

YESTERDAY



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TODAY

Newsletter of the
LOWNDES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Before American Idol There was The Original Amateur Hour

By Donald O. Davis

When people ask the source of our newsletter article topics, the answer often is, "They come in the front door of the museum." A few weeks ago Susie McKey Thomas' son Lynn Thomas of Dallas, Texas, donated a full set of the 1963-64 Valdosta High School student newspapers the *Dosta Outlook*. He was a sports editor for the paper that year and was given a complete bound set by the newspaper faculty adviser Ann D. Moncus.

An article in these newspapers provided the specific time and information about an event that I had wanted to write about since the television program "American Idol" became so popular - the appearance of Marianne Cousart and Ann Golden on "The Original Amateur Hour" hosted by Ted Mack. From this information I contacted Ann Golden Embry and she provided copies of additional information that her mother, Lillian Golden, had preserved.

"The Original Amateur Hour" program began before television in 1934 as a radio broadcast. It was an instant success. Major Edward Bowes hosted the radio edition. The show ran on television from 1948 until 1970 with Ted Mack as host. Some that got their start on this program included Frank Sinatra, Pat Boone, Nick Carter, Gladys Knight, Ann- Margaret, Robert Kline, Beverly Sills, Connie Francis, Maria Callas, Joey Dee, Robert Merrill, Jim Stafford and many others. Willard Scott, now on NBC'S Today Show, hosted a cable version for short time after the Ted Mack era.

Marianne and Ann were Valdosta High School juniors when they appeared on the "Ted Mack Original Amateur Hour" in 1964. They began singing together during the eighth grade at Valdosta Junior High School. During recess they used to sit in a ditch on campus and practice harmonizing. They continued with their duet singing, naming themselves The Dormets, and performed at churches, school, civic groups and the Miss VSC Calendar Girl Beauty Pageant.

They had been encouraged to apply to audition for the "Ted Mack Amateur Hour", wrote them, and learned of an upcoming audition in Jacksonville. After the audition Ann said that "We sang better than we ever have before." The girls were soon told that they were selected to be on the show. They left for Miami Beach, Florida, February 9 where the television show would be taped, and then shown on CBS, WCTV Channel 6 on March 1.



Marianne Cousart and Ann Golden

In the *Dosta Outlook* interview both ladies described their venture into television as "Great." The article further quoted Ann, "Getting behind the scenes of television and meeting so many people was really amazing." They did not feel nervous, even with an audience of over 2,000 people.

Ann and Marianne did very well in the voting, but in the format of the Ted Mack show, only the winner continued, rather than like "American Idol" today, where one or two are excused, and most continue for a while. Launched in October 2005, the official website of the program is www.originalamateurhour.com/.

33rd Annual History 100 Dinner

Thursday, May 29, 2008
Valdosta Country Club

6 p.m. Social
7 p.m. Dinner

VSU-Centennial Years Salute

(Save the date, complete information soon)

Crescent Corners

By Donald O. Davis

Having recently attended functions at the Crescent, taken and taught a course across the street at VSU Learning in Retirement and seeing the notices about the Board of Elections moving from the corner of Gordon and Patterson Streets to N Oak Street, thoughts went to, "Who used to be the Crescent's neighbors and what did we know about these homes?"

Dr. Alfred Willis, architectural historian and son of LCHS Past President Ed Willis, kindly shares information with us during his visits to Valdosta. He told us that W. S. West was in front of the curve when he began construction of the Crescent (*photo top left*) in 1897 in the classic style rather than Victorian. However attractive, the use of the Victorian style would wane over the next decade.

The homes shown existing in the 1904 City Directory with the Crescent are the Staten, later Dasher, home at 905 N. Patterson (*photo middle left*) and the M. A. Briggs, later Oliver, home at 809 N. Patterson (*photo bottom left*). Al Willis told us that these two homes are characteristic of the Barber and Company of Knoxville, Tennessee, who produced mail order architectural designs. He also told that the homes are a flopped design, one with a left turret with spire top, the other with a right turret and tower top. Sis West May said that even though the Crescent is located on a corner that the address is 904, not 900, and that the homes at 901 and 905 were both directly across the street from the Crescent.

