

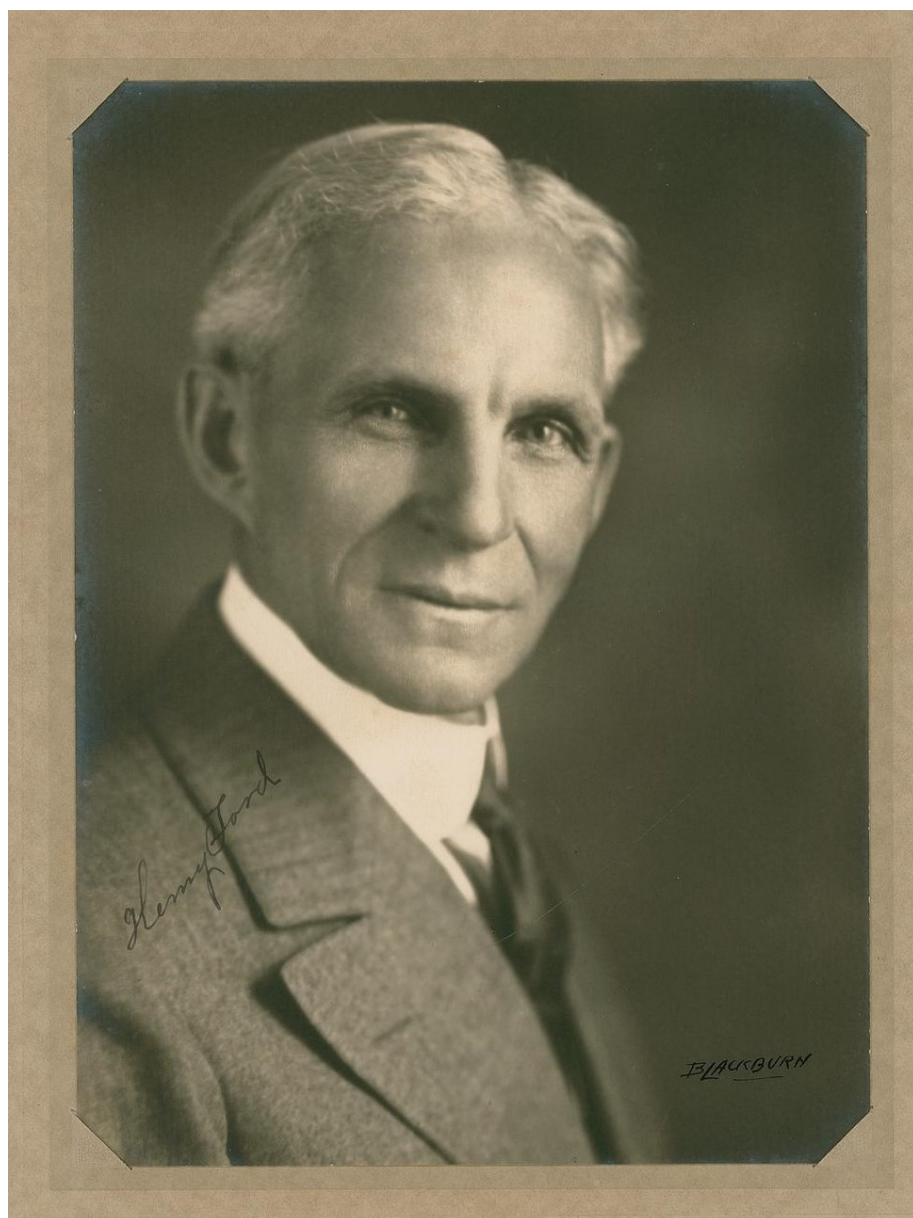
Henry Ford's Valdosta Photograph

A personal favorite for friends

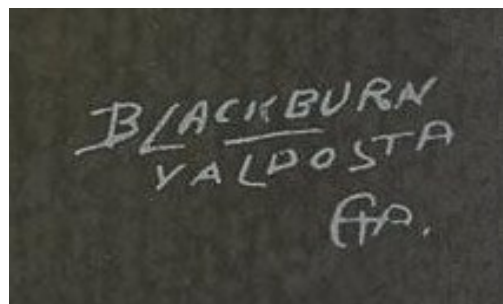
After discovering that Henry Ford did, on the spur of the moment, sit for the photograph *at left* in Valdosta, we began chasing the story of the circumstances of the particular trip that brought Henry Ford to overnight in Valdosta, GA. Bit by bit, from various digitized newspapers we learn about the trip: that the Valdosta segment of the trip was taken not in his private railcar, but in an automobile; that the automobile was not a Ford, but a Lincoln; and that it was taken in 1923 when his winter home was in Ft. Myers, Florida. Some speculation was the photo was taken in the 1930s/40s when Ford's winter home was Richmond Hill, Georgia, formerly Ways Station, which is at the Ogeechee River on the same rail line from Savannah as Valdosta.

We are, albeit slowly, gathering information on Valdosta's historical new car dealerships. One day I mentioned to staff members about Henry Ford's favorite portrait being taken in Valdosta by Veran Blackburn, and how the photograph would be an interesting complement within the new car dealerships story. Staff internet searches produced only three or four copies of this Valdosta photograph.

Albert Pendleton recorded information on this photo in 1986 from local oral history accounts, but no one knew when, why or how. The discovery story follows in this newsletter, but the 1923 issues of the *Valdosta Times*, and the needed 1923 months of the *Albany Herald* did not survive to be microfilmed. Without first hand Albany and Valdosta accounts, the story came from many different newspaper sources.



