



Amite County Historical and Genealogical Society

Dawn Taylor, President

William G. Barron, Vice President

Marcia Gordon McLaurin, Secretary & Newsletter Editor

N. Gay Blalock, Treasurer

Allen Terrell, Council-at-large

September 2018

Vol. 14, No. 8

WITHOUT A PAST, THERE IS NO FUTURE

WELCOME TO ALL NEW MEMBERS!

The next meeting will be a regular business meeting

Date: September 8, 2018

Time: 10:00 AM

Place: Liberty Baptist Church Family Life Center (building behind the church next to the tennis court). Breakfast will be provided.

Future Meeting Schedule

Note: *Time and place of regular meetings is 10:00 am in the Little Red School House unless otherwise specified.*

October 13, 2018 — Field trip to Carter-Mixon Cemetery. Leave from Little Red Schoolhouse. Members only. Lunch will be provided.

Nov. 10, 2018 — El Dorado (new Mexican restaurant in Liberty) Pending grand opening.

December 1, 2018 — Annual Open House to be held at the McGehee/Beall House on Pecan Road

January 12, 2019 — Regular monthly meeting

February 9, 2019 — Regular monthly meeting

March 9, 2019 — Regular monthly meeting

April 13, 2019 — Regular monthly meeting

May 4, 2019 — **Heritage Days**

May 11, 2019 - Regularly monthly meeting

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Membership:

Please see page 2 for a very important announcement about membership benefits and fund raising!

Newsletter Change:

The newsletter is being changed from monthly to quarterly starting with the November issue. This will allow for a better quality newsletter that will include color photographs. We are still asking that you write contributing articles so that the newsletter can remain pertinent and interesting.

Angels on the Bluff:

SOLD OUT! All of you who are attending will need to meet at the Natchez Visitors Center by 7:15 pm to catch the 7:45 bus to the cemetery.

Shiloh Field Trip:

There is a tentative trip planned for April 2019. Please keep this in mind and provide any suggestions you may have to the executive board.

LRSH Hours:

The LRSH will be open regularly every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month from 2-4 pm beginning September 11, 2018.

It PAYS to be a Member of the Amite County Historical & Genealogical Society!!!

The ACHGS dues, while inexpensive compared to other organizations, have always been used for preserving Amite county history; purchasing artifacts, documents and publications that are of historical significance to Amite County; and doing minor maintenance on the Little Red School House. Now we face the problem of MAJOR maintenance issues on the LRSH. Some of you have heard that there is a moisture issue threatening the LRSH and that funds are needed to mitigate the problem and, eventually, do restoration work where the water has wicked into the walls. As money will be needed sooner than later, fund raising efforts for this project are underway.

We know an increase in membership will be a monumental step in raising money for this project. As of today there are 1680 Facebook members taking advantage of our knowledge base but we have only 140 actual society members, some of whom are lifetime members and only pay one-time dues. As an example of the funds we could raise, if each of these individuals paid dues to the society of \$15.00 a year, there would be \$25,200 each year to help restore the LRSH. A small amount, but a start in the right direction.

As a part of this effort, the Executive Board has decided to provide members with added benefits in order to encourage society membership. Starting immediately, paying/card carrying members will be qualified for the following:

- 1) 10% off on the purchase of Society Merchandise upon presentation of membership card (some exclusions may apply).
- 2) 50% off copies at the Little Red School House.
- 3) Participation in society field trips which will be members only unless otherwise stated.
- 4) Posting privileges on the Society Facebook page. The page will still be a public page and anyone can read the posts but only card carrying/dues paying members will be able to post and comment on the page. This change will be implanted effective 12/31/18. After that date, anyone that has not paid dues will be removed from the FB group's membership. Effective immediately, no new FB page members will be added unless they have paid Society Dues.

We love all of our members and we know that each and every one of you love Amite County and the LRSH as much as we do and want to help as much as possible. Thank you so much for all of your contributions, comments, and encouragement! We look forward to having you as an active member of the society!

AMITE COUNTY HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Minutes of August 11, 2018 meeting

DRAFT

The meeting was held at Miss K's Home Plate restaurant in Liberty, MS. Everyone enjoyed a nice breakfast. President Dawn Taylor called the meeting to order at 10:15 am. There were 14 in attendance.

Invocation: Bert Blalock

Minutes: Minutes from the June 9, 2018 meeting were considered for approval. Jim freeman made a motion to approve. Neil Randall second. Motion approved.

EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS

President: The executive committee met Thursday night 08/09/2018. Rob Young had notified us of a grant from the MS Digital Library for 80 hours of scanning time which opens 10/01/18 and ends 11/30/18. We would like to apply for this grant. MSdiglib.org has the information regarding the application. This scan would be performed over the span of a week in August 2019. The decision would have to be made as to which records are most important to scan, Joey Wall's records or the school records located upstairs in the LRSH. The information they scan will live on their server. There is a way to have digital access without internet access at the LRSH to put what we have scanned into the archive. This would give access to printers as well.

It has been decided that we need to have scheduled time for LRSH to be open as we all have busy schedules. On the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month starting in September from 2-4 someone will be at the LRSH. This will be when the library is open. Marcia, Greg, and Gay will start rotating these times. If anyone would like to volunteer, please email us amitecohistory@gmail.com. This will be published with the newspaper and posted at the library, the office of the chancery clerk, etc.

We have secured a place for the Dec 1, 2018 open house. It will be held from 10-2 at the McGeHee/Beall House owned by Robin Elliott. You may see the sesquicentennial book for details on the house.

We went back to supervisors/mayor and talked to them about a discounted rate for the meeting room at library \$15. We can meet at the Family Life Center at Liberty Baptist Church for free. The September meeting will be held at Liberty Baptist Church. The October meeting will be a field trip to the Carter Mixon Cemetery. We will ask Ronnie Volentine to bring his redneck limo to take us back to the woods. The November meeting will be held at El Dorado restaurant. The December meeting will be open house.

We will be changing the frequency of the newsletters from monthly to quarterly. We are now putting newsletter in envelope in order to avoid tearing in the post office sorters. If someone joins ACHGS at the open house in December they get 6 months free. We want there to be benefits from membership. Please keep your card with you. If you buy merchandise at the LRSH you get 10% discount, get copies for half price, field trips, and Facebook page access. We have 1680 members of the Facebook group as of this morning. There are 1300 of those that are actively participating. However, there are probably only about 100 of those that pay dues. We feel it isn't fair for them to get benefits that others pay for. Only paying members of the society will be allowed to post or comment on the Facebook page. They will be given until 12/31/18 to pay dues or they will be deleted as members of the Facebook group. They will still be able to read comments. There have been instances when we have found paid professional genealogists picking peoples brains about information without paying dues. This is not acceptable. If those 1680 members were paying, we would have a lot of money that could go to the LRSH repair fund. As of now, we must raise that

money another way. We have considered hiring someone to open the LRSH and if we had that kind of money we could do that. There is no date as to when the work is going to be done on the LRSH. If we have the money then we think the county would allow us to make the repairs, especially mitigating the water situation. We will make it clear that the dues are going for actual work, not administrative. We are going to re-key the lock at the LRSH.

Vice President: No report. VP absent.

Treasurer: Financial report. People have been giving donations to the LRSH which is appreciated. We have had donations given in memory of Mrs. Vera Prestridge. We will have the newsletters printed at the LRSH instead of paying Office Depot which should save some money. Motion to accept report by Sylvia Johnson, Jim Freeman second. Motion approved.

Secretary: We will be purging the membership list when people do not pay their dues. We will send notices with the May newsletter then a second and third notice. After that you will be moved to an inactive list.

LRSH Committee: none

Old Business: none

New Business: Sylvia Johnson announced the restoration of Founders Cemetery in Tylertown. Two benches were placed in the cemetery. They asked for donations. They will be getting headstones repaired and cleaned. Information was passed out regarding this project. Sylvia and Janice have uncovered 3 headstones not in proper place. 9 footstones were also found. They are going to continue to dig for more headstones. They also want to put out a booklet with all the families buried there. 26 babies were buried there.

Announcements: We have flags left from Memorial Day. We plan to communicate with churches to give them flags to put on their own cemeteries so that we don't have to do as many cemeteries ourselves. Our goal is to have all graves marked by Veteran's day. 11 tickets to Angels on the Bluff are still available. This is the same day as November meeting. Dawn Taylor purchased the tickets so please pay her for the tickets. The tour is at 7:45 pm on 11/10/18.

Program: none

Election: Motion to adjourn by Neil Randall. Second by MaryAnne Gerhardt. Meeting adjourned.

