



THE TOWNS HISTORIAN



The NEWSLETTER of the TOWNS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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www.townscountyhistory.org

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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 the Towns County Civic Center

P.O. Box 1182
900 North Main St.
Hiawassee, Georgia
(706) 781-8611

President's Message By Tyler Osborn, President



When I took over as president in January, I never imagined that we would achieve so much in just six short months. In March, we celebrated the county's birthday, complete with special presentations, a birthday party, and a special showing of "I'd Climb the Highest Mountain".

Following that, interest was shown to restart the Oral History Project, interviewing those who can open a window to the past of Towns County. I formed a committee of volunteers to head this project and they have completed one interview and have several more scheduled over the coming months. Be sure to look for those on our YouTube Channel and Facebook. A special thanks to those serving on this committee – Bob Williams, Robin Webb, Daren Osborn, & Bruce Roberts.

To be completely honest, I thought this would be our two main projects for the year. However, thanks to the efforts of Mayor Liz Ordiales and the Hiawassee City Council, the city finally entered into an agreement to purchase the historic Berrong House in Hiawassee, well under market value. This news was an excitement for all, but even better than that, Mayor Ordiales asked the Historical Society to take over the management of the property. The plans for the home are to restore it to its original glory and use it as an event center for meetings, small weddings, and reunions.

The Berrong House project is no small undertaking and will take many volunteers and donations to bring the house back to life. However, I know with our dedicated members, we can make this happen! The officers are in the beginning stages of planning the fundraising campaign. We have already had an inspection on the home and, considering its age, it is in fabulous condition with minimal structural issues. Most of the work on the house will be cosmetic and replacing what has been stolen, neither of which will be cheap! I look forward to what the rest of this year brings for the Historical Society and know we can all do great things when we work together!

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Jerry Taylor
County Historian

Jason Lee Edwards
Deputy Historian



Mary Ann Miller
Webmaster/Graphic Designer

Nicknames

by Jerry A. Taylor

A nickname is a short name for the proper name of a person. It is commonly used to express affection, amusement, a character trait, or some other attribute. If you think nicknames are a troublesome issue now, our ancestors were just as bad as we are today with naming their children one name and calling them by a nickname.

For example, Logan Nicholson (1828-1903) and his wife Mary Ann Woodring (1830-1916) had a son named David Leander Pickney who was commonly called "Pink," a daughter named Dorcas Minerva Elizabeth but was referred to as "Aunt Puss" by everyone in the family, and Daniel Mercer who was known in the community as "Messer."

Growing up on Fodder Creek, I early on learned to differentiate the different Margie Nicholsons as "Margie Charlie," "Margie Ray," and "Margie Rondal."

My grandfather Cicero Barrett had four uncles all named James. They were referred to in the community as "Big Jim" Arrowood, "Little Jim" Garrett, "Big Jim" Tanner, and "Little Jim" Barrett. There was also a "Red Jim" Nicholson and a "Black Jim" Nicholson.

My grandfather Jeremiah Martin Taylor (1876-1928) was called "Jerry," "Juddy," and "Judd." Of course, it's easy to see Jerry, but as for Judd and Juddy, there is a story. Seems that his younger brother Grover, trying to pronounce his name, could not quite get the "r" sound and it came out as a "d" sound; hence, Jerry became Juddy, and the nickname stuck with him for all his adult life.

With this in mind, I would like to give examples of some of the most common nicknames that I have come across in our kith and kin while climbing the family tree.

FEMALE NICKNAMES

CAROLINE	Carrie, Callie
CASSANDRA	Cassie
CATHERINE	Cate, Catie, Cathy, Kittie
CORDELIA	Cordie, Delia
CYNTHIA	Cindy
ELEANOR	Nellie, Nell, Lena
ELIZABETH	Betty, Bess, Bessie, Liz, Lizzie, Libby, Lib, Eliza
ESTHER	Ettie
FRANCES (female)	Frankey, Fannie
GERTRUDE	Gertie, Trudy
HARRIETT	Hattie
ISABELLA	Sybil, Sibby, Ibby, Belle
JANE	Jennie, Janie
LETITIA	Tish, Lettie
LUCRETIA	Cressie, Lou
MARGARET	Peggy, Meg, Maggie, Margery, Mag
MARTHA	Mattie, Patsy, Patty, Pat
MARY	Mollie, Pollie, Mae, Mamie
MELISSA	Missy, Mellie
MELVINA	Viney, Mellie
PENELOPE	Nellie
PRISCILLA	Prissy, Cellie
REBECCA	Becky
SARAH	Sallie, Sadie
SUSANNAH	Sukey, Susan, Susie
TABITHA	Bicy, Tabby
TRIPHENIA	Pheny
THEODOCIA	Dosha, Docie

