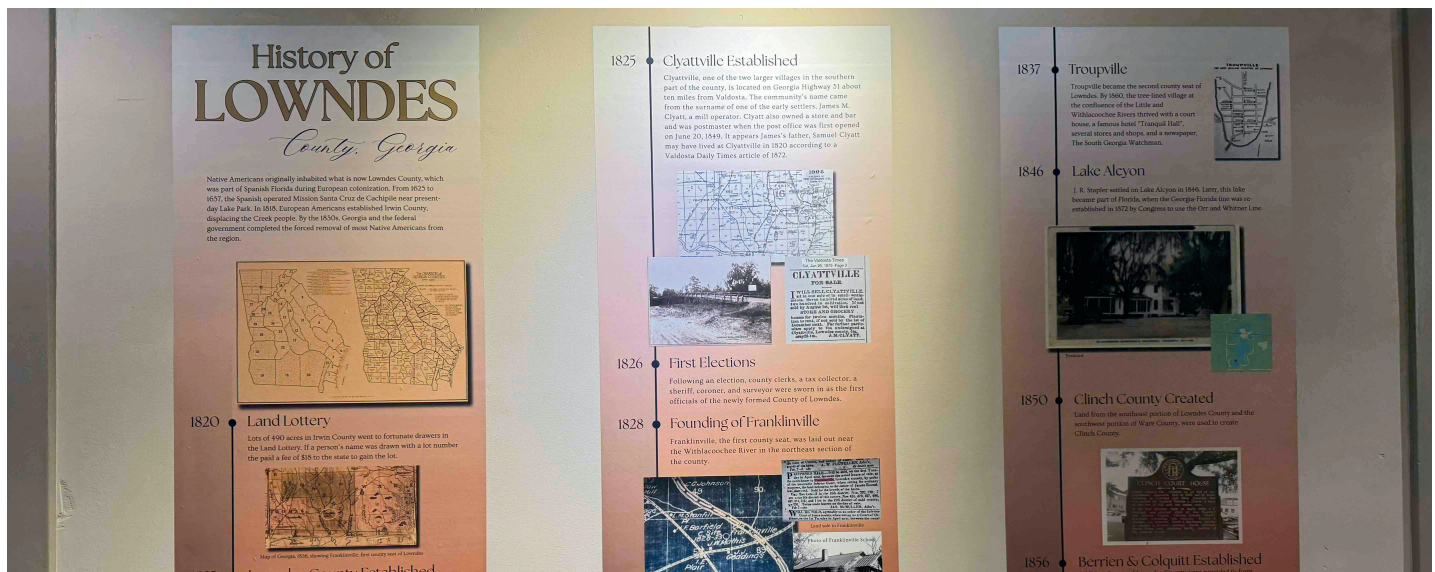


Yesterday & Today

NEWSLETTER OF THE LOWNDES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Editor's Note

Living in an era of plastic flatware, build-it-yourself IKEA furniture, and “fast fashion” garments ordered on Amazon, permanence and longevity feel elusive. Maybe it’s the nostalgia that accompanies aging, or the nomadic existence my typically American family now leads, or the fleeting nature of life events glimpsed through the rear view mirror, but these days I often find myself wondering: Where are the things that last? What has gone the distance? What will be here after I’m gone?

Lowndes County, for one. Two hundred years is nothing to sneeze at, and it didn’t come easy. As part of my ongoing attempt to familiarize myself with this place I now call home, I recently read Louis Schmier’s captivating *Valdosta & Lowndes County: A Ray in the Sunbelt*. I was astonished to learn of the cycles of struggle both have endured—the seemingly endless disruptions to the established way of life, the requisite determination and hard work county residents of all stripes called up again and again, the community emerging each time stronger than before. The unpassable Coffee Road. Post-civil war recovery. The boll weevil. The coming of the Georgia Southern & Florida railroad. Truck farming. The founding of Langdale Company and South Georgia Pecan. Moody Air Force Base. John Copeland (Number 44) and racial intergration. The South Georgia State Normal School. Winnersville’s football victories. Hurricanes Idalia and Helene.

Although much of the ephemera that mark these pivotal events is long gone, some of it, thankfully, stays safely housed in the Lowndes County Museum, and the preservation of the region’s remaining artifacts is what will enable these stories to be infinitely told. Some visitors to the collection, like Jackson Sutherland (page 5) and Gerald Bailey (page 7), have called Valdosta home their whole lives; others, like Joscelyn Godwin (page 3), Mark Henderson (page 5), and a good friend who only recently discovered the museum’s existence, though transplants from other parts of the country, marvel at the richness of the county’s unique heritage and are forever changed by what they learn.

“Valdosta is quite the survivor,” my friend texted me after viewing the newest exhibit (above). She’s right. As Lowndes County celebrates its bicentennial, may we take continue to perpetual action on its behalf (page 6), finding inspiration in the legacy of its past and excitement for what its next 200 years may bring.

