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## Community Archives – Brooks County Museum and Cultural Center Collection

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1928-1999

# Brooks County Binder

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**BLUE SPRINGS – DIXIE  
EMPRESS - JOHNSON SHORT  
MULE CREEK – NANKIN  
PISCOLA CREEK**

## HISTORIC DOWNTOWN QUITMAN



**HOTEL MARIE**

A 46 ROOM HOTEL BUILT ON THE CORNER OF SCREVEN STREET AND WASHINGTON STREET (MLK BLVD) IN 1889. A UNUSUALLY LARGE 3 STORY STRUCTURE WITH VERANDAS EXTENDING AROUND THE BUILDING. THE BUILDING BURNED IN THE EARLY 1900'S AND TODAY THE HOTEL QUITMAN IS LOCATED ON THE SITE.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF BROOKS COUNTY AND QUITMAN

Georgia's General Assembly passed an act in 1858 requiring a new county be formed from land in Lowndes and Thomas Counties. The County (Brooks) was named in honor of Preston Smith Brooks. The county seat was to be named in honor of General John Anthony Quitman. General Quitman never lived in Georgia but he did provide outstanding service to his country and the Southern cause. A note of trivia, Brooks County became a major producer of food during the War Between the

States and became known throughout the United States as the "Storehouse of the South".

The land purchased at the center of the county became the City of Quitman. The beautiful wide streets leading into Quitman from all directions was a characteristic established at the outset of the City's layout. Screven Street (Hwy 84) runs in front of the Courthouse through the downtown business district while South Court Street provides a direct route to Florida.

North Court Street is lined with some of the oldest homes in the City's history. A drive down North Court (behind Courthouse) is a must!

### TOWNS IN BROOKS COUNTY

Dixie	Pavo	Barwick
Barney	Morven	Quitman

### BROOKS COUNTY TREASURES

Arts, Agriculture, Antiques, Southern Cookin', Monuments & Markers, Hunting, Fishing, Sports, Festivals, Camping, and more.

Enjoy your visit to Quitman's downtown business district and remember this is just a small sample of what Brooks County has to offer. Contact our Chamber of Commerce for more information.

The local businesses and citizens welcome you to Quitman and want you to know you are welcome today and forever in our community.

HERE IS A QUICK GLANCE AT A FEW  
OF OUR DOWNTOWN ANTIQUE, GIFT,  
FURNITURE SHOPS AND RESTAU-  
RANTS .

RELAX AND ENJOY A TOUCH  
OF THE PAST!

## SHOPS

- Blanches Florist
- Backward Glance
- Gail's Antiques and Gifts
- Keeping Room Antiques  
and Uncle Sam Music
- McCard and Company
- Ragsdale's Wood and  
Furniture Restoration
- Romine Furniture and Gifts
  - The Bargain Place
  - Twisted Sisters
- YesterYear Memories Antiques

## RESTAURANTS

Royal Café

Twisted Sister's Café

## QUITMAN, GEORGIA THE CAMELLIA CITY

ANTIQUE & GIFT  
MECCA OF THE  
SOUTH

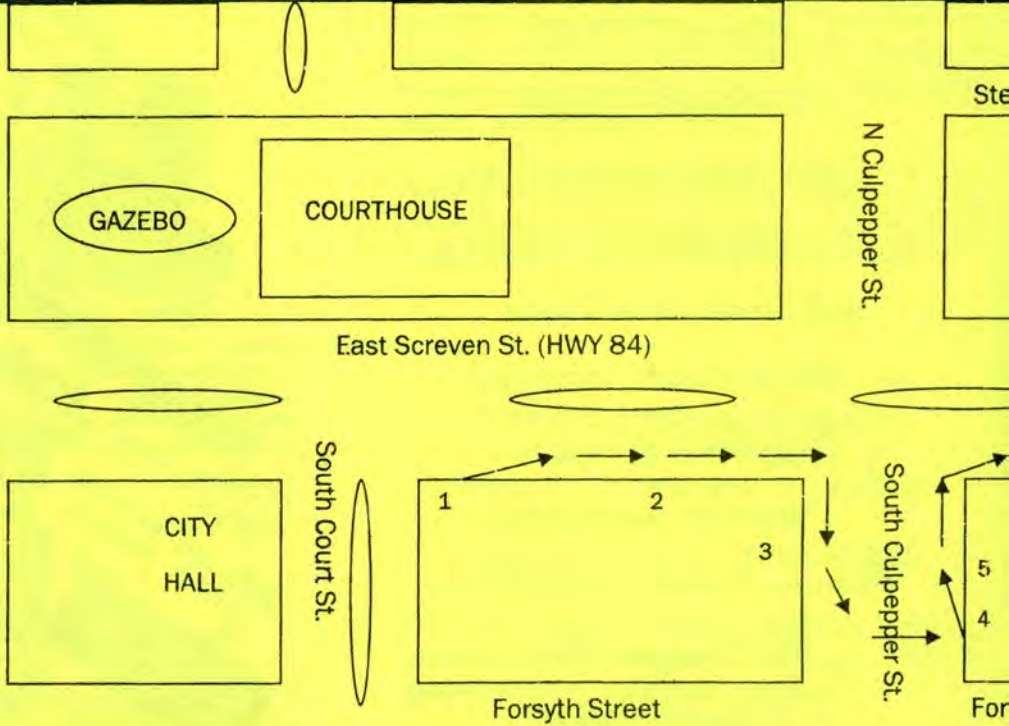


**McCARD & COMPANY**  
 101 E. Screven Street  
 Specializing in European and  
 Continental antique furniture.  
 Mon.—Sat. 10—5  
 Closed Sun.  
 (229) 263-4808

**BACKWARD GLANCE**  
 111 E. Screven Street  
 Vintage clothing, Accessories,  
 Costume Jewelry, and  
 Collectibles.  
 Thur.— Sat. 12—5 or by ap-  
 pointment (229) 247-3394  
 Closed Wed. & Sun.  
 (229) 263-4430

**BLANCHE'S FLORIST**  
 (Mr. Joe)  
 105 S. Culpepper Street  
 Fresh flowers, plants, silks, bal-  
 loons for all occasions.  
 Mon.— Fri. 8:30—5  
 Wed. & Sat. 8:30—Noon  
 (229) 263-4082

**Q  
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**ROYAL CAFÉ**  
 304 E. Screven Street  
 Serving Quitman good food since  
 1913! Open for breakfast and  
 lunch.  
 Mon.—Sat. 6—2  
 (229) 263-5443

**GAIL'S ANTIQUES AND  
 COLLECTIBLES**  
 306 E. Screven Street  
 Antiques, Gifts, and Flowers.  
 Mon.—Sat. 11—5  
 Closed Wed. & Sun.  
 (229) 263-6800

**THE BARGAIN PL.**  
 401 E. Screven St  
 Glassware, Vintage It  
 Furniture and Mor  
 Mon.-Sat. 9:30-5:3  
 Closed Sunday  
 (229) 834-1615

**RAGSDALE'S WOOD & FURNITURE RESTORATION**

104 S. Culpepper Street

Furniture repair, Color touch-ups, caning, rush weaving, refinishing, hardware replacement, complete wood care.

Mon.—Sat. 11—5  
Closed Wed. & Sun.  
(229) 263-8570

4

**YESTERYEAR MEMORIES**

102 S. Culpepper Street

Gifts, Furniture (old & New), Antiques, Collectibles, Silk Flowers and Arrangements.

Mon.—Sat. 11—5  
Closed Wed. & Sun.  
(229) 263-8570

5

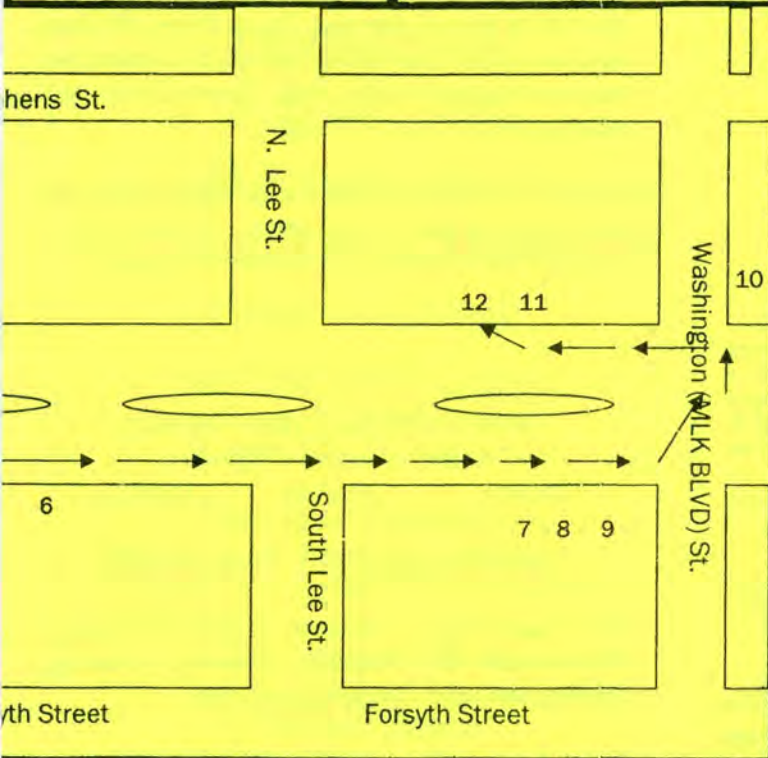
**ROMINE FURNITURE**

213 E. Screven Street

Complete line of home furnishings including Broyhill, Barcalounger, Southern Cross Bedding and gifts.

Mon.—Fri. 8—5:30  
Close at noon on Wed.—3 on Sat.—Closed Sun.  
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311 E. Screven Street

A delightful café with a menu that can satisfy every appetite.

Tues.—Sat. 10—6  
Closed Sun. & Mon.  
(229) 263-4473

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**TWISTED SISTERS!**

311 E. Screven Street

Gifts With A Twist!

Tues.—Sat. 10—6  
Closed Sun. & Mon.  
(229) 263-4473

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**KEEPING ROOM ANTIQUES AND UNCLE SAM MUSIC**

Established 1969

313 E. Screven Street

Antiques, furniture, toys, fine books, vintage guitars, and collectibles

Mon.—Sat. 10—5  
Closed Wed. & Sun.  
(229) 263-4411

9

JOIN US FOR THE HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE NOVEMBER 25 & 26, 2005. ALSO ON DECEMBER 3, 2005 CELEBRATE THE SEASON AT OUR HOLIDAY PARADE. SANTA WILL BE ON HAND TO VISIT WITH THE CHILDREN.



10



A SCENE ON DRY LAKE, NEAR BOSTON, GA.

A Regional Newspaper of Integrity Since 1876

# The Quitman Free Pr

Vol. 111-No. 25

QUITMAN, GEORGIA 31643 Thursday, June 18, 1987



Pictured is a cottage at the Blue Springs entrance which has been restored by owner Walter Cunningham.

**BLUE SPRINGS**



## Blue Springs

by Jean Logan

Blue Springs, a natural spring located about two hundred yards west of the Withlacoochee River in present day Brooks County and earlier known as Mineral Springs, was used as a gathering place by local Indian tribes as evidenced by the Indian artifacts found there.

