

# The Vintage Rabun Quarterly

THE RABUN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## RABUN COUNTY PLACE NAMES

Like many locations in Georgia, many of Rabun County's place names are derived from Indian names. In Rabun County that would be the Cherokees; further south in Georgia, the names would derive from the Creeks. In most Indian place names, we know the English spelling of how the Cherokees pronounced the word, but no actual translation of what the word means. For example, both Chattooga and Chechero were the names of villages. Chattooga was derived from the town which once stood on the South Carolina side of the river, near the mouth of Warwoman Creek. It was abandoned, probably in 1760, because it lay on the route of two British Army expeditions. When explorer John Bartram passed by in 1776, he noted town ruins in the area.

The area where Clayton is now located was once an important intersection of major Indian trails known as Dividings. One route that branched to the southeast, along what is now Highway 76 East, passed an Indian village mapped by Henry Mouzon in 1777 and called "Chichirohe". That derivation is easy to see in the community we call Chechero. The word "Tallulah" has often been said to

mean "terrible". One expert of the Cherokee language says it cannot really be translated. There was an Indian village near the great falls and gorge in the late 1600s called "Talulu". By 1725 there was another village in the same area called "Turura", a variation of "Talulu".

Some Indian names are Anglicized; Warwoman is one example. The most important route out of Dividings ran along Warwoman Creek to the east, forded the Chattooga River, and forked in South Carolina to trails that then led to Virginia and Charleston. The creek name (and



"Kerbytown"

later the community's name also) came from an honored title among the Cherokee. It was their custom to take a woman along on war parties, primarily to cook and sew, but when one proved her mettle on several expeditions, she was given the designation, War Woman. We don't know which specific woman was referred to because the Warwoman Creek has held that name for far more than 200 years.

Timpson Creek's name does not seem to have an Indian connection at first glance. But it is, in fact, named for a Cherokee, John Timson,

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## THE VINTAGE RABUN CHALLENGE

A famous resident of Clayton, Ga. wrote a book that was so controversial that it was banned in Boston. Who was the author and the book?

The answer to is on page 4.

Rabun County Historical Society Museum  
Participating in Southern Literary Trail

In March, 2009 there will be a month-long celebration honoring some of the South's greatest authors. Southern towns, communities and landmarks will be linked by a "trail" of eighteen locations across Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi.

Lillian E. Smith, the author of the book, *Strange Fruit*, is among those being honored. Lillian and her family moved to Clayton in 1915. In 1920, her father, C. W. Smith and his son Frank started the Laurel Falls Camp for Girls. In 1925, Ms. Smith left her career in music and took over as director of the

camp when the health of her parents declined.

While managing the camp, Lillian began writing and started a literary magazine. In 1944 she published *Strange Fruit*. This caused much notoriety as it was a story of a love affair between a white boy and a black girl. She was the first white woman in the South to write and speak openly against racism and segregation.

In 1949 Lillian closed the camp and concentrated her time to writing. She wrote six more books, as well as articles and speeches that expressed her views on racism.

Lillian Smith was buried on the grounds of the Laurel Falls Camp for Girls in September, 1966 after a battle with cancer.

On March 14th, as part of the Literary Trails Events, there will tours of the Lillian E. Smith Center, home site, and grave. The historical society will be open that day as well for visitors to view a special exhibit about Lillian Smith.

Go to [www.southernliterarytrail.org](http://www.southernliterarytrail.org) for more information on events.



Author, Lillian E. Smith

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who was the first convert made by Baptist missionaries in 1823.

Other Indian names abound in Rabun County. Stekoa Creek was first called "Sticooa" by the Cherokees, and Hiwassee Street is named for the great trail known as "Hiwassee" that connected the Cherokee settlements around Franklin, North Carolina to those of the valleys further south and west. Even Savannah Street, which many believe to be named for Savannah Bleckley, may actually be of Cherokee derivation because it is the English equivalent of "Hiwassee", meaning grassy valley.