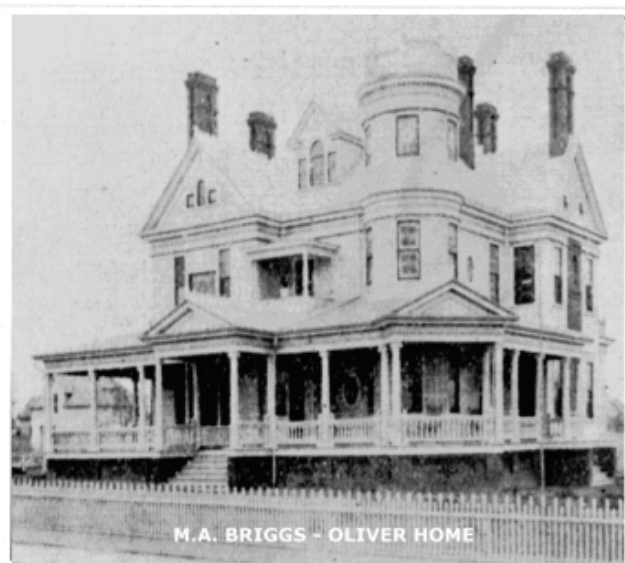
M. A. (Matt) Briggs, then his widow, lived at 809 at least until 1917-18 according to the city directory. Briggs was mayor of Valdosta for the 1904-1906 term. When Briggs died in 1913, accounts state that the funeral services were conducted from the house and that "Automobiles were used to convey the funeral party to the cemetery, it being the first automobile funeral in Valdosta."

Warrington M. (Jack) Oliver, Sr., or family lived in the home for decades. W. Maxwell Oliver, Jr., a son who grew up in the house, became mayor of Valdosta 1960-1964. This family became noted for promoting golf in the area and the annual Jack Oliver Golf Tournament still honors this tradition. The house was demolished about 1962.

In 1964 this address is listed as under construction and in 1965 as the State Employment Security Agency. The Board of Elections was at this address until 2007.

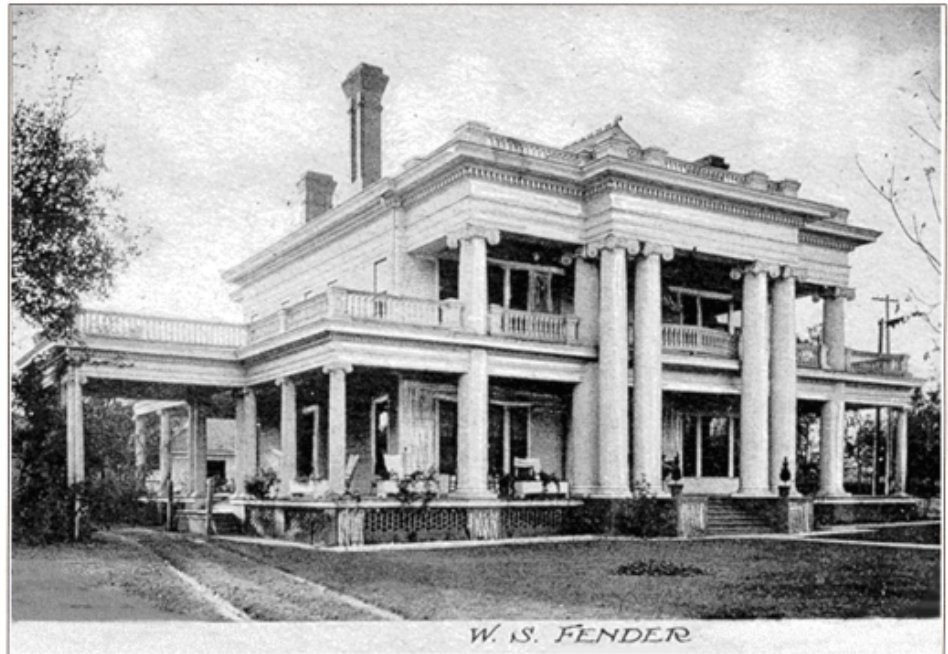
905 N. Patterson is the home of James L. Staten and his wife Lillian in the 1904 city directory. J. L. Staten. Staten owned a department store with separate dry goods, and suits and millinery departments. The Statens show living there through the 1908 city directory. By the 1913-14 city directory the home is occupied by J. Robert Dasher and his wife Mamie. His business activities in the 1930 city directory show Rose and Dasher tobacco warehouse, Planter's Warehouse and Mackey Jewelry Company. He was elected mayor of Valdosta in 1930 and died in office. The house is listed, still with Dasher family, until 1966 when Georgia Power expanded. Susie Thomas recalled this home being a favorite for art students to draw.

