

# FG/CCHS NEWS

Preserve, Protect, Promote



FORT GAINES/ CLAY  
COUNTY HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

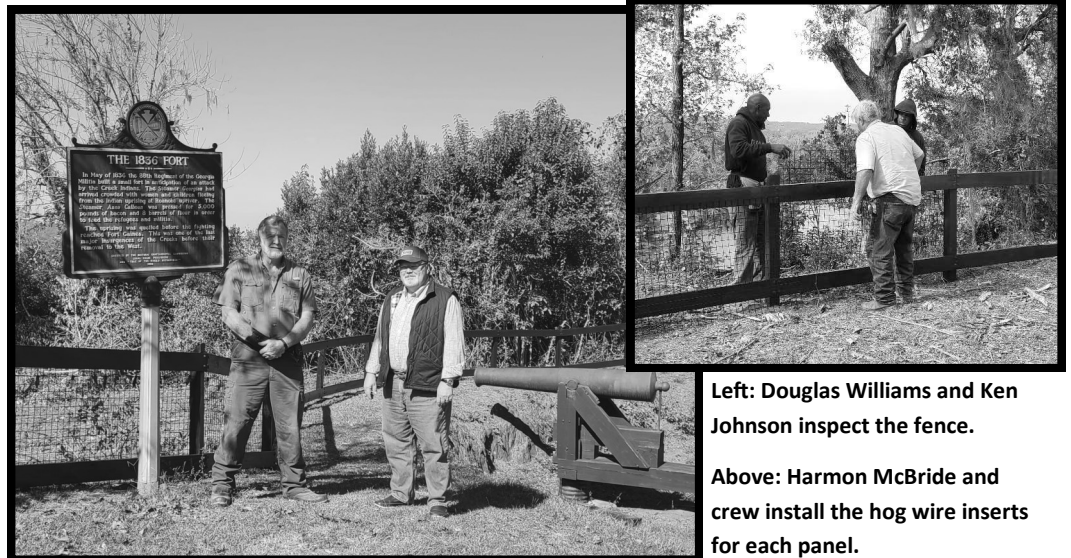
SPECIAL POINTS  
OF INTEREST:

- 106 Lifetime, new and renewed members strong.
- Frontier Village Fence Project
- The Dill Oak
- Time to renew for 2022
- 2022 Birthday Calendar on sale

VOLUME 12 ISSUE 3

Late Fall 2021

## Bluff Fence Complete!



Left: Douglas Williams and Ken Johnson inspect the fence.

Above: Harmon McBride and crew install the hog wire inserts for each panel.

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Thanks to an overwhelming response from FGCCHS members and the townspeople of Fort Gaines, the new fencing at the Frontier Village was completed in mid November in time to be shown off at Christmas at the Fort complete with Christmas lights installed by the Clay County Chamber of Commerce.

The Fort Gaines Improvement Committee (a joint effort of the Clay County EDC, the FGCCHS and the DDA) sold well over a hundred sections of the fence on the bluff overlooking the Chattahoochee River. The plaques are currently being made in Dothan and will be installed in December. Board member and EDC chairman Ken Johnson, who was in charge of the orders, reports that it was wonderful reading the notes on order forms of people far and wide buying a panel in honor or in memory of people in their lives and the life of the community.

Special thanks go to Mr. Harmon McBride and his crew from Jakin who did a great job building the fence for us. Thanks also to our board member Douglas Williams for recommending Harmon for the work.

# Christmas at the Fort



We had a great day at Christmas at the Fort 2021. The weather could not have been better and the crowd was thick and jovial. The Society sold \$690.00 in books, calendars and Douglas Williams' homemade pound cakes. We even signed up two new members. Everyone was happy to be together and outside as Delta was waning at the time and Omicron was not yet on our radar .

## News and Notes

- The next **Board Meeting** of FG/CCHS will be held at the Sutton's Corner Museum at 4PM on **Monday February 7, 2022**. All meetings are open to the public and we invite you to attend.
- Thanks to all who rallied and paid their dues for 2021.
- If you would like to schedule an individual or small group tour of the **Sutton's Corner Museum** please call 229-231-5498.

