

# THE GSOC NEWSLETTER



THE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF  
OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA

DECEMBER 3, 2015

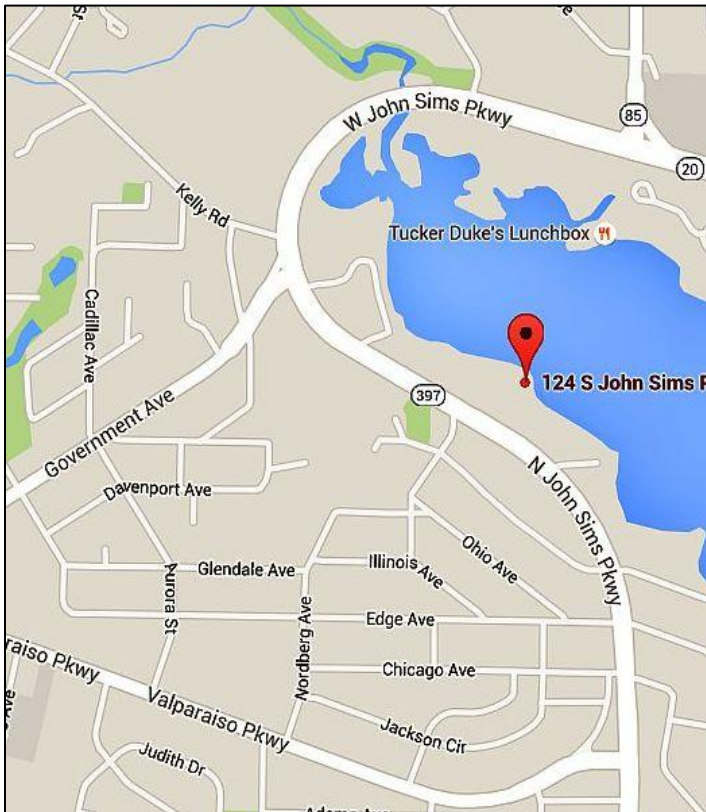
## Next GSOC Meeting

December 12, 2015 11:00 a.m.

Boathouse Landing Restaurant  
124 South John Sims Parkway  
Valparaiso, Florida

## ANNUAL CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

The GSOC's annual Christmas luncheon will be held on December 12, 2015 at The Boathouse Landing, 124 South John Sims Pkwy, Valparaiso, FL. This map shows where the restaurant is located.



The menu choices have been previously provided to all members and your selection should have been provided to Del Lessard by 30 November so that the restaurant could be provided this information as they have requested.

Please arrive between 11:00 and 11:15 a.m. Pay as you enter and receive a coupon indicating your choice of entrée. After a time of meeting and greeting, the GSOC officers for 2016 will be installed at 11:30 a.m. The Boathouse Landing staff will begin serving our salads about 11:45 a.m., with the entrees starting around noon.

### In this issue:

Stagecoach Legend	2
Old Bethel Cemetery	2
Slavery's Trail of Tears	3
Left Behind in a Country Church	7
Events, Groups, and Sites of GSOC Interest	9
GSOC Information	9

## November 14th GSOC Meeting Minutes

Heritage Museum, Valparaiso, FL  
Pat Pruett, Recording Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM by President Jim Young. He welcomed members and guests and asked if there was a door prize to be awarded. Charlene responded that a gift of homemade preserves had been donated by Val Moreland for a door prize and she then awarded it to the lucky winner of the drawing. Twenty three members and one guest were present.

Pres. Young presented the slate of nominees for GSOC officers for 2016 that was approved at the October meeting with one correction. Judy Jehn withdrew as nominee for Corresponding Secretary and Val Moreland accepted the nomination for the position. Pres. Jim asked for a motion that the following list of nominees be elected as GSOC officers for 2016:

President - Sue Basch  
1<sup>st</sup> VP (Programs) - Charlene Grafton  
2<sup>nd</sup> VP (Membership) - Jon Sheperd  
Treasurer - Phil Hoge  
Recording Secretary - Kathie Sheperd  
Corresponding Secretary - Val Moreland

Del Lessard made a motion to elect these officers and the motion was seconded by Bob Sutherland. The members present unanimously approved the motion.

President Young said that as president of the GSOC, he has been invited to speak to the Friends of the Crestview Library on 19 November. He will speak about the GSOC and its history and relate some stories about the formation of Okaloosa County and other interesting facts. The meeting is at 10:30 and is open to the public.

Pres. Young gave a review of what was discussed at the GSOC Executive Board meeting which was held today before this regular membership meeting:

The first item concerned the confusion concerning whether or not the GSOC would be able to continue meeting at the Heritage Museum. Jim said he spoke with Gina and they are happy to have us meet here. The only problem is when the Museum holds its Saturday Teas that

conflict with our meeting day. This is not a significant problem and after input from several of those in attendance, Jim recommended that we continue to meet at the Museum. The board members agreed.

Secondly, Del Lessard was asked to present the menu choices for our Christmas party at the Boat House Landing and the board members agreed on three menu options to offer. Del will then present the menu items at the regular meeting with all necessary details.

#### Officer Reports:

**1<sup>st</sup> VP Programs** - Del Lessard presented the schedule and menu for our Christmas Luncheon. It will be held at the Boat House Landing restaurant downstairs party room. We are to arrive between 11:00 AM and 11:15; with the installation of officers at 11:30 and lunch to be served at 12:00. Del passed around a signup sheet with the menu selections and said we will pay at the door. He will follow this up with an e-mail to the membership. Reservations must be in to Del by 1 December so that he can notify the restaurant by 4 Dec.

