YESTERDAY



& TODAY Newsletter of the

LOWNDES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Chartered September, 1967

305 W. CENTRAL AVENUE VALDOSTA, GEORGIA 31601

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January, February, March 2016 VOL. XLV NOS. 1, 2 & 3

100 Years Ago and Finally a Photo:

The Valdosta Millionaires

We had always known of the existence of the Valdosta Millionaires baseball teams but had scant information. The teams existed four seasons 1913-1916. The biweekly *Valdosta Times* (not the *Valdosta Daily Times*), from 1905 to 1912, are the only digitized years of our local paper.

Good fortune came to us at the museum in an email received in September 2015, as it included the first ever photo we had seen of any Valdosta Millionaires. The email came from Eric Leininger of Evanston, Illinios. He states that his grandfather, Fred Leininger, on the left in the photo, played for the Valdosta Millionaires in 1913. Eric Leininger was a member of McDonald's Corporation where he was corporate senior vice president. He now coleads the Kellogg Chief Marketing Officer Program at Northwestern University.

In 1913 the Valdosta Millionaires were one of six teams in the Empire State League, the others Thomasville, Waycross, Brunswick, Americus and Cordele. Valdosta won the first half of the season, with Cordele second. Thomasville won the second half, with Valdosta placing second. Winning the half seasons qualified those two teams to play for the pennant which was won by Thomasville.

Fred Leininger is recoded in the first box score report in the newspaper as playing in the first game on May 2. The microfilm of the *Valdosta Daily Times* shows the game played at Magnolia Park. One of the rules of the league was limiting each team to 12 players (*see page two*).

The Valdosta Millionaires name was chosen from a contest in the newspaper. After the first week the team manager "Whitey" Morse was relieved of his job as manager. Otto "Dutch" Jordan became the new manager and was called "Prince of the second sacker." The town developed a colloquial name for the Valdosta Millionaires, "Otto's Otters."

Professional minor league baseball existed here in 1906 with the Valdosta All Stars. The Valdosta Millionaires followed from 1913-1916. Professional ball returned, 1939-1942 and 1946-1958, suspended during WWII. Local author Lynn Thomas wrote of many of these later players in his 2012 book, *From Valdosta to the Major Leagues*. A 1919 article in the *Pearson Tribune*, a former local man the editor, had an article on our first town team, the Valdosta "Wide Awakes" in 1875, on which he played.



Fred Leininger and an unidentified player, 1913 Millionaires

For More Valdosta Millionaire Information

The Society of American Baseball Research, SABR, is housed at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University. Online from 2010 is a 20 page article by William F. Ross, III, on "The Empire State League: South Georgia Baseball in 1913." We attempted to contact Mr. Ross to thank him for his splendid research and found that he died at age 47 in 2012 courageously battling cancer. William Francis Marion Ross, III.

For information on early Valdosta wealth

Go to the museum website valdostamuseum.com, select Newsletter, then July-October 2013, for "Valdosta the Richest City Per Capita."



Two Valdosta Millionaires led to 12 Valdosta Millionaires

The above photo image was found online recently and was obtained by the museum. We have identified Fred Leininger (from his photo on page one) as second from left in this photo. Names found in various 1913 "box scores" include: Beggins. CF; Bierman, SS; VanLandingham, RF; Morse, 1B; Leininger, 3B; McCormick, C; Frank, LF; Stewart, 2B; Rokenbrod, P; Lewis, P; Zellars, CF; Winges, P; Jordan, 2B; Hurley, LF; Pierre, C; Schwartz, SS; and Gordon, P. The photograph is by Veran Blackburn.