When the Cherokee were removed and Rabun County was created in 1819, the white settlers started their own naming. Rabun comes from Governor William Rabun, who died in office shortly before our county came to be. Clayton, originally Claytonville, was named for Superior Court Judge and Congressman, Augustus Clayton, of Clarke County. Dillard was, of course, named for the Dillard family, among the first white settlers in that locale. Mountain City



"Pass Over"

was originally called "Pass Over" by settlers because it was part of the great valley pass through the Blue Ridge. By 1915, it was known as Mountain City. According to Mrs. Della Watts' recollections, Tiger was once called "Kerbytown", after a prominent resident who ran a general store there. The derivation of the name, "Tiger", cannot be confirmed. Some say it is named for a Cherokee chief named "Tiger Tail". Other oral history says the panther's cry from the mountains reminded early settlers of English origin of the eerie cry of the tiger of India.

Some of the information in this article was taken from the *Placenames of Georgia* by John H. Goff.

Article submitted by Carol Law Turner

New Exhibit  
On Town Histories

To learn more about the history of the towns in Rabun County, come and see the Rabun County Historical Society's current exhibit featuring the towns of Clayton, Dillard, Lakemont, Mountain City, Tallulah Falls, and Tiger.

Check Out Historic  
Photographs in the Courthouse

The county commissioners and the historical society worked jointly on creating an historic display in the new courthouse entrance.

Placed on the walls of the new outer lobby are oversized reproductions of early photographs of towns in Rabun County.

## MEMBERSHIP IS THE HEART OF OUR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Our annual and life members support us with their financial contributions, which provides for most of our operating expenses. The participation of our members in volunteering their time during our open hours and working on special projects is essential to our success. Without the continued support of our membership, we would not be able to do our work. We heartily welcome the following new life members:

### NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Glenda Benfield

Lawton Wofford

Celeste York

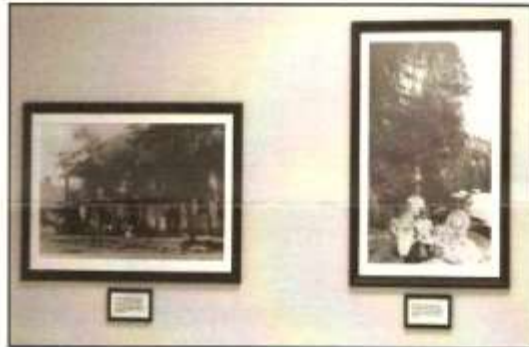
Mary M. Pooler

*The cost to become a lifetime member is \$100. Consider upgrading your membership.*

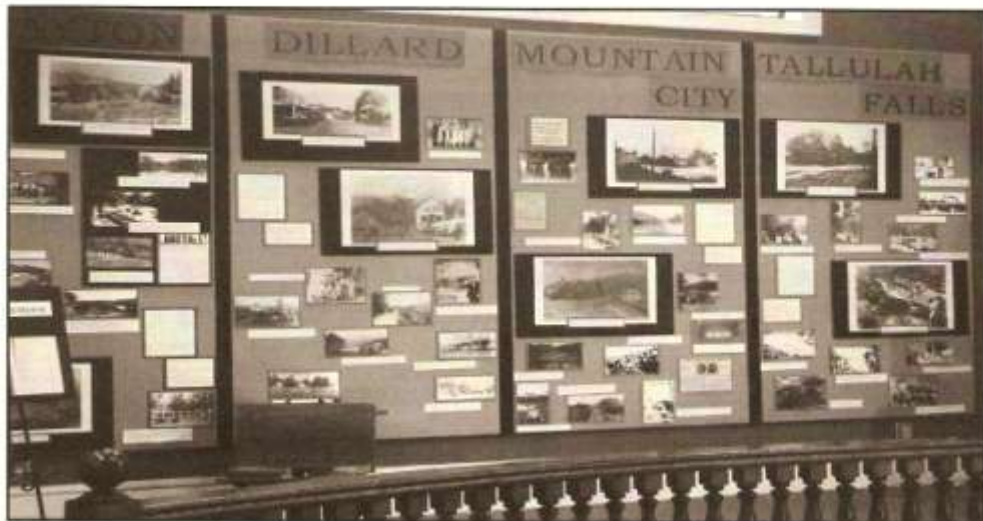
## MUSEUM SCENES



Jane Bingham at Camp Dixie Exhibit



Pictures at the Courthouse



New Exhibit on Rabun County Towns