Amy Faeskorn

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Lowndes County Continues Bicentennial Celebrations

It's hard to believe, but this year's bicentennial celebration is almost half over! Several festivities have already taken place in commemoration of this special time in the county's history.



In March, the Georgia House of Representatives and Senate recognized the 200th anniversary of Lowndes County during the legislative session with two resolutions, H.R. 704 and S.R. 327. Later that month, the official celebration was kicked off in downtown Valdosta with the first installment of the Lunch on the Lawn series. Several more events are scheduled throughout the remainder of the year, including the Lowndes Air Open Market on August 16 and the Bicentennial 5K on September 13.

For its May 22 meeting, LCHS welcomed Michael Smith, Commissioner for District 5; Jessica Ganas, Lowndes County Historic Courthouse Facility and Marketing Coordinator; and Meghan Barwick, Public Information Officer, all of whom presented on the many events still planned. LCHS Executive Director Renate Milner also debuted the bicentennial exhibit now on display in the Bird Annex.



Bicentennial swag is also available! Stop by the historic courthouse to purchase limited edition holiday ornaments (\$20), postcards, and t-shirts.

To stay up-to-date on all upcoming events, visit facebook.com/lowndescountygga.

Executive Director's Corner

The museum has been a busy place this spring, with new exhibits, ongoing improvements, and a steady flow of visitors and community engagement.

The *200 Years of Lowndes County* exhibit is now fully installed and open to the public in the Bird Annex. It offers a thoughtful and engaging look at two centuries of local history. The exhibit has already received positive feedback from visitors and members alike.

The spring newsletter was mailed in April with a brand-new layout—and the response has been very positive. We're pleased with the fresh design and tone, and we're glad to have such a capable and enthusiastic editor leading the charge. Our website is now live with updated photos and improved navigation.

Several maintenance and improvement projects have been completed, and the backyard is open again for visitors. Public programs, class reunions, and community groups have kept the research and photo request queue full and Harry busy.

Rooms on the lower level of the Bird Annex are being cleaned and reorganized to get ready for the next exhibits. The historic Mathis Auditorium sign has been mounted on the back fence.

We appreciate the continued support from our members. The work continues—and we look forward to sharing even more in the months ahead. Come see us!

Renate Milner

Check out the new bicentennial exhibit at the museum!
Open Tuesday through Thursday 11 am to 4 pm

A Tale of Two Valleys

by Joscelyn Godwin

It is common knowledge that Valdosta was named in 1859 in honor of the recently deceased Governor George McIntosh Troup (1780-1856). Because there were already a Troup County and a Troupville, it was decided to name the new county seat after his favorite plantation. But why was that so named?

Troup's life was a brilliant success story on the surface, while beneath it were tragedies including the loss of two wives and three children. By the age of 21, he had completed his education under tutors and private schools in Savannah and Long Island, graduated from Princeton, studied law, and been aide to Governor James Jackson (1757-1806). Bearing the courtesy title of Colonel, he entered the Georgia Legislature in 1803, beginning a public career that would take him to the U.S. Congress, Senate, Governorship of Georgia, and the brink of a bid for the Presidency. While his working life was mainly in Savannah, by 1815 he owned a plantation in Laurens County. Its simple log house remained his favorite home for the rest of his life (Harden, pp. 158, xxi). He retired there for fishing, hunting, and wide reading, and named it "Valdosta," after the Valle d'Aosta, a spectacular mountainous region in Northwest Italy.

The city of Aosta was founded by the Romans in 25 BC, after they had subdued the local tribes, and named for the Emperor Augustus—"Aosta" being a contraction of his name. Troup's 500-page biography shows no evidence that he had been there or even made a single Atlantic crossing. However, the region was well known by reputation. By the 1780s, geologists had begun to explore its encircling peaks of Monte Rosa, Matterhorn, Mont Blanc, and Gran Paradiso, while archaeologists studied Aosta's rich Roman remains. In 1800, Napoleon's army made a decisive invasion of Italy through the Great St. Bernard Pass and the Aosta valley. Artists had followed, notably J. M. W. Turner in 1802. Their drawings and paintings pleased the Romantic taste for the majesty of nature. Some were copied by engravers and widely distributed in prints. Troup was calling his plantation "Valdosta, Laurens County" by April, 1824, and continued to do so up to his last year (Harden, p. 248). His large library might have contained a clue to his interest, had it not burned in 1880 along with the house he called Vallombrosa.

This was the name that Troup gave to another plantation that he bought in 1832, consisting of 1800 acres with an imposing house at Lower Turkey Creek, a few miles south of his Valdosta. The name comes from another Italian valley, (= *valle ombrosa*, "shady valley"), 25 miles from Florence. It houses a Benedictine abbey which was visited in 1638 by John Milton. When he came to write *Paradise Lost*, Milton recalled his impression and used it to describe the angels of Satan: "His Legions, Angel Forms, who lay intrans't/Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks/In Vallombrosa, where th' Etrurian shades/High overarch't imbrowr."

