

Mrs. George H. Hart, Jr., President

NOVEMBER 1986

VALDOSTA, GEORGIA

VOL. XVI NO. 1



Dr. A. G. Cleveland at Valdosta High School on Williams Street next to Cleveland Field named for him. The time is about the early 1930's, note long dress on girl on steps. Dr. Cleveland is preparing to visit other city schools. The picture was provided by Miss Fredeva Ogletree.

First Baptist Church and served as Chairman of the Bible class. At one time Dr. Cleveland was president of the Valdosta Chamber of Commerce and was active in our city's affairs. A member of the Valdosta Rotary Club, he served as the district governor of Georgia. When he was School Superintendent of Valdosta Schools, the first Parent-Teachers Association was formed in Valdosta. Dr. Cleveland endeared himself

DR. A. G. CLEVELAND

1879 -- 1960

by

Albert S. Pendleton

Tall, slim, and quite knowledgeable, Dr. A. G. Cleveland was known and loved by all Valdostans. In 1919, he came to Valdosta to be the School Superintendent and retired in 1949 to Benevolence, Georgia, his former home. Dr. Cleveland was born November 9, 1879 and died in Cuthbert on October 31, 1960. Even our football field was named for him. No one could forget him, no one ever will.

In 1919, Dr. **Ambrose** Gamble Cleveland came to Valdosta from Ashburn where he had the same position he took on arrival here in Valdosta, Georgia. He had received a Bachelor's Degree from Mercer and attended Columbia University in New York receiving a Master's Degree in Education.

In 1922, our new Valdosta High School building, with Felton Davis as architect, was completed on Williams Street. One source said the football field was named for Dr. Cleveland in 1923, the first year of its use, others said in the 1930's. Dr. Cleveland's family said that it was always a great honor to him that the famous football arena was named for him.

While serving in Valdosta, Dr. Cleveland received an honorary degree from the University of Georgia. Active in the Georgia Education Association, he served as president of that organization. In Valdosta, he was a member of

to parents and children alike with his friendly, concerned manner. He was quite famous for riding a bike from school to school on his visitation route and for cutting the grass on the large lawn at the high school.

Mrs. Nymmie Ward Cleveland still lives in Benevolence, Georgia. She and Dr. Cleveland had two children: a daughter, Frances (Mrs. Gray) Hillsman; and a son, A. G. "Gus" Cleveland, Jr., of Atlanta. I enjoyed talking with Gus recently and I thank him for sending information on his famous dad. He told me his father's home was always open to any student who wanted to come by.

Cleveland Field

What is now our football field was first used in 1923, the year it was named for Dr. Cleveland. With no grass for a cushion and only hard clay from the new high school excavation, the team players received many cuts and bruises on this ground. At first there was no grandstand and the fans would stand and follow our team up and down the sidelines. Later, there was only a north wooden grandstand, and still later one was built on the south side. The first night game with lights was a great topic in 1934 -- who would go to a night game! Doubting Thomases were everywhere -- even at the crowded ball game on the night of September 28, 1934. Night football was a definite success. That night Valdosta battled Abraham Baldwin College of Tifton, Georgia to a scoreless tie -- the game termed as a comedy of errors, blamed on the new lights. The football coach then was Bobby Hooks (September 1986 & October 1986 Newsletters). Still there were opponents to the night games. One said, "An old Chinese proverb says, 'the night is for things nocturnal,'" and opposed the bright lights. Only a few agreed with him. Working people were for it. Does any high school play in the daytime now?

Wright Bazemore, retired athletic coach for Valdosta schools, once told me that the south wooden grandstand caved in at the beginning of a game in 1941 or 1942. Finally, in 1949, the first metal stands were built (south stand only, I think, at first). Then each year improvements were made, the stands extended up once or twice. What started out in the 1930's and 1940's to seat 4,000 in the stands, rose to 7,000 and then in 1978 to 12,000. Our stands seat many more than that now.

In the early 1970's, a new high school was built on Forest Street. Band marching and practice and the athletic programs are performed there, even to football practice, and Cleveland Field has been left to only the actual games. The old high school on Williams Street burned November 19, 1977, after a local football game.

This is the sixty-third year of using Cleveland Field, a place of our triumphs, few defeats. It was named for a man of great strength.

Cleveland -- The Man

He presided over chapel at high school, relating stories, experiences, advice, and one day this dignified, highly educated man taught us a new yell to spur on the football team. It sounded awfully silly coming from him and we laughed, were called down and listened and learned (about 1940), "Rah bicca bah bicca bing bang bow wow, Rip skiddy aye there, get there, stay there, Rah bicca bah bicca bing bang buff! Dosta, Dosta, you're the stuff!" This was yelled for many decades at Dosta High football games.