MALE NICKNAMES

ABIJAH	Bije
ARCHIBALD	Arch, Archey
ARTHUR	Ott, Art
AUGUSTUS	Augie, Gus
CHARLES	Charlie, Chuck
CICERO/MONROE	Roe
CYRUS	Cy
EDWARD	Ed, Ned, Ted
ELIJAH	Lije
FRANCIS (male)	Frank
HENRY	Hank, Harry
JAMES	Jimmy, Jim
JEPHTHA	Jeff, Jep
JEREMIAH	Jerry, Jeremy
JOHN	Jack, Jackie
JOSEPH	Joe, Jody, Jode
LAFAYETTE	Fate
LAWRENCE	Larry
MICAJAH	Cager
NATHANIEL	Nathan, Nate
RICHARD	Dick, Ricky
THADDEUS	Thad, Tad
THEOPHILUS	Theo, Thee
WALTER	Watty, Wally
WILLIAM	Will, Bill

The Berrong - Oakley House By Tyler Osborn



Photo Courtesy of Bruce Roberts

The house was built around 1905 by local contractor Bart Lochaby. Mr. Lochaby has a noted style on the houses he built, having been inspired by the homes he saw while serving in the Civil War. His homes always included gables, gingerbread trim, and horseshoes. He built most, if not all, of the historic homes that once stood in downtown Hiawassee. However, due to a lack of local historic preservation, the Berrong-Oakley house is one of the last known homes still standing that he built.

the home once again sat empty, only being used as a vacation home. In recent years, the home sat completely vacant.

For the past decade, both the City of Hiawassee & Towns County Government have tried to and acquire the Berrong-Oakley House from the Nelson Family, descendants of J. Miles & Maggie Berrong. In the early spring of 2023, the City of Hiawassee was able to secure a contract to purchase the home from the Nelson family. Unfortunately, the home had recently been vandalized for the first time with several historic details being stolen, including mantels, doors, and door hardware. This prompted the Nelson family to sell the home so that it could be saved from deterioration. After an investigation by the local police department, some of the stolen property was recovered to be placed back in the home.



J. Miles Berrong



Maggie Corn Berrong

Following J. Miles' death in 1939, Mrs. Maggie would split her time between her home in Hiawassee and her daughter's home, Susie Oakley, in Washington D.C. After Mrs. Maggie's death in 1961, the home sat vacant for several decades, only being occasionally used as a vacation home for the Oakley family. Sometime in the 1980s, Tom Oakley Jr. lived in the home for several years. After he moved out,



Kittie McConnell Berrong

Lost Churches of Towns County

By Jason Lee Edwards

Over the years there have been several churches to come and go in what is now Towns County, Georgia. In this article we will look at four of the early churches that disappeared before 1900.

Liberty Baptist Church (c.1842-1849)

Liberty Baptist Church existed from about 1842 to 1849. It existed simultaneously with Bell Creek Baptist Church and served the same general area. In 1850, both Bell Creek and Liberty had disappeared and were replaced by a church simply called Hiawassee Baptist Church. During its seventeen year existence, Liberty Baptist Church was pastored by Rev. Abner Chastain. They met on the first Sunday and the Saturday before. James K. Byers served as church clerk. At their height, in 1847, Liberty Baptist Church had forty-eight members including two black members. Known families who attended Liberty Baptist Church were the Burch, Byers, Chastain, Cloninger, Gibson, Price, Wickle, and Wilson families.