Some later travelers to Italy, intrigued by Milton's curious lines, went to see Vallombrosa for themselves. They included William Wordsworth, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Mary Shelley, and William Beckford. The latter's lively account in Italy, with *Sketches of Spain and Portugal*, published in London and Philadelphia in 1834, may have been Troup's inspiration in giving his Turkey Creek plantation a more dignified name. In the USA, colloquial pronunciation and ignorance of its origin often caused it to be written as "Vallambrosa." As such it was given to a plantation near Savannah, and continues there as "The Villages at Vallambrosa," a housing development on the south side of the city.

(continued on next page)



Image from James Pattison Coburn's *Views in the Valley of Aosta Drawn from Nature* (1823)

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Tomb of Governor Troup in Lothair
photo © Brian Brown, vanishinggeorgia.com

(continued from previous page)

After Troup's death in 1856, Vallombrosa passed to his daughter Oralie, who in another stroke of fate became insane and was institutionalized. The splendid house fell into disrepair until her agent, Colonel Robert P. Wayne, took charge. He employed 400 freed slaves to set both the Valdosta and Vallombrosa plantations working profitably with modernized farming methods. As mentioned, the house burned in 1880; Wayne died in 1881, and that was the end of Governor Troup's two “valleys.”

For further reading:

Edward J. Harden, *The Life of George M. Troup*, Savannah: E. J. Purse, 1859. Available online through the Hathi Trust.

Will Bowers, “Vallombrosa Visited, 1838-1851,” *Modern Philology* 118/3 (2021), accessed online.

Scott B. Thompson, Sr., “Thick as the leaves of Time,”
dublinlaurenscountygeorgia.blogspot.com/2010/09/vallambrosa.html

Joscelyn Godwin, a retired music history professor (Colgate University) and a winter resident of Valdosta, wrote for the March 2025 newsletter on the Valdosta adventure of Father Divine.

DID YOU KNOW?



Valdosta's oldest surviving residence, the Wisenbaker-Wells-Roberts house circa 1845, located on Wells Street, is currently on the market for \$450,000.

For more information about restoring this important piece of local history, visit

www.georgiatruster.org/endangered-properties/wisenbaker-wells-roberts-house/



Mark Henderson, Jackson Sutherland

Scanning, dusting, and everything in between

Valdosta newcomer Mark Henderson and Lowndes High School student Jackson Sutherland join the ranks of the society's volunteers

Jackson Sutherland lived his whole young life in Valdosta without ever knowing the Lowndes County Historical Society even existed—until a friend told him he should volunteer there.

"I love history, and I plan to major in it when I go to college," says the Lowndes High School junior. "So when I learned about the opportunity, I came straight away. I'm really into the early years of our state. James Oglethorpe, the Yamacraw, and other Native American tribes who lived here are all fascinating to me. I'm also intrigued by the Salzburgers and their story."

Jackson began volunteering last month and has already made a big impact: over a 10-day period, and using just his iPhone and a tripod, he digitized all 416 pages of the 1915 *Valdosta Daily Times*. "They're so brittle they were starting to fall apart in our hands," he says. "Now we have them in the permanent digital collection and will be able to put them up online."

Over the summer, Jackson plans to come in each weekday from noon to 3 pm. His next task? Writing posts and increasing traffic to the Society's social media channels.

Like Jackson, Mark Henderson has always had a passion for history. When he and his wife purchased their home at 400 Central Place—within walking distance of the museum—he turned to Researcher Harry Evans and Executive Director Renate Milner for assistance in researching its past. "We thought our house was designed by Lloyd Greer, but Harry's findings sadly didn't support that," he says. "We do know that it was built in 1922, and restored by Alex Alvarez. We fell in love with the neighborhood and are so glad we now live in the historic district." After doing some digging, he even discovered the name and background of the first owner. "We don't so much own the place as feel we're caretakers of it," he explains.

After retiring from a career in international trade, Mark, along with his wife, Marcel, decided to move to the area to be close to their daughter and her family, who live in Tifton. Since starting to volunteer last month, he's enjoyed helping out with whatever is needed, from vacuuming to shelving books to organizing stacks of papers. "I'm particularly fascinated by the World War II period and am looking forward to learning more about how Valdosta was impacted during that time," he says. "I love being at the society and respect that it needs a lot of support from the community."

Interested in working with Mark and Jackson on the many projects currently underway?

Email Harry Evans at lchs.research@gmail.com or Renate Milner at milner.renate@gmail.com for help.

