



# THE TOWNS HISTORIAN

The NEWSLETTER of the TOWNS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOL. 2 ISSUE 1

MARCH 2018

The Towns County Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and sharing the rich history of our area. We meet the second Monday of each month at 900 N. Main St., Hiawassee, GA.

P.O. Box 1182  
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Hiawassee, Georgia  
(706) 781-8611

## 2018 OFFICERS

Sandra Green  
*President*

Nancy Cody  
*Vice President*

Betty Phillips  
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Frances Shook  
*Treasurer*

Mary Ann McCall Miller  
*Membership Secretary*

## HISTORIANS

Jerry A. Taylor  
*County Historian*

Jason Lee Edwards  
*Deputy Historian*

Mary Ann McCall Miller  
*Webmaster/Graphic Designer*

## BUSY! BUSY! BUSY!

That's the best way to describe the first quarter of the Towns County Historical Society! We started the new year by welcoming a new officer, Membership Secretary, Mary Ann Miller. The other officers were reelected to their positions. Everyone works together to make the organization successful. As our secretary, Betty Phillips, is fond of saying, we're a team!

The programs for this quarter were a perfect example of the variety of topics offered by the Historical Society. January featured Maddie Botting telling us about the history of, and future plans for, Hamilton Rhododendron Gardens. The program was enhanced by David and Myrtle Sokol's

slide show of the garden in bloom. The guest speaker for February was Billy Ray Palmer talking about the legend of Abraham Lincoln's connection to this area. A very timely topic for March was Bill and Nancy Cody telling us about the old-timey way of planting according to the "signs". Our vice president, Nancy Cody, does a great job coming up with the ideas for programs.

It was a busy three months planning the Old Rock Jail Museum's grand opening/ribbon cutting scheduled for May 19th at 2:00. The lighting fixtures were installed, including upstairs in the cells as well as spotlights for future displays. A substantial metal handrail was installed for the stairs leading up to the cells. We received several donations of items for display in the museum. We now have a wringer washer, Hoosier table and cabinet, a brass floor lamp, corner cabinet with glass doors, and two metal porch chairs, in addition to small kitchen items! We hope, once the museum is open, it will inspire others to donate artifacts for display. We particularly are interested in military or sports memorabilia as well as anything specifically connected to Towns County or the jail. There is much left to do but we can see the light at the end of the tunnel! Thanks to everyone that has assisted in any way. Mark your calendars for May 19th at 2:00. Hope to see you there!



Sandra Green, President

# Floyd Ensley, Sr. by Nancy Cody



*Floyd and Alma Sampson Ensley*

Floyd Roosevelt Ensley Sr. (1906 – 1993) was born on Buzzard's Roost in a log cabin.

His grandparents, Samuel Bailey Ensley (1856 – 1932) and Elizabeth Lois Long (1857 – 1943) came to Track Rock from Jackson County, North Carolina. Elizabeth was a mid-wife and herbalist. She delivered babies all over Union and Towns counties.

Floyd's parents were Chester Arlin Garfield Ensley (1886 – 1965) and Ada Matilda Franks (1887 – 1969). Garfield was a carpenter and construction man. He built all the bridges and culverts from the North Carolina line to Hiawassee and then to Neal's Gap.

Floyd followed in his dad's footsteps and also became a carpenter. He helped build the dining hall and library at Young Harris College, and Sharp Memorial Methodist Church. He also helped build several buildings on the square in Hiawassee.

While working in Rome, Georgia, Floyd heard about the TVA taking applications for workers. He applied, took the exam, and was hired. The work involved construction on the dams, locks, and power houses. They could dump about 7 yards of concrete every three minutes. Floyd thought it was interesting and exciting work.

Floyd worked on Wheeler Dam at Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Wheeler Dam was the 2nd dam that TVA built (Norris was the first). Wheeler Dam was built 1933 – 1936 and is 72 feet high.

He then went to work at Hiawassee Dam in North Carolina. When he first got to the site there were two engineers and a tent. There was a lot of wilderness and he had to walk a mile or more to get to the site. It took 3 ½ years to build Hiawassee dam from 1936 to 1940. It is 307 feet high.

He worked at Watts Bar Dam in Tennessee. Construction was started in 1939 and the dam was finished in January of 1942. It is 112 feet high and is a nuclear dam.

Chatuge Dam was started 17 July 1941 and completed 12 February 1942. It is an earth dam and is 150 feet high. Floyd didn't get to work on Chatuge because he was still working at Watts Bar at the time.

