

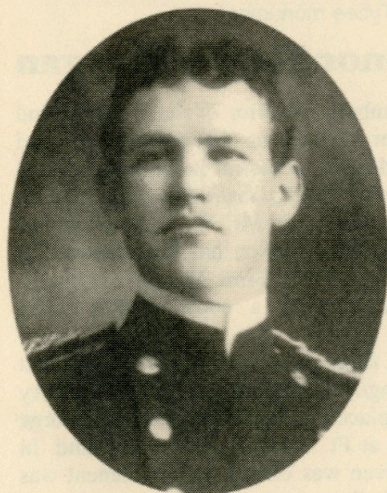
## Valdosta's "Forgotten" First West Point Graduate

It is the fort in the tidal sands of Wassaw Island that draws you in, but the story of Henry Sims Morgan that keeps you.

Knowledge of the legacy of Henry Sims Morgan for our current time is to be credited to Mr. Hans Neuhauser. Mr. Neuhauser was long-time coastal director of the Georgia Conservancy and Savannah resident but for several years now has been Executive Director of the Georgia Land Trust Service Center in Athens. He has written articles that cover the fascinating aspects and intrigues of the Spanish-American War, fort building on Wassaw Island, activity on Tybee, the horrible 1898 Savannah hurricane and Henry Sims Morgan in relation to these situations.

At the museum we have his overview article, "The Strange Ruins of Wassaw Island" from the January/February 1998 issue of the *Georgia Journal* magazine. We became aware of this article in 2003 when Susie Thomas sent a copy to the museum. She was given the magazine by Steve Priest, Sunset Hill Cemetery supervisor. He received two copies by way of Dr. William Megathlin of Savannah.

After talking with Mr. Neuhauser recently, he sent copies of two more articles he wrote on the subject in 2003: "Battery Henry Sims Morgan and Short History of the Name 'Fort Morgan'" and "Notes on the Plans for Wassaw's Fort Morgan." This article includes a copy of the battery plans, discovered fairly recently in the Architectural Records Branch of the National Archives, and published in a book in 1999. So interesting is that the plans were drawn after the 'fort' was completed because HSM, to get the fort built in a hurry to protect Savannah, had developed the plans from his own mind. Neuhauser first proposed that the fort or battery be named in memory of Henry Sims Morgan in 1985. He continues to work for this designation.



The story of HSM is fascinating; Valdosta's 'forgotten' first West Point graduate, his brilliance, giving his life attempting to save others, body lost at sea and found many years later. Realizing that certain portions of Henry's story will always be told - at Tybee Museum and here, the articles for this newsletter changed course to more reflect the few personal glimpses we have uncovered about Henry's life - and one them being, incredibly, that he may be the first Valdostan to ever play on a football team.

A West Point classmate wrote almost 25 years after his death, "There was always just a tinge of hero-worship in regard to [Henry]. He was big in mind and body and his impulses were always fine. His friendship was so true that it was a joy and inspiration to those who were privileged to have it. No member of the class, apparently, had a finer career before him, which made his death seem doubly sad. His efforts to save those sailors was a fine example of quiet soldierly heroism. He knew only too well that with his weakened condition his chances of coming back were very small, but he saw men clinging to the masts, he thought it his duty to make the effort and he made it. ...his death was a great loss not only to his family and friends, but to the Army and his Country."

Please feel free to come the museum to read the Neuhauser articles and learn about the efforts to name the Wassaw Island battery in memory of Henry Sims Morgan.

