

THE VOICE

of the *Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society and
Cobb Memorial Archives*

WEST POINT ON THE CHATTAHOOCHEE

We love to hear from our members, and over the past few years several members have expressed a desire to return to in-person meetings. Virtual meetings were a necessity during the Covid period and even afterwards due to the loss of our traditional meeting arrangement with the Bradshaw Library.

On Saturday morning, July 27, CVHS will host a very *different* kind of quarterly program at the West Point outdoor riverside pavilion, located directly south of City Hall. CVHS President Jason Williams, VOICE Editor Ron Williams, and fellow board member Malinda Powers will present the program on this small city's remarkable history.

Archaeological evidence suggests Native Americans were here as early as the Archaic period during the time of "hunter-gatherers." Shallow shoals just a mile or so upriver provided excellent fishing and, more importantly, a natural river crossing enabling travel between more permanent native towns that developed. Traders made their way westward from South Carolina, followed by pioneer settlers which ultimately resulted in Indian removal westward. Early West Point residents faced many hardships and trials, but persevered. Two rail lines were conjoined in West



*A glimpse of West Point in 1900: (photo from 1901, This Was Our Valley)
From the Historic West Point & the Chattahoochee Valley Facebook Page*

Point, connecting the little city with two state capitals. When war came to West Point, the battle became known in the annuals of American History as "the last fort battle of the Civil War." But like the mythical Griffith, West Point was quick to rise from its ashes and reinvent itself. The river once again played a vital role in the city's history as it powered two new factories downstream, ultimately becoming a leading textile manufacturer in the world.

The public is invited to attend

the meeting at the pavilion at 10:00 am EDT. Immediately following the program, guests are welcome to join a guided walking tour of several blocks downtown to discover the forgotten businesses that once thrived there. At the conclusion of the walking tour, guests will find a variety of downtown restaurants and eateries for lunch.