The site became a gathering place for area residents shortly after the Civil War, reaching its peak in use and popularity in the 1920's. However, as early as 1849, a recorded survey indicates a town, Springville, was proposed. The attraction was a spring fed by three subterranean streams, creating a twelve to fifteen feet boil. Its waters were thought to be therapeutic. In 1894, the *Quitman Free Press* published a mineral analysis of the water at the request of E.D. Wade who moved permanently to the spring for his health.

Known as "Wadespark" at that time, the resort had a train station, a post office, and boasted of the "most beautiful baseball ground in the state." Six cottages were available for rent; at the height of the Springs popularity, this number doubled. Individual families owned several cottages.

A pool was built around the spring and in 1926, a two-storied dance hall was constructed. Area residents enjoyed the nights set aside for "round dancing" and "square dancing." Local bands, such as Johnson Brother Band and the Wiggins Boys provided music.

A memorial event was the annual inter-denominational Sunday School picnic when children from the local Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches would board the train for the ride out to the Springs.

As a resort, the Springs began its decline after a 1928 flood partially blocked the flow of water from the spring and continued as the availability of the automobile lured residents to other vacation spots. Another severe flood in 1948 washed all but two of the old buildings. Today Blue Springs is but a happy memory for some residents of Brooks County.

## **Blue Springs Blues – By Beth Williams Powers**

Crossword puzzle buffs are familiar with the three letter word “spa” for health resort. A literal translation of the word is a spring and when we think of a spring Blue Springs immediately pops into mind. This was a famous popular resort six miles west of Quitman which boasted the coldest, clearest water gushing from an underground stream which later flowed into the Withlacoochee about a quarter mile below the bridge on the old Valdosta highway.

Paul Bennet and I were in a reminiscing mood the other day and wound up feeling sorry for the youngsters of today who do not have memories of Blue Springs tucked back in the happy part of their hearts. Paul said he seemed to recall the first owner of the property was O. K. Jelks but in the early 20’s Mr. Charlie Young and Mr. Bob Young were the owners. There was a bathhouse built along the banks of the spring, a pavilion and several cottages which were rented in the summertime. The hospitality center was the Bennet cottage (much too large to be called a cottage today) which was located between the spring and the railroad track. Remember the little shed by the track where you waited for the A. C. L. and the fare was 15 cents from Blue Springs to Quitman, or vice versa.

The ecumenical movement was probably started right here in Quitman in the late teens and early 20’s when every church in Quitman united for a Sunday Scholl picnic the second Friday in June. Such a crowd you never saw with swimming, ball games and long tables spread with tons of food out under the trees.

Some six or eight cottages were for rent and usually were reserved from one year to another. I recall that we always had the two story cottage with the big screened porch and if memory serves me the rent was \$15 for two weeks.

Old-timers tell of a hotel out there, but I do not remember this building but I well remember the pavilion where dances were held every Friday and Saturday night. Young people from Valdosta, Thomasville and all neighboring towns gathered for the festive occasions and I remember how I longed for the day when I would be old enough to attend one of the dances but in the meantime youngsters had to be content to play around the yard but we could hear and enjoy the music as it drifted from the dance floor.

It was also during this time when senior classes from Quitman and neighboring towns had their class picnics at Blue Springs and it was uncommon to find three different towns having their annual commencement picnic on the same date. This was before the time when seniors went to Washington, New York or Timbuctoo on their class trips but in the good old days we traveled only six miles for a wonderful day of pleasure.

Years ago the Young Brothers sold the property to Frank Taylor in Moultrie and in the intervening years the spring disappeared almost to a trickle and the old resort area was abandoned. With deep wells being dug all over the countryside the water table dropped and the spring as we had known it was gone.

Walter Cunningham brought the property in 1949 including about 75 acres of land. He and his daughter Telia have adopted it as their play ground where they have ducks and donkeys with most of the acreage planted in pines.

Some of us old timers still get the blues when we think of Blue Springs as we knew it in the good old days.

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The gate at Blue Springs, Brooks County flood of August 15, 1928



Withlacoochee River Bridge  
Old Valdosta Road  
August 15, 1928



Gate at Blue Springs

Aug 15, 1928





Blue Springs August 15, 1928

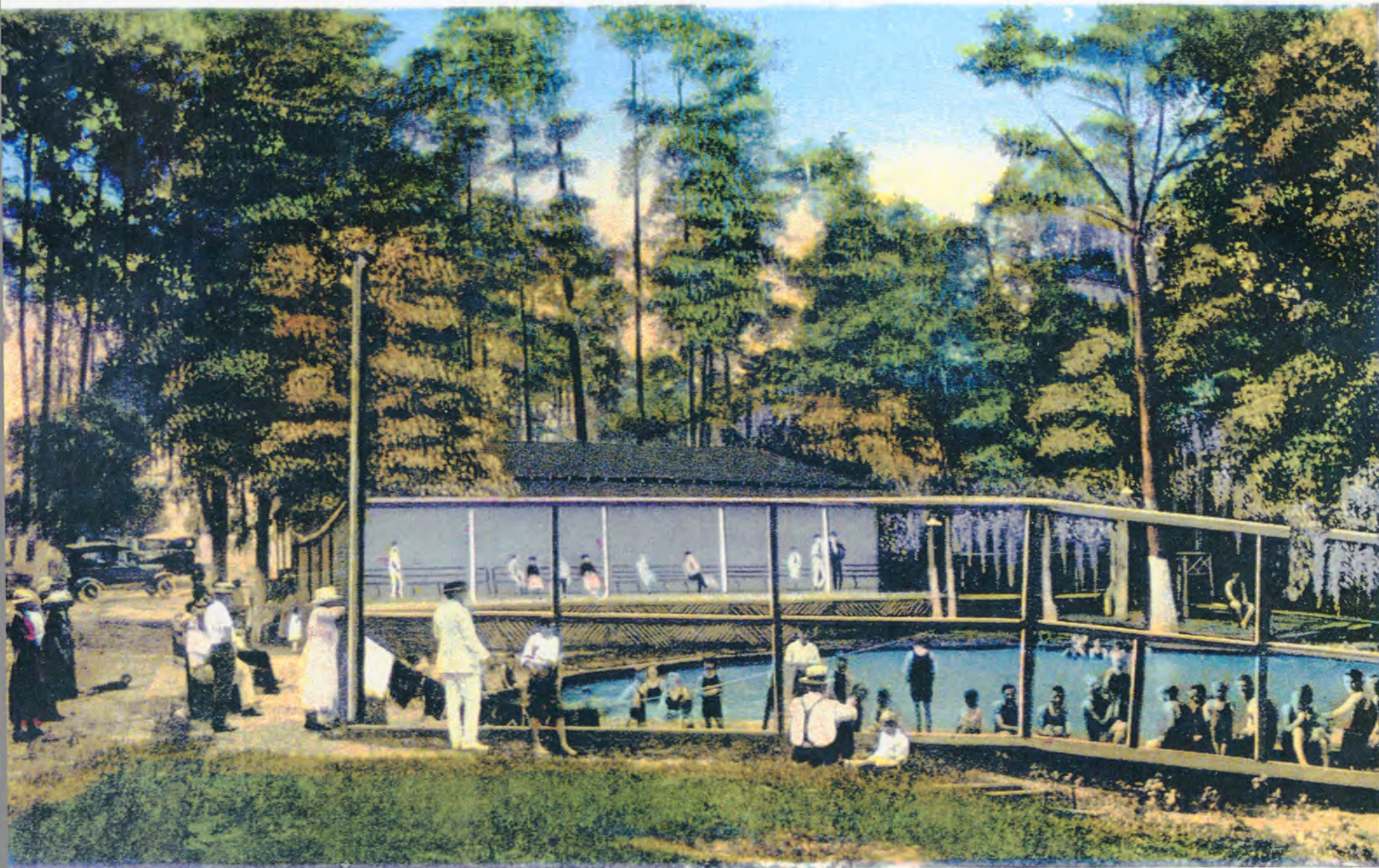


Blue Springs

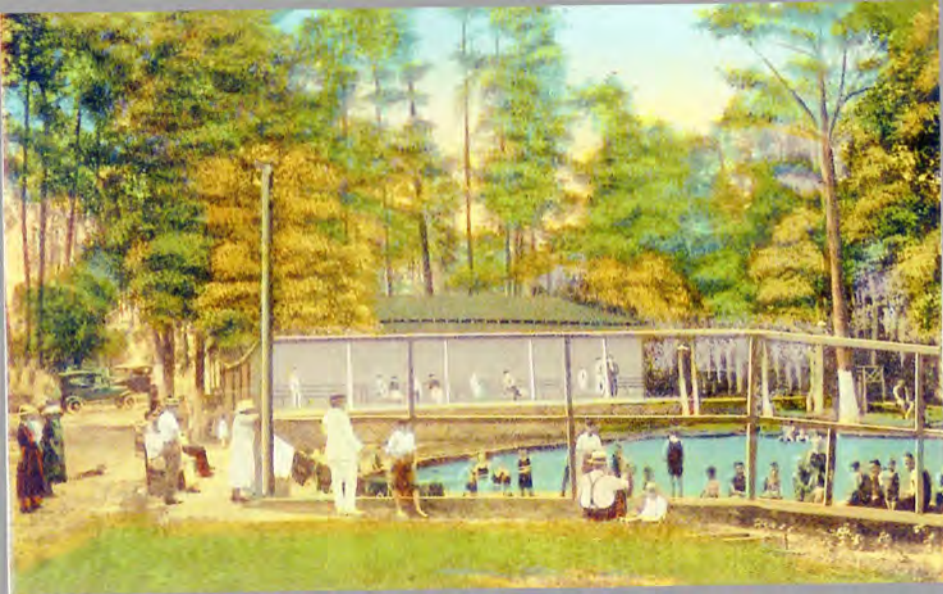
Aug. 15, 1928



The flood at Blue Springs, Brooks County August 15, 1928



BLUE SPRINGS NEAR QUITMAN, GA.





Withlacochee River Valdosta Road flood of August 15, 1928



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by  
Jean Logan



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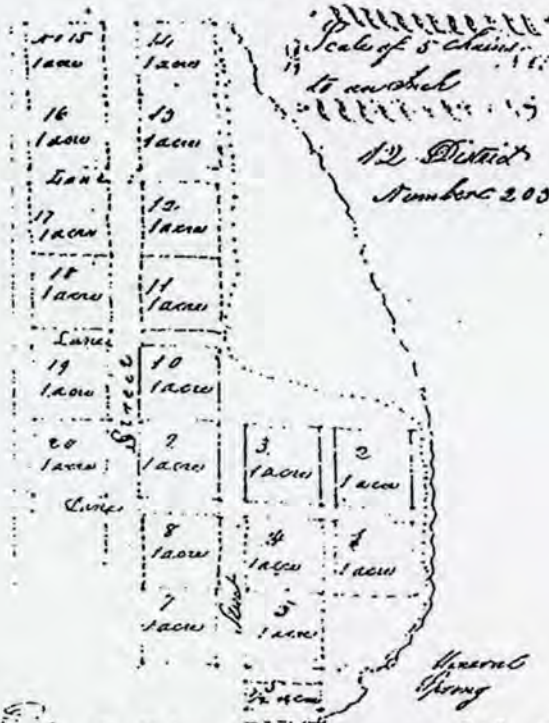
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*C. J. Draw of Springville  
Brooks County Georgia  
August 10<sup>th</sup> 1847*



*This a town draft is a representation of the town of Springville in the Middle Georgia, Texas Springs County Georgia laid out on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of August 1847. Having such farms and shops as a town.*

*Attest Samuel Wilson, Sr. C. J. Draw.*



The flood at Blue Springs, Brooks County August 15, 1928

# Quitmanites remember historic Blue Springs

BY GINA MESSER  
Free Press reporter

Up until the 1920's and 30's, Blue Springs, located on the old Quitman Highway was one of the most popular summer resorts for the people of Brooks County.