**2<sup>nd</sup> VP Membership** – Charlene Grafton reported that we presently have a membership consisting of 14 life members, 30 individual members, 22 family members and 4 organizations for a total of 70 members. She suggested that all members fill out a new application form each January when membership dues are to be collected. This will provide a list of surnames that our members are researching as well as keeping all of our information up to date, such as e-mail addresses.

Jim said that he would be glad to compile the names to be researched into a list appropriate for publication in the Newsletter.

**Treasurer** – Bob Basch said that it cost approximately \$750 to publish and mail our 2015 Journal. He said all bills have been paid and we have a check book balance of \$1535.17. He also passed the Blue Box for donations for purchase of genealogy books for local libraries and to help defray the expenses of the Journal.

**Recording Secretary** – Pat Pruett had nothing to report.

**Corresponding Secretary** – Carl Laws said the new periodicals and a copy of our 2015 Journal will be taken to the Ft. Walton Beach Library for their genealogy room.

**Publicity Chair** – Val Moreland said that the Northwest Florida Daily News will only print our notices as “space available” from now on. No problem with the other papers.

There being no other announcements, Jim turned the meeting over to Del.

Del introduced Beverly Gross as our speaker and her presentation was entitled “The Pilgrim’s Story”.

Bev has been involved in genealogy research for many years and has taught classes on the subject. Bev is a long time member of the GSOC and has served on many

committees and in several offices. She was president from 2007 through 2009. Bev’s vibrant personality comes through in her presentations and it is always a pleasure to have her present our program.

Pres. Young thanked everyone for coming and Bev for her interesting program and then adjourned the meeting.

## **Stagecoach Legend**

Legend has it that the stagecoach road to Milligan, Baker, and Pensacola went by the Old Bethel Cemetery. Dee Marcum said she use to ride her horse down to the river supposedly where it crossed. She said if you had a vivid imagination, late at night you can hear the stagecoach and horses racing down the road.

Her daughter and eight of her friends talked her into taking them up to the cemetery one night so they could listen for the stagecoach and horses. Nine kids piled into her pickup truck bed. They all sat up there twenty to thirty minutes as the tension grew. Suddenly, kids were screaming and crying and nine hysterical youngsters piled into the cab with Dee. She had to take them to her house to get them calmed. Every one of them swore they heard the horses galloping, neighing, the reins slapping and chains clanging, and the stagecoach rattling and squeaking along. Dee said all she heard was the kids.

That was thirty years ago. To this day, those grown girls and boys insist they heard the noises. She does not think any of them have dared go up there at night to listen for the stagecoach and horses again.

The Heritage of Okaloosa County, Florida, Vol. I, told by R. Dee Marcum



**The Old Bethel Cemetery**

The historic Old Bethel Cemetery is located in Austinville, once a stop on the stagecoach route between Milton, FL, and Geneva, AL. Griffith Ferry, established around 1850 to transport goods, people, and the stagecoach over the Yellow River, was about a half-mile from the cemetery.

The Crestview Historic Preservation Board selected Old Bethel Cemetery for its second historical marker in 2013.

# Slavery's Trail of Tears

## The journeys of a million people from the tobacco South to the cotton South

The Slave Trail of Tears is a thousand-mile-long river of people, all of them black, reaching from Virginia to Louisiana. During the 50 years before the Civil War, about a million enslaved people were moved from the Upper South—Virginia, Maryland, Kentucky—to the Deep South—Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama. They were forced to go. This forced resettlement was 20 times larger than Andrew Jackson's Trail of Tears as tribes of Native Americans were driven out of Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama. It was bigger than the immigration of Jews into the United States during the 19th century, when some 500,000 arrived from Russia and Eastern Europe. It was bigger than the wagon-train migration to the West. It lasted longer and grabbed up more people than any other migration in North America before 1900.

On April 16, 1834, a man named James Franklin in Natchez, Mississippi, wrote to the home office of his company in Virginia. He worked for a partnership of slave dealers called Franklin & Armfield, run by his uncle. "We have about ten thousand dollars to pay yet. Should you purchase a good lot for walking I will bring them out by land this summer," Franklin had written. Ten thousand dollars was a considerable sum in 1834—the equivalent of nearly \$300,000 today. "A good lot for walking" was a gang of enslaved men, women and children, possibly numbering in the hundreds, who could tolerate three months afoot in the summer heat.

The firm of Franklin & Armfield was established in Alexandria, Virginia, in 1828. Over the next decade, with John Armfield based in Alexandria and Isaac Franklin in New Orleans, the two became the undisputed tycoons of the domestic slave trade. "I will bring them out by land" referred to a forced march overland from the fields of Virginia to the slave auctions in Natchez and New Orleans.

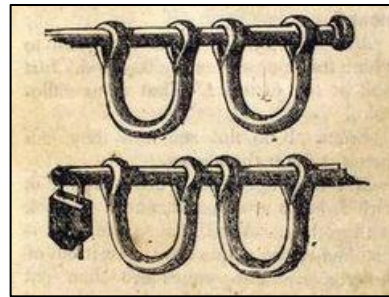
With that letter from Natchez, Armfield began collecting people from the Virginia countryside using headhunters who worked on commission to collect enslaved people up and down the East Coast, knocking on doors, asking tobacco and rice planters whether they would sell. Many slaveholders were inclined to do so, as their plantations had begun to make smaller fortunes than many liked.