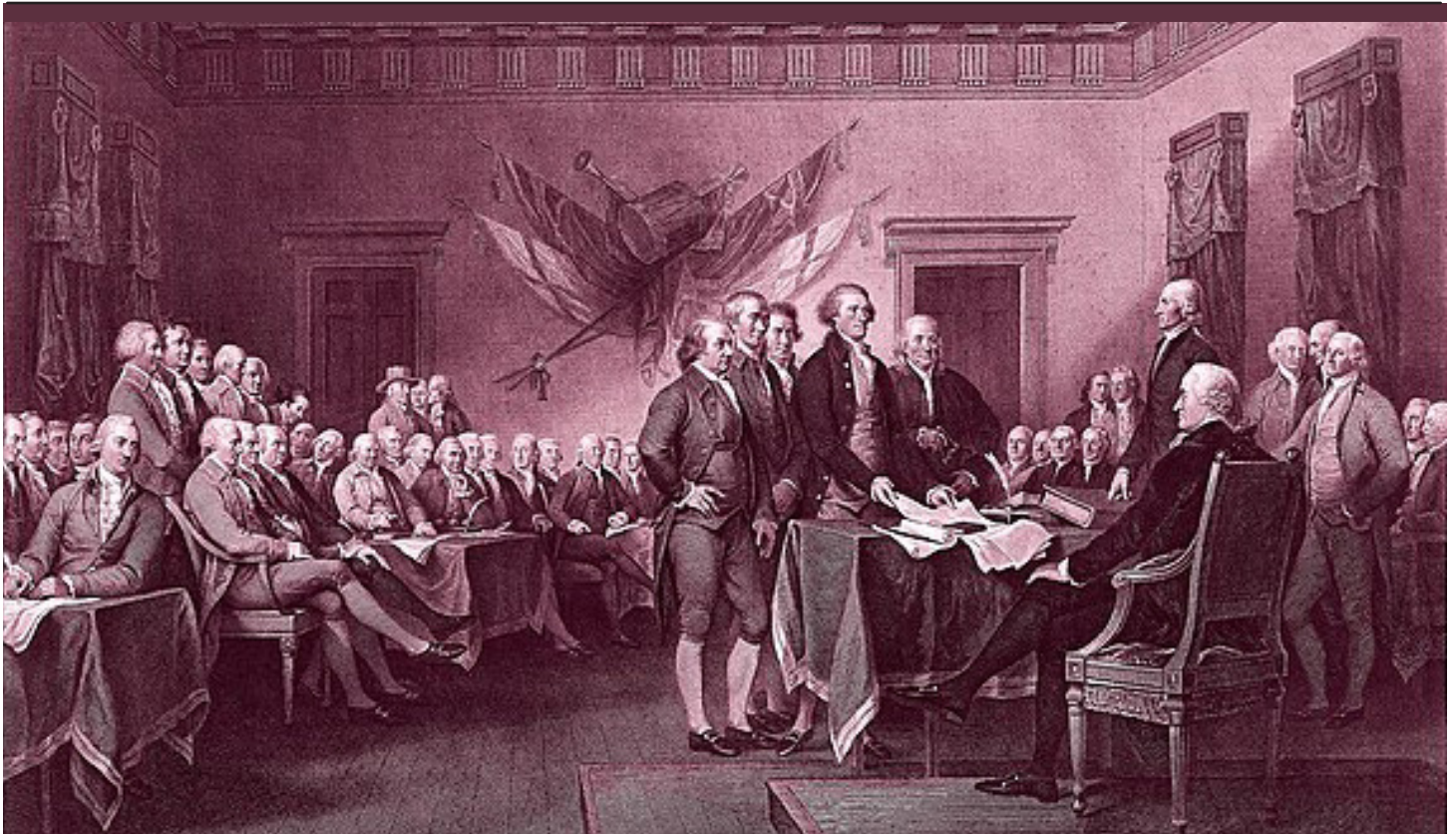


**THE CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY MEETING**

Saturday, July 27th, 2024

10:00 AM (EDT)

West Point Outdoor Riverside Pavilion



The Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776), from Wikimedia Commons

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *by Jason Williams*

As we celebrate our country's annual birthday in July, it is amazing to think that we are approaching the 250th Anniversary of the 1776 Declaration of Independence. Across America, communities are planning activities to observe this event on July 4, 2026. We invite you to share your thoughts on ways that we may also mark this occasion. Having ancestors who established Jamestown and who came over on the Mayflower, history is much more than only dates or facts to

me personally. While our local recorded history only goes back approximately 200 years, please join us in coming together to remember our history from the Native American Era to today. Also, if you have not renewed your membership for 2024, please do so today. We are here to serve you as fellow members!



The VOICE is a quarterly newsletter of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society, Inc., P.O. Box 718, West Point, Georgia 31833

Editor: Ron Williams (hopewellroad@yahoo.com)

Find us on Facebook and visit our website at <https://cvhistoricalsociety.org/>

MISSION STATEMENT: As a non-profit membership organization, the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society seeks to preserve and promote the history and heritage of Chambers County, Alabama, West Point, Georgia, and the greater Chattahoochee Valley area. CVHS produces and sells historical books and media, publishes a quarterly newspaper, and presents programs with speakers on historical topics of local and regional interest.

VISION STATEMENT: Having been in continuous operation since its founding in 1953, the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society strives to uphold the vision of its founders while posturing the organization for growth in the 21st Century.

BROTHERS SEARCH FOR TREASURE

by Ron Williams

Everyone loves a treasure, and the South is full of them. At least it is full of them in the way of old tales.

We all know that during the War of Northern Aggression our ancestors were forced to hide their wealth, and many times they would bury it. As a result, some of it was never recovered. It is not uncommon to hear, even today, that “we never did find all of the silver.”

These stories mixed in with the stories of old folks who did not trust banks and who buried their money in jars around the farm are and were enough to fuel the fire in many boys’ imaginations.

I have seen Ernest Williams’ hand-drawn map of his Grandfather Holladay’s farm. He had marked off the old home place just west of the road to Glass in the southeastern corner of Chambers County. Squiggly lines indicate the branch and the pond, and there are three small, dark circles just east of the pond that are named “Beech Trees.” It was at these trees that the boys carved their names and hearts next to a special girl’s name, and these trees were well-decorated. An arrow on the map points to the third tree.

It was in the shade of this tree that the young Ernest, with his brother, Marvin, found treasure.