Before Valdosta grew, in the 1860s across from the current Crescent area was the Force family farm, formerly belonging to Capt. Patterson who died in the Civil War. The museum has a scan of an 1863 pencil drawing of this structure and grounds



Fender Homes On Patterson

Fender families occupied five homes on North Patterson Street in the very early 1900s. Three occupancies were long term; the two below involving Crescent Corners and the W. L. Fender and wife Texas home at 1110 N. Patterson. This home eventually became The Landmark and is now a private residence. W. S. Fender, Jr., occupied 800 N. Patterson which is listed as the Ashley home by 1917. The first home was destroyed by fire. It is now the location of Smith Tire. The J. F. Fender residence, 1100 N. Patterson, was the J. E. Mathis residence by 1913 and is now the location of Herndon Realty Co.



The homes of father and son Wm. S. Fender and W. Brocius Fender were constructed soon after the W. S. West, Briggs-Oliver, and Staten-Dasher homes. The latter three appear in Valdosta's first City Directory in 1904. The Fender homes appear first in the second city directory in 1908.

The W. S. and Jane Sims Fender home, 808 N. Patterson Street, was immediately south of the Crescent across Gordon Street. The address of the Brocius and Coma Young Fender home was 901 N. Patterson Street, the second home built across the street from the Crescent, and catty-cornered to his parent's home.

W. S. Fender owned the Fender Lumber Company. Arlia Tomlinson wrote in *The Sesquicentennial History of First Baptist Church* that "Deacon W. S. Fender, a large manufacturer of yellow pine lumber, donated the pine woodwork in the interior of the church. He was most painstaking in selecting the pine to be used for the sanctuary interior." W.S. Fender's donation continues to be a beautiful gift to our community.

We have no photograph of the Brocius Fender home. Jane Shelton wrote in *Pines and Pioneers* that "Coma Young and Brocius Fender were the first couple to marry [summer 1900] in the new Baptist church. Guests were unable to use the uncompleted front steps, but they sat in a sanctuary bright with a profusion of electric lights. There were so many, in fact, that the overloaded circuits failed and all the light went out. They soon came back on and the wedding proceeded to a brilliant conclusion." Brocius was also a close first cousin to Henry Sims Morgan, Valdosta's first West Point graduate, who drowned off Tybee Island in 1898 heroically saving others lives.

Brocius Fender is shown at the address through 1923. The 1925 directory list Coma Fender as Brocius had died. For several years in the 1930s and 40s the home is occupied by James B. Copeland. The address shows no listing in the very late 40s and by 1953 is new construction being the Georgia Power and Light office.

W.S. and Jane Fender continue in their home in the 1930-31 city directory. They both died in 1933. The Fender home transferred to Michael W. Fry. The home became the Fry Apartments. The Fender-Fry home continued at the address in the city directory until 1964. In 1965 the address shows under construction and in 1966 Rhodes Furniture. Susie McKey Thomas said that the millwork inside of this home was exceptional.

CRESCENT CORNERS

A United States Senator and President of the Georgia State Senate, W.S. West

Three Mayors of Valdosta

The donor of the impressive woodwork in First Baptist Church sanctuary

The famous golfing Olivers

Our first motorized funeral procession

The first wedding in First Baptist Church, even with no front steps

MEMORIALS

Mary Catherine Pendleton Coffey

by

Mr. and Mrs. John B. Lastinger

Leona Strickland Hudson

by

Donald O. Davis
Lougenia Gillis Gabard

Dr. Noah N. Langdale, Jr.

by

Mr. and Mrs. John B. Lastinger



GEORGE H. FEAGLE



From Feagle To Fabrics

By Donald O. Davis

A few months ago an energetic and patient lady came to the museum looking for an early image of 612 North Patterson Street, currently the accounting firm Culbreth, Minick and Associates, PC. Amy Brown had been asked by business partner Julie Minick to make a drawing of the early image. The early image of George Feagle home, *top left*, is taken from a postcard that shows four individual homes. The appearance of the home has been considerably altered. The front porch columns and balcony have been removed and the side porches enclosed to enlarge the interior space. George Feagle was active in the community. Early hunting and golfing photographs in our archives picture him. He was also a charter member of Valdosta Country Club.