Floyd also worked on Fontana Dam in North Carolina. It was built 1942 – 1944. It is 480 feet high and is the highest dam east of the Rocky Mountains.

The TVA worked three shifts around the clock, seven days a week and didn't stop for rain, sleet or snow. During the winter of 1942 – 43, it came 14 snows and for five weeks straight the temperature stayed between 5 & 10 below zero. Nobody laid out of work and they didn't stop work.

Floyd went back to carpenter work before retiring in Young Harris where he always said, "it is the most beautiful valley I have ever seen."

Floyd married a local Young Harris girl, Alma Eulalah Sampson (1909 – 1991), daughter of John Oscar Sampson (1877-1955) and Mariah Cannie Ensley Hullender (1875 – 1934).

Floyd and Alma Sampson Ensley had five children: Floyd R. Ensley Jr. (1927-2002), Marie Ensley Hall (1929-2008), Patrick Roy Ensley (1931-1990), Louis Gerald "Jerry" Ensley (1933-2008), and Martha Ensley Abernathy, who is still living.



# YOU CAN'T GET THERE FROM HERE!

by Sandra B. Green



At least it seems that way when you're talking about Tate City. One of the most, if not the most, beautiful parts of Towns County is also the most inaccessible. It adjoins Rabun County. In fact, you have to go into Rabun County to even get to it, unless you would like to hike from Upper Hightower through some pretty rugged wilderness. It is so cut off from the rest of the county that Towns and Rabun counties have an agreement that all students living in Tate City go to Rabun County schools. The community was known as Tree prior to being named Tate City after a mining company manager called "Captain" Tate. It is a voting precinct with a total of 13 registered voters!

Few of the original families still remain. Instead it is home to part time residents with summer homes and weekend campers along the Tallulah River. It is an historic community where many pioneer families, whose descendants still live in Towns County, first settled, families such as Shook, Nichols, Nicholson, and Rogers. In the late 1930s a church was built that also used as the school. The teachers would board with local residents. Among the early teachers were Fred Walls, Mae Walls Nichols, Frank Wood, and Cordie Ledford. Although the original building is no longer there, the gravestones in the old cemetery tell a story of those pioneers of bygone years.

Corundum mining and logging were the primary means of making a living in the community. In the late 1800s there was a small railroad built to haul logs out to the mill. As those natural resources dwindled, and since there wasn't enough level terrain on which to grow enough crops to feed their family, people gradually moved to communities that had land on which they could farm.

If you've never been to Tate City, I encourage you to explore this rugged part of Towns County that holds so much of our history!



TOWNS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO ATTEND THE



**OLD ROCK JAIL  
MUSEUM**

**GRAND OPENING AND  
RIBBON CUTTING  
CEREMONY**

SATURDAY, MAY 19, 2018

2:00 PM

91 SOUTH BERRONG STREET

HIAWASSEE, GEORGIA 30546

A poster for a musical performance. The left side features a close-up of an acoustic guitar's body and neck. The right side has a textured, parchment-like background with text. The text includes the event title, date, time, and location.

