Baldwin County History Files

Montpelier

Settlement in North Baldwin County often referred to Blacksher although about 5 miles east, existing here by 1856 as it appears on John La Tourette's *Map of the State of Alabama and West Florida.*

Montpelier Methodist church is the principal building established 1853-4, also the home in which Mrs. Frank Earle lived still stands constructed in 1884. After the battle of For Mims in 1813, two more forts were built, Fort Montgomery and Fort Montpelier. A huge home with white columns was built at Montpelier, according to resident Tom Bradley, but burned in the early 1880s.

Before his presidency, Andrew Jackson and his wife, Rachel stayed at Montpelier for five weeks in 1821 and it was there he resigned in1821 as governor of Florida. His troops were stationed at Montpelier.

Miscellanea that may include periodical and newspaper abstracts, clippings, biographical sketches, reminiscences, personal profiles, local history, family histories, facsimile of documents, etc. pertaining to Baldwin County, Alabama.

2017
Alabama, Local History & Genealogy Collections
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UNITED STATES : OVERVIEW

The United States can claim a full national spread of Montpel(l)iers, with examples in over 20 states from the eastern seaboard across to California, and south to the US Virgin Islands. Earliest occurrences are in Maryland and Virginia; most famous is Montpelier, state capital of Vermont, from which several more recent settlements in western states take their name.

UNITED STATES : ALABAMA

Montpelier

Historical locale in north Baldwin Co, about 5 miles east of Blacksher. A settlement existed here by 1856, when it appears on John La Tourette's *Map of the State of Alabama and West Florida*. The principal building there today is Montpelier Methodist Church. Montpelier and Blacksher refer to the same general area in north Baldwin county, with Blacksher being the current name. Its origins lie in the 1812 war with Britain, when the Creek Indians were encouraged to rise in arms, massacring several hundred settlers who had taken refuge in Fort Mims, near the junction of the Alabama and Tombigbee rivers. (At this time the area was in Mississippi territory, Alabama not achieving statehood until 1819.)

After the battle of Fort Mims in 1813, two more forts were built, Fort Montgomery and Fort Montpelier. A huge home with white columns was built at Montpelier, according to resident Tom Bradley, but burned in the early 1880s. The home that still stands in which Mrs. Frank Earle lives was constructed in 1884. Bradley's grandfather and Francis Earle lived in the first Montpelier home. Francis Earle's sister, Mary, married Bradley's grandfather and had two sons, Ulmer and J. T. When the original Montpelier burned, the Bradleys built a home across the highway from Montpelier. Francis Earle stayed in Montpelier and eventuallly left it to his son, Frank. Before his presidency, Andrew Jackson and his wife, Rachel stayed at Montpelier for five weeks in 1821. It was there he resigned May 31, 1821 as governor of Florida. His troops were stationed at Montpelier. In its day, 150 years ago, Montpelier was *the* social place of its time. *Thanks to Jeanette Bornholt of the Foley Public Library, Foley, AL, for this info*

Cantonment Montpelier

(1817 - 1820), near Little River

A Federal camp located seven miles northeast of Fort Montgomery, ten miles from the Alabama River, at the old townsite of *Montpelier*. Also known as **Camp Montpelier** and **Fort Montpelier**.

Cantonment Montpelier Site

- Also Known As: McGillivray's Cow Pens Plantation also Tate's Cow Pens also Montpelier

Blacksher Community: **First known as Montpelier**

Cantonment Montpelier Site, c. 1817-1821:

Built for bivouacs and training on David Tate's plantation after the Mim's attack.

Montpelier Methodist Church, c. early 1900's

David Tate Plantation Site and Frank Earle House, c. early 1800s:

Site where Andrew Jackson resigned his Army commission after defeating the British in New Orleans.

Andrew Jackson
Tennessee - Fort Montpelier

Rachel Jackson, wife of General Andrew Jackson visited him at Fort Montpelior and stayed five weeks during the period 1815-1821. This was shortly after the massacre of Fort Mims, which was the reason for Jackson locating at Fort Montpelior in the first place.

Rachel wrote friends in Tennessee... " nearly three Months in the South and never but once did I hear a gospel sermon or was the song of Zion spunded in my ear. " She felt that she was "in a vast howling wilderness far from my friends in the Lord, my home and my country." Our beloved magnolia blossoms were " too odoriferous" She said further that "one acre of Tennessee land was worth a thousand acres " of our long leaf pine country.

3/24/13

Montpelier file

Montpelier Methodist Church was donated to the county. It will be moved from the Blacksher community to Stockton to be a part of 19th Century Village at Bicentennial Park. (File)

HEADED TO BICENTENNIAL PARK

Plan to move church gets the green light

Thyrie Bland
tbland@al.com

The plan to move Montpelier Methodist Church is back on track.

The Baldwin County Commission has voted to award the contract for the church move to Ducky Johnson House Movers. The company bid $49,950 for the project.

The county had planned to have the church moved last month by Jack Odom House Movers.

The company had to drop out of the project because it lacked the $1 million in general liability insurance that the county requires for the project.

The church, built in 1895, was donated to the county by Thomas John Earle.

Ducky Johnson will be responsible for moving the church from the Blacksher community to Stockton.

The church will become part of the tour at the 19th Century Village in Bicentennial Park.

NO A/C NUPTIALS

Till heat stroke do we part?

Thyrie Bland
tbland@al.com

Imagine this: It's June, and it's your wedding day.

You've decided to have your wedding in a small historic church built in 1895.

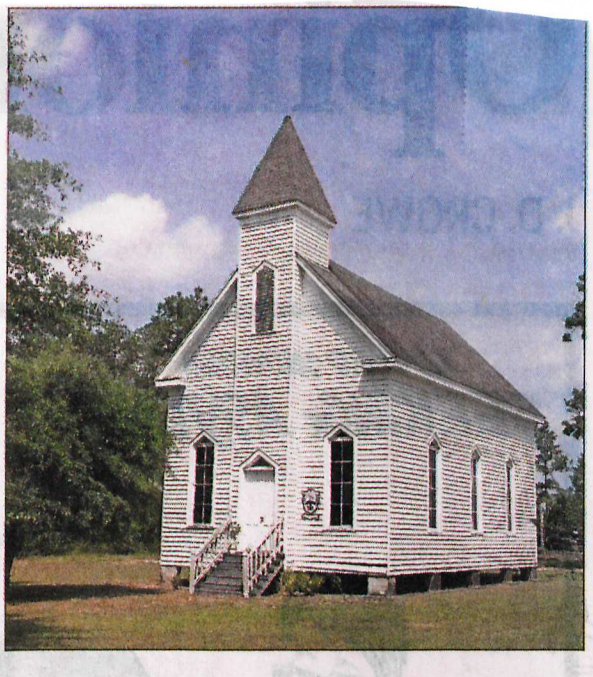
The setting is lovely. But there's one catch: The church doesn't have air conditioning.

"I have been to some of those weddings," Baldwin County Commissioner Robert James said. "You see a beautiful bride with a big old sweat stain down her back."

See CHURCH, Page 9A

ONLINE

WOULD YOU HAVE YOUR WEDDING AT THE OLD CHURCH IF IT'S WITHOUT A/C? CAST YOUR VOTE IN A SPECIAL POLL AT **AL.COM.**



Montpelier Methodist Church is more than a century old and might be the perfect wedding chapel at its new location in Baldwin County's Bicentennial Park. But there's a concern: It has no air conditioning. (File)

7/12/13

CHURCH

From Page 1A

This week, James and the other commissioners discussed whether the county should pay for an air conditioning and heating unit for its newly acquired Montpelier Methodist Church.

Thomas John Earle donated the church to the county last year. In April, it was cut into three pieces and moved from the Blacksher community to Bicentennial Park in Stockton.

The county plans to let people tour the church as well as book it for weddings, church services and meetings.

Julius Long, county facilities maintenance coordinator, said that the unit would cost about $7,900. He said a wood box could be built around it to hide it from view.

Commissioners said it's important to weigh modern convenience against historical accuracy.

Commissioner Charles "Skip" Gruber said he has been to weddings at a church with no air conditioning, and it wasn't that bad.

He said the church's windows were open, and there were fans in the ceiling.

James and Commissioner Frank Burt Jr. urged that the heating and air be installed. Burt said he thinks families would steer away from the church otherwise.

Commissioner Tucker Dorsey said he was undecided about the issue.

John Jackson, director of Baldwin County's Department of Archives and History, said there is no right or wrong answer.

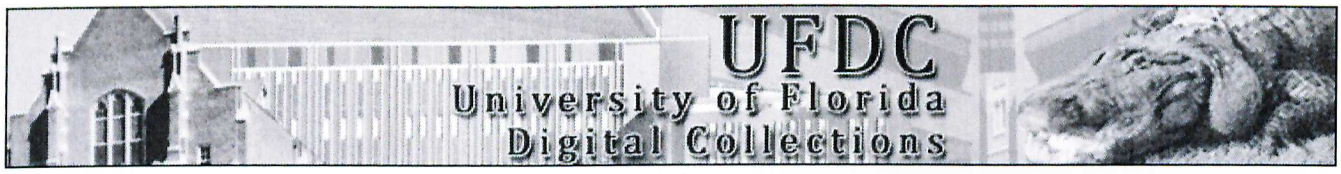
He noted that the county decided to heat and cool the Swift-Coles Historic Home, a 16-room mansion in Bon Secour, so that tour visitors would be more comfortable.