It took a good while to find this image and Amy was very helpful in the pursuit. She returned a few days later with homemade orange zest cinnamon rolls. She is a home economics graduate of the University of Georgia with several courses in historic fabric and design. She kindly offered to identify and categorize textiles in our archives in preparation for a special exhibit. Steve Burrell recorded Amy's descriptions of each item and entered the information into a data base for continued future reference. Amy has given approximately two months of volunteer time to the museum in accomplishing this exhibit. With all that is on exhibit, to fathom the volunteer work Amy gave the museum, understand that the exhibit shows less than twenty percent of the textiles in our archives. In the photograph *bottom left* Amy is shown with her silk embroidery with water color of the Monroe Sutton House in Fairview. It took two years to prepare and is on view at the Arts Center

From the Frontier To the Front Room:

**A Special Display of Clothes,
Hats and Artifacts**

Exhibit Opening Reception:

**Saturday, May 10, 2008
10:00 AM – 2:00 PM**

***Lace Making Demonstration
By Amy Brown***

Tourists Enjoyed Learning During Exhibit Preparation



Above: Mildred Danno and Patti Kler of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, talk to Amy Brown about christening gowns. They had flown south to attend the Suwannee River Music Festival and Mildred made time especially to come see Doc Holliday's home while in the area. **Below:** In the background, daughter, Lisa Hunt of Westfield, Indiana, and mother, Rebecca Okken of Speedway, Indiana, watch as Amy Brown and Steve Burrell open another archive box of early clothing. Mrs. Okken had studied historic apparel and was keenly interested. They and other relatives were spending five nights at the Fairview Inn Bed and Breakfast while visiting family here.



Memberships

*Renewal and new listings
continued from the
January/February newsletter*

Phil and Cathy Alday
 Larry A. Allen, Sr.
 William and Helen Banks
 John and Helen Bennett
 Ronnie and Bebo Blanton
 Ralph and Hilda Brown
 CMSgt. Paul and Sherri Burgess
 Daniel Shaw Coleman
 Virginia Rentz Davison
 Dorothy Dewar
 Mr. and Mrs. Bob Dickerson
 Glenn and Sherri Gregory
 Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hatcher
 Mrs. Opal Herndon
 Clarence and Vi Heidemann
 Ron Irwin
 Jerry and Kay Jennett
 Margaret E. Langdale
 Bill Lastinger
 Hank and Claire Lee
 Judge and Mrs. H. Arthur McLane
 Dr. Chris Meyers
 Mr. and Mrs. Hugh H. McElvey, Jr.
 Mr. and Mrs. Dutton Miller
 Joyce Bullington Paine
 John Pinkston, Jr.
 Ed and Pat Puckett
 Dr. William and Sally Querin
 Sam and Shirley Register
 Fritz H. Scarborough, Jr.
 Charlene Bowen Scholey
 Marcie Swank
 Charles and Leigh Stewart
 John and Helen Thomas
 Valdosta Magazine
 M. Brent Walker
 Lavelle and Lyndal Webb
 Quinnell D. Wiggins
 Richard Wiggins
 Alfred Willis
 Robin Yorke

Dear Members and Friends,

First, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, I want to thank all of you that have renewed your memberships or have become new members. We appreciate all members, active ones and those whose membership simply supports us as a cultural entity.

Our special clothing exhibit begins May 10. Many thanks to Amy Brown. (See the article in this newsletter.) You will get information on the History 100 Dinner soon. It will provide enjoyable glimpses into VSU campus life as a part of the Centennial Celebration, covering proper young ladies through the hippie generation.

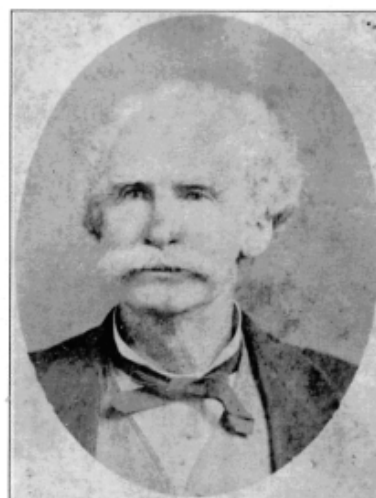
Thanks to Mary McRee, Building & Grounds chair for getting the Master Gardener's involved in assisting with special plantings on the grounds. Thanks to the "Kodak Kids" for their continued help in identifying photographs.

Our gracious thanks to Dr. Ben Jenkins, life member and Cumberland Island resident, whose very generous donation funded stabilization of 1930s and 40s items in our archives.

Patsy Giles, President

Learning About Valdosta's Second Mayor.

