

Mrs. John Williams, President

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VALDOSTA, GEORGIA

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THE DREXEL PRESENTATION

The Museum was all aglow with decorations and anticipation on November 12th to honor Mr. R. J. Drexel, who for many years was superintendent of our City Parks, and also did more than anyone else in making Valdosta known as the "Azalea City."

Friends filled the auditorium as Marion Drexel of Irwinton, Georgia, granddaughter, unveiled a large portrait of Mr. R. J. Drexel that Robert Winter III had taken and framed to be placed in the Museum. Testimonial talks were given by Mayor Gil Harbin, Senator Loyce Turner, Robert Winter III, Mrs. Julian McKey and several city and county officials, as to the untiring work that he had done. All joined in saying, "Thank you, Mr. Drexel."

This all started with an idea of a charter member of the Historical Society, Joy McKey. She and her late husband, Mr. Julian McKey, were among the first to give many artifacts to the Museum as well as financial and moral support from the start in 1967. We are indebted to Mrs. McKey for her untiring efforts and formulation of plans for this happy occasion and for encouraging the assistance of society members and numbers of friends.

With members of Mr. Drexel's family -- Mrs. Drexel was ill and could not attend -- four generations of "Richard Drexels" and relatives were present to participate in this honor and to see Mrs. McKey present a love token from his many friends. We were privileged to see the wonderful smile and glitter of his eyes as Mr. Drexel expressed appreciation and thanks, thus ending one of the nicest events ever held at the Lowndes County Historical Society Museum. Sorry if you missed it, Natalie. (this message from our president)

ANOTHER REMINDER ABOUT DUES

Mary Young has asked me to print something about unpaid dues. After much discussion with members we must say the following: Since the advance in cost of publication and postage, it seems necessary that the Newsletter be sent only to those who have paid dues for the 1978-79 year. Don't miss a copy. Send in your dues now to the Lowndes County Historical Society, P. O. Box 434, Valdosta, Ga. 31601. Dues -- \$10.00 per person.

SOME FAMOUS (AND INFAMOUS) PLACE NAMES
OF VALDOSTA AND OF LOWNDES COUNTY

by

Mike Paine

Valdosta has always been a colorful city, full of both colorful characters and colorful stories. Along with colorful people, there are also some place names of interest. In fact, the name "Valdosta" itself comes from the name of Gov. Troup's plantation in North Georgia, which comes from the Italian, Valle d'aosta, meaning the Valley of the Aostas (family of Italy). This paper will explore some of these place names in Lowndes County and will relate some of the famous (and infamous) stories of these names.

As is well known, Valdosta grew up along the present Seaboard Coast Line Railroad tracks in her early days. Savannah Avenue was the main drag in those days and was the scene of most activities of the city. The intersection of East Savannah Avenue and South Troup Street

was the section of town known as "Hamm Neck." The Hamm family lived on South Troup and (as Redden Parramore relates) "there was always a fight going on" in Hamm Neck. It seems that the Hamm boys were well known pugilists and were willing to take on all comers. Naturally, there were plenty of battles in Hamm Neck and also plenty of "skint knuckles" and wounded pride.

The next nickname concerns that part of Valdosta on East Gordon Street bounded by Marion and North Troup. This part of town is affectionately known as "Tom Town" and the title has two possible explanations, one whimsical and one with more veracity. The former possibility is that the locals may have proved their mettle by acting like tom cats. They became so proficient at their trade that the section became known as "Tom Town" in honor of these battlers.

The true explanation for Tom Town concerns Tom Simmons, grandfather of well known Valdostans Lucy Simmons White, Jack Simmons and Bennie Simmons. Tom Simmons was a former slave who by hard work and industry, became a wealthy citizen of Valdosta. He bought land along East Gordon Street and the section became known as "Tom's part of town" or later, Tom Town.

Although the Tom Towners were a cut above average in fighting, the West Side gang were such professionals in the martial arts that Stanley Street has long been known as "Kill Me Quick." In fact, for many years a sign hung outside a club in Kill Me Quick urged patrons to "Leave your guns, knives and razors outside." Stanley Street was certainly not a place for a Sunday stroll.

Valdosta advertises her azaleas, pine trees, day lilies and other herbage, but it is unfortunate that the colorful sign "Snake Nation Road" was removed in 1962 from the Interstate. Instead, the thoroughly innocuous "North Valdosta Road" was substituted. Personally, I do not know how Snake Nation Road got its name but here are two guesses. First, some cracker may have "come up on" a brood of snakes and told someone that there were a nation of snakes "out yonder at Shiloh." Second, there could have been a religious body of snake handlers who met in Shiloh. At any rate, Snake Nation is a unique and colorful signpost for Lowndes County. Can't you picture Yankees describing Valdosta as having a nation of snakes running the government? To be sure, our government often has some serpentine features known to all South Georgians.