Ambrose T. Watkins (1832-1864)

This past spring, a group of volunteers took on the project of documenting as many Confederate Soldiers from Amite County as possible. Documentation was to include; Birth-Death dates, Military Unit, cemetery locations. etc. The plan included locating and flagging all the graves we could find to honor our families' military service.

During our research, I was asked about Ambrose T. Watkins who is buried in Liberty Cemetery. Knowing the timeline of his birth and death dates, along with his age, he must be another soldier and part of our Confederate Soldier documentation project. The information below was found in the Amite County Cemetery book.

Name: Ambrose T. Watkins
Birth Date: 1832
Death Date: 1864
Cemetery: Liberty Cemetery
Burial or Cremation Place: Liberty, Amite County, Mississippi, United States of America
Killed. One marker, erected for Ambrose, Mary A., and Eugene A., was placed by their daughter/sister, Carrie May Watkins Heiter.
["Amite County, Mississippi, Cemeteries" (Mogan & Mogan w/Glen Huff,1982) page 260.]

From the [1860 US Census]

Name: Ambrose T Watkins
Age: 28
Birth Year: abt. 1832
Gender: Male
Birth Place: Michigan
Home in 1860: Pipestone, Berrien, Michigan
Post Office: Pipestone
Dwelling Number: 1125
Family Number: 1092
Occupation: Teacher Com School
Real Estate Value: 375
Personal Estate Value: 150
Household Members by Name/Age:
Ambrose T Watkins 28
Mary Watkins 25
Eugene Watkins 3
Carinna Watkins 1

Once Ambrose was located in Michigan during 1860, the research began. He was found only in a few online family trees. My next step was to send a message to the tree owners, reaching out in hopes of a response. Thankfully, with the help of others, I was able to put together the pieces! I received the following information from a Watkins descendant, who is the 4x Great Niece of Ambrose's father, C. Watkins. She relayed to me that she is a descendant of William M. Watkins, whom is the writer of the following information.

This is the story of Ambrose and his family:

About 1885, William M. Watkins, an uncle of Ambrose, wrote this about his nephew as part of a short family history. A transcribed copy was given to me after my grandmother's death. The blanks, ex: [...], were in the transcribed version probably due to illegibility.

Here is the excerpt regarding Ambrose:

C. Watkins, the eldest son of Levi and Lucina, was born in Naples, N.Y. on February 7th, 1810, he was married to Miss Mary C. Hayward in Naples, N. Y. on April 5, 1830. They came to Michigan to reside in the Winter of 1832 and 33 (with the family of Levi Watkins). The names of their children were Ambrose T., Harriet, Antha and Albert. There was another son, Jas. Monroe, who died in infancy. Harriet died October 8th, 1851.

Ambrose was a young man of fine abilities and had a good education. He was a student at Albion College where he qualified himself as a teacher. Ambrose taught in local schools for several terms and held many responsible offices in the town of Leonidas, Michigan. He served one term as the county surveyor for the County of St. Joseph. He married Miss Mary Pincaut in about 1857. In the fall/winter of 1859, they traveled south, settling in the state of Mississippi and continued teaching.

When the War of the Rebellion began, he was obliged to leave his family or enlist with the Confederate Army; He chose to travel north, leaving his wife and children behind. For two years he got no news from or of his family. In 1863, after the North had opened the Mississippi River by driving out the Confederates, he received a letter from a friend who was still in the South. The letter stated that his wife, Mary P., and his young son, Eugene, were dead but, that his little girl, Carrie May, was alive and well. The friend said that they wished he would or could come get her. Stating that there was no danger, the rebel forces had all been driven out of that part of Mississippi. He immediately closed his business in Michigan and traveled south to get his daughter.