### GIFT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Anderson Construction

## TIME TO RENEW FOR 2022!

**ENCLOSED WITH THIS ISSUE IS A COLORED SHEET WITH MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION FOR THE YEAR 2022 AND AN ENVELOPE ADDRESSED TO FGCCHS.** Please use that envelope to send in your 2022 dues or yearly contribution in a timely manner.

**FYI: IF YOU JOINED AS A NEW MEMBER** in October, November or December of 2021, Your dues count for the year 2022.

**Lifetime Members:** You can designate your contribution to a certain project if you wish.

## 2022 Birthday & Event Calendars

If you missed ordering or need extra calendars, they are on sale at the Clay County Library and Opera House Hardware in Ft. Gaines.

# Projects & Progress

## The Dill Oak:



Left: The Dill Oak after clean up and new landscape and signage at Farm Bureau.

Above: Linda Morgan and Farm Bureau manager Julie Simpson took a ride to the canopy on clean up day.

Board member Linda Morgan reports that on September 9, 2021 arborist Davis Edwards and crew of D&D Tree Service out of Albany came and cleaned up the Dill Oak, trimming branches and removing decades of vines and overgrowth from the base and branches of the tree. Some work had already been done by the city of Ft. Gaines to remove years of leaves and trash from the base of the old oak which disturbed three snakes in the process and unearthed an old zinc tub that had probably been planted with flowers eons ago.

Subsequently, Farm Bureau took the opportunity to upgrade their signage in front and re-landscape to show off the oak. They are awfully proud of the historic tree and take their stewardship seriously. Surveyor and licensed forester Bryson Langford from Shellman, who donated his time, has worked to establish the tree’s boundaries for enclosure. We are considering a simple post and chain affair to protect the base. Both David Edwards and Bryson Langford agree that the Dill Oak is easily 200+ years old.

## Sutton Museum:

This past quarter the Delta variant has been surging in the community, but we did manage to have about eight individual and couples tours. Roof repairs are holding. No leaks! A little work was done on the Saxena building roof this last quarter.

## Records Update:

We would like to ask all members (regular and lifetime) to update their email addresses for the Society. If you are renewing for 2022 please include a current email address. Lifetime members please drop us a note and use the enclosed self addressed envelope for your convenience.



The picture above is from a Georgia Archives scrapbook. Dated 1952, it shows the Globe House on Washington Street in Ft. Gaines. The caption in the scrapbook reads, "New Safety Program inaugurated at Clay County High School this year." Of note to us is the globe which can be seen to the right of the parked car and the sign on the front porch which can be spotted over the heads of the children on the corner. It reads "TELEPHONE OFFICE".

The following is an excerpt from *Tale of the Naked Hitchhiker and Other True Stories* which was compiled by Katie Bennett Koski. The book, published in 1995, consists of stories of life in Ft. Gaines and Clay County. The tales below all concern Lona Gamble, a widow, who lived in the Globe House and worked from there as the local telephone switchboard operator during the 1940's and early 1950's.

### ***THE DAY WE LOST DAD***

#### **Elizabeth King Folger Nashville, Tennessee**

During World War II, Dad was the lone male in two households of females. Pat, Willie, Fred, Shirah and Ronald were serving in the Armed Forces.

Often Dad became weary of being surrounded by so many women and sought the company of other men. He would go to Sappington's Drug Store (Formerly Dan's Drug Store) to drink a coca-cola and either join the patriots at the Buzzard's Roost or walk around the block to Brooks Brown's filling station where the Bald Headed Club held regular sessions.

The Buzzards' Roost was located under the old oak at the corner of Dr. West's stable. Dad loved to sit in one of the ancient mule-eared chairs enjoying the shade with farmers who brought their horses to be serviced by Dr. West. It was a busy corner filled with tall tales, tobacco juice, black gnats, and sleeping dogs and it reminded Dad of his horse and buggy days.

Brooks Brown's filling station glistened with progress. Always immaculate, the filling station serviced cars while the Baldheaded Club discussed the war and important affairs of the day. Dad was a regular attendant.