The portrait above was signed by Henry Ford and has "Blackburn" in black ink in the lower right. The "Blackburn, Valdosta, Ga." in white ink, at right, is taken from the portrait copy he gave to actress Mary Pickford. His signature on the Pickford copy was written up onto the white collar. This sold for several hundred dollars at auction in 2012. Another signed copy sold for \$1,200. at auction in 2013. Its states "Imprint of Blackburn, Valdosta, Ga. on verso." Another original is in the Florida Archives Koreshan Collection signed "To Dr. Price, Henry Ford." The Koreshan group was near Ft. Myers. Internet searches have produced very few images of this portrait; it perhaps for special personal distribution and not so much corporate use.





Above: Chip Blackburn of Mexico Beach, FL, is a grandson of Veran Blackburn. He currently operates a charter fishing boat business, *The Miss Mary*. His father, Veran O., a son of Veran, was a soldier in the Military Police and snapped several hundred photographs when crossing Europe during WWII. Chip's mother, Joella Blackburn, donated them to the museum in 2007. Chip came by the museum recently to arrange getting digital copies of his father's WWII collection. While here we pulled his oil painting of "Old" Remerton, also donated by his mother. Chip said he had not seen the painting in years and it was his first oil in VSC art classes.

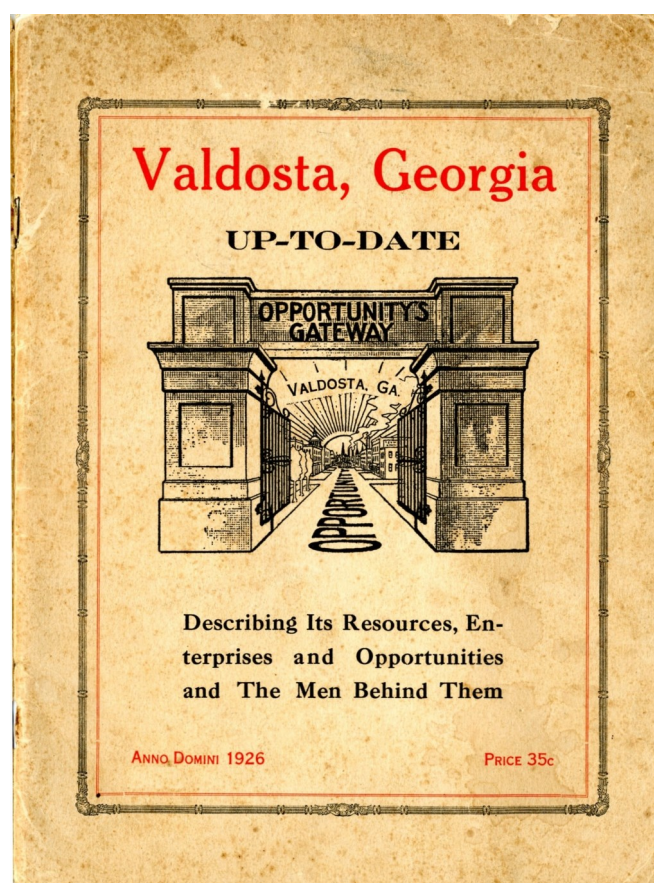
Chip told us that he would email or mail pertinent historical items and photographs to the museum as their discovery allowed and he has done so.



Recent Booklet Donation Provided The Clue for Searching the Date of the Henry Ford Photograph

Soon after Chip Blackburn's visit to the museum he mailed us the booklet below, *Valdosta, Georgia UP-TO-DATE*. We had never seen a copy and are excited to have it as it may be a unique surviving document. Published in 1926, it is forty pages, professionally produced, with separate short stories on over 100 Valdosta businesses. The excerpt below provided our impetus to seek the story of Henry Ford's Valdosta photograph by Veran Blackburn.

"When Henry Ford visited Valdosta some time ago Mr. Blackburn photographed that distinguished gentleman without any intentions of selling him any of the pictures. Mr. Ford requested prints from the negatives and so satisfactory was the work that he has since made five different orders for the pictures, totaling 159 prints."



Veran Blackburn 1882-1945

The photo *at left*, Blackburn later in life, was taken from a tribute to him in the 1945 Valdosta High yearbook. He died on January 1, 1945, while on a fishing trip on the Fenholloway River at Perry, Taylor Co., Florida. Many state papers ran his obituary and it is found out of state as well, Charleston, SC, for example. Blackburn opened his business here in 1907.

The museum has a news file on Blackburn, and now as we come by them, identify the photographs by the subject matter as well as his name. Albert Pendleton wrote, "One of our greatest Open House parties at the museum was on Sunday Nov. 23, 1986. It featured the "Blackburn Display." Previously, residents brought in more than 200 pictures made by him.

Ford's trip that included Valdosta, Segment One: by Private Railcar

**Leaving Detroit; then to Washington, DC;
Charleston, SC; and Ft. Myers, FL**

One of the first impressions when studying this trip was the grand friendship between Ford and Thomas Edison which also included Harvey Firestone. A newspaper headlined "Edison Goes to Florida, Will Await Henry." The Ft. Myers' paper of March 26, told, "Henry Ford, accompanied by Mrs. Ford, his secretary and two friends, arrived here yesterday to spend a fortnight." In the same paper was the headline, FAMOUS TRIO HOLDS REUNION AGAIN IN FLORIDA." Visit the Edison & Ford Winter Estates Museum website for detail.

A Stop in Washington, D.C.

Ford Offers to Buy Museum of Lincoln Relics

Osborn H. Oldroyd, in his eighties in 1923, continued to own a museum of Abraham Lincoln relics in the house opposite Ford's Theater where Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth. Congress had twice failed to fund the purchase of the relics. Ford respectfully, and respectful of Lincoln, offered the same \$50k asked of Congress, but he would move the museum to an upcoming new exhibition building in Detroit. Even with the collection to have the name "Oldroyd Lincoln Memorial Collection," Oldroyd said he desired to give the US Government a final chance to keep the relics in D.C. which they did in 1926.

