



Amite County Historical and Genealogical Society

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Wayne B. Anderson — Newsletter Editor

June 2015

Vol. 11, No. 6

Without a past, there is no future

Next meeting:

The annual meeting with election of officers will be held at 10:00 am in the conference room of the Liberty library. Following the business meeting and conclusion of voting, there will be program presented by Plater Robinson (see below, right column).

AMITE COUNTY HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Minutes of the May 2, 2015 meeting

DRAFT

President Dawn Taylor called the meeting to order at about 9:15 am in the meeting room of the Liberty library. There were 6 members attending. Pres. Taylor stated that the meeting business would be limited to receive the report of the Nominating Committee on candidates for the officer for the coming fiscal year. Linda Lea, Nominating Committee Chair reported that the committee recommended Dawn Taylor for President, Greg Barron for Vice President, Wayne Anderson for Secretary, Gay Blalock for Treasurer, and Allen Terrell for the at-large post on the Executive Committee. There were no nominations from the floor. Linda Lea made a motion that the slate of candidates be approved; Greg Barron seconded. The motion was approved without dissenting votes.

The meeting was adjourned at about 9:20 am.

Future Meeting Schedule

June 13, 2015, 10:00 am — Annual membership meeting with election of officers in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS.

July 2015 — No meeting in July.

August 8, 2015, 10:00 am — Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS.

September 12, 2015, 10:00 am — Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS.

October 10, 2015, 10:00 am — Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS.

November 14, 2015, 10:00 am — Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS.

December 5 or 12, 2015 — The date and nature of the December meeting is to be announced.

January 9, 2016 — Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS.

June Program

Plater Robinson, Education Director at the Institute for Education and Research at Tulane University, will be the speaker at the Amite County Historical & Genealogical Society meeting on Saturday, June 13, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. in the conference room of the Liberty library.

Plater will talk about his great-great-grandfather J. T. Nolan who enlisted in the Confederacy at age 17, fought the Yankees at Shiloh, and spent the last half of the war fighting the Yanks in the district of east Louisiana and Southwest Mississippi.

BITS AND PIECES OF AMITE COUNTY HISTORY

Editor's note: The following was provided by Mrs. Frances Phares for publication as space permits. Next month, the related genealogy of the Micajah Wilkinson family referenced in the intro will be published.

These memories were shared by Angie Wilkinson Isaac on Heritage Day, May 2, 2015 with permission to be shared. Mrs. Grady Jones and Mrs. Nettie Caston had shared with her. Family connections to letters follow.

January 1, 1973

I AM GLAD THAT I AM 75 YEARS OLD. I can say that I have lived in three different worlds. I remember my grandparent's house on my Wilkinson side of the family which was built in 1839 during slavery time. It was built of pine logs, every log the same size, pegged together with wooden pegs. The house was one great big room that was a bedroom and dining room combination, the beds and chairs were hewed out of pine logs, the railing of the beds had rope from one railing to the other interwoven to hold the homemade mattresses. I remember one bed like this was still used, as there wasn't any household furniture in this period of my family life.

The chairs were made the same way only they had cowhide bottoms. I still have my oldest uncle's little chair that he used as a child, the original cowhide bottom still in pretty good shape. There were two small bedrooms the length of the big room on the back. From the back door of the house, two long porches on three big heart pine blocks about two feet from the ground led to a big kitchen. Its first floor packed so hard it looked like it had been polished. Across one end of the kitchen was a great big dirt chimney and fireplace, long iron rods with hooks on the ends, hanging down from each side of the chimney to hold iron pots and lids to cook vegetables and stews, etc.

Big iron skillets on three legs with heavy iron lids to bank hot coals on to bake cornpones and biscuits to the side of the fireplace they banked up hot ashes to bake potatoes. A few feet from the kitchen was the cook's house, with its sagging doors on leather hinges. It was called Aunt Mandy's house as she and her two boys lived in it, she doing the cooking and one boy was a houseboy and other one was a yard boy.

The houseboy would go into the big house at day light to build a fire in the big fireplace in the bedroom and dining room combination. The room would be nice and warm for my grandpa and grandma to get up and get dressed by. The big fireplace held five or six logs about four or five feet long. It really had this room heated up in no time.