As I have stated Dr. Cleveland rode a bicycle from school to school. Miss Fredeva Ogletree who taught high school here from 1927 to 1960, and who provided us with the picture on page one (the snapshot is autographed by A. G. Cleveland), said Dr. Cleveland visited every Valdosta school and every class, every day. He traveled from school to school on his bicycle. Miss Ogletree also told me that Dr. Cleveland had a toy baseball bat he carried with him on his cycling tours to fend off dogs. She also told me that he had a jogging suit. When he got home from a day's work he would put on his jogging suit and get in his rocking chair on the porch and rock -- he'd already done his leg exercise for the day. So he just rocked and relaxed!

Dr. Cleveland enjoyed ballroom dancing and many times as he visited our Tea Dances in the basketball shell, he would ask certain students to dance. I'm told he was a very smooth dancer.

One story that has been told and retold about Dr. Cleveland happened one day when he was cutting the grass at the high school. It was late afternoon, a not so hot time of day when a car stopped at the curb. A man and a woman were lost and wanted to find a certain street in Valdosta. They called Dr. Cleveland over and he gave expert, lengthy directions to the exact spot where they were going. As he turned his back on them and they prepared to leave, Dr. Cleveland heard the lady say, "My! They certainly do have educated yard men around here!"

The Student Directory of 1956-1957, states: "Dr. A. G. Cleveland became superintendent of Valdosta Schools in 1919. He brought many changes which bettered the system. Dr. Cleveland soon became beloved by everyone for his wonderful sense of humor, his storytelling, and his great understanding of the students."

Dr. Cleveland died in Cuthbert, Georgia Monday night October 31, 1960. The funeral was held at Benevolence Baptist Church where he had been chairman of the Board of Deacons.

Understanding, concerned, stalwart, friend -- all these, and many more, describe Dr. A. G. Cleveland. He had many speaking engagements. He attended all school functions -- he was busy day and night. You can't ask much more than that of an educator.

Museum News

In regard to our need of repairs to the basement of the museum, we are in a sort of holding pattern. The Lowndes County Commissioners have agreed to help if we can have the work done in stages. At present we are setting our priorities in order of these stages of work.

We need to raise more funds for a complete repair job.

We are grateful to the following who gave more than their dues when they renewed or paid dues: Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Anderson, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. James M. Beck, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Blanton, Jr., Mr. Brad Burnette, Mrs. Raymond Cook, Mr. and Mrs. W. Ed. Crane, Mrs. Howard Dasher, Mr. Joe V. Dasher, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Charlton L. Davis, Mr. Sam Harvey, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Carl Jones, Mrs. Louis Kafoure, Col. and Mrs. James C. Kinner, Mr. Harley Langdale, Jr., Mrs. Brinkley Laws, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Lester, Mrs. Fernando C. Mencaccy of California, Mr. Eric Miller, Texas, Miss Fredeva Ogletree, Mr. John N. Peeples, Mrs. George Schurr, Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Strong, Mr. and Mrs. W. Conner Thomson, Mrs. Bill Whitaker, Atlanta, Mrs. and Mrs. J. C. Woodward, Jr., Dr. Owen K. Youles, Jr., Mrs. Sue Watters, and Miss Edith Roberts.

The following are generous patrons who gave toward the building repairs: Mrs. Caroline Thomas, Mr. Fred Deloach, Sr., Mr. and Mrs. Tommy Henderson, Atlanta, Mayor Gill Autrey, and Dr. Joe Stubbs.

Memorial gifts were given in memory of Mrs. Margaret Roberts Graham by Mr. and Mrs. Michael A. Drumheller and Mr. and Mrs. Albert S. Pendleton. A memorial gift has been received in memory of Mrs. Kathleen Winn Knight by Mr. and Mrs. Albert S. Pendleton.

New members include Jeanette Tillman Cole of Arizona, Brian Killeen of Lake Park, and Mrs. Jeff Claypool of Maryland.

On October 30, Dr. Dale Peeples gave an interesting program on the history of Valdosta State College.

Remember the Blackburn photographs display on Sunday November 23, 1986, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm. Bring your photos to lend Wednesday, November 19, from 9:30 to 11:30 and on Thursday, November 20, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. The 4-H Club of Lowndes County will furnish refreshments and decorations. Join us all for this tribute to the artistry of Mr. Blackburn.

See you at the Museum, Albert S. Pendleton, Editor