

# *Jackson County Historical Society News*

VOLUME THIRTEEN, NUMBER TWO

JANUARY 2006



*The Barber Band performed throughout the day on May 5, 1906 at the Jefferson Centennial celebration. Pictured are members: John Ayers, Calvin Barber, Clint Barber, Bob Toney, Ed Toney, Sam Hutchins, Ed Medley, Bob Williams, Hugh Ellard, Willie Ayers, Henry Williams*

The Jackson County Historical Society meeting will be held on January 15 at 2:30 p.m. in the former upstairs courtroom of the historic Jackson County Courthouse building on 85 Washington Street in Jefferson. Tommy Benton will present a program on the Jefferson Bicentennial.

*Jackson County Historical Society*

*P.O. Box 1234, Commerce, Georgia 30529*

*(706) 335-5946*

## Newsletter

The Jackson County Historical Society News is published quarterly and mailed before the next meeting. Back issues can be obtained for \$3.50 each plus postage. Past newsletters can be viewed online at: [rootsweb.com/~gajackso/](http://rootsweb.com/~gajackso/)

## Queries

Send queries to be published before the next deadline, March 15, 2006. Send requests for information to the address below with a stamped, self addressed envelope.

## Dues for 2005–2006 year

Costs for publishing have caused an increase in dues. The dues year runs from July to July. Checks can be mailed to:

Jackson County Historical Society  
P. O. Box 1234, Commerce, GA 30529:

Individual –\$15  
Family –\$20  
LIFE member –\$100

## JCHS Officers 2005-2006

President:	Charlotte Mealor
Vice-President:	Jerry Mealor
Recording Secretary:	Nora Tolbert
Corresponding Secretary:	Boniface McDaniel
Treasurer:	Tommy Benton
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Past Presidents:	Joyce Ethridge Ann A. Jarrett Richard Chambers Jean H. Booth Betty Ann Mathis James Mathis Ralph Freeman Carol Tanner Marie Parks Tina Harris
Newsletter Editors:	Tina Harris Jean Booth

## Queries

Descendant of William (1759-1837), through Moses H. (1794-1863), Christopher Columbus (1823-1860), William Moses (1844-1914) and Allie Bee (1878-1948). Interested in information on the Potts family and on Julia Carolina Gathright, (1824-1905) wife of Christopher Columbus Potts. Contact: Amelia Potts R. Ford, 4409 Woodland Ave, Charlotte, NC 28227

Will the lady who called me regarding my ancestor, John Morgan, son of Samuel, please call again. I did not get your name or contact information. Georgia Cavanaugh; [georgiac@cccomm.net](mailto:georgiac@cccomm.net), 775-867-3890

*Excerpt from the Jackson Herald*

Jackson county was created in 1796, from a part of Franklin county. The act was signed February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1796, by Thomas Stevens, speaker of the house of representatives, Benjamin Talaferro, president of the senate, and Jarrard Irwin, governor.

An act passed February 2, 1798, appointing James Cunningham, Owen Brown, Thomas Barren, Joseph McCutching, Absolum Ramey, Mathew Stowe and Micajah Berry, commissioner, to locate a courthouse and jail. Signed by David Merriweather, speaker of the house of representatives, Robert T. Walter, president of the senate, and James Jackson, governor.

The first seat of justice was in Clarkesboro district, near Tallassee Shoals. Jefferson was made the county seat in 1806. The first courthouse was in the Webb old building, which was used for several years for court purposes; after which a brick courthouse was erected on the public square. This was used until 1878, when the present courthouse was built.

Business of the county was transacted by an Inferior Court, composed of five judges, called esquires. The judges of this court levied the taxes, directed how the money be spent, audited all accounts against the county, ordered the money paid out, appointed J. P's and constables in the several districts, overseers on the roads, tax collectors, receivers and sheriffs, had jurisdiction over all county matters, tried all court cases except felony and land title cases, erected whipping posts and had parties whipped, fixed the price of meals and lodging in taverns, and the price of horse feed and liquor. The price of liquor fixed by the first Inferior Court was 12 1/2 cents per pint and hot meals in the taverns at 35 cents, cold meals at

25 cents and a bed for 10 cents. The names of the first judges: Joseph Humphrey, Robert Earley, Absolum Raney, James Pittman and William M. Stokes.

The following persons served as the first constables of Jackson county: David Shay, Samuel Bridgewater, Johnson Clark, and John Kennerley.

