# YESTERDAY



& TODAY Newsletter of the

#### LOWNDES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Chartered September, 1967

305 W. CENTRAL AVENUE VALDOSTA, GEORGIA 31603

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## Winding Up 2012 Emphasis, Valdosta 1912

As the end of 2012 approached there was no winding down of activities, or preparations for activities, for the Lowndes County Historical Society. After 3 or 4 attempts last year the Garden Clubs, Inc. and the historical society found a date to host a Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours[BAH]. Both had wanted to do this in conjunction with the Chamber's 100th Anniversary, 1912-2012. The chamber arranged with Steel Magnolias for the catering. Steel Magnolias served from trays as would befit a Crescent social 100 years ago. The generosity of the Crescent's next door neighbors, Coleman Talley Law, LLP, made the possibility of holding this event a reality.

Normally at BAH functions, the chamber registers each attendee and prints each a computerized nametag. For this event the chamber had so many more RSVPs than normal that it was decided to forego printing nametags. The Crescent was decorated beautifully in traditional style for Christmas. The historical society had appropriate special exhibits inside the Crescent and Chamber of Commerce and other exhibits in the auditorium. One popular exhibit, now at the museum, showed the layout of the Crescent neighborhood in 1912 and photographs of the demolished homes. Many were glad to see the ballroom of the Crescent. Pianist Susan Eye Wheeler played Christmas carols throughout the event. (more photos pages 6 & 7)



**Above:** Pictured in the Crescent auditorium are Greg Reid of Edward James Associates; Bubba Highsmith, State Farm Insurance Agent and Jay Prince of Prince Automotive Group. Jay Prince is 2013 Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors Chairman.



**Above:** Wade Coleman and Greg Talley, of Coleman Talley Law, LLP, event sponsors, are pictured on the porch of the Crescent. Their law firm celebrated its 75th year in 2012. As part of their 75th activities they participated in the Chamber of Commerce Centennial Tree Project, 100 years, 100 trees, purchasing two in memory of former partners, founder B. Lamar Tillman and Henry Turner Brice, Jr.



Susan Eye Wheeler volunteered her services for the December Business After Hours. Her excellence at the piano increased an already festive mood at the Crescent which was beautiful with natural decorations for Christmas. *Above:* To recognize her long standing musical abilities we show her from the 1969 VHS yearbook, playing the piano, as winner of the annual Beta Club sponsored student talent show.

### James Edward Alexander Speaks on New Books

Valdosta native James Edward Alexander [JEA], now of Bluffton, South Carolina, spoke at the museum on February 21 about his now published volumes two and three in his life trilogy, *Forks in the Road* (2010) and *I Wish You Had Been There, Sharing Memories of an Exciting Life* (2013). He also included items during his programs from *Halfway Home From Kinderlou*, his first volume from 2008.

His day began early. When he and wife Toian Bowser-Alexander arrived Wednesday afternoon to set up for the museum program, we asked if he wanted to rise early and speak to the Valdosta Sunrise Rotary Club who were scheduled to meet at 7:30 a.m. Thursday at the museum for a "field trip' meeting. JEA enthusiastically added this third speaking program to his day. Sunrise Rotary was also being visited by district officers to receive accolades, and it proved a productive gathering.

The morning continued with the 10:30 museum program, held in conjunction with VSU Learning in Retirement. About ninety attended. The third speaking engagement was to the Azalea City Kiwanis at their weekly luncheon meeting at Valdosta Country Club.

JEA stories are sometimes of events observed and often of life lessons learned. One story that begins in his child-hood is about the Red House. During segregation black travelers often stayed in private homes, this included entertainers. His aunt owned the red house and guests he remembered from his youth included Count Basie and Duke Ellington. Years later, after the military and before his law practice, JEA was a television broadcaster. When the mayor of Denver, CO, asked him to be a special host to Ella Fitzgerald, she in Denver, he accepted. When he quizzed her about Valdosta, she said she stayed at the "Red House." JEA told us that it is still painted red and still stands at 209 McDougal Street.