The cool, natural spring which is said to have three streams feeding into the hole, was "clear as glass," according to Walter Cunningham, present owner of Blue Springs.

The limestone area was thought to be 12 to 15 feet deep to the boil and to have a larger canyon down under the boil, according to divers.

Cottages were also an asset to the area. There were 12 to 13 of them built throughout the vicinity and rented to the public.

For weekend dances, a two story dance hall was built in 1926 by owner Frank Taylor of Moultrie.

Entertainers including the Johnson Band, the Wiggin Boys and others played on Friday nights at the dance hall.

Henry Taylor of Quitman remembers the years 1929, 1930 and 1931 when he worked at Blue Springs during the summer months.

Taylor worked for \$7.00 to \$10.00 a week in the downstairs area of the dancehall at the refreshment stand and in the bath house near the spring.

"Coach Herman Johnson was managing the place at the time," Taylor said. "It was a time when people created their own recreation. It was the best of years."

Wesley Peach, a Brooks County resident remembers playing the banjo at the dance hall as a young man and said it was the "hot spot" back then.

Peach also remembers that there was another dance hall down past the spring before the new one was built beside the highway.

Peach said that there was a well at Blue Springs which had sulphur water. "I drank out of that well a many a time." He also recalled a sign at the well saying "350 feet deep."

According to Free Press files in the 1800's, Blue Springs used to be less than a fourth its present size, with logs placed to keep the silt from washing down into it.

There was also a hotel there and a small station where trains stopped. It was a swimming and picnic resort for the whole section and they had a May union Sunday School picnic there regularly.

Blue Springs was also a popular place for courting couples, who rode in light buggies along the sandy road.

The spring, according to Free Press files has undergone three floods. The first in 1923, 1928 and later in 1948.

History of the 1923 flood is somewhat vague, but in the 1928 flood, the spring was deep under water which reached the top of the fill and ran over the paved highway. When the waters receded, the spring did not flow well

and later it became abandoned as a summer picnic ground and swimming hole.

It was believed that the spring water flowed underground from the river and had its inlet in one of the underground faults of the limestone area, so it was thought the flood had stopped up the inlet.

In the 1948 flood, Blue Springs took yet another beating from the Withlacoochee river.

According to an article which appeared in an April 8, 1948 Free Press, the filling station which sat on a built up foundation at the entrance to spring grounds was washed across the highway and "dumped into the swamp."

Great blocks of the paving were broken up and washed away, along with the two-story gate entrance to the spring grounds.

Pearlie Tweady, a resident at Blue Springs at that time remembers the '48 flood. "We were in Florida at the time and heard about the flood and came home. We had to row in a boat to the house and water was already inside the house. We put mattresses and everything on the floor up on tables."

That same year, Walter Cunningham who was attending the University of Georgia had an opportunity to purchase Blue Springs jointly with Ross DeVane.

Cunningham said that DeVane kept the area south of the road and he kept the area north of the road.

DeVane later passed away and his side was divided and sold in 5 acre tracts.

When Cunningham purchased Blue Springs, the buildings were beyond repair but the spring was fairly active.

Cunningham said that there were three cottages left; one burned and he still has two.

He chose to restore the cottage at the Blue Springs entrance.

The two-story cottage is a get away for Cunningham and he says he visits there often.

Beside the cottage is a shelter which used to contain what was called the Delco System, a generator used to charge batteries for lights.

"All we had back then was kerosene lamps. There was no such thing then as REA, so the Delco gave light for the cottage and dance hall," Cunningham added.

When asked what influenced him to buy Blue Springs, Cunningham said that he had always liked the place.

"I used to go there when I was a young boy on Sunday School picnics and Boy Scout trips. I had an opportunity to buy the place, so I did."

Cunningham thinks of Blue Springs as his playground.

"I go there two or three times a week and walk from the cottage down to the spring. It's especially nice in the Spring when the wild honey suckles are in bloom. The area has a real nice nector scent."

# DIXIE



## HISTORY of DIXIE

By Mrs. Mary Hatcher

12-1-1986

It is indeed a privilege and a joy to be here tonight and to share with you some things about Dixie and her history.

First I think we should have a mutual understanding of the meaning of History. History? "That branch of knowledge that records past events, especially those involving human affairs". It is a record of man's behavior - failures, achievements, his progress and his successes.

History comes to be because of man's memory- one of the greatest gifts we have is the ability to remember- mind and heart enter into the ability to remember the past, recall it and rejoice in it; we are able to build memories as we live day by day. It behooves each of us to live each day well as we store memories. Yes. History is a record of the past, but most importantly, history is an on going present record. We too, are part of today's record that some one will recall and make into a "History of this period in our communities. Memories? Yes, how blessed we are for the beauty and richness of our memories.

Grace Noel Crowell has helped us realize the value of each day's worth for memories in her lives:

"Each day will bring some lovely thing  
I say with each new dawn.  
Some gay adventurous thing  
To hold against my heart when its is gone.  
And so I go to meet the day with wings upon my feet."

To get on with the History of Dixie- I can't separate it from my own beautiful memories; so you'll see lots of personal remembering as I try to bring to you something about our little community of Dixie.

You've had access to the few resources available for learning something about all of us neighbors, but perhaps a few pertinent things will give you

a glimpse of Dixie you haven't heard before.

Dixie had her beginning at a cross road station where the railroad went from Savannah to Thomasville- called Station no. 17 or the Groover Station. This was about 1869.

Some of the first families who came to settle in this section were: the Moodys, Borings, Groovers, Austins, McLanes, Branches, Talleys, Cranes, Clarks, Stewarts, Royals, Laftons, Winters, Williams, Oesterreichers, Hams, Bowens and Powells.

Records tell us that even before Station 17 was established, one, Charles E. Groover, came to what is now the Dixie Community from Thomas County and built what is now the Elizabeth Jones Simpson home.

The song, "Dixie" was written in 1859. It was very popular in the South and the name "Dixie" was picked up as the one for this little community. Mr. George Austin is given credit for naming our community.

To me, any community life centers around the activities in which the people are involved. With this in mind, I'd like to look at the involvements of the Dixie people across the years in the following categories:

#### I. The Economy:

This community depended on the land for its support, income and food.

a. FARMING : staple crops of corn, peanuts, cotton, sugar cane and sweet potatoes. There were hogs, cows and Chickens.

b. TURPENTINE INDUSTRY. The native trees made naval stores very profitable and stable. Did you ever have the joy of chips from the turpentine still to kindle fires?

c. LUMBERING: by the same token of native trees, lumber mills were very profitable. This was one of the oldest industries in Dixie. The Jones Mill closed down in recent years, was passed down for three generations.

d. BUSINESS: Stores, grocery and general business- first one was in 1895. There were other businesses; grist mill, blacksmith shop and cotton gin.



III. THE RECREATION: In Dixie, it was so wholesome, homespun and unifying in the community. Some one has said, "Show me how a people spend their leisure time, and I'll tell you what kind of people they are." Truly the leisure time in Dixie was spent in ways conducive to building better people. Can't you imagine the closeness of the people as they shared:

- |                         |                   |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Quilting             | 4. Pound Parties  |
| 2. Square dancing       | 5. Peanut Boiling |
| 3. Picnics              | 6. Cane Grindings |
| 7. Cake Walks           |                   |
| 8. Box Suppers          |                   |
| 9. Outdoor-Indoor games |                   |
| 10. Icecream Suppers    |                   |

III. EDUCATION: At one time there were five schools in the Dixie district.

Pidcock, Elam, Groover Crossing, Simmon Hill and Dixie..

- a. The first one was in the old Masonic Lodge . It started there, a one-room house and one teacher.
- b. Some 3 or 4 years later the two story wooden building was our place for learning. It was built on the site where the present building is now.
- c. In 1932 a \$20,000 bond was voted in and the brick building came into being.. Laborers worked from 6 to 6 for 50¢ a day. Some leaders in Education that we remember fondly are :Allen Smith, Tommy Kimbrough . Allen Higginbotham Leland Hatcher... and so many others who made rich contributions in guiding the youth in the life long process of learning. It was my privilege to come to Dixie in 1934 and have the first Home Economics program in our Dixie School.

IV. RELIGIOUS AND CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES:

The Methodist Church was organized in 1876 with 12 members

The Baptist Church organized in 1892

In 1892, the membership of the Methodist Church out grew the building. This building was sold to the Baptist Church and a larger building was built on the site where the Methodist Church is today. The building was dedicated by Rev. Bascomb Anthony. This church burned in 1925 and the present church replaced it in 1926. This too, was dedicated by Rev. Bascomb Anthony.

These churches have worked across the years in such close Christian Fellowship. Today the special holiday services of Christmas and Easter alternate with a joint service/ Also Family Nights, each 1st Sunday, alternate; 5th Sunday alternate, the visiting church groups furnishes the Sunday School Teachers.

Much of the social life centered around the churches- picnics, violet picking. New Years Bar=B-Que.

A number of Methodist Ministers had their roots in the Methodist Church here. Namely, Ralph Ramsey, Guernsey Ramsey, Henry Stipe, John Warren and Stewart Austin.

I would like to recall a few interesting facts along the way in the Dixie Community:

1. There were 12 fires; 8 homes burned, three businesses and 1 church.
2. Dixie was once incorporated with a Mayor, Councilmen, policemen, jail, a depot with agents and telegraph service. and 4 passenger trains daily, two going east and 2 west..
3. Mis"Pet Winters" was the first woman rural mail carrier in Georgia. First it was via horse and buggy, then a lovely surrey, then the day of the car.
4. Ice was available from a sawdust pit in one of the stores-- Mr. Bower.
5. There were two doctors in residence in Dixie, - Dr. Cooper and Dr. Austin.

In Dixie, I feel that we have a great heritage. Roots? Yes, there is no doubt in my mind that our roots are well grounded.

In Dixie we have been given a deep sense of belonging, examples of integrity, honesty, dependability, responsibility, loyalty, resourcefulness, and stalwart character were help up for us across the years.

I hope we've caught the torch of love and brotherhood, of high goals and standards of living that was carried by those who've lived before us in Dixie and here in our beloved Brooks County.

In Dixie, we're like one big family. We're all friends; loving, caring

sharing and supporting each other. We cry together, we laugh together, We work together and we play together.

Would you get the idea that I love Dixie? I've said before, "I covet a Dixie for everybody". It is a good place to call "HOME".



Dr. Allen Smith Sr. with the girls basketball team 1930's









Dixie, Ga. School building when Allen Smith Sr. started there as the principle.



School Projets from 1930's



# Dixie class of 1950 meets at Ramsey home

1986

The class of 1950 of Dixie High School met October 4th at the home of one of their members, Mildred Ramsey McRae, (Mom and Dad, Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Ramsey) where they had spent many happy times way back then, 36 years ago. Visitors began to arrive early in the afternoon and cameras began to click. Members shown in above picture are standing left to right: Mary Lou Parker, Thoamsville; Norma Jean Taylor Corbett, Valdosta; June Darlington Lewis, Clyattville; Charles Warmack, Pavo; Billy Gene Morgan, Quitman; Mildred Ramsey McRae, Valdosta; Janie Bass Buck, Nampa, Idaho; Martha Oesttericher Pitman, Tampa, Fla.

Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Ramsey, (Mom and Pop) to that class were presented a lovely tray engraved, "We love you Mom and Dad" from the class of 1950.

One of the members presented

Mom and Dad with a nice album of pictures of past and present reunions. She was presented a copy of "Historic Treasures of Brooks County" by the J.R. Ramseys.

A delicious meal was served with a lovely decorated cake in honor of the occasion.

Reminiscent of the old days was the spend-the-night party for the girls. Mildred Ramsey McRae recalled one spent the night party when they went on a possum hunt. "After we came back in Mom had cookies and milk for us. Soon we went to bed and had a big pillow fight." The men spent the night with Billy Gene Morgan.

Past reunions were held in 1970 at the Holiday Inn in Valdosta, 1984 at the home of Norma Jean Taylor Corbett, Valdosta, 1985 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wormack in Pavo, 1986 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Ramsey, Hickory Head Community.





## *Dixie class of 1950*

Standing left to right: Douglas Arrington, Janie Bass, June Darlington, Billie Gene Morgan. Sitting: Carolyn Hallford, Charles Warmack, Frank Moody, Mildred Ramsey, Gladys Crane, Norma Gene Taylor, Myra Jones, Mary Lou Darlington, Mr. and Mrs. W.E. Price and baby Linda. All members of class except Ruth Miller who was absent. This was taken on their trip to Flagler Beach, their senior trip in 1950.



Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Ramsey, sitting, are surrounded by several members of the Dixie High School class of 1950.

The Ramseys are holding a silver engraved tray presented to them by class members.



### **WESTBROOK SCHOOL (OLD DIXIE SCHOOL)**

*The old Dixie School building, which now houses Westbrook School, was built in 1932 at a cost of \$13,500. The first administrator of the brick building was Mr. Allen C. Smith. The Dixie School eventually merged with the Quitman schools and the schoolhouse became dilapidated.*

*However, in 1970, some citizens of Brooks County and adjoining Thomas County organized the Brooks County Christian School, with Mr. George Hubert as Headmaster. Parents and interested citizens renovated the old building, and later added an elementary building, gymnasium, football field, and music building.*

*The school, now known as Westbrook School, is an accredited member of the Georgia Independent Schools Association. Mr. Jay Cleveland is the present Headmaster, and the school offers quality education to students in grades 1-12.*



A SCENE ON DRY LAKE, NEAR BOSTON, GA.

**EMPRESS**

## Empress, Georgia

Even though a number of families were living in the area before Brooks County was created out of Lowndes, the community of Empress was not named until the South Georgia Railroad was extended to Greenville, Florida. Work was begun on this line in 1901 and the Empress station was probably official some time in 1902 and was listed on the 1903 schedule. The site of this community and railway stop was located where the railroad crossed a much used public road connecting the southern part of the county as well as several communities in north Florida, particularly Lovette, Florida, with Quitman.

The origin of the name "Empress" appears to have been unrecorded; however, a plausible theory is that the station was given the name of a very well known make of steam engine of the day- the *Empress*.

Probably an improvised station was used at first, but in 1914, a station was built meeting specifications of the Interstate Commerce Commission. It had a 20 x 10 passenger end and a 20 x 20 freight end. A station was also built ~~at that~~ time at Shore, Georgia, one mile below Empress.

The station had a waybill box for the conductors to use when the agent was not on duty and it also had a mail crane. Some trains were not scheduled to stop and a mail pouch would be placed on a crane allowing the on-board postal clerk to "snatch" the pouch without making a stop.

Supplies came by freight to stock the several stores in the community; certainly passengers used the train for both business and pleasure trips. The depot was very active during the season of a particular farm product to be shipped to market. The watermelon season was perhaps the most active season with farmers with wagon loads of melons, buyers, government inspectors, laborers hanging around to unload the melons into the boxcars. Many young high school boys looked forward to working in watermelons during the summer not only to make a little money but to build up their muscles as well. "The South Georgia" ran its last watermelon train in 1955. Russell Tedder who worked for the railroad at that time rode one of these trains which had picked up 16 boxcars of watermelons at Empress to be shipped to northern markets.

A post office was established in Empress in April, 1902, with Walter Dewey, Jr. serving as its first and only postmaster. This office was closed one year later and mail was sent to Quitman—by railroad. At one time, Empress had as many as three stores which sold groceries and farm supplies. Over the years, the ownership of these stores changed; however, two of these stores were operated by members of the Childers family; another by a Mr. Patrick from Greenville. In later years, a store was run by Orin and Ellis Lucas, sons of J.C. Lucas who owned an extensive acreage in and around Empress. The last such store belonged to Mrs. Gilly Jones.

The 1908 property map shows a turpentine still just north of the Empress crossing and a sawmill about one mile south of it. This was the Shore sawmill, built by F.M. Shore and his brother Ralph. Even though these two communities almost merged, Shore was granted a post office in 1907 and closed in 1918 after the mill moved to Quitman. Both of these industries required a labor force, adding to the population and activity of this area.

Empress also had a doctor – Dr. Cook who had an office in a little building in his yard; a blacksmith shop – operated by Mr. Tom Jones who on occasion served as dentist; a grist mill; a number of residences with the Childers home and the J.C. Lucas home (built by B.F. Garrett) being the largest ; and for its day a nice school building.

The school had three rooms and a back porch. Two of these rooms were classrooms and the third, the largest of the three, had a built-in-stage. The school had six grades. It was one of the few rural schools to have running water which Mr. J.C. Lucas had pumped down to the school from his house a few hundred years away. This school closed in 1928 having been consolidated with Palmetta School a few miles up the road near Piscola Creek.

Robert Denson in his article "The Country School Called Empress" wrote with pride that eight students who had received their early education in the Empress-Palmetta-Nankin schools enrolled in Quitman High School in 1932.

Despite their fears of not being prepared, this group maintained a grade average equal or above those who had been educated elsewhere. He also remembered some of his classmates: Homer Howard; Hunter Blair; Helen, Mattie, Will and Ralph Collins; Albert, Virgil and Walker Lewis, Jr; Edward and Margaret Patrick; Henry, Frank and E.L. Shaffer.

Today, the official community of Empress at the railroad crossing is no more but the community exists in a broader sense with many people living in the area identifying their part of the county as Empress.

#### SILVER DOLLARS USED AS PAY FOR TURPENTINE WORKERS

There is an old story explaining why silver dollars were used instead of paper money to pay turpentine workers. They spent their wages at the only store in the community where they lived—a “commissary” operated usually by the owner of the turpentine business. Since this process was just a form of re-circulating money, the proprietor of the commissary didn’t want to have sticky, torn up paper money so he used silver dollars to pay off his workers. The gum from the turpentine which was on the workers’ hands was very sticky but would not harm silver as it would paper. When the money came back in as pay for goods received, the proprietor soaked the coin in a bucket of mineral spirits and it was as good as new. He then used the same silver dollars to start the re-circulation process again.

**This old story was told about the Empress and Baden turpentine stills.**



## Tamathli Farms

By its very name, "Tamathli" suggests that this site has a history dating back long before it was recorded in Brooks County. Tribes of the Creek Nation inhabited this area as the many Indian artifacts found by collectors, both serious and amateur, attest. According to historians, one of these tribes was called Tamathli.

It is, of course, quite possible that this part of Georgia was at one time inhabited by Spanish conquerors who settled and raised their cattle here. Evidence of their missions have been found in the area and the route in southern Brooks County known as the Spanish Trail used by the Spanish missionaries and soldiers to travel from St. Augustine across southern Georgia and northern Florida to points west as far as Mobile, Alabama, is but a few miles, as the crow flies, from Tamathli.

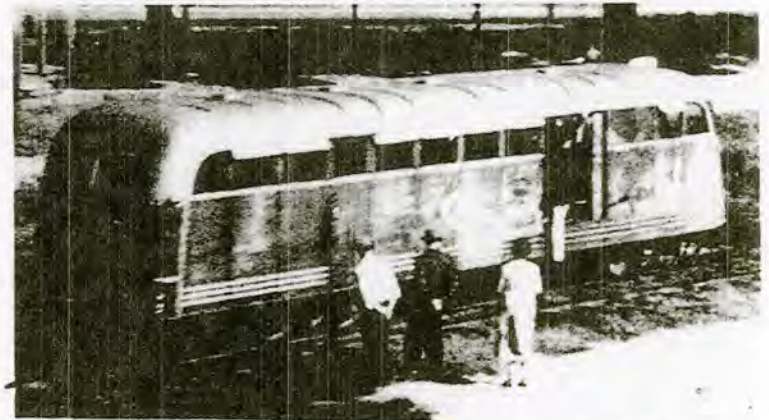
After the Revolutionary War, this area was open to settlers migrating southward from northern Georgia and the Carolinas. The land bordering Florida across the southern part of what would become Brooks County was settled by hard working, determined people. They cleared the land, built their homes, usually beginning with a log structure, planted their fields and settled in to raise their families and to create something to pass on to their children. Two distinct communities soon emerged. Grooverville on the west and Nankin on the east. Those living in the middle along this line eventually got their own named community around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the South Georgia Railroad named its station in the area "Empress", giving this name to the district as

well. "Tamathli" is located a short distance from the site of the Empress station.

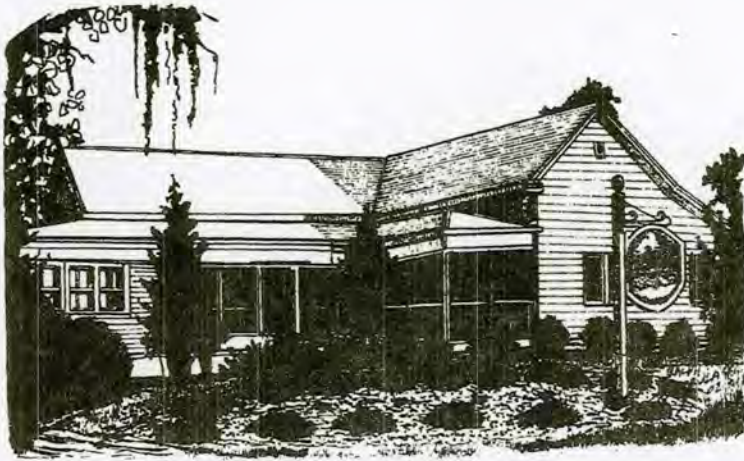
Two of the dwellings that make up "Tamathli" have their origin in the early 1800's. The third dwelling dates back to the early 1900's. These old houses were homes to various families over the years. They had become worn and faded over a century of use, but still retained a hint of possibility.

Brooks Countians are indebted to the McGriffs and Petways for recognizing the possibility, and building on it to make three functional and attractive houses yet retaining much of their original look and character.

Brooks Countians are also proud of the excellent conservation and land management practices which these two families employ on this wonderful complex known as "Tamathli".



The "Doodlebug" transported passengers on the South Georgia Railroad line between Adel, GA and Perry, FL until the mid 1950's. One of its stops was at Empress. But things change: tonight you are being transported on a trolley.



### The McGriff House

According to oral family history, this house had its beginnings circa the 1830's with several changes over the years before the McGriffs did substantial renovations in the 1990's. Skinned poles for rafters, wooden pegs instead of nails and remnants of an old chimney are evidences of its age.