One day he did not come home at 5:00. By 5:30 Mamma became uneasy and asked that one of us go call Dad at his office and see what was holding him up. I was designated.

Dad, a lawyer, was also County School Superintendent. At the time the only telephone in the courthouse was a hand-cranked wall instrument located at the end of the courthouse hall. Miss Lonie, known also as "Central", took great pride in her job with the telephone company. She also relished being central to all the activities in Ft. Gaines.

The old courthouse phone rang many times before Miss Lonie interrupted my call to say that it was after 6:00 and everybody had gone home. Who are you calling? I explained about Dad.

"You know, Bit, Mr. PC had that stroke last year. He could have fallen somewhere, maybe in his office. I'll call Albert Killingsworth and get him to look over there and see if the light's on." There was no light on in the office. At Sappington's, Mr. King had not been in all afternoon. Miss Lonie called us at 7:00. As best she could tell, the last time anyone had seen Mr. PC was about 4:00. He and a dark-haired stranger had gone into the pool hall.

To our knowledge, Dad had never been in a pool hall. And who was the stranger? Our worries began to mount.

Miss Lonie told us that search groups had been organized— boy scouts, church members, some of Brooks Brown's group. They all had flashlights and were beating the bushes along the sidewalks and in the gullies along the roads.

Soon, concerned townsfolk began gathering at our home. They came in small, silent clumps and gathered on the porch, in the parlor and in the hallways. All the lights in the house were on. Our supper on the table sat cold and untouched.

It was pitch dark outside, except for the glittering lights from the courthouse to Rose Hill. The searchers with their flashlights were persistent and diligent.

At about 8:00, a big, black car slowly rolls down the hill and parks at the landing in front of the house and lets Dad out. He stands there in complete amazement watching the scouts beat the brush. As a dumbfounded searcher picks up Dad's face with a flashlight, Dad asks, "Ya'll lost something?"

Dad had been to Blakely to "get a man out of jail." Dad and his client went in the pool hall to check the clock and they decided they would be back in plenty of time for supper. Unfortunately, the judge was not immediately available and they had to wait.

As for Miss Lonie, much can be said about modern-day services, but, somehow none can measure up to Central and her switchboard.

## ***MISS LONIE & THE ANNOUNCEMENT***

### **Elizabeth Tatum Tripp Fort Gaines, GA**

In the 1940's, the telephone system consisted of one operator and a switchboard. Our operators name was Lonie. Lonie was the bureau of information. For example, if there was a fire we called her to ask where the fire was. Once I called my mother from college and Lonie said, "I saw your mother walking down the street with your Aunt Ruth. She should be home soon."

Anne Gwynn and Cliff Johnson, both of Ft. Gaines, were working in Washington D.C. They decided to get married, Ann called her mother, Miss Annie Erie, and told her that she and Cliff were going to get married but not to tell anyone until Cliff called his mother.

Miss Annie Erie called Lonie and asked, "Lonie, did you hear Ann?" Lonie said, "Yeah, Annie Erie, but I won't tell anyone."

Soon Lonie called back and said, "Annie Erie, Cliff is talking to his Mama."

So Annie Erie called all her friends.



# **BROWN HOUSE ARTIFACTS FOUND**

Submitted by FGCHS Board Member, Clay County Library Manager and Clay County Historian Dustin Holt, this article chronicles the discovery and significance of a ledger from the Brown House Tin Business which operated on the second floor of the home still on Washington Street from the 1820's to after the Civil War.

Several weeks ago I was contacted by a gentleman from Texas named David Branch who was inquiring about his family's origins in Fort Gaines. While researching his family's genealogy, he discovered a large ledger book belonging to his great, great grandfather Reverend Evander Sweet. What made the book so interesting was that, while it appeared to have been used by a Fort Gaines Business in the 1850's, some of the ledger pages were pasted over with 1870's newspaper clippings. I began to pick up on historical clues from Mr. Branch as we talked. The first big "aha" moment was when he told me that just about all the items recorded as sold in the ledger were made of tin.