Woods Grove Primitive Baptist Church (bef.1874-c.1893)

Woods Grove Primitive Baptist Church was founded sometime prior to 1874 when it petitioned the Blue Ridge Primitive Baptist Association for membership. The church ceased to exist in about 1893. The known pastors of Woods Grove Primitive Baptist Church were J. M. Ellis (1876-1879) and Joseph M. Thomas (1879-1892). Among the families known to have attended were the John Wood family, the John Russell family, the Albert B. Russell family, the Henry H. Brown family, the William Johnson family, the J. J. Wood family, the J. S. Wood family, the J. W. McClure family, the J. M. Parker family, the J. Y. Cathey family, the W. A. Thomas family, the A. M. Moore family, the Jesse Emmerson family, and the George W. Tipton family. This was a different church organization than the slightly more modern Woods Grove Baptist Church, but many of the same families went on to be involved in the newer church.

Antioch Primitive Baptist Church (bef.1880-1886)

Antioch Primitive Baptist Church was located in the Upper Hightower community. It was started sometime prior to 1880 when its members petitioned the Blue Ridge Primitive Baptist Association for membership. A committee consisting of John A. Corn, Joseph M. Thomas, and William Tate examined the church and found it orthodox. They were duly admitted to the association. Most of the information about Antioch Primitive Baptist Church comes from the minutes of the association as only one page of their church book has survived.

The pastors who served Antioch Primitive Baptist Church were Joseph M. Thomas (1880), John A. Corn (1880-1885), and John M. Brown (1886). The Church Clerk was William K. Garrett. The known members were: Margaret E. Elliot (c.1877-aft.1886), Nancy Jane Garrett Elliott (1850-1928), Samuel Parks Elliott (1834-1929), Elizabeth Chastain Garrett (1822-1909), Jane Stroud Garrett (c.1794-aft.1886), Joseph Patton Garrett (1822-1886), Minerva Jane Shook Garrett (1864-1926), Mary Eller Garrett (1848-1923), William Garrett (c.1793-c.1888), William Kimsey Garrett (1848-1940), William Norris (c.1810-1882), and Mary Norris (c.1830-aft.1900).

The church minutes of August 16, 1886, read as follows: "Cauld for jeneral Bisness A moove from the church to consolidate the church with the fodders creek church. Moove and second was carried for consolidating." Two members, Elizabeth Garrett and Mary Garrett, received letters of dismissal. The nine remaining members then joined Fodder's Creek Primitive Baptist Church and would continue there as members

Brasstown Grove Primitive Baptist Church (1881-1889)

Brasstown Grove Primitive Baptist Church was established in 1881. It was located in the vicinity of present-day Young Harris, Georgia. By 1882, the church had twenty-two members and was pastored by Rev. John A. Corn and they were meeting on the first Sunday of the month. Rev. Corn continued in that capacity until 1884 when John M. Brown and J. M. Thomas were elected pastors. By 1885, the church was meeting on the third Sunday of each month. In 1886, Joseph M. Thomas was elected pastor and the church had grown to thirty members. Tilman H. Bryson served as pastor of Brasstown Grove Primitive Baptist Church from 1887 to 1889 when the church disbanded. Known families who attend Brasstown Primitive Baptist Church were the John Crane family, the Priscilla Kerby Bryson family, the Tilmon H. Bryson family, and the Isaac B. Swanson family.



Known War of 1812 Veterans Buried in Towns County

By Jason Lee Edwards

Henry Berrong (c.1785-March 30, 1873) served as a Private in Capt. Banks' Company, South Carolina Infantry from February 27, 1814, to April 13, 1814. He is buried in Upper Hightower Cemetery.

Jarrett Burch (c.1782-April 5, 1856) served as a Private in the South Carolina Militia. He is buried in Burch Cemetery.

Bright Burrell (June 18, 1797-October 20, 1860) served in Ewing's Regiment, North Carolina Militia. He is buried in Upper Hightower Cemetery.

Jonathan Denton (May 12, 1794-February 17, 1881) served as a Private in Capt. Devers' Company, North Carolina Militia, from February 16, 1815, to March 13, 1815. He is buried in Upper Hightower Cemetery.

Kinchen Harrison (c.1795-c.1858) served as a Private in Few's Regiment, Georgia Militia. He is buried in Burch Cemetery.

