



# Washington County Historical Society

P.O. Box 6088, Sandersville, Georgia 31082

Brown House Museum  
Washington County Genealogical Research Center & Old Jail Museum

**Volume 24, Issue 1      Winter 2021**

## Upcoming

- The January Membership Meeting Program will be presented via Facebook and YouTube at a time to be announced.
- Next Membership Meeting: April 26th, 2021
- The Museums are open with COVID-19 precautions in place!
- 2021 Membership Renewal

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## President's Message

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year. I hope this message finds you and yours happy, healthy, and ready to take on 2021. As I reflect on this past year, I am proud of the ways in which the Washington County Historical Society faced the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the outbreak did necessitate the closing of both the Brown House Museum and the Genealogy Research Center for a period of time, we used that time to focus on upgrades to our technology to make our operations more organized and streamlined for our employees, volunteers, and patrons. Our website is currently receiving an upgrade with updated content and an easier online shopping experience for the publications we offer. We also have been working on ideas and plans for new marketing materials, gift shop items, and exhibits in order to offer even more to the public.

As health conditions have allowed, we have managed to open our doors to researchers and museum guests. Our employees and volunteers have done a wonderful job in adapting and ensuring a safe yet valuable visit for our patrons. We also participated in the Washington County Chamber Society's Halloween Around Town event and hosted visits from Santa in conjunction with Citizens Bank of the South providing many children the opportunity to have holiday fun in safer way.

As we look forward to this new year, there is no way to predict what new challenges our society will face, but I am completely confident that whatever these may be, we will face them head on, persevere, and come out stronger on the other side.

Blessings to you and your family and best wishes for 2021.

David Brooker

President of the Washington County Historical Society

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### Next Society Membership Meeting Program

**Time and date will be announced.**

**A virtual presentation by**

**Jackie Bell**

**On**

**History of Georgia Plates**

**Go to:**

**[facebook.com/Washington-County-Historical-Society-Georgia-143375919056002](https://facebook.com/Washington-County-Historical-Society-Georgia-143375919056002)**

**Facebook page to view the Facebook Premier video at 7:00 p.m.**

**Once completed, the video is viewable from the beginning at any time.**

**You do not need a Facebook account!**

## History of the Georgia Historical Plates Virtual Presentation Time to be Announced

The society is very pleased to have Mrs. Jackie Bell speak to us about the history of the Georgia plates. Miss Jackie was the chair of the Transylvania Club's Georgia Plates Committee during the heydays when she presented Georgia plates to Princess Anne and to Rosalynn Carter.

Born in Atlanta, then raised in Pooler, Georgia, Miss Jackie graduated from Savannah High School in 1947. She then graduated from Georgia State College for Women with a major in music in 1951 and was hired by Tennille Public School. The first registered public-school music teacher in the county, she taught all grades from first through twelfth and covered all facets of music.

Destiny brought Clifford Bell into her life and they were married in 1952. Miss Jackie remembers saying to Clifford, "Some ladies invited me to join a club, the Transylvania Club. Do you think I should accept?" He answered, "Yes, you will probably enjoy it, especially when you get older." "Look at me now," She exclaims! "getting ready to talk to you at my age!" Clifford certainly got that right!

Miss Jackie was the chair of Transylvania Club's Georgia Plates Committee from 1972 through 1986 including the year the plates were designated Georgia's official plate by Governor Jimmy Carter. She is perfectly qualified to tell us about the history of the famed Georgia plates. A passage from Cotton to Kaolin states, as the first batch of plates left England in 1935, no other Wedgewood product "surpassed the Georgia plates either in design or execution." Proceeds from plate sales have helped provide Washington County with a public library for more than 112 years.

