



Guale News

OCTOBER 1995

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RAMBLE RAMBLE RAMBLE

TRADER'S HILL IN CHARLTON COUNTY

Are you ready for a fall trip? Check your calendar for Friday October 13!!! Yes, it is Friday the thirteenth and yes we will visit a cemetery as part of the ramble. Come join the rest of the members and guests!!

DETAILS: Meet at the old Winn Dixie parking lot in Kingsland across from the Kingsland United Methodist Church. Will leave at 9:00 a.m. SHARP!! Then it's on to Trader's Hill, west of Folkston.

(If you choose to meet the group there, take Highway 23/121 from Folkston, the same one that goes to the Okefenokee. After you pass the Highway Department headquarters and cross Spanish Creek, you will see signs to the Trader's Hill Recreation Center. Follow those signs, it's paved all the way.)

After a morning of strolling, looking, listening, and conversation, the group will return to Folkston for a Dutch Treat lunch at the Okefenokee Restaurant. They serve a delicious country style noon buffet.

Before the tour you might want to do some preliminary reading. Three suggested books: Alex McQueens' *HISTORY OF CHARLTON COUNTY*. This history was originally published in 1932 and has since been reprinted. Lois Mays' *SETTLERS OF THE OKEFENOKEE* gives the stories of families in and near the Swamp and their ways of life in years gone by. *CHARLTON COUNTY GEORGIA HISTORICAL NOTES*, published by the Historical Commission in 1972 brings the history of Charlton County up to date from 1932 to its publication date.

WHAT IS TRADER'S HILL?

Once the county seat of Charlton County, it dates to Indian times when Fort Alert, garrisoned by Federal troops, was set up there in the 1700s for the protection of the settlers moving into what had been Indian territory.

This site is at the head of navigation on the St. Marys River and was one of the most important trading centers in the area. Along with the stockade came a few stores and barrooms to serve those living in the surrounding area.

Mr. McQueen's Charlton history describes the community, "The principal industry of this old town was trade between the storekeepers and the pioneer farmers and this was chiefly the exchange of merchandise, shot and powder, for furs, hides, wool, cotton, beeswax, tallow, etc. Every storekeeper was a trader and every mercantile establishment carried, as a matter of course, a well-stocked bar. These bars were responsible for frequent brawls for the pioneer was, at times, a hard-drinking, fighting individual, but these fights were usually of the fist and skull variety although several killings were credited to old Trader's Hill."

A two-story wooden courthouse was built when Traders' Hill became the county seat after Charlton County was formed from portions of Camden and Ware counties. It remained the seat until 1901, long after Folkston had become the leading town of the county when the railroad opened in 1881.

Court sessions brought most of the county's male population, who arrived by horse, mule or oxen. The men cooked and slept around campfires and were entertained with fist fights and horse racing.

The jail was an unique building according to Mr. McQueen "a high structure built of hewn logs and the logs studded with spikes, and the only entrance being at the top of the first story. When a prisoner was carried up a stairway one story he was then sent down a ladder into the jail, and the ladder was then withdrawn." The opening was a trapdoor padlocked from the outside with no chance for an escape.

A post office was established at Trader's Hill in 1832 with John Mizell as postmaster. The office was discontinued in 1913 when the mail was picked up in Folkston.

The first Masonic Lodge for Charlton was established

there in 1854 and remained active until 1870 when it was moved to the now dead town of Centerville, then later to Folkston.

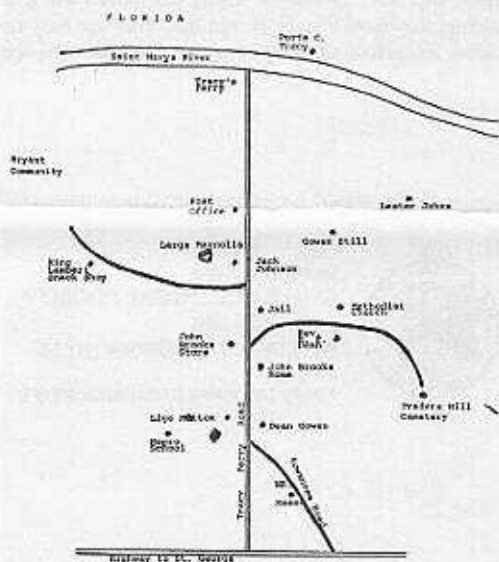
In 1957, I visited Trader's Hill with my Grandfather Tom Dean. He had lived there as a by in the 1890's and pointed out many of the old house sites. At that time, the rebuilt church used only on special occasions was the only remaining building. His father E. F. Dean was a Methodist preacher and conducted services at Prospect several miles away and also taught school. They lived in the old Hatcher house and in 1957, the house site could be located by a magnolia tree and two oaks that were standing when he was a boy. Grandfather said that he and his brothers and sisters were not allowed to swim in the river, but that they could fish on Saturdays. They caught nothing until the Bryant family taught them to use No. 8 black sewing thread and small hooks. Then they could catch enough for the large family. He remembered the Bryant store and these other families living there: Johnsons, Lees, Mattox; - in all about fifty people in the settlement.

Lois Mays described the old Trader's Hill Church in her *SETTLERS OF THE OKEFENOKEE*. "... a square, unpainted wooden shingle-roofed building in the center of a cluster of large oak trees on the crest of the hill. Facing toward the north it was set high upon hewn lightwood foundations, with steps leading up to the two front doors. Inside were two rows of comfortable board benches that had fuzzy nap surfaces, a result of being lovingly scrubbed so many times with white river sand. ... for light during evening services, they lit six kerosene lamps which had shiny metal reflectors and were attached to the side walls."

