



## Amite County Historical and Genealogical Society

Dawn Taylor, President

Wayne B. Anderson, Secretary

William G. Barron, Vice Pres.

N. Gay Blalock, Treasurer

Allen Terrell, Council-at-large

Wayne B. Anderson — Newsletter Editor

**September 2015**

**Vol. 11, No. 9**

Without a past, there is no future

**THE FIELD TRIP SCHEDULED FOR SEPT. 12 HAD TO BE CANCELLED. POSSIBLE RESCHEDULING WILL BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING.**

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**Next meeting:**

**The next meeting will be a regular business meeting on September 12, 2015, at 10:00 am in the conference room of the Liberty library.**

### **Future Meeting Schedule**

**September 12, 2015, 10:00 am — FIELD TRIP CANCELLED!** 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, 2015 —** Open House at the William Gardner House.

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

**February 11, 2016 —** Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS.

**March 11, 2016 —** Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS.

**April 9, 2016 —** Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS

**May 1, 2016 —** Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS

### ***AMITE COUNTY HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY***

Minutes of the August 8, 2015 meeting

**DRAFT**

President Dawn Taylor called the meeting to order at 10:01 am in the meeting room of the Liberty library. There were 21 members attending. Allen Terrell gave the invocation.

The minutes from the June 13, 2015, meetings were approved. A motion was made by Gay Blalock and seconded by Linda Lea. The motion carried.

**President Report:**

The Angels on the Bluff tour of the cemetery in Natchez will be at 8:45 pm on November 7, 2015. Tickets are \$25 per person. Anyone wanting to attend with the group should sign up on the sheet being passed around.

The field trip to tour the Old and New Capitols in Jackson is being scheduled to replace the September meeting (September 12, 2015). Attendees will congregate in Liberty then carpool to Jackson. Members committing to attend should sign up on the sheet being passed around. Specific details will be

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communicated later to those committing to go.

Open House is scheduled for the first Saturday in December (December 5) at the Gardner house. Members attending should bring finger foods to provide the refreshments. Several musical presenters are being lined up to provide entertainment.

Vice President Report: VP Greg Barron could not be present.

Secretary Report: No report.

Treasurer Report: Treasurer Gay Blalock reported we have \$10,842.59 as balance on hand. Mary Anne Huff made a motion to approve the report; Nelson Dawson seconded. The report was approved by unanimous vote.

COMMITTEES: The committees had no activity to report. Pres. Taylor stated that she would like to form a new Hospitality Committee to handle food, etc. at Open House. Volunteers are requested.

Old Business: None.

New Business: Pres. Taylor reported that the Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a logging festival on the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend in Oc-

tober at Vance Park (October 17-18 with set-up on the 16<sup>th</sup>). She would like to comply with the Chamber's request that the society set up a logging history display to complement the other activities. Volunteers are needed to handle the planning of the display, the set-up on Friday and to work at the display on Saturday and Sunday. Sam King was suggested as someone who could bring a lot to the event considering his collection of pictures related to logging. Sam, however, was absent and could not be contacted at the time.

Other Business:

If any members have suggestions on projects or field trip they would like to see in 2016, contact Dawn Taylor and outline your ideas.

Gay Blalock reported that her sister, Sue Severson, Life Member of the society, is researching old Bible records for genealogy related to Amite County. If anyone has any Bible records they would like to share, contact Gay.

Pres. Taylor reported that two other projects are in the planning stages. The first is to interview surviving World War II veterans. The other is to have to old school records books photographed so that the genealogical information that they contain can be more easily researched without handling the books themselves. Camera photography will have to be used; the books are difficult to scan/copy on flat-bed scanners.

The meeting adjourned at 10:28 am.

## BITS AND PIECES OF AMITE COUNTY HISTORY

*The first part of this month's installment was provided by Mrs. Frances Phares.*

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### **Gloster campground was scene of fiery weather, sermons**

Weekender, by CARL MCINTIRE

Clarion Ledger Staff Writer

*Sunday, August 21, 1983*

"Hell fire and damnation" preachers at the old camp meetings must have benefited from visual aids furnished by the weatherman for those sessions that were usually held in August.

Ten such installations for the Methodists alone flourished in Mississippi just before the turn of the century. One of the largest, and longest lived was the Sam Jones Methodist Campground near Gloster.

The campground, two miles north of town on the New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Vicksburg and Memphis Railroad, drew not just hundreds, but thousands in its heyday.

Preaching was the mainstay of the camps, with sometimes as many as 40 or more ministers on hand. Services were conducted as often as five times each day, and the sessions continued for two, three and sometimes four weeks.

Nothing is recorded about the weather, but Mississippi in August had to be hot, just as it is today.

The open-air pavilions where the crowds gathered probably came equipped with those fans that funeral homes and furniture stores used to donate for religious gatherings. Sometimes they were made of palm fronds, but most were of cardboard, with a little stick fastened on the back to provide some sturdiness and also a handle.

One has to wonder if, at the end of a four-week session, with five services per day, any fans were left for the folks when the final sermons were delivered.