The earliest known settler of this site, Lot 100, 15<sup>th</sup> District, was Allen M. Simms. Mr. Simms, together with his wife who was at least part Cherokee and their four children, migrated from Coweta County, Georgia, to this part of what was then Lowndes County. He acquired extensive acreage in the area but by 1879 had sold most, if not all, of Lot 100.

However, through one of his daughters, descendants of Allen Simms continued to be connected to this property off and on over the years until the late 1980's.

Mr. Simms and his second wife Mary, are buried in the Old Union Cemetery located a short distance from the house at Tamathli. Family members believe there is a strong possibility that his first wife, Prudence Jane, is buried next to him in a now unmarked grave.

From 1888 to 1938, this property was owned by J.C. Lucas. Mr. Lucas made some improvements on the house and lived there before moving to Empress in the early 1900's. He was involved in a large farming operation and was a member of the well-known Hickory Head Agricultural Club. He was a leader in his community petitioning the County Commission to create the Empress District in 1897.

J.C. Lucas was a great nephew of Virgil E. Lucas who was a member of "The Piscola Volunteers", a regiment formed in Brooks County at the outbreak of the war in 1860. He served as the color bearer of this unit, and had in his possession at the end of the war, the banner which had accompanied this unit throughout the conflict. He returned this banner to Brooks County where it hangs today in the Brooks County Museum. Toward the end of his life, this Confederate veteran lived with the J.C. Lucas Family.

In 1938, Hunter and Olin Blair bought this property, selling it in 1946 to Walker Lewis, Jr., a great grandson of Allen Simms.



After purchasing the property in 1986 , the McGriffs enlarged the living room of the original house, added a master bedroom and bath, a laundry, a boot room and a large screened porch. These additions were done keeping in mind the integrity of the architecture. Its simplicity, its elegance of scale has been preserved denoting this house as a rural antebellum planter's home.



### The McGriff Guest House

This house was moved to its present site from Empress where it was built in the early 1900's by Mr. John Thomas Jones for his family. Its architectural style with four rooms and a wide hall is typical of a well-built rural house of its day. Mr. Jones operated a blacksmith shop in Empress. Family records show that the Jones family can trace their ancestry to Allen and Prudence Jane Simms who had lived in the main house in the early 1800's.

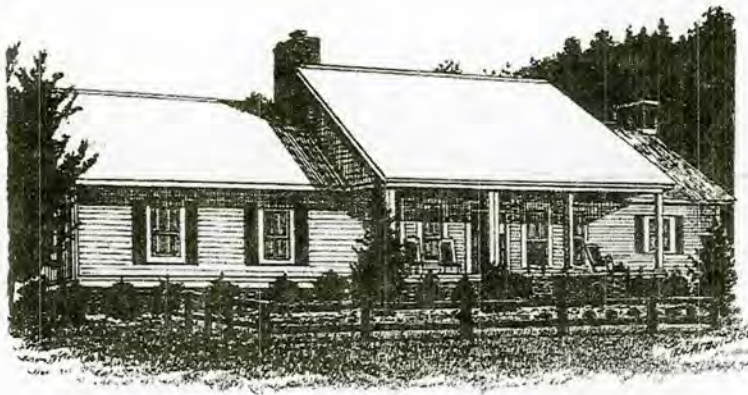
The house looks now much as it did originally with the exception of the back bedroom which had been the kitchen in the old house. The walls have been stripped to the original beaded board and the ceilings restored to their original height. Old wood from several old abandoned houses on the property has been used to frame mirrors and pictures. Two of the unusual original columns are used to frame the headboard of the bed in a front bedroom. The columns used on the wrap around porch are reproductions of the original.

The house has been furnished and decorated in a style in keeping with a country home of its era.

### Tamathli Tack Barn







### The Petway House

The Petway house also dates back before the creation of Brooks County. The first recorded transaction of this property in Brooks County records was in 1860 and involved Thomas N. and William T. Arrington. The original log dwelling was probably built by a member of this family. The log structure is at the center of the house even as it is today.

The Arringtons, the Denmarks and the McMullens were among the early settlers in this area of what later became southern Brooks County and each had extensive holdings. Land titles passed back and forth as these families intermarried. Such was the case when Thomas Arrington deeded some of this property to his son Briggs Arrington in 1901 and again to his son-in-law John Lee McMullen in 1905.

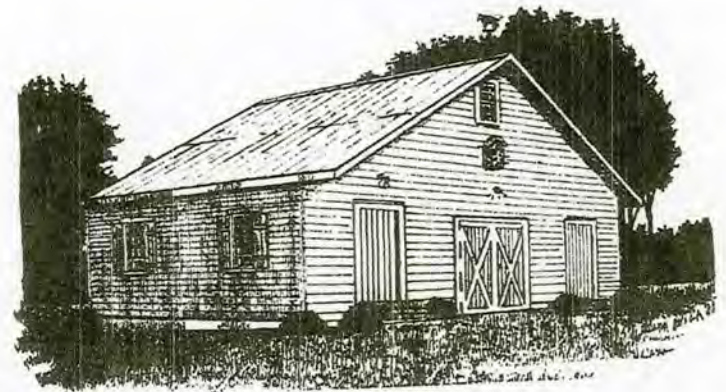
By 1925, this property was no longer owned by these families, passing through several owners before being purchased by Robert V. Weaver some time in the 1930's.

Over the years, the house was paneled on the inside and a wooden siding sealed the exterior. Mr. Weaver added a brick siding over the wooden one.

In 1988, the property was purchased by Tom Petway and the house was moved to its present site. The brick siding was removed. The ceiling in the living area was raised for a cathedral effect and a wing including a bedroom and bath was added onto the right side of the house. The screened porch was extended across the back of the house.

This house is furnished and decorated with elegant simplicity, reflecting its origin and present use.

### The Petway Barn





## EMPRESS COMMUNITY

### ABSTRACTS FROM LOCAL NEWSPAPER

July 4, 1891: Miss Laura Blalock is now connected with the Boscobel College for young ladies in Nashville, Tennessee. Miss Blalock is one of the most finished educators of the South as many Brooks County young ladies can testify.

#### EMPRESS POST OFFICE BROOKS COUNTY, GEORGIA

NAME	TITLE	DATE APPOINTED
Walter J. Dewey Jr.	Postmaster	04/07/1902

Discontinued on April 30, 1903; mail to Qultman

#### SHORE POST OFFICE BROOKS COUNTY, GEORGIA

NAME	TITLE	DATE APPOINTED
William A. Peters	Postmaster	01/26/1907
Ralph F. Shore	Postmaster	04/11/1907
Francis M. Shore	Postmaster	12/11/1916

Discontinued on March 30, 1918; mail to Lovett



*Mr Robert Denson.*

THIS SIDE IS FOR THE ADDRESS

*A. Shore, Jr.*  
Mrs. Janet Lovett Erwin of Lake City, Florida remembers Empress School where she was a student in 1928. There were three teachers with Miss Leila Knight serving as principal.



Palmetto School



Palmetto School, 1992: This school was built in 1918 to replace Old Palmetto.



**JOHNSON SHORT**

(PICTURE)

MR. GEORGE W. JOHNSON'S MEMORIES OF 100 YEARS AT  
JOHNSON SHORT

The Brooks County Historical Society celebrated its thirteenth Birthday on January 27 at their Museum on Screven Street. We were privileged and honored to have as special guest Mr. George Johnson, wellknown Centenarian of Brooks County. The late Mrs. Beth Powers at the Free Press was always delighted when Mr. Johnson came in and brought her some of the first fruits of the season, peaches, melons, strawberries, or whatever he happened to be growing. He was a man of the land and proud of the fruits of his labors. He was also a man of many talents and believed in giving his best to any job that came along.

Mr. George Johnson was born October 20, 1888, and he came to Brooks County when he was four years old, living on the land known then as it still is today as "Johnson Short", a corner of Brooks County that is wellknown for its products as well as its people, some of the finest in the land. After farming several years Mr. Johnson decided to let the boys have it, and he began working for Mr. Pete Young. At first it was growing and harvesting sugar cane. A part of the sugar cane deal was harvesting it which meant making syrup. Working from 40 acres to begin with, the acreage grew soon to be 75 acres. To us that seemed like a mighty large amount of syrup making. He soon became general manager of the farm, taking care of everything. He said it took four wagons to keep the syrup mill going with one old mule and trying to catch the juice as it came out of the mill, the only way to really enjoy cane juice.

When Mr. Young started raising hogs on a big scale Mr. Johnson really had his hands full, tending hogs, from birth to the time they became Brooks County Hams. In regard to this activity, he gave a very vivid description of just what "hog killing" was, from the time someone slaughtered them to the end of the line. One incident that stands out in the minds of the listeners was when one worker, a colored man, stood too close to the fire and vat where the hogs were being scalded, and he fell in. Unfortunately he died before he could be rescued. Mr. Johnson had his own method of curing meat. He said, "If you want good, tender, sweet meat, you have to feed the hogs on peanuts". From his description of how good this meat was you could almost taste a supper of ham, grits, eggs and hot biscuits smothered in red-eye gravy, (some folks might remember it as "branch water gravy"). By whatever name you want to call it, it was sopping good!

Once Mr. Young called him and asked him to get rid of the "skippers" in the meat. This was his remedy - "Get a big tub of hot water, throw in a handful of Borax, and dip the meat in it for just a few minutes, according to how badly the hams were infested. Then take the meat out, dry it off real good and hang it up to thoroughly dry. You can be sure the mention of skippers in the meat brought the listeners to their feet with the question "What are Skippers?". By that time no one was in the mood for ham for supper any time soon.

When Mr. Young told him to build a shed over the syrup making area, this man of many talents went to work and did just that. Although he admitted to us, "I didn't know a thing about building anything, he went out in the woods and cut down some pines and went to work. It was during

the War and we just had no lumber. I made a shed, and it must have been a good one for it lasted many years."

Someone asked him how the name "Johnson Short" came about. "Well", he said, "Mr. Jack Faircloth, manager or president or something of the then South Georgia Grocery Company, during the First World War, bought a lot of farm products from us, lots of meat and syrup, and since the little dirt road that runs by that community that connected it to the highway was a little short road, he got to calling the area 'Johnson Short', that's about all we know about the name."

Someone then mentioned the Johnson String Band, that was quite famous in Brooks County at one time. He said it started when some of the Johnson boys, who could play all sorts of musical instruments, would get together just to play for their own enjoyment. Sometimes they would go to a party or dance and people would ask them to play. The word soon got around and they became wellknown around the county. Mr. Johnson told of how he wanted to go with them when they went out to play at one of the Saturday Night Dances, but since he was the youngest they reminded him that he didn't know how to play anything, so they wouldn't let him go along. So he said, "I went out and bought me a banjo and learned to play it in just a week, and then the next Saturday Night when they started out I was ready for them. So I became a member of the Band." "The Band would go to different places to play, even going down to Blue Springs where they had a pavillion and held frequent dances. That was a kind of resort for people who could afford it would go there staying for weeks in the cottages and enjoying the icy cold water of the spring, thereby escaping the long hot summers."

He added, "I don't think there is much left of that place now due to neglect, and I guess people started going to other places."