**TOWNS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**PRESENTS**  
**JOHN COCHRAN &**  
**THE COWHANDS**

**PICKIN'  
ON THE  
PORCH**

**6:00pm**  
**May 19th**

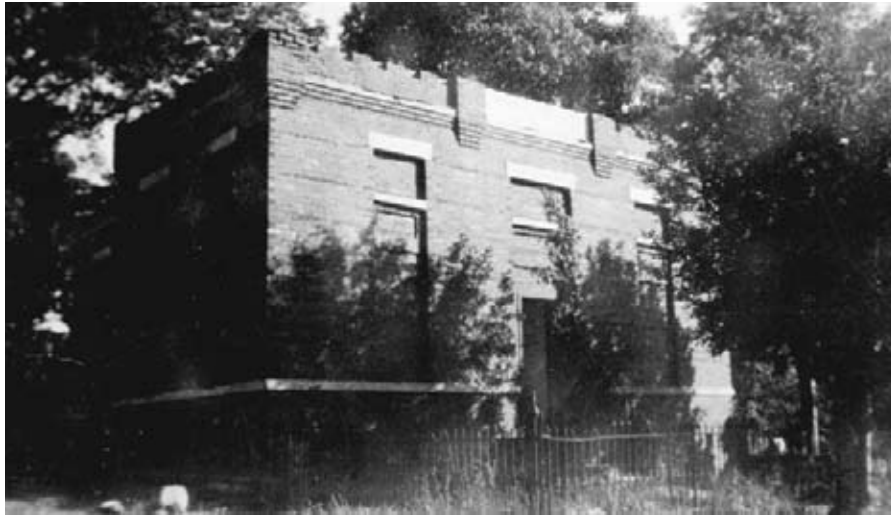
**Old Rock Jail Museum**  
**Porch**

**traditional western & country music**



# Towns County Jails

by Jerry A. Taylor, County Historian



Towns County was created in 1856, and Andrew J. Burch was the first sheriff. At that time, there was no jail, and when he had to arrest someone, he put him in his cellar. The first permanent jail was a log structure consisting of two rooms with an alley between. The prison was made of double walls with the outer and inner walls being about eight inches apart. The space between the double walls was beaten full of rocks as the structure went up. It stood on the edge of Mr. Dave Frank's pasture across from where Mrs. Pauline Franks lived (which is at the present time along the edge of Ingles parking lot at Bell Street). In entering this building, one had to go up a stairway which led to two or three small rooms upstairs. In the center of one of these rooms was a hole in the floor about three feet square with a fall door. When anyone was brought to prison, a ladder would be put down through this hole and the prisoner sent down into the dungeon. After the ladder was removed, and the fall door closed, there was not much chance for escape. As far as is known, this building, constructed over the semi-dug out dungeon, served as the jail until 1912 when, under the leadership of ordinary John M. Johnson, a new jail was built. This is the jail which is pictured here. It stood behind the courthouse where the England Garden Club building now sits. It served as the county jail until 1936 when the old rock jail was built.

In September 1934, the Grand Jury reported that "the condition of the jail remains unsanitary and unsafe," and they urgently requested that the "Ordinary look after this matter at once." The efforts to replace the existing jail were given impetus on March 28, 1935, when the roof was blown off in a storm. In the March term of court, 1935, the Grand Jury instructed the Ordinary to build a new jail in conjunction with the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the predecessor to the Works Progress Administration (WPA). They described what they wanted as "a two story, stone jail similar to the one in Union County" with quarters for the jailer and family." In September, the Grand Jury further instructed the Ordinary to "exchange the present county jail for the lot located south of the courthouse" and retain the "the cells now located in said old jail."

Work began on the new jail in the first week of October, and the Towns County Herald reported that "the walls of the lower floor are being built twenty-four inches thick of rock and concrete while the second floor wall will be twenty inches thick." One week later, the paper reported that "work on the new jail is progressing rapidly and soon the walls of the first story will be completed." In the last week of October, 1935, "workmen were pouring the concrete flooring for the second story which will be six and a half inches of steel and concrete." Work continued as weather permitted, and the Grand Jury of March 1936 was able to report that the new jail "is modern, safe, and sanitary in every respect and is very a commendable structure and improvement to our County." They also praised Ordinary Dr. J. F. Johnson "for his faithful and untiring and economical efforts used in the construction of the jail" that cost the county only \$4,353.31. The jail works, including a cell patented in 1901, were moved from the former jail and still remain in the Old Rock Jail.

The Old Rock Jail functioned as the county jail from 1936 until the early 1970s when the Towns-Union jail on Track Rock in Union County was constructed. That relationship ended in the early 2000s when both counties built their own separate jails with Commissioner Jack Dayton relocating the Towns County jail to Crooked Creek Road on land that was owned by the heirs of Charlie and Lola Gribble Tatham.

# George Washington Brown

by Jason Lee Edwards, Deputy County Historian

George Washington Brown (May 9, 1829-November 21, 1889) was born in Haywood County, North Carolina, to Henry Brown and Mary Hooper. He came to what is now Towns County, Georgia, in 1837 with his parents. He first married Rosetta Adaline Brown, daughter of Joel R. Brown and Matilda Lloyd, in about 1859. They were the parents of one son, John Henry Brown (1861-1934). His first wife died in 1861 and is buried in Ivy Mount Cemetery, Towns County, Georgia. During the Civil War, he served in Co. G, 65th Georgia Infantry. On January 10, 1867, he married Jane Amanda Russell. She was born September 11, 1830, in Macon County, North Carolina, to John Russell and Nancy Dickey. They were the parents of Lona Cicero Brown (1867-1928) and Nancy Alice Brown Woodring (1870-1945). George Washington Brown lived at what is now the Spiva place on Fodder's Creek. He had a tandem sawmill and grist mill on Fodder's Creek prior to 1870. At the mill, there was a small lake created by a dam. The lake was large enough for people to go out on it in boats. He had purchased the land in 1856 and may have begun his milling operation before the Civil War. His sawmill was the only one in the Hiawassee area, in the early years, and most of the old buildings in town were made from lumber sawed there. After his death, in 1889, the mill passed to his son Lona Cicero Brown. Often the Browns hired other people to tend the mill. In the early years it was operated by