At the 19th Century Blacksmith Shop at Bicentennial Park, the county decided against adding electrical power, to keep it true to metalworking tradition.

"You have to find a happy medium or you choose one way or the other," Jackson said. "That's what we do historically with any structure. You make that decision, and you stick with it."

The commission decided to table the issue to await annual budget deliberations, which open late next week and wrap up on Aug. 30.

Montpelier BCHT



Title: Richard Keith Call, Southern Unionist
URL: http://ufdc.ufl.edu//UF00020424/00001
Site: University of Florida Digital Collections

References to Montpelier + Andrew Jackson

2

From Military to Political Life

RICHARD CALL had spent but a few months at Russellville at his law books when Andrew Jackson recalled him to duty—again to go to Florida. Jackson, who was being retired from active service on June 1, 1821, under an act of Congress which curtailed the military establishment, had been prevailed upon by President Monroe to accept a commission to receive the surrender of Florida from Spain and to become its provisional governor.[1] Though Jackson expressed reluctance to accept the assignment and reiterated a desire to return to his home, Monroe seems to have acted on the belief that it would be both impolitic and unseemly to turn the "Old Hero" so abruptly out of government service.

By April 12, 1821, Jackson had completed his arrangements and informed Secretary of State Adams that he and his wife would depart immediately. From Nashville the general and his lady proceeded by riverboat to New Orleans, thence along the Gulf to Blakely, Alabama, on Mobile Bay. From Blakely Jackson was to proceed to Montpelier, an army cantonment near the junction of the Alabama and Tombigbee rivers, where he would await notice of the arrival at Pensacola of Colonel James G. Forbes with the transfer orders from the Captain-General of Cuba for the Governor of West Florida. Call was ordered to make the trip from Nashville overland, bringing the general's horses. Expecting that the overland journey would be completed first, Jackson authorized Call to receive the communications from Forbes. The transfer, however, was not to be so easily accomplished.[2]

On his leisurely journey down the Mississippi and along the Gulf coast Jackson met Henry M. Brackenridge of Pennsylvania, a lawyer, scholar, and linguist, who was also going to Pensacola. This gentleman had previously been the secretary of a diplomatic mission to South America, and though Adams regarded him as a "mere enthusiast" Monroe had been sufficiently impressed to offer him a

Richard Keith Call, Southern Unionist Page 2 of 2

job in Florida. Jackson was also impressed and attached the scholarly adventurer to his official family as a legal adviser to assist in the transfer and in the erection of the new government in Florida.[3]

Jackson's party arrived at Blakely on April 29 to find that Captain Call, delayed by bad weather and high rivers, had not yet arrived. While waiting Jackson sent Brackenridge and Dr. James C. Bronaugh, his personal physician and confidante, to Governor José Callava of West Florida to announce his mission to effect the transfer. About a week was passed by the remainder of the party in Blakely before the arrival of Call. On the return of Brackenridge and Bronaugh they proceeded to Montpelier where another delay of some five weeks ensued.[4]

From Montpelier Call was ordered on May 11 to Pensacola to await the arrival of the tardy Colonel Forbes on the United States sloop of war *Hornet* from Havana. Call was authorized to enter into any preliminary negotiations which Callava might be willing to entertain. His instructions were detailed in describing the subjects which he might discuss with Callava, but had a postscript reading, "The real object is to be informed of the real feeling of the Governor and whether he is a coward full of duplicity or a candid honorable man."[5] On May 15 at ten o'clock Call was granted his first interview with the governor and found it a most agreeable experience. He observed Callava to be "a remarkably fine looking man." He was a large, fair, blonde-haired gentleman of about forty years of age, possessed of noble bearing. "I believe him to be a frank, ingenuous soldier," Call told Jackson, "and that every confidence may be placed in the professions which he has made."[6]

Besides opening preliminary negotiations for the transfer Call had been charged with obtaining permission for the deposit of American supplies in Pensacola and with arranging the concentration of Spanish troops for the evacuation. He was soon able to report to Jackson that Callava had designated a warehouse for supplies and a Spanish detachment to guard it, and had agreed to bringing the garrison at St. Marks to Pensacola for transport with the Pensacola garrison to Havana. Although the governor had denied having any power to enter into preliminary negotiations concerning the actual surrender, he had assured Call that he would grant every facility for prompt occupation by Jackson as soon as the orders arrived from the Captain-General. On May 20 Call returned to Montpelier with the news that the *Hornet* had at last left Havana with Forbes aboard.

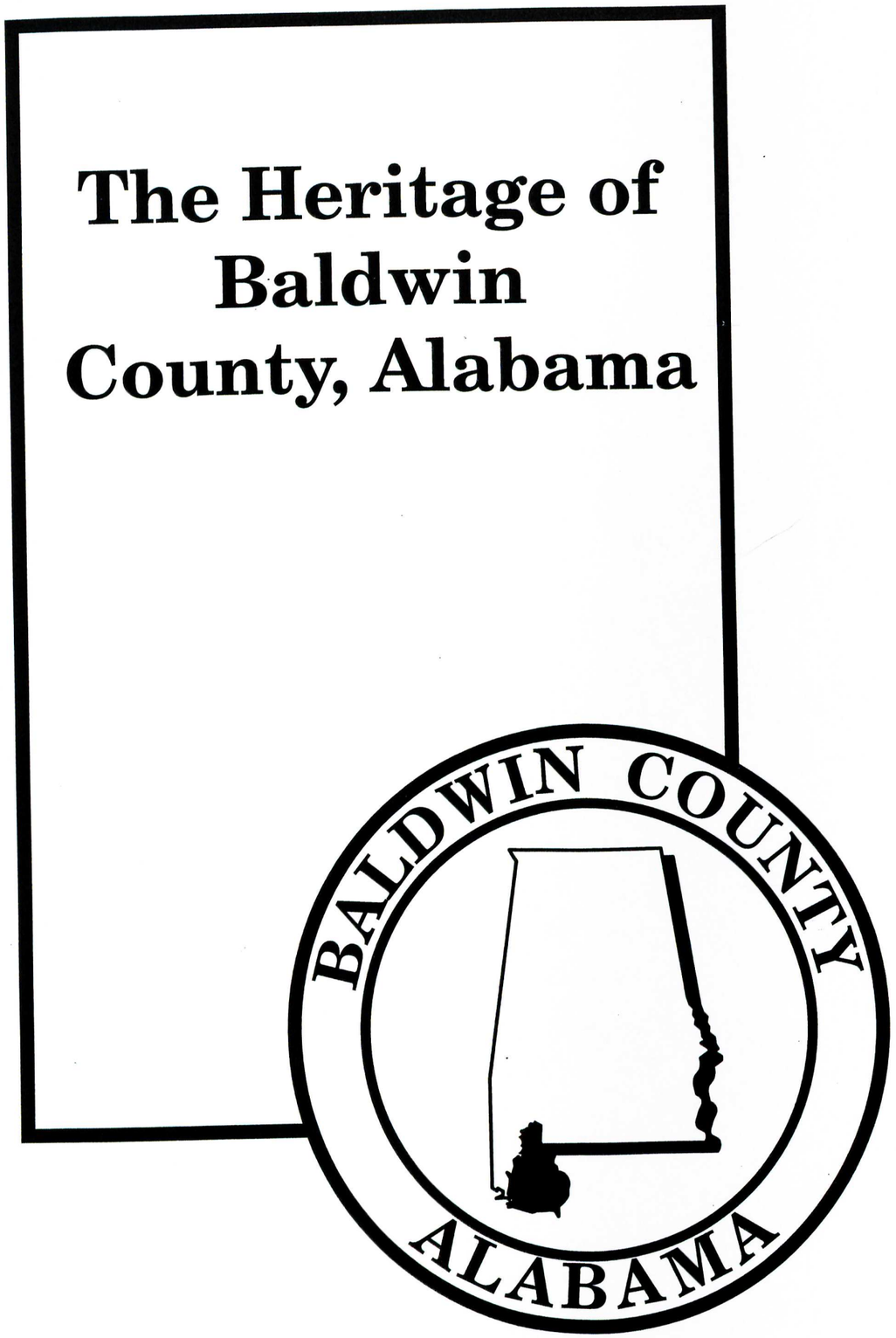
Immediately Jackson sent James Gadsden to Pensacola to meet Colonel Forbes and empowered him to make arrangements for the receipt of the province.[7]

As Jackson cooled his heels in Montpelier, where on June 1 his military retirement became effective, President Monroe was filling the appointive offices in the government of the new territory. Jackson had submitted a list of his own recommendations for the Florida posts but Monroe ignored it, and on May 23 the Secretary of State forwarded to Jackson a list of the president's appointees. While this list was enroute, James Gadsden was ordered back to Montpelier and Call replaced him at Pensacola. Jackson had deemed Gadsden more valuable to him in Montpelier and had directed him to transfer all his powers to Call.[8] When Gadsden arrived in the Alabama village he found Jackson in a perfect rage: ". . . not one of those I recommended is appointed." Among the recommendations, Call had been named by his former general as a likely candidate for the office of Secretary of West Florida.[9] Instead Monroe had named a partisan of William H. Crawford, George Walton of Georgia, to that post. In reference to Call the president told Jackson, "It would have given me pleasure to have placed the latter near you, but, on great consideration, I thought it better . . . to pursue the course I have done. Mr. Walton was strongly supported by the two Senators from Georgia. . . . I could do nothing else for him, and Mr. Call was already provided for."[10] Call had been provided for by being retained in the army with the rank of captain, after its reduction on June 1.

