

In the Line of Duty

At the museum we try to be always evident in seeking to gather more local history. On occasion, the flow of a day's events brings discussion that leads to information.

Melvin LaVaughn Bass and his wife Eva had been wanting to purchase a copy of Botie Chitty's book *The Valdostans, 99 Stories of the Way We Were*. We had no copies remaining for sale, but we felt sure a couple of clean copies that had come in from estate donations. We told them that we would hold a copy for them and to check back with us in a couple of weeks after we had time to process the acquisitions. We should add here that the late Botie Chitty kindly gave rights to this publication to the Lowndes County Historical Society.

The day the Basses returned for their copy of *The Valdostans* we had been assisting a lady who had come to the museum to see if we had an obituary, etc. on Charles Covington, an Investigator with the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Division, US Treasury, who was killed in Lowndes County in the line of duty in 1966. Covington had died before the historical society began, so we did not have a complete newspaper clipping file. He is included in the website Officer Down Memorial Page.

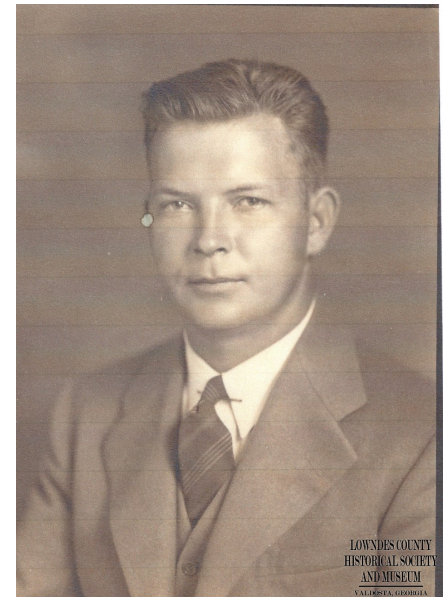
As she left we mentioned that we wished we had information on all local law officers killed in the line of duty. Bass then told that a high school classmate of his had a father killed in the line of duty. The Basses offered to make the necessary contacts and did so. We recently received the following story from Dick Walden, III, who retired in the Warner Robins area after being with their Chamber of Commerce.

May 15 each year is National Peace Officers Memorial Day. With this article we pay tribute to our local Peace Officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

**A remembrance of
The death of Alfred C. 'Dick' Walden, Jr.
November 14, 1913 - June 18, 1955
Deputy Sheriff, Lowndes County
Valdosta, Georgia
by Dick Walden, III of Byron, Georgia**

Shortly after midnight on Thursday, June 19, 1955, Deputy Walden was returning to his home after completing an uneventful mid-week shift. Stopping at an all-night convenience store, he called home to let his wife know he was on the way and to see if she wanted him to bring anything for her or their sleeping children. As he returned to his patrol car, he observed a car speeding and weaving dangerously, traveling south through Valdosta. Giving chase to what he thought was a routine DUI, Walden stopped the vehicle near the old Farmers' Market at the south city limits on U.S. 41, in an area known as "Little Miami." The driver was 21 year-old Alton M. Wilson of Thomasville, GA. Two female companions also occupied the car: Wilson's 39 year-old wife, Ruth, and 30 year-old Jessie Florine Thompson. All were obviously intoxicated.

At that late hour, Deputy Walden had no way of knowing that the trio had earlier robbed and beaten to death a fourth person in their group, L.M. Rachels, 62, a railroad conductor from Waycross, Ga. The two couples had been drinking and



Alfred C. 'Dick' Walden, Jr. died in June 1955 while serving as a Lowndes County Deputy Sheriff.



Dick Walden, III.. Portrait from the 1953 VHS Sandspur yearbook, his junior year. This photo near the time his father died in the line of duty.