On to Charleston, SC, Saturday, March 24, 1923

One is amazed at Henry Ford's Rock Star-like status, but the tag "The World's Most Famous Private Citizen" proves more appropriate. The *Evening Post* ran the headline, *HENRY FORD IN CITY TODAY, Spends Ten Busy Minutes at Union Station on Way South*. After expressing immediate excitement and quick details, the article ends, "The train arrived at 1:20 and departed ten minutes later." Ford was the talk of the town.

Top Topics the Entire Southern Trip: Muscle Shoals and The Presidency

Muscle Shoals: Henry Ford had hoped to purchase the incomplete Wilson Dam on the Tennessee River in North Alabama and produce nitrate fertilizer in mass that would be affordable for farmers. Thomas Edison accompanied him as a consultant on one trip there.

Congress ended up denying his request. For compact information search, "Henry Ford, Muscle Shoals, Alabama, and the TVA" on YouTube for two 4-minute videos by Greg Privett. In the mid 1920s Ford began an economic development and educational project on the Ogeechee River at what is now Richmond Hill, Georgia. Construction began on the Ford's winter home there in 1936.

US President: Henry Ford was quizzed and highly encouraged about the Presidency in Valdosta and, Mrs. Ford with him, in Albany and Rome. From *The Tampa Tribune*:

MRS. FORD WOULDN'T LIVE IN WHITE HOUSE:

"The Henry Ford boom for the Presidency, while yet a bit undefined, received a severe jolt when Mrs. Henry Ford told people in Georgia, where she was visiting with her husband, that she wouldn't live in the White House and that if Mr. Ford were elected he would have to go to Washington alone."

Our First Finding of : "Valdosta, Henry Ford and Photograph(ers)" Together in the Same Article

The very short news brief below, consisting only of a heading and two sentences, began our electronic research trail. It is from the *New Orleans Star* taken from the *Valdosta Daily Times*.

Henry Ford Is Touring Over Georgia Roads.

"Valdosta, Ga., April 5. - (By A. P.) Henry Ford accompanied only by his chauffeur, left here shortly before noon today for Albany on his tour over the highway from Ft. Pierce, Fla., northward. Mr. Ford spent the night here and posed for local photographers before leaving the city."

Now one could begin piecing together information on Henry Ford coming to Valdosta. Then more questions, "What route did he take to Albany, and in a rush to print, "Did the Valdosta Times writer get it wrong, why would Henry Ford travel up from Ft. Piece on Florida's Atlantic coast when he was vacationing at his winter home at Ft. Myers on Florida's lower Gulf coast?" And "What kind of roads did interior south Florida have in 1923?" Possible answers to these questions and more would come from bits and pieces in other newspapers.

In a Lincoln, Not a Ford

A Thomasville newsman seems to be the only reporter who told, during the time of the trip, that Henry Ford was traveling in a Lincoln. He also told that they dined at the Tosco Hotel restaurant. Henry Ford got through Thomasville unnoticed but word quickly spread that he had been there. Also reported in the same article was the chauffeur spending the night in Thomasville when he began his return trip to south Florida.

Why a Lincoln & Whose Lincoln?

Henry Ford had bought Lincoln Motor Company, owned by the Henry Leland family, in February 1922. The company produced well built vehicles marketed as a luxury automobile, but they lacked the luxury look and financial problems sent them into bankruptcy. In 1923 several body styles were introduced. An internet search showed that Henry Ford gave Thomas Edison a 1923 Lincoln, so certainly he must have loaned it for the drive up Florida that would pass through Valdosta then on to Albany. A durable vehicle for many sections of unpaved road in Florida and south Georgia at that time.

This further confused the mention of Ft. Pierce on the Atlantic as part of this trip. However, a *Macon Telegraph* reporter helped "perhaps solve" the issue. At the end of a composite article he adds the car was loaned to Henry Ford by Harvey Firestone. Firestone's winter home was in Miami, and now we understood why Henry Ford's trip to Valdosta was from Ft. Pierce directly and not Ft. Myers.

Leaving Valdosta, Which Route to Albany?

When chasing a story such as this, one likes to connect the dots. We are certainly glad that Valdosta State archives has the 1923 Thomasville newspaper on microfilm as only it told of the Henry Ford trip stopping in Thomasville. And also, as mentioned above, that he was touring in a Lincoln. The old Withlacoochee River Bridge, impressive in its time, now known as "Spook Bridge," opened for service in July of 1921 in conjunction with considerable road improvements from there on to Quitman.

Note: The improvements in Florida and South Georgia roads from the early to late 1920s, and their mapping, were considerable and proved an interesting side study in researching this trip.

Ford's Trip that Included Valdosta, Segment Two: by automobile

**Leaving Ft. Myers; then Ft. Pierce, FL;
Valdosta, Thomasville and Albany, GA**

Henry Ford in Valdosta

Sourced from the Valdosta Times, April 5, 1923;
the following from The Atlanta Constitution April 6, 1923
FORD WANTS MUSCLE SHOALS

"Valdosta, Ga., April 5.—(Special)

Henry Ford spent last night and the forenoon today in Valdosta in route to the north from his Florida home. He was accompanied only by his chauffeur and was traveling incognito, or did not register at the hotel., in an effort to escape the crowds that have greeted him on his southern trip.

He did a little shopping, buying some garden seeds from a local dealer, and an axe from another, and sat for a number of photographs with a local photographer to be sent to his Detroit home.

