

The Voice

of
The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society
And
The Cobb Memorial Archives

SPEAKING ABOUT THE PAST TO THE PRESENT, FOR A BETTER FUTURE

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Spring 2007

C.V.H.S. Quarterly Meeting

Sunday, April 22, 2007, 3:00 p.m. EDST
The Lanier Room, H. Grady Bradshaw Library
Valley, Alabama

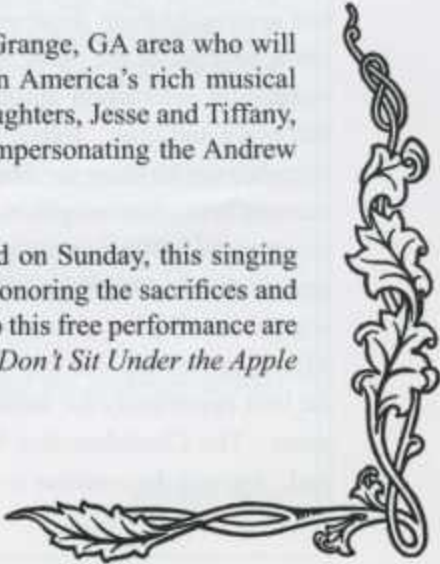


The DeCapos

A unique and exciting musical program has been planned for the April 2007 program of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society.

The DeCapos is a renowned singing group originally from the LaGrange, GA area who will be taking you on a "sentimental journey" to a shining moment in America's rich musical heritage – the days of World War II. Darlene Shaw and her two daughters, Jesse and Tiffany, have made many performances including touring with the USO impersonating the Andrew Sisters.

DaCapo is a musical term meaning to return to the beginning, and on Sunday, this singing group will be paying tribute to the music of the Big Band era and honoring the sacrifices and memories of our country's greatest generation. Those coming out to this free performance are sure to hear such unforgettable tunes as *Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy*, *Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree*, *Bei Mir Bis Du Schoen* and many others.





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am sure that you once in a while wonder why you have a need to know about the past and why you have the urge to tell the old story or save the artifacts that are the bits and pieces of a by-gone era. I too think about these feelings and inclinations and believe they arise from a need we have to contribute to maintaining the "tie that binds" us in our society. Our vision of the future in this technology-driven global era is ever changing and many times threatening. We seem to intuitively know that cultural threads of stability and wisdom are to be found in the past and constantly must be laced into that tie that binds us if our society is to sustain itself. So we collect, we preserve and we seek to tell the story and highlight the sustaining cultural values that emerge from the past. A recent experience caused me to reflect on values that contribute to building a community that could have the best chance of sustaining itself. In rereading Miss Allie Abernathy's Scrapbooks I noticed the many occasions where ministers of different denominations preached at the same funeral. I remembered how my old folks born in the 1880's and 1890's told about visiting various churches of denominations different from theirs and enjoying the fellowship with their neighbors. I remembered the stories about the earlier Meeting Houses where multiple denominations would meet on different Sundays of the month. I remembered stories about my mother's father, a Campbellite Christian born in 1854 who taught Sunday School in rural churches of various denominations in Georgia on Sunday afternoons. And I remembered the visits of my rural family to worship services of various denominations when I was a child. Did our recent ancestors benefit socially and spiritually from these experiences and were they bound together as a community in a better sense because of the cross denominational experiences? I would believe that frequent social and worshipful interaction among the members of a community did strengthen that community in that place and time. Today, out of necessity and due to declining memberships, some small rural churches are holding services only once a month and the members of various denominations are meeting with their neighbors seeking to sustain their churches. Community is being defined in a larger sense by these interdenominational visits across many rural areas. The rural church enjoys greater stability from these visits. So what is the moral of this short musing: that it was and still is good for all of us to know each other, to worship with each other, to eat with each other, and to tell our stories and find our wisdom from the past with one another. If we do these things, we have the best opportunity for sustaining our communities in rapidly changing and somewhat confusing times. The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society collects and preserves but also helps us to find. So, you do continue to reflect, collect and preserve for our common benefit.