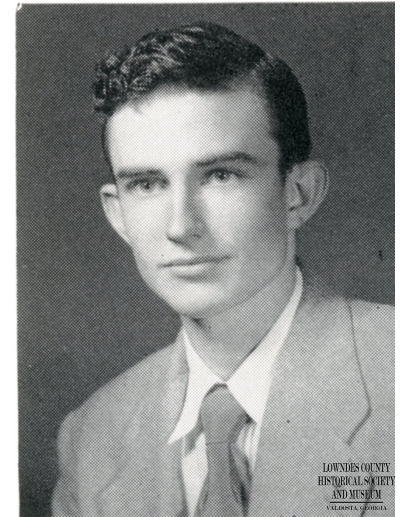
partying in the Thomasville area since the preceding day. Having hidden his body beneath a bridge on the Withlacoochee River, near Quitman, Georgia, the trio was fleeing into Florida. After determining that all were indeed intoxicated, the deputy turned to his patrol car to radio for assistance in transporting the three inebriates and their automobile to the county jail. Wilson, now fearing that his earlier crimes had been or soon would be discovered, pulled a .32 caliber revolver, which had been concealed in his belt beneath a loosely fitting sport shirt. He fired on the unsuspecting officer, striking him once in the back. The felled deputy managed to return fire; Wilson was hit with four of the six shots from the officer's .38 service revolver. The single bullet taken by Walden caused extensive and severe injury, piercing his spleen, liver, and intestines. The wound caused massive arterial damage and the ultimately uncontrollable internal hemorrhaging which took his life. Although severely wounded, Wilson survived.

Walden, 41, died on Saturday following the incident and was buried in Valdosta on June 19, 1955. The day was, ironically, Father's Day. His wife, who was at the time five months pregnant and three sons, 18, 11, and 5 years old, survived him. His fourth child, also a son, was born the following October.

Although Wilson recovered, he was never again to enjoy a day of freedom. During the following two years he faced a number of trials for the murder of Deputy Walden and the Waycross man. Tried first in Thomasville for the Rachel's murder, he was convicted of voluntary manslaughter and received a sentence of twenty years. Ruth Knowles

Wilson faced similar charge in the Rachels case and received a fifteen-year sentence. His first two trials for the Walden murder were held in Lowndes County; both resulted in convictions and death sentences. Both were reversed on legal technicalities. His third trial, which had to be moved to neighboring Brooks County because of an insufficient jury pool in Lowndes County, resulted in yet another conviction, but drew only a life sentence. The third member of the trio, Jessie Thompson was indicted but, having testified for the State against Wilson and his wife, was not tried in either case. Wilson spent the remaining thirty-seven years of his life as a prisoner of the State of Georgia. He died at the State Hospital in Milledgeville, Georgia, on July 1, 1992.

Note: In Valdosta Dick Walden worked twelve years in radio, WGOV and WJEM, and then for the Chamber of Commerce. He then was with Chambers including Augusta, Vidalia and retiring from the Warner Robins C of C.



Melvin LaVaughn Bass from the 1954 VHS Sandspur, his senior year. He and his wife's visit to the museum led to our having the Walden memorial story.

WWII Photos on Website

Years ago the Lowndes County Historical Society produced two books called: *Valdosta Visions: Yesteryears: A Family Album of World War II Memories (Books 1 & 2)*. The books were printed as calendars in 1995 and 1996 and featured details and photos of local World War II veterans from Lowndes County.

The committee tasked with this project was chaired by Ed Willis who painstakingly collected the stories and photographs of this great generation of Americans. This collection is highly valuable and we are very fortunate that Ed Willis gathered these stories while so many of these veterans were still living.

We uploaded these valuable records of local veterans to our website, for the public to view, in honor of Memorial Day 2013 and out of respect to those Lowndes County citizens who have given their lives in the line of service.

Both of the complete books can be found at our website here:

http://valdostamuseum.com/collections/wwii_album_veterans/

Each one is separated into three parts. Click one to open a PDF document of that section. You can search the documents if you want to find a local veteran you believe might be included.



Leadership Lowndes 2013



Macheski-Preston, Hughes, Collins and Fricker

Class 2013 of Leadership Lowndes visited the museum on their Quality of Life Day, May 16, this just after a trip to Wild Adventures. They viewed the slide show of Valdosta's years of development, 1890s through the 1920s, the period that town leaders established a foundation that allowed for future success. Upstairs they participated in a points of interest scavenger hunt. Some even accepted the chance to ring the 1889 Valdosta Institute bell in the outdoor exhibits. **At left** are Emily Macheski-Preston of Coleman Talley Law, Dedra Hughes of the Herndon Company, Patrick Collins Valdosta City Engineer, and Paula Fricker, homemaker, RN. They are enjoying a Coca-Cola with peanuts as they leave the museum. **Below**, Suzan Prince, Prince Automotive, looks at the Chamber of Commerce 100 Years of Presidents with her husband Jay the last photograph. **Right below:** Adam Doughty, seated, of the museum staff, shows Andy Bolton and Lee Tarpley, BB&T, the beginning of the 100 Years of Football exhibit on the museum website. They both played for VHS and their fathers were team coaches.