Above: Nancy Wainer Parrott of Hahira as she purchases books from Toian Bowser-Alexander. Right: Jack and Cheryl Oliver. JEA and Valdosta Mayor Maxwell Oliver were good friends in the 1960s. The friendship has passed to Oliver's nephews, Jack, at right, and Rev. William (Billy) Oliver who came from Macon for the program.



**Above:** Early at the museum, Sunrise Rotary Club president, Robby Hastings; James Edward Alexander; Assistant Governor Bob Harrison; and Rotary District Governor, Bob Griggers of Byron, Georgia.



**Above:** Gwen Register Thomas and uncle Arthur Brown attending the program





#### JEA Program continued

Left: Ruth and Ralph Council are old friends of James Alexander and attended the program

Right: Brother and sister, Mitchell and Morris Smith. Morris is also an author of several books. She and Mitchell are both historical society members.



# From Sallas-Mahone School to the Zimbabwe Parliament

During the Fall of 2012 the museum received a call from Fann Dewar Greer, VHS 1962, now of Norfolk, Virginia, who wanted to quiz if the museum might have information that would be of benefit to an upcoming visitor.

Trudy Bevier left Valdosta and Sallas-Mahone school after the fifth grade. Her father Gilbert Bevier, had died when she was age two in 1946 while he was in the Air Force in Korea. Trudy's widowed mother, who yet lives in England, met an Englishman assigned to Moody AFB, they married and the whole family moved to England in 1955. Life circumstances took Trudy Bevier Stevenson and family to Zimbabwe in 1980. She became a Zimbabwe citi-



Ambassador Trudy Stevenson at the museum



zen in 1990. She was elected to the Zimbabwe parliament becoming the only white female in that body. At one point she was ejected from the Parliament for relentless discussion condemning the government for jamming the airwave frequencies of certain radio stations. In July 2006, after attending a political meeting, she and others had their vehicle windows smashed and were pulled from it, were attacked and suffered panga (machete) wounds, and some said left for dead. She is now the Zimbabwe ambassador to the nation of Senegal.

As Fann Greer told of local ties we began finding items that would be of interest. The preparation time was valuable because when Hurricane Sandy delayed Stevenson, it 'squeezed' her Georgia trip. Stevenson's grandfather, J. Frank Jarrell had come to Valdosta as a professor at Emory Junior. One of the items we showed her at the museum was the book on Emory Junior that included her grandfather. We learned that her mother not only lost her husband Gilbert Bevier but also her brother, Frank Jarrell, Jr., who went down with his plane near Iwo Jima. Stevenson was pleased, and said her mother would be so pleased, that Frank Jarrell was remembered, even with no family left here, and included in our WWII Calendars, in Albert Pendleton and "Bouncer" Smith articles. She recorded the title of the book by Valdosta native Louis Lomax, *The Reluctant African*, 1960, as he wrote first hand on intrigues and crisis as Africa changed from colonialism. We left the museum to visit her father's burial site in Sunset Hill.

Above: Trudy Stevenson sent us the photo of her father Gilbert H. Bevier, who died 1946 in Korea, with his remains buried here in Sunset Hill Cemetery in 1947. **Right:** Classmates, some since 1st Methodist kindergarten, met for lunch before some visited the museum. Front row; Becky Odum, Trudy Bevier Stephens, Kate Wainer Owens, Mary Jo B. Price, Peter VanHorne and Mary Laura D. Norman. Back row; Jim Boyle, Fann Dewar Greer and Kate C. Swiderski.



# In Memory Susan Converse McKey Thomas 1920–2013

Truly, an era ended for the Lowndes County Historical Society and Museum with the death of Susie McKey Thomas. But, because of her passionate devotion to the collection of the historical record of Valdosta and Lowndes County she has made possible, in a manner, that a new era begins.