This kind, gentle man was so full of interesting reminiscences of his early years. One thing he told about himself was that his mother named him after George Washington, but he admitted that he didn't have any of Washington's attributes, but they did have something in common. It seemed that his mother was trying to grow a prize pear tree in the backyard when he was very young, but he said "very young but old enough to know better". Anyway, someone had given him a little hatchet that just begged to have something to cut down, and that little pear tree was just right. The hatchet wasn't sharp, so he said, "I didn't really chop it down, you might say, I sort of 'gnawed' it down. When Mother asked who did it? I couldn't tell a lie, I had to say 'It was me, Mother', for I was caught red handed, cause old George wasn't there."

The residents of this small community lived in a close relationship, they played together, sharing their joys and sorrows. It gives one a picture of a bunch of boys growing up in this kind of background. Grownups shared in their fun also. There was a small pond on the place and a sawmill built nearby. When the trees were ready to be cut the logs were floated down stream, and they would have a log-rolling contest. At one of these events it meant lots of food. We've heard the saying when describing a large feast as "having enough food for a logrolling". When times got slack they would have a jumping contest, seeing who could jump the highest over a pole. When some poor soul couldn't quite make it, he would be given a boost with the "rising board", which made the fellow find he could jump higher than he thought he could.

When he was asked about the schools then, he answered, "Well, we didn't have too much learning then. We had a one-room schoolhouse that was located on this side of Piscola Creek. One room and one teacher, who hardly had a sixth grade education, but I guess we learned enough to grow up on, and I think we all turned out pretty good. One poor teacher handling about 40 active children surely earned her pay".

One member<sup>asked</sup>/him if it was true that it would rain at Johnson Short when no one else in the county got any rain. He said, "I don't know if that saying is true or not for we have some dry spells down there too, but it did rain enough to keep the road slick". He added, "I had a running battle with Mr. Blackburn, Superintendent of the roads in the county, trying to get him to level off the road so that people wouldn't always be sliding in the ditches. But he never did it". Mr. Johnson told of another incident, the time he was hauling a pig in the back of his truck and was going very slowly up a hill. When he got to the top of the hill he shot the gas to it and the truck jackknifed, went into the ditch and the pig got loose and made a hasty exit for the hills. It took all the neighbors around to round up the pig, get the truck out of the ditch and be on my way."

All of this information was gleaned from a cassette taped at our meeting, and for an inexperienced typist it was quite a challenge to transcribe the message and try to make it readable and do justice to this remarkable gentleman and his colorful and interesting stories. There were many interruptions and to transcribe it verbatim would have been quite lengthy and almost impossible. If there are any discrepancies

in time, events, or relationships, please try to overlook them.

It would take a well-versed Genalogist to figure out the many Johnsons and their relationships to eachother. The Johnson name is prevalent through South Georgia and especially in Brooks County. There is hardly a family here that doesn't have some connection with this family name, be it by blood, marriage, or just plain good friends or neighbors. Mr. Johnson reminded us that "Johnson Short" is and was a good place to live and raise a family, and to lead a kind of down-to-earth life in a sort of sheltered way. But, he said, "I warn all the young men that it is dangerous to move down here, for there are too many widows, about one on every corner."

This dear man has endeared himself to everyone who knows him. He will never become a "lonely old man", for there is too much love for him and his family. He presently lives with his grandson, Gene and his wife, Ann Johnson, in town, which is quite a change from the country style he has always known. He has adjusted well to his newer lifestyle and enjoys his grandchildren very much, and they of course enjoy "Granddaddy". His keen sense of humor seems to fit right in with the modern generation, so different from what was customary in his growing up years. From his birth in 1888 he has lived a long full life. He said he had outlived two wives and is not looking forward to having another, but he did say, "I have reached my first hundred year and am starting on my next one."

The Historical Society is deeply indebted to Mrs. Mrs. Jean Blackburn Logan for bringing him to our meeting. Her mother is a second cousin to Mr. Johnson and is well acquainted with his stories.

That night Jean would prompt him some by saying, "Tell them about the Log-rolling, or some other incident she knew that would delight us. In fact when talking to Jean later trying to confirm some of the data I have been compiling," said, "When I was taking him home after the meeting he expressed a desire to come back to another meeting. He said he didn't know we had such an organization in Brooks County, and couldn't understand why everyone didn't come and support this Society." You can be sure that the Society does want him to come again, he is so full of Brooks County history and can contribute much to recording events and people that were a part of our past that should be preserved.

So, Mr. George Johnson, our hats off to you, take a bow. You have the love and esteem of all of Brooks County, and the Historical Society will treasure the many facts you told us about your life in Brooks County and especially making us more familiar with "Johnson Short". Being our honored guest at our 13th Anniversary will be a night long remembered.



# MULE CREEK

# MULE CREEK LEGEND ABOUT BURIED GOLD

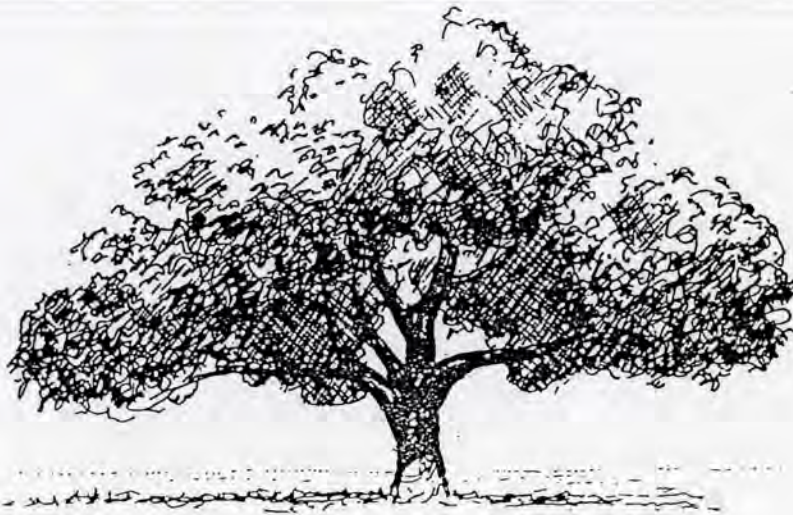
by  
James R. "Jimmy" Knight

As a young boy I recall people telling stories about gold being buried near the confluence of Okapilco and Mule Creeks. To the best of my memory, as the story goes, there was an Indian village located where the "Coffee Road" crossed below the two creeks.

A confederate wagon train of several wagons was hauling a chest of gold from South Carolina to Vicksburg. Each night on the trail when the wagons stopped for the night, the chest of gold was buried in a hidden location and each morning the gold was dug up and the journey continued. The wagons stopped for the night after crossing where the old Indian village had been located. At that time, most of the In-

dians had already been driven into the Okefeenokee swamp and down into Florida. A marauding band of Indians attacked and massacred the members of the train. As the story goes, the Indians did not know about the gold and it is still supposed to be buried somewhere in the area.

Over the years numerous people have hunted for the gold. I recall that in 1928 or 1929 I was an Assistant Scout Master to Mr. Branch Hunter, Scout Master. On one of our overnight campouts I carried our troop up to Mule Creek Swamp and we searched the area for gold. At this time there were many holes all over the place where others had searched. To my knowledge, no one has ever found the treasure.



*Editor's Note: There are many versions of this legend. We have given two accounts in the Book. Among other things, it is noted that there is some discrepancy as to whether gold or silver is buried on Mule Creek!*

## Mule Creek Legend About Buried Gold

By: James R. "Jimmy" Knight

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# IS THERE A TON OF BURIED SILVER ON MULE CREEK?

by  
Gerald Hunter

If the tales are all true, 2,500 pounds of silver are buried somewhere below the dense undergrowth of a south Georgia swamp. I'm going to tell you where to look for that treasure.

And it's all yours if you find it. I have given up the search. After many years of mental gymnastics, of probing and digging—and even buying and adjusting a “treasure find”—I'm through.

I have quit because the area where the treasure is supposed to lie is so rugged, so dark, so wet and so unworkable, and because there is such an awful lot of dirt and catclaw briars and tangled vines and shin-busting snags in that swamp. I have seen the spot so many times that it is probably etched on the back of my eyeballs. Neither I nor Millard Gaddis who prospected with me for a while nor our colored boy who fled when he dug up some human bones has ever made a nickel on the deal. All we discovered was a lot of territory where the treasure isn't.

This story begins on a January morning about the year 1750 when fifty strong, hand-picked Frenchmen stole furtively through the gates of New Orleans to set out on a long, dangerous trail that was to lead to a ship on the Georgia coast. These had to be strong men, for in addition to his provisions, each one carried fifty pounds of pure silver. A month later they reached middle south Georgia—and their rendezvous with death.

That's how the story goes, the story of 2,500 pounds of silver that I am convinced is buried somewhere near the forks of the Okapilco and Mule Creeks in Brooks County, Georgia.

I first heard about it from my father who had been told about the buried silver by an old timer, near the end of his years. And so far as I know, the story has gone no further than Dad, Millard Gaddis, Buddy Gamble and myself—until now.

Two hundred years ago the French held New Orleans. Spaniards occupied all the area around Pensacola. During a Spanish blockade of New Orleans the French, fearful that the city might fall, began sending its treasures overland north of Pensacola to an undisclosed rendezvous with French ships on the Georgia coast. The dim trail ran through Brooks County.

On the particular venture we are talking about the French expected a Spanish attack. For that reason, the group buried their treasure each night, and then divided and camped in separate places so that if the Spaniards should surprise and kill half the party, the others would be able to dig up the silver and see that it got safely to France. In those days people were realistic.

No doubt, as time wore on and boots wore out and tempers wore then, the party grew more and more careless. It is possible that the sentries relaxed for 40 winks

there in the forks of Okapilco and Mule Creeks.

At any rate, on this February night while they were camped "in the forks of the creeks" the unforeseen happened: after the silver bullion was buried and the expedition bedded down, the men were attacked not by Spaniards but by Indians!

The cunning redmen had spotted both encampments. They pounced on the two groups simultaneously.

Not a Frenchman survived the massacre.

The Indians, so the story goes, either were unaware of the treasure's value or for some reason didn't want it. French reconnaissance parties soon found their dead, but discovered no trace of the silver or its place of burial.

People have looked for and dreamed of that treasure for some 200 years. So far as I am concerned, the search has ended.

Twenty-five hundred pounds of silver-worth something less than \$50,000 is not a fortune in these days of the 30-cent dollar. But it is enough to put most of us in a very comfortable state of mind—IF we had one.

I have always thought that the lax ways that permitted fifty well-armed warriors to be surprised and murdered by savages proved that the party was growing lax in hiding its treasure. In other words, burying the silver probably had become a mere compliance with orders rather than an actual and careful precaution against highjacking. The treasure probably wasn't too carefully hidden. Anyway, that's the theory we had when we started our hunt.

The silver treasure could be a rela-

tively small package—and a very heavy one. Buried in anything except perhaps clay, it might, over a period of two hundred years, sink a considerable depth into the earth. We began by checking the low places. When we exhausted these, we tried the high spots thinking that the extra dirt left after digging the hole might still be visible as a slight rise. The only thing we found in one mound was human bones.

After searching the low places and the high ones, we began investigating the level ground—what there is of it. Nowhere did we get any reaction from the "treasure seeker." This is a device, actually a kind of army mine detector, which buzzes in earphones and registers on a dial when the probe passes over any mass of metal. By us it worked well—in tests.

Our investigations have been manned under all sorts of climatic conditions except good ones.

In the first place, that swamp is ten miles from the nearest road.