Ernest and Marvin Williams were the sons of Richard E. and Emma Holladay Williams. They had just one sister, Emily. Their father died when they were young, and the family lived with the maternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. John Thomas

Holliday, on their farm just South of Fairfax. It was on this farm in the 1920s that the boys began their search for treasure.

They were not the first to do so. The boy’s great uncle thought there were gold coins buried on the property, and he had hired men to dig holes at the base of large oak and hickory trees. Signs of the six by 6X6X6 holes were still evident all over the farm.

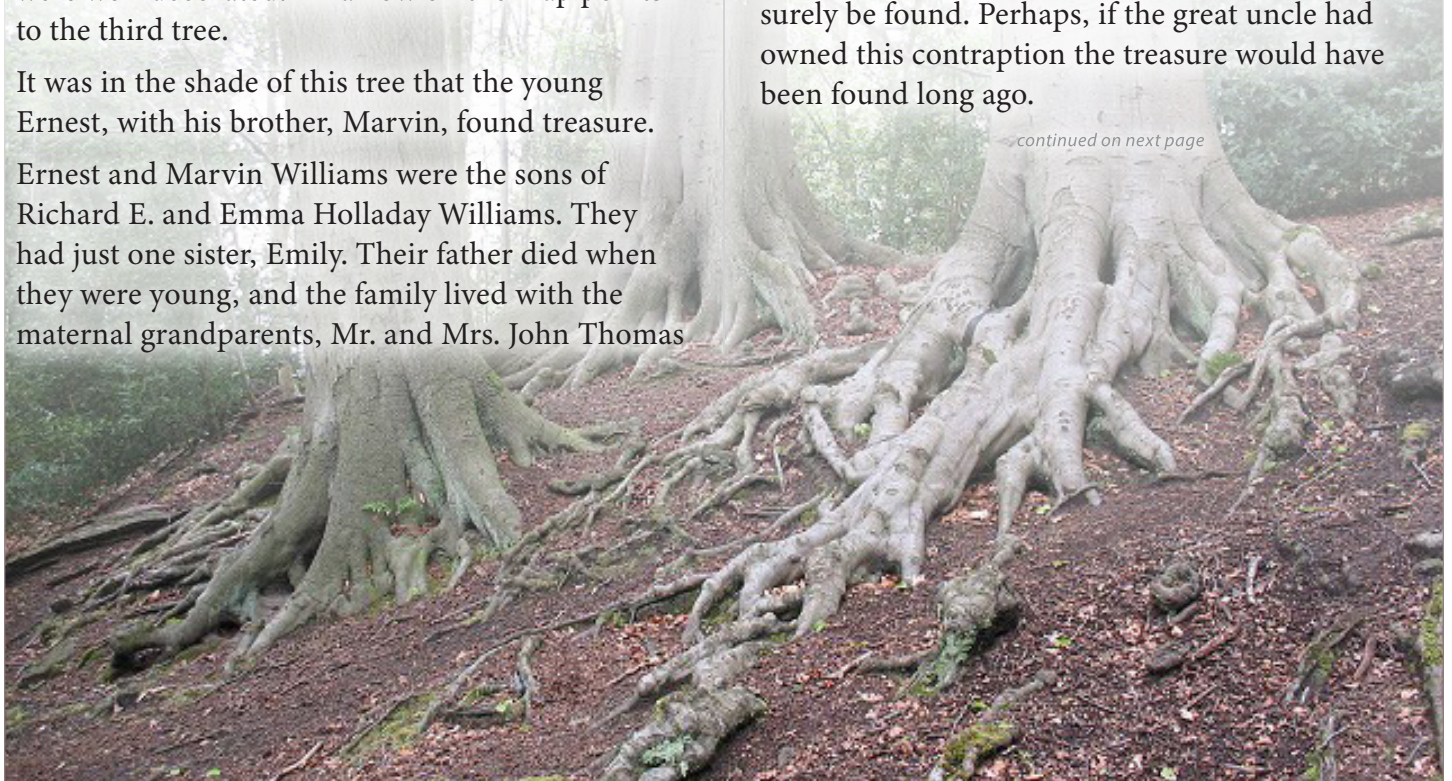
“He finally gave up,” wrote Williams, “but he continued to believe the treasure was there. I have heard him talk about it.”