It took four months to assemble the coffle. The company's agents sent the people down to Franklin & Armfield's slavepens in Alexandria, just nine miles south of the U.S. Capitol: seamstresses, nurses, valets, field hands, hostlers, carpenters, cooks, houseboys, coachmen, laundresses, boatmen, and also fancy girls, young women who would work mainly as concubines. And, always, children.

By August, Armfield had more than 300 ready for the march. Around the 20th of that month the caravan began to assemble in front of the company's offices in Alexandria on Duke Street. A man named Ethan Andrews, happened to witness the organizing of an Armfield coffle and he

described the scene as Armfield directed the loading for the enormous journey.

"Four or five tents were spread, and the large wagons, which were to accompany the expedition, were stationed" where they could be piled high with "provisions and other necessities." New clothes were loaded in bundles. "Each negro is furnished with two entire suits from the shop," Andrews noted, "which he does not wear upon the road." Instead, these clothes were saved for the end of the trip so each slave could dress well for sale. There was a pair of carriages for the whites.



Coffle Yoke

Armfield sat on his horse in front of the procession, armed with a gun and a whip. Other white men, similarly armed, were arrayed behind him. They were guarding 200 men and boys lined up in twos, their wrists handcuffed together, a chain running the length of 100 pairs of hands. Behind the men were the women and girls, another hundred. They were not handcuffed, although they may have been tied with rope. Some carried small children. After the women came the big wagons—six or seven in all. These carried food, plus children too small to walk ten hours a day. Later the same wagons hauled those who had collapsed and could not be roused with a whip. Then the coffle, like a giant serpent, uncoiled onto Duke Street and marched west, out of town and into what some now call the Slave Trail of Tears.

Virginia was the source for the biggest deportation. Nearly 450,000 people were uprooted and sent south from the state between 1810 and 1860. In 1857 alone, the sale of people in Richmond amounted to \$4 million, that would be more than \$440 million today.

Franklin & Armfield put more people on the market than anyone—perhaps 25,000—broke up the most families and made the most money. About half of those people boarded ships in Washington or Norfolk, bound for Louisiana, where Franklin sold them. The other half walked from the Chesapeake to the Mississippi River, 1,100 miles, with riverboat steerage for short distances along the way. Franklin & Armfield's marches began in the late summer, sometimes the fall, and they took two to four months.

The Armfield coffle of 1834 is better documented than most slave marches. It headed west out of Alexandria. Today the road leaving town becomes U.S. Route 50, a big-shouldered highway. But when the slaves marched, it was known as Little River Turnpike. The coffle moved along at three miles an hour. Caravans like Armfield's covered about 20 miles a day. People sang. Sometimes they were forced to. Slave traders brought a banjo or two and demanded music.

After 40 miles, the Little River Turnpike met the town of Aldie and became the Aldie and Ashby's Gap Turnpike, a toll road. The turnpike ran farther west—40 miles to Winchester, and then to the brow of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Every few miles, Armfield and his chained-up gang came to a toll station. He would stop the group in its tracks, pull out his purse and pay the man. The tollkeeper would lift the bar, and the coffle would march under it.

About August 25, they reached Winchester and turned south, entering the Shenandoah Valley. The gang headed down the Great Wagon Road, a route that came from Pennsylvania, already some centuries old. Along the way, the coffle met other slave gangs, construction crews rebuilding the Wagon Road, widening it to 22 feet and putting down gravel. The marchers and the roadwork gangs, slaves all, traded long looks.

on the ground, in groups of about a dozen each." Meanwhile, "the white men...were standing about with whips in their hands."

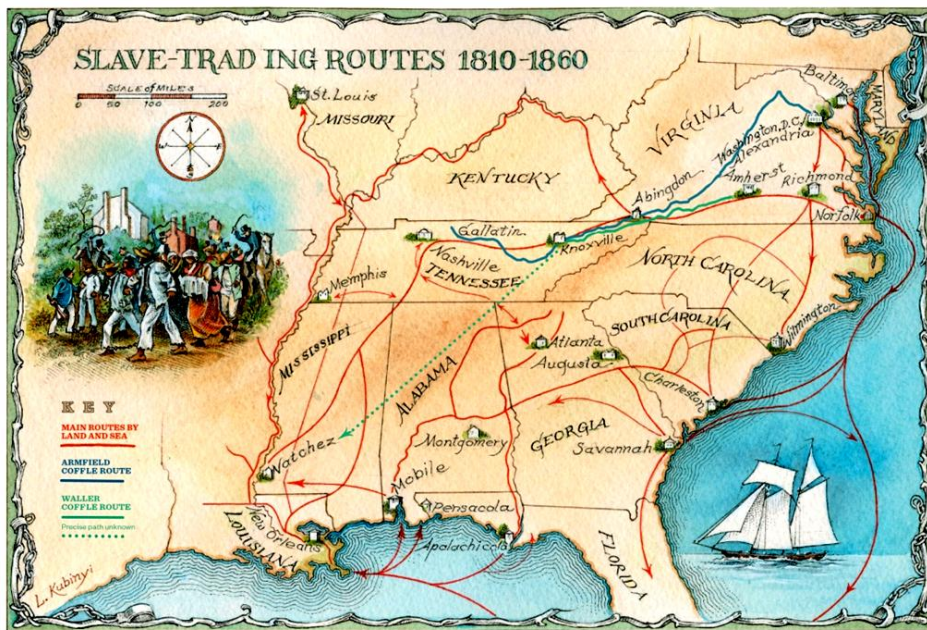
Featherstonhaugh, a geologist on a surveying tour for the federal government, described the slave trader as a raw man in nice clothes. John Armfield wore a big white hat and striped pants. He had a long dark coat and wore a mustache-less beard. Early the next morning, the gang readied again for the march. "A singular spectacle," Featherstonhaugh wrote. He counted nine wagons and carriages and some 200 men "manacled and chained to each other," lining up in double file. As the gang fell in, Armfield and his men made jokes, "standing near, laughing and smoking cigars."