Andrew Hooper (c.1792-March 1849) served as a Private in Capt. McClure Company, North Carolina Militia. He is buried in Enotah Cemetery.



Hosea Land (c.1786-April 15, 1872) served as a Drummer in a Haywood County, North Carolina, company. He was 5ft, 6in tall, with light hair, blue eyes, and a light complexion. He is buried in Old Union Cemetery.

Aaron Matthews (c.1790-July 25, 1880) enlisted as a Private in Greene's Company, North Carolina Militia, September 21, 1814. He was discharged February 5, 1815. His burial location is unknown, but he is probably buried in Burch Cemetery.

Towns County Historical Society Meeting Reminder Contact Form

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

I would like to receive reminders about monthly meetings and special events from the Towns County Historical Society

(please check one or both) Phone Email

** Bring this form with you to the next monthly meeting or mail it to:

Towns County Historical Society

PO BOX 1182

Hiawassee, GA 30546

A Brief Postal History of Young Harris, Georgia

By Jason Lee Edwards

The first post office in the area that is now Young Harris was called Brasstown. It was established on July 30, 1842, with John Bryson as the Post Master. It was discontinued on February 20, 1844. A new Brasstown Post Office was established on May 9, 1848, with James Cathey as Post Master, but this post office was nearer to the North Carolina state line. It was discontinued on June 22, 1866.

Back in what is now Young Harris, Greenwood Post Office was established in September of 1848 with Martin Greenwood as the first postmaster. On March 8, 1851, the name was changed to Mt. Eolia and Sumner J. Smith was appointed postmaster. He was followed by Robert H. Erwin on December 19, 1855, John Bryson on December 29, 1857 and January 29, 1858, Mangrum H. Bryson on December 5, 1859, and James T. Rogers on May 9, 1860. Mount Eolia was discontinued on January 5, 1867. However, it was quickly reestablished on February 19, 1867, with Sarah Bryson as the postmistress. It was again discontinued on April 21, 1871. Mount Eolia returned on Mar 18, 1872, with Mangrum H. Bryson as postmaster. He served until Mount Eolia was finally discontinued on January 7, 1876. On March 22, 1883, Mangrum H. Bryson again became

postmaster in what is now Young Harris. The name Brasstown was resurrected, but it only existed a short time. On December 17, 1883, Brasstown Post Office was discontinued and the mail routed to Track Rock Post Office in Union County, Georgia.

With the coming of the Brasstown High School, later Young Harris Institute (now College), a new post office was needed. On August 10, 1887, McTyeire Post Office was established with Robert L. Campbell as postmaster. He served until January 28, 1889, when Edward A. Gray was appointed. He was followed by Charles C. Spence on October 9, 1889. On August 17, 1891, the name of McTyeire was changed to Young Harris. The early postmasters of Young Harris, with their dates of appointment, were:

Charles C. Spence, August 17, 1891
Joseph W. Boyd, November 28, 1894
Alleney L. Howell, July 14, 1898
John W. Hood, March 25, 1915
Forrest C. Berry, November 23, 1921
Theodore R. Berry, December 31, 1930

HIAWASSEE OR HIWASSEE

By Jerry A. Taylor

For all you folks always asking about the spelling - whether it's Hiwassee (as in North Carolina) or Hiawassee (as in the Georgia town) - well..... what can I say?

The first Clerk of Superior Court spelled it "Highwassee" in the first court record book in 1856!

When Towns County was created in 1856, the Inferior Court purchased land from Kimbrough H. Watson for the county seat. They chose the name Hiawassee, a name coming from the Cherokee word "Ayuhwasi" meaning "savannah" (green grassy area).

Prior to the court's settling on the name Hiawassee, the community was known as Watson's Crossroads, then briefly Boston in 1856, and finally Hiawassee.

The Hiawassee Post Office was established April 7, 1857, with Andrew J. Burch named as the first postmaster.

It is interesting to note that there was a post office named Hiwassee on Shooting Creek in what is in now Clay County, North Carolina, in the 1840s.