### Henry Sims Morgan Timeline

- 1874 Born October 14, Valdosta, Georgia
- 1893 Leaves Valdosta to enter West Point
- 1897 Graduates fourth in his class at West Point, Assigned to Ft. Screven, Tybee Island, Georgia
- 1897-98 HSM designs and supervises construction of Wassaw Island fort, its purpose to protect Savannah during the Spanish-American War. Contracts malaria.
- 1898 August 31, HSM drowns off Tybee attempting to rescue the crew of an imperiled ship breaking apart during a hurricane. Body reported lost at sea.
- ca.1900 St. Catherine's Island, two black men find unidentified skeletal remains in remote inlet. Secretly bury remains in a rough grave and keep quiet worried that the white man might make trouble.
- 1902 HSM's only brother John dies at age 20 of pneumonia. Double column marker erected in Sunset Hill cemetery listing both sons.
- 1906 Capt. Gus Oemler hears rumors of secret burial on St. Catherine's. Investigation of the rumors leads to the discovery of HSM's remains. Identified by clothing and length of skeleton, 6'4", his remains were re-interred in Valdosta.

During this period there was a railroad to Tybee Island. Wassaw, Ossabaw, and St. Catherine's Islands remain isolated to this day having no bridges to the mainland. HSM's body was carried by the ocean close to 35 miles from near the top of Tybee Island, past Wassaw and Ossabaw Islands, washing into a remote inlet of St. Catherine's Island.



## Morgan Diary

Henry Sims Morgan [HSM] kept a pocket diary of abbreviated entries from September 29, 1897 until April 28, 1898. Cullen Chambers, director of the Tybee Island Museum and Lighthouse, and Hans Neuhauser told me that the diary chiefly covers activity at Ft. Screven and the battery construction on Wassaw Island. The diary is part of the HSM collection at the Tybee Museum. Dr. Elizabeth F. Abbott, great niece of HSM, copied the diary before the family made the donation. Dr. Abbott is retired from the University of Florida faculty and lives in St. Augustine, Florida. In speaking with Dr. Abbott she told me that the HSM diary showed that he visited home at Valdosta at least twice. The portion of the diary shared here is what would be HSM's last Christmas in 1897. The travel mentioned is by railroad. The automobile was a few short years away.

Wed. [December 22] – No concrete on account of no Portland cement for #1 and very little river (sand?). Began unloading cargo. Not cement.

Thurs. [December 23] – Received expense & thank (up?) to (?) to include Dec. 1. Returned to Tybee[evidently from Wassaw] in afternoon – not duty. Obtained leave for 5 days.

Fri. [December 24] – Tybee to Sav[annah] to Valdosta, on leave. Reached home 1:20 pm. Supper at Uncle F's.

Sat. [December 25] – Home – John S. with me – rained all day. Theater at night. R. Downing in the Gladiator.

Sun. [December 26] – Church Baptist. Dinner at home. Supper with Uncle F.

Mon. [December 27] – Hunting on Gr. Ma's place. Papa, Uncle F. & Uncle F. W. S. & myself. All killed 39 partridge & 1 dove.

Tues. [December 28] – Home[in Valdosta]. Went to Cecil on 11:25 am train. Sugar boiling at C. Church at night with Miss S. H. and talk till 11 pm.

Wed. [December 29] – Home [to Valdosta] on early train. (Niles?), Brosius, and Aunt Jane for dinner & Sissie. Returned to Sav at night with Col. Varne(doe?).



Morgan was a Baptist.

Another entry in HSM's diary records "church, Baptist". The Morgans were members of Valdosta Baptist, now First Baptist Church. The current sanctuary was built in 1899. HSM attended services in the earlier East Central Avenue location that became Valdosta Primitive Baptist for decades and recently Pentecostal House of Prayer. East Central Valdosta Baptist Church was constructed in 1869 and is classified as a community landmark building and is a part of the newly recognized East End Historic District.

## Henry's West Point Class Ring



Morgan class ring

Charles Morgan Abbott of Naples, Florida, a great-great nephew of HSM, has possession of his 1897 West Point Class Ring. An account of the day of Henry's drowning states that as he started to get into the rescue boat he took off his class ring and handed it to a bystander, saying, "Hold this for me, you never can tell what is going to happen."

Charles Abbott told me that even though one would think that the ring should look new since Henry wore it for such a short time – it does not. It is worn. Charles Abbott continued by saying that as long as Henry's four sisters lived one of them always wore the West Point ring of their brother who drowned at sea trying to save others.