- Horace M. Holderfield

ARCHIVE'S REPORT

In the first three months of 2007 some quite interesting things have come our way.

Some years ago Miss Nan Heath gave the Archives an album she had kept with the school pictures of all of the First Graders she had taught at LaFayette Lanier Elementary School in Langdale from 1947 to April 1968. All of the students are identified, which makes this an especially valuable record. In recent months Judy Bledsoe has created and donated to the Archives a CD-R of the pictures in this wonderful album. Creating this record on a disc was a time-consuming labor of love for Mrs. Bledsoe and we deeply appreciate her kindness in sharing this for the pleasure of generations to come.

Among Lavinia Morgan's papers was Vol.1 No.1 of *The LaGrange College Magazine* published in the Fall of 1959. Those of you who attended LaGrange College might be interested in looking through this issue.

Mr. and Mrs. Hunter Searcy have given a copy of a book by their son-in-law, Robert Tracy McKensie, Prof. of History at University of Washington. Lincolnitess and Rebels is a compelling history of the divided town of Knoxville, Tennessee during the American Civil War.

The book has been placed on the library shelves so that it can be checked out by the public.

March has been a month of floods for West Point. Wayne Clark recently used flood photographs from our collections on the *Days Gone By* page of *The Valley Times News*. A clipping featuring a flooded business section of West Point, Georgia that appeared in *The New York Times*, Saturday, March 16, 1929 was found in a scrapbook kept by Mr. George S. Cobb, Jr.

Mrs. Emmie Batson Gorman began what was known as the December Fifth Birthday Club. Original members were John C. Batson, Miss Bertha Heyman, Mrs. A.M. Ennis, Mrs. Ethel Hall, Mrs. E.D. Lifsey, Mrs. G.V. Gorman, Russell Smith and Mrs. Robert M. Causey. A collection of photographs and newspaper clippings of each year's dinner have been donated by Mrs. Gorman's daughter, Graydene Gorman Smith and granddaughter, Gramelda Smith.

We have recently received a "Program of the Tuskegee Institute Centennial Celebration and 64th Annual Founder's Day Observance, April 12, 1981". It is interesting that the LIBRARY TRAVELERS, a new travel group sponsored by the Chambers County Library, will be going to Tuskegee on March 20 almost exactly 26 years after Tuskegee University celebrated its 100th Birthday.

Marjorie, Jeanne and I hope you will have an opportunity to visit the Archives in 2007 and see some of the interesting things we have.

- Miriam Syler

From the editor's pen...

With this issue of *The Voice* we are fortunate to have another article written and researched by CVHS member J. Newell Floyd of Opelika, AL. Mr. Floyd is in my opinion the leading expert on early land records and research in East Central Alabama. Recently it was my privilege to see an extensive map collection that he has exhibited in a building on his family farm. Here he has over 115 maps divided into nine groups for the years 1540 through 1995. His attention to detail and display make it very easy and understandable for visitors when viewing his collection. Unfortunately I had limited time on the day of my visit but plan to go back again soon. For anyone else who might be interested in seeing this wonderful archive he will be happy to show you by appointment.

As the CVHS has an ongoing project of enumerating cemeteries in Chambers County, I took advantage of the cold winter days of February to visit and document five family cemeteries that were previously overlooked in the old cemetery book. These include the Holloway, Turner, Lett, McClendon and Sorrell/Forshee/Partridge cemeteries.

The Sorrell/Forshee/Partridge Cemetery is by far one of the most interesting old cemeteries that I have been to in recent years. There are approximately 45 burial sites and 26 have markers with epitaphs. As this cemetery is located near the old quarry site of tombstone maker Rock Jackson, it was not surprising to find that 25 of the monuments were of his make. The earliest burial date inscribed in stone was for the year 1837 – 170 years ago!