He was quickly recognized on the streets this morning and the crowds demanded a speech which he declined with a smile and a shake of the head. He would not discuss the presidency, when assured that the people here were for him, but said he would like to have Muscle Shoals in order to help farmers get cheap fertilizer." *End of article*

Albany, a Public Visit

Henry Ford arrived in Albany where he was to meet his wife when their private car came through from Ft. Myers. He went by Union Station to enquire on train schedules, visited the Ford dealership and then spoke with the crowds from the veranda of the New Albany Hotel. Discussion included Muscle Shoals, Florida and south Georgia roads, the pecan industry, Ford automobiles, industrial development, etc. On Friday, April 6, he attended the Kiwanis Club luncheon and visited a Chamber of Commerce session that evening before he joined Mrs. Ford in their private car and entrained for Rome.

*Editor's Note: Solomon's Porch & Law's Furniture

1946 article below: In 1923 Blackburn's Studio was at 108 W. Central Ave. now 1st Methodist Solomon's Porch, and West Motor Co. (Ford), 123-129 W. Central, now Law's Furniture.

Ford's Trip That Included Valdosta, Segment Three: by private rail car

**Leaving Albany; to Rome, GA, by way of
Macon, Atlanta and Kingston**

To Rome to Fulfill a Promise to Martha Berry

Our getting the Ford group to Rome was another connect-the-dots mystery. All first reports stated only "Albany to Rome." While pondering a direct Albany to Rome route, one newspaper report concerning the Berry School visit told that Mr. and Mrs. R. F. Maddox, Jr., joined the group in the private rail car in Atlanta. This was the first naming of any trip companions. However, the unnamed companions, mentioned as early as the DC and Charleston southbound segment of the trip, are also named with the Maddox couple: Mr. and Mrs. L.C. Kingsford, (*wrong*), to L.C. Kingsford (*an English historian, wrong*) finally to Mr. and Mrs. E.G. Kingsford, both of Michigan, she a first cousin to Henry Ford, and he working with the company; also Frank Campbell, (*wrong*) its Campsall, Ford's assistant.

The *Macon Telegraph* solved the travel route mystery by adding a local information paragraph to the end of their wire service news article concerning Valdosta and Albany.

"The Ford party passed through Macon at an early hour this morning in Mr. Ford's private car, Fairlawn. It was attached to the Dixie Express of the Central of Georgia Railway."

Note: Fairlawn (*wrong*), the correct name is Fairlane.

The Ford party later reached Kingston, GA, where Martha Berry and company transported them to Rome and the Berry schools. Ford, Maddox and Kingsford addressed the students. Ford emphasized using water power. The Fords and Martha Berry became life long friends. Internet searches give insight into this friendship and their devotion to educating youth.

Kingsford Charcoal and Mr. Atlanta

The side bar stories that tie to this trip and its participants are numerous. Ford began making charcoal from wood packaging and scraps related to car manufacturing. When Kingsford brokered the deal for the plant, Ford Charcoal was named Kingsford Charcoal in his honor. Maddox, referred to as *Mr. Atlanta*, died at age 95 in 1965; national banker head, mayor, public health servant and the Governor's Mansion, his old home site.

A 1946 Waycross Journal - Herald Article Confirms 1923 News Reports: Jesup Photographer Remembers Blackburn/Ford Story

In 1946, Jesup photographer G. M. Broadhurst told Waycross reporter Jack Williams, Jr., of Henry Ford's photo. We did not have this article at the museum, and it is not searchable, so when Chip Blackburn supplied it from family archives, we were glad that it confirmed much our research. Blackburn, who died in January 1945, was widely recognized, as he attended and received awards/recognitions at state, southeast regional and National conventions. It is a point of respect to Blackburn that Broadhurst made sure his Henry Ford story was recorded. Blackburn's personal accounts are evidently part of this story as it is information not contained in other articles. Article below:

Picture Of Henry Ford (*from the Waycross Journal-Herald, 1946 undated*)

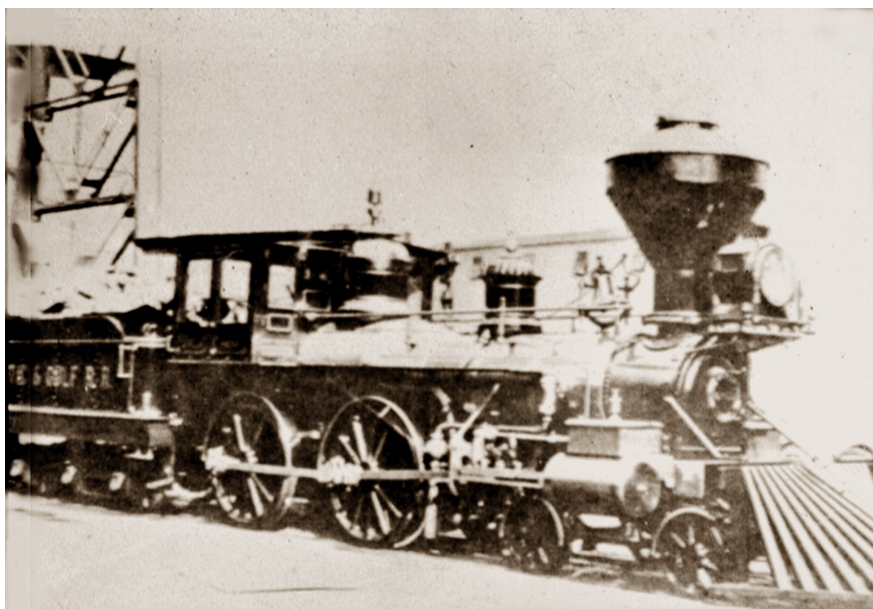
"Photographer G. M. Broadhurst, of Jesup was a visitor here yesterday and told the interesting story of how the late Veran Blackburn of Valdosta secured the photo of Henry Ford.