A quick glance at the at the emailed family tree Mr. Branch had sent prior to our conversation showed that Rev. Sweet was married to a Miss Cornelia Brown of Fort Gaines. Cornelia was the daughter of Col. James Edmund Brown, one of SW Georgia's most important ministers before the Civil War, as well as the grand daughter of the famous John Brown who served as President of the University of Georgia from 1811-1816 before settling in Fort Gaines.

With great excitement, I proclaimed that the object he was describing might be store records for the Brown Brothers Tinworks which operated in Ft. Gaines from the 1820s until after the Civil War. Working from the second story of the Greek Revival home on Washington St., the Browns manufactured an array of tin and metal objects as well as leather and blacksmith goods which were reportedly some of the finest quality along the burgeoning Georgia frontier.

Mr. Branch graciously agreed to send me an usb stick containing scanned copies of the ledger. The types of items listed as sold, the date range recorded throughout, the names recorded as customers and the fact that it was owned by a relative of the Browns, provide strong clues that lead to the conclusion that this is most certainly the record book of the renowned artisan shop the Brown family ran for several decades. The presence of Rev. Sweet's newspaper clippings pasted on some of the ledger pages might be explained by the severe shortage of paper in the Reconstruction South. Lacking another source of paper, it seems Rev. Sweet used the old ledger for his scrapbook.

Additionally, Mr. Branch provided scans of family letters saved by Sweet which chronicle his father's decision to leave he and his brother behind in Ft .Gaines to take the rest of the family to Texas in 1859, his time as a student at the Cotton Hill Seminary, his courtship and marriage to Cornelia Brown, his efforts to establish a school in the area near the end of the Civil War, and their eventual decision to leave Ft. Gaines to join the family in Texas in the 1870s. Several letters in the collection were sent to Sweet after the move to Texas from friends and family still in Ft. Gaines describing conditions the city faced during the Reconstruction era.

As far as historical research and archival preservation goes, a find like this is an astonishing thing. The ledger is rare and unique and locating family correspondence covering a span of history from which we have the fewest amounts of surviving local artifacts is the absolute cherry on top! Thank you Mr. Branch for preserving these incredible objects as well as your generosity in reconnecting them with our community.

Fort Gaines December 1849

A PAGE FROM THE BROWN TINWORKS LEDGER Dated December 1849, the page includes the familiar names of McAllister, Dill and Castleberry. Dill & Alexander seem to have been very steady customers.

10	Gordon & McAllister	Dr L			
	20 Shuts tin	15			3 00
11	Dill & Alexander	Dr L			
	Balance on coffee pot		13		
	1 coffee pot	5		63	
	4 Candle moulds	4		50	1 26
12	Wm Castleberry	Dr L			
	1 Pan wheel	7			25
14	Dill & Alexander	Dr L			
	3 Bake hearts				1 25
15	Joel Crawford	Dr L			
	1 Bathing tub				10 00
	N C Bap	Dr L			
	1 Gal Measure	4		63	
	3 Scraps	3		55	1 38
17	Tuttle & Wakefield	Dr L			
	coffee pot	2			25
	J. B Key	Dr L			
	by cash				20 00
	W E Munnford	Dr L			
	Funnel				15
	N C Bap	Dr L			
	3 Funnel	15			30
18	Dill & Alexander	Dr L			
	2 Lantern pans	4			1 00

# Fort Gaines/Clay County Historical Society, Inc.

Fort Gaines/Clay County Historical Society, Inc.

159 Wilson St. Suite 7

Fort Gaines, GA 39851

## Want to Join Us?

This membership will entitle you to the following:

- Quarterly Newsletter
- Annual Meeting & Dinner Invitation
- Feel good about helping to Preserve, Protect, and Promote your community and Heritage.

Please fill out the coupon below. Make checks payable to the Fort Gaines/Clay County Historical Society, Inc. and mail to 159 Wilson St. Suite 7, Fort Gaines, GA 39851.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Individual Membership (\$30.00)      Corporate Membership (\$100.00)

Lifetime Membership (\$200.00)      Gift Membership (\$30.00)

Membership Type (Please circle one):    New    Renewal    Gift

FYI: If you join as a new member in October, November or December of a given year, your dues cover the following year as well.