So, on a late summer afternoon, when a visiting cousin pulled out a gadget for searching for treasure, it did not take any persuading to convince the two country boys to join in the adventure.

“The gadget,” remembered Williams, “was built with a handle attached to a long, coiled spring with hollow glass tubing on the lower end. The tubing was filled with gold and silver colored granules of metal. The spring allowed the tubing to bob up and down and swing back and forth.”

Armed with this machine, the treasure would surely be found. Perhaps, if the great uncle had owned this contraption the treasure would have been found long ago.

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BROTHERS SEARCH FOR TREASURE -

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Williams related, “Our trip took us by Ank’s pond and the beech trees. Our cousin took no notice of the trees with their decorations, or so we thought. We walked on a short distance, and he said, ‘I think we should take a reading.’ Marvin and I watched and saw the glass tubing begin to swing back and forth straight toward one of the beech trees. Our cousin had Marvin stand in line and point his arm toward the tree. Then he took the instrument over forty feet and took another reading. And yes, you just have to believe it, the line of swing went right through the same beech tree.”

Upon investigation, the cousin pointed to some strange carvings on the tree in the shape of small heads. They were old and gnarled and moss-covered. Ancient. “Robbers,” the cousin whispered in a knowing tone. “Probably identifications, marks put by the man who selected this tree as a good place for burying their loot. No doubt they were robbers.”

The young boys, Ernest and Marvin, were ecstatic. They danced around confident a treasure had been found. Plans were made to get tools to do the digging, and the only thing that stopped the boys from becoming rich that very night was their mother’s call to supper, which could not be argued, and after supper it was too dark to dig.

Unfortunately, the cousin, without whose help the location of the treasure would still be a mystery, was forced to return home from vacation. This left the hard work to the brothers.

“And dig we did,” wrote the late Ernest Williams. “We wrestled with the roots and rocks at the base of that beech for many long, sweaty hours, and the treasure we found there lies solely in the many laughs that we have had when we remember our excitement and the expectations, and yes, disappointment, and a large portion of these treasured memories lies in the realization of how artfully our cousin had laid it on us. Somewhere, he, no doubt, gets a chuckle also. For some reason, he never visited us again.”

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WHEN THE BEATLES PLAYED FAIRFAX

by James Patterson

I lived in Fairfax when the Beatles invaded America in 1964. Beatlemania quickly became a global phenomenon. As a fan of the Beatles, I encountered Valleyans who disliked the group due to their long hair. This was an objection expressed elsewhere in 1960s society.

When popular CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite (1916-2009) learned Ed Sullivan (1901-1974) planned to introduce the Beatles to America on his hugely popular Sunday night TV variety program on CBS, the news anchor said he was “offended.” What offended Walter? The four “lads from Liverpool,” as Sullivan called them, had longer hair than was then the custom in the U.S., the Deep South, and most of the world.

The first appearance of the Beatles on the Sullivan show was advertised as “Elvis times four.” Paul McCartney, John Lennon, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr comprised The Beatles. Sullivan had introduced his audience to Elvis Presley in 1956. Elvis was a national sensation. The four members of the Beatles would be an even greater sensation, Sullivan predicted.

On that long-ago Sunday evening, I saw the Beatles in the home of my grandparents in Fairfax. It was February 9, 1964. After the Sullivan show, my grandmother changed the TV channel to NBC for the popular western “Bonanza.” I went to another room of the house where I dreamt of seeing the Beatles and traveling to Liverpool.

At the Fairfax Theater, I saw The Beatles in their 1964 film *A Hard Day’s Night* and in their 1965 film *Help*. These black-and-white films are now considered groundbreaking. At Nader’s Music Store in West Point, I bought the band’s 45-RPM records and their albums.