There were no stop watches to tell how long the ministers preached, but it is a sure bet that few, if any, could wind up a good old-fashioned sermon in under an hour. The singing, with upwards of 3,000 voices, must have been heard in Gloster.

At the Sam Jones Camp Ground as in many others, the people lived in little houses, called tents but made of wood, along a street that led to the "auditorium," which was a covered tabernacle with open sides.

The first camp meeting was conducted there on the Friday before the last Sunday in August of 1886. The second session, in 1888, saw some improvements to the grounds. John Griffing Jones preached his last sermon then on Aug. 23 of that year. He was 84 and died on the following Oct. 1.

By 1889, the Sam Jones camp had become the scene of a great gathering. The crowds were estimated to be between 4,000 and 5,000 and 30 preachers were present during the session.

In 1890, the number of preachers included 24 itinerants and 17 local pastors. This time the crowds averaged 800. There were 13 "accessions," or conversions.

The tabernacle could seat 1,000, so one wonders whether there was standing room only all around for some of the "preaching" or if the people drew lots and attended at different times, perhaps to hear their favorite ministers.

A three-room tent (or house) was listed by one journal as costing \$37.85 for lumber, \$19.80 for labor and \$3 for lamps, a total of \$60.65. The original auditorium was built for \$216.

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Church-related campground sessions ended in 1919, the last entry in the minutes reading. "It is folly, a waste of time and energy to try to have another camp meeting with those Gloster Methodists causing so much trouble. They still think the place belongs to them."

Controversy had erupted over the ownership of the place from the very first, and on April 21, 1903, a lawsuit was filled on behalf of the Gloster Methodist Episcopal Church, South relating to that matter. This lawsuit is still pending on the books of the Chancery Clerk of Amite County and, conceivably could still be called by the court. No resolution of the matter was ever made.

While no more camp meetings were held after 1919, other organizations used the tabernacle for various purposes for a number of years. However, when the Mississippi Methodist Annual Conference learned that some groups were using the property for dances and picnics, and that "spirits" were being served, the land was put up for sale, W. W. Cassels and Delos Cassels purchased the plot on Oct. 30, 1933.

During research for the Gloster centennial this year, some other facts turned up about the famed religious institution were:

Thirteen years after the start of the Sam Jones Methodist Campground, a much more famous Woodmen of the World Health and Pleasure Resort was established adjacent to the land, on the north and west sides.

Evangelist Sam Jones, for whom the place was named, died on a train in Arkansas of heart failure on Oct. 15, 1905, at the age of 59.

Dr. J. R. Whittington, who filed the suit on behalf of the church, was a Gloster physician and Methodist minister, who was granted the first saloon license in the town of Gloster on July 18, 1884. His ministerial credentials were taken from him in 1895, but he continued to serve as a lay delegate from the church. In 1901 his credentials were restored, but he voluntarily surrendered them in 1906. Whittington's reputation was that "he could pray like a saint and cuss like a sailor." He was a well-known planter, surveyor and real estate entrepreneur.

Both Billy Sunday and Gypsy Smith, two of the most famous evangelists America has produced, were both scheduled to speak there during the 1911 camp meeting, but there are no records to prove that either arrived.

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*The second part of this month's installment is information from the WPA books followed by an analysis for perspective in our modern day.*

Volume II, Section XX, Page 431 gives a summary of the accidental death statistical report for the year 1900. (The information has been reformatted for this article.)

Reported deaths in 1900 from:

Drowning: 7  
Explosions: 5  
Automobile wrecks: 17  
Accidental poisoning: 3  
Suicide: 3  
Burns and scalds: 8  
Falling trees: 3  
Falling from buildings: 2  
Accidental discharge of guns: 6

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Snake bite: 1  
Thrown from wagon: 1  
Killed by trains: 5  
Truck/lumbering accident: 2  
Bridge falling through: 1  
Tractor accident: 1  
Lightning: 5  
Tornadoes: 15

*Analysis by the editor:*

This totals 85 deaths by accidental causes (17 distinct causes included). In 1900 the census count population was 20,708 which gives an accidental death rate of 4.1 per thousand people. Compare that with the most recent data available and you find that in 2007 (the last year data are publicly available) there were 22 deaths (from only two causes) out of a population of 13,131 (2010 census) for a rate of 1.7 per thousand. Discounting differences in what causes are now considered accidents, one could say it is now 2.5 times safer in the county.

Interestingly in 1900 there were 17 deaths in auto wrecks, more than I would have expected in that early era of automobiles. But in 2007 there were 16 deaths which shows not much has changed with auto wrecks on an annual frequency basis. The only other cause in 2007 was falls totaling 6 deaths compared to either 2 or 3 depending on how you count "falling" in the 1900 stats. So one could say the death rate for falling has doubled.

For those curious about the population differences, the larger population in 1900 was probably due to the influence of transient timber industry workers. The population peaked in 1910 at 22,954 when the timber harvesting industries were at their peak of operation and has generally declined in the last century, dropping by 43% to the 2010 census count.

Suicides are apparently no longer considered accidents, presumably because the act is intentional. I did not look at deaths by other causes so I do not know how suicide is viewed now.

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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.

**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)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip+4: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone(s): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

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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