It seems that a Valdosta newspaper man was in a small town in Northern Florida on his way to Georgia and he stopped at an inn on the way. He announced that the other modes of travel did not suit his schedule and he was looking for a ride North. A distinguished looking gentleman said he was going by Valdosta and would take him. In a few minutes a Lincoln rolled up with a chauffeur and the two stepped in. Then the stranger introduced himself as Henry Ford. "You mean the tin-lizzie king" asked the surprised newsman? (*Continued on page 9, see 1946*)

When Henry Ford Purchased a Wood Yard Locomotive in 1924 It Saved a Key Symbol of Valdosta's 1860 Establishment

The annual reports of the Atlantic & Gulf Railroad state that the line to Valdosta from Savannah opened on July 25, 1860. Valdosta was a brand new town and would not be officially chartered as county seat until December 1860. The existing Lowndes County seat of Troupville was four miles from this first ever rail line into south Georgia and the citizens moved to establish the new town of Valdosta.

The *Satilla No. 3* is recorded as the locomotive engine pulling the first train into Valdosta. It was a train of seven passenger cars bringing numerous guests from Savannah and intermediate places on the road. The *Satilla No. 3* and rail cars arrived at one o'clock and "hundreds and hundreds" came from the countryside to the "Railroad Jubilee," which was celebrated with the firing of a nine pounder, a public dinner, speeches and political meetings.



Henry Ford acquired the *Satilla Number 3* in 1924 from the J. J. McDonough Lumber Company of Savannah. It was built in 1858 by the Rogers Locomotive Works for the Atlantic & Gulf Railroad. The A&G line ran from Savannah into south Georgia with Ways (now Richmond Hill) being Station 1½; and others, Valdosta, Station 15; Quitman, Station 16; and just at the outbreak of the Civil War in April 1861, Thomasville, Station 19. After the Civil War on to Bainbridge on the Flint River.

Ford had the *Satilla* restored in 1925 at Ford's River Rouge Complex in Michigan. Ford renamed it the *Sam Hill* in honor of a Michigan Central railroad engineer whom he admired as a boy.

On a grand day of celebration in 1929, the *Satilla No. 3* served a most special purpose and received its third name, *The President*. An example of the grand vision and accomplishments of Henry Ford was concisely evidenced through the invitation to the event. From *The Henry Ford Museum website*:

**The honor of your presence is requested (by)
Mr. Henry Ford and Mr. Edsel Ford (At a)
Celebration in honor of
Mr. Thomas Alva Edison
On the occasion of
The Fiftieth Anniversary of his
Invention of the Electric Light
And the dedication of
The Edison Institute of Technology (by)
The President of the United States
On Monday, October twenty-first
Nineteen hundred and twenty-nine
Dearborn, Michigan (R.S.V.P.)**

The renamed *Satilla No. 3* pulled Ford, Edison and US President Herbert Hoover from Detroit to Dearborn for the grand celebration. The complex would eventually carry the name The Henry Ford Museum, it containing the Edison Institute. The Henry Ford Museum website includes fascinating 1929 video of the 1858 locomotive, *The President (Satilla No. 3)*, pulling the celebration train to Dearborn. Edison would die October 18, 1931, age 84.

Satilla No. 3, an Atlantic & Gulf Locomotive

Most of the first locomotives of the A&G were named for the rivers the railroad crossed: *Altamaha, No. 2; Alapaha, No. 4*, etc. Reports of the A&G Trustees (see Confederate Railroads website by David L. Bright) show various usages during the Civil War. Early, the *Satilla* is listed as hauling gravel and in 1863-64 hauling passengers and freight. With Ford's 1930s and 40s winter home at Richmond Hill on the Ogeechee River, it would have been of note if Ford could have rescued locomotive No. 9, the *Ogeechee*.

More Valdosta Portraits Ordered Soon After the October 1929 Celebration

*From the Macon Telegraph January 7, 1930,
taken from the Valdosta Times January 5, 1930.*

"Veran Blackburn, Valdosta photographer, received an order for two dozen photographs for Henry Ford the auto magnate during the holidays.

The photographs are from a negative made five or six years ago [1923] while Mr. Ford was visiting in this city and consented to sit for his photograph. After the negatives were taken Mr. Ford told the photographer to send him proofs and if he liked any of them he would send an order. Since that time photographs amounting to more than \$1,000 have been ordered by Mr. Ford from the Valdosta negative."

The Henry Ford: The museum, indoor and out, is a 250 acre "Archive of American Innovation." It is an independent, non-profit educational institution not affiliated with the Ford Motor Company or the Ford Foundation. Do visit their website and discover their amazing variety of holdings and activities. When/if you make your trip to The Henry Ford, after you purchase your tickets, be sure to tell them (*referring to the invitation at left*), that you have a personal invitation from Henry Ford to visit the *Satilla No. 3*.

Arbor Day, Live Oaks, VSU Tours

Editor's note: When approached, I consented to giving a brief talk at the 2016 Arbor Day program concerning historical points behind Valdosta's 30th Year being named a Tree City USA. The museum archives provided broad and interesting information for the speech below.

"I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you on the occasion of Valdosta's 30th straight year achieving the designation of Tree City USA, Valdosta State's fourth consecutive year being named a Tree Campus USA, and Georgia Power being presented Tree Line designation.