Since leaving Valley, I have seen Sir Paul McCartney and Sir Ringo Starr in their solo acts. I saw Starr, now a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a solo artist, perform to a full house at

WHEN THE BEATLES PLAYED FAIRFAX - continued from previous page

The Masonic Temple in San Francisco. He opened with *It Don't Come Easy*. Being a Beatles fan in Fairfax 60 years ago was not so easy, either. I also saw Sir Ringo at other venues in California. I also saw his All-Starr Band at New York's Radio City Music Hall.

After leaving the Beatles, Sir Paul McCartney led the group Wings. Nowadays he plays at casinos and other accessible venues across the U.S. My best memories are of seeing Sir Paul perform at New York's Madison Square Garden and Washington DC.

At some of Sir Paul's shows, footage from the first Beatles' first Sullivan appearance plays for audiences. He performs new musical compositions and hits from the Beatles era and his Wings era. The Beatles formally disbanded in 1974.

Though John Lennon had problems with his family, drugs, religion, and the disabled, his music, especially *Nobody Told Me*, *In My Life*, *Crippled Inside*, *Imagine*, and others, leaves a different message about the composer who lived a brief 40 years. In 1980, he was murdered outside his New York home.

I was at the green-shingled house on Hill Street in Fairfax where my grandparents lived when announcer Howard Cosell, on ABC's Monday Night Football, told the world that Lennon was dead. We still have his music.

At McCartney's concert that officially closed Candlestick Park in San Francisco, I recalled again when the Beatles played Fairfax in the home of my late grandparents. To quote a Lennon/McCartney lyric, "There are places I remember all my life."

International Beatle Week (IBW) is held annually in Liverpool. It is a celebration of Beatles music by tribute bands from across Europe. I attended for many years. It was always fun to meet other Beatles fans to recall their music. This year IBW is 23rd August 2024 – 27th August 2024.

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(Above) James Patterson at John Lennon's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame

(Below) James Patterson with Paul McCartney at his home at 20 Forthlin RD, Liverpool. Known as the "birthplace of the Beatles."



MRS. BLAKLEY OFFERS A LOOK INTO THE PAST

by the late, Mr. Jim Watson (*The Valley-Times News*)

“I didn’t know her for very long but even such a short acquaintance was a truly stimulating experience. With the effects of a hip that was broken and less than perfectly healed, Mrs. Ed Blakely was sharp as a tack. We talked for hours about history and current affairs. And for one on into her nineties, many times I was hard-pressed to match her insights. Now I miss her, but the memories are pleasant.

It’s fascinating country that stretches down below Riverview. Bordering along both sides of the river. I never drive that way, but visions of the past fill my mind. I know that, for me anyway, part of the appeal has to do with the shroud of mystery of intrigue that seems to hang over it, along both sides of the river. Much of its past and faded now and I have to dig hard sometimes now for bits and pieces. But once in a great while, I get lucky, and most of the time it’s from totally unexpected sources.

‘You mentioned Osanippa Post Office,’ the voice came bright and cheerful over the telephone.

Yes ma’am but I don’t know anything about it.

‘Well, I do,’ came back the answer and the voice with a smile in it. ‘It was in our house.’ By then I was hopelessly captivated. And not many days later I sat in her home, and she talked while I listened.

The voice on the phone that day belonged to Mrs. Ed Blakely who lives today in Lanett. She grew up Annie Mearle Wills in Osanippa, Alabama, or Berlin as some will remember it. Of course, those who do remember it will know the thoroughly southernized form ‘Burlin.’ It was a long time before I knew the two names were the same place.

‘The story I always heard,’ Mrs. Blakely explained, ‘was that when the post office was established, there was already another town named Berlin in Alabama. The Post Office made them change the name. Our house had a big hall through the middle of it. The Post Office was in the front of that hall and a big cabinet all full of pigeonholes sat there and my Mama was the postmistress.’

I watched while she talked. Her voice was clear as crystal and there was never a moment of hesitation in her answers. Her recall was almost perfect. I would never have believed it, but I have her own words, ‘I was born in Osanippa in November 1897.’

The Post Office story continued to unfold. ‘An elderly man brought the mail every day from West Point. It was usually just one bag, and mama would have a bag for him to carry back. I have watched many times as she sorted the mail into the pigeonholes and then go back to her housework. People would come and go all through the day and get their mail. Mama sold stamps, of course, and post cards. It seems strange now but a stamp cost one cent and a post card was a penny.’

