

Lowndes County Historical Society 1110 North Patterson Street Valdosta, Georgia 31601

A message from our President, Mrs. J. G. Hagen: "The time has come full circle when we again celebrate the birthday of our Saviour. Our hearts are full of love and gratitude. The members of the L.C.H.S. wish you all a Merry Christmas, Peace, Love. You are invited to become members of the L.C.H.S. Our ancestors left us a heritage of a good name in every walk of life. Their footfalls may still be heard as we walk our streets, enter institutions of learning or worship in the Churches. It is the duty of the living to see that inspiring records of great men and their deeds shall live. Rev. William Stoughton said in 1669...."God's Hand is in the making of history and the incidents and elements that serve to form it. For God sifted many nations that He might send choice grain into the wilderness." (signed) Vera Hagen."

More news of pictures and other items: Mary Young Oliver has offered us a picture of Albert Converse II, first white child born in Valdosta, and also a picture of his parents, pioneers in this section. Mrs. Hallie Worley who let us copy a picture of hers of the Florence Hotel, once owned by her father, Mr. Bamberg, has offered us an old copy of the local telephone book. Mrs. C. L. Smith has given us city directories from the very first publication. Jane Ferrell suggested we contact her father-in-law, Mr. Ed Ferrell, about his articles and reminiscences of local and other doings back to the turn of the century. I believe Mr. Ferrell has already told Joe Stevens that we could publish some of his articles. After reading a bunch of the stories, I called Mr. Ferrell myself and he said we could publish them. Before we do that, I asked him to write us a Christmas article and am pleased to announce that it is published here.

The Society has received a book from Mr. Corliss Lamont of New York. It is called The Thomas Lamonts in America, published in London. It is in our library at the museum for you to see.

We've had a couple of requests lately from far off places. Someone has written to ask for information about a Mr. Pierpont (who later wrote Jingle Bells) but lived in Valdosta during, or just after, the War Between the States. He had a child born here and very shortly moved away. Another request is from St. Louis, Burton A. Boxerman, Ph.D., inquires about the Edison family who lived in Valdosta possibly 1896-1906. If you have any information about these two families, please contact me. I do know that Edison ran a shoe shop on Patterson. His name was Abraham, his wife was Sarah and they had two sons. They lived on Virginia Avenue. This was 1902.

At our last meeting, when Albert Pendleton gave a history of the Pendleton family, Fred Pindar, a distant relative of Albert's through Lewis' and Tebeau's, gave the society his research paper of his family, the Pindars, which includes much about Savannah. Fred also told us that the above mentioned Mr. Pierpont was buried on the Pindar lot in Savannah.

It was reported that we have the Bass papers on the History of Moody Air Force Base, and Mrs. Bass and Emory Jr., will allow us to copy these valuable papers before they turn them over to the Valdosta State College as previously planned. At this same meeting, Frances Dekle showed us a high school annual, Valdosta Institute July 1899, given to her father long ago by Miss Klein Staten. The graduating class included: Miss Leila Elizabeth Fender, Miss Aline Vivian Jones, Miss Irene Anita Parrish, Miss Klein Willamon Staten, Mr. James Forsyth Passmore, and Mr. Dana Reginold Stevens. Local items of students followed with articles by the students.

We have no pictures of mayors before J. T. Roberts 1906-1916, although I believe Marion Bright has promised one or two. The mayors before 1906 are: M. A. Briggs 1904-5, C. R. Ashley 1901-2-3, C. B. Peeples 1900, A. H. Smith 1898-9, O. M. Smith, 1897, J. G. Cranford 1895-6, W. H. Griffin 1892-3-4, E. L. Moore 1891-2, W. L. Thomas 1887-8-9-90, N. A. Williams 1886, B. F. Whittington 1885, J.M. Wilkinson 1882-3-4, J. W. Wells, 1881, I.N. Davis, 1880, A. H. Smith 1878-9, J. O. Varnedue 1887

DON'T FORGET....OPEN HOUSE, SUNDAY DEC. 12th.....OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS!! BRING SOMEONE!!