The new plantings immediately (around us, outside) and in the Jane Street islands bring us here to the American Legion, Post 13. I can always remember that the Post designation here is 13 because the Historical Museum's Bulk mail designation at the Post Office is - Permit Number 13. As we get older, it is nice when even small issues in life are made simpler.

I will share with you just a few historical highlights in relation to events and individuals concerning this function. In going through documents in the museum archives it unfolds that the activity at this particular function each year is threefold: it being an observance of Arbor Day, specifically Georgia Arbor Day; also bringing recognition to the activity of The Valdosta Tree Commission; and now for 30 years, the special recognition of the City of Valdosta continuing to be named as a Tree City USA.

Also I had a moment of consternation when in the files as to significant historical dates of inception. The Tree Commission showed beginning in 1984, well that is more than 30 years ago. But then it became clear. Valdosta's first Tree City USA designation came in 1987. And yes, then the math and the dates did work: 1996, 10 years; 2006, 20 years; and 2016, 30 years.

Even before the Tree Commission was formed, articles show that citizens encouraged Mayor Gil Harbin to begin an Arbor Day observance. For some years the Valdosta Civic Roundtable helped organized the event and by way of the school systems, usually distributed 10,000 pine tree seedlings that were donated by The Langdale Company. The Georgia Forestry Commission also provided seedlings for distribution.

In 1984, some of the first members of the Tree Commission were Dr. Wayne Faircloth, Lee Bennett and Bette Bechtel, all of VSC. Today, a word or two on personal association with Mrs. Bechtel and Dr. Faircloth:

Bette Bechtel became a member of the Valdosta City Council and in 1974 got Valdosta's first tree ordinance passed, it was not the first attempt. She stated that it was not meant to be preventative, but that the trees being removed because of disease, safety, or construction be replaced. As a side note, Once quizzing her for information on our ecosystem I learned that our forest also has a floor and she introduced me to information on the Gopherus Polyphemus Society, the subject reptile of the society is also known as the Gopher Tortoise.

Announced at the 2016 event: Valdosta, the only trifecta tree community in Georgia: Tree City, Tree Campus and Tree Line.

2016 Arbor Day Ceremony Celebrating City of Valdosta, 30 years as a Tree City USA



Above: Dr. Emily Cantonwine, current VSU sciences faculty, and Betty Bechtel, retired VSU sciences faculty, met for the first time at the 2016 Arbor Day program. Some of their activities, past and present, are written of in these related articles.

Dr. Faircloth was my White Oak Drive 'acquaintance- neighbor.' Nearly 30 years ago, when I was developing evidence for US 84 to be the Wiregrass Georgia Parkway, he not only was wonderfully informative about urban forests, but being a native Grady County (Cairo), he was fully exposed to and knowledgeable about the untouched Wade Tract, with its 300 year-old pine, it exemplifying the longleaf pine, wiregrass ecosystem, which is also known by the phrase, The Fire Forest.

The entities that sponsor our Arbor Day every year, along with some other past sponsors listed in some programs include: the City of Valdosta, The Garden Center, Inc., Valdosta Tree Commission, Georgia Forestry Commission, Georgia Urban Forest Council, Keep Lowndes/ Valdosta Beautiful, and Valdosta Lowndes County Parks and Rec.

Through the years Arbor Day activities have included 5k runs and cycling races. Often there are youth ambassadors. The Tree Commission initiated Christmas tree recycling. Another program of the Tree Commission was Adopt-a-Spot. A most noticeable example and legacy of this program is the 5-Points intersection that was sponsored by our recently deceased active citizen Dr. Dean Mink.

Around 1990, the Miss Gum Spirits of Turpentine Beauty Pageant was listed as an expanded event of Arbor Day Week, the winner to go on to compete for Georgia Forestry Queen. (continued page 7)

(from page 6) Tree Commission Arbor Day Programs have been held at various venues over the years. The locations show broad coverage of our community. Among them are: Drexel Park, Olympic Park, Saunders Park, S.L. Mason school, VSU Main campus, VSU North campus, SouthWest Georgia Bank, Rainwater Conference Center, the Valdosta Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce, the Roberts House in Fairview, Habitat for Humanity build site on Harmony Way, Valdosta Board of Education Offices, and, McKey Park where a Bald Cypress was planted. And for some reason [being bald] I think I want to find that tree.

Perhaps a most memorable Arbor Day was in 1997 with The "Trees for Patterson" Partnership Project with ceremonies at the Crescent and on the VSU campus. A grant had been obtained from The National Tree Trust. The plantings were made from 5 Points to the now Historic Lowndes County Courthouse. Patsy Giles had noticed this grant as an opportunity for Valdosta and accomplished its success. Also, during this event trees were dedicated on the VSU campus to the earlier mentioned Lee Bennett and Dr. Wayne Faircloth.

The Live Oak is Emphasis Tree This Year

The emphasis tree for the Commission this year is the live oak. Many years ago someone once expressed to me that the beauty of our southern flatwoods and wetlands is lyric, rather than grand, as the vistas in the mountains. But among the grand within our lyric beauty is the live oak. And it sometimes adorned with Spanish moss and/or resurrection fern.

The live oak is designated as Georgia's State Tree but only occurs in about 20 percent of the state, this in an inverted arc across deepest south Georgia, Atlantic to Alabama, with the range roughly encompassing only one county or two above US84 in any given spot. Years ago when on a learning trip to downtown Tifton with a group, a most observant Valdosta lady asked "Where are your Live Oak trees?" The tour leader said "There are no natural live oaks in town, they do not naturally occur here because of elevation. Some are near riverbanks."