Mr. McQueen poetically described the ancient town site. "...skirting the old site on the south the magnificent St. Marys River placidly flows toward the Atlantic Ocean, and through the giant, moss-draped oaks the south wind still speaks of fierce combats, noble adventures and sweet romances of an almost forgotten past."

TRADER'S HILL CEMETERY

We will be visiting this also. It is located near the site of the original Trader's Hill Methodist Church and is one of the oldest in the county. Burials are listed in the Charlton County history



A sketch of Traders Hill around 1910 as recalled by Miss Annie Keene.
(Picture Credit: Lois B. Mays)

showing Bryants, Peebles, Tracys (who lived across the river), Dunbars, Gowens, Joneses, Gays, Chessers, Brocks, Johnsons, and others. Many descendants still live nearby.

IN MEMORIAM

Guale Historical Society Member 1995

Jim Talley

QUICK QUIZ ANSWERS

All information is found in *CAMDEN'S CHALLENGE*. Questions in September newsletter: The Indians had two names for Cumberland Island, Tacatacoru, the same name they gave the St. Marys River and Misso (sometimes Wisso) meaning Sassafras. The Spanish named Cumberland San Pedro. Methodism's early leader visited Cumberland while staying at Frederica. His journal contained a good description of Fort St. Andrew. Phineas Miller, the husband of Caty Greene, widow of General Nathaniel Greene, died from lockjaw after being pricked by the thorn of an orange tree. Admiral Cockburn, the same man who occupied Washington, occupied Cumberland Island after the War of 1812 had ended.

LIVE OAKS

A recent article in the *TRIBUNE* tells of the interest Rotary Exchange student Gillian Milne has in the live oaks of St. Marys, most particularly those that were registered with the Louisiana Live Oak Society several years ago. Dee Pace headed this committee for Guale Historical Society and a number of trees because of their size were recognized. Many were named for local citizens, some no longer living. Most were on city property and some such as the Washington Oak no longer stand.

Among the oaks named were: Harris, Mignon Sterling, Gray, Austin, Trapnell, Baker, Gilman, Gillican, Clark, Pratt-Wood, Dodge, Purdy, Hernandez, Bailey, Tillery, McDowell, Mills, Wright, Wildes, Land, Barker, Flood, Rudolph, Elliott, Whiddon, Hall (2).

This is a project that has been filed for many years, and it is well to know that once again that it is underway.

FAREWELL OUT ON A LIMB

Many Historical Society members have been avid readers of LaViee Smallwood's genealogy column as they have searched for help as beginning as well as experienced researchers in a quest for family information. Now she has hung up her pen, typewriter, PC, or whatever helped her to produce those outstanding columns for seventeen years. How will we know when seminars are scheduled? When new research material is out? Her hints and helps will be sorely missed! Thank you for the last seventeen years, LaViee, and thank you, too, for the outstanding support that you have given all historical projects here in Camden County.

FROM OTHER SOCIETIES

Charlton County Historical Society is expanding its space. They have been using a small room at the Folkston library for display area and now that the library has moved into a new building, they have bought the old one. They are busy now painting and preparing for opening day. The plan to be open,

at first, one day a week using volunteer help. They will appreciate donations or loans of artifacts or research material that relate to Charlton county. If you have something that will be useful contact them at P.O. Box 575, Folkston, GA 31537.

The Georgia Historical Society's fall lecture series will continue on October 7 with Dr. Charles Hudson of the University of Georgia speaking on "Imagining the High Priest of Coosa." On November 2 Chris Trowell will talk about "Life on the Okafenokee Frontier." (You remember Society members who went on the Okafenokee Ramble were fortunate enough to hear one of Chris's presentations there.) These are held in the Society Library at 501 Whitaker Street, Savannah on Thursday evenings at 7:00.

FROM BRYAN-LANG HISTORICAL LIBRARY

A suggestion - if you are fortunate enough to hold an old family Bible, would you be willing to let Dr. Christian photocopy the family sheets and title page for the library's files? Over time families become so widely scattered and have no idea where the old Bible has gone. Nothing is more exciting to a researcher than to find the handwritten information so vital to a family history. If you are out-of-town and have one related to Camden County, would you please copy and mail to him at P.O. Box 725, Woodbine, GA 31569.

ELECTION DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN

You will probably see no posters or read ads for vacant positions on Guale Historical Society board, but the nominating committee might be contacting YOU! Please consider which vacancy you might be able to fill when they call!

The following have served a good year, most of them have served many good years - please tell them thank you for jobs well done!

1995 Officers: President & Archivist - John Christian
Vice Pres. & Program Chr. - Henry Williams
Treasurer - Mildred Walko
Rec. Sec. - Carolyn Covert
Cor. Sec. & Newsletter Ed. - Eloise Thompson
Directors - Charles Thompson, Jeanne Hurt,
Bebé Williams
Committee Ch: Mailing - Minnie Johnson & Dot Holstun
Cemetery - Stanley Walko
Orange Hall - Linda Love
Membership - Dot Holstun
Nom. Comm. - Betsy Thomas
Publicity - Bill Blankenship

Red marks still remain on some of your labels meaning you must have overlooked paying your 1995 dues. Dues for 1996 will be payable in January. Those who have become up-to-date since the last newsletter and before 9/20: Terry Floyd Family, Henry Williams, Jr., Family, Carl Meeks Family.

Dues should be mailed to Mildred Walko, 800 Margaret Street, St. Marys, GA 31558.

Family \$15 Individual \$8 Student \$2

We will look forward to seeing you on October 13, 9:00 a.m. for a good Ramble to Trader's Hill!!!!