### YESTERDAY



&
TODAY

## Newsletter of the LOWNDES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Chartered September, 1967

305 W. CENTRAL AVENUE VALDOSTA, GEORGIA 31603

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Summer 2019 VOL. XLVIII NOS. 4,5,6,7

# When old Gornto Road was Dirt

Recently, within a few days of each other, Sally Turner Querin and Bob Schroer brought images of early Gornto Road to the museum either to donate or be scanned. The 2013 connector to Woodrow Wilson Drive has brought the street increased traffic to the point a center turning lane has been proposed for "old Gornto," it being from Oak Street to Jerry Jones Road.

It takes people in their later sixties and above to remember when Gornto Road was dirt. My parents moved onto White Oak Drive in 1956 when I was age 5. The 2200 block was paved then, but for a short while on each end the 2100 and 2300 blocks were not yet paved. 2300 T-junctions into Gornto. Perhaps the main reason people have such vivid memories of dirt Gornto Road was after a rainy period portions of it became a red clay, slip-and-slide, mud churning, occasionally treacherous stretch of road.

Jane Mixer Sherwood told that even when Gornto was dirt her father paved their driveway entrance over the culvert to stymie vehicles from sliding into the ditch.

#### "It was Awesome"

Tony DeGange told a childhood "dirt road" story. Neighborhood kids made a fake snake from garden hose and attached it to a long string. They had fun pulling it across the road as a vehicle approached. He told that they ceased snake prank operations one day after a man stopped in the road and got out of his vehicle to shoot the "snake." Tony was asked what was it like growing up to watch long streets like Gornto and Azalea Drive be paved. He replied, "It was awesome."

Duane Dodson also told of Gornto being dirt when his parents built there and his father and Mr. Dasher paying to have gas lines run down the alley from Cary Street, to be reimbursed as new home owners connected to the line. *At right:* 

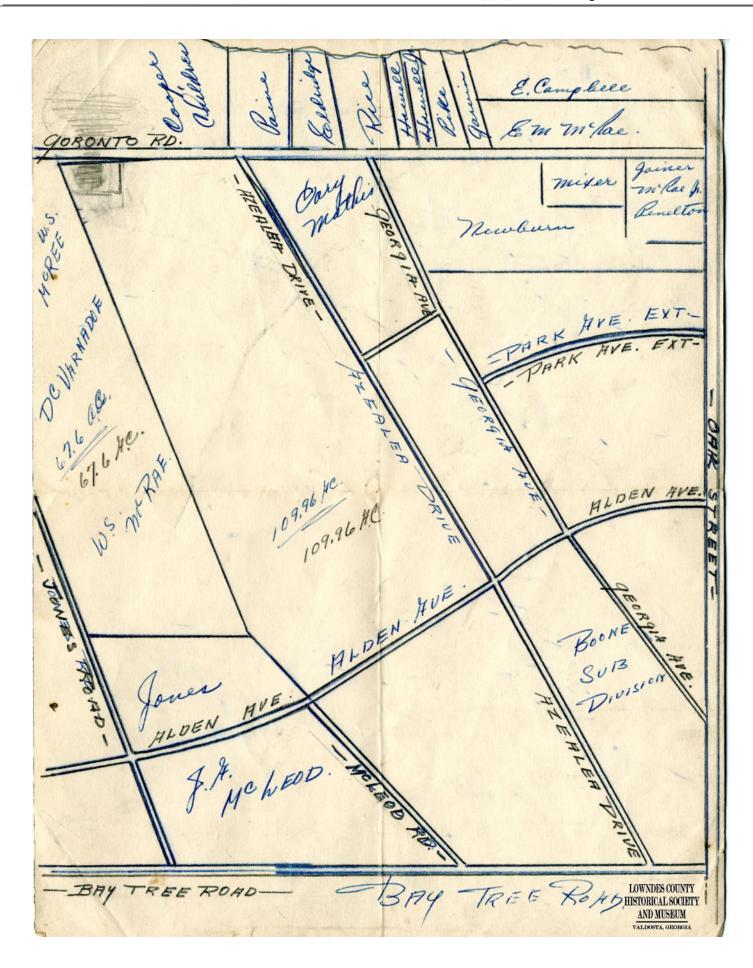


The image from 1938 is the Howell house under construction. It was the first home built on Gornto. Other Howell and Schroer photos show that the area early was mainly farms and treeless. In the photo Lily Howell is holding her young daughter Annette Howell (Turner). whose familiar portrait, *at left*, is displayed in the Annette Howell Turner Center for the Arts.



