

Walton County—Great West Florida Empire

Beautiful County Seat of Walton County, Florida.

BUILT 300 FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL, ENCIRCLING A LAKE OF CLEAR SPRING WATER, IT IS THE PROSPEROUS AND PICTURESQUE HOME OF A REFINED AND CULTURED PEOPLE.

Editor's Note—The following article was prepared for The Journal by Hon. John L. McKinnon, author of the history of Walton county, just a few days before his recent death. It is the last manuscript he ever prepared for publication and probably the last thing of any kind he ever wrote.]

By Hon. John L. McKinnon.

Walton county, originally lying between Black Water river on the west, Choctawhatchee river on the east, Alabama on the north, and the Gulf of Mexico on the south, with 2,918 square miles, was formed in November, A. D. 1828; and the first census taken in 1830 showed a population of only 1,207 persons, not quite a half man to the square mile, with 1,000 square miles given away.

In 1810 the census showed a population of 18,400. This is progression.

November 28th, A. D. 1842, Walton county gave her territory west of Yellow river to form Santa Rosa county; and on January 8th, A. D. 1848, she contributed 435 square miles out of her northeast corner to help form Holmes county.

This noble old county was located and settled in A. D. 1820, by Scotch pioneers from North Carolina. They found here a tribe of intelligent Indians, ruled by a noble chief, named Som Story, whose ancestors were driven from Mexico by bloody, exterminating wars, very much the same as they

are having there now. They coasted along the shore in frail bark, coming east hunting peace, and they say, the Great Spirit led them into this goodly land. They could not count the years that had gone since their coming. The tribe was called "Uchees." They were of a very high type of Indians—full of good character, as their association for many years with these Scotch settlers proved them to be.

Nature has done wonders for this part of the highlands of Western Florida; has given it an altitude above the highest; has watered it more abundantly in beautiful rivers, springs and lakes, that abound in the greatest varieties of table fish; has given it a variety in soils—the sandy loam, the gray and red mole, the heavy swamps or hammock lands, and the rich alluvial soils, with a climate that will make them grow anything.

Staple Crops.

Corn, cotton, sugar cane, potatoes, beans and peas have long been the staple crops. But the climate, the lay of the land and the abundance of convenient water point to Walton as an ideal stock raising country in the broadest sense and we look to this industry as the great success that will place her up with the greatest stock-raising sections. Then these old staple products—corn, cotton and the like—will not be the leading products.

We have fully demonstrated here that you can raise more genuine, nutritious stock feed on one acre planted in velvet beans, than you can on two planted in corn and with half the work and fertilizers, and, too, the beans replenish the land while the corn exhausts it.

So you will see in a few years that stock raising, velvet beans (white and black), sojgen beans, and Chinese came with their kindred plants will be the leading business.

I really don't know what we people up this way could do now for stock feed, were it not for the velvet beans we raised in the nooks and crooks of our farms.

The white velvet bean is the most prolific and the easiest housed—does not sting the land—but it shells out easily and will not keep in the field in the winter months for stock to feed on. So both varieties should be planted.

Besides Walton county's bounding waters, she is blessed with other

streams, noted for beauty and utility, running across and about her territory, all leading into that great natural inland water-way, that is such a rare and gracious blessing from our God, Choctawhatchee Bay, the narrows, the sound and Pensacola Bay.

You can pass in any ordinary weather, in perfect safety, in large or small boats, through these protected waters, on by old Camp Walton, with the protection of Santa Rosa Island, 60 miles long on your left, and on to our newly regenerated commercial city of Pensacola—"Queen of the Gulf."

These rivers and creeks that run through her territory give power to manufacture her staples with, and float her timber to the markets.

History of P. & A. Division.

About a quarter of a century ago, the P. & A. division of the L. and N. railroad was projected from west to east directly through the center of Walton county through the very poorest of her soils.

You say "why such a projection?" The topography of the country partially answers. This line was on a high and dry ridge route, with few cuts and fills.

Then the commercial interests of the owners and builders will answer fully. When you take into consideration that they were to get the swamp and overflowed lands along the water-courses and an odd section from either side of the road within the limit of six miles from the road bed for every mile they built.

You see readily had they run the road through our rich lands in the northern part of the county, the six-mile limit and the Alabama line would have disconcerted them, and had they run it through the rich lands of Euchee valley they would have encountered the same trouble—the six-mile limit—the Gulf of Mexico and nature's old field would have cut them off.

This projection of the road completely revolutionized Walton county. It broke up some of our best families, schools and towns—we only had two towns. Euchee Anna, our capital, it killed completely; and our live, active, commercial town—Freeport, it chloroformed it. But the big cypress and yellow pine mills in and around it, would not let it die and it is standing there as stable now as ever, saying to the railroad: "You must tote fair

WALTON COUNTY POSTOFFICES.

- Argyle,
- Bearhead,
- Bolton,
- Bruce,
- Crestview,
- Darlington,
- Deerland,
- DeFuniak Springs,
- Dorcas,
- Ealum,
- Freeport,
- Garden City,
- Glendale,
- Gordon,
- Lakewood,
- Laurel Hill,
- Luanna,
- Mossy Head,
- Niceville,
- Paxton,
- Portland,
- Redbay,
- Stella,
- Union.

with our people; our great natural inland water-way is still open, and as free as the air, to bring freights through it to our people."

Progressive Towns.