Note: The tradition of the college, and thus the high school class ring, is believed to have originated at West Point with their Class of 1835. In 1897, HSM's class, the ring changed



Marker in Sunset Hill Cemetery erected to Henry and his brother John. John died in 1902 when Henry's body was thought to be lost at sea.



*Morgan Continued from Page 1*

## Morgan at Valdosta Institute

Perhaps the only personal information existing about Henry's youth states that he attended Valdosta Institute where he made an enviable record in his academic work and early showed his sterling character. A story is told of his school days that one of his teachers always had a so-called monitor selected from among his pupils. When this teacher had Henry as a student, instead of rotating pupils as monitors, he kept Henry for his monitor the whole term. Henry did not like this very much and asked the instructor why he made him be the monitor all the time. The instructor replied that it was because he knew that he could trust him entirely to do justice to each pupil whether he liked the boy or not. Evidently only boys got into trouble in those days.

Also recorded concerning Henry's youth is that when Henry finished the eighth grade, his father took him from school so that he could get more exercise hunting and fishing. His father thought him too slender for his height. Henry was 6' 4" and the average height then was less than it is today. At that time, leaving school after the eighth grade was not a drastic measure. Records archived at the museum show the 10<sup>th</sup> grade as the graduation year at Valdosta Institute into the early 1900s.

## The First to Wear Blue

One family story that survived the years is of Henry being told that he was the "first in the family to wear blue". The older relatives that HSM grew up around had worn Confederate gray. HSM did have an ancestor, Stokeley Morgan, Sr., a Revolutionary War soldier who lost his life at the siege of Savannah. HSM's father and three Morgan uncles were Confederate War participants. HSM's mother, Susan A. Sims Morgan was the eldest of her siblings and her brothers were not of age for the Civil War. However Henry's grandfather Sims did participate.

William L. Morgan, Jr., [Henry's father], member of Valdosta Guards, 3<sup>rd</sup> corporal March 4, 1862. Appointed 1<sup>st</sup> Corporal Oct., 1862. Captured at Gettysburg, Pa. July 2, 1863. Exchanged at Point lookout, Md. March 6, 1864. Pension records shows he was on sick furlough at the close of war

Charles S. Morgan, [Henry's uncle], member of Lowndes Volunteers, 3<sup>rd</sup> Corporal June 14, 1861. Appointed 3<sup>rd</sup> Sergeant June 25, 1862. Captured at Spotsylvania Va. May 8, 1864. Released at Elmira, N.Y. July 11, 1865.

Luke J. Morgan, [Henry's uncle], Private June 14 1861. Wounded in head at Spotsylvania, Va. May 10, 1864. Died of wounds in 2<sup>nd</sup> Division of Jackson Hospital, Richmond, Va., May 29, 1864. Buried there in Hollywood Cemetery.

Henry Joseph Morgan [Henry's uncle], too young at war's beginning. Enrolled Dec. 14, 1863, Militia Company #663, Valdosta.

William Henry Sims, [Henry's grandfather], Piscola Volunteers, Enlisted May 1, 1862. Captured in 1864. Exchanged in 1864. Paroled at Thomasville, Ga., May 23, 1865.

## Morgan's West Point test

The *Valdosta Times* issue on Saturday, June 24, 1893, reports 'Passes The Test'. This newspaper mention states, "Henry Morgan passed the test examination at West Point with credit and has been admitted into the military academy. The examination is reported as the hardest given in several years and lasted 5 days. Out of 147 applicants this June, 97 failed. The friends of Henry here expect him to take a high stand in scholarship, and when the class is graduated in 1897 be a leader of his fellows."

On December 9, 1893 the *Valdosta Times* printed a fun, clever and respectful, **long** article written by HSM on his first term as a plebe (freshman) at West Point. The beginning and ending statements of the article are quoted here:

The article begins, "For West Point nature did her best, and man has well sustained his part. Situated on a point swept around by the Hudson [River] and guarded by majestic mountains, there is no more beautiful place than here where Uncle Sam runs the mill that grinds out the officers of his army."