The Barnes Produced Images in the 1910s, Very Important to our Local History Record

Above: From the VHS Class of 1966 are Sally Shingler Kurrie, Valdosta, a Lowndes County Historical Society Trustee, and Mardi Barnes Maxwell, Macon. They had just found their old telephone numbers (before CHerry 2 and CHerry 4) in the 1957 directory, 2467 and 3390-J. The Barnes Drug Company postcards and promotional pamphlets are almost the only photographic record of Valdosta in the 1910s. They consist of thirty to forty images of street scenes, homes, churches, banks, industry, and agriculture. They are used frequently by the general public and historic preservation consultants alike. The above Barnes post card shows West Hill Avenue when looking west. The spire is the Hill Avenue First Christian Church sanctuary, it demolished in the early 1950s.

VHS Class of 1966: Significant Local History Connections











Including Seven Mayors

The VHS Class of 1966 reunion committee contacted the museum to ask if the museum could be listed as an opportunity visit on Saturday, March 5 during their 50th year weekend. Reunion individuals have to make fairly short visits to the museum so we try to pull items that relate their class ahead of time for quick viewing. Many varied and interesting connections were "discovered" and some are included in this newsletter on pages two through five and on page eight. In looking over the class mailing list we noticed a more than usual amount of Valdosta mayor's children. Further checking tallied seven mayors as fathers or grandfathers.



Mayors and descendants:

James M. Beck, *top panel left*, 1966-70, 1970-72, daughter, Betty Gene Beck Birdwell of Marietta, Georgia.

J. E. "Ed Mathis," 1948-52, *top panel left center*, grandchildren, Betty Gene Beck Birdwell, Marietta, and Ed Mathis, Powell, Ohio.

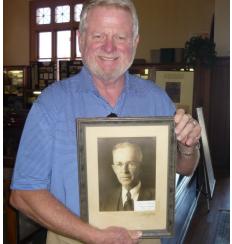
John Bray Giddens, 1952-56, *top panel right center*, daughter, Becky Giddens Bracey, Thomasville.

Philip C. Pendleton, 1930-32, *top panel right*, grandson, Emerson Bell, Arlington, Texas.

Aubrey J. Stump, 1970-72, *right panel top*, son, Tom Stump, Lake Park. Sally S. Kurrie, niece.

J. D. Ashley, 1934-43, *right panel middle*, grandson, Clay Freeman, Ornond Beach, Florida.

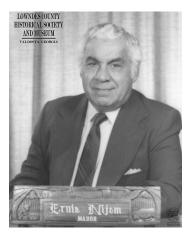
Ernest Nijem, 1980-86, *right panel bottom*, daughter, Toni Nijem Varn, Valdosta.



Museum photographs in the panel at left: *Top:* Betty Gene Beck Birdwell near the Mayors and Doc Holliday Exhibits. Doc Holliday's father, Henry B. Holliday, also a Valdosta mayor, served in the 1870s. *Middle:* Becky Giddens Bracey with Linda Lastinger Grondahl, Valdosta, who keeps the contact list for the VHS 1966 class. *Lower:* Emerson Bell with a portrait of his grandfather Pendleton. Emerson found numerous family connections in exhibits or on display in the museum.











At right top: Class of 1966 member Jimmy Thrash of Appling, Ga (Augusta metro) at the exhibit covering the ill fated attempt to rescue hostages from the American Embassy in Tehran, Iran in 1980. A 1964 VHS graduate, Air Force pilot Lyn McIntosh died in this attempt. His widow Ann Dixon was a member of the VHS Class of 1966. Jimmy spoke of Ann and her children. Ann died in 2001. The exhibit also includes Molly Huckaby Hardy's death in 1998, also VHS 1964, in the US Embassy bombing in Nairobi, Kenya. This event brought the name Osama bin Laden to public attention. After his death in 2011 it was revealed that Molly was a CIA agent within the embassy. Many national and international events can be told launching from our local history.