Upon the other hand there has sprung up in our rich lands north of the railroad, other towns, mills, churches, schools and industries that are making good—notably, Crestview, Laurel Hill, Paxton, Gaskins, Darlington and Glendale.

These are all live, growing, progressive towns, with manufacturing going on and hard roads projecting out, and better than all, these have fine arable lands around them to help hold them up.

We live here at the "Hub"—are often confronted by strangers, on first entering, with this speech, namely, "What is it that supports this town with its schools and colleges, its Chautauqua and all these churches and water-works and electric lights? How did you induce people here to build all these? It seems to us that this

Beautiful Picture City of DeFuniak Springs

is the poorest stop along this road, and yet it seems to be the largest and most progressive town between the River Junction and Pensacola. It is a mystery to us, how you ever started, and how you continue to grow. We thought you would have fallen through long ago. You don't seem to have any back-bone to your town to support it, really, how do you keep it going?"

We answered some of them thus: "Friends, we would impress you with this great truth, that is so often overlooked—there is more in the people that make a town or country, than in the soil."

And before we go further, let us say, that one of the prerequisites in building a town is to see that it is well located—a good healthy climate—good water, and beautiful for situation. God graciously blessed us with these, which were great gain to begin with.

Then we looked out for good men and women to build with us—and we will tell you how we did this. We commenced right away building school-houses, churches and colleges. The very first building of any note, was our Chautauqua and Auditorium, which was a drawing card, and it soon drew the state normal here. That did the best work of any institution in the state for 17 years. Then we went for Palmer college and got it, and mean to hold it against any politicians. So these other blessings that we have, come in their order and are still coming. Thus it is we have the pick of the people from the north and the south, to come and live with us and help keep up our educational institutions.

We already hold strategic positions for advanced education for the south.

Had the Backbone.

You come again, and say: "You have no back-bone to support your town."

This is often hurled at us, and is a very much mistaken charge—we have more than one back-bone, if you mean rich productive lands.

There are our rich pine and hammock lands lying on the prongs of the two Alaquas to our southwest—the rich Euchee valley lands, that include the rich, deep soils of Mossy Bend—these lands that sustained the sturdy old pioneers for nearly a century, and with our advanced ideas in farming and improved farming imple-

ments are worth more now than they ever were. Go, say, from six to ten miles north of us—and you will come to the very best productive lands—the Cany creek yellow lands, which are as productive as the red lands of Jackson county, and you will be surprised, too, at what these lands right here on which this town is built will produce with proper encouragement.

Don't think for a moment, that we keep all our values on exhibition all the time.

"What you don't see, ask for it." We have venturates in abundance. You may find them on the sides.

When the Panama canal is completed we expect to use Pensacola as one of our back-bones.

We don't want to grow to the mammoth size she is aspiring to—we are thinking about putting on the brakes now. So, you good people, who would like to come in with us, come in now, before we shut down and while it is not too late.

OFFICIAL LIFE IN WALTON COUNTY.

Hon. D. Stuart Gillis is mayor of DeFuniak Springs, and is a Walton county boy in whom everyone takes the friendliest interest. M. T. King is chairman of the city council, the remaining councilmen being M. T. King, W. L. Cawthon, J. N. Laird, E. P. Mader, Dr. D. H. Simmons, P. L. Bidelle, and George W. Ward. A. R. Campbell is city clerk.

Being also the county seat of Walton, DeFuniak has its list of county officials, who are as follows: County clerk, C. H. Gordon; county judge, W. E. Parrish; county tax collector, Jas. A. McLean; county tax assessor, D. A. Gillis; county sheriff, J. M. Bell; superintendent of county schools, D. N. Trotman; judge of the county criminal court, Honorable D. S. Gillis; county solicitor, A. G. Campbell; clerk of the criminal court, A. R. Campbell; county engineer, G. K. Armes.

For literature on Walton county write to Secretary Geo. K. Armes, of the Commercial Association, DeFuniak, Florida.

Marvelous Development of Rich Agricultural and Stock Raising Section.

ITS SETTLEMENT DATES BACK MORE THAN A HUNDRED YEARS WHEN STURDY WHITE HOME-SEEKERS RECOGNIZED ITS WEALTH OF RESOURCES AND SPLENDID CLIMATE.

A city of enterprise, with a populace fully capable of making the most of its great advantages on every hand, is DeFuniak Springs, the far-famed and altogether delightful Chautauqua City of West Florida.

Built on the banks of Chautauqua Lake—a limpidly beautiful, shadow-peopled sparkling body of purest water from the purest of unseen springs, 89 feet deep and one mile in circumference—DeFuniak is located in a manner most ideal for the city beautiful enthusiast, along with her numerous other and more practical assets.

Surrounded by piney woods and a magnificent rolling country, drained by nature, 300 feet above the sea, DeFuniak presents a situation ideal for the health-seeker and for the home-seeker, in fact, a haven for the man who would build himself a home in the heart of boundless resources which are surely his upon every side.

DeFuniak Springs on account of its matchless climatic conditions makes the year round resort proposition a glowing possibility.

The Chautauqua assembly which meets once a year in a beautiful amphitheatre situated directly on the banks of the picture-lake, Chautauqua, advertises the city admirably throughout the length and breadth of the country.

The farming possibilities of Walton county, which are spoken of elsewhere in this edition attract the farmers of Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, the Dakotas, Florida.

(Continued on Next Page.)

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