On September 6, the gang was marching 50 miles southwest of Roanoke. They came to the New River, a big flow about 400 feet across, and to a dock known as Ingles Ferry. Armfield did not want to pay for passage, not with his hundreds. So one of his men picked a shallow place and tested it by sending over a wagon and four horses. Armfield then ordered the men in irons to get in the water. This was dangerous. If any man lost his footing, everyone could be washed downstream, yanked one after another by the chain. Armfield watched and smoked. Men and boys sold, on average, for about \$700. Multiply that by 200. That comes to \$140,000, or about \$3.5 million today. The men made it across. Next came wagons with the young children and those who could no longer walk. Last came the women and girls. Armfield sent them across on flatboats. Today, on the same spot, a six-lane bridge crosses the New River, and there is a town called Radford, population 16,000.

Armfield and his caravan came to the Shenandoah from Alexandria. Other coffles came from the direction of Richmond. One of them was led by a man named William Waller, who walked from Virginia to Louisiana in 1847 with 20 or more slaves. Waller was 58, not young but still fit. The Wallers lived outside Amherst, Virginia, and owned some 25 black people and a plantation called Forest Grove. They were in debt. They had seen the

money others were making by selling out and decided to do the same. Their plan was to leave a few slaves behind with Sarah as house servants and for William to march nearly all the rest to Natchez and New Orleans.

Waller and his gang reached the Valley Turnpike in October. "This morning finds us six miles west of Abingdon," Waller wrote home from one of the richer towns. "The negroes are above all well—they continue in fine spirits and life and appear all happy." It is rare to have a glimpse of slaves enchained in a coffle, because the documentary evidence is thin, but Waller's march is an exception. The people who accompanied him included a boy of 8 or 9 called Pleasant; Mitchell, who was 10 or 11; a teenage boy named Samson; three teenage sisters, Sarah

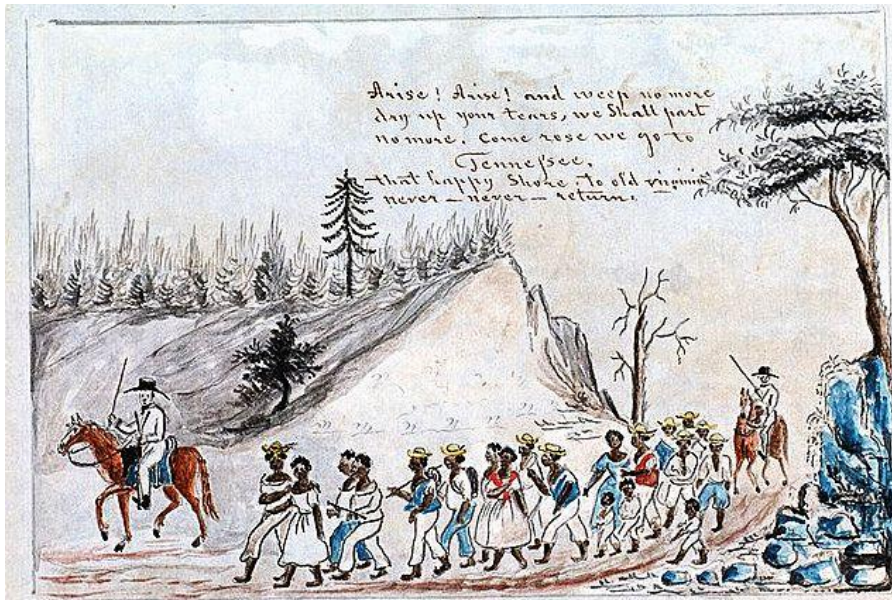


Today the Great Wagon Road, or Valley Turnpike, is known as U.S. Route 11, a two-lane that runs between soft and misty mountains, with pretty byways. Long stretches of U.S. 11 look much like the Valley Turnpike did during the 1830s—rolling fields, horses and cattle on hills. Northern Shenandoah was wheat country then, with one in five people enslaved and working in the fields.

One night in September 1834, a traveler stumbled into the Armfield coffle's camp. "Numerous fires were gleaming through the forest: it was the bivouac of the gang," wrote the traveler, George Featherstonhaugh. "The female slaves were warming themselves. The children were asleep in some tents; and the males, in chains, were lying

Ann, Louisa and Lucy; Henry, about 17; a man named Nelson and his wife; a man in his 20s called Foster; and a young mother named Sarah, with her daughter Indian, about age 2. There were others. The three sisters had been taken from their parents, as had Pleasant, Mitchell and Samson. Most of the others were under 20. As for Sarah and Indian, they had been taken from Sarah's husband and her mother. Waller planned to sell all of them.

As he pushed his "hands" down the pike, Waller felt guilty about Sarah and Indian, he told his wife. "My heart grieves over Sarah and I do wish it could be different," he wrote. "But Sarah seems happy." Days and nights down the Valley Turnpike, the spine of the Blue Ridge, destination Tennessee, where Armfield would hand over his coffle and board a stagecoach back to Alexandria.