*December 14, 1905, Excerpt from the Jackson Herald*  
By J. A. B. Mahaffey

Opening an old dust covered volume, we find the following statement, regarding this county:

### **"Jackson County" By J. A. B. Mahaffey**

This county was formed in 1796; part cut off as Clarke, 1901; part added to Madison, 1911; part to Walton, Gwinnett, and Hall, 1818. It is 23 miles long and 18 wide; square miles, 414. It was called after General James Jackson. The branches of the Oconee flow through this county. Big Sandy, Mulberry, Barber's, Curry's, Cider, and Beach creeks, are some of the streams.

Much of the soil of this county is unproductive, although there are some good lands on the branches of the Oconee.

The diseases most prevalent are fevers and pneumonia, Instances of longevity are not rare. Among others, are Mr. Henry Angling, aged 90; Mr. Amos Staples, 90; Middleton Brooks, 96; Mrs. Brown, over 100.

Jefferson is the seat of justice, situated on the waters of the Oconee river, distant from Milledgeville 87 miles. It was made the county site in 1906, and incorporated in 1812.

Extract from the census of 1850—Dwellings, 1,200; families, 1,200; white males, 3,372; white females, 3,436; free colored males, 9; free colored females, 10. Total free population, 6,827; slaves, 2941; deaths, 91, farms, 547; manufacturing establishments, 6; value of real estate, \$723,054; value of personal estate, \$1,375,657.

Among the first settlers of this county were, Jacob Bankston, Richard Easley, John Smith, Jordon Clark, Abednego Moore, Thomas Hill, Paul Williams, Edward Callahan, Parks Chandler, Andrew Miller, Bedford Brown, A. Collins, S. Lively, Johnson Strong, Miles Garthright, D. W. Easeley.

The old volume published in 1854 is quite interesting and instructive. The reader will note that while the county was formed in 1796, Jefferson was not constituted

"the seat of justice" until 1806, ten years after the formation of the county, and five years after cutting off Clarke county.

At what precise place the county site was located during these ten years, history is silent, but from the best information we can gather, it was Tallassee; that was then something near the geographical center of the county. Be that as it may, a glance at a good map of the county will show that the present county seat is centrally located, and that the symmetrical beauty of the county is unsurpassed.

The names mentioned as being among the first settlers of this county are quite familiar, and will doubtless awaken interest in the readers of The Herald. The name of the ubiquitous "John Smith" springs no surprise. Some years ago one of this distinguished family claimed that it was the boast of the Smith family, and had been ever since Adam Smith and Eve Smith were placed in the garden of Eden, that a John Smith could be found anywhere and everywhere throughout the civilized world, except in the penitentiary. It will be conceded that the archaic John mentioned by our historian was the ancestor of the very numerous families of all the clever Smiths resident in this county at the present. Mr. Thomas Brooks and J. S. Brooks of Pendergrass, A. D. Brooks, of Atlanta; Andy Brooks, of near Jefferson, and are descendants of Middleton Brooks.

Among the descendants of Miles Garthright, are the Hon. George D. Bennett, who served in the legislature with distinction; Dr. J. C. Bennett, who served his county faithfully several terms as clerk and treasurer; Jack Bennett, our present efficient county civil engineer, than whom a better engineer never boxes the compass, and Miles Garthright and a host of others who rank among the best citizens of this county.

The name of Edward Callahan is still held in loving remembrance by his descendants. He was the grand uncle of Mrs. James Roberts, Mrs. J. A. Mahaffey, and that gallant and illustrious soldier, Major W. G. Callahan. Parks Chandler, one of the first settlers, was the grand uncle of C. C. Chandler, of Center, who made one of the most efficient clerks and treasurers that ever served in that office.

Amos Stapler was the uncle of that grand and noble gentleman, T. J. Stapler, of near Nicholson, whom to know is to esteem, and who has served his people long and faithfully as justice of the peace.

It is interesting to compare, or rather contrast, the statistics of 1860 with the figures of 1906.

In 1860 the population of this county was 9,768.

In 1906 the population of this county is 26, 646, a gain of 18,878 in fifty-five years. This is indeed remarkable when we take into account the ravages of the four years of civil war.

In 1860 the value of real estate in this county was \$723,064.

In 1906 the value of real estate in this county is \$5,299,200, a gain of \$4,576,146 in fifty five years.

In 1850 the average price of land, per acre was \$2.58.

In 1905 the average price of land, per acre is \$18 a gain of \$16.48 per acre. The value of personal property in this county in 1850 cannot be compared with the value of personalty in 1906, for the reason that most of the personal property in 1850 consisted of slaves. Estimating the value of slaves at that time at \$400 per capita, which would be moderate, runs the amount up to \$1,176,400.