Bolton, Tarpley and Doughty



Prince

Announcing a special hardcover book from the Valdosta Daily Times

Lowndes County Memories

A Pictorial History of Lowndes County: 1860s—1960s

Scanning Sessions:

Tuesday, July 10 - 2:00p.m. to 5p.m.
Thursday, July 18—2:00p.m. to 5p.m.
Saturday, July 20— 10:am to 1:00p.m.

Guidelines:

General interest photos, such as commerce, industry, transportation, rural life, public service, etc.
Photos taken from 1860 to 1969.

Photos only—preferably original photos (no newspaper clippings or photocopies).

Photos taken in Lowndes County area.

One submission form per photo

10 photos per family. Call 360-687-6731 to set up an appointment if you're a private collector with a sizable collection.

Author Victoria Wilcox Speaks at the Museum about her Doc Holliday Books

“He’s been a Western legend for over 100 years. But first he was a Southern Son.”

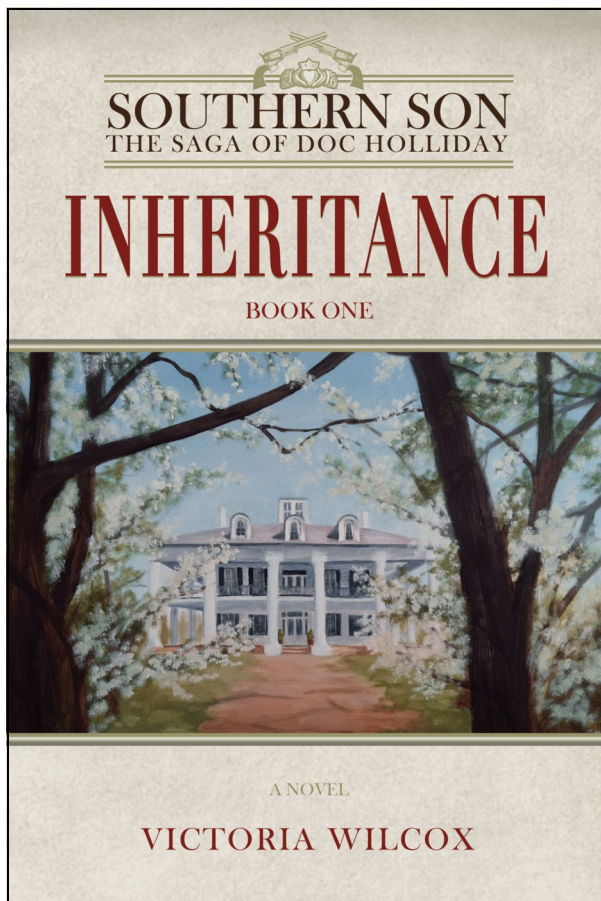
Victoria Wilcox has researched for eighteen years before beginning her trilogy on Doc Holliday. She interestingly pointed out that she read no other historical fiction books or articles on the subject so there would be no influence to follow after other writers.

Her fascinating program at the museum, with slideshow, provided all facets of pertinent information whether of her personal story or those relating to research. She grew up in a pioneer Hollywood family loving dramatic stories of all kinds. A move to Atlanta introduced her to the Old South of Doc Holliday and inspired the writing of Southern Son.

She was a motivator and leader in the restoration of a Fayetteville 1850s house, that had been the home of Doc Holliday’s uncle Robert. It is now the Holliday-Dorsey-Fife House Museum.

Victoria was most gracious and gave the museum some books to sell, hoping they cover reception expenses. They are all sold so anyone wanting a copy needs to try your local bookstore or shop online.

Victoria expressed many kind words about the late Susie McKey Thomas and their friendship. For more information about the writing of Southern Son and the world of Doc Holliday visit www.victoriawilcoxbooks.com. Victoria’s husband, Dr. Ronald C. Wilcox, who made the trip with her, happens to be a dentist, just as Doc Holliday was.