Perhaps the most unusual characteristic about this cemetery is the moat that was dug around the perimeter of the graveyard, clearly designating the one acre site. After all these years the moat is still approximately three feet deep in places and about ten feet wide. Large old oak and hickory trees shade the area well and have prevented undergrowth such as smaller bushes and briars from taking over. I am sure these early Chambers County pioneers would be quite pleased to know that their efforts to establish a burial ground for their family members has withstood the ravages of time and vandals – so far.

- Don Clark

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Photographed ca. 1970 in a dilapidated condition, and reprinted from Lindsey's Reason For the Tears. Fort Cusseta had been used for many years prior as a Commissary by Frank Adkinson Vernon.

FORT CUSSETA, AL REVISITED 2006

Compiled and Contributed by J. Newell Floyd

Not trying to be redundant with my article about the Chapman Trail in an earlier issue, I am choosing to write about "**The Indians are coming... The Indians are coming**" which I'm sure gets your attention...it did mine concerning Fort Cusseta in Cusseta, AL.

This story has its beginning in 1833 when Robert Floyd built a house near Cusseta, AL outside the 'corporate limits' at that time. I have a copy of the painting of the Floyd home which was built when "...the Indians danced in the grove." Pretty awesome.

Then there was the Creek Indian Uprising of 1836. The early settlers built themselves a "smug" little fort, probably to protect themselves as well as their wives and children. It was a log structure, about 16' x 30', a cabin with "gun ports"...much like the other four militia forts in the area...Ft. Gunn, Ft. White Plains, Ft. Dudleyville and Ft. Henderson. Fort Henderson was written about more than the other four forts.

While the Cusseta fort apparently served the earlier settlers well, the Indians were shortly removed and the fort fell to other uses over time. To the extent that it's demise was recognized

by some entrepreneurial soul following the advent of the Montgomery to Atlanta (Western RR) in about 1851, it was relocated to 'downtown' Cusseta right by the railroad, where it began housing a general store of a sort. A historic marker was placed in 1976 commemorating its importance in local history. According to first hand information, the old store building was used as a storage facility for cotton seed from the Vernon Plantation by Frank Adkinson Vernon (1873-1960). Through the auspices of the Chambers County Commission and some community effort, it has stood encased since about 1990, in an umbrella building to preserve it forever more...a matter of question!

In about 1837 Robert Floyd led a contingency of Creek Indians down the old Federal Road from Fort Mitchell, herding them to their new home out West. He returned from this adventure and died in 1840 of an illness at the young age of 40 years. He is buried in the Cusseta Community Cemetery beside his daughter, who was born in Alabama in 1834 and died here in 1835. Other family members are also buried in the Floyd plot. I am just saying that Robert Floyd was a "player" in the scheme of things during this era. There were many more, I'm sure of that!

Keeping matters in perspective, let's examine the written history. It is written in several places that there were "gun-ports..." (in the old) "...fort which can be seen today" in the relocated site. Actually, these gun-ports are the notches for the ceiling trusses that held the old log building together. These notches are well above the height of an average man, making it impossible to



The Robert Floyd House was painted in 1877 by Margaret Josephine Combs (1857-1952) who was born in the house. Close examination of the painting reveals the 1 1/2 story Floyd House to have had two large rooms divided by an open hall or dogtrot. A shed room appears to be at the left end of the porch. Sleeping rooms above the two large rooms downstairs received light and ventilation from window openings at each side of the chimneys in the gable ends. Houses of this design were very typical of the plantation architecture used in antebellum Chambers County.