As U.S. 11 steps into Tennessee, the road finds the Holston River and runs parallel to it. Here the mountains thicken into the Appalachian South of deep hollows and secret hills. In the old days, there were few black people here, a lot of Quakers and the beginning of an antislavery movement. The path of I-40 west roughly matches a turnpike that once ran 200 miles across the Cumberland Plateau. The coffles followed the same route—through Kingston, Crab Orchard, Monterey, Cookeville, Gordonsville, Lebanon and, finally, Nashville. At this point in the journey, other spurs, from Louisville and Lexington to the north, joined the main path of the Slave Trail. The migration swelled to a widening stream. Armfield and his gang of 300 had marched for a month and covered more than 600 miles. When they reached Nashville, they would be halfway. When Armfield turned up with his gang, he handed the group to Isaac Franklin's nephew James Franklin.

As autumn began in 1834, the caravan that John Armfield handed over left Tennessee, bound for Natchez. Records of that part of the journey do not survive, nor do records about the individual slaves in the coffle. Like other Franklin gangs, the 300 probably got on flatboats in the Cumberland River and floated three days down to the

Ohio River, and then drifted down another day to reach the Mississippi. A flatboat could float down the Mississippi to Natchez in two weeks.

Franklin & Armfield's jail and slave market in Natchez was on the edge of town at a place called Forks of the Road. There, half of the big gang was probably sold with the other half herded onto steamboats and taken 260 miles south to New Orleans, where Isaac Franklin or one of his agents sold them, one or three or five at a time. And then they were gone—out to plantations in northern Louisiana, or central Mississippi, or southern Alabama.

Although the Armfield gang vanishes from the record, it is possible to follow in detail another coffle of people on the journey from Tennessee to New Orleans, thanks to William Waller's letters.

In Knoxville, Waller readied his gang of 20 or more for the second half of their journey. He expected another month on the road. It would turn out to be four. On Tuesday, October 19, the troop headed southwest, Waller leading from his horse and his friend James Taliaferro bringing up the rear, both men armed. No steamboats for this group. Waller was pinching pennies. In Virginia, the coffles marched from town to town. But here, they were marching through wilderness. Waller's letters are imprecise on his route, but by then there were a few roads from Tennessee into Mississippi. But during the 50 years coffles were sent on the Slave Trail, the road most taken was the Natchez Trace.

The trace was a 450-mile road, originally a native trail, through the forest; and the only overland route from the plateau west of the Appalachian Range leading to the Gulf of Mexico. The modern Natchez Trace Parkway now follows the old route, but remnants of the original Trace remain out in the woods, some just a few yards from the modern road, mostly untouched. In place of towns were "stands" every 10 or 15 miles. These were stores and taverns with places to sleep in the back. Gangs of slaves were welcome if they slept in the field, far from business.

Waller reached Mississippi by that November. "This is one of the richest portions of the state and perhaps one of the most healthy," he wrote home. "It is a fine country for the slave to live in and for the master to make money in." And by the way, "The negroes are not only well, but appear happy and pleased with the country and prospect before them." At the village of Benton a week before Christmas 1847, Waller huddled with his gang in a ferocious storm.

On the Slave Trail people like Waller marched a coffle and sold one or two people along the way to pay the travel bills. Sarah and Indian, the mother and daughter, wanted to be sold together. The three sisters, Sarah Ann, Louisa and Lucy, also wanted to be sold together, which was not likely to happen, and they knew it.

But as Waller drifted through Mississippi, he couldn't sell anyone. "The great fall in cotton has so alarmed the

people that there is not the slightest prospect of our selling our negroes at almost any price," he wrote home. When cotton retailed high in New York, slaveholders in Mississippi bought people. When cotton went low, they did not. In winter 1848, cotton was down. "Not a single offer," Waller wrote.

His trip on the Slave Trail, like most others', would end in Natchez and New Orleans. Buyers by the hundreds crammed the viewing rooms of dealers in Natchez and the auction halls of brokers in New Orleans.

There was one place en route, however, with a small slave market—Aberdeen, Mississippi. Waller decided to try to sell one or two people there. At Tupelo, he made a daylong detour to Aberdeen but soon despaired over his prospects there: The market was crowded "with nearly 200 negroes held by those who have relations & friends, who of course aid them in selling."

Waller then dragged his gang northwest, four days and 80 miles, to Oxford, but found no buyers. "What to do or where to go I know not—I am surrounded by difficulty," he brooded. "My plan is, take my negroes to Raymond about 150 miles from here and put them with Mr. Dabney and look out for purchasers," Waller wrote his wife. Thomas Dabney was an acquaintance from Virginia who had moved to Raymond, on the Natchez Trace, 12 years earlier and doubled his already thick riches as a cotton planter.

Today as then, Raymond, Mississippi, is a crossroads, population 2,000. Near a school playground in the middle of Raymond lies the Dabney family graveyard, surrounded by an iron fence. His plantation is gone, but this is where he arranged for a married couple, neighbors, to see Waller's Virginia gang. "They came to look at my negroes & wanted to buy seven or eight, but they objected to the price," Waller said. Dabney told him that "I must not take less than my price—they were worth it."