Reading through the microfilm of the Valdosta Times, I found that on December 18, 1900 the local stamp for mailing had just gone up from 1¢ to 2¢....we're hoping for a bulk rate for this letter, and I promise you a different, better looking and permanent, format for January 1972. Please send copies of this letter to your friends. Another December item was the Pope-Thomas wedding in 1895. I was so close to the Thomas family that I said Aunt and Uncle to everyone, so this reading brought back many times I spent in the Thomas house on North Patterson just beyond College Street where the telephone number was 20. It was the early thirties and Uncle Will had been Judge since before 1911. He seemed to enjoy paying us a lot of attention and was quite a humorous man. In the November 7, 1895 issue of the Times, a Christmas advertisement urged people to buy their Christmas umbrellas at C. C. Varnedoe & Bro., which at this writing is still a good idea. And now, the Ferrell article.

"Our First Christmas at the Valdes in Valdosta in 1902"

by

E. D. Ferrell

The original site of Valdosta, Georgia was at Old Troupville, a few miles north of its present site. In the 1800's the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad was built through South Georgia, and Valdosta was moved to get on the new railroad.

South Georgia was blessed with more Natural Resources than most any other section of the entire United States. Its soil and climate were suitable to a diversity of agricultural money crops, unexcelled in the nation, and to name a few of these--

Watermelons and canteloupes were shipped in carlots to the northern markets. Short staple cotton was raised on a large scale. Tobacco became a flourishing income for South Georgia farmers. Peanuts became a very profitable crop, and this encouraged hog-raising on a large scale. Brooks County Hams became very famous. Pecans and peaches made fortunes for orchard owners. In the early days of the automobile tire business, it was found the long staple Egyptian style cotton was suitable for the fabric used then in tires, and a few counties in South Georgia and North Florida were the only areas this type cotton could be grown profitably. The price brought four times as much as the short staple, and it was a gold mine for several years.

So, Valdosta being in the center of all these God given resources, and also blessed with a group of fine progressive citizens, the city of 1902 was the richest city, per capita, in the entire United States.

Although in the extreme southern part of Georgia, only 13 miles from the Florida state line, the Georgia State Fairs were held in Valdosta for about ten years from 1900 to 1910. South Georgia was recognized as the Agricultural Center of the state, and that was why the State Fairs were held in Valdosta.

In 1901 a group of the leading merchants in Valdosta, headed by three of the leaders, Mr. O. K. Jones, the largest Dry Goods Merchant, Mr. Frank Strickland, President of Strickland Cotton Mills, and later President of the Merchants bank when its founder Mr. R. Y. Lane died. (Mr. Lane was the father of the two famous bankers, Mills B. Lane, who moved to Savannah from Valdosta and his brother, Ed Lane who moved to Jacksonville and founded the Atlantic National Bank. These two banks are among the largest in the National today. Mills B. Lane's bank is, of course, The Citizens and Southern National Bank.) And the third man was Mr. W. P. Roberts, a successful Naval stores operator. These men decided to build the nicest hotel in Georgia outside of Atlanta and put up the money to do so along with other Valdosta merchants. They felt that Valdosta needed such a hotel in line with the progressive spirit.

My father, E. D. Ferrell, was in the hotel business at Selma and Montgomery, Alabama, and was recommended highly to the Valdosta group as being a man who they would do well to lease the Valdes to, if they could interest him in it. They contacted my father and asked him to come to Valdosta for an interview. He was impressed with the citizens and became interested, but before closing a deal he brought my mother to Valdosta to get her opinion which he regarded highly. Both felt Valdosta was a good town to be a permanent home for the family, and were impressed with the possible success of the Valdes Hotel, and agreed to furnish the hotel and closed a ten year lease, and opened the hotel September 1, 1902. The name Valdes was decided upon--the first three letters of Valdosta and the last three letters of Lowndes County.

The Valdes Hotel, with E. D. Ferrell as Proprietor, played an important role in the growth and development of the city of Valdosta between 1902-1912. In those days, the nicer hotels in the United States were operated strictly on the American Plan with room and three meals included in the rate. No rooms were rented without meals. Today, the opposite is true and hotels are operated on the European Plan. The rooms and restaurants are operated separately, under the same management.

The daily rates at the Valdes were \$2.50 per day with room and three meals, without bath --and \$3.00 per day with room with bath and three meals per day. A single meal at the nicer hotels today would cost that much. The Valdes had no bar-room or cocktail lounge and no liquors were served.