During her presentation Victoria Wilcox happened to mention that the Holliday Home museum in Fayetteville opened the day the Olympic Torch went by on the way to the 1996 games in Atlanta. To show good Valdosta hospitality we let her hold the museum’s Olympic Torch telling her that a portion of it was made from Georgia pecan wood. Doc Holliday’s father, Major Henry Holliday, was a Valdosta mayor and introduced the pecan tree to this area.



Bud Thomas, a son of researcher Susie McKey Thomas, looks at an 1871 entry in a journal from the museum archives that includes the only record of Doc Holliday doing dental work in Valdosta.



Above: Patsy Giles, Lowndes County Historical Society President, and Catherine Redles, society trustee, relax during the social after the program.



With the late Albert Pendleton the co-author of the local history on the Holliday and McKey families, Victoria Wilcox, **center**, was pleased to visit with Albert's daughters Helen, **left**, and Catherine, **right**.



When Erin Baird, **right**, attended the Wilcox program, he also purchased the Lynn Thomas, **left**, baseball book and was pleased to get it signed. Lynn is a son of Doc Holliday researcher Susie McKey Thomas.



Dr. David Johnson, **left**, and Sandra Connell, **right**, in line to purchase the book. His residence includes the Holliday home and he invited the Wilcoxes to visit.



The above family of Paducah, Kentucky in Valdosta visiting relatives. They saw the article on Victoria Wilcox in the newspaper, and attended the program.



Dr. Susannah Patterson, **left**, and Mary McRee, **right**, served as greeters and hostesses for the event.



Above, Jane Willis, a native of Griffin, the Holliday's home before refugeeing to Valdosta. Sadie Smith Harbin, **right**, attended with her.

Valdosta Pro Baseball

A Book, an Exhibit

and Programs

Lynn Thomas is a baseball enthusiast premier. When he returned to Valdosta almost three years ago, he determined to gather information on the professional baseball in Valdosta that he had enjoyed so much in his youth. His goal of reaching those players that made it to the "Major League" caused much other information to surface also, especially interesting items in our archives.

The information led to a special exhibit on local pro baseball in Valdosta. The exhibit will be up until April when Lynn's VHS Class of 1964 visits the museum as part of their 50th year reunion.

There were also two programs at the museum, both held as a Learning in Retirement event also. The one last October was so well received, it was repeated February 28. Dr. Deane Mink and Steve Kebler spoke at both following Lynn Thomas and Donald Davis who told about items from the archives on display.

Before the last meeting, Rufus Youmans, vintage collector, called the museum saying he had recently found the original sign from downtown that announced game days. Lynn Thomas ended up purchasing the sign and donating it to the museum. Lynn also donated the museum copies of his book to sell.

Below begins his Editor's Foreword to his book *From Valdosta to the Major Leagues*.



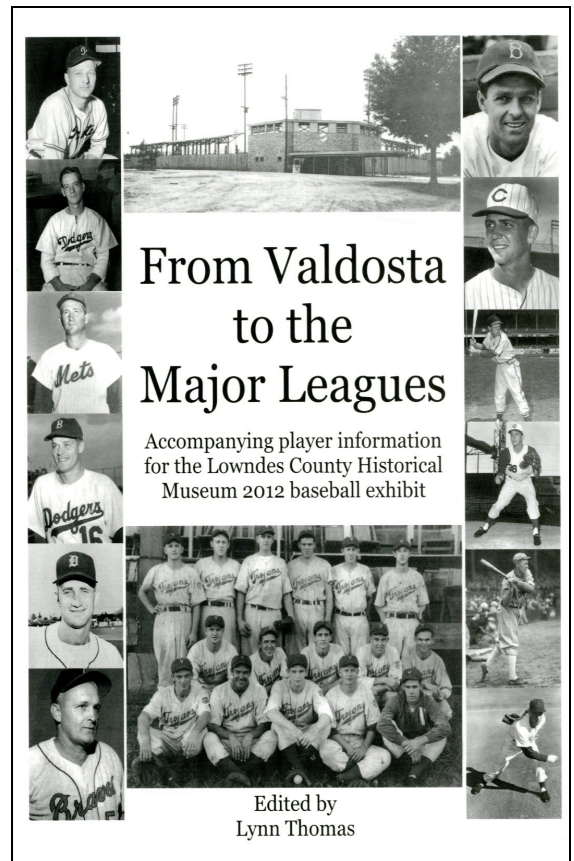
Thomas displays newly found "old" sign

"... You see, you spend a good piece of your life gripping a baseball and in the end it turns out it was the other way around all the time."