Of course, the facilities of travel and communication in 1850 can only be contrasted with those in 1905, in this county. In 1850 there was not a mile of railroad, telegraph or telephone in this county, neither were any contemplated; and neither of the two last mentioned in the state. Indeed, in 1850, the railroad was in its infancy, the telegraph in its swaddling clothes and the telephone was not even in embryo.

In the month of May, 1844, the first telegraph message that ever flashed over the wire went from Baltimore to Washington, and was the announcement of the nomination of Mr. Polk for the presidency of the United States. Then that grand old scientific hero, Professor Morse, in the van of advanced thought, was in a little room furnished him at the capital at Washington, for experimental operations, that he might develop the electro-telegraph system, and the croaker was abroad in the land telling his pessimistic interrogatory, "Qui bono?"

It is, indeed, tempting here to enlarge upon the efforts of the energetic reformer of today and the opposition he meets, but time and space forbid. Today Jackson county has in successful operation 35 miles of standard-gauge railroad, and 30 narrow gauge is to be converted into standard gauge, and 18 miles, from Jefferson to Athens, completed, that will give 85 miles of railroad in the county. In addition to this, the prospect is flattering for a trolley line of railway to be built from the western border of the county to the eastern border of the county, giving the

county over 100 miles of railway. A few years ago we had no means of communication, except the slow process of inferior mail facilities. Today the telegraph and telephone wire and routes of rural delivery bring our people close together, eliminating time and distance.

It should go down in history that as our thanks are due Professor Morse for the telegraph system, so are thanks due Hon. Thomas Watson for the rural free delivery system, "Honor to whom honor is due."

From the census of 1850 we find there were only six manufacturing establishments in Jackson county, with a capital of probably \$10,000 invested. In 1905 there are over twenty manufacturing enterprises, in successful operation, with a capital of not less than \$1,000,000 invested.

The historian from whom we have quoted could, of course, say nothing of banking institutions in the county in 1854, because, then there were no banks in this county, and indeed, but few in the state. Today, however, there are twelve chartered banks in this county, with over \$500,000 invested.

In 1854, the historian could not mention a single city in this county, and as it seems from his silence, there was not a town or village within the borders of Jackson county worthy of mention, except the town of Jefferson, and doubtless, Jefferson would have been regarded as unworthy in place in history but for the force of the physical facts that designated her to be as the historian styles her, "the seat of justice."

What a grand contrast is presented in 1905! Wealthy cities, prosperous towns and villages have sprung up within the borders of Jackson county, which is conceded to be the banner county of the Empire State of the South.

Jefferson in 1850, a little village of about one hundred inhabitants, has grown into a city of about fifteen hundred inhabitants, with two chartered banks, with one of the best endowed schools in the state (Martin Institute), cotton mill, oil mill and other enterprises too numerous to mention; Center and Nicholson, thriving villages, with several hundred inhabitants each, with cotton gins, etc.

Commerce, which a short while ago was known only as a wide place in the road is today one of the wealthiest cities, according to population, in the state, with about 2,500 inhabitants of most intelligent and enterprising citizens, with three banks, two cotton mills, oil mill and

various other manufacturing enterprises too numerous to mention, but we must be allowed to mention the splendid newspaper published in this city of enterprise under the management of Mr. J. F. Shannon.

A few miles north of Commerce, on the Southern railroad, we find the beautiful enterprising and thrifty town of Maysville, of about 700 inhabitants, with two chartered banks, oil mill, roller mill, chain factory, etc. Here, in the little town of Maysville, are some of the cleverest and most hospitable people on earth.

Turning westward, how inspired the scene! Pendergrass, Hoschton and Statham, each flourishing with a bank, oil mills and other enterprises.

Last to be mentioned, but not least in fact nor less loved, is that splendid city of Winder, one of the most enterprising cities of the south, with about 3,000 inhabitants, composed of the most beautiful ladies, chivalrous men and brightest and promising children. This city with her three banks, splendid cotton mill, oil mill, foundry and other manufacturing enterprises, with energy and grit enough to run an empire, does, indeed, constitute the Occidental, as does Commerce, the Oriental beauty, boast glory and pride of the grand old county of Jackson. Indeed, the splendid city of Winder is the pet and pride of three great counties, Jackson, Gwinnett and Walton, and being mostly, indeed, nearly entirely in Jackson, is by far too enchanting and lovely to ever bid farewell. Long flourish the city of Winder and may her love for Jackson county never wane! Had we time and space it would be a labor of love to word-paint her worth.