Jackson's nephew, A. J. Donelson, wrote to a friend, "I am sorry to see that Call is not secretary. This disappointment is not a little vexing to the general." Rachel Jackson wrote to one of her brothers, "There never was a man more disappointed than the General has been. . . . he has not the power to appoint one of his friends; which . . . was in part the reason of his coming."[11] But the old general was not beaten yet. He told Dr. Bronaugh, ". . . say to my friend Call not to despond—that I am determined to try my influence in his behalf, next Congress, and any thing I have in my power to give him, will be."[12]

As Jackson was penning this note in Montpelier the *Hornet* arrived at Pensacola with Colonel Forbes and the transfer order from the Captain-General of Cuba. Call immediately went to Montpelier with the news and a letter from Governor Callava listing the troops

The Heritage of Baldwin County, Alabama



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brains and toiling hands of those who are now settled among us, contented and happy; and to thousands who may come to us from the less favored localities of this glorious country of ours, or from the overpopulated and over burdened nations of Europe.

In predicting that Baldwin county is to become in the near future one of the most important counties in South Alabama, (outside of Mobile county) the writer has no dread that such forecasts will be ascribed to the dream of the visionary or optimist, in the years that are to be, and now he only invites, to vindicate that view, a just and proper consideration of the geographical location of Baldwin county, the fertility and adaptability of its soil to the growth of the semi-tropic plants and fruits, cereals and fiber-bearing plants of both temperate and tropical origin; to the salubrity and healthfulness of its climate, making it an ideal resort for both winter and summer. Its immense area of more than one million acres, or 370 miles of territory more that in the State of Rhode Island, five sixths of which are arable, with not more than one twentieth in cultivation at present; and by the authority of government experts the finest Sea Island cotton that has ever been raised in the United States was grown on the soil of this county; as fine sugar cane, cotton, tobacco, leguminous plants, esculents, vegetables, pecans and all other nut producing trees, and grapes of many varieties grow and bear to perfection on this soil.

We have utilities and resources capable of supporting a quarter million more people.

Submitted by: Baldwin County Heritage Book Committee and Written by Honorable J.H.H. Smith as printed in The Baldwin Times, page 1, December 20, 1906.

Early History of North Baldwin County

A French chart shows the Tensas Indians living on a bluff at what is now Stockton in 1721. The Tensas Indians were a roving tribe, moving whenever food became scarce. They worshiped fire and sun, making human sacrifices when disaster came. Later this land was inhabited by the Creek Indians.

Benard Roman, a British army captain, was sent to study the river country of the Tensaw around 1770. He reported the land was fertile and there were many plantations along the river "Tensas". During 1790-1799, many families came to the Tensaw area; Linders, Mims, Halls, Byrnes, Killcreases, Steadhams, Bates, Danleys, the Peirce brothers and others.

The chief industry was agriculture. The Peirce brothers, William and John, were from Salem, Massachusetts. William operated a trading post on Boat Yard Lake, also a cotton gin, all materials of which were brought in by pack horses from Georgia.

John Peirce established the first American school in Alabama in 1799 at Boat Yard Lake. John took up permanent residence along the Tensaw where he assisted his brother in running of the store, served "seven years in the Character of a Schoolmaster," and also successfully avoided efforts of young maidens to relieve him of his bachelorhood.

From *Some Reminiscences of Olden Times in Baldwin,* by Charles Daniels, Daniels gives this account; "I left Claiborne, Alabama, early in the morning on last day of Dec. 1838, taking stage which carried the mail. I arrived about dusk the same day at Montgomery Hill, Alabama. Upon my arrival at Montgomery Hill, I stopped at a house of entertainment, kept by Mrs. Bryant. I found quite a number of young men there on the sporting order. Some of them wore rough shirts and other articles of clothing to match. They were jovial and polite men, some of them had race horses, the most of them spending Christmas there. They joked each other in a very pleasant way about what they had lost and won."

The next day was the first day of January, 1839, a notable day in Baldwin especially at Montgomery Hill. It was 'hiring day', which drew a great many people together from all parts of the country who came to hire hands for the ensuing year and to settle up of hands hired previous year. As many as a hundred darkies were put up on the block and cried off to highest bidder. The hirer was to pay so much a year, pay doctor bills, feed and cloth them."

Montgomery Hill had a fine race track at that time. The mile long length could be seen by a person standing on the ground. Several days of racing were kept up on this track.

There was one fine large store owned by Col. C.W. Godbold, who later sold out to Edward Nolly. This together with a drinking house kept by a Mr. Bryant and stage stand where stage horses were changed constituted the business houses.

Most of the people living in Montgomery Hill and Montpelier vicinities were wealthy planters with plantations on the river growing cotton and corn, working from 50 to 75 hands, employing overseers with salaries from $250 to $500 dollars a year. They filled their smoke houses with meat raised at home. They dressed plainly, lived well, were warm hearted, hospitable, and sociable.

Lorenzo Dow visited the Tensaw country in April, 1803, to preach to the people there. Until his visit, many of this area had never seen a minister of the gospel. Dow bought land in the area to build a home but never did.

January 2, 1808, Mathew P. Sturdevant started his 13 day journey across 400 miles of wilderness to the Tombigbee River Settlements in what is now Alabama. He was the only volunteer among 58 preachers at the South Carolina Conference; thus he became the first Methodist preacher ever sent into present Alabama.

Fort Mims was built around the home of Sam Mims. It was destroyed by Indians on August 30, 1813, in what is called by historians one of the bloodiest massacres in American History. William and John Pierce were building a stockade at their mills, Fort Pierce. This was located on Pine Log Creek about three miles from Fort Mims.

In 1857, Montgomery Hill Baptist Church was begun and completed at cost of $1400. The church is still in use today.

The Holly Creek Church, no longer existing, was used until 1900 when present church at Montpelier was built. The people of Tensaw also built a Masonic Hall. They engaged in shipbuilding. A boat named Alpha of 110 tonnage was built at Tensaw in 1835.

The old town of Stockton was located on banks of Tensaw River. Story is in those days several hotels, bars and stores lined streets of Stockton widely known as "rough and ready" town. In early 1840s, was moved to present higher location considered more healthful due to a yellow fever epidemic.

In his "Reminiscenses", Charles Daniels says about Stockton: "In 1841, the government established a horseback express line which runs from Stockton to Washington City. The riders were boys from 11 to 14 years old. The horses were changed every 10 to 12 miles and had to be run at high rate of speed. One of the shortest runs was 7 miles from Stockton. I have known those 7 miles to be run in less than 20 minutes to make connections with mail boat at Stockton, and have known several horses to drop dead on the bluff ... (mail bag was) buckled around the riders waist, locked with a small brass lock. All letters were limited to ½ ounce in weight. No newspapers were carried. Only little strips of important news, cut out and rolled up in white paper and sealed at each end with wax, could be sent. The amount charged for carrying letters or parcels was 75 cents." A few years after the horseback express was discontinued the Stage Coach owned by individuals, operated what was known as the ridge route from Blakely to Washington City. The coming of the railroad rang the death knell for coach.

The Presbyterian Church was organized in Stockton on August 7, 1847, with 33 members. The churches of Stockton worshipped together in a union church until the Methodist built in 1890. The Presbyterian building was dedicated in 1903, on the spot where present church is located. The Methodist Church was moved in early 1930s to its present location.

From a deed written in 1834 we learn street names in Stockton were Martha, Ann, Kennedy, and Tensaw.

The northern part of Baldwin County was location of four forts. One fort seldom mentioned in text books is Fort Montgomery, erected near ruins of Fort Mims, built and commanded by Colonel Thomas Benton in 1814. Colonel Benton had marched his soldiers to Holmes' Hill, two miles from Fort Mims and was building the fort to stop marauding Indians on the east side of the river.

There are several old homes still left in Stockton-Tensaw area. In Tensaw, a home built by Thomas Atkinson in early 1880s by slave labor later became the home of David Pierce English who married Mattie Atkinson. The home, also known as the English Place, was built of bricks made and dried on the plantation. It is now used as a hunting lodge.

The Warren Home is said to be first frame dwelling built in Baldwin County. It was home of Hanna Mims and built not long after the massacre of Fort Mims.

The Baptist Church built in 1854 includes a slave galley, and is still used for services today.

In Stockton, a home stands built by Willam Kitchen in 1854, now owned by T.M. McMillian estate.

The old Bryant house has been remodeled since it was built in 1860, but a portion of the original building is still used, lived in

BEAR POINT - Located on north side of peninsular in southern most part of county, it was announced in July, 1895, a daily mail was to be established between Bear Point and Millview, Florida, carried by steamboat. Frank Parker and Anna Callaway were married at home of the bride's father, J.C. Callaway with Rev. Hanson officiating. Right before Christmas of 1895, five unknown men were drowned near mouth of Perdido Pass. In August, 1896, Charles Stapleton and Lillie Gable were married; her father was Jno I. Gabel. In November of 1908, the schooner 'Mary Etta' arrived from Mobile with cargo of oak merchants. In early January, 1913, Charles A. Swift, a pioneer in the lumber company, died in his home at age 60 from effects of a stroke and was laid to rest in Magnolia Cemetery in Mobile, leaving a wife and eleven children.