--- Jim Bouton, *Ball Four*

In my youth, like thousands of other boys, I dreamt of becoming a big league baseball player. Just the thought of being able to play a game that I loved so much filled my daydreams for countless hours, not to mention the seemingly endless summer days actually spent playing the game itself. My first memories of baseball center around the 1954 Topps baseball cards I first purchased as a 7-year-old from McCrory's and/or Kress's five-and-dime stores on North Patterson Street downtown, and listening to Washington Senators' games on the radio with my friend, Robert Bryan, and his father. The Sportsman's Club (now the Bleu Pub) on West Hill Avenue fascinated me with its gigantic black-and-white photo enlargements, primarily those depicting players for the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants major league baseball clubs (thank you, Ellis Clary). My initiation into *organized* baseball was as a 12-year-old member of the Sullivan Oil Little League team at the Valdosta Boys' Club in 1959 (I wore that green baseball cap *everywhere*). I followed that up by playing Pony League/Babe Ruth League baseball during summers between the ages of 13 and 15, those games being played at what then remained of old Pendleton Park.

It wasn't long, however, before I became painfully aware I did not have what it took to be a professional baseball player. Nevertheless, that failed to dampen my love for the game itself or my admiration



for those men who could truly “play the game.” To this day, those who know me can tell you I literally have thousands of tangible memories in the form of baseball cards and other baseball-related memorabilia as a constant reminder of those halcyon days, most of which were spent playing sandlot baseball with my brother Bud and our neighborhood pals on the then-vacant corner lot of Williams and East Moore streets.

One of my fondest memories during the summer of 1958 is of watching the last minor league professional baseball team Valdosta had – the Tigers. While it admittedly was Class D baseball (the lowest rung in the minor leagues), we kids nevertheless loved cheering on *our* guys against their league rivals (especially the despised Albany Cardinals), and even got to chase down foul balls and return them for *free snow cones*! Shortly after I moved back to Valdosta a little over two years ago, it occurred to me that three of the players on that 1958 team had eventually made it to the major leagues, and that the manager (Frank “Stubby” Overmire) had also previously pitched in the big leagues. That then got me to wondering exactly how many of the hundreds of players who had passed through Valdosta in pursuit of their dream of playing professional baseball might have actually made it to “The Show.” The information which follows is the result of an on-again/off-again two-year labor of love regarding the thirty-seven men who spent time in Valdosta between the years 1939-42 and 1946-58 (Georgia-Florida League operations were suspended during World War II for the years 1943-45), either as a player and/or manager, who *did* experience the major leagues.

Rather than simply just reiterate statistics, I have tried wherever possible to include anecdotes and reveal some insights about the men themselves regarding their individual journeys through the world of professional baseball. While some men had more information available than others, I attempted to give each of them an equal amount of time and attention – which I felt they so rightfully deserved. And while I have hopefully minimized them, any/all mistakes are mine, as I utilized several reference sources and (with profound apologies to my Valdosta junior high and high school English teachers) unabashedly copied most of them verbatim.

When I began this venture in 2010, there were thirteen former Valdosta minor league/major league players still living. I wrote letters to all of them, hoping to get as many replies as possible while allowing for the fact that the majority of them were now quite advanced in age. I did receive five responses – four by letter and one by phone – and have included as much of their content as possible in the following material. Unfortunately, three of the thirteen men have passed away since my initial mail out and the completion of this document.

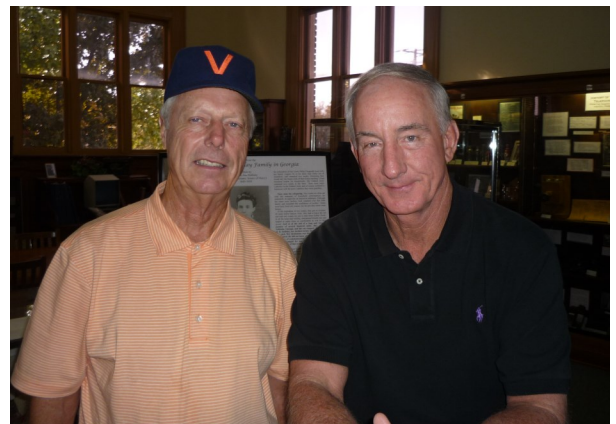
This effort is dedicated to all those who ever dreamed of playing major league baseball; to those of us in Valdosta who watched, supported, and fondly remember our minor league heroes and teams of 1939-42 and 1946-58; to my friends who I played with and against during the days of my youth; to the approximately