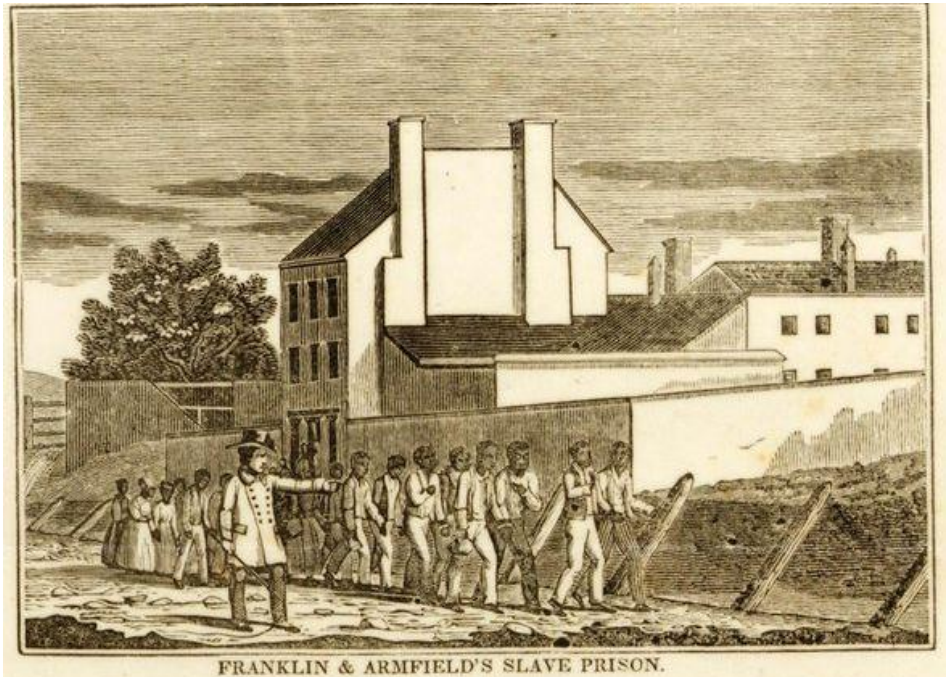
He later wrote home, "I have sold! Sarah & child \$800...Henry \$800. Sarah Ann \$675, Louisa \$650. Lucy \$550....Col. Dabney has taken Henry and is security for the balance—the three sisters to one man." He was relieved. "All to as kind masters as can be found." Sarah Waller wrote in return, "I was much pleased to learn by your letter that you had sold at such fine prices." Then she added, "I wish you could have sold more of them." The remainder of the gang pushed on to Natchez.

Natchez, pearl of the state, stands on a bluff above the Mississippi. Beautiful houses, an antique village, a large tourist trade. But the tourist money is fairly recent. "There is no branch of trade, in this part of the country, more brisk and profitable than that of buying and selling negroes," a traveler named Estwick Evans wrote about Natchez in the early 19th century.

Just outside town, the Trace comes to an end at a shabby intersection. This is Forks of the Road, the Y-shaped junction formed by St. Catherine Street and Old

Courthouse Road, where Isaac Franklin presided. His slave pen appears on old maps, labeled "negro mart."

In Raymond, thanks to Thomas Dabney, Waller had gotten in touch with a slave seller named James Ware, a 42-year-old with Virginia roots. Waller knew his family. "By the polite invitation of Mr. Ware," as he put it, "I passed over a hundred miles with no white persons visible and got here to Natchez in four days." He trotted into town in early 1848, the dwindling gang behind him. At the Forks, Waller found a group of low wooden buildings, long and



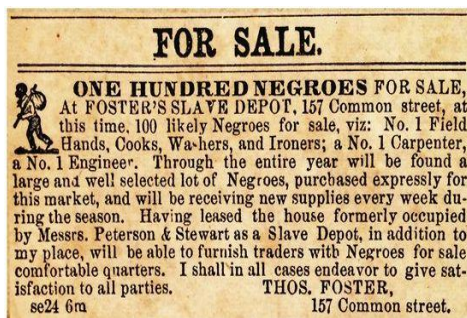
narrow, each housing a dealer, each with a porch and a dirt yard in front. Slaves for sale wore a uniform of sorts. "The men dressed in navy blue suits with shiny brass buttons...as they marched singly and by twos and threes in a circle," wrote Felix Hadsell, a local man. "The women wore calico dresses and white aprons" and a pink ribbon at the neck with hair carefully braided. The display was weirdly silent. "No commands given by anyone, no noise about it, no talking in the ranks, no laughter or merriment," just marching, round and round.

After an hour of this, the showing of the "lively" stock, the enslaved stood in rows on long overhanging porches. They were sorted by sex and size and made to stand in sequence. Men on one side, in order of height and weight, women on the other. A typical display placed an 8-year-old girl on the left end of a line, and then ten people like stair steps up to the right end, ending with a 30-year-old woman, who might be the first girl's mother. This sorting arrangement meant that it was more likely children would be sold from their parents.

Buyers looked at the people, took them inside, made them undress, studied their teeth, told them to dance, asked them about their work, and, most important, looked at their backs. The inspection of the back made or broke the deal. Many people had scars from whipping. For buyers, these were interpreted not as signs of a master's cruelty, but of a worker's defiance. A "clean back" was a rarity, and it raised the price.

William Waller left for New Orleans during the second week of January 1848, taking an 18-hour steamboat ride. James Ware, Waller's broker, was having no luck selling the truncated coffle in Mississippi. Among them were the field hand Nelson, plus his wife; a man called Piney Woods Dick and another nicknamed Runaway Boots. There was also Mitchell, a boy of 10 or 11, and Foster, 20-ish and strong, his "prize hand." In Louisiana the top prices could be had for a "buck," a muscled man bound for the hell of the sugar fields.

Waller had never been to such a big city. "You cannot imagine it," he wrote home. As the steamboat churned to dock, it passed ships berthed five or six deep, "miles of them, from all nations of the earth, bringing in their products and carrying away ours." The arrival, gangplank on the levee, cargo everywhere. "You then have to squeeze through a countless multitude of men, women, and children of all ages, tongues, and colors of the earth until you get into the city proper."