Public recognition of Susie in Valdosta usually involved her thoroughly detailed research on the early life of her first-cousin-once-removed John Henry "Doc" Holliday. All Doc Holliday researchers use her information. But unknown to the public is that the volume of Susie's contributions to our local history far and exponentially exceed her Doc Holliday and family research. The conservative estimate of museum staff is that Susie's clippings and abstracts for the museum archives number well over 10,000, and maybe much more.

Hardly any local history museum has had an individual so solidly devoted to the collection of information. Because of Susie the museum almost always has information on a local topic. This situation prevents us from being able to escape to the answer "No," so we would smile and laugh when reminding her, "Susie, because of you we go home tired." We made sure to get a photograph of her son Lynn when he brought Susie's last batch of clippings to the museum on November 21, 2012.

Susie understood and was proud of the weave of culture and leadership that built the foundations of our community. She passionately collected and assembled records of our county, but not for herself, it was for all of us.

Note: The following tribute was read during Susie's memorial service.

#### Thinking of Susie

Aunt Susie lived her life within the framework of the highest standards and principles. She was gifted with a great sense of pragmatism and practicality. Susie was not interested in the "pretense and surfaces" of our lives. She had a deeper mission here.

Susie was an explorer! She loved putting together the puzzle of our local history and folklore. In the process of her exploration, she befriended people from every walk of life. Susie's "word" was good. You could count on it! She sought a "correctness" about her endeavors.

Aunt Susie was the best "company" in the world. She had a broad range of interest and intellectual curiosity. Someone once said, "That which is lovely never dies - yet - passes on to another loveliness."

Susie's "fingerprints" are all over this town – and – they are all over my heart. *Earle McKey*, *2013* 



Left: Museum Trio
Louie Peeples White and
Susie McKey Thomas, both
VHS 1937, with Albert
Pendleton, await
the passage of the
Olympic Torch.
Right: Doc Holliday Trio

Authors Victoria Wilcox and Gary Roberts with Susie at her 90th birthday party.



Susie, 1938 GSWC yearbook



Glenn Gregory, left, 'became' Doc Holliday for several functions by special request from Susie.



#### A chart of Doc Holliday's last two first-cousins once removed

William Land McKey 1800-1856 married Jane Cloud (McKey) 1804-1853. Their children were born from 1827 through 1846. This particular chart involves only three of their several children. Long generations are involved in this kinship chart.

#### The three siblings, with their direct descendants listed below each

Alice Jane McKey (Holliday) Capt. V 1829-1866

Capt. Wm. Harrison McKey Thomas Sylvester McKey 1837-1890 1842-1934

#### the children of the siblings, listed above, were 1st cousins to each other

John Henry "Doc" Holliday 1851-1887 he had no children Earle S. McKey, Sr. 1878-1930

Thomas Howard McKey 1876-1964

#### the children of the above 1st cousins are 1st-cousins-once-removed to Doc Holliday

daughter of the above Susan C. McKey Thomas 1920-2013 son of the above John Daughtery McKey, MD 1917, July 22-





Above: Susie at her 90th birthday party, September 2010, which was held at the historical museum. With her are sons Bud and Lynn Thomas; granddaughter Tracy Fetting and great grandson Will Fetting of Atlanta. Another granddaughter is Missy Thomas of Philadelphia, PA. Note the archive boxes on each side of the cake. They contain every Valdosta Magazine published at that time. have often used Susie's clipping files for information. Below: Young Susie and her immediately older brother "Wibby," the late Dr. Robert W. McKey, New Orleans pediatrician. Susie had a history-recording memory from a young age. She was one of the last people in town who could remember riding the trolley, even though it ceased operation in 1925. She credited the remembrance to so many trips from her parents W. Hill Ave. home to her grandmother Converse's home, which was north of the Crescent. She could tell you specifics of the last living elderly people that had moved from Troupville to Valdosta in 1860 that she had known when a child around 1930.

SIGMA DELTA THETA
This sorority held its first meeting at the home of Maud Dukes for the purpose of electing officers and new members.

