



Amite County Historical and Genealogical Society

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September 2016

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Without a past, there is no future

Next meeting:

The next meeting will be a regular business meeting at 10:00 am on September 10, 2016, in the conference room of the Liberty Library. The program on "The Great Sweet Potato Raid" which was postponed from the cancelled August meeting will follow the business session (see details on page 2).

AMITE COUNTY HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

The August meeting was cancelled due to the heavy rain and flooding that occurred just before the meeting date.

→ Important Notice ←

To all members with books from the LRSB Library:

Please return all books in your possession to Greg Barron by the time of the September 10 meeting. These books need to be properly tagged and inventoried. Since the August meeting was cancelled, VP Barron is extending the deadline for return of books.

Future Meeting Schedule

September 10, 2016 — Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS.

October 8, 2016 — Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS.

November 12, 2016 — Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS.

December 3, 2016 — Annual Open House. Details to be announced.

January 14, 2017 — Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS.

February 11, 2017 — Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS. Filed trip to grave of Col. Thomas Hinds in Jefferson Co. following meeting.

March 11, 2017 — Field trip to New Orleans to visit Chalmette Battlefield and other sites.

April 8, 2017 — Regular monthly meeting in the conference room of the library in Liberty, MS.

May 6, 2017 — Heritage Day. Society activities to be announced. No regular meeting.

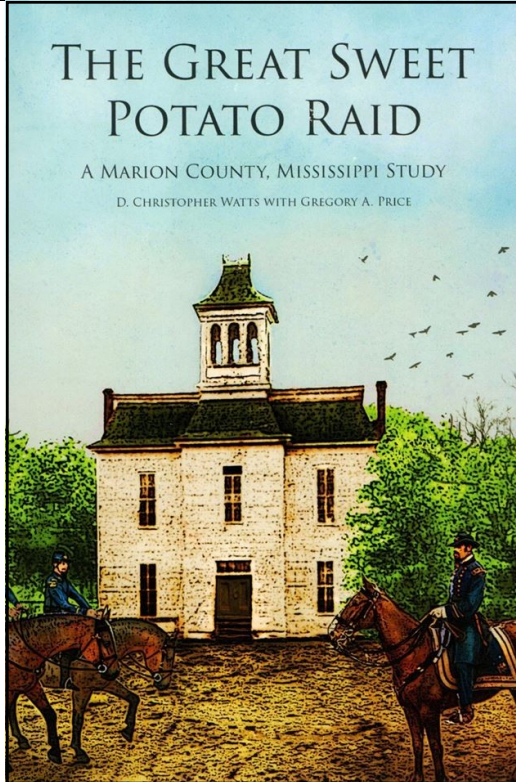
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Reference:

[Http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml)

September Program



Society member Jim Freeman has arranged for Chris Watts to come and present a program on his new book *The Great Sweet Potato Raid*. He will have his books for sale at the meeting! They are \$25.

Meeting attendees are invited to have lunch with the author and society officers at the Dinner Bell in McComb following the meeting.

Local Flooding Problem

As most of you know the town of Crosby lies on the Amite and Wilkinson County border. The recent record-setting rainstorm caused severe flooding where none had occurred before. The news media reported heavily on the widespread flooding in Louisiana and the problems in Mississippi were given far less notice.

As a result of a recent visit by Governor Phil Bryant to the damage area in Crosby it has been learned that over 20 inches of rain fell in a 24-hour period flooding dozens of home. Some 95% of the affected homeowners do not have flood insurance since the area was not considered to be a flood zone.

The officers of the society have discussed doing something to aid in Crosby's flood relief but are currently at a loss as to the best route to take. We would like to do something, probably in the form of a donation, to directly help the locals. Suggestions have been made about giving to traditional charitable organizations but that would not likely aid the local community.

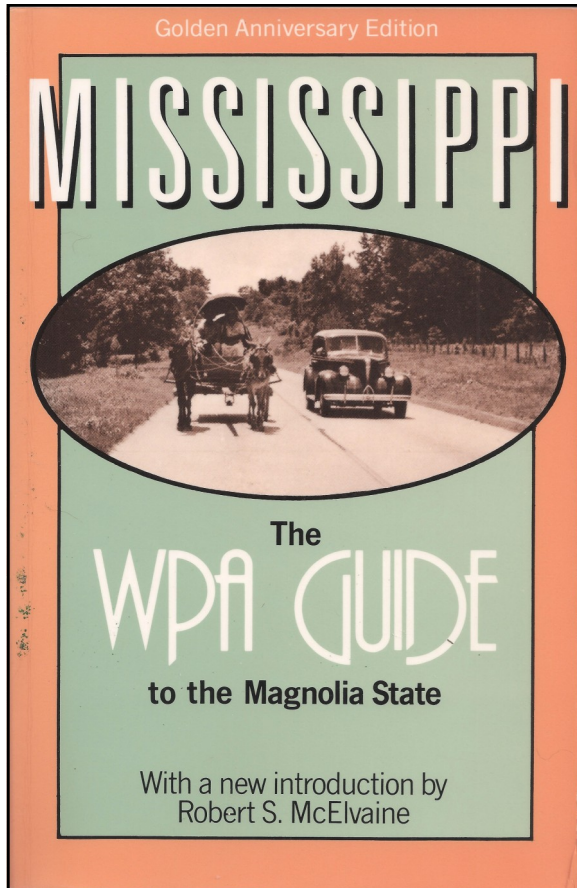
If any members have suggestions on how to aid Crosby directly, please communicate those suggestions to President Dawn Taylor either by e-mail message to rdawnt@gmail.com or by letter to the ACHGS at PO Box 2, Liberty, MS 39645.