Now with us mentally picturing Valdosta's grand live oaks, note - that for the northern tourist, Valdosta in essence is "Georgia's Interstate 75 - Live Oak Tree City." Hopefully tourists at exit 18 are busy watching for traffic or traffic lights, but if not, the large live oak at Arby's may be their first view of this iconic Southern symbol. There are younger highly trimmed live oaks at Denny's.

Perhaps someday, our magnificent oaks can be mentioned in the various tour brochures of our town. We at the Lowndes County Historical Museum are currently using our archives to work with Dr. Emily Cantonwine on VSU's historical plantings which include some of the campus live oaks. The historical plantings on VSU will probably become included as part of a campus tour.

I am fortunate to have a now large live oak tree in my back yard, yes here in the middle of town. Aerial photos from 60 to 70 years ago show this tree surviving, as it had begun in a fence row. I also have three red tip trees growing in my yard courtesy of past Arbor Day events. Thank you Georgia Forestry Commission.

And as a citizen, Congratulations to the Tree Commission, and to the City of Valdosta, recognizing that city leadership has in the past and continues to make this Tree City achievement possible.

When we break in a few minutes, and as you leave the American Legion Post 13, you might look upward towards Drexel Park and notice the tops of ancient longleaf pines. Their tops are characterized by the irregular shaped crowns.

And also, take a deep breath and then release your carbon dioxide and let the trees do their work. Thank you." *End of speech*

At VSU, Botanical Walking Tour of Campus Historical Plantings & Herbarium Established



Above: Young Palms in front of West Hall.

The 1931 Pine Cone yearbook has the above earliest known ground level photo graph of the palms Documents in VSU Archives show the planting of a Palm Avenue suggested in 1928 by Richard Drexel, City Arborist,.

Several months ago an author contacted the museum planning to publish a book on historic walking tours in Georgia towns. We directed him to some that already existed and to the Heritage Foundation Driving Tour, portions of which could become walking tours.

When chasing live oak information months back, I noticed where VSU horticulture classes had identified all species on the campus and placed them online. This brought back to mind an article in our archives from 1982 when Alice Herrin Davis, 90, contacted Elizabeth Butler, VDT reporter, to write an article recording the story of the VSC live oak tree by Patterson Street. It was planted in 1914 by the first three graduates of the college. Mrs. Davis was present at the planting and graduated in the second class.

We asked if his book was to have any college campus botanical walking tours and he told that he liked that idea. We have not heard further from the author.

In discussion with Dr. Emily Cantonwine, we forwarded her the 1914 live oak planting article and other information. After several exchanges of information, her Spring horticulture class, also with research in the (see page 8)

2016 New & Renewal Memberships

(continued from previous newsletter)

Place of residence listed for those
Outside of Lowndes County

**The Historical Society Trustees
and Museum Staff greatly appreciate
your memberships as they affirm our place as an
important cultural entity
in Lowndes County and help us to
fulfill our mission—
To collect, preserve and present
the history of Lowndes County**

James Edward Alexander &
Toian Bowser-Alexander
Bluffton, SC
Brenda Lee Barclay
Orange Park, FL
Ron and Tammy Borders
Becky Giddens Bracey
Thomasville, GA
John Robert Bryan
Pooler, GA

Roy and Donna B. Cannon
Atlanta, GA
Ron Colson
Barwick, GA
Orrie L. and Francine J. Coppage
Ellen Mackey Dewar
John Kent, Sr., and Vikki Edwards
Philip and Vickie L. Everitte
Tucson, AZ

Ted and Mickey C. Gaskins
Lee V. Greer
Fair Oaks Ranch, TX
Dixie Ray Haggard, Ph.D.
Jack and Jane Hearn
Riley and Jenny Beck Howard
Julie E. Hunt
Tifton, GA
Wm. B. 'Benny' and Gloria Kent
Karen King

Brian and Margaret B. McDaniel
Moultrie, GA
Cliff Nichols
Tim and Pam Officer Oliver
Delores M. Parrish
Sue Ellen Patterson
Athens, GA
John and Gretchen Quarterman
Dr. Calvin and Sue Davis Reams
Thomasville, GA
Renasant Bank
Will Kemp

Joe Glenn & Marie Converse Smith
Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Vallotton
Judy Weeks-Malhorta
Ho-ho-kus, NJ
Reaves and Amy West
Gwynedd Valley, PA
J. Edward Willis

(from page 7) VSU archives, produced a walking tour in video segments of VSUs historic plantings. Mass Media students auditioned to be narrators.

The historic tour includes the 1914 Graduation Oak; The Bicentennial Oaks; Palm Avenue; VSU Herbarium, second largest in state; virgin long-leaf pine age 200 years plus; Whitehead Camellia Trail; and south at Mile Branch, the Pinetum and Richard Drexel azalea plantings. Information was also gathered on memorial plantings. These include plantings in memory of Lee Bennett and Wayne Faircloth, Tree Commission charter members.

It was interesting to learn that Richard Drexel proposed Palm Avenue in 1928 and that very young palms were planted circa 1930. Drexel came to Valdosta in 1925 as city arborist. The palms and West Hall have become not only iconic symbols of VSU but also Valdosta. To see the videos search "Historic Plant and Garden Tour at Valdosta State University" on Youtube.

Whitehead to be part of State Tourism Camellia Trail

The students prepared the Whitehead Camellia Trail video with considerable detail. It will serve dual purposes. The Georgia DNR, Tourism Product Development Division is preparing an I-75 Camellia Trail including Valdosta, Quitman, Tifton, and Fort Valley, location of the national headquarters of the American Camellia Society. Valdosta stops are the Whitehead Trail, Smith Oliver Gardens at Christ Episcopal and Roberts House on Wells Street. Bruce Green, retired Georgia DNR chief of Tourism Product Development, is completing this project he conceived as a consultant.

