

Mrs. J. G. Hagen, President

September 25, 1972

VALDOSTA, GEORGIA

VOL. I NO. 11

On Sunday afternoon, September 9, 1972, Susie Thomas and I began to chart the cemetery at Sunset Hill. In two hours we had gone from the Youles lot down on the East, all the way up through the Shaw lot on a corner where one of the large streets goes through, just across from the Converse lot. This was quite a bit and it was tiresome. We probably would have gone on to the Converse lot, but it began to rain about 6:30. So, with time, weather and strength permitting, we will continue to do this and with the help of the Colonial Dames who want to publish a book of all names in cemeteries in Lowndes County. A great undertaking? You said it! If you're interested, please get in touch with us. We charted on another day, finished that row on to the West and began another. Also, if you have any information about certain lots, unmarked graves, let us have it. We have already been told of some. We plan to copy the Sexton's maps to go with our card file. This summer, there were two ladies on two different occasions who came to town seeking information about their ancestors. We helped them quite a lot, and they were amazed that we were so eager to help. We asked them in turn to give us their collected papers.

As I have announced several times, Clyde McKey White will be our speaker at the first meeting of the 1972-1973 Historical Society year. She will give the McKey History, which will also include information about the Hollidays, Major Henry B., and his son, John H., better known as "Doc". We are all looking forward to hearing Clyde. Let's have our best attendance ever. Meeting is Thursday, Sept. 28th, 8:00 PM at the Museum.

Items from the Valdosta Times;

July 8, 1882. "Miss Minnie Keller, quite a pleasant young lady from Bryan County, is visiting Mrs. C. R. Ashley."

Dec. 16, 1882. "Mr. T. B. Converse of Valdosta, was married on last Wednesday to Miss Minnie Keller of Bryan County."

Feb. 19, 1881. "Did you know that the cows were eating up the chinaberry trees in town?"

Feb. 26, 1881. "Rev. W. H. Goldwire, an old citizen of this county now a resident of Kingston, Georgia, preached in the Baptist church last Tuesday night. Mr. Goldwire has relatives and a great many friends in this section."

Mar. 6, 1881. "Capt. A. H. Smith, County Commissioner, has set out some beautiful Sycamore trees on the Court House Square, taken from Major Holliday's nursery."

May 7, 1881. "WHAT WE NEED.....A large hotel with two or three hundred rooms--well kept, A public library, An Immigration Society, More tillers of the soil, Smaller purchases of guano, bacon, and corn, More truck and less cotton, More money and less papers, More industry--less idleness, More subscribers to the "Times."

And everybody said, "Amen!" And we could also name a good list of things "we" need for our Museum. We need a nice, large, well located piece of land, a permanent building for the Museum, enough land to place our log cabin and other buildings and fence from the John Demings of Twin Lakes. We need more artifacts, more pictures, we need, we need....

*****-----*****

Origin of Street Names in Valdosta #I.

McKey Street--named for Thomas Sylvester McKey, father of Clyde McKey White and Julian McKey. Mr. T. S. McKey was County Commissioner when they built the Court House, was successful in many endeavors and quite well known. He was the uncle and close friend of John Henry "Doc" Holliday. McKey Street borders the city block in which he built his home.

Patterson Street--On the authority of Mrs. Gertrude Harrell and Mrs. Strom, Patterson Street was named for Col. M. T. Patterson, a Confederate soldier killed in the Civil War. His widow married William Henry Goldwire and was his second wife. Rev. Goldwire was the second Baptist preacher at Troupeville, continuing in Valdosta at the Baptist Church.

Mary Street, Ann Street and Force Street were named for Mary Ann Force, the grandmother

of our Mrs. Strom. Mary Ann Force was the second wife of Charles O. Force and was the former Mrs. Smith of Rome, Georgia. Before Mrs. Smith and Mr. Force married, two of their children married each other: Thatcher Smith married Julia Force. All families refuged from Rome to Valdosta and remained here. The famous diary and history of this account and of early Valdosta was written by Mrs. Strom's mother, (daughter of Mrs. Smith-Force) Mrs. Thannie Smith Wisenbaker. (Susie and I had a very nice visit with Mrs. Strom.)

Crane Avenue--named for Major H. N. Crane of Boston, Mass., "our winter visitor". It seems that Major Crane would winter in Valdosta and make the personal mention column in the paper. When the street was given his name the Major traveled to Quitman and had hauled over a spreading oak, which he had planted out 13 years ago, and replanted it on Crane Avenue. Apparently a well-liked person, his friends announced "may the Major live and visit us many seasons more to see his tree grow and his friends multiply".

How "Tom Town" Got Its Name

Most of us older residents in Valdosta remember that the negro settlement, "Tom Town" is that section around East Gordon and West Ann Streets, just off North Ashley Street. When I was a child (1930), our family cook, Anna Judge, lived in "Tom Town" and took us home with her one afternoon. After a tour of her house, we sat on the back steps and ate pomegranates and talked with her neighbors.