In December of 1912, fresh water killed many oysters in local oysterbeds. The proposed canal from Wolf Bay to Mobile lay claim it would save oysters beds while adding greatly to area by March, 1913, it did not look good for the proposed canal inland waterway; but by July 1931, the dredge 'Texas', cutting the canal from Pensacola to Mobile, was towed across Perdido Bay to begin work at Wolf Bay and later at Portage Creek. In June of 1933, Captain Lemuel Walker at 87 years of age crossed the canal for the first time.

BELFOREST - Located about 6 miles northeast of Fairhope, a small, peaceful, farming community was first settled in 1890s by Italian immigrants, most of whom were from northern part of Italy. The name is a derivative of Italian words for bel, 'beautiful,' forest. Livestock, corn and cotton were raised but a main staple for most of the farms were grapes used to make wine. Many of the older homes had wine cellars. Belforest is also home to a large black community who homesteaded about the same time as the Italians with family surnames as Mayhan, Johns, Yieldings among first black families to settle in area. There were two country stores near each other.

The first school was built in 1896. In April, 1912, a box social was held at the schoolhouse with proceeds to pay for the remainder of the cost of new desks. Lemonade was served, games played with nearly everyone taking a part and when proceeds were counted up, it was found to be about $15. It was noted they would have had quite an additional sum if some of the bashful girls hadn't put their boxes off in a desk where the seller of the boxes could not find them. Seventy-five cents per bushel was being paid for potatoes. It was noted in 1912, quite a number from Belforest attended the Shakespeare play at the Daphne Normal auditorium.

The Gordon Sirmon family was considered one of the best farmers in Bell Forest area by crop reporter Julius E. Howell, having one of the larger dairy herds in county. The cows were milked twice a day. Howell would weigh the milk and test for butterfat and diseases from each cow milked night and morning. Aaron Bishop and sons, Cortes, Bertolla were all large Irish potato growers and shippers. Howell also visited a number of the black family farms in Bell Forest area who grew cotton.

The Cortes also ran a seed and fertilizer business and were one, if not the largest, grower and shippers of sweet corn in the county. There was always jobs for harvesting, grading, and packing potatoes and sweet corn for high school kids looking for work.

BELLE FOUNTAINE - Settlement located northeast of Stapleton and north of Gateswood, where Andrew L. Holman who served in House of Representatives established a school near his home in the Belle Fountaine area and was largely responsible for forming the Clera Spring Methodist Church. Julius E. Howell remembers this area of Belle Fountaine and Gateswood as one of the thinnest settled communities in the county. After virgin timber was cut, farms were cleared and in most cases descendants of original settlers are still here. When the open range laws were passed prohibiting citizens from running cows on open range, that hurt people in this area of county as they ran range cattle in the woods.

Some of the family names Howell remembers were Morris, Waters, Allen and Pittman, Snellgrove. These people were more like the way the old Southerners used to be than any community he worked in says Howell. Checking crops in this area often meant Howell spending the night wherever it fell. Homes were always open to him. He relates once at day's end being at Mr. Gibson's farm whose house was one of the old types having large open hall thru the house. The weather was cold and house not insulated. Mr. Gibson had a son and grandson staying the night also. When Gibson showed where they would be sleeping, he said, "Boys, there may not be as much cover on the beds as you like, but that's all there is." He was honest and plain about the covers. We soon decided there was not enough cover for two beds for us to keep warm and put the covers on one bed and three of us slept together, the grandson being in the middle of the bed. Sometime in the night this boy wet the bed. Howell recalls it as a miserable night.

BLACKSHER - An old community located 5 miles northeast of Tensaw, was listed in census of 1890 and was probably named for the family of first postmaster, Blacksher who was appointed in 1889. Once known as Montpelier, Blacksher has beautiful pine timber forests, little traffic, and much history. In 1910, it consisted of six general stores and a naval store facility. Made up of about six square acres of land in upper Baldwin County, Blacksher's timber industry is vital and main reason for the settlement. Tom Bradley, Francis Earle, Jeptha and Uriah Blacksher, the Coghlin Family are among the names of early settlers. Earle and Bradley, timbermen, farmers and cattlemen, were large landowners in this settlement. With open range land, herds of cattle running the woods would be gathered several times a year, marked and branded with each owner's own ear mark and brand. Danny Hall, who never married, owned timberland here but most of his land was in Tensas area and covered the "Boat Yard" boat landing. The 'Blacksher News Notes' of August 15, 1918, in *The Onlooker* newspaper tells us "Word has been received here from Mr. Lawrence G. Brown, one of Blacksher's most popular young men, who left here some time ago for Camp Sevier, South Caorlina, that he had crossed over safely in "yonder land." Also, "among those that attended the ice cream social at Little River from here Thursday night were Mr. and Mrs. A.T. Wilson, Misses Gussie and Jaytee Wilson, Miss Alice Butler and Mr. Bosso Wilson."

BLAKELEY, BLAKELY - A dead town once located at the northern end of Mobile Bay on the Tensaw River, it was a rival for city of Mobile. Blakeley was founded in 1813 by Josiah Blakeley, a native of Connecticut, who owned 12,000 acres of land in the area. He was adventurous and of enterprising disposition. Blakeley had a town laid out with two public squares, straight streets named for famous men and cross streets named for trees, flowers and shrubs. The town was incorporated in 1814. By 1820, Blakely had population of several thousand people with a weekly newspaper, *The Blakeley Sun,* a ferry that ran every day between Blakeley and Mobile, and a post office which was open from 1818 to 1866. It served as county seat from 1820 to 1868. In 1821, Francis McHugh paid $100 for a lot in town of Blakeley while James C. Seaberry paid $500 for land adjacent the town of Blakeley. Yellow Fever epidemics struck the town three different times, 1822, 1826, and 1828. The plague along with high land prices contributed to the decline of the populace and by the time of the Civil War, it was a ghost town. A cemetery nearby has few markers; those remaining are upright stones with a few graves bricked and flat stones marking them.

BON SECOUR - A settlement, located on Bon Secour River 7 miles southwest of Foley, was named by Spanish after the river and bay called "Rio del Socorro," "river with a good harbor." Later named by Frenchman Jacques Cook, Bon Secour means "safe harbor" or more literally, "the best chapel of ease." Nicholas Cook brother to explorer James Cook, came to Bon Secour River with his son, John, to sail these waters and establish a home.

Cooper's Landing (courtesy Lance Young)

Jean Baptiste LeMoyne Bienville and his brother built a fishing and hunting lodge at Bon Secour. A center of salt making during the Civil War, 'wells' where salt was distilled are still evident today. The first post office was established in 1875 kept by Theresa Margaret Keller Miller and was called "Theresa." It has been discontinued. Services at St. Peter's-by-the-Sea began in 1878. The first wedding ceremony in St. Peter's Church was that of James Allen and Winnifred Johnson. Along graceful, quiet, Bon Secour River under ancient oaks draped with moss and wisteria entwined, are lovely homes. Fishermen and farmers are tied together by their kinship with the river and land access to them from many different roads.

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Newspapers

Valade - Woodham ancestors

Entries: 14807 **Updated:** 2016-08-14 22:35:07 UTC (Sun)

Contact: Michelle Woodham [redacted]

Home Page: Valade and Woodham Ancestors

Index | **Descendancy** | **Register** | **Pedigree** | **Ahnentafel** | **Public Profile** | **Add Post-em**

- *ID:* I00044
- *Name:* Eloisa Mathilda Mary Tate
- *Sex:* F
- *Birth:* 23 NOV 1802 in Baldwin Co, Alabama [1] [2] [3] [4]
- *Death:* 9 MAY 1875 in Mobile, Mobile Co, Alabama [5]
- *Burial:* Montpelier, Blacksher, Alabama
- *Census:* 1850 Baldwin County, Alabama [6]
- *Census:* 1860 Baldwin County, Alabama [7]
- *Census:* 1870 Baldwin County, Alabama [8]
- *Event:* Individual Note Portrait owned by Hilary Herbert Lyons, Mobile, AL
- *Residence:* resided Montgomery Hill, AL
- *Note:*

Gazetteer of Montpeliers and Montpelliers in the United States
http://www.allthemontpeliers.org/area/united-states

Montpelier
Historical locale in north Baldwin Co, about 5 miles east of Blacksher. A settlement existed here by 1856, when it appears on John La Tourette's Map of the State of Alabama and West Florida. The principal building there today is Montpelier Methodist Church. Montpelier and Blacksher refer to the same general area in north Baldwin county, with Blacksher being the current name. Its origins lie in the 1812 war with Britain, when the Creek Indians were encouraged to rise in arms, massacring several hundred settlers who had taken refuge in Fort Mims, near the junction of the Alabama and Tombigbee rivers. (At this time the area was in Mississippi territory, Alabama not achieving statehood until 1819.) After the battle of Fort Mims in 1813, two more forts were built, Fort Montgomery and Fort Montpelier. A huge home with white columns was built at Montpelier, according to resident Tom Bradley, but burned in the early 1880s. The home that still stands in which Mrs. Frank Earle lives was constructed in 1884. Bradley's grandfather and Francis Earle lived in the first Montpelier home. Francis Earle's sister, Mary, married Bradley's grandfather and had two sons, Ulmer and J. T. When the original Montpelier burned, the Bradleys built a home across the highway from Montpelier. Francis Earle stayed in Montpelier and eventuallly left it to his son, Frank. Before his presidency, Andrew Jackson and his wife, Rachel stayed at Montpelier for five weeks in 1821. It was there he resigned May 31, 1821 as governor of Florida. His troops were stationed at Montpelier. In its day, 150 years ago, Montpelier was the social place of its time. Thanks to Jeanette Bornholt of the Foley Public Library, Foley, AL, for this info