The premier of the History of the Georgia Plates by Mrs. Jackie Bell will occur at a time to be announced. You can log on to Facebook at Washington County Historical Society (Georgia) and watch it for this first release, and it can be viewed anytime afterward. Alternatively, you can log onto the website, [wacohistorical.org](http://wacohistorical.org), and watch the talk. Enjoy one of Washington County's beloved longtime residents enlighten us about our own renowned local history. Please visit: [gaplates.com](http://gaplates.com)



Courtesy Lyle Lansdell, the Georgia Historical Plates Facebook page, and Trey Veal

### **African American Committee** - Eddie Mae Gilmore

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have all been unable to travel for our research. This limitation has not stopped us, though. Mr. Adam Adolphus' book and several books left by Mr. Lonnie Davis, lists of Washington County Civil War colored troops that we have been researching. A book on the Goldsboro, North Carolina 135th United States Colored Troop contains even more Washington County soldiers to find. Between all these sources, we have a good number of soldiers to research in our own files and information. We may not find information on every soldier listed, but we look forward to learning about the several for whom we do have files and other mentions.



Anne Brooker, Shaun Veal, Layne Kitchens, and a special guest greet Brown House visitors on a very chilly Halloween. The Chamber of Commerce sponsored a COVID safe trick-or-treat event for the county.

### **Genealogy Research Center and Old Jail Museum** - Loretta Cato

We hope everyone has had a wonderful holiday season despite all the differences in how we were able to celebrate this year. I was unable to spend Christmas with all of my family and friends because of governmental restrictions for the first time this year since World War II. Back then, gas and tires were rationed (along with many other things like sugar, shoes, rubber, and metal), so no one was able to travel far enough to spend the holidays away from their homes and with their loved ones. Hopefully this second time will also be the last Christmas I have to spend without family and friends.

Despite the museum being closed for much of this year, our volunteers have continued to show up and contribute, so the work here at the GRC has not slowed! We have reorganized, moved furniture, gotten new computers and printers that required more organization, and continued our research too. Kay Chandler, Stella Sue Jackson, Marilyn Daniel, and I in particular spent many days at the museum working to make sure everything was in order and where it needed to be.

Our work paid off, too. The new placement of our files is a big improvement on where they were: everything is now in one research room for ease of access, and the office and library are significantly less cluttered.

However, despite our continuous work to keep everything here running smoothly, our queries are beginning to get backed up. We have had many people sending in new ones that we have not quite managed to answer yet, and several more that should be finished soon but for now are still in the stack. The interest in genealogy that must have caused such amounts of queries is exciting!

One specific query that Mr. Leon Perry has been working on completing requires the location of the private Logan family cemetery. Any help that anyone can offer on the location of this cemetery would be greatly appreciated.

Queries are not the only things we have had more of recently. We had another donation from Mrs. Bateman's collection, mostly containing Alabama material. We are working on adding the books in this most recent donation to our ever-growing library, and as always are grateful for every contribution she made and continues to make even now to our research and research ability.



# *The Brown House Museum*



*It was a very Merry Christmas indeed at The Brown House Museum! Our beautiful facility was decked out in her holiday finest and welcomed more than 100 families. Volunteers spent days decorating each inch of the front of the house, the downstairs, and the back-porch area. Trees, nutcrackers, garland, bows, wreaths, twinkle lights, flowers, and candles made the museum absolutely stunning for our Christmas Open House.*



*Twice during December Santa made a quick stop in Sandersville and parked his sleigh right on the front porch. He was thrilled to spend the afternoon listening to the Christmas wishes of the county's children while Citizens Bank of the South provided treats and photographs for visitors.*

*It was such a pleasure to welcome so many guests during the Christmas Open House and Santa Stops that we hope to make these annual events.*



## SPIRITS, WAR, TAXES AND ORDINANCES

By: Mary Murphy

Spirits, war, taxes and ordinances. Or simply, whiskey, fighting, money and laws. Spirits and war have existed basically from the beginning of time or the two are as “old as dirt.” Taxes and ordinances were “spin offs” from the latter two, evolving over tumultuous years of time.

Whiskey has flowed like a river in the United States since its introduction by the early settlers in Jamestown and Plymouth. Large supplies of ale, spirits and wines were brought in; the settlers producing their own when supplies dwindled. In the early 1620's they brewed beer using whatever supplies were at hand, using the excuse they needed the whiskey until they had gotten use to the drinking water. Probably any excuse given would have been acceptable.