Wonderful, indeed have been the strides of progress and change in the last fifty years. Then the statement went down in history that "most of the soil of this county is unproductive, although there are some good lands on the branches of the Oconee." Today it is a universally admitted fact that nearly all the soil in Jackson county is very productive, although there are some waste and unproductive lands on the branches of the Oconee.

Fifty years ago practical science and chemistry were unknown and absolutely worthless to the farmer. Today they are indispensable to the farmer. Then a few lordly mansions, surrounded with servants' cabins were to be found scattered here and there over the county; today the county is dotted over, in gunshot distance of each other with homes of happy, contented people and the old-time cabin is a thing of the past.

Then, there was, on an average, a menial to serve ev-

ery two white persons in the county; today involuntary servitude is unknown. Then, the deer and wild turkey were common; today they are mere creatures of history and tradition. Then dense forest checkered over with Indian trails covered most of the territory; today splendid farms, elegant homes and good highways occupy nearly the entire territory of the county.

Jackson county is not only the banner county of the state in wealth and physical resources, but is so by reason of educational advantages and political status. Good schools are now within the reach of most of the children throughout her rural districts and steps are now in progress to perfect her school systems, under the guidance of Hon. R. D. Moore her efficient county school commissioner.

We have, practically, free schools at Jefferson, Commerce and Winder, and good educational advantages in every town and village in the county.

There is no county in the state, except those with populous cities, as well equipped with newspapers as is Jackson.

The Jackson Herald, at Jefferson, edited by Hon. J. N. Holder; the Commerce News, at Commerce, by Hon. J. F. Shannon; The Economist and Wider Democrat, published at Winder, the former edited by the gifted A. G. Lamar and the latter the erudite L. C. Russell, are splendid papers and sources of information for the people, now regarded as indispensable. The names of Holder and Shannon are guarantees of the value of their respective papers.

The officers of the county are the peers of any in the state, Hon. John N. Holder, who has served three terms in the house of representatives and one term in the senate, has won a reputation throughout the state for ability and influence in the general assembly. Hon. L. G. Hardman, who has served as member of the lower house, has won an enviable reputation. These two distinguished gentlemen are now the representatives of this county, Jackson county is proud to number among her citizens the Hon. R. B. Russell, judge of the superior court.

As a jurist, Judge Russell is admired and esteemed wherever he is known. He served as solicitor general in the Western circuit for eight years, and seven years as judge. He is now an aspirant to fill the governor's office. There can be no doubt, judging the future by the past, that the affairs of state would be safe in his hands.

*May 10, 1906, Excerpt from the Jackson Herald*

## **The Centennial Celebration**

The Centennial Celebration was held here last Saturday and every one present on that occasion pronounced it one of the greatest days the county ever saw.

Hundreds of people assembled here from every section of the country and many came from other counties. One of the largest crowds ever seen in this city of 100 years old gathered here on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The old town was decorated in gay colors of red, white and blue. The courthouse, court house fences, all the stores and many of the residences were ornamented with buntings and flags. Prof. Ivy had both the interior and exterior of Martin Institute beautifully decorated.

Several barrels containing ice water were placed on the courthouse lawn and on Martin Institute campus to quench the thirst of the people. But people were not very thirsty, for the day was bright and beautiful and a breeze blew all day from the west. Never was a more ideal spring day seen than was last Saturday. There was no dust, as a rain the day before not only cooled the atmosphere, but laid the dust.

The sweetest of music was made by the Barber Band, of which Mr. C. E. Barber is the director. The band played several inspiring pieces on the courthouse lawn, after which it went to the Institute, followed by a large concourse of people. The chapel was jammed and packed with more than a thousand beings, and yet not more than one-third the crowd was in the spacious auditorium of Martin Institute.

John N. Holder called the great audience to order, and stated that the meeting was to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the location of the county seat of Jackson at Jefferson, and the exercise of the day were opened with a fervent prayer by Rev. W. H. Bridges of Randolph district, after which the song "America" was sung by the audience.

The address of welcome was delivered by Hon. H. W. Bell, mayor of Jefferson. Judge Bell delivered the words from a warm and sincere heart. He voiced the sentiments of every citizen of Jefferson when he said "welcome."

The response to the address of welcome in behalf of Jackson county was delivered by that veteran educator, Hon. G. J. N. Wilson. His address was full of historical

data and information, and at the request of a large number of people who were unable to hear it we will publish it in full later.