*George Washington Brown*



*Brown Sawmill & Grist Mill*

John A. Scroggs (1837-1911). Later it was operated by Henry Freeman Beard (1853-1934). In 1908, Cicero Brown began construction on a new house in town on Bell Street. The lumber for the house was sawed on Fodder's Creek. In 1909, he refused to grind green corn for a local person he knew was going to use it to make moonshine. That evening, the mill mysteriously burned. Having completed his house in town, he sold the land to Freeman Beard who had operated the mill for a number of years. In 1918, Freeman Beard sold the property to James N. Spiva (1880-1965). His descendants live there today. George Washington Brown and Jane Russell Brown belonged to Macedonia Baptist Church, and he represented the church several times at the associational meeting. He is buried in Ivy Mount Cemetery, Towns County, Georgia. Jane Amanda Russell Brown died January 4, 1904. At the time of her death, she belonged to Enotah Baptist Church, having been one of the Charter Members in 1899. She is also buried in Ivy Mount Cemetery.

# MOUNTAIN RECIPES

## Pickled Beans and Corn by Nancy Cody

### Preparation:

Wash, string and break beans. Cook until done but not mushy. Don't overcook.

Shuck, silk and wash corn. Cook the corn on the cob by dropping the ears into boiling water. Let water come back to a boil and cook corn for about 8 minutes. Take out of boiling water and put in cold or ice water to stop the cooking process. Let cool then cut the corn off the cob.

Mix the beans and corn together. Put in jar or churn and follow directions below.

Gallon jar method: Put beans & corn in a wide mouth gallon jar. Do NOT pack it tight. Put  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of canning salt over the beans & corn and then pour cold water over until beans & corn are covered with the water. If the salt doesn't dissolve and settles in the bottom, stir it a little to help it dissolve. Cover the jar with clear plastic wrap and put a saucer on top. Set jar in a pan or something to catch the water as it works. In a day or two the water will begin to get dingy and start to work – water will run off of it and spill over top of jar.

It will be pickled in a few days, depending on how hot the weather is, and how sour you want it. Also, sweet corn will pickle quicker than field corn. Just taste it to see when it is the right taste for you.

Churn method: If you are using a churn to pickle in, put beans and corn in churn. Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup canning salt per gallon of water used. Cover corn and beans with the salt water. Cover churn with cheesecloth or a white cloth. A churn holds more than a gallon jar so it will take it a day or two longer to pickle, again according to weather, kind of corn you use, and your taste.

### Canning:

When the beans and corn are pickled take them out of jar or churn and rinse with cold water. Put then in quart or pint canning jars and put water over them. Don't over fill the jars. Leave  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch space at top of jar. Put lids and rings on jars. Put jars in water bath canner and cover with water. Process for 25 minutes for quarts and 15 minutes for pints, after the water starts to boil in the canner. Remove jars from canner and set on a towel. Let cool, then check to make sure all the jars sealed before putting on the shelf.

Pickled Corn on the Cob: Cook the corn on the cob same as above. Put in cold water to stop cooking process. Let corn cool completely. Put the ears of corn in a wide mouth gallon jar, standing on end. Mix  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup canning salt to one gallon of water. Pour over the corn on the cob until corn is covered with the salt water. Cover jar with clear plastic wrap and set a saucer on top. Put a container under the jar to catch the water as it begins to work. The water will get dingy as it starts to work. In about 4 days it will be pickled, depending on weather, type of corn used (sweet or field) and how sour you want it to be. Take an ear out at a time, rinse, and eat. You don't have to can it if you are going to eat it within the next few days.

*If you have a old-timey pioneer recipe you would like  
to share with us, please submit it to:  
[townscountyhistory@gmail.com](mailto:townscountyhistory@gmail.com)*

# ❧ DONATIONS ❧

Kathy and James McAteer  
*In memory of Warren Paul Berrong*

Bud and Rosemary Branson  
*Old Rock Jail*

Michael Gerschefski  
*In honor of James and Billie Jones*

Norma and Bob Stewart  
*In memory of Marilyn Gordon*  
*In honor of Jerry Taylor*

Jim and Trish Reynolds  
*In honor of Towns County First Responders*

Sid Turner  
*In honor of William Ross McConnell*

Hector & Heather Berrera  
*In memory of James Frank Russell*

William Ronald & Carol Ann Gibson  
*In memory of Bonnie and Noble Gibson*

Joy Lockman  
*In memory of Richard Schmidtke*



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