Ancestry Hints for **Eloisa Mathilda Mary Tate**

1 possible matches found on Ancestry.com

ancestry.com

Father: David Tate b: 1778 in Little Tallassee on the Coosa River
Mother: Mary Eloise Randon b: ABT 1786 in Creek Nation

Marriage 1 George Brooke Tunstall b: 14 DEC 1793 in Pittsylvania Co, Virginia

- *Married:* 4 JUL 1822 in Baldwin Co, Alabama [9]

Children

1. [redacted] Thomas Tate (T.T.) Tunstall b: 8 APR 1823 in Tate Shoals, Monroe Co, Alabama
2. [redacted] Mary Ann Tunstall b: 10 APR 1825 in Baldwin Co, Alabama
3. [redacted] Lucy Emily Tunstall b: 5 MAY 1827 in Baldwin Co, Alabama
4. [redacted] Peyton Randolph Tunstall b: 10 JUL 1830 in Tate Shoals, Baldwin Co, Alabama
5. Elizabeth Barker Tunstall b: 16 JAN 1833
6. [redacted] Rebecca Brian Tunstall b: 18 MAY 1835 in Montgomery Hill, Baldwin Co, Alabama
7. [redacted] George Washington Tunstall b: 22 FEB 1838 in Montgomery Hill, Baldwin Co, Alabama
8. Edmund Savage Tunstall b: 15 SEP 1841 in Baldwin Co, Alabama

Sources:

1. Title: William Weatherford, His Country and His People
   Author: Lynn Hastie Thompson
   Publication: Lavender Publishing Company, Bay Minette, AL.1991
   Repository:
   Media: Book
   Page: p.839
   Text: has birthdate as 11-28-1802
2. Title: 1850 Census of the United States
   Publication: Ancestry.com
   Repository:
   Media: Electronic
   Page: Division 1, Baldwin Co, Alabama p160
   Text: age 47
3. Title: 1860 Census of the United States
   Publication: Ancestry.com
   Repository:
   Media: Electronic
   Page: Baldwin Co, Alabama p28
   Text: age 57
4. Title: 1870 Census of the United States
   Publication: Ancestry.com
   Repository:
   Media: Electronic
   Page: Twp 2, Baldwin Co, Alabama p236B
   Text: age 68
5. Title: Obituary
   Repository:
   Media: Newspaper
   Page: copy of obituary press clipping from Baldwin Co. AL
6. Title: 1850 Census of the United States
   Publication: Ancestry.com
   Repository:
   Media: Electronic
   Page: Division 1, Baldwin Co, Alabama p160

7. Title: 1860 Census of the United States
   Publication: Ancestry.com
   Repository:
   Media: Electronic
   Page: Baldwin Co, Alabama p28
8. Title: 1870 Census of the United States
   Publication: Ancestry.com
   Repository:
   Media: Electronic
   Page: Baldwin Co, Alabama p236
9. Title: Marriage and Death Notices from Raleigh Register and North Carolina State Gazette, 1799-1825
   Publication: Ancestry.com
   Repository:
   Media: Electronic
   Page: p95
   Text: Tunstall, George of Raleigh to Eloisa Matilda Mary Tate of Alabama, Jly. 4 R.R. Aug. 16, 1822

Bicentennial Park takes on preservation of historic monuments

2 October 2012

Lookin' Back

JOHN JACKSON / CONTRIBUTING WRITER

For the past seven years, the Baldwin County Department of Archives and History has worked with area residents and through the auspices of the Baldwin County Commission to preserve the history of Baldwin County and of the residents that make this area unique.

At Baldwin County's Bicentennial Park, that effort has manifested itself through the preservation of historic structures and the re-creation of structures that represent the cultural heritage of the county. These conservation programs have taken place within the Bicentennial Park, which is located in the Stockton community just off State Highway 225, north of the I-65 interchange. The 367-acre park is dedicated to the legacy of the county's 200th birthday and is for residents to enjoy.

At present, the park maintains a historic store that was relocated from Lower Bryant's Landing, a 19th century Indian Lifestyles Exhibit that includes a trade house, winter houses, a re-creation of a 19th century blacksmith shop and a ¼ scale replica of a Civil War water battery from Spanish Fort.

The country store was moved the short distance from Lower Bryant's Landing in 2009 as a means of saving a representative piece of history that has touched the lives of most people living along the delta, and ultimately throughout the entire county. The country store, as many can remember, served the needs of county residents who lived in outlying areas well into the 20th century. It is completely furnished with items that customers could have purchased at their local country store around the turn of the 20th century.

The 19th century blacksmith shop and the Indian Lifestyles Exhibit are recreations that allow hands-on educational opportunities for visitors. The blacksmith shop represents a component of the proposed 19th century village planned for Bicentennial Park. Local members of a blacksmith organization run the facility one weekend day each month, teaching blacksmithing techniques and demonstrating to the public. The facility has a fully functional forge and is a fantastic way to understand a skill that was an integral part of the 19th century world.

» want to know more?

WHAT: Bicentennial Park

WHERE: 51233 Hwy. 225, Stockton

HOURS: Monday through Saturday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Sunday, noon to 4 p.m.

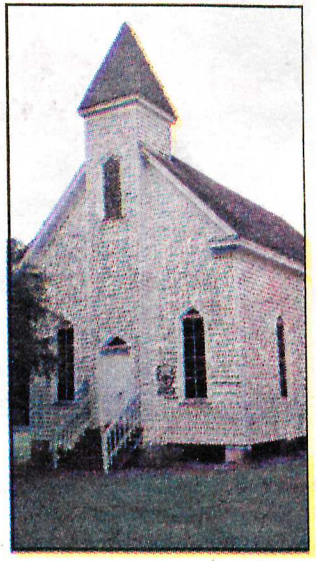
ADMISSION: Free

The Indian Lifestyles Exhibit offers visitors to Bicentennial Park an opportunity to examine the long lost world of the Native American at a time of transition from a traditional lifestyle to one more akin to that of European immigrants to the region.

A replica of the defensive position occupied by the Confederate forces at Spanish Fort is underway now with a completion date set for late October. The ¼ scale water battery will allow visitors to closely examine the experience of the soldier during the last weeks of the American Civil War.

Originally built in 1781 by Spanish troops, the site will replicate a ¼ scale of the earthworks in their original format. This will allow opportunity for visitors to see artillery demonstrations, the life of a civil war soldier as well as understand help them understand the "Mobile Defenses" in Baldwin County and their importance to many civilian dwellings and enterprises. This portion of the park would be used extensively by accredited living historian volunteers to engage and interface students and visitors to further their knowledge of the American Civil War.

One of the most exciting efforts at Bicentennial Park will be the move of the historic Montpelier Methodist Church from Blacksher to the park during the upcoming fiscal year. Thanks to a gracious donation of the structure from Thomas John Earle and family, the historic church will be moved to the park, and Baldwin County residents can enjoy it for years to come. The church, built in the 19th century, was once attended and maintained by the Earle and Bradley families, although it no longer serves an active congregation. At one point during the church's active period, it served as the home of the annual district meetings of the local Methodist churches. The church, when moved, will become a cornerstone of the proposed 19th century village.



Sometime in the upcoming fiscal year, the historic Montpelier Methodist Church will be moved from Blacksher to Bicentennial Park in Stockton for preservation.

GCN File Photo

Church move scheduled —The historic Montpelier Methodist Church, built in 1895 in Blacksher, will be moved early next year to a permanent home at Bicentennial Park where it will be a centerpiece in the 19th Century Village. The Baldwin County Commission approved $80,000 for the move and has received several thousands of dollars in donations from church groups and individuals to supplement the move. The church is owned and donated by Thomas John Earle. Commissioner Frank Burt said $80,000 was budgeted for the project, which includes Baldwin County Highway Department assistance to construct a slab at the site. He also said $13,000 has been donated and that potential donors were awaiting relocation before contributing. The church is near the Thomas John Earle Home on State Highway 59. The church was attended and maintained by the Earle and Bradley families, although it no longer serves an active congregation.

