

The Voice

Of
The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society
And
The Cobb Memorial Archives

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

Volume XXXII, No. 1

Published Quarterly

Spring 2010

C.V.H.S. Quarterly Meeting

Sunday, April 18, 2010, 3:00 p.m. EDST
The Lanier Room, H. Grady Bradshaw Library
Valley, Alabama

The Rise and Fall of John Wallace: Chambers County's Native Son

Speakers: Ron Williams & Dorothy Moore

An interest in local history led Ron Williams to meet Montgomery, Alabama, author Dorothy Moore, who wrote the award winning Oracle of the Ages: Reflections on the Curious Life of Mayhayley Lancaster. The eccentric Lancaster was well known in the Chattahoochee Valley area as a fortune-teller in the mid-20th Century and she gained national attention during the 1948 murder trial of William "Wilson" Turner.

Turner, a share-cropper, was killed by wealthy land-owner John Wallace who went to Georgia's electric chair for the crime in 1950. The episode was made famous when Margaret Ann Barnes's book Murder In Coweta County debuted in 1976, followed by a made-for-TV movie starring Johnny Cash and Andy Griffith in 1983.

Moore is now in the process of writing a book about the life of John Wallace, who was born and spent his boyhood days in Chambers County. Tentatively the book on John Wallace is called The Rise and Fall of John Wallace and should be in print by the fall of 2010.

Ms. Moore is native of Heard County, Georgia and a resident of Montgomery since 1945. She graduated from Norman Academy in Norman Park Georgia, from Alabama College (now University of Montevallo) and has a Master's degree from Auburn University Montgomery. She taught school in the Bessemer City Schools, at Lanier High School and the Montgomery Academy in Montgomery. She later was as an educational specialist with the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education and has been researching and writing since her retirement in 1996. This will be Ms. Moore's third appearance before the membership of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society.*continued on page 2*

Ron Williams who is assisting Moore in gathering information relating to the childhood and ancestry of Wallace, is a member of the seventh generation of his family to call Chambers County home. He and his family reside in the Hopewell Community, where Williams' pioneer ancestors settled in 1833. Ron has always loved history and has a special interest in the south east corner of Chambers County.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our Steering Committee for the Chambers County photographic history project has been very busy in the past three months. The Committee composed of Virginia Weldon, Lynda Burton, Mary Helen Benford, Linda Holderfield, Don Clark and myself have scanned and inventoried more than one thousand images. The book, *Chambers County*, will be published later this year by Arcadia Publishing in its *Images of America Series*. Arcadia has sent us the proof of the cover image which we believe you will really enjoy seeing. Although we have over a thousand images in inventory we may only use 240 in the Arcadia publication, and we are working now to select the images and write their captions. We have future plans for publishing all images submitted for consideration in this project, and we sincerely appreciate individuals and families sharing their treasures.

Folks also have shared many interesting and poignant stories with us about the people and animals in the photographs. The primary purpose for our preserving these old shadows is to experience their power to elicit memories and stories from us about our circumstances in the past and their aid in defining the context of our existence. Unfortunately our captions in the book must be limited by space, and we can only hint at some of the stories belonging to the images. In this message, I would like to relate a story we learned from the photographs.

Scanning a Lee Family collection we discovered a photograph of two young men in their WWI uniforms, Pierce Lee and Lem Slaughter. I was happy to see this photograph, having known Mr. Pierce, of my father's generation, as a friend and enjoyed his telling me about his time in the war. I knew Mr. Pierce served with the Rainbow Division in active combat in the trenches in France in 1918 but I had never learned of Lem Slaughter. Checking Ancestry.com I discovered that the two young men registered for the enlistment on the same day, June 5, 1917. Both registered as single, 21 years of age, and farmers in Chambers County. In a Cumbee family scanning session we had the opportunity to examine the Bethel Baptist Church membership rolls and discovered that Lem Slaughter joined the church on July 28, 1911 and by his name was written in bold letters, "Died in France, November 11, 1918." This date was Armistice Day, the last morning of the last day of The Great War. His was the only death recorded on the immediate pages in the roll book.

The United States declared war in April 1917 and later mobilized the Fourth Alabama National Guard Unit as the 167th of the Forty-second (Rainbow) Division which would be fighting in 1918 in the Aisne-Marne Offensive. Alabama provided 5,000 National Guardsmen, 7,000 volunteers, and 74,000 white and black draftees to the U.S. Army. In the battles in France in 1918 more than 2,500 Alabamians would be killed in the trenches and in the fields. Mr. Pierce never spoke of Lem Slaughter but did describe living conditions, fighting, and capturing German soldiers. He also described how he was made a light machine gunner and was issued a French Chauchat, one of first light machine guns in modern warfare to be carried and fired by a single operator and an assistant. He never had access to an American manufactured weapon during the war.