During the 50 years of the Slave Trail, perhaps half a million people born in the United States were sold in New Orleans, more than all the Africans brought to the country during two

centuries of the Middle Passage across the Atlantic. New Orleans, the biggest slave market in the country, had about 50 people-selling companies in the 1840s. Some whites went to the slave auctions for entertainment. Especially for travelers, the markets were a rival to the French Opera House and the Théâtre d'Orléans.

The auction advertisements at the end of the Slave Trail always said, *Virginia and Maryland Negroes*. "The words *Virginia Negroes* signaled a kind of brand. It meant compliant, gentle and not broken by overwork.

William Waller's depression lifted after he left New Orleans and returned to Mississippi. "I have sold out all my negroes to one man for eight thousand dollars!" he told his wife. "I have not obtained as much as I expected, but I try and be satisfied." James Ware, the slave dealer Waller had met in Natchez, had come through on the sales, and he offered Waller an itemized statement. "The whole amount of sales for the twenty"—the entire group that had come with him from Virginia—"is \$12,675." (About \$400,000 now.) The journey ended, the business done, Waller headed home. It was March 13, 1848.

"I am now waiting for a safe boat to set out for you," he wrote. "Perhaps in an hour I may be on the river."

On April 1, Waller reached home. His wife and children greeted him. Also, an elderly black woman named Charity, whom he and Sarah had kept at home, knowing that no one would offer money for her.

The slave cabins were vacant.

Extracted and adapted from an article in *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 2015 by Edward Ball.

## Left Behind in a Country Church

As Charlie Barnes pulled into the churchyard on that sticky-hot night his mind was on his few acres of cotton and corn as well as the garden needed to feed his large family.

"Charlie, how's it going over at your place?" asked Jeff Franklin. "I don't see Mrs. Barnes with you tonight." "Well Jeff, she stayed home with a sick youngun." Charlie and Jeff continued to exchange weather and crop woes as Charlie called his children to join him in the church.

The stuffiness of the church caused Ray to nod in his seat. His older brother, Calvin, eased him under the bench.

Hours after the service was over, Ray woke with a start, not sure where he was until he looked up at the moon-lit windows. Energized with fear, he raced to the front door. He pulled and pushed on it but the door would not budge. Next he dashed to the rear of the church and tried the back doors. They were chained shut from the outside too. He ran to the windows on the east side of the church and looked out into the graveyard lit by a bright, three-quarter moon. His heart hammered with fear. Even though the drop through the window on that side of the church would be a shorter fall Ray couldn't talk himself into climbing out next to all those headstones. He dashed across to the other side and forced a window open.

"Now I got to get by that old cemetery to get home." Ray talked out loud to himself to bolster his courage. Then he remembered that Mrs. Pope, his brother's mother in law, lived just down the long clay hill from the church and right up against Boggy Holler Swamp.

Once past the headstones, gleaming white in the moonlight, Ray moved to the middle of the road as far from the wooded sides as possible. A loud "Hoot, Hoot" sounded from the surrounding woods and just at that moment a scrambling noise from the edge of the woods was followed by a half grown 'possum which crossed the road ahead of Ray.

He flew as fast as his feet could carry him the rest of the way down the hill to Mrs. Pope's house. Dashing up the steps to the small farmhouse, Ray beat on the door almost as hard and fast as his heart was beating within his chest. "Let me in," he called frantically.

"Who's there?" Mrs. Pope called from her side of the door. "It's me," responded Ray.

"Me who?"

"It's me, Ray."

Mrs. Pope spread a pallet of blankets on the floor for him. "You certainly were a brave boy this evening, Ray Barnes. I don't know may six-year-olds who could find a way out of Red Oak church and come all the way to my house."

Decades later, from his farm less than ten miles from Red Oak Church, Ray shared with his grandchildren the story of being left behind in the old church.

The Heritage of Okaloosa County, Florida, Vol. I, by Rudella Shaw Goodson.



## The Evergreen Cemetery, Gainesville, Florida

### Offers a Unique Cell Phone Tour

In February of 1856, the ground now known as Evergreen Cemetery received its first burial from the newly named community of Gainesville, Florida. The infant daughter of a well-to-do cotton merchant and landowner James Tilatha Thomas and his first wife, Elizabeth Jane Hall Thomas, died at the age of 10 days. They laid her to rest in a place of serene natural beauty beneath a young cedar tree, roughly in the center of vast acreage owned by Thomas that extended from Boulware Springs north to present day Depot Avenue. Eight months later, in October 1856, Elizabeth died at the age of 40 years and Thomas buried her in the same grave as their infant daughter. Thus, the grave is a double grave, and is marked by a rare and elegantly simple headstone carved by W.A. White, a well-known stone mason from Charleston.

In 1866, Thomas sold the entire parcel of 720 acres for \$6000, reserving roughly one acre around the double grave for a graveyard that remained in his name until his death in 1877, when it passed to his heirs. At some time prior to 1888, the original Evergreen Cemetery Association was formed and acquired four acres already in use for burials, which immediately adjoined the original Thomas acre, plus an additional 30 unused adjoining acres. In 1890, the heirs of James T. Thomas sold the original one acre that had been reserved as a graveyard by the late Mr. Thomas to the Evergreen Cemetery Association for the sum of \$1.

From that time forward to 1944, the Evergreen Cemetery Association and Cemetery were privately operated by a group of members of old Gainesville families who lovingly cared for it until they were unable to do so. On May 11, 1944, the Association sold the Cemetery to the City of Gainesville for \$1.00, and the City has managed it since.