The yardboy worked a big yard of flowers and the biggest vegetable garden you ever saw. He grew some mighty fine roses and every other kind of flower that grew in those days, even had flowers along the fence rows and along the walkway among the vegetables. I remember a beautiful American Beauty rose and a lovely white one that I never knew its name. The cook "Aunt Mandy" and her two boys never did any other work except wait on her white folks, as she called Grandpa and Grandma. Their work was from sunup til sundown at that.

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There was a loom house about twenty feet from the east end of the gallery on the front. This house was used for spinning and weaving the cloth for their clothes, bed linens, etc. They used all kind of dyes gotten from poke berries and red oak bark and indigo plants to dye threads all color to embroider or color the dresses and aprons.

My sister, Blanche, who is 86 years old, has a canapane woven and embroidered with these different colors of thread, the design on this old antique canapane is the same design that is on my original George Washington spread I have today. In those days, they were called canapanes instead of bedspreads like we say today. There also stood a large smoke house in the back yard off the east side of the big house with its dirt floor hard as cement. There were shelves all around the walls of this log house to hold boxes, jars, etc., on the floor stood many barrels all sizes to hold everything from pork to cornmeal, one of them was full of lye soap, as they made their soap also. By putting ashes in a barrel from the fireplace all winter, in spring they put this barrel on a hopper? that sloped down to an iron pot, in the ashes, they put pork fat, drippings from the bacon and bones, then water as it slowly dripped into the pot until the pot was over half full, they put a big fire under the pot and boiled it down until it thickened into soap. After the smokehouse wasn't in use any more, I think I can still smell the odors from all these things mingling together from over the many years it was in use. It was a very pleasant fragrance, too. The ladies of each household over the neighborhood would dress up, sitting around in a gathering to piece fancy quilts or just visiting. Not one hand turn did they do toward housework or any of the chores of a later date.

My grandparents had a buggy with wheels five feet high with a little seat that fold down on the back. They would hitch up the buggy, horse and drive off to a camp meeting, dressed in their Sunday best. The meetings were held on what they called the campgrounds many miles from home. I still have the turkey tail fan they used to keep cool with at these meetings. They would sing and shout till all hours, enjoying the preaching and each other so much.

Later, the slaves were freed by President Lincoln, some didn't want to leave and died there. Others left for homes of their own.

My uncles, seven of them, no girls - one uncle died at an early age, the other six as they married off would use the old loom house as a bedroom and ate at the big house till they could build for themselves. Grandpa giving each one land near him. They built in sight of Grandpa and each other almost in a circle, except two brothers who built upon the river several miles from the others. May dad and Uncle Jeff married Nunnery sisters.

When I was about two years old, Grandma died, leaving Grandpa alone, so Dad and family moved in the house with him. He died when I was around seven years old. By this time two market places had opened up, one at Natchez and Summit, Miss. They were almost the same distance from home - one West and one East. The menfolks would hitch up a team of oxen, "4 I believe made a team" to a covered wagon and take off to the marketplace. On going to the market they drove half way there, stop and make camp for the night, next day they would break camp by daylight and drive on into the market either at Natchez or Summit, whichever they left home for. They both were about fifty or sixty miles from home. They would get to market, load up the wagon with everything they went after - had to be wagon load as they only made two trips a year, all the staple goods for the kitchen, calico for the Ladies, candy for the children, tools for the farm. They started back home by mid afternoon, camped out

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again the night. They would get in home late evening time, tired but full of news they had picked up at the market.

As I grew older I can remember the old kitchen and Aunt Mandy's house, loom house and the flowers in the yard and the vegetable garden. These old houses stood for years, till they fell apart from age. These other things I write about I learned from sitting for hours listening to Dad and Grandpa, and later a nephew of Dad's, Cousin Lee Wilkinson. They would sit for hours laughing and talking about the past, calling each slave and ox by name till they both died just a few years apart.

In the back yard, near the old kitchen, stood one of the biggest old black walnut trees you ever saw. Its branches reaching away up toward the heavens. My mother raised pea fowls that used this tree to roost in. At twilight you would see them climbing up to the very tip top for the night, but by daybreak we could hear the male let out a screech that would awaken us, by the time we got up and dressed, the male would be strutting and dancing around the back door with his beautiful tall feathers spread out like a fan.