Some WWI and WWII textiles attached to the Class of 1966 were placed on display for the reunion. John Wesley Langdale's WWII Naval officer's uniform was shown. His Class of 1966 daughter is Lee Langdale Mikuta, Valdosta. He was an Ensign and was promoted to Lieutenant. *At right center*: Denise Cross Dickens of Washington, D.C., and her mother Marion Anise Roberts Cross of Valdosta, respectively granddaughter and daughter to Ben Hill Roberts, Jr. They are photographed with his WWI Naval officer uniform. The museum also archives additional uniforms belonging to Roberts including his white service dress uniform (choker whites). Roberts and Langdale also appear in the Chamber of Commerce 100 Years Exhibit, both having been Chairman.

Below, Bottom: Sue Davis Reams, Thomasville, with her father's WWII Army uniform. Textile curator Amy Brown really liked the sweater vest, first she had seen. Vests were not part of the standard uniform but were knitted by the Red Cross, etc., and sent to soldiers. Sue's father served in the 8th Army, Headquarters Division. The collection donated to the museum includes Nazi banners, flag, youth knife, insignia, medical items and wooden Dutch shoes as he was quartered with a family in Holland who owned a Klompenfabriek.

Below left; Sharon Lincoln Coleman, Class of 1966, at the Vietnam War Exhibit in the museum. The Naval uniform in the exhibit was donated by her husband Buddy Coleman. They also supplied many photographs of his Vietnam experience, most of which the museum has scanned. Also in view is a portion of a memorial to the 22 Lowndes County casualties in the conflict. Portraits of VHS grads Ken Webb, Tex Mullis and Ronald Strobo are included. **Below Center:** In February, in response to our appeal in our previous newsletter, Robert Sowell, Class of 1966, brought in a photo of his brother, Donald Britton Sowell, a Vietnam casualty.









January—March 2016





Lloyd Greer Architect

At the museum we have continual requests for information on Lloyd Greer homes in Valdosta. A particular study of his homes with photographs was placed on exhibit for the Class of 1966 as Paula Greer Walter, Virginia Beach, Virginia is a granddaughter. Paula was unable to attend the reunion so two classmate friends stood in the gap for her, photo left, Mickey Copeland Gaskins of Valdosta, and Julie Groover Chun of Dayton, Ohio.

Wolinski Collection

A portion of the Wolinski Collection at the museum is several archive boxes of school related photographs. These were pulled for the Class of 1966 for viewing. Having the faculty mothers of three VHS Class of 1966 members seated in a row, this photo caused particularly notice. At left, Grace Thompson, Home Ec, mother of Malinda Thompson Pennington, Cumming, Georgia; Mildred Wisenbaker, History, mother of Kathryn Wisenbaker Singletary, Brunswick; and Mabel Wolinski, English, mother of Greg Wolinski, Hahira. There is a separate VHS photo collection of 55 archive boxes with close to 5,000 photos.

TALES OF OLD VALDOSTA

Frank Christian

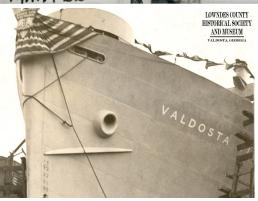
Above: The late Frank Christian, father of Stan Christian, Quitman, Class of '66, was an exceptional oral historian. Encouraged by many to write his memories, in 2009, his 35 short stories were published as Tales of Old Valdosta. It is a valuable local history record. Story number "36" in the collection, the last, is "Mongo Hardee Loved Coca-Colas" by Ellis Clary, father of Carol Clary Herndon, Class of 1966.

Ellis Clary in Museum Baseball Exibit

Ellis Clary, the father of VHS 1966 classmate Carol Clary Herndon, of Valdosta, is in the photo copy, at left along with baseball great Mickey Mantle, their signatures included. The photo happened to catch Ellis Clary with his eye shut, so Clary captioned the photo "Mickey, your stories put me to sleep." The Valdosta Times reported that Clary spent decades in professional baseball, 43 years at the Major League level; player, coach, scout. Because of his well publicized humor and knowledge of the game he was in constant demand as a guest lecturer throughout the United States. Some of his writings are in our archives.