The post office was closed 1905 and combined with the one at Blanton, a few miles further down the road. Then I turned the conversation to another subject close to my heart, the river ferries of her day. ‘My father was Thomas Jefferson Wills, and he grew up in Harris County. He owned lots of land and our house was on a high hill that looked down to the ferry. It was rich bottom land and he farmed it every year.’

Which ferry was it? I inquired.

‘Houston’s Ferry, a few miles below McGinty’s Crossing there was a crossroads. The left turn went down to the ferry, and we lived on that road.’

I guess you must have ridden the ferry lots of times, I remarked to her.

She paused for a minute before she replied. ‘You know, Mr. Watson, I was born there and lived there till I was about grown. I saw that ferry every day from our back porch. But never one time did I ever set foot on it, nor even cross the river down there.’

I had heard that much earlier Houston’s Ferry had been known as Collin’s Ferry. But Mrs. Blakely couldn’t help me out with that. ‘There were lots of Collinses down there. My daddy bought land from

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MRS. BLAKLEY OFFERS A LOOK INTO THE PAST - *continued from previous page*

Mr. Collins and my sister married a Collins, but I never heard the ferry called by that name.'

We turned to another of my favorite subjects when she announced, 'My father was a veteran of the War Between the States.' I guess my mental arithmetic was showing, for she explained, "He was elderly when he married my mother and when I was born. There had been an earlier marriage. I was his favorite, and he took me everywhere he went. I used to ask him about the war a lots.'

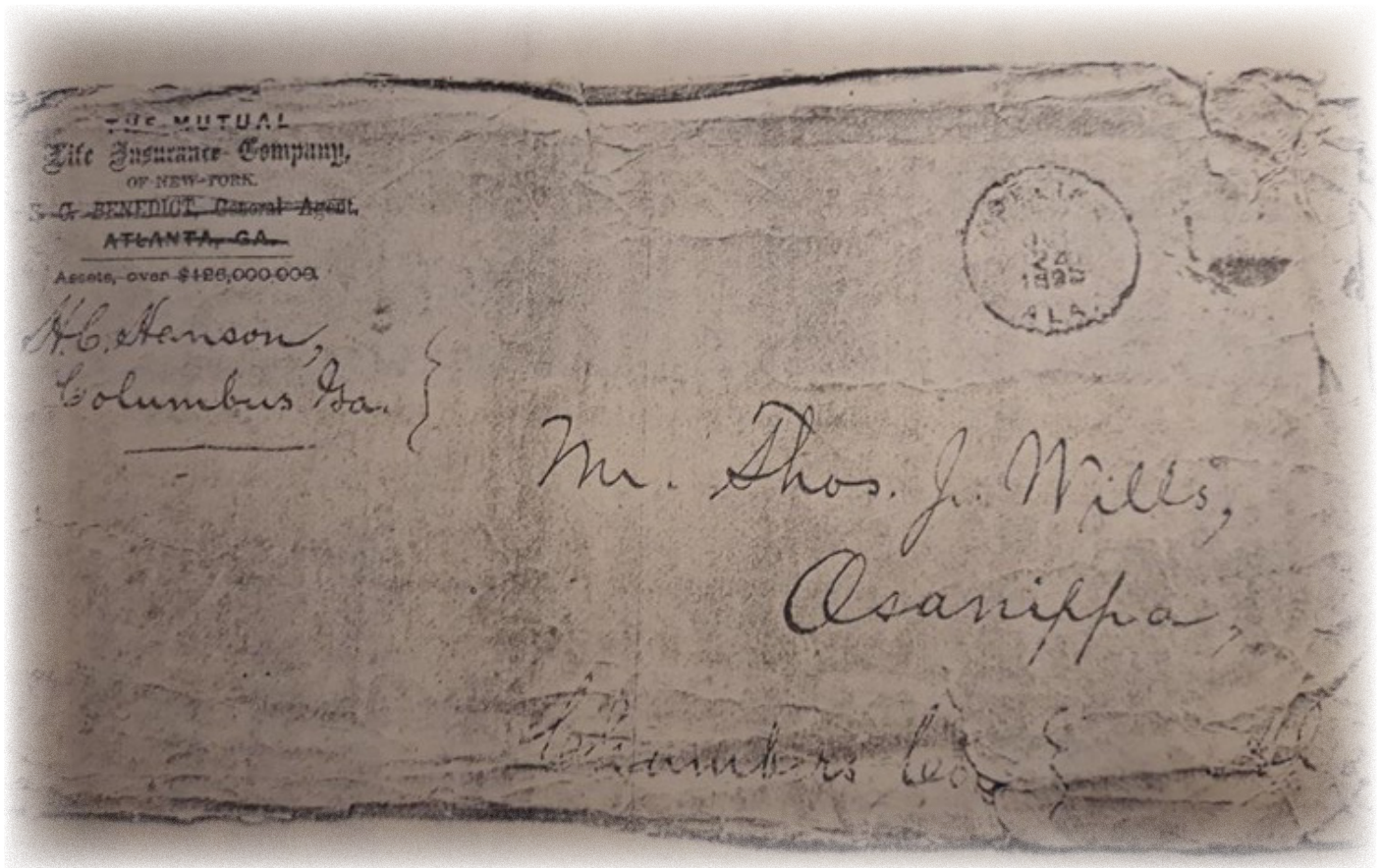
'He didn't like to talk about it much, but once in a while he would tell me little things. He had been a prisoner of war but survived pretty well because he made jewelry and repaired watches and all sorts of finery. He set up a little shop and the wives of the Union officers sent things to him to be fixed.'

