



Wakulla County Historical Society Newsletter April 2010

Features:

- Monthly Program
- Upcoming Events
- Spotlight on the Museum
- History Exploration
- Committee Reports:

Genealogy
Membership
Heritage Village
Cemetery
Audio Visual
Volunteer
Coordinator-Historian
Photography
Public Relations,
Sponsors & Donations

- President's Message

**WCHS
BOARD
MEETING
APRIL 13,
6:00 P.M. AT
THE MUSEUM**

"A MORSEL OF GENUINE HISTORY IS A THING SO RARE AS TO BE ALWAYS VALUABLE". -Thomas Jefferson

MONTHLY PROGRAM FEATURE - APRIL 13, 2010 "A FAMILY TRADITION - SYRUP MAKING IN SOPCHOPPY"

Mrs. Betty Green would like to invite you to our monthly program for April featuring Richard Hardin of Sopchoppy sharing "A Family Tradition - Syrup Making in Sopchoppy." Richard Harden's family is keeping a dying art alive; each fall the Harden family comes together to make sugar cane syrup. The tradition began 40 years ago when Gerald Harden was taught the art of syrup making from old time Sopchoppy syrup makers Johnny Roberts, Theo Rudd, and Bert Roddenberry. The county extension agent at the time was Robert Greener; he hired Johnny Roberts to teach Gerald the art of syrup making. Gerald learned to cook syrup on Edison Roddenberry's mill. He eventually bought the mill from the family of Edison Roddenberry and moved it to the Harden Farm in West Sopchoppy. Gerald and his three brothers Warren, Larry, and Ronnie Harden, along with their father Heddie Harden, built the syrup house and mill operation where it still stands today.



Charles Harden and Craig Dodson feed the sugar cane into the mill prior to making cane syrup. Photo by Bill Gilman

Monthly meetings are held at the Wakulla County Public Library on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. except during the summer and Christmas.

Upcoming Events & Fund Raising By Carolyn Harvey

We will be at the Sopchoppy Worm Gruntin' Festival on April 10, 2010. We will need volunteers to help with all these events. Contact me at 524-5334 if you can help.



**Spotlight on the Museum
By**

Mary Sampson, Director

Jim Calhoun has completed the hanging of the drywall in the Westside display room and it is ready to paint. We need helpers who aren't afraid of getting messy. We are making a silk purse from a sow's ear; next comes the carpet then the displays.

Thanks to volunteer Anne Stewart who secured her husband Mike our County Commissioner and the ROTC instructor at Wakulla High to have the cadets to help with moving the Museum's property from the Elizabeth Smith Room at the Library to the Museum. It will be stored temporarily upstairs while we inventory exactly what we have and make plans to display the materials. Another "new" volunteer, Sue Griffin has been working hard getting Linda's scrapbooks of old newspaper articles by Captain Schley organized. These will be indexed making it easier to find a particular article. Sue is a retired librarian and I can see her talents being put to good use at the Museum.



**History Exploration
"Salt Pan Island"**

By John Y. Roberts

This is a second part of a series on "Salt Pan Island" by John Y. Roberts. We will be doing a series featuring his story and will have a program in September at the library.

..Salt was a dire necessity, not only for flavoring and preparation of food, but most importantly, for the preservation of perishables such as meats. The Confederate armies had to be fed, and many foods were packed in barrels and shipped to their camps. Without salt, the southern war effort was doomed.

Soon the Confederate government and private citizens began to realize that soon the supplies of salt would be exhausted. Naturally, their minds turned to the salty water of the nearby Gulf of Mexico, and the inexhaustible supply of salt there. The method of evaporation had been used for ages, and still is, to some extent, but the people of the south were not familiar with it and had little or no equipment for the process.

Soon, a large number of people went to the coast and began the new industry in a limited way. In no time, hundreds of small salt works were producing salt all along the coast of Florida. Some operated continuously and provided the finished product to the Confederate army, while some made it to sell to the general public. Still others were farmers who went to the coast in the fall to make enough salt to preserve their

meats through the coming year. The farmers usually brought their kettles and other utensils back with them after making salt for no more than two weeks. Farmers from throughout Georgia and Alabama made these yearly treks to the Florida coast.

The average small salt plant consisted merely of a large kettle holding from sixty to one hundred gallons of water and set in a brick or clay furnace. They were very similar to the syrup furnaces of today found on small farms in our area. They were not built directly on the shore because of the high tides and wind, but were usually located at least a few hundred feet inland.

To be continued...



Iron Pot at salt works

"Farmers from Florida and Georgia made a yearly trek for Salt"

Committee Reports

Genealogy

By Carolyn Harvey

The Genealogy group would like to invite you to join us for our next special meeting on April 1, 6:30 p.m., at the Library. The meeting entitled "Melody really is an Indian" will feature Melody Porter from Thomasville, Ga. Call 850-524-5334.