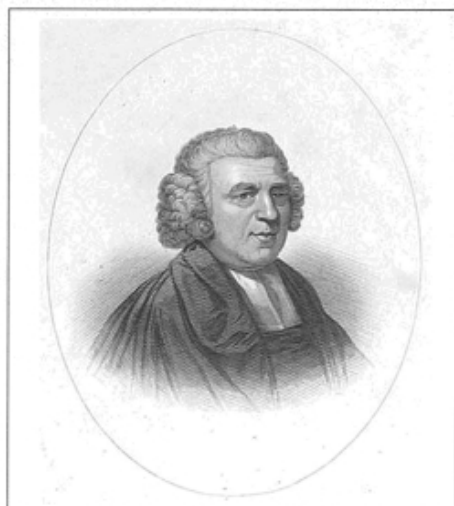
Sisters Eleanor Phillips Barberi of Melbourne, Florida, and Minnie Olivia Hutchison of Live Oak, Florida, (*photo below*) were glad to see that the museum had a photograph of their great grandfather, Rufus Wiley Phillips, the second mayor of Valdosta. He served two terms 1861-1862 and 1862-1863. We had little information on him and found out why. Notes from Mrs. Hutchison's son in New Jersey, dubbed their "official" family researcher, show that Phillips moved to Valdosta in 1860 from Jasper Co. By 1868 he was the Echols Co. state representative in the Georgia legislature. He was a lawyer, minister and later in Suwannee Co., Florida was a judge. He was in his early thirties when mayor. The family said the portrait of Phillips was taken about 1900 and promised more information



Mayor R. W. Phillips b. 1830 – d. 1903

Amazing Grace Odyssey Tour

Youth Pastor Adam Hammand of Belleview, Florida (near Ocala) visited the museum in mid March to see if we had information that would correlate to a spring break tour he was planning for participating youth (*photo below*) in his church. The theme of the tour was the hymn *Amazing Grace*, and the story of its author, John Newton, who in life changed from being a slave ship captain to the repentant writer of the well known hymn. Hammand took the youth to slavery sites in St. Augustine, Kingsley Plantation near Jacksonville, and Jekyll Island. In Valdosta, when they arrived on April 9, we used the "Lowndes to Liberia" stories of Laura Yearby and Laura Lane, among other items, for his theme trip. Learning that day that the specific church of the group was First Baptist of Belleview, we suggested they view the beautiful Valdosta First Baptist sanctuary. Pastor Hammand soon returned telling the youth that after activities at the museum they would sing *Amazing Grace* from the First Baptist sanctuary balcony before leaving Valdosta.



John Newton b. 1725 - d. 1807





Museum and More

Photo upper left: Patricia Winheim of Aschaffenburg, Germany and Thomas Heitzmann of Mannheim, Germany spent two days with us gathering information for a documentary on Doc Holliday. They filmed at the museum, Sunset Hill Cemetery and at the Holliday/ Johnson home. They complemented the museum's archives.

Photo middle left: Michael Black presented the museum a copy of his new book, *Sincerely Frank - : Frank Reade, Professor, President and Camp Director*. In his limited edition book Michael included a digitized audio copy of Frank Reade introducing Eleanor Roosevelt when she spoke at Georgia State Womans College. Our early copy of the audio and the copy in VSU archives are the same only covering the first four minutes of her speech.

Photo bottom left: Eleanor Maxwell Johnson, PhD., of Sandy Springs, Maryland, spent several days at the museum researching her ancestry. Through mitochondria DNA testing she has traced her direct female ancestor to the Camaroon in Africa. She became a LCHS member.

Photo below: Nina McMillan and Andrea Smirthwaite prepared a comparative photograph exhibit of current and former business and government uses of buildings for a redecoration of the City of Valdosta Customer Service Center on N. Lee Street. They got many of their images from the museum's digital and standard archives and are shown with just one of several clusters of photographs. People getting business licenses had inquisitive comments immediately. The exhibit was prepared in recognition of Georgia Cities Week, an annual celebration sponsored by the Georgia Municipal Association and the City of Valdosta.



MUSEUM CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- May 10 10:00 AM until 2:00 PM Garment exhibit reception and opening. Exhibit continues through July
- May 26 Closed in observance of Memorial Day
- May 29 33rd Annual History 100 Dinner

Executive Committee

H. Lamar Cole, Martha N. Gibson, Joseph Tomberlin,
Redden Hart, Anita Shelton, Susie M. Thomas, Julie Smith

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Lowndes County Historical Society

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