Montpelier

William Weatherford
His Country and His People

By
Lynn Hastie Thompson

Lavender Publishing Company
Bay Minette, Alabama, USA

First Printing 1991

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Cover Illustration: Lynn Hastie Thompson, 1991

Dedication

This book is lovingly dedicated to my mother, Davida Riche Hastie, who has worked untiringly for many years to preserve history of Baldwin County, and who instilled in me her spe interest in the history of north Baldwin.

estore the lands of their Indian allies. Officials in London and Washngton expected the Creeks' land to be returned to them.[4] Signed in 1814 after the British were defeated in New Orleans, Article 9 prorided for the return of all lands possessed by the Creeks in 1811, on he condition that they took no further part in hostilities against the Jnited States.[5] Nicholls remained at Apalachicola with a body of narines and West Indian black troops to protect the Indians until the inal settlement was made. Old Hickory, however, acting on his own, nd against the orders of the secretary of war who advised him to ooperate with the Indians,[6] insisted that the Treaty of Ghent did not pply to the Red Sticks since they had signed the Treaty of Fort ackson prior to that, and were therefore not allies of the British at the ime the Treaty of Ghent was signed. In truth, none of the Red Sticks igned the Treaty of Fort Jackson except a few captured prisoners. All hose who signed were American allies during the Creek War.[7] After ackson initiated their removal, "the government, under pressure from vestern and southern states," hesitantly went along with Jackson's vishes. If England took issue, the United States could place the blame n Jackson. Unfortunately, the London government did not discover he mistreatment of the Creeks until some months later when they vere in the midst of negotiating a new treaty with the Americans. Already committed to a policy of peace, and having demobilized most f their forces, they could not risk a new conflict. Though embarassed by the affair, they decided it best to accept the position of the Jnited States.[8]

Nicholls remained in Apalachicola until June when he was forced o leave. While there, he organized a government for the Indians, naking a treaty which, if ratified in London, would extend formal 3ritish recognition to the Creek Nation and establish a regular military lliance with them. The Creeks, agreeing to keep peace, sent Josiah rancis to England with Nicholls to serve as their representative when he treaty was ratified. All but a few Indians left the fort after their leparture. Several hundred blacks then assumed complete command, n possession of thousands of muskets, several cannons, and a huge uantity of ammunition that Nicholls left behind.[9] In September of 1815, the commissioners, aided by William McIntosh, Big Warrior, and Alexander Cornells, began surveying the new boundary lines as set forth in the treaty. Urged by a number of British citizens, and by Woodbine, claiming to be the advance of a British expedition coming to restore their lands, the Creeks began to express a desire to have their half of the Treaty of Fort Jackson "lopped off." The Americans realized they could refuse to ratify the treaty if they so chose, and that they were being urged to do so.[10] Unhappy and enraged at seeing the land fall completely into the hands of their white enemy, two bands of warriors organized under the command of Uchee Tom and Sowanoka Jack. Preparations were again being made to drive the white man back. To escape further wrath from their white victors, the mixed bloods denied their Indian heritage, abandoning all Creek customs and relations. They saw this as their only choice to be able to remain on the lands of their forefathers.[11]

It was in the midst of such turmoil that Weatherford headed for the home of his half-brother David Tate. Nearby, on Tate's plantation, was Cantonment Montpelier, the camp grounds of Jackson.[12] Arriving there, he was happy to learn that his relatives had saved much of his former property.[13] All of his negroes, horses, and surviving cattle, brought from the interior of the nation, were awaiting him. Members of his family, including both his half-brother David and his brother John had been given large tracts of land under the provisions of the Treaty of Fort Jackson. From these tracts, they happily granted Weatherford generous portions.[14]* Collecting the remnants of his former wealth, Weatherford retired to that land on Little River. There, near Mount Pleasant in Monroe County, in a "civilized" home surrounded by a beautiful grove of majestic oaks, the gallant chieftain began his life as a planter.[15] It was on the banks of Little River, not far from the site of Fort Mims, that William Weatherford remained until his death.[16]

When Weatherford learned the whereabouts of his dark-eyed maiden Sofath, he went to see her, hoping to bring her to his new home. He had missed her greatly. His war bride greeted him at the door and asked him in. He stood in the doorway, unable to take his

*Lee Harris, Professor of History at Troy State University, Troy, Alabama, stated that Weatherford was given 240 acres by David Tate.

wait for his war bride to join him.

On March 9, 1824, at the age of 44, the mighty warrior breathed his last,[169] and according to the beliefs of his people, had now gone to live in the world of the spirits. In life, he had provided for his family, was an active an intrepid warrior, lived a just and upright life, and did good deeds. Now he would live in a warm, pleasant country, lush with green flowering savannas and large forests watered by rivers of pure waters. There, the deer and game would be plentiful, the sky peaceful and unclouded, and once again he would enjoy a fullness of uninterrupted pleasure.[170]

Before his death, Weatherford asked to be buried beside his Creek mother Sehoy III, Princess of the Wind.[171] Buried as he lived, in a lonely, secluded spot,[172] he now sleeps beside her on the "brickyard place" of David Tate not far from the mouth of Little River in Baldwin County.[173] Nearby is the old James D. Driesbach home,[174] on the same spot that he had made the talk to his warriors on the eve of the Fort Mims massacre.[175] A few miles from his grave on the Alabama River is the old Weatherford plantation.[176] The following notice appeared in the Mobile paper:

"Weatherford the Prophet."

> This celebrated Savage warrior is at length vanquished; the destroyer is conquered; the hand which so profusely dealt death and desolation among "the whites" is now motionless. He died at his late residence near Montpelier, in this state, on the 9th of March. His deeds of war are well known to the early settlers in South Alabama, and will be remembered by them while they live, and be talked of with horror by generations yet unborn; but his dauntless spirit has taken its flight—"he has gone to the land of his fathers."
>
> "Billy Weatherford," denominated "the prophet," was about one fourth Indian, some say, "a half-breed," his white ancestry Scottish. He is said to have boasted of having "no Yankee [American] blood in his veins."
>
> "It is due to the relatives of this distinguished barbarian to say, that they were generally friendly to the whites, [of the United States] many of whom rendered valuable services to us, while exposed to the combined hostilities of both red and white savages."[177]

Weatherford was survived by his wife, Mary Stiggins, and four of his children: three sons—Charles, Alexander, and Washington; and one daughter—Levita.[178] Also left to mourn the loss of the noble chieftain was Sofath Kaney and Weatherford's son William.[179] The faithful black stallion that had carried him safely through all the perils of the war was later owned by a farmer in Stockton, Alabama.[180]

Dying in the same year as Weatherford was the famed Choctaw Chieftain Pushmataha at age sixty. Since he had served the Americans, and aided in the defeat of Weatherford and the Red Sticks, Pushmataha was signally honored and buried in the Congressional Cemetery. His funeral cortege in Washington was over a mile long. An impressive monument was erected at his grave while the lowly grave of the daring war chief of the Red Sticks remained unmarked 181 and unnoticed by all except his family. In 1928, the Baldwin County Historical Society marked the lonely grave of the noble chieftain 182 with a cairn of native stone on which was placed a plain tablet of Tennessee marble bearing the following inscription:

William Weatherford
"Red Eagle"
1765-1824 [183]

Although the marker gives the year of Weatherford's birth as 1765, most historians agree that he was born in 1780.[184]

Not long after the death of William Weatherford, Sofath Kaney rendered her soul to the Great White Spirit and once again joined her handsome chieftain, Red Eagle. Upon Sofath's death, Weatherford's

Very few Indians appeared, and none of the leading Upper Town chiefs were present.[136] The meetings began December 27, with the commissioners from Georgia accusing the Creeks of refusing to return their property, mainly runaway slaves, as they had promised to do in earlier treaties. The Creek chiefs appointed William McIntosh to answer the charges. He pointed out that the prior treaties referred to by the commissioners had been signed by only part of the Creek Nation, and by none of the Seminoles.[137]

The new year saw the negotiations dragging slowly on. The commissioners charged the Creeks with the responsibility of having the Seminoles return the runaway slaves. As always, when the talks drew to a close, the Creeks were offered an exchange of lands, acre for acre. They could move to eastern lands where they could return to their old lifestyle of hunting. The problem was that Creeks no longer relied on hunting as they now grew their main food supply. Stating that they would therefore prefer to remain where they were than cross the Mississippi in search of game, they also pointed out that they had made a new law. Those who abandoned their land in the pursuit of game would be deprived of their rights in the Creek Nation. McIntosh, however, proposed that, "in the event of any town or towns wishing to cross the Mississippi, the nation would be willing to give up their land to the United States for lands there."