From the 1850s to the 1890s, Hiwassee and Hiawassee were generally interchangeable. However, by 1900, Hiawassee was the generally accepted spelling. The official spelling of the Georgia town is now Hiawassee. The official spelling of the river is Hiwassee. In Virginia, the word is spelled Hiwassee. In Tennessee it is generally spelled Hiwassee. In South Carolina it is Hiwassee. In Florida it is spelled Hiawassee. So, no matter how it is spelled, it is pronounced HIGH-wassee.

The Town of Hiwassee (no "a") was chartered by an act of the legislature on October 24, 1870. Originally, Hiawassee was governed by a commission style government under the name of the "Town of Hiwassee." The first commissioners were William T. Crane, Alexander M. Mauldin, Romulus A. Brown, and Dr. Daniel W. Killian. At some point in the early 1900s, the commission style was replaced by the current mayor and council style governmental body.

The City of Hiawassee was issued new charters by the legislature in 1956 and 1974.

WHO IS BURIED IN THE FAIRGROUNDS

By Jerry A. Taylor

Have you ever wondered who is buried in the little cemetery within the Georgia Mountain Fair Campground? It is enclosed by a four-foot-high wooden fence about 25 square feet. In 1941, when it was inventoried by the TVA, in preparation of the coming of Lake Chatuge, it was identified as the Rogers Cemetery since James Alastus "Lass" Rogers owned the land. It was described as having four graves marked by unscribed rock head and foot stones.



Mrs. Dora Maggie (Rogers) Denton was interviewed by the TVA agent as the closest neighbor to the cemetery. She stated that she had always been told that the deceased persons were Wilsons, and relatives of her brother-in-law, Harve Wilson. She had been living near the cemetery for thirty-two years. The TVA Removal Record shows that Mr. J. H. Wilson, nearest relative, signed the paperwork for the four graves to remain.

Research indicates that it was the family cemetery of the William Wellborn Wilson (1810-1880+) family. As to the identity of William Willborn Wilson, he was born in 1810 in North Carolina and married Mahalia Wilson on Jan. 14, 1832 in Burke County, NC. They moved from Yancey County, NC, to Lower Bell Creek in the 1840s.

Their known children were Mary Caroline Wilson (1832-1875) who married first James M. Burch (1828-1862) and second to James Monroe Self (1845-1925). She is buried in the Burch Cemetery. Their daughter Matilda Wilson (1848-1908) married Barnett Jasper Gibson and moved to California. Their son Clamon Wilson was born in 1851 in Union (Towns) County, Georgia, and died after 1860.

Sometime in the 1870s, the Wilsons moved to Davis County, Kansas, where they were residing in Jefferson Township at the time of the 1880 census. They died in the 1880s and are buried in Kansas.

So, who is buried in the Wilson Cemetery in the GMF Campground? It would seem that they would be Clamon Wilson (1851-1860+) and three other children of William Willborn and Mahalia Wilson.

DONATIONS

Thank you to the following people for
their generous donations to the historical society.

Alvin Burrell

Old Rock Jail

John Carswell, Jr.

Old Rock Jail

In Memory of Ed Barnard

Tony Denton

Berrong-Oakley House

Carlton and Gail Gooding

In Memory of J.C. Berrong

Marty Hayden

Charlie and Maude Hicks Family

Patricia Hunt

Yvonne Kaiser

Berrong-Oakley House

Eileen Oberzut

Old Rock Jail

*In Memory of Edward Oberzut,
Terry Kay and in Honor of Jerry Taylor*

Joe Ruf

Berrong-Oakley House

Sharp Memorial Church (Faye Hogg Circle)

Cemetery Island

Jerry Taylor

Memory of Travis Saylor

Brian and Mildred Underwood



Towns County Historical Society
P.O. Box 1182
Hiawassee, Georgia 30546

Membership Form

Date: _____ New Member _____ Renewing Member _____

Yearly Individual (\$15) _____ Yearly Household (\$20) _____ Life Individual (\$250) _____

Member Name(s): _____

Address _____
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I would like to receive reminder calls about meetings via phone/email: _____ Yes _____ No

Please send in this form with your check made payable to: Towns County Historical Society,
PO Box 1182, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

Be sure to check out our website: www.townscountyhistory.org.

I would like to make an additional contribution to:

_____ TC Historical Society _____ The Old Rock Jail _____
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- in the amount of \$ _____

In honor of: _____

In memory of: _____