'He said his buddies were treated very badly. They all lived in tents and up north the winters were real

bad. There were big holes in the tent and snow blew in. There was never enough to eat, he told me, and then he told me how lots of times he had watched when one of his buddies just died right there in the middle of the tent. I heard him say several times, 'All those stories from Andersonville don't mean nothing to me.'

We talked that day for an hour, and I've been back since. I hope to go back again and talk some more for she's certainly a delightful person and remembers so much. And for me that translates into lots of stories."

The late Jim Watson was a local historian and storyteller. He wrote a weekly column which appeared in The Valley-Times News in the 1980s. He and his wife lived in the Huguley Community in Chambers County.



A copy of a letter mailed to Mr. T.J. Wills, Osanippa, Al.

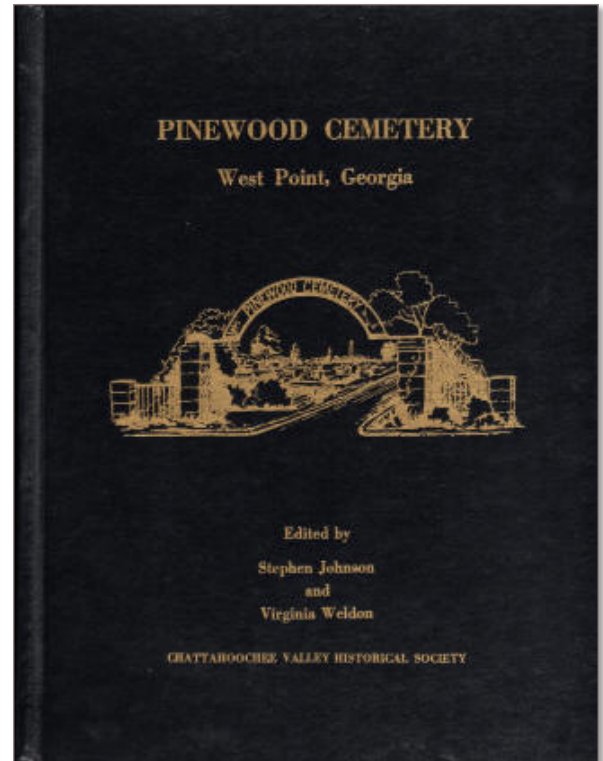


\$26 *Pinewood Cemetery*

Pinewood Cemetery: West Point, Georgia. Hardback. Listing of interments by lots. Includes interesting genealogical information on many of those buried there. Stephen Johnson and Virginia Weldon, editors. Copyright 2012. CVHS Publication No. 13 (Revised Edition)

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