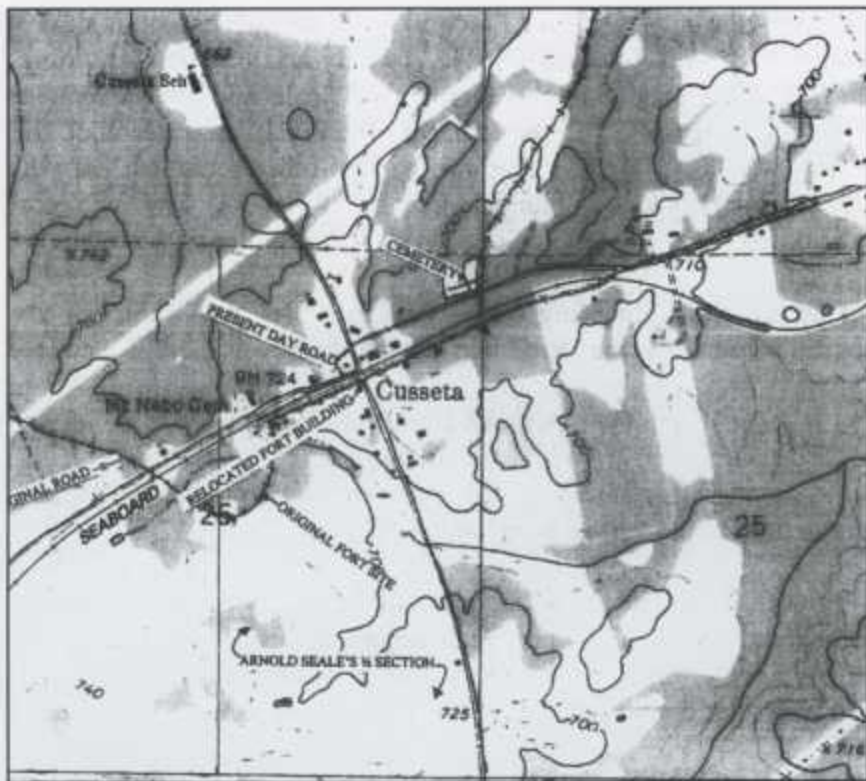
Rotting logs that were once under a protective shed built over the old fort swing in mid air. The lack of maintenance for the protective shelter over the years has allowed inclement weather and termites to reduce Fort Cusseta to nothing more than rotten and decayed wood.

shoulder a firearm at that height unless the armed man or woman (God bless her soul) was standing on a kitchen stool! As it has turned out, a first account witness reports that the gun ports were "...put in at the height of four feet" in a double walled structure. [see also details re: Acknowledgments]. So, it appears to me that only the inner walled structure was relocated to the present site in the town of Cusseta.

As to the original location...this excites me the most. I have conducted interviews, studied old road maps, searched original deeds, as well as topographic maps of yesteryear and today. In my opinion, the original site of Fort Cusseta was located on land allocated to Creek Indian, Kowok-koo-che, which was purchased by Arnold Seale and William & Sanders R. Vann (a land company). It was also on this tract that the town of Cusseta was laid out and on which the public cemetery is located. This tract, known as the East ½ of Section 26, Township 21 Range 27, is shown on a map where the oldest known road network is compared with the newest road network. In my opinion, this is very revealing about the 173 year history of this area.

According to references, Mr. Bobby Lindsey researched the land title for the present site of the "Fort". I suspected that the Seales & Vanns sold this site to local settlers for the purpose of laying out the town and for other public uses before the Creek Indians were removed. So, I set out to try to find proof. Recent research of original records in the Chambers County, AL courthouse revealed some interesting information.

In 1831, Arnold Seale & Sanders Vann, among others, crossed the Chattahoochee River on a ferry at Franklin (West Point, GA) where one of two businesses, a trading post, operated by Arnold Seale was established. On May 18, 1836, the "sanctimonious" Arnold Seale "stricken the



This map shows Arnold Seale's East 1/2 of Section 26 where Cusseta is located. The approximate location of the fort's original location can be seen slightly SW of the present location.

enemy with...terror"; Arnold Seale was among the earlier settlers of the town of Franklin (now called Lanett); John J. Williams became the third merchant of record in the village of Cusseta; seven business houses...existed in Cusseta and Arnold Seale settled in the village prior to 1836; Arnold Seale removed himself to his plantation in Macon County, AL; his son-in-law was Sanders Vann; and, Arnold Seale was the principle financier of the Mobile and Girard Railroad, the town of Seale, AL located along the line was named in his honor.

