still has the defined characteristics of an improved road bed, at least by 1908 standards.

The barrow pits are still deeply grooved, and the arbored trees have exposed their roots to the deep cuts made by those early road crews. Many trees and bushes have woven their



limbs into the hogwire fencing, adding support to the heart pine posts that often define the original land lot lines.

Traces of a few homes that once had regular visitors passing their porches and doorways on their way to and from Tifton, are now dilapidated remnants hiding in the dark shadows of ancient oak, pine, sycamore, and pecan trees.

Some old wells also give some indication of the location of other homes which are no longer standing.

The road actually leaves Highway 125 at the Van Wheless Road along the old H. M. McNabb homestead, and goes west until meeting Raymond Roland Road and turns north. This is an improved section of the road much like



*This detail of the 1908 Berrien County map, shows the section of the old Nashville-Tifton highway still visible today, identified within the dotted box. The approximate highway location of Highway 125 is shown in the heavy dash lines.*

many other county maintained roads. It turns north at the Raymond Roland Road and just as it joins Highway 125 again, a trace of it makes a hard left turn into the heavy brush. It reappears in its historic form about a quarter mile south of the Earnest Sumner Road, at the edge of a cultivated field, adjoining an old farm remnant.

It then crosses over the Earnest Sumner Road and continues in a northerly direction. The 1908 map depicts this section of the road as being a straight north-south section in land lots 93 and 138 in district 9, then owned by George P. Griffin. However, it actually takes a 90 degree turn to the west about where the two land lots

meet, and then turns north again after following the westerly direction for about fifty yards.

The road then continues north, past several fence lines, barns, and a well, before it disappears into a wooded maze. Though there is a hard turn again to the left, it appears this portion of the road blends into cultivated land, and loses its definition all together.

It is possible that this is still part of the original Tifton road as it turned more northwesterly, joining up with the new highway once again, but more research is needed to bear this out.

We should remind historical enthusiasts that this road is now on private property and before exploring the location, you should contact the owners for permission to do so.

If there are any other old historical roads that you are aware of that are being lost and almost forgotten, we would encourage you to bring them to the attention of the Berrien Historical Foundation so they can be inventoried and a written history compiled. —OB

## BERRIEN HISTORICAL FOUNDATION REACTIVATED

**W**ith the celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the creation of Berrien County last year, came a renewed interest in creating an active historical preservation association for the county. Hundreds of county residents, old and new, spent hours viewing the Historical Photo Display in the Perry Memorial Library. The most often heard comment was, "We had no idea we had this much history available from this county."

One of the most unique aspects of such an old county is that it has such an interesting heritage, and most of it sits in old trunks, attics, barns and especially in the minds of a quickly vanishing elderly generation. There is an urgent need to identify, record and share the memories, photos, and artifacts of these senior citizens that help tell the story of this vintage county.

If you have an interest to see that this history is preserved for the benefit of generations to come, we encourage you and your family and friends to join the Berrien Historical Foundation.

It will be a working organization. It will enlist an army of dedicated members who will be willing to put their personal agendas aside, and help identify, document and preserve the historical heritage we all share. We encourage you to join us the first Thursday of each month, 7:00 p.m. at the Perry Library.

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**BERRIEN HISTORICAL FOUNDATION**