The SS Valdosta Victory and the McCrary Family

When VHS 1966 classmate, below, Josephine McCrary Lewis, then of Susanville, CA, visited the museum several years ago, she told that her family moved after her tenth grade year. She came to see the christening bottle and Launch Album for the Valdosta Victory. With 5 sons in WWII her grandmother Odessa McCrary was chosen to do the honors in Baltimore, MD. Stories around the ship are fascinating. The museum has photos of it docked at Manilla, The Phillipines, and Sasebo, Japan.







2016 New & Renewal **Memberships**

as of March 31, 2016 * Denotes Life Membership Place of residence listed for those Outside of Lowndes County

The Historical Society Trustees and Museum Staff greatly appreciate your memberships as they affirm our place as an important cultural entity in Lowndes County and help us to fulfill our missionto collect, preserve and present the history of Lowndes County.

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I-75 Artifacts, Discovering Area Pottery, and also Bucket Lists



Above left: VHS Class of 1966 members at the museum: Johnny Miller, Conyers; Bobby King. Brevard, NC; Pat Taylor, Ph.D., Highlands, NC, and Penn Wells, Atlanta. While looking at downstairs exhibits one of the guys quizzed Pat Taylor, "When did you move to Valdosta?" He answered that his family moved here as his father was an engineer for Interstate 75 construction. They then observed the exhibit on the Spanish mission site Santa Cruz de Cachipile which shows how artifacts uncovered in the construction of I-75 led to the discovery of this 1600s mission site. Left; Pat Taylor looks at the booklet The Pottery of Stockton: South Georgia's Only Jugtown, published in 2000. In the mid 1970s, when teaching at VHS, he, taking his students, located this pottery site and taught about the now collectible Timmerman pottery. He became the Chair of the Department of Visual Arts at Kennesaw State University for much of his career.

Mayor of Highlands, NC... and Bucket Lists

Above right, Pat Taylor and Donald Davis Museum Director. Though retired, Pat is still active in the arts and is mayor of the well chronicled resort town, Highlands, NC. His wife Sallie is Chief Exhibitions Officer for The Bascom Center. Last summer when relatives vacationing in the Highlands/Cahiers area invited Donald up to visit he accepted. Noticing that he was "age 64 on US64," in a resort town where a VHS guy was mayor, he thought it a good bucket list beginning - a photo of 64 on 64. Failing to manage this task while in Highlands, and with only 11 days remaining at age 64, it was accomplished with Mayor Taylor here in our Valdosta museum. With US84 directly in front of the museum, lets all work towards making a photograph of "age 84 on US84."

January—March 2016



IEMORI



Frank Butenschon, III

VHS Class of 1969 Alfred E. Willis, Ph.D. J. Edward Willis

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Ed and Nancy Avera South Prince George, VA Donald O Davis Patsy T. Giles J. Edward Willis

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At Left: Myrtis A. and Rudy Howell. In memory of Dr. 'Rudy' Howell, Jr., 1925-2016, who graciously established The Rudolph and Lilly Howell Endowment

Fund for LCHS Museum book purchases and other educational needs. The Lowndes County Historical Society Board of Trustees and Staff extend our condolences and gratitude to the family.

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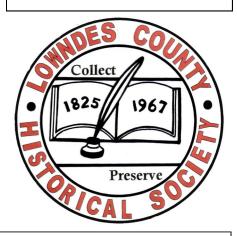
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Valdosta High School Class of 1966

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January—March 20	16 Annual Membership Drive
March 25-26	Closed for Easter Weekend
March 29	Pines Family Campus Group
April 30 25	th Anniversary Lake Park Historical Society
April 30	Patterson Group
June 24	Alachua, Florida, Dream Girls Group
June 25	50th Reunion Pinevale Class of 1966
July 2-4	Closed for Independence Day

Lowndes County Historical Society & Museum

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YESTERDAY & TODAY

Newsletter of **Lowndes County Historical Society**

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YESTERDAY & TODAY

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