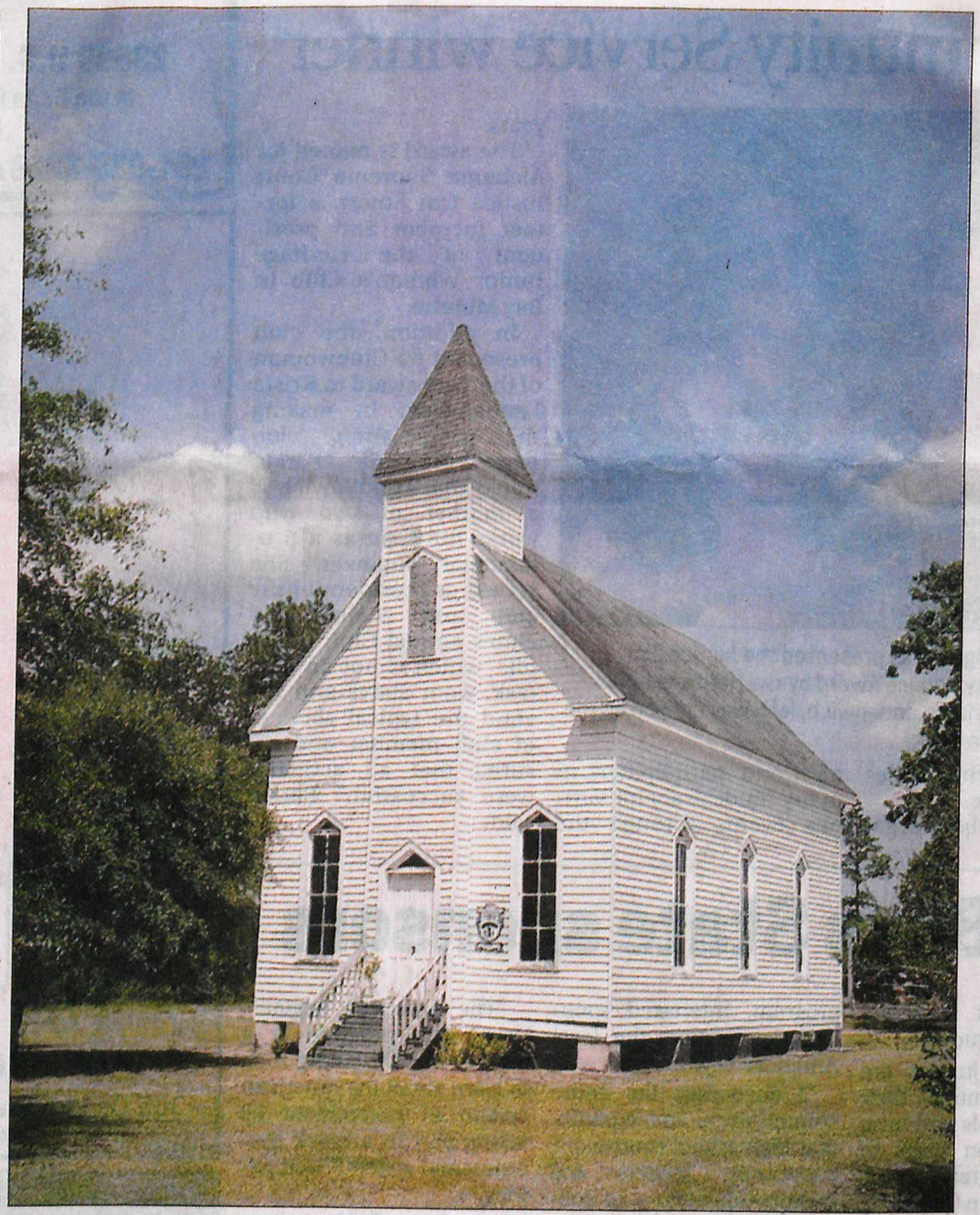
The chief of Tuckabatchee stood in protest. "McIntosh knows that we are bound by our laws, and that what is done in the public square in general council is not binding on our people." Turning to the commissioners the chief continued, "That is the only talk I have for you, and I shall return home."

Unfortunately for the Creek Nation, the commissioners accepted the signatures of McIntosh and his thirty-six followers as binding upon the entire nation. When the council ended, 6,748 square miles, or 4,318,720 acres of Creek land had been ceded to the United States. In the words of the commissioners, "no tract of land within the Indian boundary is as fertile or desirable as the land now ceded."[138] The Creeks, misled by the commissioners, believed they would be receiving ten cents an acre for their land, when they would actually receive less than seven cents. Damage claims turned in by the Georgians amounted to $100,589, making the total purchase price for tne precious Creek land $300,589. The Creek Nation was charged for all black slaves carried off by the British during the War of 1812, as well as those who had sought refuge among the Seminoles. Hearings on these depredation claims took place in Georgia, but the Creeks were not allowed to attend. The difference between the $100,589 actually paid and the $250,000 set aside to pay debts the Creeks owed the Georgians remained in the federal treasury, and nothing was ever said about returning it to the Creek Nation.[139]

The Creeks were more determined than ever that no more land would be ceded. They had only ten million acres left, but it was fertile and rich, containing the ancient sites of their towns and the burial grounds of their people. A law forbidding further sales was passed as early as July, 1817, and McIntosh, as speaker of the National Council, was the first to proclaim it publicly. He was also charged with the major responsibility of enforcing the law. Yet, at the Indian Springs council, he had argued that the law should be suspended in order for the Creeks to pay their debt to Georgia and thirty-six headmen, his followers, reluctantly agreed. After the treaty was signed, however, a majority of the Creeks became greatly dissatisfied; some even threatened the life of McIntosh. The National Council was ready to enforce the death penalty for anyone who sold anymore Creek lands.[140]

In February, John Crowell was appointed to replace Mitchell, the Indian agent who was found guilty of dealing in slaves and removed from his position. The Creeks found a friend in Crowell. The first thing he did was stop any involvement McIntosh had in receiving or paying the Creeks' annuities. Finding many still unpaid for their losses in the war, and that others entitled to a reserve of land under the Treaty of Fort Jackson had not received justice, Crowell wrote to the secretary of war. He sincerely wanted to see that the Creeks were treated fairly.[141]

In May, Tate and the Weatherfords bid farewell to Old Hickory who was leaving Fort Montpelier, erected on Tate's homestead near Weatherford's plantation, to set out for Florida. He had resigned from the army to become Governor of this newly acquired territory. Thus began his political career.[142] In September, three leading Seminole



Montpelier Methodist Church in Stockton could one day be a part of Baldwin County Bicentennial Park if county officials can get funding to move the historic building. (Photo courtesy of the George F. Landegger Collection of Alabama Photographs, Library of Congress)

HISTORY LESSON

Officials eye Montpelier Methodist

3 June 2012

Church from one of county's most storied communities may be next addition to Bicentennial Park

By Connie Baggett
cbaggett@press-register.com

BAY MINETTE — Bicentennial Park's recreated village may get an authentic addition if commissioners can find the money to move Montpelier Methodist Church the 18 miles it will take.

Officials said they were looking at cost estimates and hoped private organizations would fund the move after learning that the late 1800s/early 1900s structure was available.

"I found out the Earle family was interested in seeing the church moved to the park," said Lynn Hastie Bozone, who has been active in historic preservation efforts as was her mother, the late Davida Hastie. "They wanted to donate it to the county or else have it torn down to avoid having it deteriorate. They

See Church, Page 6

Church

3 June 2012

continued from page 1

are all interested in seeing it preserved."

Bozone said she knew county officials were planning to build a replica of an early church on the park site, and floated the idea to commissioners to see if they were interested in moving an actual church instead.

"It is in wonderful condition," Bozone said. "It has the original pews and pulpit, oil lamps and stained glass windows — it is in immaculate shape." She said all the building needs is a church bell.

Local historical accounts say Montpelier, north of Stockton on Ala. 59, started out as a military encampment after the Fort Mims Massacre in 1812.

Fort Montpelier or Cantonment Montpelier housed Andrew Jackson's troops and it was there that Jackson resigned from his commission after the Battle of New Orleans. He and his wife, Rachel, stayed at the home of the Earle family for five weeks at the time the victorious Jackson resigned on May 31, 1821.

By 1856 Montpelier was a thriving community, but the grand Earle home burned in the 1880s. The family rebuilt across the road in 1884 and that home still stands.

By 1889, the community name was listed as Blacksher, likely named after the postmaster at the time. In 1910, there were six general stores in the town. Now few buildings from that heyday remain besides the Methodist church, which is no longer used for services.

Commissioner Tucker Dorsey said moving the church would be a great addition to the historical park, but the cost of moving might stifle the plan.

"We had talked about having an 'old timey' church there," Dorsey said. "It really all comes down to money. It would be good for the long-term plan for the park. I just hope we can get some help fundraising to get it moved. It would be nice for weddings and other events at the park. We would take care of it if the folks can help us get it there."

Commissioner Charles "Skip" Gruber agreed.

"It would be a great addition," Gruber said, "but it all depends on what it's going to cost us."

In correspondence with staff and community members about the church, Commissioner Frank Burt said, "I know of no more befitting place for this Historical Treasure than at Baldwin County's Bicentennial Park."

Commission Chairman Bob James directed staff members to get estimates on moving the church and prepare an item for discussion at the next work session.

BALDWIN COUNTY

20 January 2013

DAR learns story of Montpelier church

Submitted article

Historic Montpelier Methodist Church was the topic at the recent meeting of the Fort Mims Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. Martha Earle Smith took the members back in time. During her presentation, Smith told of her family connection to the little church in Blachsher. Her brother Thomas John Earle, recently donated the church to Baldwin County to be relocated to Stockton's Bicentennial Park.

Montpelier Church was built around 1895 in north Baldwin County. Families attending the church and listed on early church registers include the following: Boyles, Davis, Earle, Hart, Files, Holmes, McCall, Swanson, Steadham, Ferguson, Watts, Myles, Bradley, Miles, McNeill, and McNeal. By the early 1940s, active members were predominantly members of the Earle family, as well as members of the Bradley, Chason, Miles, Witherington and Woolfe families.

At that time, the community was known as Montpelier.

Chapter members were informed that after the massacre at Fort Mims in 1813, two more forts were built, Fort Montgomery and Fort Montpelier.

The Earle plantation, Montpelier, was one of the first to rebound after the Fort Mims tragedy.

When Gen. Andrew Jackson and his wife, Rachel, came to the area during the Pensacola Campaign, Mrs. Jackson stayed about three months as a guest in the Earle home.

Fort Montpelier housed Andrew Jackson's troops and it was there that Jackson resigned from his commission after the battle of New Orleans.