The name "Tom Town" comes from a different story.

About 1880, Tom Simmons, an ex-slave who had taken his white family's name, bought a plot of land where "Tom Town" is now located, from Mrs. John Myddelton, but, it is said, never paid a cent of cash for it. He and his wife, Ann, worked out the value of the land in tending fields, crops and doing work about the Myddelton place. The transaction for the sale (5 acres) took place on February 20, 1882 and was recorded in the clerk's office October 9, 1884.

As a reward for his deligence, Tom and Ann were granted permission to cut cypress from the swamp for a home. While Tom cut the trees, in water knee deep, he floated them to his wife, who stood on the edge and peeled them. She helped him to raise the log cabin in which they lived for many years, and they reared a large family. Tom preceded his wife in death quite a number of years. But at her death in 1934 there were surviving numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

"Aunt Ann", as she was known to all, was a diligent worker and an unusually quiet person. She was part Indian, and that blood in her veins made itself apparent in her actions.

Everyone mourned her death. It is said that she didn't know her own age, but often said she was "almost a hundred".

The section is called, "Tom Town" for her husband, but the property they worked for was dedeed from the Myddeltons to "Martha Ann Simmons".

Item from "The Times": August 8, 1885: "Any one who appreciates fine Perfumery can select from the following list of the best and most popular odors, Euxenia, Luculia, Kanlanthe, Frangipanni, Heliotrope, Jessamine, Jockey Club, Lilly Valley, Stephanatis, White Rose, Olive Blossom, Ylang Ylang, Wood Violet, Tube Rose, New Mown Hay, Mignonette, White Pond Lily, Orange Flowers, Bouquet Carolina -- at Briggs Drug Store."

April 30, 1902. "We guarantee Robert's Chill Tonic to cure fever, chills, malaria and restore lost appetite .25¢ if it does -- money back if it does not." A. E. Dimmock"

Dec. 6, 1885. "Mr. M. L. Floyd has retired from management of the City Hotel and Mr. Ransom Prescott takes charge." (Could Floyd Street be named for this man?)

(How about the ads of these two gentlemen? Gentlemen??)

"WIFE WANTED -- I am seeking a wife (widow without children preferred between 25 and 35 years of age). Must have at least \$200 or \$300, which I need in my business. Property or land considered as good. Care "Times". FRANK STREET."

"Wife Wanted -- I am 30 years old, 5 foot 5 inches high, in good health, good business ability, called handsome. I do not smoke, chew nor drink, am a member of church. I desire to make the acquaintance of a lady that would marry me at once if suited. She must possess a kind, loving disposition, good health and be between

18 and 23. I have nothing to hide. Courteous and honest. Answer. To any lady that may wish to investigate. Business, In care of the Valdosta Times, Valdosta, Ga."

More About Blind Jim

A correction for my newspaper article in the Heritage issue...Blind Jim was Jim Norman. His sister married a Morrison and named their son Jim. Blind Jim Norman was buried at Antioch Cemetery, off Knights Academy Road, in an unmarked grave. His sister's grave is marked. We visited this cemetery and the white section is so overgrown as to be almost impassable to walk through. We struggled through vines and stickers to see monuments.

An old negro man down the road, Frank Berrien, told us the name of the man who shot Jim in the eyes with a shot gun for "flirting with his wife". They lived near Frank who is now in his original home on the farm bought, he said, from Mr. Pendleton.

Jim moved to Valdosta, worked for 40¢ a week (later \$2.50) at the "Times". It was his duty to turn the old fashioned printing press. "I was the motor," he would proudly say. After modern printing presses were installed, Jim was again out of work. After several jobs that did not pan out, he borrowed 50¢ to go into the peanut business. The rest is history, of course.

Jim said that before paved streets and gutters, he did "a lot of stumbling and falling". He knew the only way to go from a fall was up -- and, too, he'd find himself a different street to walk.

He was always cheerful, even in his darkness. He was blind to the sunset and the beauties around him. But he was not blind to grit and determination to work, or the urge to do right. He knew them well.

Item from: "The Valdosta Times". May 10, 1902. "See W. W. Stapler for a fine four gallon acclimated cow."

Another item:(date ??) "Chewing and smoking tobaccos, all the leading brands at prices that will tickle you almost to death. Mathis Bros."

Dues are due for the 1972-1973 year of the Society. Dues are 5.00 per person joining, \$10.00 for a couple. Please mail the coupon below now.

And remember....(from "The Valdosta Times" 3-7-85)

"Some of the boys in Clinch call Valdosta "Cracker's Heaven". Well, Valdosta is a good place to come to--while living."

See you at our meeting,

Albert Pendleton

TO: LOWNDES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 434

Valdosta, Georgia 31601

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Amount enclosed _____
(\$5.00 per person joining,
\$10.00 a couple.)