Distillery of alcoholic beverages continued over the centuries. “Spirited beverages” were the choice of drinks. It was simply accepted as a way of life. Therefore, soldiers from both sides were already well acquainted with whiskey years before the Civil War; the southerners mostly occurring during the antebellum era. Even in the small town of Tennille in 1856 barrooms occupied the entire south side of the square. The town charter allowed only two. Whiskey was by most part the most popular drink in 1861. That is, by the male population. The opposition to the drinking of whiskey and other fermented beverages by the ladies is another story in itself. An interpretation of a well known statement which would describe the over-all situation is that “one does not want to face the wrath of a woman's scorn.”

Excessive alcohol consumption during the Civil War was widely known as a constant problem in both armies. “General Robert E. Lee remarked once that it was not possible to have an army without music. He might just as well say that it was not possible to have an army without whiskey.”

Union Major General George B. McClellan in February of 1862 stated “no one evil agents so much obstruct this army as the degrading vice of drunkenness. It is the cause by far the greatest part of the disorders which are examined by court-martial. The complete abolition of alcohol would be worth fifty-thousand men to the armies of the United States.”

Whether being used as an aid for relaxation, medication to treat wounds, disease or to prevent desertion, whiskey and other alcoholic beverages were rooted in the armies of the 1860's. The various ways alcohol “funneled” its way to soldiers and sailors, and the method used to control its influence, are with the story of battles, regiments and ships of war. One of many humorous incidents involved with the soldier's fondness of the brew was recorded by Union General Benjamin Butler.

“General Butler was baffled by soldiers returning drunk from an outpost. Every night soldiers went to guard an outpost 1 ½ miles from Fort Monroe, Virginia. The soldiers departed for their shift perfectly sober, yet when they returned to the post the next morning, they caused trouble “on account of being drunk.” Searches of canteens and gear failed to reveal the source of their whiskey. But there was one odd thing about the detachment: someone in Butler's command noticed that the men always held their muskets straight up in a peculiar manner, the mystery unraveled when their muskets were examined “every gun barrel,” wrote Butler, “was found to be filled with whiskey.”

There were countless ways to sneak whiskey into the camps. Even when the flow was restricted, soldiers were still permitted to drink when they received a pass to leave camp. In the Confederate Army, the phrase “running the blockade” meant the sneaking out of camp for “illicit” purposes, usually involving alcohol. One point must be made, the illicit use of spirits was affecting the general population as a whole. Both military and civilian.

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## Spirits, War, Taxes and Ordinances

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A good amount of whiskey was sent to army camps on both sides, especially among the Union soldiers. It was common practice for families to send care packages to the soldiers, many of these packages holding a great deal of whiskey in various hidden ways. The whiskey would be smuggled into camp in legitimate-looking containers with false labels, in baked goods such as bread and cakes. Some soldiers stole bottles from sutler huts, wagons or tents.

Soon it was necessary for parcels intended for a soldier, to be opened and searched before its delivery to him. Union Private John D. Billings, wrote in his memoirs *Hardtack and Coffee*, "there were as many a growl uttered by men who lost their little pint or quart bottle of some choice stimulating beverage, which has been confiscated from a box as contraband of war." Billings wrote about the ingenious ways that innocent looking gifts concealed the "precious drink." "One favorite ruse was hiding a bottle of whiskey inside a well-roasted turkey."

Civilian distilleries were found all over the southern states, including Georgia and as well in Washington County. Our county had government stills scattered over her vast agricultural area to specifically provide alcohol for soldiers in the Civil War for medicinal purposes. Civilians were permitted to make whiskey and other fermented alcoholic beverages for use as well as to sell. Some even used their cultivated crops such as corn and grains (prohibited by war time law at the time) to distill and sell the alcoholic beverage. Whiskey was in such demand farmers turned to using sweet potatoes, rice, sorghum seeds and persimmons when no corn or grain was available.