The wonderful article ends, "Great is West Point, great are her methods; but greater still the experiences, the joys and ills of a Plebe." Henry S. Morgan



Morgan Tybee monument

## Classmates Honor Henry Morgan

We appreciate Cullen Chambers, Director of the Tybee Island Museum and Lighthouse, for sending us this photograph, and others, of the Henry Sims Morgan memorial monument located on the grounds of their museum. The *Valdosta Times* reported on November 3, 1903 that "the family of Mr. W. L. Morgan has received a photograph of the tablet which has been erected at West Point in honor of the late Henry Sims Morgan ... by his classmates." Charles Abbott sent us a copy of this tablet photograph.

Often, just one recognition from classmates is exceptional, but HSM's classmates again recognized him on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. In 1923 they placed a duplicate tablet on a large granite stone on the grounds at Ft. Screven on Tybee Island. In 1950, six years after Ft. Screven was closed, the monument was moved to historic Ft. Pulaski. The memorial was returned to its rightful home in 1994, and placed in front of the Tybee Museum.



## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Members,



It's time to renew your membership!

By now you should have received your renewal notice. If you did not get a notice in the mail, call the museum at 229-247-4780 and we will send one to you. Many exciting things are happening in our organization—new exhibits, new programs, and a busy museum. Please continue your support and help us preserve our local history. Thanks to Martha Gibson, Mary McRee, Anita Shelton, and Donald and Renate for their help with our membership drive this year.

Mark your calendars in September for two important events. Our members' meeting is scheduled for Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00 p.m. At this meeting we must approve our budget for the upcoming year, look at changes to our by-laws, and review our programs. As our organization grows we need input from our members. Please plan to attend this meeting. You may also pay your membership dues at this time.

Also in September is our second Annual Blast in the Past History Festival. Last year's festival was successful and a great deal of fun. We will have many of the same foods and activities, as well as new things to do. At 2:00 p.m., Dr. Marvin Smith will talk about the archaeology Valdosta State University conducted in our back yard over the past two years. Most of the items found were from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century—just before the Carnegie Library was built. Plan to join us on Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup> for a stroll through time and a glance at what life was like before the Carnegie.

For those who remember Alan Morgan, our former director, we received an e-mail recently that he will soon finish Seminary and is working part-time as the Children's Minister at First Baptist Church in Charlestown, Indiana. Alan and April are also expecting their first child any day now. We will keep you posted on this exciting news. Our best wishes to Alan and April.

If you have not been to the Museum lately—stop by for a visit. Better yet, attend our meeting on September 11<sup>th</sup> and the Festival on September 17<sup>th</sup>. See our progress and if you are so inclined—lend a hand. There are opportunities if you want to get involved. Contact the museum at 247-4780 or me at 244-7480.

Sincerely,

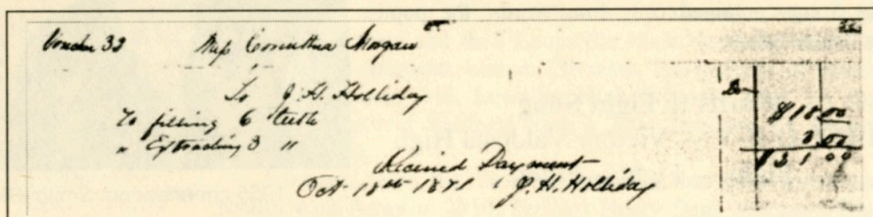
*Julie Smith*

## Aunt Corinthy was Doc Holliday's Patient

Corinthia Morgan, Aunt Corinthy to the family, was the youngest child of W. L. Morgan, Sr., born in Troupville in 1852, moving to the new town of Valdosta in 1860. She was sister to W. L. Morgan, Jr., Henry Sims Morgan's father. Corinthia has become a part of local history and lore because she is the patient in the only official record of Doc Holliday doing dental work in Valdosta. 6 teeth filled, 3 teeth pulled, \$21.00. October 18, 1871. Just younger, Corinthia attended Valdosta Institute at the same time as Doc Holliday.

