

Washington County Historical Society

P.O. Box 1088, Sandersville, Georgia 31082

Brown House Museum
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Genealogical Research Museum
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Newsletter

January 2000

Jan. 24 meeting features local authors of Oconee history

Local authors Diane Hodges Pierce, Regina Hodges Mensing and Rebecca Smith Hodges will discuss the history of Oconee and tell about their book, "History of Oconee, Georgia, the Town and the Community" at the Jan. 24 meeting of the Historical Society. Meeting time is 7:30 p.m., place is the Civic Room at Washington EMC.

Diane and Regina are sisters, who responded to their grandmother's request about a burial place for a relative by visiting area cemeteries. That research led to reading old funeral home records and searching through old newspapers. After a while, they met with their former high school English teacher, Rebecca Hodges, and she compiled their notes into a 200 page volume.

The book basically covers the period from 1840 through 1945, with a small amount of history before and after that period. There are a lot of names and dates which will make it good research material for others to use.

"We wrote this for the people of Oconee," said Diane adding that they were inspired by their visits to neglected ceme-

teries, learning the reasons people died. "Many women died in childbirth, and they were just children themselves, just 13 or 14," she recalled.

"At one time, Oconee was a big town," Diane continued, adding that the Cleveland-Oconee Lumber Company had over 300 employees. "There was a hotel in Oconee - The Snell House." A good bit of their information came from interviews with local residents. The sisters pulled copies of Oconee News columns written by their great-great-uncle, Henry Jordan Hodges, who wrote from 1890 to 1900. He had eight daughters, and all but one of them married, so there were descendants to talk with and learn about him.

They credit some of their research came from help provided by the Society Genealogy Research Committee.

After the compilation, they located a printer and a hard cover book is the result. They ordered 200 copies last fall, sold the first one in September and the books are nearly gone.

The book sells for \$35 and the authors will have a few copies available at the meeting.

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Brown House Museum restoration wins top Georgia Society award

by Mary Alice Jordan

I have just received a very exciting letter from the Georgia Historical Society. The first paragraph reads:

"It is my very great pleasure to inform you that the Washington County Historical Society's submission, "Restoration of the Historic Brown House," has been selected as first place winner in the Preservation category of the Roger Warlick Local History Achievement Awards. Congratulations!"

The award will be presented at the Awards Luncheon during the Georgia Local History Conference on Feb. 4-5.

Portraits come home

For about 125 years portraits of William Gainor Brown and his wife Maria, hung in the hallway. They were the first Browns to live in the house. The portraits were removed by the descendants sometime in the 1970s to keep them safe.

The portraits are back, hanging in the hallway, returned to the Brown House by recent visitors and descendants Mr. and Mrs. R.M. Brown III of Texas and Dr. Hal Brown of California. They also returned a gun, made in London and given as a gift to William G. Brown in the 1850s. The very handsome portraits and the gun are exciting additions to the Museum collection. The Browns also brought back some coin table silver made by an itinerant silversmith on the back porch of the house in the 1850s, using silver from Mexican coins.

(Please turn to Brown House on the back page.)

President's Notes... by Jo Cummings

After hosting a successful "Ramble" for the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, we know how to have fun with those warm and enthusiastic preservationists. But the Georgia Trust is more than a fun time. Other important activities that boost preservation and can come to us if we but reach for them.

One is its "Revolving Fund" which works to "Hold" historic properties and assist sellers in contacting preservation-minded buyers. The Trust seldom actually purchases property outright. It is like a marriage broker bringing two willing partners together. This could prove useful in our towns and country-wide. Think about it!

Another unique service is "Heritage Education" curriculum. The Trust, with local teachers, writes a course of study tailored to us using primary and secondary sources - diaries, census records, maps, photography, oral histories, newspapers and historic sites - as teaching tools. Its gains would help our youth develop a sense of place and of stewardship; to gain insight into their communities' development and history; to appreciate cultural and folk traditions of their communities. And we would gain historic devotees. Think about it!

We are proud that the Brown House restoration has been recognized by the Georgia Historical Society. Horses can win the Triple Crown. We hope that restoration project can win the "Double Crown" and also be recognized by the Georgia Trust.

Monday's meeting should be a great program featuring local authors. Come if you can and bring friends and neighbors.

Jo



Jan. 2000

Genealogy Committee receives grant

This committee has received a \$750 grant to improve the repository collection with the help of a professional archivist.

The Old Jail Genealogical Research Center has been getting a face lift from the commissioners. We are grateful for their work on the porch and the roof.

The Committee is compiling a book on "Memories of Yesteryear" and need your input.

Do you remember when there was no indoor plumbing, wash day meant scrub boards and lye soap, and everyone went to school in a one-room building? If so, we want to hear from you.

A suggested list of topics appears here, but others will be considered. Submissions may include stories, anecdotes or information on the topics as well as unique recipes.

Write about: making candles, soap, butter, syrup, clothing, baskets, rugs; quilting, canning - preserving, cooking or wash day.

Other topics: home remedies, herbal remedies, medical folklore, doctor visits, early doctor fees; ice cream socials, church events, Brooks Springs; school days and subjects studied; farm machinery and implements, hog killing, meat curing, harvest time, the ice wagon; ice houses, smoke houses, root cellars; and funeral customs and practices.

Send your stories to Genealogy Committee, P.O. Box 6088, Sandersville, GA 31082.

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Time to Renew Your Membership

by Ray Hollingsworth

It's that time again! The membership committee is in the process of sending out Year 2000 membership renewal forms. We encourage everyone to not only renew your membership, but also to invite others to join the Historical Society.

The year 1999 was very successful for the Society with a lot of recognition and we'll need all the help we can get to make 2000 even better!

You may renew your dues at the meeting Jan. 24 or by sending the appropriate amount to P.O. Box 6088, Sandersville 31082.

Dues are \$10 for individuals, \$12 for families, \$2 for students and \$100 for life memberships.

Brown House ... (continued from Front Page)

R.M. Brown and his brother Hal Brown lived in the house for a time when they were boys. They are *very* pleased with the restoration.

Museum utilized for other events

On January 6, the Balls Ferry Historic Park Association met at the Brown House. History related groups such as the DAR, Sons of Confederate Veterans, 49th Regiment and the World War II Veterans Memorial Committee have met at the house.

We purchased and were given a number of items from the Newman Estate: Pollard's two-volume History of the Civil War written in 1866, a World War I bayonet, some Mark Newman related items and some history books.

We are so pleased with our volunteer hostesses, many of whom had not been a museum hostess before. We are very grateful to all of them.

The Brown House Museum is open Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, 2-5 p.m. Admission is free. Donations are always welcome.

1999-2000 Officers - Committee Chairs

President - Jo Cummings

Vice-President/Membership - Ray Hollingsworth

Secretary - Martha Armstrong

Treasurer - Katy McCoy

Directors:

Marilyn Daniel, Carolyn Fordham, Gwen Hall,
Allen Hodges, Gladys Spight and Tommy Walker

African-American Heritage - Katie S. Poole

Brown House Museum - Mary Alice Jordan

History Book Chair - Mary Alice Jordan

Cemetery Chair - Glenda Ruth Johnson

Genealogy Chair - Amanda Logue

Historic Sites/Districts - Adam Martin

Hospitality - Gladys Spight

Living History - open

March to the Sea - Johnny Wilbanks

Program Chair - Deborah Rhodes

Society Program Meeting
Monday, Jan. 24, 7:30 p.m.
EMC Civic Room