During the war the south dealt with a shortage of food, rising inflation and transportation problems, naming a few. But the soldiers and civilians dealt with the drastic shortage of alcohol. Alcohol was in short supply because of the laws imposed prohibiting the use of corn, grain and foodstuffs for distilled liquor. Private distilling took a blow after the Federal capture of Chattanooga in September 1863 and with the advancing Union forces capturing copper mines that were desperately needed in the south. Many stills were taken apart so they could be used to manufacture necessary artillery parts.

The Confederate Congress passed a law allowing President Jefferson Davis to suspend habeas corpus and declare martial law in Portsmouth, Norfolk and Richmond, Virginia. When this occurred, Richmond came under the control of provost guards commanded by Brig. General John H. Winder, who prohibited the manufacture of liquor and the closing of all saloons. By this time the use of liquor among the troops had caused so much trouble and crime between the Confederate soldiers and the civilians that many in Richmond welcomed the martial law. The repercussion of the martial law was the driving of alcohol availability of underground.

There had been economic issues in the years leading up to the war and the Federal government was already in need of funding. "After its first attempt to fund the war, economic conditions grew worse in the North." The Revenue Act of 1861 was the first direct income tax imposed on American citizens. This act taxed imports, provided for land tax and it imposed a 3% on individual property. This was handled poorly and the results were most ineffective to help fund both sides. After a number of "indecisive battles" through 1861 and the first half of 1862, it was clear that the war would last longer and would cost more than had been imagined -----"than President Lincoln had originally hoped."

The Revenue Act of 1862 soon followed. It was a U.S. federal law to fund the war against the Confederate States. It served as an expansion of the previous 1861 act. It resulted in a dramatic expansion of goods and services that were subject to federal excise tax. Taxes were levied on everything from "jugglers to medicines" and

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## Spirits, War, Taxes and Ordinances

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a wide range of goods and services in between, including manufactured goods; raw materials such as iron, feathers, leather and licenses for all kinds of professions. It is noted after the war, excise taxes were cut back to apply primarily to alcohol and tobacco sales. The revised 1862 act is known for introducing the first progressive income tax in the US. and for establishing a separate Federal tax bureaucracy that would eventually become the modern Internal Revenue Service (IRS.)

The ending of the Civil War did not end the flow of alcohol. The population was divided; those who partook and avoided overuse and those who partook and overused. A year after the war Sandersville passed increased laws to provide order in the town. The Central Georgia October 17, 1866 issue reported disorderly conduct was a severe problem, firearms were being discharged on the streets, and numerous disorderly conduct behavior was rampant in the town. The use of alcohol was the “demon.”

Post war reconstruction was in the early stages and with it came civilian unrest and fear of the safety of the citizens in Sandersville. Thus, ordinances “made it unlawful to discharge firearms in the public square and streets; fasten a horse, mule, or oxen to shade trees or fences on the public square.; to obstruct public walkways; to allow a privy to be exposed for public gaze. It was unlawful to use fire crackers, rockets or balls of any kind except on Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. License fees were also set for the sale of spirits liquors. “New businesses were flourishing and in the summer of 1867 a refreshment saloon offering “lemonade with something in it” had its grand opening. Much to the chagrin of many citizens in the following years there were three bars and billiard rooms in downtown Sandersville.

Liquor license and fees helped to build the economy in the county. In 1874 Mayor B.D. Evans, cited “considerable revenue the city received from licenses to sell liquor but “it is to be deplored that so many should exist in such a small town.” At this time there were five saloons in Sandersville. Some considered Sandersville as being handicapped by the curse of open bars. Drunken men lay in the streets, brawls were of daily occurrence, pistol duels (just like the old west) occurred and women or girls were not to be seen on the streets on Saturday or court days unless protected by a man. Women never went out at night without an escort. Even with imposed taxes and ordinances in place to prevent civil unrest, it continued to prevail.

Temperance Groups and Unions were formed over the years to combat the sale and consumption of alcohol. Many comprised of women but with strong support from men who also opposed liquor in the county. It was hoped this social movement would help deter the sale and consumption of alcohol. This seemed to go on for years and years, with no absolute ending in site.