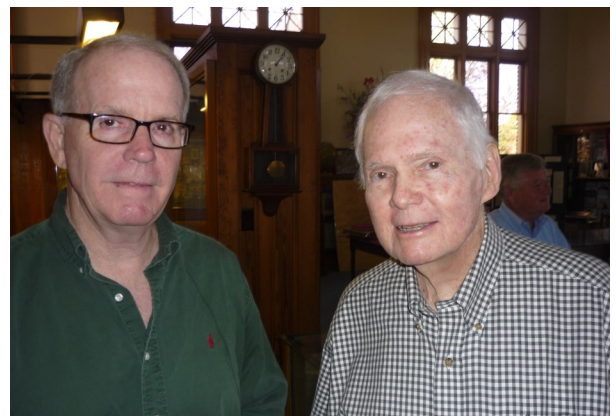
Bobby Dasher and Dr. Deanne Mink



Sue Hellstern and Leona Abood



Hank Lee and Joe Clary



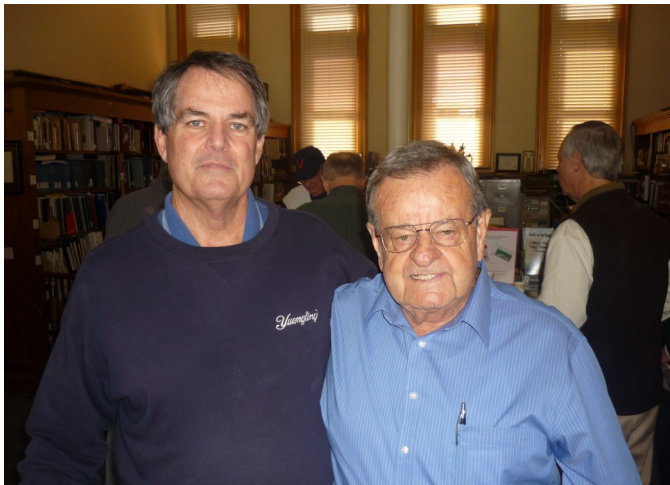
Earle McKey and Dr. Briggs Smith

four-hundred-and-fifty plus young men (and some not-so-young) whose dream brought them to Valdosta's minor league teams in its pursuit; to my grandson, William Thomas Fetting; and *especially* to the thirty-seven who made it....

I hope you enjoy reading about and getting to know them as much as I did....

Right: Steve Kebler and wife Pam. Steve spoke at both programs. He also donated a uniform jersey, cap and official Georgia-Florida League baseball.

Below left, John Dennis and Dr. Deane Mink. **Below right,** Judge George Hart and Doval Webb.



John Dennis and Dr. Deane Mink



Judge George Hart and Doval Webb

Georgia Day - "Spinning and Lace Making: Activities of Colonial Women"

Since Amy Brown was bringing her spinning wheel and related items to the museum from home, the Georgia Day program was held with the James Jackson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution on February 12, and a spinning and lace making program for Learning in Retirement on February 11. Georgia Day recognizes the beginning of the Colony of Georgia in Savannah on February 12, 1733. Amy also does spinning exhibitions for the Georgia Agrirama. Donald Davis introduced the program connecting spinning to Colonial and Revolutionary Georgia. He told that the 1775 Provisional Congress of Georgia elected Archibald Bulloch as one of Georgia's representatives to the Continental Congress. Bulloch immediately impressed the delegates from other colonies when he attended in

Philadelphia wearing homespun clothes symbolizing Georgia's commitment to the embargo on British goods.

Left: Amy Brown, gave a most informative demonstration and talk to the group on tatting, lace making and spinning different yarns. **Right:** At the program Redden Hart, president of the Valdosta Chapter of the SAR and Jerry West, Regent of the James Jackson, NSDAR. Redden is also a Trustee and Treasurer of the Lowndes County Historical Society.