By this time, Dad, his brothers and neighbors had started clearing off the trees underbrush and stumps for a new ground. After the trees had been felled, cut into logs, the large ones cut into firewood, the smaller ones rolled into piles to be burned. The menfolks of the neighborhood came together to help his neighbor roll his logs, taken 6 men to the log using hand sticks. The women folks would gather two days before the log rolling to cook for this event. What a table load they would set before their tired menfolks at noon, pies, cakes, pork, chicken, all kinds of vegetables, cornpones, bread, biscuits and of course gallons of steaming hot coffee. If any of the neighbors had sickness in the family, after working hard all day they would come and sit by the bedside of the sick person all night.

If a neighbor got behind with his plowing, planting or working out his crop, all would gather there to give him a days work. No one had very much of this world's goods back then but they had a heart full of love and respect for God and their fellowman. I remember hearing Dad speak of a boy back during slavery time his age on the place, called Heck Wilkinson, as the slaves were called by their white folks name. How he and Heck would swing from limb to limb on the sweet gum trees that grew along a small stream called the branch where all their clothes were washed and in summer time they bathed. I recall going down to the branch and Dad had reached the age of 70 years or more. Dad told us how Heck would always bring a gift for Mas Frank as he still called Dad. The time I saw him, he had a pretty blue shirt for him. These two old whiteheaded men - one white and one black - sat there for hours laughing and talking about their boyhood days when they climbed the sweet gums to swing from limb to limb across a big cattle pasture, loafing on the job they had been sent to do, playing pranks on each other, etc. Color didn't mean a thing to these two old men as they sat there remembering their friendship all these years. They were closer than most brothers are these days.

Of course, the old log house I grew up in had been changed by weatherboarding up the outside and ceiling inside. Another frame room, big as the big log one, had been added and two small bedrooms. A big fireplace across the west end of the big frame room. Years before Dad had built a frame kitchen and dining room connected to the main house, by a porch. The gallery across the front of this big house was fifty or sixty feet long. It was the gathering place in spring and summer for us to sit after a hard days work, as we would sit there resting laughing and talking till bedtime.

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This lovely old place, a house full of precious memories of years gone by, burned down in 1967. It was in the Wilkinson family all these years until a few years before burning down. The last in the family to own it was my sister, Gertie and husband. Today, I am living in an entirely different world from the other two that is in the past. On October 18, 1971, I flew with Emile and two dear friends, Sidney and Mary Barnes, on a 707 Jet 32000 feet high 600 miles an hour to Hawaii for a vacation. Wonder what our ancestors would think of this!??

My world is a happy world for my son loves me very much and of course I love him dearly. Our God is a living God and is ALL POWERFUL.

Hand written: Mrs. Lettier lives in Shreveport, Louisiana with her son, Emile.

If members have information they would like to contribute, please feel free to offer it by contacting me at one of the addresses shown in the box on page 2. I will not be able to accept/use just anything submitted. If information is sent by e-mail, it must be in the body of the message, in a *MS Word* document, or in a PDF document. If images of documents are sent they must be in JPG format so that I can attempt to convert them to text via an optical character reading application. If information is sent by postal mail, it should be in typewritten text, not handwritten, and should be a copy that doesn't have to be returned. Since about half our members receive the newsletter by print copy and the copying process will not adequately display photos, I cannot illustrate text write-ups. If photos are sent, do so only by electronic files in JPG format but don't assume the photos will appear in the newsletter. Photos sent in this manner may sometimes be put on the society's Facebook group page if they are likely to have wide appeal. I realize these criteria may prevent the sharing of some information; however, I must place some limits on the amount of time I devote to the newsletter each month since I have other projects including another monthly newsletter that I work on periodically.

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Don't forget to vote!

Time is running out.

Annual Membership Contribution
Amite County Historical and Genealogical Society
PO Box 2
Liberty, MS 39645

Check or circle choice

- \$15.00 – Individual \$25.00 – Family \$50.00 – Sponsor or Ancestor Memorial
 \$200.00 – Lifetime \$10.00 – Student (under 18) \$10.00 – Senior (over 65)

All contributions are tax-deductible.

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

(Please print)

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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):

**Amite County Historical and
Genealogical Society**
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