Current relatives of Corinthia and her sister Susan (Aunt Sissie) say the earlier generation spoke of them as eclectic, as do current Valdostans in their 80's that remember them. Perhaps not unlike the Baldwin sisters on the television show *The Waltons*.

Knowing that she was the last living member of this family and was one of the last people that had lived in Troupville, Judge Folks Huxford made record in *Pioneers of Wiregrass Georgia*, Vol. VI, that he visited Corinthia Morgan in 1933, before her death in 1934, obtaining family historical information and bible records dating back to 1775.



## MEMORIALS

**Ray Bennett**

by

Mr. and Mrs. Robert T. Daugharty

**Dell Bridges Davis**

by

Mrs. Nancy Schmoe

**Sherwood C. 'Woody' Dennis**

by

Mr. and Mrs. Robert T. Daugharty  
Mr. and Mrs. Albert S. Pendleton, Jr.  
Mrs. Nancy Schmoe

**Peggy Reid Durden**

by

Charlene Brown Scholey

**Major Gen. Joseph Wesley Griffin, Jr.**

by

Martha N. Gibson  
Mr. and Mrs. John B. Lastinger  
Catherine Redles

**Inez Moon Pendleton**

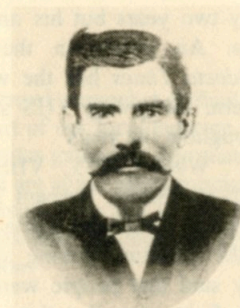
by

Mr. and Mrs. Albert S. Pendleton, Jr.

**Edith Smith**

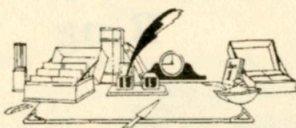
by

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Bennett





## Albert's Desk



by Albert S. Pendleton, Jr.

I am looking forward to our Valdosta High School  
Multi-Class War Years Reunion in October.  
Hopefully many former classmates are planning to attend.

Thanks to so many of you for supporting the  
Lowndes County Historical Society over the years.

Give me a call when you get to town—  
I would love to hear from you.

## MEMBERS MEETING

Sunday

September 11, 2005

2:00 p.m.

Join us for this important meeting where  
we will review our budget for the  
upcoming year, review changes in our  
by-laws, and discuss how we can help  
our organization grow.



Everyone had a great time at  
last year's festival—  
plan to attend this year!

Plan to step back in time as the past comes  
alive at our Second Annual

## BLAST IN THE PAST HISTORY FESTIVAL

Saturday

September 17, 2005

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Hot Dogs, cold sodas, biscuits,  
boiled peanuts, and memories of yesteryear.  
Fun for the whole family—but be careful,  
you might learn something!

**Special Program at 2:00 p.m.**

**Before the Carnegie:**

**Archaeology in our Backyard**

Dr. Marvin T. Smith

VSU Department of Anthropology

Admission is free.

Purchase a **Passport to the Past**  
for food and activities.

For more information call the museum at  
247-4780.

To volunteer call Julie Smith at  
244-7480.





# Could Morgan Be Valdosta's First Football Player?

Once the article in the *Georgia Journal* magazine brought to light the saga of Henry Sims Morgan's heroic death, the goal became to discover more about his life in Valdosta and at West Point. People researching pre-1900 Lowndes County are very fortunate because Wayne and Judy Dasher of Nashville, Georgia abstracted the *Valdosta Times* for obituaries, births, marriages and personal mentions and published these records in about twelve volumes.

Wow! There it was in *Personal Mentions from our Research, Vol. III*: from the *Valdosta Times* issue Tuesday, November 3, 1896, "A picture of Henry Morgan, as guard on the West Point football team, attracted the attention of readers of one of the big New York papers this week." Only one sentence, but one of potential impact in our community sports history and heritage.