In the second, unless things are very dry indeed, the creek forks area is a pond. We don't know whether the massacre occurred in a wet or a dry season.

Near the forks of the Okapilco and Mule Creeks lie the bones of valiant Frenchmen, I am convinced.

Not too far from the bones lie 2,500 pounds of silver.

And not too much farther from there lies—in storage—a \$300 treasure finder that I will sell—cheap.

—reprinted from *The Atlanta Journal Magazine*.  
Editor's note: The author has passed away since this article was written.

## *Jeptha Rode That Mule*

*Jeptha McLeod, well-known farmer up Pidcock way, was in town the other day wearing a cast on his leg which was broken in two places, the cast having been fashioned by him. He was the victim of a peculiar accident and the way he told it, to his good friend Sheriff Clanton, was that he turned a mule out to graze in the yard and that the mule with a halter and chain on had wandered into the cornfield.*

*Jeptha went after the mule and undertook to pull up by the chain to get aboard the critter and ride it back to the house. The mule bucked and he fell off and the mule stepped on his leg below the knee and broke it. He crawled around, found some wire and tied the leg up and mounted again and again he fell off, breaking the foot of the same leg.*

*He tied the mule to a cherry tree, crawled back to the house, got some tin and tin snips and fashioned himself a very serviceable cast for the disabled limb. Securing his walking stick and a saddle he proceeded to the field, mounted the mule and rode him to the house.*

*As Sheriff Clanton was telling the tale and seeing the strained look on faces he hastened to explain that Jeptha's legs were both artificial, he having lost his feet in an accident some years ago.*

*It seems he was a car inspector in the Thomasville railroad yards once and a train backed over him. It was the train's fault, or at least it looked that way to the jury and Jeptha got a right smart sum for damages but by the time he divided it with his lawyers and helped out a good many friends who stood terribly in need of funds, he did not have such a lot left. He kind of po'-managed the money, said the sheriff, but he's done well in every other way and has raised some fine children.*

*He has a lot of mechanical ingenuity and back on the farm at Pidcock he got him some good blackgum and made his first artificial limbs with hinges at the joints and managed wonderfully well and was very cheerful.*

*It takes a lot of hard luck to really get one of the highlander breed down and as you may have gathered, Jeptha is Scotch. When he was wearing his home-made limbs he used to come to see the sheriff when in town. "Well, how you doing, Jep?" the sheriff would say and Jep would reply: "I'm doing pretty good if I can just keep the termites from eating my feet off."*

*Jeptha's grandpa was Murdoch McLeod and he once lived at Swainsboro. He was a great man for figgers and was never stumped by a problem. One of his old friends died and left a will with a note attached saying if they couldn't figure it out to send for Murdoch. The will directed that 17 horses be divided among three sons as follows: First son was to have half; second son one-third; third son one-ninth.*

*No one could see how the horses could be divided thus without cutting one of them in half so they sent for Murdoch. So Murdoch mounted his own nag and rode up to Swainsboro and looked the situation over and said: "What you need is a common denominator. I'll let my hoss be it and put him in the pen with the seventeen." "Ye'll lose yer hoss, Murdoch," they said, but he didn't. So there were eighteen horses in the pen.*

*To No. 1 son he said: "Take nine horses and leave mine," and he did. To No. 2 son he said: "Take six horses and leave mine," and he did. To No. 3 he said: "Take two horses and leave mine," and he did, and Murdoch still had his own horse. With a grandpa like that Jeptha figured he could manage to get around one .... and he did.*

**NANKIN**

## Nankin

by Nelle R. Jones and Betty K. Horton

Nankin, today, a pleasant, easygoing little community is somewhat like the line in the song, "The old gray mare, she ain't what she used to be!" Nankin of older times bustled with founding families, a grist mill, county store, post office, school, churches and a stage coach line.

Nankin is located in the 0659 Militia District approximately ten miles south of the city of Quitman. It was listed by Folks Huxford in The History of Brooks County Georgia as one of several villages associated with the county's early history. Although Huxford listed Nankin as now extinct, it currently exists as the Nankin Militia District and is still comprised of some of the descendents of the early settlers. Two of the original churches still hold regular services and burials continue in Columbia Cemetery.

When Brooks County was created in 1858, Nankin was in the part of Lowndes County which was incorporated to form Brooks County. The community of Nankin is comprised of the land to the south closest to and adjoining the Florida line. It is bordered on the east by the Withlacooche River and the west by the communities of Empress and Hickory Head. Prominent earliest settlers in Nankin were: William P. Wade, T.S.T. Knight, James A. Barrs, William Barrs, Kinch Radford, Henry -Radford, John Rambo, William Bridges Holwell, James A. Bentley, James Wood, John Wood and Dr. H. M. Fernsides. Other early physicians in the district were Dr. James King, Dr. A. B. Colvin and Dr. G. M. Anderson.

Nankin's claim to fame may have been a trail which developed into the first stage coach road across Brooks County. Known as the old "Spanish Trail" which was used by the missionaries coming from St. Augustine up into Georgia, this trail first came through Lowndes County through the Statenville area and then into Brooks County. This narrow path-like trail crossed the Withlacoochee River from Lowndes into Brooks a few hundred yards below the confluence of the river and the Okapilco creek on the east side of the Spain Plantation. The river ford was known as Knee High. In later years, part of this



same trail became known as the Oglethorpe Trail and was used by Oglethorpe to help settle other parts of Georgia. At one time there was an inn located on the Brooks County side of the river where travelers could get meals and room for the night. The Stage Road then continued through the community of Grooverville into Thomas County and then into west Florida which was known as the Appellate Country.

Another important landmark in the Nankin area leading from Brooks County into Lowndes County was the Knight's Ferry Road and Bridge. The road was established in the early days by the Knight family and used to drive cattle to market in Savannah. Fishermen on the Withlacoochee River during low water may still see the old bridge timbers.

Other early roads in the Nankin district granted by the Brooks Inferior County in 1859 were: "from the bridge on the Piscola to intersect with the Madison Road at Dr. Fearnside's Plantation, and from Dr. Fearnside's Plantation to the Florida line." Reviewers for these roads were John W. Spain, H. M. Fearnside, James B. Peacock, William Barrs and T. S. T. Knight. A rather funny tale concerning the state boundary line between Georgia and Florida which is two miles below Nankin is told about Mr. W. B. Holwell. An original survey of the Georgia/Florida line placed Mr. W.B. Holwell's house on the Florida side of the line. A corrected survey made sometime later placed Mr. Holwell's house on the Georgia side of the line. On Mr. Holwell's next visit to Quitman, one of his friends asked him how he liked living in Georgia. Mr. Holwell's reply was, "Fine, I'm damned glad to get out of that old Malaria state of Florida."

The first country store in Nankin was probably owned by the William P. Wade family. The country store was a meeting and visiting place where one could get a cool drink and hear all the news. Down through the years there was always a country store in Nankin and Mr. Clarence Knight was an early proprietor following the Wade family. Mr. Knight owned and ran the store for many years and at some time served as Postmaster and Justice of the Peace. Following Mr. Knight in operating the country store were several others including Mr. W. Jeff Williams, Mr. Monroe Willaford and Mr. Joe

Hackle. The last proprietor of a store in Nankin was Mrs. Roy Lane better known as "Miss Allie" who kept the store open until recent years.

At one time there was a Post Office which was established in Nankin in 1856 prior to Brooks County being formed. The first three postmasters in order of service were: C. J. Blalock, Thomas A. Groover and Thomas J. Blalock. There was one school in Nankin called Beulah School. Miss Della Shaw of Adel was one of the first teachers and later Miss Doris Knight taught there before she became a missionary. Two of the original three churches in Nankin still hold services. The Nankin Methodist Church is no longer in existence but the Columbia Primitive Baptist Church and the Beulah Baptist Church (a missionary church) hold services regularly. Beulah Church is noted today not only for its Christian heritage but for its Thanksgiving Feasts.

In the very early days of Nankin a gristmill was operating on Mr. William Wade's land. Farmers took pride in the quality of the corn, oats, and peanuts produced but cotton was the largest crop in the district. The timber business also played a large part in the economy of the area. An interesting story is told in the Quitman Free Press, March 8, 1878, which relates an account of a rather large log that was cut the week before by Mr. Zack Knight and others on his father's place in Nankin. Normally, logs measured about fifteen inches in diameter at the top end and around twenty inches at the bottom with an average length of about sixty feet. The particular log that Mr. Knight and the others cut measured twenty-two inches at the upper end and was eighty-four feet long. It required sixteen mules to pull it 600 yards to the river in order for it to be floated down to what was known as Drew's Mill.

Today, most people still depend on farming and agriculture for a living but others commute to places such as Madison, Clyattville, Valdosta and Quitman to work. The people of Nankin have deep roots in Brooks County and have contributed in many ways to its rich heritage. Many of the citizens in the Nankin Community today are descendents of the early settlers. Some of the other families living in and around Nankin between the late 1800 s and 1900 were: Sherrod Swilley, William King, Madison Coeey, Frances

McCall, Allen Sims, John Darracott, John Dugger, Solomon and Samuel Howard, Frank Lane, William White, William Taylor, Bordie Wine Dodd, Henry McMullen, Mathew Albritton, Redding Denmark, E. E. McCarty, Thomas Arrington, A.M. Collins and others.

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Individual Contributors:  
Thelma Groover  
Lucy E. Jarvis  
Harriett Radford Jones  
Nelle Radford Jones  
James R. 'Jimmy' Knight

# PISCOLA CREEK

February 25, 1999

Dear Mrs. Lowarence,

Enclosed you will find a map of our County (Brooks County). Also from Kenneth K. Karkow, Georgia "Names and Places," 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, the mention of Piscola. From this it seems Piscola was a Creek Indian name. Meaning milk and white oak acorns. It seems that the Indians ground the acorns to make oil or "soy" milk. There are many oak trees growing now along Piscola Creek, and they produce acorns, today eaten by deer, squirrels, raccoons, other wild animals, pigs and cattle. They are a source of food.

The Creek Indians had settlements along these creeks and rivers as today we find arrowheads and Indian mounds (burial grounds) and other artifacts.

These Indians words, or their languages, were probably interpreted by early explorers, fur traders or missionaries and probably named by them. The name of Piscola Creek was here before the white settlers came in 1820. Folks Huxford mentioned this creek in his History of Brooks County, having been here before 1800. This Piscola Creek goes all the way through Brooks County, is joined by the Okapilco Creek and then empties into the Withlacoochee River, which empties into the Suwannee River, and this river goes on to the Gulf of Mexico.

The early explorers used the waterways to go inland from the Gulf and then they encountered the Indians not on the Creek but the

From the archives in Tallahassee, Florida, we find the name of Pensacola and according to the history there were at least four explorers who helped name that town including one that I am sure was Italian. I am doing more research on the explorers which include both Ponce de Leon and DeSota who visited this area. And remember Columbus, an Italian discovered America. So who knows - mingling Indian languages with Spanish, French, Italian, and English, we can certainly say there could be a connections. I hope this will help you. I am continuing the research.

Sincerely,

Nancy Y. Schmoe  
"Blackwater"

*Piscola Creek  
- BOTTOM - 1/15/99*

## **The Legacy of Piscola Creek**

South Georgia and especially Brooks County is known for the natural resources, wild life, lovely creeks and rivers, lakes, swamps and ponds. The Indians called this land, the "Land of the Trembling Earth" As we know the Okeefanokee Swamp still bears that name. We have the beauty of perhaps the worlds largest mixture of natural forests, and even if we didn't plant trees today, we'd still have a jungle of wild habit, including many different varieties of wet land plants, wild flowers and foliage of all kinds. I don't think we realize what's really around us, and how lucky we people are who live here, among the beauty of our forests, our plants and our wild life.