2016: Live Oak is Emphasis Specie of Tree Commission Lowndes Viking Oak: The Third in Georgia in the Live Oak Society

The Lowndes Viking Live Oak became member #372 of the Live Oak Society in 1972, girth recorded at 24ft. 9inches. It was the third in Georgia and the first in Lowndes County. It was registered by, A. B. 'Sonny' Martin, *photo at right*, then Superintendent of Lowndes County Schools. The grand tree was located behind the school system offices then on St. Augustine Road, now the Lowes area.

The first in Georgia, #49, Big Oak in Thomasville, registered between 1934 and 1938. 20.06 girth at that time.

The second in Georgia, #262, Village Centinel, in Waycross at Baptist Village, 1967, girth 30 feet at that time.

In the 1980s and '90s coastal Georgia areas began registering many of their live oaks. Only two others from Lowndes County appear to be registered, both in the Stone Creek neighborhood.

Even though lightening strikes and storms brought the demise of the Viking Oak, trees that die remain registered members of the society. For information internet search "Live Oak Society." It is a division of the Louisiana Federation of Garden Clubs. Registration is no charge, but donations are accepted.

A tree must have a girth of 8 feet, and those at 16 feet are classified Centenarian. Measure at 4 to 4.5 feet above the



ground, or just below the split, if the tree splits before it reaches the 48 to 54 inches height.

Many local trees could be added to the Live Oak Society: the just named VSU Graduation Oak, those on the Crescent lawn and in Sunset Hill Cemetery, the Emory-at-Valdosta oaks on VSU north campus and many other live oaks in Valdosta and Lowndes County.



MEMORIALS



Toian Bowser-Alexander

Bluffton, SC

by

Dr. and Mrs. William Oliver, Jr.
Macon, GA

Howard H. Broomberg

Jefferson, GA

by

J. Edward Willis

W. Earl Cunningham

by

Donald O. Davis

Dr. Calvin and Sue D. Reams

Thomasville, GA

J. Edward Willis

Lt. Col. Charles H. Duncan

by

Patsy T. Giles

J. Edward Willis

Harold Strong 'Hal' Gulliver, Jr.

by

Dr. Jerah Johnson

New Orleans, LA

Jefferson "Jeff" Wier Hunt

by

Alex B. McFadden

J. Edward Willis

Christie Lamar Patterson, Jr.

by

Malcolm and Marion Liles

Nashville, TN

Jane Twitty Shelton

by

George and Rebecca Daugharty

New Market, VA

Beatrice Elaine Teffeteller

Alpharetta, GA

by

J. Edward Willis

Paul Norman Yale, Jr.

Chapel Hill, NC

by

Rebecca Anne Odom

Gift in Honor

of

Hub and Nel Bessoms

The Netherlands

by

Riley and Jenny Beck Howard



(1946 Continued) TOLD WRONG PERSON.

As they approached Valdosta, Mr. Ford said that he was not giving his real name at the hotel etc. because of the curious. However, he told this to the wrong person since it was a newspaper man. He let the newshawk out at his home and proceeded to his hotel. Then the scribe went downtown and told the boys how he had ridden up with Henry Ford.

Veran Blackburn, a young photographer decided he would go see Mr. Ford. He found him at the Ford agency. He asked him about sitting for a "portrait picture." Mr. Ford replied that he would be glad to. That his picture had been taken by scores of news photographers but never by a professional one. (He had a very modern photographic laboratory at his plant at Detroit containing the latest equipment.)

Mr. Ford said he could give him 30 minutes of his time. So the two of them walked to Mr. Blackburn's studio. Mr. Ford stayed and talked an hour. He looked at a magazine while Blackburn took 12 pictures.

Later he sent the proofs to Mr. Ford in Detroit. He liked them and ordered several and later placed one of these pictures in every Ford dealer agency in the United States and Canada. Blackburn made \$3,000 on that one negative which struck Mr. Ford's fancy." (end of article)

1935: Local Finley Machine Co., also foundry, built saw mill engines. Ford bought one for Ways Station, then specified the manufacture of an engine, four times the size of the ordinary saw mill engine, taking 60 days, the largest then ever built in Valdosta.

Above are Hub and Nel Bessoms of the Netherlands recently in the museum. In the WWII adopt a grave program they tend the grave of soldier Sidney Beck, who was brother to former Valdosta Mayor James M. Beck. The Beck daughters held a memorial marker service while they were here. The Bessoms hold a copy of a documentary their daughter Ingrid produced on the adopt a grave program and finding the life and family of Sidney Beck.

2016 Membership Application, Lowndes County Historical Society, P.O. Box 56, Valdosta, GA 31603

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Membership Category

Individual \$25. ____

Family 30. ____

Business 50. ____

Contributing 100. ____

Patron 250. ____

MUSEUM CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 14 & 28..... Valdosta D.A.R.E.

August 31, 10am.....Preserving Heirloom Textiles by Amy Brown

.....In conjunction with Learning In Retirement

September 3-5.....Closed for Labor Day Weekend

September 12, 6pm.....Sen Ellis Black, Lake Park Historical Society

Next Newsletter..... Catching Up On Museum News

Officers and Executive Committee

President, Patsy Giles; 1st Vice President, T. Davy Shelton; 2nd Vice President,
Martha N. Gibson; Secretary, Joseph Tomberlin; Treasurer, John R. Bennett;

Past President, Ex Officio, Julie Smith

Lowndes County Historical Society & Museum

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YESTERDAY & TODAY

Newsletter of

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Executive Director.

Amy Brown

Textiles and Research.

Harry S. Evans

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Adam Doughty

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