Officers elected were: President, Sara Mackey; vice-president, Frances Parks; secretary, Mamie Johnson, treasurer, Maud Dukes; and publicity chairman, Louie Peeples. The pledges having been initiated

The pledges having been initiated are now sorotiv members. They are: Bobbie Johnson, Shirley Hoye, Minie Roberts, Alice Wisenbaker, Betty Franklin, Catherine Young Graham, Leccy Anne Goodloe, Joyce Stewart, Susie McKey, Frances Giddens, Margaret Pardee, Elizabeth Garbutt, and Anita Roberts.

CARVER'S
(INCORPORATED)
VOGUE READY-TO-WEAR
Valdosta, Georgia

**Above:** From her college days, Susie, on the right, was editor of the 1941 *Pine Cone*, yearbook of Georgia State Womans College, now VSU. On the left is Minnie Roberts (Williams), also then of Valdosta, assistant editor. They also were cousins on the Converse side. After GSWC Susie got a further degree from Katharine Gibbs College in New York City.

**Left and Below left:** From Susie's high school days are two items from the **Dosta Outlook** newspaper. With no yearbooks during the Great Depression, the VHS Class of 1935 began the paper. Susie was an assistant editor for Vol. III of the **Outlook** in 1936-37. The October 14, 1936 issue reports her as a new member of Sigma Delta Theta sorority. The May 3, 1937 issue ran the photo and article on Susie winning a Texaco sponsored trip to Hollywood that included meeting movie stars, etc. **Right below:** Ruth Davis, UGA grad and on the museum staff until leaving for graduate school this fall. She is digitizing over 35 spiral notebooks of Susie's abstracts of article topics from the **Valdosta Times** covering from 1875-1930. These are

not like genealogical abstracts. Instead they cover all aspects of culture and development. Susie preceded some abstracts with 'BERT' for notification to Albert Pendleton. These newspaper abstracts will prove invaluable in the future, providing research information guides that had not existed.

Below: An abstract on "Blind Jim," Feb. 13, 1904.

AMT "Blird Jim", who allepsomets on the street, never accepts an invitation to ride because he soing that he always ofto "turned around"







# *™Memorials*

#### **Harold Martin Bennett**

by Mike and Martha Dover

#### Jack L. Bennett

by Jane L. Ferrell

#### Frank Stanaland Christian

by Jan and Bobby Snow Boal Atlanta, Ga Eleanor Morgan Howard

#### **Larry Walton Colson**

by
Paul B. "Bud" Hatcher, Jr.

#### Jack and Helen W. Gayle

Paul B. "Bud" Hatcher, Jr.

#### Paul and Martha S. Hatcher

by Paul B. "Bud" Hatcher, Jr.

#### Maceo Williams Horne, Jr.

by Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

#### George John LaHood, Jr.

Donald O. Davis

#### Harley Langdale, Jr.

by Beulah E. Hennly Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

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Hank and Claire S. Lee
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Donald O. Davis
Jane L. Ferrell
Patsy T. Giles
Mr. and Mrs. John B. Lastinger
Jane Twitty Shelton
Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

#### Robert S. Pinkston Mary Crum Pinkston

by

Jan and Bobby Snow Boal

Atlanta, GA

Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

#### Phillip Wendell Russell

by Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

#### **James Kenneth Scruggs**

Mr. and Mrs. Wade H. Coleman Patsy T. Giles Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

#### John P. Sinnott

Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

#### **Susan Converse McKey Thomas**

Myra Jane Bird Jerry N. Byrd Mr. and Mrs. Wade H. Coleman Donald O. Davis The Fred DeLoach, Jr., Family William T. (Bill) Dennis Marietta, GA Jane L. Ferrell Patsy T. Giles Beulah E. Hennly Judy H. Hinton Mr. and Mrs. John B. Lastinger Hank and Claire S. Lee David and Esther Paine Lifsey Atlanta, GA Irma Adams McKey Metairie, LA Bobbie T. Mullis Mr. and Mrs. Clint M. Slocum, Jr. Dr. H. Briggs and Lane Smith

#### Earl C. Wetherington, Jr.

by Donald O. Davis Patsy T. Giles Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

#### John Robert Wiggins

by Eleanor Morgan Howard

#### Randall Dane Woodruff, Sr.

by Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Willis

- - - -



#### **Business After Hours**

Photos continued

The photo at left is of one of three composites from historical society exhibits that show Chamber of Commerce Chairmen of the Board for 100 years. This section begins with C. W. Warner in 1960 ending with D.K. Hollis in 1993.