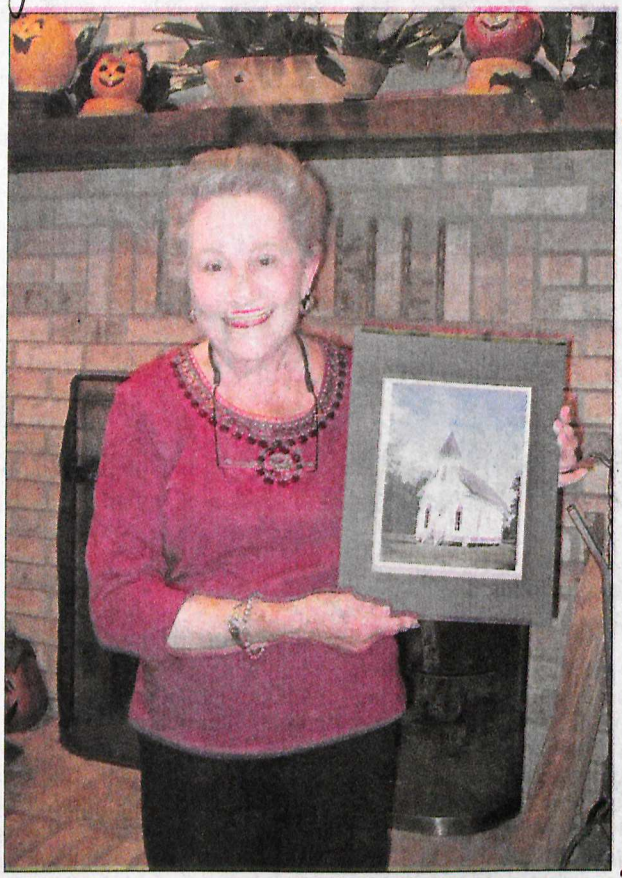
In the early 1900s, the community name was changed from Montpelier to Blacksher when a post office was established there by Jeptha and Uriah Blacksher.

The family of Thomas John Earle was the last generation to grow up in Montpelier Methodist Church.

Over the years the congregation dwindled and by the early 1970s, the United Methodist Church stopped holding regular services there.

The Earle family has continued to maintain the building through the years. Once moved to Bicentennial Park it is hoped it will once again become a vital part of the community, serving as a venue for weddings and club meetings.

Following her presentation, Smith led the group to the church where members enjoyed touring it. Baldwin County Commissioner Frank Burt was on hand to answer questions about the upcoming relocation.



Martha Earle Smith holds a picture of the church, which is closely linked to her family history. (Courtesy/Jerry Sherrell)

Montpelier

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BALDWIN COUNTY

Church cut into sections, moved to new park home

Thyrie Bland
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Thomas John Earle had mixed emotions Thursday as movers used cranes to slowly and carefully lifted the roof off his family's church.

It was one of the last steps in a two-week process to get Montpelier Methodist Church ready to be moved from the Blacksher community to Bicentennial Park in Stockton.

"It was like cutting a finger off or something like that to see it go," said Earle, 68. "Back in rural country life, the church was where you got to see everybody."

Earle donated the church to Baldwin County with the condition that it be put at the park. The county plans to make the church an exhibit at the park's 19th Century Village and rent it out for events such as weddings and meetings.

"We are not able to have enough membership to continue having a church," Earle said. "I was going to have to spend a lot money on it to bring it up to par. I wanted to see the community or the people be able to share it more."

The church, which is made of heart pine, was built in 1895. It sat down a dirt road that runs off Alabama 59 near T.J. Earle Road in rural northern Baldwin County.

Cranes lift the roof from Montpelier Methodist Church, which will be rebuilt in Bicentennial Park in Stockton. (Thyrie Bland/tbland@al.com)

There has not been an active congregation at the church in at least 40 years. The last gathering there was a funeral service in the late 1960s for one of Earle's cousins.

The church is decorated with stained glass windows and chandeliers. A steeple sits atop the church. The church's pews can seat 50 to 60 people.

A few people gathered on the church property, some of them taking pictures, as the movers prepared the church for its 22-mile journey to the park.

"This is going to be beautiful at the park," said Georgene Conner of Stockton. "It will bring much happiness. It's going to live on for a different mission."

County workers cleared the inside contents of the church so Ducky Johnson House Movers could move it.

The moving company, which has appeared on Home & Garden Television, bid $49,950 for the church project. The county collected donations to help pay for the cost of the move.

The church was moved to Bicentennial Park in three pieces.

The steeple was taken off the top of the church Wednesday and put in a trailer.

The moving company took its time with the roof, using power saws to separate it from the body of the church, said Donald Barbee, project manager.

"That's why it took four days," he said. "Normally, it would have taken a couple of days. They were real particular with it."

The roof was placed on a platform dolly. A low-profile dolly was put underneath the church. The three pieces — the roof, steeple and body — left Blacksher shortly before noon Wednesday headed to the park.

The three vehicles pulling the pieces moved at a snail's pace along Alabama 59 to County Road 21. The vehicles then got back onto Alabama 59 and proceeded to the park on Alabama 225.

Earle said it is going to be tough for him to drive along Alabama 59 near T.J. Earle Road and not see the church.

He has fond memories from his childhood of listening to his late mother play an organ at the church and of playing outside the church.

"I hate to see it go," he said. "I am glad in another way to see it. My momma and daddy both told me, 'Nothing in life lasts forever. Everything changes.' And it's time for a change."

Montgelier -

6/20/12

Baldwin County commissioners are seeking donations to help pay the estimated $70,000 cost of moving Montpelier Methodist Church from Blacksher to Bicentennial Park. (Register file photo)

County asks donations to pay for church move

Montpelier Methodist at Blacksher would be part of 19th Century Village at Bicentennial Park

By Connie Baggett
cbaggett@press-register.com

BAY MINETTE — Baldwin County commissioners solicited donations Tuesday to help defray the estimated $70,000 cost of moving Montpelier Methodist Church from Blacksher to Bicentennial Park some 18 miles south.

"It would almost be a sin to see it demolished," Commissioner Frank Burt said.

The historical structure built just before 1900 will be demolished by the owners of the property where it now stands if the county declines the donation.

"We will reach out for support from Methodists and Baptists" and others who can donate toward the project, Burt said. Donations would be tax deductible, he said.

Archives Director John Jackson said the commission should be able to give the Earle family an answer by July 3.

"We plead with residents of Baldwin County, anyone" who can make a donation specifying the gift for the church project to do so, Burt said.

Commissioners Tucker Dorsey and Charles "Skip" Gruber both voiced support for preserving the structure if funding can be secured.

Commission Chairman Bob James said the building could eventually be rented out as a site for weddings at the county's park on Ala. 225 in Stockton.

"It would be a very valuable asset to Bicentennial Park," Jackson said.

Baldwin officials had planned to build a 19th Century Village at the park, including a replica of a church similar to the Montpelier building.

The church in north Baldwin is in excellent condition, officials said, with original furnishings and fixtures as well as stained glass windows.

Alabama

Baldwin County officials eye Montpelier Methodist for Bicentennial Park

By Connie Baggett, Press-Register
Follow on Twitter
on June 04, 2012 at 8:41 AM, updated June 04, 2012 at 1:46 PM

BAY MINETTE, Alabama — Bicentennial Park's recreated village may get an authentic addition if commissioners can find the money to move Montpelier Methodist Church the 18 miles it will take.

Officials said they were looking at cost estimates and hoped private organizations would fund the move after learning that the late 1800s/early 1900s structure was available.

"I found out the Earle family was interested in seeing the church moved to the park," said Lynn Hastie Bozone, who has been active in historic preservation efforts as was her mother, the late Davida Hastie. "They wanted to donate it to the county or else have it torn down to avoid having it deteriorate. They are all interested in seeing it preserved."

Bozone said she knew county officials were planning to build a replica of an early church on the park site, and floated the idea to commissioners to see if they were interested in moving an actual church instead.

"It is in wonderful condition," Bozone said. "It has the original pews and pulpit, oil lamps and stained glass windows — it is in immaculate shape." She said all the building needs is a church bell.

Local historical accounts say Montpelier, north of Stockton on Ala. 59, started out as a military encampment after the Fort Mims Massacre in 1812.

Fort Montpelier or Cantonment Montpelier housed Andrew Jackson's troops and it was there that Jackson resigned from his commission after the Battle of New Orleans. He and his wife, Rachel, stayed at the home of the Earle family for five weeks at the time the victorious Jackson resigned on May 31, 1821.

By 1856 Montpelier was a thriving community, but the grand Earle home burned in the 1880s. The family rebuilt across the road in 1884 and that home still stands.

By 1889, the community name was listed as Blacksher, likely named after the postmaster at the time. In 1910, there were six general stores in the town. Now few buildings from that heyday remain besides the Methodist church, which is no longer used for services.

Commissioner Tucker Dorsey said moving the church would be a great addition to the historical park, but the cost of moving might stifle the plan.

"We had talked about having an 'old timey' church there," Dorsey said. "It really all comes down to money. It would be good for the long-term plan for the park. I just hope we can get some help fundraising to get it moved. It would be nice for weddings and other events at the park. We would take care of it if the folks can help us get it there."

Commissioner Charles "Skip" Gruber agreed.

"It would be a great addition," Gruber said, "but it all depends on what it's going to cost us."

In correspondence with staff and community members about the church, Commissioner Frank Burt said, "I know of no more befitting place for this Historical Treasure than at Baldwin County's Bicentennial Park."

Commission Chairman Bob James directed staff members to get estimates on moving the church and prepare an item for discussion at the next work session.

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