All of this came home to me last summer when I received a call from a lady in Lawrenceville, NJ. Her name was Joan Piscola Lawrence, and she had found us on the Internet. And she was very curious to know about Piscola as she had never heard of anyone or anything being named that before. Her father had told her that Piscola was probably an Italian name. She asked me for information. So immediately I remembered that in our first U. D. C. book, Historic Treasures of Brooks County, Mrs. Ruth Ramsey had written stories about Piscola Post Office and also Piscola School, in the south end of Brooks County, and I also remember that hanging in our museum was the Piscola Flag that was carried by the Piscola Volunteers, who marched away from here to take part in the Civil War. So I gathered together as much material as I could and sent it on to Mrs. Lawrence, including a write up on the Indian Lore of our county written by Grady and Judy Williams. This brought forth more calls from Mrs. Lawrence and letters. And so it all sparked my curiosity, and I began a search for why was Piscola Creek called Piscola Creek and where did the name come from. I first visited the local Brooks County Library. All we could find there was that it was a French name meaning ending or tail. Then I checked with the Archives in Tallahassee and came up with Indian names of all the towns in Florida - but no Piscola.

By chance I was visiting the Regional Library in Valdosta. I ran into Lisa Newsome, our former Librarian here and told her my story, and she pointed me to another worker in their Archives and through Valdosta State University she came up with the answer. They had a book by Kenneth K. Karkow, Georgia Names and Places, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, that mentioned Piscola Creek. From this resource it seems the Piscola was an Indian name meaning milk and white oak acorns. It seems the Indians ground the acorns to make oil, that they called milk. As we know there are many oak trees growing along Piscola Creek and the acorns today is for deer, squirrels, raccoons and other wild animals, as well as pigs and cattle. They are a real source of food. The Creek Indians had settlements along the creek. The history books tell us that there was a Creek settlement on this creek about six miles southwest of Quitman. Folks Huxford in the history of Brooks County mentioned this creek named Piscola before 1820. In my research I found many fur traders and explorers passing through here before that time, as far back as the 14 hundreds. There was first Columbus, an Italian Ponce de Leon and DeSota.

Piscola was really explored before St. Augustine was established but fell on bad times and was abandoned. Most of these explorers fled north and came through our territory - probably finding the Creek settlements and crossing Piscola Creek.

I've lived here over fifty years now and probably passed over the Piscola Creek a thousand times or more going back and forth to Quitman, and didn't realize it's importance to the South end of Brooks County. If you trace this little creek, it begins over in Thomas County and starts it's journey to the Sea. It meanders across Brooks County like a snake. There are seven to eight bridges that you can cross, that span it's little waters. It's joined by the Okapilco Creek in the Southeastern part of the County and together they flow into the Withlacoochee River, on to the Suwannee River which then flows into the Gulf of Mexico. These were the waterways the Indians and early settlers used to go from one place to another some settling along the way.

It was the natural beauty then and now that first brought the early explorers and settlers to this area along with fertile soil and plenty of water.

In exploring the Piscola Creek we find even today a world of many varieties of tree. To name a few - The Oak Trees, including Live Oaks, White Oaks, Water Oaks, Pine Oaks and Seven Oaks. Pine Tree including Long Leaf, Swamp Pines, Loblolly Pines and Slash Pines. These trees furnish lumber, produce acorns, ship building, etc. The pines are used for building materials, navel products like turpentine and tar - both used in medicines.

Here we have the nut trees. Walnut nut trees, wild pecan trees, black and sweet popular trees, tupelo trees, black cherry, magnolias and dogwood.

Here we have fruit trees growing wild. Plum trees, cherry trees, persimmon trees, may haws and palmetto. Also we have growing along the creek dewberries, huckleberries, blackberries, wild grape vines, poke berries (leaves off poke berries can be used as a vegetable) Then we have the wet land plants and grasses, you'll find and can be replanted in your own garden. Some are wiregrass, crabgrass, pursely clover, milk weed and jimson weed.

The wild flowers can also be found along this creek. Some are natural plants.

Lilies, violets, black-eyed susan, Queen Anne's Lace, many varieties of fern, etc.

## **A Note about Piscola Creek**

Piscola Creek not only has played an important role in the history of our county, it has been a sustainer of life to those who have lived along its banks from the dawn of civilization up until now:

1. It served as a means of transportation for the Indians, Explorers, Fur Traders and early Settlers.
2. It's furnished food for all of these, in the form of fish, wild meat, fruit and some vegetables.
3. Its shrubs, flowers and wet land plants have been used for medical purposes.
4. It's furnished water for wild animals, cattle, hogs and people.
5. It's been used for recreation, fishing, swimming, picnicking and some family times and family reunions. And a source of beauty and relaxation.
6. The plants and wild flowers found along its banks are the foundation for many of the shrubbery you use in your own garden today.
7. From the trees that grow along its little valley has come, lumber, pulpwood, that makes paper, turpentine and tar from its older trees and berries for the dye, as well as berries to eat and honey and jelly for bread.

The lumber you use to build your houses, the paper you write on, most medicines you use, can be traced back to the beginning, with the same plants, trees, shrubs, wild flowers that have grown along the banks of this small stream.

So don't discount little Piscola Creek, as you pass over it. Remember its not only creates life it sustains life.

Think through the years how our cattle, pigs and wild life have used it for water and food and pleasure it brought so many for recreation swimming, fishing, picnics, hunting, walking along its banks and for family reunions. Many farms and plantations have been named after it, as well as schools, post offices, road and banners.

### **Famous men who have crossed this stream or came near it :**

DeSota, on his way to discover the mighty Mississippi River. Perhaps Ponce de Leon, searching for the Fountain of Youth. Oglethorpe, as he journeyed his way to meet the Indians to form an alliance against the Spanish. The Confederate soldiers on their way to fight in the battle of Olustee, Florida during the Civil War and so many others, especially General Andrew Jackson

Piscola Creek has lived and flowed under five flags, first the Spanish, then French, English, United States and the Confederacy.



Here are some of the trees, shrubs and wild flowers found growing along Piscola Creek

<b>Trees</b>	<b>Fruit Trees</b>	<b>Shrubs, Wild Flowers &amp; Grasses</b>	<b>Wild Animals and Eatable Birds</b>	<b>Fish</b>
Live Oaks	Plum	Palmetto	Deer	Perch
White Oaks	Cherry	Crabgrass	Turkey	Brim
Red Oaks	Persimmon	Wiregrass	Raccoon	Stump
Post Oaks	Mayhaw	Ryegrass	Opossum	Knockers
Black Jack Oaks	Mulberry	Spanish Moss	Bear	Shell Crackers
Scrub Oaks		Jack in the Pulpit	Otters	Red Bellies
Long Leaf Pine		Lilies	Beavers	Catfish
Slash Pines		Swamp Lilies	Squirrel	Suckers
Loblolly pine	<b>Berry Vines</b>	Pond Lilies	Muskrat	Pike
Short Leaf Pine	Wild Grapes	Jimson Weed	Quail	Jack Fish
Walnut	Muscadines	Yellow Daises	Dove	Soft Shell
Maple	Pokeberries	Black-eyed Susan	Woodchucks	Turtle
Gum	Huckleberries	Pursey Clover	Snipes	Mud Fish
Poplar	Blackberries	Pokeweed	Ducks	Clams
Cypress	Dewberries	Goldenrod	Terrapin	
Tupelo	Hackberry	Queen Anne's Lace	Gopher	
Black Cherry	Gallberry	Pyser Plan		
Magnolia		Honeysuckle Plant	Many Song Birds-to numerous to mention	
Dogwood		Yellow Jasmine		
Holly		Milk Weed		
Bay		Morning Glory		
Chinquapin		Mistletoe		
Hickory		Cherokee		
		Roses		
		Four O'Clocks		
		Hyacinth		
		Ferns		
		Pitcher Plants		

Recipes used originally by the Creek Indians along Piscola Creek,  
adjusted to todays recipes.

### **Swamp Cabbage**

Find a large Palmetto Palm. Cut our the center portion of the plant for the cabbage and cook as follows:

- ½ lb. of smoked bacon
- 4 cups of cabbage sliced thin
- 2 tablespoons bacon drippings
- ½ cup of water
- 2 table spoons of butter
- ½ cup whipping cream

Use a large cast iron skillet. Fry bacon in skillet. Drain bacon on paper towel. Leave some bacon drippings in skillet. Add cabbage and stir for a few minutes, add water cover and cook ten minutes. Continue to boil until all the water evaporates. Add ½ cup of whipping cream and butter and salt and pepper to taste. Crumble bacon over the cabbage. Serve in a large bowl with corn bread and a salad of your choice.

### **Soft Shell Turtle Soup**

If you are lucky and can obtain some soft-shell turtle meat. Its white and taste a little like chicken meat. Cook the following way.

- 2 lbs. turtle meat
- 4 tablespoons of butter
- 1 can of tomato soup
- 2 quarts of water
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 cup of potatoes, diced

Boil meat in large iron pot with water until tender. As water is reduced, place garlic and onion in a pan with butter. Sauté for a few minutes. Then add contents to the soup and the tomato soup. Add potatoes and ½ cup of red wine. Boil for ten more minutes until potatoes are tender. This is delicious soup. Serve in small soup bowls with crackers. Just add a green salad.

## **Walnut Bread**

Gather some acorns in fall of year and some walnuts from wild walnut tree. They are very hard nuts to crack so use a hammer. Then remove the walnut meat. Shell acorns and put through a grinder. Mix acorns with 2 cups of stone ground wheat flour. Place in mixing bowl, add a little more shortening, two eggs, 2 teaspoons of baking powder, a cup of milk and 2 tablespoons of sugar and mix. Then add walnut meat. Stir and place in loaf pan. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes. This bread could be a little hard.

## **Duck Pilou**

Ducks are plentiful in fall of the year in Brooks County. Have someone clean ducks thoroughly for you. You'll need at least two ducks. Place in large soup pot. Boil whole ducks until tender. Take meat off bone. Return to pot with juice. Add one chopped onion, 1 cup of cut up celery, 1 ½ cups of rice, ¼ cup of butter. Cook until rice is tender and the liquid is almost used up. Serve with a vegetable and home made biscuits and Scuppernong jam or jelly (wild grapes).

## **Pine Mast Seed**

This seed that comes out of the pinecone is delicious to eat and has been used by the Indians for a food source. It's very popular today and is used in many recipes.

Find a fresh fallen pinecone and remove the mast. Take seed out of the mast and place on a flat cookie sheet. Place in oven at 350° until crisp. Watch closely. Remove and cool on a rack. Cut up to use in salads, breads and vegetables. Has a nutty taste. You can just chew them if you are walking in the woods.

## **Poke Salad or Green**

Gather the poke leaves off the pokeberry bush. They are best in the spring of the year when tender, but can be cut from stalk all year as collard greens.

To cook, place a piece of ham hock in about a quart of water. Boil for about thirty minutes, then add poke leaves, salt and pepper and continue to cook for at least an hour or until water has boiled out. Cut up, serve on platter with deviled eggs. You may add some pepper sauce – Real Tasty.