My mother, Mrs. E. D. Ferrell, was most capable in the Culinary Arts, especially in home-cooked type meals with many favorite recipes. She took over full supervision of the meals and of the kitchen and large dining room, and a smaller private dining room connecting with the main dining room. Private parties were held in the private dining room. Four excellent colored men cooks were

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brought over from Alabama. They were the Chef-Second Cook, Meat cook and Pastry cook. Also an experienced colored Headwaiter who had twelve waiters under him.

The hotel was a commercial hotel catering to the business world. The high class sales representatives of national firms, as well as state officials, lawyers and business men who came to Valdosta. The Valdosta people soon learned of the nice meals at the Valdes and many became regular patrons for their holiday and Sunday dinners "dining out". My father and mother were delighted to have these Valdosta people as meal patrons, as it added a homelike, refined atmosphere.

Also, the extra large parlor became the meeting place for the Wymdausis Club. This large parlor was on the lobby floor on the corner facing Hill Avenue and Toombs streets, and became popular for the script dances held by the younger set, well chaperoned, of course. The parlor furniture could be cleared and put into one of the large sample rooms near the hall. So, the Valdes became the meeting place for many social gatherings in the large hall, which added much to its popularity with the city folks as well as the hotel guests.

The first Thanksgiving Day dinner at the Valdes in 1902 was the talk of the town, as the diners pronounced it superb, and this paved the way for a capacity crowd for Christmas dinner. During the Christmas holidays the hotel dining room, dance hall and the ladies Parlor adjoining the large parlor were all decorated with holly and a pretty Christmas tree in the dining room and one in the lobby. The college crowd, home for the Christmas holidays, had a big dance in the dance hall, so our first Christmas at the Valdes in 1902 was a festive occasion, long to be remembered. Those were happy days for all Valdostan's.

-end-

(E. D. Ferrell 12-2-71)

Thank you so much, Mr. Ferrell. We are deeply indebted to you. And I want to add that we are greatly indebted to your niece Gloria Dalton Sorenson and your great-niece Caro Sorenson Marquis, and others too, for getting you started on your articles of remembrances. We are pleased to publish them for all to read and enjoy. To follow, will be more impressions of the Valdosta of the early 1900's by Mr. Ferrell, about his brother Claude, a bellhop at the Valdes, etc., and remembrances of school and college away from home, a trip to New York, and later, some football games he'd rather forget. There are more, many more. And we hope more to come from Mr. Ferrell. I spent a most enjoyable time with him and we planned right then and there to get together often and just talk and listen; he, the talking; and me, the listening. This is great!! We're recording our history. Why don't some of the rest of you call me, or Mrs. Williams, or Mrs. Hagen and let us record what you remember. Call any member of the society. Join our society. We have just received 21 new members, giving us a total today of 114.

Meanwhile, back in the microfilm....How about this for one in the light vein? ...from the "Dawson News", published in the Valdosta Times, May 13, 1903, and it said, "A young woman of Valdosta has recently traveled to Alaska to get married. Some women will go to any length to catch a fellow." I lightly searched the papers for a wedding announcement, but found none. Who was it? On November 3, 1903, the Times reported in "The Talk of the Town", that a certain local young man at New Orleans High School was tops in his class, but was probably too modest to let it be known. He is still stops and modest. His name?...Ed Ferrell! We had another inquiry. The local library called that someone wrote for information about when our street car last ran. I believe City Hall told them they thought we never had street cars. Well, from 1900 to (we guess) 1925, street cars traveled Hill Avenue and Patterson to Alden and out to Remerton. The little house on the southeast corner of the college property was built especially for the girls to stay out of the weather and rain, and, as an article says, "to hide from the stares of the young men of the town". My sister, Frances, and I used to use it when we waited for the bus in the 1940's. Jane Shelton remembers using the street car in 1923 when she attended the training school (now VSC) and my sister, Clyde Joyner, remembers riding it for the same reason as late as 1924. An extensive paving program began in 1925 and most of the well traveled streets were paved. This, and many more automobiles, caused the street cars to stop running. We have some excellent pictures of our street cars, and more of old Valdosta, at our Museum, 1110 North Patterson Street.

REMEMBER....OPEN HOUSE SUNDAY December 12, 1971.....OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS.....PLEASE COME !!

Albert Peadleton