What was the solution to the mounding alcohol problems? A notice appeared in the September 18, 1885 Mercury notifying citizens of an upcoming election. After 1/10<sup>th</sup>. of registered voters had signed a petition “For the Sale or Against the Sale” of liquor, there would be an election, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1886 to decide the solution to this most heated debate!

What was the result of this election? How much did the temperance groups and unions aid in abetting the alcohol problems? How would the economy survive if the income from taxes made on the sale of alcohol totally ended? There was no war to be involved or considered with these existing problems. Would there be more ordinances or laws made to control the sale and use of alcohol?

When the pages are turned in the next newsletter article on spirits, war, taxes and ordinances, will the winds of change and the sands of time bring about amity, appeasement between parties, or disaffection? The culmination of these four leads us to an interesting resolution.



## Membership Report - Alisa Norris Scott

Happy New Year! Please remember that your 2021 annual membership is due in January regardless of when you paid your membership in 2020. To pay dues for 2021, please send in your payment via: [wacohistorical.org/membership/](http://wacohistorical.org/membership/)

Your membership dues and donations assist the Washington County Historical Society in accomplishing our mission. Our mission is to promote a program for the appreciation of history and the natural and social sciences; to preserve the history of Washington County, and to create and maintain permanent museums and allied projects; and to encourage the recording, preservation, presentation, and tourism of the history of Washington County and its people.

We appreciate every one that made a donation in 2020.

### Membership Listings

#### Life Members:

##### Listed only in January letter:

Alston, Marvin & Joanna W.  
 Andrews, Gerald & Carol  
 Andrews, James & Sara W.  
 Armstrong, Horace & Martha  
 Bateman, Anne  
 Bateman, Frances  
 Bell, Jackie  
 Bibb, Ken & Deana  
 Bishop, Lori H  
 Branan, Randy & Joyce  
 Brantley, Jimmy Lynn & Sandra  
 Brazzell, Capers & Deborah  
 Brown, Hal  
 Brown, Joe & Jeanne  
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 Cato, Loretta  
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 Crisp, Dale & Leslie  
 Crouch, Danee Miller  
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 Davie, James & Diane  
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 Etheridge, Sara Owen  
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 Franklin III, Samuel O.  
 Garner, Clarence & JoAnn W.  
 Giles, Larry & Beth  
 Ginn, Faye  
 Hall, W. L. & Marilyn  
 Harris, Thomas L.  
 Hill, Louise H  
 Hodges, Allen M. & Anne Knox  
 Hodges, William C. & Trina  
 Hollingsworth, Ray & Brenda  
 Hutchins, Dan  
 Irwin, Chris & Ray  
 Jordan, Cheryl  
 Jordan, Ed & Dianne  
 Jordan, Mary Alice  
 Jordan III, T. Bryant  
 Kay, Ben

Kimsey, Saralyn  
 Kitchens, Wentzelle & Layne  
 Lewis, Edna  
 Lewis, Susan  
 Longcrier, Steven W.  
 Lord, Rachel  
 Lyons, Patricia  
 Mathis, Dianne  
 May, E. K. & Debby  
 McCaskill, Grace  
 Morris, Jean Clair P.  
 Moye, Frank & Brenda  
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 Newsom, Strick & Barbara  
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 Smith-Bryan, Paula Y  
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 Tarbutton, Nancy  
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[wacohistorical.org](http://wacohistorical.org)  
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**THE JANUARY 2021 MEMBERSHIP MEETING PROGRAM  
WILL BE VIRTUAL VIA FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE**

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*2021 Membership*  
To pay 2021 membership  
dues, please visit:

[wacohistorical.org/membership/](http://wacohistorical.org/membership/)



Membership for 2021 is  
January to December.

## Georgia Plates

Start or complete  
your collection.

Dinner Plates - \$49.95  
Salad Plates - \$46.44

Plate sales benefit the  
Brown House Museum.