Society Memberships 2013 calendar year

*List continued from
previous newsletter.
Place of residence listed for those
outside of Lowndes County*

Larry Allen
Mike and Martha Dover
Laurie White Carter
Jacksonville, FL
Tommy A. Clark
Belmont, MS
Laura B. Dasher
Patricia Williams Futch
Lougenia Gillis Gabard
Sen. Tim and Ellen Golden
Carolyn Blecha Hall
Vallejo, CA
Charles and Loree Hatcher
Brantley and Barbara Jenkins
John M. Lukens
Catherine Redles
Linda Beggs Rehberg
Jacksonville, FL
Ken Sloat
Lakeland, GA
Marie Converse Smith
Wm. Al Turner
Lavelle and Lyndal Webb
Hugh H. and Jerry R. West
Gretchen McCoy Young
Powder Springs, GA

*The LCHS Board of Trustees
and Museum staff greatly
appreciate your memberships
and the community support
they represent.*

In Honor

Patsy T. Giles

On her birthday
by
Sally Shingler Kurrie

Memorials

Dr. Hugh Coleman Bailey

by
Dr. Malcolm and Bonnie Rainey

Harold M. Bennett

by
Joe Glenn and Marie Converse Smith

Frank Stanaland Christian

by
Sally Shingler Kurrie
Dr. Malcolm and Bonnie Rainey

Jean Farris DeLoach

by
Donald O. Davis
Patsy T. Giles

Mary Judson Lilly Eye

by
Morris Smith
Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

Harris S. Greene, Jr.

by
Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

Hilda Carroll Griffin

by
Donald O. Davis
Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

Sue Ann Rehberg Hardin

by
Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

Dr. Joseph Samuel Houston

by
Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

Harley Langdale, Jr.

by
Dr. Malcolm and Bonnie Rainey

Harley and Eileen Langdale

by
Lougenia Gillis Gabard

Julian B. Lawson, Jr.

by
Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

William M. "Bill" Lester

by
Dr. Malcolm and Bonnie Rainey

Matilda 'Tillie' Dasher Mathis

by
Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

Clarence Matthews Paine, Sr.

by
Sally Shingler Kurrie
Martha Norwood Gibson

Samuel D. Register, Jr.

by
Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

K. Larue Shaw

by
Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

Emma Lou Wisenbaker Shaw

by
Donald O. Davis

Evelyn V. Shiver

by
Donald O. Davis

Susan Converse McKey Thomas

by
Sallie McKey Dry
Metairie, LA
Lougenia Gillis Gabard
George N. and Lilla Kate Hart
Joe Glenn and Marie Converse Smith

Mail to: LCHS
P.O. Box 56
Valdosta, GA 31603

2013 Membership Application
Lowndes County Historical Society

Membership Category

Individual \$25. ____
Family 30. ____
Business 50. ____
Contributing 100. ____
Patron 250. ____

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Email _____

MUSEUM CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 22.....	Juneteenth Historical Tour
June 26.....	Summer Youth Group
July 4-5.....	Closed for Independence Day
July 11.....	Valdosta DARE Group One
July 16, 18, 20.....	Pediment Publishing Scanning Sessions
July 23.....	Summer Youth Group
July 25.....	Valdosta DARE Group Two
July 27	Program for South Georgia Regional Library
September 2.....	Closed for Labor Day

Officers and Executive Committee

President, Patsy Giles; 1st Vice President, T. Davy Shelton; 2nd Vice President, Martha N. Gibson; Secretary, Joseph Tomberlin; Treasurer, Redden Hart; Past President, Julie Smith; Mary McRee, and Anita Shelton

Lowndes County Historical Society & Museum

305 West Central Avenue
P.O. Box 56 Valdosta, GA 31603
(229) 247-4780
Fax: (229) 247-2840
E-mail: ddavis.lchs@gmail.com
Web page:
<http://www.valdostamuseum.com>

YESTERDAY & TODAY

Newsletter of
Lowndes County Historical Society

Newsletter Editor

Donald O. Davis

Assistants

J. Adam Doughty
Andrew W. Johnson

Museum Staff

Donald O. Davis
Director

Amy Brown
Textiles and Research

J. Adam Doughty
Andrew W. Johnson
Ruth Davis

YESTERDAY & TODAY

is a trademark of the
Lowndes County Historical Society.

Return Service Requested

Lowndes County Historical Society
P. O. Box 56
Valdosta, Georgia 31603-0056

Non-Profit
U S POSTAGE
PAID
Valdosta GA
PERMIT 13