When discussing scanning with a committee member, Mary Helen Benford, I asked if she and her family had any knowledge of Lem Slaughter. She recalled how a relative, Jake Royston, who served in the 167th, explained what had happened. Jake and Lem, the best friends, had been together and survived the months of combat until that last morning. Although the officers and men on both sides knew when the armistice would take effect, exchanges of fire and even advances were ordered by various officers among British, French, German and American units. Jake recounted that Lem was killed by fire from the Germans that morning before the eleventh hour in what was obviously a senseless act of brutality. The war was ending. At the eleventh hour

when all sounds of aggression ceased and men emerged from the trenches of the Allies and the Germans, celebrations broke out up and down the lines. Jake was swept along with his comrades to meet the German soldiers who were also coming into the no man's land, shouting and embracing everyone. Jake was angry, mad. Lem had just died, and now everyone was jumping about, exhilarated with happiness. When he came face to face with his first celebrating German soldier, Jake drew back his arm and fist and struck the soldier solidly in the face, knocking him out. When Jake recounted his story over the years, he expressed remorse for his last violent act in the war. He empathized with that German soldier and imagined that that young German surely had lost a buddy in the last hours of the war also and felt the same sorrow and loss that he, Jake, felt in the pointless death of an innocent young man. The images of the three good friends, the young soldiers, are presented in *The Voice* for you to see and remember their story and especially to remember Lem Slaughter's sacrifice as a soldier from Chambers County.

- Horace M. Holderfield

ARCHIVE'S REPORT

Our current exhibit is in conjunction with the Alabama Reads program which encourages everyone to read the Mark Twain classic Tom Sawyer. As many of you will remember much of the story takes place on the Mississippi River. Our exhibit is called "Life on the Chattahoochee River" which ties in with Twain's Life on the Mississippi. Sherre Sorrell has created a marvelous story in pictures and articles which tell the story of the Chattahoochee River as it relates to this area from many years ago to the present.

A recent donation to the Archives is a doll which was found a number of years ago on the banks of the river and was given to a doll collector in the Valley. This collector in turn brought the doll to us because of its unique place in the history of the river. The doll's clothing is a very old style and in remarkable condition. Unfortunately there are no identifying marks on this treasure.

Ben Jarrell has donated his first six copies of a new magazine, to which he subscribes that tells the story of the Southern Cotton Mill People. This magazine *Bobbin and Shuttle* is an important addition to our research shelves. In fact, Mr. Jarrell wrote one of the stories in No. 6. The title of his story is "Born in Hard Times". There is also an article attributed to Wayne Clark of *The Valley Times-News*. We hope you will want to come by and read these articles.

We want to introduce our newest employee, Paula Gilmore. Paula is a native of Lanett, moved away for many years, and recently came home. Margie and I are delighted to have Paula join our staff and we are anxious to have you come to the Archives and welcome her.

- Miriam Syler

The Photographic History of Chambers County, Alabama

Over one thousand photographs have been scanned during the last four months for possible inclusion in The Photographic History of Chambers County, Alabama. Some of these have been used in previous publications but many are never before published images that should be of great interest to anyone with Chambers County ties. A sampling of these photographs are presented here.



This 1894 photograph of the Obediah Newman family from the Rock Spring community is an example of cabinet card photos that were relatively inexpensive and copies easily made from glass plate negatives. During this period husbands are almost always posed seated with wives standing. This handsome family was short lived as Mr. Newman died two years later and the young son Albert died in 1898. The widow Jane Alice Estella Abernathy Newman later remarried Dr. Russell D. Stallings, living some years in Chicago but mostly Atlanta where she died in 1959. Submitted by Sara A. Yancey.