I soon contacted the Library Archives at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. In explaining Henry Morgan's death and other reasons for my call, I quizzed the pleasant lady as to whether they had an Academy yearbook for the 1896-7 school year, and if so, did it include a photograph of the football team with player identification.



Army Football team in 1896. H. S. M., first row, second from left.

After a few weeks she contacted me and said "Its him!" From archived photographs and class rosters she confirmed Henry Sims Morgan as a member of the 1896 Army football team. That particular lady no longer works in the archives and we are waiting to hear if he played in earlier college years. Henry Sims Morgan went to West Point in 1893, twenty years before Valdosta High School began football in 1913.

Is Henry Sims Morgan the first person from Valdosta to play on a football team? He is the earliest proof we have of someone from Valdosta playing football. We have asked people long involved with area sports if they know of any earlier player and they do not. However, did someone from here perhaps play for an Ivy League school in the 1870s or 80s? We don't know. No matter what we might learn, my salute goes to Henry Sims Morgan as a member of the 1896 Army Black Knights football team.

## Most Wins In Football

In gathering information on the life of Henry Sims Morgan [HSM] and especially his playing football, it seemed somewhat difficult to communicate the spirit of winning that football has helped bring to this community. Football success is a big part of our local heritage. A visual often explains a concept more easily than verbal definition so I prepared a graph. I have visited many websites gathering information for this graph. Some school websites claim one or two more victories than other sources show for them – so there are slight discrepancies. I have had several interesting conversations – one in particular with the Sports Information Director at Yale University. Yale and VHS are so close in number of wins that I wanted to be correct. This graph combines all levels of football into one field - professional, college 1A, 1AA, 2A, 3A and high school - showing teams with the most wins in the United States. Totals are through the 2004 season.

School	level	wins	losses	ties	began	win%
U. of Michigan	1A	842	275	36	1879	.7459
Yale University	1AA	826	320	55	1872	.7103
Valdosta (GA) High	HS	821	174	34	1913	.8144
U. of Notre Dame	1A	802	263	42	1887	.7435
U. of Nebraska	1A	793	317	40	1890	.7070
U. of Texas	1A	790	307	33	1893	.7137

Other colleges include Penn at 775 wins, 1877 began play; Harvard, 767 and 1874; U. of Alabama, 764 and 1892; Ohio State, 764 and 1890, and Penn State, 760 and 1887.

In high schools VHS is followed by Massillon Washington Ohio at 754 wins and then Louisville Male Kentucky and Little Rock Central Arkansas, both at 750 wins. The tradition of winning is continued here with Lowndes High School's 2004 5A State Championship and Valdosta State's 2004 Division 2A National Championship.

I learned from the Yale conversation that they renew their rivalry with Army in 2010. Perhaps Henry Sims Morgan's Black Knights can knock off Yale and help Valdosta High be second on the graph. Army football is 624-415-51, beginning in 1890.



## V-I-C-T-O-R-Y is 50

About two years ago a conversation with Barbara Taylor Slocumb put me on alert to find information on the Valdosta High Fight Song. Barbara told me that she was a cheerleader when the fight song was first written and her group of VHS cheerleaders choreographed the fight song routine, some elements of which are still used today.

A few months ago, while checking for something else, I came across the September 1955 issue of the VHS student newspaper *The Dosta Outlook*. One of the headlines on the front page was "New Band Director Presents VHS With Own Fight Song." This *Dosta Outlook* issue was one of many in several scrapbooks assembled by the late Tootsie Foy Anderson when she was a VHS student in the 1950s. She prepared extensive scrapbooks that include newspaper articles, movie flyers, church and social bulletins, and even sugar packets from the S&K Drive-In Restaurant. These scrapbooks are at the museum.

The composer of the fight song was Andy Odum, the new band director in the summer of 1955. The *Dosta Outlook* said that Mr. Odum believed that every school should have a fight song so he wrote the "VHS Fight Song". The song was presented to the student body at the first pep meeting. The students were asked to applaud if they liked the song, and to hold their applause if they disapproved. When the band finished playing, they received a very loud ovation, and it was agreed that this song should be dedicated at the first football game of the '55 season on September 9.