Those on this composite currently active in community include Hollis, Loyce Turner, Tyson McLane, Wade Coleman, Bill Holland, George Powell, Wally Colson, Owen Harris, Ed Crane, Walt Carter, Joe Cordova, Wendell Godbee, Tommy Hatcher, McLane. H.Arthur J.R. Sessions and Brad Burnette.

#### **More from the Crescent Business After Hours**

People enjoyed the beauty of the Crescent decorated for Christmas, the celebration of the season and the celebration of the historic development of our community with recognition of 100 years of the Chamber of Commerce.

At right: On the Crescent porch are Mike Hill and Sonny Shroyer. Mike was recently elected as a Lowndes County Tax Assessor. He currently serves on the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and is a member of the Lowndes County Historical Society. Sonny is well known is the community for his acting career which included the role of Enos in the television program "Dukes of Hazzard."

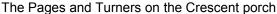
**Below right**: In the Crescent dining room are Laura and Mark Lerdall, Ron Irwim and Mary McRee. Ron and Mary are Historical Society Trustees.

**Below:** County Commissioner John Page and wife Cindy and Dr. Loyce and Ingrid Turner. Dr. Turner is a Historical Society Trustee. The Turners and Mary McRee are society Life Members.



Mike Hill and Sonny Shroyer







Lerdalls, Irwin and McRee

#### Our new websites are a great way to discover local history

The Lowndes County Historical Society & Museum is working to make as much of our community's history available through the internet. Our redesigned website features online displays with new content being added all the time. Currently you can find digital exhibits on famous Valdostans, early baseball history, Valdosta's City Halls, African American history in Lowndes County, and much more. You can also like us on **Facebook** or follow us on **Twitter** to learn new things about local history and to stay up to date on all the Society's upcoming events.

This summer we will host an event celebrating the launch of our new website.





*Left:* Mrs. Eleanor M. Howard with the WWII uniform of her late husband, Captain William M. Howard, at the Turner Center for the Arts. Mrs. Howard donated many of Capt. Howard's military items to the museum and they have been on display. A request was made to have them on exhibit for the Arts Center's special Veteran's Day program *War Bonds: The Songs and Letters of World War II* in November.

**Note:** The museum has been quite busy in the last few months with many of the events that are featured in this newsletter along with several others that could not be covered in this issue. The next newsletter will report on our recent baseball programs, the Georgia Day program with the Daughters of the American Revolution, the program with Learning in Retirement on spinning and lace making, and notable museum visitors.

#### 2013 New & Renewal Memberships

\* Denotes Life Membership

Place of residence listed for those outside of Lowndes County

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





Mail to: LCHS P.O. Box 56, Valdosta, GA 31603	<b>Annual Membership Application</b> Lowndes County Historical Society	Membership Category
		Individual \$25 Family 30
Name		Business 50.
Address		Contributing 100.
Email/phone		Patron 250

#### MUSEUM CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Civil War Exhibit......Ongoing changing exhibits during the Civil War
Sesquicentennial, 2011-2015, by Jeremy Petrella
March 30......Museum closed for Easter weekend
May 18......10:15am Victoria Wilcox speaking on the first book in her series:
Southern Son: The Saga of Doc Holliday, Book One, Inheritance
May 27......Museum closed for Memorial Day

#### Officers and Executive Committee

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

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Web page: <a href="http://www.valdostamuseum.com">http://www.valdostamuseum.com</a>

#### YESTERDAY & TODAY

Newsletter of

Lowndes County Historical Society

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Andrew W. Johnson

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Amy Brown Textiles and Research.

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