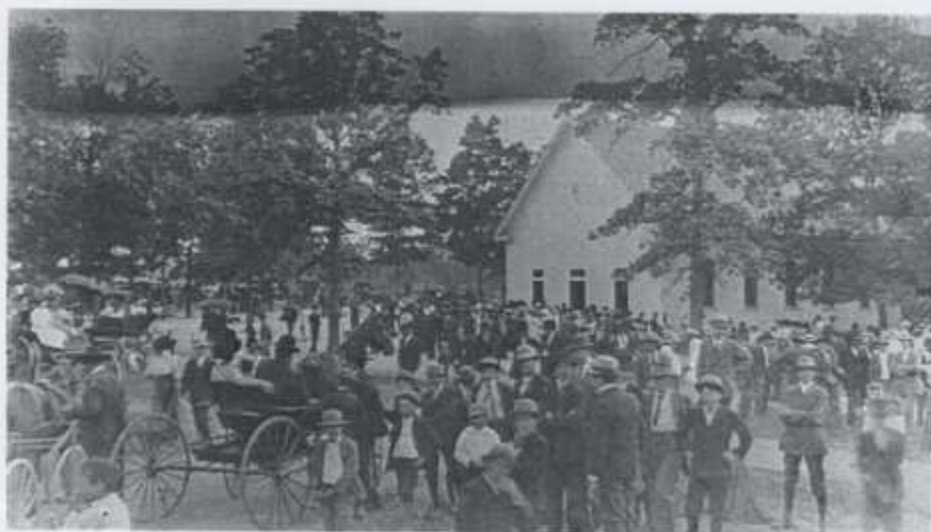
Col. C.S. Moon (1877-1956), a native of Clay County, came to LaFayette to practice law where he was a well recognized figure around the courthouse in the first half of the 20th century. His fondness for watermelon is remembered where he enjoyed eating and sharing them with friends on the courthouse steps. Submitted by Horace Holderfield from the Alice Smith Carroll Collection.



Lem W. Slaughter (left) from Doublehead and Pierce D. Lee from Welch were members of the Rainbow Division during WWI. Slaughter died in France on November 11, 1918. More on these soldiers can be found in the President's Message in this issue. Submitted by Cathy B. Sellers.



The Fredonia Methodist Episcopal Church is believed to have been established around 1833. This 1850s building with four square columns is typical of rural Greek Revival church architecture. The windows above the doors gave ventilation to the slave gallery. In 1954 this building burned and was replaced with the present brick structure. Submitted by Chambers County Museum, C.A. Spence Collection.



People, horses and buggies abound on the grounds of Pleasant Grove Congregational Christian Church in this early 1900s photo made by local photographer Warner M. Phillips. Located in the Union Hill community the church was organized in 1886. This building has been replaced with a brick structure. Submitted by Jason Sanders from the Isom Johnson Collection.



Located in the Hopewell community was the home of the W. W. Williams family. The open end hall referred to as a "dogtrot" was commonly found in rural dwellings. During the summer months it would be the coolest place to gather but unfortunately the same applied for cold winter days. After cotton picking time in the fall the family would pile cotton in the space until ready for ginning. Submitted by Ron Williams.



In 1898 the family of Mark Summerfield Andrews (1855-1930) gathered for The American View Company's photographer to record their image. Located in the Sturkie Community south of LaFayette, this image depicts an upper middle class family farm family and residence. Submitted by Victoria L. Ford.



The Robinson House was built one mile east of LaFayette in the 1890s by Judge J.J. Robinson, Sr. and also occupied by the family of his son J.J. Robinson, Jr. when this photo was made. A fine example of high style Victorian architecture, the house and lands were later sold to the Hunter family. Hunter Subdivision, north of Hwy. 50, was developed from this property. Submitted by Betty Chambers Carr.

- 108th Annual Sacred Harp Singing -

Saturday May 22, 2010: Come and experience the unique sound and tradition of shaped note singing from the oblong B.F. White Sacred Harp songbook. This event attracts many people locally and from distant states each year who gather to sing or listen to the ancient hymns as sung by our forefathers when the book was first printed in 1844. At noon a traditional "dinner on the grounds" (bring your favorite dish to share) is enjoyed under a pavilion that covers a 50-ft. long table overflowing with every kind of food imaginable. Afterwards the singers reconvene for two additional hours of singing. If you've never experienced a "fa-sol-la" singing, make your plans to do so. The singing begins at 9:00 a.m. CST at Mount Pisgah Church, located 14 miles north of LaFayette on Hwy. 431 at Stroud, Chambers County, Alabama.

2010 Officers of CVHS

President
1st Vice President/Programs
2nd Vice President/Editor - The Voice
Secretary
Treasurer

Dr. Horace M. Holderfield
Mrs. Martha L. Gatlin
Mr. Don Clark
Mrs. Ellen P. Sapp
Mr. Wayne Scroggs

The annual dues of the **Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society** are due each year on the first of January. Dues are \$12.00 per individual, \$6.00 for any other member of the same household, and \$3.00 for any student who is still in school and is under 21 years of age. Other yearly membership levels include **Benefactor** - \$250; **Patron** - \$100 and **Friend** - \$50. For any **NEW member only** who subscribes after September 1, their membership will be for the remainder of the current year and also the following year. 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

2010 Membership Application - The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society

Name _____ Amount \$ _____
Street Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____



The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society
3419 20th Avenue
COBB MEMORIAL ARCHIVES
Valley, Alabama 36854