In the early 1990s, financial considerations caused the City Commission to consider the sale of Evergreen Cemetery to private interests. Following a public hearing on the matter in January 1994 and a vocal dissent by members of the community, the Commission decided that the City would maintain ownership of the Cemetery, and appointed an Advisory Committee to provide guidance in a number of areas, including historical, cultural, financial and operational matters.

As part of this process, the Advisory Committee prepared and the City Commission approved the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws for the re-established Evergreen Cemetery Association of Gainesville, Inc. which is now a non-profit organization, with all donations tax deductible.

**A**n unusual initiative by the Cemetery Association has been the creation of a cell phone tour of the cemetery. Anyone can dial 352-327-9004 on their cell phone from anywhere and, when prompted, enter the number of the stop on the tour followed by the # sign. For example, entering 212# will result in an audio recording describing the gravesite of James Tilatha Thomas, the founder of the cemetery. The stop numbers begin at 201 and go through 238. This feature works best, of course, if the person calling that number is actually walking the prescribed tour path in the cemetery.

The same audio recordings can be heard by going to the audio tour page of the cemetery website at <http://www.thiswondrousplace.org/audio-tours/>

The cemetery website also provides a listing of the 37 stops which identifies the purpose of each stop.

---

# Events, Groups, and Sites of GSOC Interest

---

## It's That Time Again...

to renew your GSOC membership

This year we are asking everyone to complete a membership form again so that we can make sure all our contact information for you is correct and to also give you a chance to list the surnames you are researching, and, importantly, where those surnames were living.

We will be publishing the surname/location listing in a future edition of the GSOC Newsletter. Your name won't be given, but anyone with information about or an interest in a specific surname can contact the GSOC and we'll provide the GSOC member researching that surname with the contact information so that they can get in touch with the person who asked about that name.

A copy of the membership form was emailed to you recently. If you have misplaced it, or didn't get it, you can go to our website and download it from the home page.

The form is located at:

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~flocgs/Membership Form.pdf>

**Please either mail the completed form along with your check to the GSOC post office box address given at the right or bring them to the next GSOC meeting with you.**

## **Yule of Yesteryear A Traditional Holiday Festival**

**And Special Okaloosa Centennial Christmas Celebration  
Saturday, December 12, 10 a.m.- 5 p.m.**

*Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida  
115 Westview Avenue, Valparaiso*

The Spirit of Christmas will fill the air with musical performances from local choirs, musicians, dancers, Pittman's Magic Show and a Christmas tree lighting including hand bells and a sing-a-long from the First Baptist Church of Niceville starting at 4 p.m.

Enjoy free Museum admission and play in the "Discovery Room" for kids, stroll in "Paradise Gardens", and view special Okaloosa Centennial exhibits. There will be a holiday bake sale, ornament making for children and free picture taking with Santa Claus inside the Museum.

With fabulous Food Vendors to keep you going, you can shop from our areas talented Art & Craft Vendors for one-of-a-kind gifts and find affordable stocking stuffers in the Museum's awesome Gift Shop.

## **GSOC INFORMATION**

### **Officers for 2016**

President, Sue Basch  
1st Vice President (Programs), Charlene Grafton  
2nd Vice President (Membership), Jon Sheperd  
Treasurer, Phil Hoge  
Recording Secretary, Kathy Sheperd  
Corresponding Secretary, Val Moreland  
Immediate Past President, James Young  
Journal Editor, TBD; Historian, TBD  
Genealogist, Margaret Harris  
Publicity Chairperson, Val Moreland  
Webmaster & Newsletter Editor, Jim Young

### **Addresses**

P.O. Box 1175, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549-1175  
Email: [gsocokaloosa@yahoo.com](mailto:gsocokaloosa@yahoo.com)  
Newsletter Editor: [youngjmy@cox.net](mailto:youngjmy@cox.net)

### **Meetings and Membership**

Regular meetings of the GSOC are held at the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, 115 Westview Avenue, Valparaiso, FL, at 10 AM on the second Saturday of each month. There is no admission charge and all are welcome. The meetings are usually followed by an optional Dutch treat lunch at a nearby restaurant.

Annual membership dues are \$24 for an individual and \$35 for an individual and spouse at the same address. If you would like to become a member, want to renew your membership, or want to update your membership record, please go to the GSOC web site and download the membership form.

### **The Newsletter**

The GSOC Newsletter is usually published on or before the first Friday of each month. Suggestions for articles are welcome. The editor, Jim Young, can be contacted by phone at 850 862-8642 or by email at [youngjmy@cox.net](mailto:youngjmy@cox.net). Letters to the editor are welcome and may be published.

### **The Journal**

The GSOC Journal, *A Journal of Northwest Florida*, is published once each year. The 2015 issue, was published and distributed in October 2015.

### **The Web Site**

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~flocgs>

The site is updated frequently and contains information about future GSOC meetings, minutes of past meetings, copies of the newsletters, articles and items of genealogical and historical interest, and much more.



The December GSOC meeting will be our annual Christmas Luncheon on Saturday, December 12, 2015, at The Boathouse Landing Restaurant, 124 South John Sims Parkway, Valparaiso, FL.

Members are requested to arrive between 11:00 and 11:15; for a period of gathering and socializing. The installation of 2016 officers will begin at 11:30 and the Boathouse staff will begin serving salads about 11:45 with the entrees coming along around 12:00.

*"Whatever you know, whatever you learn – Pass it On!"*

**Genealogical Society of  
Okaloosa County (GSOC)**  
P.O. Box 1175  
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549-1175