Jan McDaniel Kennedy, head drum majorette, and Barbara Wise Baldwin, drum majorette, led the band onto the field for their first halftime performance. The climax of the performance was the rendition for the first time on Cleveland Field of "The VHS Fight Song" which was dedicated to Mr. Bazemore, his coaching staff and the team.

Andy Odum was band director at VHS for only two years but his music continues to excite fans. An article in the September 17, 1955 *Valdosta Times* has the words "Thank you, Mr. Odum, for giving VHS something that will last throughout the years".

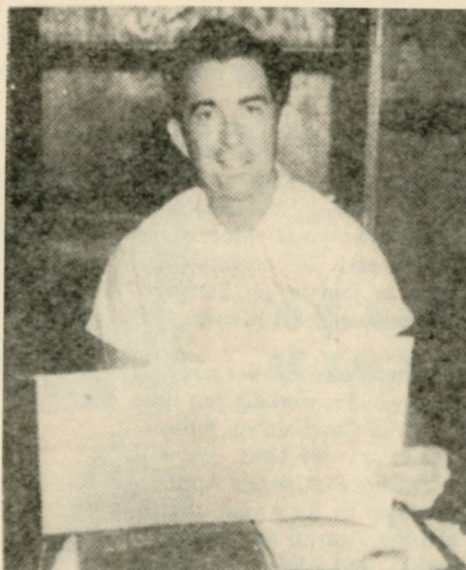
When 1955 VHS cheerleaders Marie Converse Smith, Barbara Taylor Slocumb, Sandra Clements Belue and Ginna Parramore McTier were at the museum looking at Tootsie's scrapbooks, they said that people were so enthused over the new fight song that they even sang it after first downs. Tootsie Foy saved mimeographed printings of pep rally cheers. Even though the new VHS Fight Song contained only four words, the pep rally list included:

### Words to Fight Song

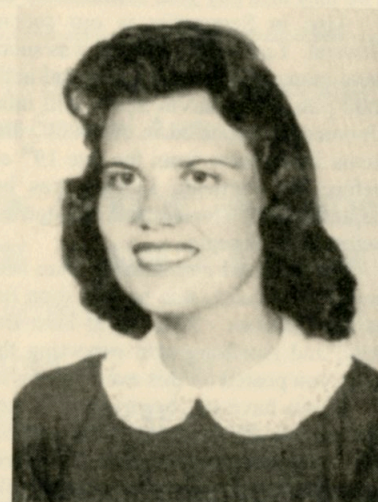
V-I-C-T-O-R-Y --- Victory Valdosta High  
Fight --- Fight --- Fight.



Tootsie Foy from Sandspur



Andy Odum from the Dosta Outlook



Jan McDaniel from Sandspur



1955 cheerleaders Smith, Slocumb, Belue and McTier at the Museum.



## MUSEUM CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- September 11    **Historical Society Meeting**    2:00 p.m.  
 September 17    **History Festival**    10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
                     **Special Program**    2:00 p.m.  
                     **Before the Carnegie - Archaeology in Our Backyard**  
                     Dr. Marvin T. Smith, VSU Department of Anthropology  
 September 26    **Sons of Confederate Veterans**  
 October 31       **Sons of Confederate Veterans**  
 December 3      **Winterfest and Museum Holiday Open House**

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### Lowndes County Historical Society & Museum

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Web page:  
<http://www.valdostamuseum.org>

## YESTERDAY & TODAY

Newsletter of  
 Lowndes County Historical Society

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Julie Barnes Smith

### Newsletter Editor

Donald O'Quinn Davis

### Editorial Advisor

Albert S. Pendleton, Jr.

### Kid's Page Editor

Andrew P. Smith with  
 Julie Barnes Smith

### Museum Staff

Donald O'Quinn Davis  
*Administrative Director*

Renate K. Milner  
*Museum Director*

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### YESTERDAY & TODAY

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