If you wish to see the recent TV report on the flooding, go to:
<http://www.msnewsnow.com/story/32795399/governor-bryant-visits-wilkinson-county-flood-victims>

Contributions

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.

BITS AND PIECES OF AMITE COUNTY HISTORY



This book was compiled by the WPA and was published in 1938 by the Viking Press with copyright in the name of the Mississippi Advertising Commission (obviously a state agency charged with encouraging tourism in the state). It was reprinted in 1988 (the cover shown at left) on the 50th anniversary with a lengthy introduction added. The book is a bit over 500 pages (main text) plus various introductory parts and an index.

Those familiar with the Amite County WPA books know that the WPA attempted to cover all aspects of life in the county from its beginning until the date of the WPA project. Since the writers were concentrating on a single county they were able to go to a level of detail that was not possible in a book about the entire state. The book is still a good reference, especially for those interesting in Mississippi culture in the first half of the twentieth century.

The largest part of the book is done in the form of driving tours along major thoroughfares of the period with discussions of landmarks along the way. I scanned the pages that describe the tour through Amite County and used optical character recognition to create a text file. I've tried to catch any errors caused by the OCR misinterpretations but if I've missed some, please excuse the overlooking of them. The rather high mileage mark given for certain Amite Co. sites is due to the tour

(Tour 13 in the way the book is laid out) beginning at the point where Mississippi Hwy. 24 begins in east Mississippi near the state line.

THE AMITE COUNTY TOUR

(The text begins as the county is approached from McComb and ends when the tour enters Wilkinson County.)

Between McComb and Liberty the highway passes through the westernmost part of the longleaf pine region. There is little good timber left, but the farms tilled on the cleared lands are above the average for the pine woods. The cuts show a mixture of the sandy clay of the truck farming belt and the loess of the bluffs of the Mississippi. The impression is of farms without the newness of the Piney Woods clearings east of Pearl River, even though the fields are dotted with stumps.

The RED FRAME HOUSE at 154.8 m. (R) serves well to mark the division between the truck farming belt and the old south section.

LIBERTY, 163.2 m. (300 alt., 551 pop.), is one point of the triangle which, with Fort Adams and Vicksburg, bounds the corner of Mississippi best epitomizing the deep South. The AMITE CO. COURTHOUSE,

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recently repaired, replaced in 1840 an earlier log structure that had marked the seat of the county since its organization in 1809. The square in which the early structure stood had been, before 1809, a ball ground for the friendly Amite Indians. Later, the square was the junction point of the Mobile-Natchez road with a road to Bayou Sara, La., both of them important arteries of travel in the Southwest. Men came 50 miles to attend court here. In 1816, the year before Mississippi became a State, a census of the town and county showed 3,365 whites, 1,694 slaves, and 19 free Negroes. Slaves were one of the most important commodities of the period, and the slave block where they were bought and sold was placed just north of the present courthouse. Streams of oxcarts, each cart loaded with three or four bales, carried cotton to the Natchez market, 60 miles northwest.

In addition to cotton culture, the town had industrial activities unusual for Mississippi. In the GAIL BORDEN HOUSE across from the courthouse on Main Street, Gail Borden condensed the first can of milk. Hiram Van Norman, who married Borden's step-sister, moved from Indiana to Liberty, bringing Gail, a small boy, with him. Young Borden attended the Liberty Male Academy, was made County Surveyor in 1825, and while teaching at Zion Hill near Liberty married Penelope Mercier in 1828. He later made a fortune from the perfected formula for condensing milk, on which he was working at the time of his marriage. Dr. Tichenor, who made and perfected Tichenor's antiseptic, began his experiments in Liberty before the War between the States, although it was not patented until 1883. A contemporary reports that Dr. Tichenor said, "I will use my antiseptic freely on southern soldiers, but want no d*** yankees to get it." He lived on what was known as the John Webb place, about 1½ miles E. of Liberty. After a few years in Liberty, he moved to a place on the Mississippi River in Wilkinson Co., and later to Baton Rouge, where he secured the patent for the antiseptic. Speculation Creek, on the banks of which the speculators established Liberty in 1809, became known as Tan-yard Creek, when in the 1820's Van Norman built on it a shoe factory that he ran with slave labor. The water power supplied by the two prongs of the Amite River moved the wheels of the cotton gins and the first clumsy gristmills and sawmills. When the War between the States began there were 16 water power mills in Amite Co. Liberty was given a blow when, about 1882, the railroad was run to Gloster 15 miles northwest.