604 Gornto Road - Rudolph & Lily S. Howell Home Under construction in 1938. More area photos at museum

Editor's Note: This article is not written to be a fully detailed report on Gornto Road, but to stimulate gathering information on this subject and other "dirt road" and general stories of the 1950s and 60s. We encourage your input. Submit information using email research.lchs@gmail.com.



#### **Concrete, Camellias and Pecans**

The areas about and near "Old Gornto" reflect noticeable changes in Valdosta as growth occurred after WWII and with the reopening of Moody AFB in 1951.

When headed north in Valdosta the area of Gornto and horizontally east and west across town one finds the last "out-cropping" of the concrete perpendicular street markers. Note one at the T-junction of Azalea Drive and Gornto. They were soon being supplanted by metal poles with horizontal street names signage at the top. Should the concrete posts be removed we would appreciate one or two being donated to the museum to exhibit concerning this era in Valdosta and Lowndes County.

Many of the gardens of Valdosta from the Gornto area and south to downtown are distinctive with considerable plantings of camellias. They particularly grace these older areas of our city with their beauty. Also of notice on the Old Gornto landscape are remnants of pecan groves from the era of farms in the area.

#### **Development in the Area**

The construction that occurred nearby in the current swath of old Gornto and its connection to Woodrow Wilson Drive reflects a considerable time of community development.

#### As Examples:

1953 – Northside Baptist Church, November, first building, used for early sanctuary 1954—Valdosta Junior High School 1955—Pineview General Hospital 1955- Park Avenue Methodist Church, December, first building, early sanctuary 1956—McKey Park land, opens 1957 1957—Castle Park Shopping Center (now the east end of Gornto/ Woodrow Wilson) 1959—St. Johns the Evangelist Catholic School opens new facility on old Gornto Road

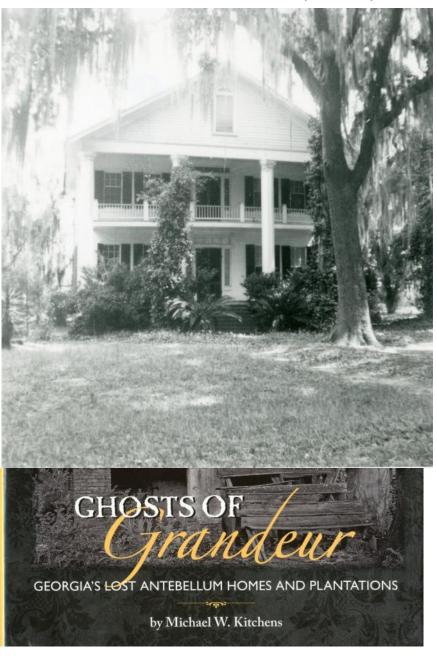
#### **Before Interstate 75**

Another point to notice. These development projects precede the construction of Interstate-75. Valdosta's main highway corridor was US 41, Ashley Street, with Patterson Street the US 41 alternate. The state designation is GA 7.

You still approached Valdosta State from Patterson Street, rather than Baytree Road, this occurring after the opening of I-75. The growth near I-75 meant that Valdosta had to develop East-West corridors whose need could not be imagined or foreseen decades ago.

#### It Became Gornto's "Grand Ghost"

In 2012 Michael W. Kitchens, Valdosta native and now Athens attorney, published his book Ghosts of Grandeur, Georgia's Lost Antebellum Homes and **Plantations**. The only Lowndes County inclusion was The Oaks Plantation house, *photo below*, which was built by Berry Jones before the Civil War. For many years this home was reached by Jerry Jones Road (aka Jo-Ree Pond Road). Later the Gornto extension to and across Jerry Jones located this house in the NW corner of the Jerry Jones/Gornto intersection, now the location of the LDS Church. This home was deconstructed after 1965. Much more detail is in Kitchen's book and in *Pines and Pioneers* by Jane Twitty Shelton.