The response on behalf of the state was delivered by the Hon. T. J. Shackelford of Athens. It was one of the greatest and most eloquent addresses ever heard in this town. Mr. Shackelford had only about 16 hours notice that he was expected to deliver the response in behalf of the state, but every one under the sound of his voice on that day was spellbound by the sublimity of his thoughts and beauty of expression. We never expect to hear a more eloquent speech here than Tom Shackelford's address.

Ex-Governor Candler was on the program, but he has been totally blind for several months on account of a cataract growing over his eye. He promised to be present and make an address if the doctor did not operate on his eye, but on Friday he telegraphed John N. Holder as follow: "In hospital. Can't come. God bless Jefferson and Jackson county, the best county in the state. May the people of the county be as good, noble and true 100 years hence as the people are today." When John Holder read the telegraph there was a perfect storm of applause, that swept over the great audience, which lasted a half minute. When it was stated that the operation had been performed and was a success and that Ex-Governor Candler's sight would be restored, there was great applause again.

Hon. J. J. Connor was introduced. He is the president of the State Agricultural Society. He told several amusing stories, after which he made a strong plea for agriculture, and urged Jackson county to make an exhibit at the state fair this fall. Mr. Connor was liberally applauded several times during the delivery of his splendid address. At the conclusion of his speech, the audience was dismissed with a short prayer by Rev. J. J. Bennett.

The people adjourned to the court house lawn, where there were thirty tables laden with a sumptuous repast. Sheriff Stevens announced from the courthouse steps that there was plenty to eat for everyone present, and that every one was invited to partake of the feast of the day. He said, "Do not wait or expect any other invitation, for everybody is invited to eat at any table they desire to." There was plenty to eat and everyone seemed to enjoy the festivities of the hour. The entire crowd seemed to be happy and in a good humor. The candidates were present and talked and ate.

In the afternoon the crowd returned to the chapel. After several nice pieces of music by the Barber Band, Dr.

J. C. Bennett introduced to the audience Hon. J. M. Terrell, governor of Georgia, who addressed the people on the Empire State of the South. Governor Terrell spoke of the early history of Georgia and told of the great achievements of her people. He detailed a conversation he had with Gov. Follett of Wisconsin last year. He said the governor of Wisconsin said Georgia was far ahead of Wisconsin on railroad legislation. "Yes," Gov. Terrell said to him, "Georgia is ahead of Wisconsin in that respect and several other respects and we are going to see that Georgia keeps ahead of Wisconsin." Gov. Terrell said that Georgia is in enjoyment of great prosperity. That her farmers are prosperous, her merchants are doing well, in fact the whole state is on a tidal wave of good times. Cotton is bringing a fair price and the farmers are buying their own homes. Land is a good price, banks are being established and their deposits are being increased every year, the tax values are getting larger every year, the tax rate is getting less, while the public school fund is greater than that of any other southern state, and Georgia boasts of the high honor of paying more to pension her Confederate veterans than any state in all the southland. He highly complimented Jackson as being the leading county in the state, as more farmers own their homes in this county than any other in Georgia. Governor Terrell was frequently applauded during his address, and at the conclusion was loudly cheered.

At the conclusion of his speech, J. N. Holder said: "The speech of Governor Terrell concludes the exercises of this centennial celebration. We thank you all for your presence, the good order observed and the close attention given to the several addresses. In behalf of all the committees, we desire to thank the people for their good behavior here. We do not believe there was ever better order where such a large crowd assembled than has been observed on this occasion. It speaks well for Jackson county and her citizenships, but knowing her people as we do, we are not surprised at the good behavior of the people of the best county in Georgia. We trust each one had plenty to eat today. There was plenty at the courthouse lawn for every one, and if one failed to get his share it was his fault. We trust each one has had a pleasant day, and that we will go away from here knowing each other better, thinking more of each other and feeling happier and better for having been here. May the sweetest and richest benediction of Him who makes the grass to grow, the brooks to babble, the birds to sing, the

stars to twinkle, the sun to shine and who presides over the universe, be with each and every individual, is our wish and our prayers."

Rev. R. N. Abraham dismissed the audience with prayer, which concluded the centennial exercises for the day.



*G. J. N. Wilson, educator and author of "The Early History of Jackson County".*

At the Jefferson Centennial celebration, G. J. N. Wilson read the welcoming response from Jackson County. His narrative containing historical information and data was later published in the Jackson Herald.



*The celebration for the Jefferson Centennial was held on May 5, 1906, at Martin Institute from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. Following the program of speakers, a picnic basket feast was provided by all the attendees.*

Jackson County Historical Society

P.O. Box 1234 Commerce, Georgia 30529