LCHS Accepts Qualified Charitable Distributions

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, the Lowndes County Historical Society and Museum is dependent on memberships and donations to operate, replace exhibits, and provide free admission.

Did you know there are multiple ways to support LCHS?

One method is a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) which allows an IRA owner or beneficiary over age 70½ to donate directly from an IRA to a charity without being taxed on the Required Mandatory Distribution (RMD).

Another option is donor advised funds.

If you're interested in supporting LCHS, please contact Justin Martin, at 229-247-3381, Southeast Capital Investment Group, who can facilitate transfers to your specifications which can support areas of the museum you wish to grow.

The society depends on the generosity of its patrons around the world to carry out our mission.

Thank you to all contributors.

received March 12 - June 6, 2025

Memorials

Jeff Anderson

Matilda Stubbs

Ralph Council

Ed and Rita Hightower

James Wendell Godbee

Sally and Charlie Barnes III

George H. Hart III

Ron and Carol Irwin

Jimmy Manning

Sally and Charlie Barnes III

John L. McGowan

Mary Young Manning

Melinda C. Pate

John Kent Edwards, Sr.

Honorariums

Mark Henderson

Deanna Wagoner

Ring the Bell!

The Valdosta Institute bell is a prominent feature of the Museum's side yard, visible from Central Avenue to thousands of vehicles passing daily.

Student visitors love ringing the bell, and we use it to celebrate Independence Day, Veterans Day, and other special occasions.

The wheel on the bell, which is made of wood, has rotted, rendering the bell unusable for the past two years.

The cost to replace the wheel in steel is \$2,800.

We need your support to repair this important landmark.

Donate today!

Lowndes County Historical Society

P.O. Box 56

Valdosta, GA 31603-0056

lowndescountymuseum.com

Save the Date!

Membership Meeting

September 18, 2025

4 pm

Bird Annex



Fall Ramble

October 10-12, 2025

Tour of 22 historic properties
with meal options available

To register, visit:

www.georgiatrust.org/tours-events/fall-ramble/

The Boys Next Door

by Gerald W. Bailey, in honor of Jesse Moore



Gerald Bailey

Once there were two nine-year-old boys who met at Pine Grove Elementary School's fourth grade class of 1941. As toddlers, the tall one was known as "Bashful Thighs"; later he towered over his pal and he nicknamed him "Slats." They became fast friends and were almost like brothers. They got to have sleepovers and spend time with each other's families. What fun they had!

Their class was small—just eight girls and eight boys. Fourteen members of the class have since passed away; only these two remain. Both boys enjoyed life growing up in Lowndes County. Most importantly, they made an important promise to never use tobacco or alcohol, and they kept it.



Jesse Moore

They played sports in high school. They were active in Future Farmers of America and won trips to the FFA National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri in 1949. They graduated from Pine Grove High School in 1949 and planned to enroll at ABAC. Slats did, finishing his degree at UGA in just three years, milking cows on a dairy farm and later at a dairy processing plant to pay his way. He joined the Air Force and flew reconnaissance near the USSR border. As Director of the Cotton Division for the USDA, he was based out of Washington, D.C. but traveled all over the world, classifying cotton as far away as China, India, and Australia. Now retired, he and his wife, Nancy, make their home in Virginia.

Back to the short guy. He'd planned on heading to ABAC with Slats and rooming with him—he'd even paid his dorm reservation fee—but the Korean conflict was heating up. He decided to enlist in the Air Force instead, thinking he'd serve long enough to come home and go to college later on the GI bill.

Life had other plans. His parents owned some acreage just north of Valdosta city limits and operated a service station and grocery for a small mobile home village they had established. His dad, Roy Bailey, loved to farm some of the place, but he hurt his back and had to

have two separate operations, so the boy went home on a hardship discharge (DD 214, honorably so) and helped his family through that difficult time.

Two and half years later, that same boy was sitting out on the curb of the Keys Drive-In, playing guitar and serenading the girls. He spotted a beautiful young lady heading in to the restaurant, got up, and went inside to meet her. Not long afterwards, on December 17, 1955, he and Betty were married. This December they'll celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary!

As the years went by, the boys stayed in touch. They'd see each other regularly at Pine Grove reunions. With birthdays only 11 days apart, they'd call every year to say "Happy Birthday." They still check up on each other by phone.

One day not long ago, Slats thought it would be a good idea to write up their story. "Somebody ought to know about us living this long and being such good friends," he said. So the other boy said, "If that's what you want me to do, then that's what I'll do."

These two Lowndes County fourth-graders had no idea that their friendship would see them through life's ups and downs, last over over 80 years, and still go strong to this day.



The boys as toddlers



Senior year at Pine Grove High, 1949

Gerald Bailey expanded Bailey's Mobile Manner in 1956 and ran it until his retirement in 2004.

Jesse Moore is the author of And One More Thing: Life on a South Georgia Farm, 1932-1949.



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