Another player was John Hunt Broadnax who had settled in West Point, GA. He was a surveyor, teacher, and trader there in 1828. He laid out the town of East West Point (GA) in 1839 and also laid out the town of Dadeville, AL about the same time.

My research leads me to believe that John Broadnax was engaged to lay out the town of Cusseta, AL for the benefit of Arnold Seale. There was an "ill-fated" marriage between John H. and Katherine Baker Whitaker Broadnax of which a premarital agreement set the stage. Broadnax served under General John Floyd's Georgia Militia. Broadnax drew plans for the courthouse and town of Zebulon, GA. In 1826, Broadnax served as Inferior Court Clerk & Clerk of Superior Court, Pike County, GA. Broadnax built a warehouse on the Chattahoochee River in 1825, from which he subsisted the Creek Indians during the Broken Arrow negotiations, and by 1829 he operated a trading post from this facility.

While operating the trading post, he surveyed the area and assisted in the formation of Franklin (now West Point, GA) in 1839 as well as the town of Dadeville, AL, of which the principal street bears his name. Dozens of records indicate Broadnax was a champion of the Creek cause. In 1836, a capias was issued in Tallapoosa County, AL against Broadnax bearing the charge of adultery with a Creek Indian woman.

Obviously, I have digressed from the subject; however, all of these facts are so interesting I just had to share them with you. Now you wonder what all this has to do with Fort Cusseta and the town of Cusseta. Just marvel at this scenario: Arnold Seale asked John Broadnax to lay out the village of Cusseta prior to 1836; Katherine Whitaker Broadnax, divorced, removed with her children to Cusseta, AL, later removing to Macon County, AL; Arnold & Lucy Seale and Sanders R. & Mary R. Vann sold a parcel of land, in 1842, to "Catherine" Broadnax "...being two thirds of Lot and Fraction or parcel of Land, situated in the Town of Cusseta, known in plan of said Town as Lot No Twenty and Fraction adjoining it on the south East...". Wouldn't you speculate that the families of Seale and Broadnax were closely connected in business or friendship? ... particularly when you consider that the sale of the parcel to "Catherine" was for a far less amount than the other recorded lots which have been found on record in the deed books of Chambers County of that era. The last recorded deed of record from Seale was dated April 14, 1848 to one Wiley F. Slaughter in the town of Cusseta.

There is no record of regarding whose land the "fort" was built, nor the original location of the fort, nor did I find when the "fort" was moved; however, there is a conclusion:

A recent investigation of the purported original site appears to be on a "C.T. 1832" tract of



The Smith/Stockade House, a 2-story log structure, was located south of Cusseta on the Cusseta-Oak Bowery Road. Early Chambers County pioneers William W. Smith (1775-1839) and wife Judith B. Smith (1783-1854) lived here and established their plantation of some 1,250 acres of land. Descendants of this family are the well known Smith Ts in Opelika. According to William Davidson in *Pine Log & Greek Revival*, "During the 1870s it became known as the Smith Stockade House. At times there was a shortage of farm help during the Reconstruction following the War Between the States and prison help was recruited for work on the plantations. The prisoners were kept in the old house and until recent years there were some chains on the walls."

land Arnold Seale purchased from a Creek Indian named Ko-wok-koo-chi. It seems that Arnold Seale, in order to protect himself and the few early area settlers from the Indian uprising of 1836, built a structure to protect the "downtown" area of Cusseta.

In the opinion of this compiler, the town of Cusseta was laid out, most likely, by Seale's friend, John Broadnax, about 1839 when Seale began selling "town lots" in the "Town of Cusseta", the earliest recorded in Chambers County was in 1841 (in my opinion, these sales were generally recorded well after the actual date of the transactions as were the original "tract" records).

My further hypothesis divulges that Arnold Seale allowed a Captain Gunn to build Fort Cusseta on Seale's land overlooking from a hill slightly SW from his "town" of Cusseta. It is also interesting that the Cusseta Community Cemetery is also located on Mr. Seale's ½ section of land, in the NE ¼ of the NE ¼ of his section. It is in this cemetery that the earliest recorded grave is dated "Jan 12th 1835". Cusseta was not incorporated until 28 May 1853.