To receive tips called "About Genealogy Tip of the Day, and "The Weekly Discovery." Send your request to 46frog@gmail.com.

Membership

By Tanya Lynn

We had 17 members at our regular meeting with 7 visitors. We have 113 paid members (more including family memberships). Contact Tanya at tanyalynn165@gmail.com for more information.

Heritage Village

By Murray McLaughlin

I talked with Eva Thorpe and the funding cycle for the grant application for money to purchase the Medart parcel opens at the end of March. Deadline is end of May. I will be meeting with Eva in the next couple of weeks to go over any last minute needs including narrative. We will definitely be applying. It is not too late to turn in your volunteer hours on Heritage Committee activities. The Knight Community Foundation grant I wrote last year will be resubmitted after March. The Foundation had suspended acceptance of any applications which explains the lack of response. They are

rewriting their guidelines and will be accepting again after March. This application was for money to purchase materials for reassembly of the Linzy House we had moved to Jim's property.

I attended the latest Swamp Gravy performance in Colquitt, Georgia this past weekend. This was an encore performance of one of their earliest and most popular performances from the 1990s. It is called the "Gospel Truth" and continues each weekend through March. Confirms in my mind that this type of oral history/folk play is not only a great way to preserve and share our history, but could become a major fund raiser. You can email Murray McLaughlin at murmac@embarqmail.com for more information.

Cemetery Committee

If you would like to help maintain local abandoned cemeteries contact John E. Roberts at jeroberts@comcast.net.

Audio Visual Coordinator

We are still working on copying tapes of our WCHS meetings onto DVD. You can contact Scott at scottj@wakullalibrary.org.



Volunteer Coordinator/Historian

Arlene Vause will be our new Volunteer Coordinator for WCHS. Her new responsibilities include finding volunteers to fill

vacant positions; work with all groups to assist with finding volunteers; assist with organizing events; and train volunteers. She will also help with the preservation of our history. We appreciate Arlene's dedication.

Photographer Cal Jamison

Cal is always at all our events capturing the history of our organization. He does a great job and has many years of important photographic history. Thanks Cal!

Public Relations, Sponsors & Donations

By Sandra Vidak

During the March board meeting this historic quote was adopted as our motto:

"A morsel of genuine history is a thing so rare as to be always valuable"

~Thomas Jefferson~

This quote will flavor our promotional material from now on. We are looking forward to meeting with the Heritage Village Committee this next week and continue in research to determine needs and assess all available resources to produce the best possible media packet. The vision of the Heritage Village should materialize into some colorful tools to share with others to bring them on board too. The dream of a park-like setting to share our heritage and demonstrate living in this beautiful county, from the time

**The Preservation
of Wakulla County
History
"A Work in
Progress"**



Arlene Vause, Tanya Lynn & Carolyn Harvey doing Genealogy Research at the Museum Research Lab

Public Relations, Sponsors & Donations Cont...

the Creek Indian pronounced it "Guacara," will surely be an attraction for our citizens as well as tourists. The girls and boys entered the little Smith Creek School through separate doors and later departed the same to run and play. There's a wooden swing hung from expansive tree branches and drink of cool water from a wooden ladle passing one's lips will surely capture memories of times gone by if but for a moment. The Heritage Village will provide a place for those memories to live on by first-hand experience. Wakulla County history is rich with folklore and characters to enrich future generations.

Acknowledging the tireless dedication and hard work of those who have come before us in preserving the history of Wakulla County, we are privileged to serve now while experiencing the realization of their dreams.

The Museum is nearly bursting with information and exhibits; the opening of another room so quickly is nearly beyond all expectations. Resident expert genealogists avail themselves to help with research making the Museum a "must drop by" place in downtown Crawfordville. Talk of a fall heritage festival to be held on grounds around the Museum just adds to excitement in the air of preservation progress.

The Society's Facebook group page has been well-received and will be linked to the wakullahistory website which is under construction. We strongly solicit your suggestions and contacts for publicity and promotional material along with pictures and previously prepared written material by email to vestreety@msn.com and vidaks@embarqmail.com.



The small wooden swing is imagined to be on the grounds of the Heritage Village to remind us of times gone by.



Historic Smith Creek School one of the historic properties to join our Heritage Village

Message from the President:

As you can see from this newsletter, we are making wonderful strides toward accomplishing some of the goals of the WCHS. We are in hopes of pursuing our dream of the Heritage Village and a completed museum. Our second Wakulla County book is much anticipated. You are a part of our accomplishments through your support. We appreciate you and could not do it without you.

Thank you for your support.

Cathy Gray Frank

President WCHS

Visit the Museum on Thursday and Friday from 10:00 – 4:00 p.m. You can contact Mary Sampson, Museum Director at msampson26@comcast.net if you need any assistance or would like to visit the museum. Museum Telephone Number 850-926-1110

We're on the web at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~flwchs/>