Beautiful homes were a manifestation of the wealth of the people. The first house in the settlement to have glass window panes, a carpet and a piano, the E. N. SKINNER HOME on a hill three blocks south of the courthouse, is in almost as good condition as when built in 1824. Its heart-of-pine timber was hand-sawn and put together with pegs, and all interior woodwork, including an elaborate mantel, was hand-carved by slaves. The carpet and piano were shipped down the Mississippi from Kentucky. The builder of the house, Dr. Edward Carroll, shipped in a steam sawmill also, but when he tried to run it with slave labor the engine exploded, killing five of his Negroes.

The COURTHOUSE was built in 1840 of brick fired by slaves. It is a square building two-stories high, with a low sloping roof. The flooring is of planks a foot wide, and the stone steps are deeply hollowed by wear. The first brick office buildings, also erected in the 1840's, were made from the same red and white local clays as was the courthouse. The OLD OPERA HOUSE, now known as the Walsh Building, on the corner of Main and East Girdle Sts. (formerly the street girdling the town), was built in 1840. Its enormous brick columns on two sides have retained a dusty yellow tinge, contrasting with the flame color of the other buildings. In it Jenny Lind sang to the planters from the surrounding country. The congregation of the present PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, organized in 1848 with a slave as one of its 14 charter members, meets in a building erected in 1853 on the corner of East Girdle and Broken Sts. The brick, the high-backed pews, the altar, the walls of the commodious auditorium, and the slave gallery were hand-fashioned by slaves. The Amite Female Academy, founded in 1853, had a plant of several brick buildings until Federal troops destroyed all but one in 1863. The building left standing is a part of the AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL on the eastern edge of town.

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When the War between the States had ended, Liberty began the task of raising a MONUMENT to its dead. It was made in New Orleans, hauled the last 30 miles to Liberty by oxen, and raised in 1871. The total cost was \$3,322, representing hard-earned money in the post-war Reconstruction period. It is classic in style, a single eight-sided shaft of Italian marble, 20 ft. high on a base seven feet square. A laurel wreath with the motto "At Rest" is topped with a raised star and a Grecian urn; there are four richly-carved tablets inscribed with the names of the Amite County soldiers who died in the war.

Left from Liberty on State 48 to an unmarked graveled road at 3-8 m.; L. here to the TOM STREET HOME, 6 m. (R), a well-preserved house built in 1827. Two stories in height with a double deck entrance porch, it has unusually large rooms with high ceilings. Originally there was a ballroom on each floor.

At 174.4 m. on State 24 is the junction with an unmarked graveled road. Right on this road (L) to the THOMAS TALBERT HOME (private), 1.8 m., a large, two-and-a-half story red brick structure, set high on a hill and visible a half-mile away. Finished in 1853, it is probably the best remaining ante-bellum home in the area. Thomas and Sally Talbert, the owners, were South Carolinians from the Edgefield District. The brick was made by slaves and burned on the place; the glass was shipped from Kentucky. The structure is of monumental proportions: ceilings are 14 ft. high; a hall 40 by 14 ft. is flanked by rooms 20 ft. square; and solid brick walls, a foot-and-a-half thick, are still sheathed in plaster that has neither cracked nor been repaired. The flooring is of heart pine, as are the mantels, stained to represent dark marble.

A slave with a lamp on a stick burned figures of animals and other objects in the stained pine of the second-floor ceilings; it now resembles tiling. The house contains some of the original pieces with which it was furnished: four-posted beds, old-fashioned dressers and chairs; a secretary; a large chest full of quilts; and a whatnot, a thing of beauty with spindling props, three shelves, and a mirrored back. There is a legend concerning a murder committed while a dance was in progress in the parlor. A jealous husband, advancing on his wife's dancing partner with upraised poker, was stabbed in the ensuing scuffle. The hill on which the house stands was formerly terraced and planted with rows of cape jessamine, some of which remain.

GLOSTER, 178.2 m. (434 alt., 1,139 pop.), is a comparatively new railroad town named for the engineer who put the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley R.R. through in the 1880's.

CENTREVILLE, 188.6 m. (374 alt., 1,344 pop.), is a small early settlement that did not become incorporated until 1880, when the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley R.R. ran along the border between Wilkinson and Amite Cos. Because the station was approximately midway between Liberty and Woodville and about midway between Natchez and Baton Rouge, it was appropriately named Centreville.

Right from the railroad station to the WILLIAM DICKSON HOME, 0.8 m. (private), built in 1819 by William Winans, the eccentric and powerful Methodist circuit rider, whose voluminous papers are preserved in the State Hall of History. Of the usual Southern plantation type, it is a story-and-a-half high with a long wide gallery. A frame office is attached to the south end of the gallery. Brick and lime hauled by ox cart from Natchez were used in the foundations and chimney. Among the old relics is one of the seven pikes stolen from John Brown's arsenal.

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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):

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