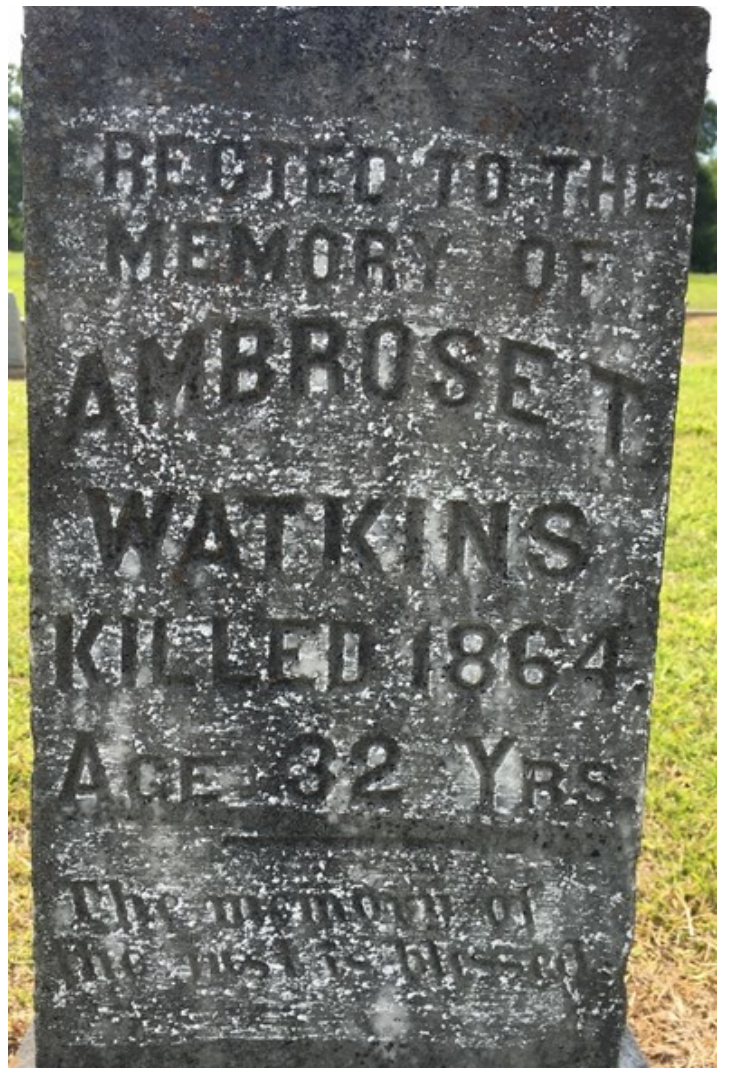
His mother, Mary C., received a letter from Ambrose written from Natchez – that was the last we hear of him for a long time. That was when a cousin of his wife came north and brought his daughter, Carrie May.

This is the statement made by the cousin of Ambrose' wife, Mary:

Ambrose got through all safe, but in a few days after his arrival a [...] heard of him. He was arrested and taken away [...] where they hung and shot him. It was down near an old colored woman's cabin. After the [...] had gone, she took his body down and buried it. Thus, perished one of the brightest men born of the Watkins family that I was ever acquainted with.

After receiving and reading this account of his life, the first thing that came to mind was that Ambrose was reported to the authorities as a spy for the north and/or as a deserter of the south. Upon sharing this story with a few Civil War historians, they also agreed to the account, based on the above information. So far, we have been unable to find where Ambrose was employed as a teacher. It is possible and likely so that he was employed at the Amite Female Seminary or by a wealthy planter.

Carrie May Watkins Heiter was documented in a Michigan probate court in 1868 and again in 1870. She was sent to a boarding school as a child. She married and had several children. They are known to have resided in Wyoming, Nebraska and Florida. Carrie May is buried in an unmarked grave in a family plot near Orlando, Fl.



Annual Membership Contribution
Amite County Historical and Genealogical Society
PO Box 2
Liberty, MS 39645
amitecohistory@gmail.com

Check or circle choice

- \$15.00 – Individual \$25.00 – Family \$10.00 – Senior (over 65)
 \$200.00 – Lifetime \$150 -- Lifetime, couple 70+ age \$100 - Lifetime, 70+ individual
 \$10.00 – Student (under 18) \$50.00 – Sponsor or Ancestor Memorial

All contributions are tax-deductible.

Please make checks or money orders payable to: **Amite Co. Historical and Genealogical Society.**

Please send PayPal payments to: **amitecohistory@gmail.com**

(Please print)+

Name: _____

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Prefer newsletter to be mailed Prefer newsletter to be emailed

Thank you for joining the Amite County Historical and Genealogical Society. Your contribution helps us continue to collect and preserve historic treasures from Amite County's past, as well as to promote family history. Membership also provides an opportunity to attend programs and participate in special events.

I am interested in helping with:

Archives Membership Programs Newsletter Other (specify):

Please let us know if you would prefer to receive the newsletter via email instead of snail mail. This would allow us to save money on postage which would in turn allow money to be spent more prudently.

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