As to the date that the "Fort" building was removed to its present location, it is impossible to determine. Some data supporting its early present location has been documented by the use of the log structure when it was used by Frank Adkinson Vernon when he operated his Commissary in downtown Cusseta circa 1910 in conjunction with his "general store", gin house, and storage of cotton seed in it. Mr. Vernon graduated from Ala. Male College (AU) in 1892, took over his father's farm operation in 1893; married in 1907; and opened his commissary in downtown Cusseta about 1910.

By-the-way, the coordinates of the original site are: Latitude: N32 degrees, 47.247'; Longitude: W85 degrees, 17.623'; Elevation: 696'.

Indians have done come and went...as the old Fort has done about come and went also!

I would like to acknowledge assistance from the following: Miriam Ann Syler, Archivist, Cobb Archives, Valley, AL; "Miss Tommy" Vajda, Retired Post Mistress, Cusseta, AL; Mrs. John N.(Anne) Alsobrook, Treas., Cusseta Community Cemetery; Mr. Ben Jarrell, Cusseta Cemetery Manager; O.D. Alsobrook, property owner, Cusseta, AL; Julia Vernon Keller (use of relocated Ft building); Lindsey's Reason For The Tears @ p239+, pub 1971; Mr. Charles Blanton, 1991 ('umbrella' building), LaFayette, AL; Mr. Chris D. Haveman, Graduate student, AU History Dept.; Mr. Douglas Purcell, Exec. Director, Historic Chattahoochee Commission, Eufaula, AL; Mr William R. Dean, GPS Survey; Mr. Alva T. Webb, II, Land Surveyor.

Upcoming Events

Saturday, May 26 – Come and listen to the ancient music commonly referred to as "fa-sol-la" as participants gather for the annual all day singing held at Mount Pisgah Church. Major B.F. White of Hamilton, GA compiled and published The Sacred Harp in 1844 and the old tunes are still loved and cherished today just as much as they were then. All day singings such as this were once a common occurrence throughout the Chattahoochee Valley area. So if you would like to experience a bit of living history, come for the entire day (9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. CDST) or for an hour or two. There will be a tremendous covered dish dinner on the grounds at noon under the pavilion. Dress comfortably and cool as natural breezes from open windows, ceiling fans, and the swift motion of cardboard funeral home fans are the only "air conditioning" allowed! The church is located 14 miles north of LaFayette on Hwy. 431 at Stroud, Chambers County.



Shown above are CVHS members George Zachry (l) and James Weldon (r) as they enumerate Emory Chapel M.E. Church Cemetery near LaFayette. An ongoing project of the CVHS is to update and record all old cemeteries that were omitted from the previously published cemetery book. Not only did Zachry and Weldon copy epitaphs, they also cut and removed undergrowth in the overgrown and abandoned graveyard.



*CVHS Member
Memorial*

*Mrs. Elizabeth Davidson
Ferguson
of
West Point, GA
1912 - 2007*



***Memorial Gifts
Received by the CVHS***

In Memory of
William Davidson
by Virginia Smith.

In Memory of
William Davidson
by Ken & Carol Henderson.

In Memory of
Leonard F. Simpkins
by Dorothy Davis Moore.

The annual dues of the **Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society** are due each year on the first of January. Dues are \$10.00 per individual, \$5.00 for any other member of the same household, and \$2.00 for any student who is still in school and is under 21 years of age. Other yearly membership levels include **Benefactor** - \$200; **Patron** - \$100 and **Friend** - \$50. In becoming a member you will receive a quarterly newsletter *The Voice*, which will inform you of quarterly meetings, new publications that are offered during the year, articles of historical interest in the tri-county coverage area and upcoming events.

Please make your check payable to C.V.H.S. and mail along with application below to:

Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society, Inc., 3419 20th Avenue, Valley, AL 36854

2007 Membership Application For The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society

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