*Image page opposite:* The map at *left* is one of several images of representations of old Gornto Road that Bob Schroer donated to the museum archives. The map covers old Gornto to the area now just west of St. John's the Evangelist Catholic Church. No roads yet existed between Azalea Drive and Jerry Jones. Alden Avenue is shown, it an old path having been the rail street car line from the Fairgrounds to Remerton. We found a similar map that is slightly earlier in our archives after Bob Schroer donated this copy. Some of the names listed on the map are E. Campbell, E.M. McRae, Mixer (earlier Ulmer), Newbern, Cary Mathis, J. H. McLeod, W.S. McRee, Garrison, Pike, Howell, Rice, Eldridge, Paine and Cooper Childress (now St. John's). The Paine is listed earlier as Josie Payne and it became the street and land lots of Berkley Drive south of Two Mile Branch.

#### A Newer Section of Gornto Road: West from Jerry Jones to Sugar Creek



**Above:** The beginnings of Westover Subdivision. Inspection of the photo indicates that this portion of Gornto Road, the lower road in the photo, was freshly paved as dirt from road grading is yet noticeable beside the pavement. The road at left above Gornto is Briarwood Dr. In the center, with the most housing development, is Westwood Dr. headed towards the Jerry Jones entrance to the subdivision and at right off Gornto is Fieldcrest merging into Westwood. When the photo is enlarged the Mederer/Langdale home and driveway are visible. Eager Subdivision and Millpond Road were not yet developed. The line of trees across the center of the photo is the location of Two Mile Branch. **Below right:** Map, circa 1954, shows that Gornto did not then cross over "Joe Ree Pond Rd." into the area of the future Westover Subdivision. White Oak did not yet reach Gornto and its 2100 block shows the earlier name Vallorbe. Notice that no Loganberry Circle nor streets north off Gornto are shown.

# 1964 City Directory First listing of Gornto Extension

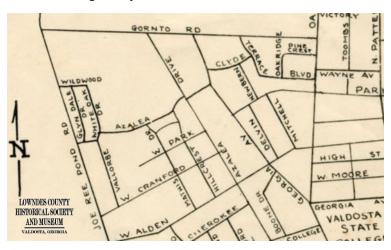
It reads:

Gornto Road EXTN (RD 1) - A continuation of Gornto rd. from city limits west and then south —— Pilkington Virgil @ 242-2449

#### Baytree rd. intersects

Note:

The extension area is listed RD 1, Rural Delivery Route 1, so no street numbers were used. Street numbers developed upon need or convenience in the county. Then names and numbers were assigned county wide when the 911 Emergency Service began.



#### 2019 New & Renewal **Memberships**

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 mission-To collect, preserve and present the history of Lowndes County

\*\*\* designates Life Member \*\* designates Patron Member designates Contributing Member

2019 Memberships will continue to be listed in the next newsletter

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### Gifts in Honor of

#### J. Edward Willis

Recognitions In Celebration of his

#### 90th Birthday

Richard and Jane Shelton

The Valdosta Chapter Sons of the American Revolution

Col. Ebenezer Folsom Chapter National Society Daughters of the American Revolution Valdosta, Georgia

Donald O. Davis



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Dr. Ron and Nancy Zaccari

**HELP NEEDED:** Preparing for expansion into the Bird Hospital annex the museum staff is extremely busy. In this newsletter are a few of the many kindergarten class photos in our archives. We need your help in identifying those in the photos on pages 8, 9 and 10. You can enlarge the photos as this newsletter is online at valdostamuseum.com.

#### Please send identifications via email to research.lchs@gmail.com



Above and below: First Methodist Church Kindergarten, the director was Martha McKey, above right The 1956-57 First Methodist kindergarten photo, not shown here, was the first from this church donated to the museum. Esther Paine Lifsey of Atlanta made the donation, it having almost complete identification. Learning that Martha W. McKey began leading the Methodist kindergarten after the death of her husband, Dr. Earle S. McKey. Jr., we contacted Earle S. McKey III for information. Soon he donated the photos on this page and several more. They do not yet have persons identified. Wyn Miller is definitely recognizable on row two in the 1952-53 photo. In the 1954-55 photo below we think we recognize Rick Winston, Charles Joyner, Barbara Pearlman Soshnik, Stan Cox and Charlotte Cunningham Ford.





**Above:** Katrina Tayman's Kindergarten at Christ Episcopal Church. Current Lowndes County Historical Society members recognized in this photo include Marvin Dickey, Teresa Sherwood Steinberg, Peggy Sikes Chitty, Rozzie Bird and Joe Hall. Lane Giddens donated the photo and is preparing an album of his mother's kindergarten classes. **Below:** Bob Schroer recently donated the photo of Mother Goose Kindergarten. Also in the photo appear to be Glenn Davis and Chip Story. Chip Blackburn recently donated several years of photographs from his mother's kindergarten classes at Christ Episcopal Church.