The last location to be discussed is in the extreme southern part of Lowndes County. The run from the Owens-Illinois plant to the western side of Lake Alson and the eastern side of the old Peters place is known as Jumping Gully. The only explanation I could dig up on this name was that the run was small enough to jump across in a single leap; therefore the name, Jumping Gully Run.

Finally, the above are only a smattering of some local place names. There are doubtless others which concern local personalities or events. Our historical society would certainly welcome any comments or explanations for any unusual place names. These locations are but reflections and observations about local history.

I want to thank Mike and Natalie for adding to the Newsletter this month. I will dig up a story I started once about some place names that I found in an old newspaper and it will probably add to this list of local names.

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

Our annual old fashioned Christmas party this year was well attended. Everyone enjoyed themselves visiting with good friends and having good refreshments, while many toured the Museum. Many thanks to Susie Thomas and her committee for making this gathering a success.

In this Newsletter I am continuing my story on 1917 in Valdosta and Lowndes County. In the months to follow, I will finish this story and go into 1918. In between these months, however, I will use stories that I am able to research and write.

Another member who comes some distance is Mary Taylor of Twin Lakes. She is at every meeting and is a writing buddy of mine. Mary recently won an award for a short story and is working on a novel. She is most interesting to talk to and it is always a joy to see her.

LOWNDES COUNTY: THE WAR YEARS-1917
(part 2)

by

Albert S. Pendleton, Jr.

In April 1917, the news for the city to stop car speeders came from women's clubs who gave speeders and drivers strong warnings. Their concern brought results, observers said. Besides reckless driving, the paper reported something had to be done about "the general practice of using cut-outs, whistles, gongs and other noise making instruments on machinery. It is said that Valdosta is the only city of its size anywhere that allows so much noise in the driving of cars. The noise nuisance is disagreeable..." It was pointed out, however, that noise did not cause wrecks and accidents, recklessness did. Then a speeding car was stopped and the man was arrested by Officer Arant for failure to make a signaled stop. The speeder had been going twenty-five miles an hour.

Later in April, news from Stockton was "The younger set of the village was pleasantly entertained on Saturday evening at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hughey Blanton." And "Dr. Sloan has a new automobile." The day after war was declared on April 6, 1917, our paper announced a name change for West College Street. The name was being changed to Georgia Avenue. Apparently, when the street was built up above College Street at Patterson, it was called West College Street. Many years later, West College Street actually skipped to the other side of the college property and took on again now where it is beside the S. L. Mason School, but Georgia Avenue was once called West College Street.

Mr. J. N. Griffin was busy building two handsome bungaloes on his lots between Central and Hill Avenue on Lee Street. The report was that he would probably build two other houses nearby. Forty years before this time, Mr. Griffin and his father had bought these lots for the total sum of \$225. In 1917, the statement was that they were now worth many thousands.

On Patterson Street next to the First Methodist an old building was being dismantled to make way for a new brick building. The structure was formerly occupied by Blackburn's Studio and the Bryan and Bruce Cigar factory. A thoroughly modern theatre was being constructed, The Valway. The lot was owned by Mrs. A. Converse. The seating capacity was to be 800, with a stage sufficiently large to put on many of the stage shows that came to Valdosta, and at other times would be used as a movie house. This building is now occupied by Martha's.

The news of April closes with the announcement of another wedding in our city and here is the article that appeared April 28, 1917:

Miss Marie Griffin and Mr. F. M. Steinburg were married last night at the Methodist parsonage, Dr. Bascom Anthony performing the ceremony. The couple went around to the parsonage without notifying their friends of their intention, and the wedding was a very quiet one.

The bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. D. C. Griffin, of 308 Varnedoe street. She is an attractive young woman and has made many friends since moving to this city with her parents some time ago from Macon. The groom is an employe of the Georgia Southern railroad and is a young man who has numbers of friends among his fellow workers.

They are making their home for the present with the bride's parents. Later they will keep house.

So, this April, this pleasant and happy couple will celebrate their 62nd Anniversary! Congratulations to the Steinburg's.

NOVEMBER MEETING

Dr. John Ricks of the History Department of Valdosta State College spoke at our November meeting. His talk was on local history, the importance of it with some ideas of how we should go about it. See you all in January.

Albert S. Pendleton, Jr., Editor