The photograph above was donated to the museum by Charlotte Cunningham Ford. It was among items her mother Lois Cunningham had preserved pertaining to her late brother Stan, he seated front right. We do not know if this was a First Baptist Church kindergarten or Sunday School Easter Egg Hunt. Several children have been identified while this newsletter was being prepared for the printer. These include Mike Fambrough and mother, Mike Crown, Al Willis and others. You can enlarge this photo by calling up this newsletter on our website valdostamuseum.com. Email identifications to research.lchs@gmail.com .

### **The Lowndes County Historical Society & Museum**

Gratefully Recognizes

a Memorial Donation *In Remembrance of Classmates* 

By the

#### Valdosta High School **Class of 1949**

On the occasion of their 70th Year Reunion



of the

#### **The Lowndes County Historical Society & Museum**

for efforts in the Preservation of and in the Presentation of Local & Family History

By the

Col. Ebenezer Folsom Chapter **National Society Daughters of the American Revolution** Valdosta, Georgia

### **More Mixson-Bird Hospital Births**

Mixson-Bird births reported since the last newsletter. Dorothy Drexel (St. Pierre) born December 23, 1929 currently resides in Thomasville

Betty "Ruth" Harp (Butler) born December 21, 1932 currently resides in Valdosta

We plan a special listing of Bird Hospital births known before Our Grand Opening.



# **♦MEMORIALS** ♦

#### Henry Edison 'Eddie' Bentley

by

J. Edward Willis

#### **Geraldine McLeod Clifton**

by

Orrie L. and Francine Coppage
Donald O. Davis
Patsy T. Giles
Beulah Exum Hennly
Ed and Rita Hightower
Carol J. McLeod
J. Edward Willis

#### Helen Virginia Register Courson

by

J. Edward Willis

#### George Hilliard 'Red' Cross

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Mary D. Gray

Patsy T. Giles

Dr. Calvin and Sue D. Reams Thomasville, GA

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by

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Mary D. Gray

Hank and Claire S. Lee

John T. and Ginna McTier Betty Jean Hinely Thomason

Satsuma, FL

#### Fred DeLoach, Junior

by

Patsy T. Giles

Beulah E. Hennly

J. Edward Willis

#### **Hubert Dale Edwards**

by

J. Edward Willis

#### Blakley Drewry 'Blake' Ellis

by

Mary D. Gray

#### Frank Eldon Eye

by

J. Edward Willis

#### George Willard Flythe, Jr.

Athens, GA

by

Hank and Claire S. Lee

## Dr. William Neville 'Bill' Gee, Jr.

by

Donald O. Davis

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by Patsy T. Giles & Daughters

Lisa G. Gilchrist

Linda G. Robling &

Sherry G. Corker

San Raphael, CA

Mary D. Gray

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Patsy T. Giles

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by

J. Edward Willis

#### Milton Bryant Martin, Jr

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Wade H. and Geri Coleman Highlands, NC

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by

Mary D. Gray

#### **Margaret Davenport Nisbet**

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Beulah E. Hennly

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Mary D. Gray

#### Frank Adams Strickland, Jr.

by

Mary D. Gray

#### **Jeffery Todd Wells**

бу

Patsy T. Giles

2019 Membership Application, Lowndes County Historical Society, P.O. Box 56, Valdosta, GA 31603	
N.	Membership Category
Name	Individual \$25.
Address	Family 30.
Phone	Business 25/50
	Contributing 100
Email	Patron 250

#### Page 12

#### MUSEUM CALENDAR OF EVENTS & DATES

#### **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, Sally S. Kurrie; Treasurer, John R. Bennett; Past President, Ex Officio, Julie Smith; Anita Shelton

July 11 & 25	Valdosta D.A.R.E. Groups at the Museum
August 28	Board of Trustees Meeting 3 p.m.
<b>September 26</b>	Society Membership Business Meeting 4 p.m.
October 4Museur	m Keynote Speaker at State UDC Convention
October 18	Tallahassee Seniors at Museum and Bus Tour
November 9-11	Closed for Veteran's Day Weekend
November 20	Museum Speaker at James Jackson NSDAR
	Closed for Thanksgiving

#### **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: research.lchs@gmail.com & ddavis.lchs@gmail.com

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

#### YESTERDAY & TODAY

Newsletter of

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