

Surgeon's Lecture Highlights September 11th Tragedy

by John Kater Miller

Valdosta surgeon, Dr. Kevin McCowan gave a lecture, entitled "A Time to Pray, A Time for Peace: A Surgeon's Story of 9-11," about his personal experiences of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. Dr. McCowan was at a surgical conference in New York on the morning of the attacks.

The event took place on the seventh anniversary of the attacks in the sanctuary of the First Baptist Church of Valdosta. Mayor John Fretti opened the nights events. The Valdosta Police and Fire Departments provided a color guard that presented the colors. The Woodmen of the World presented flags to the Chief of Police and the Fire Chief. The event lasted for about an hour and was well attended.

Dr. McCowan was born in Anderson South Carolina. He attended Morehouse College in Atlanta, and was the first African-American General Surgeon in Valdosta. He is on the staff at Smith-Northview Hospital.

Dr. McCowan was attending a surgical conference on the morning of the attacks. He and other doctors built makeshift hospitals to aid the injured in office buildings and storefronts.

Unfortunately, Valdosta is intimately familiar with terrorism and its effects. Major Lynn McIntosh was killed in the 1980 rescue attempt to save the embassy staff held hostage by Iranians under the rule of Ayatollah Khomeini. Molly Huckaby Hardy was killed in the Al-Qaeda attacks on the US Embassy to Kenya in Nairobi 1998. She and Lynn McIntosh were schoolmates in the Valdosta High School class on 1964.

Steven Paine, a Valdosta native, worked in the World Trade Center in 2001. He was in Tower Two when the attack occurred. Those in his tower were told that there was nothing to worry about and to return to work. He and other colleagues ignored the announcement, and survived the attacks. The museum has copies of his autobiographical account of the attacks.



Dr. McCowan (*left*) set up a sidewalk hospital in New York after the terrorist attacks. He recently gave a lecture in the sanctuary of First Baptist Church



Valdosta Mayor John Fretti leads the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance as the Honor Guard presents the colors



Patsy Giles, *right*, the president of the Lowndes County Historical Society presents Susie McKey Thomas, *center*, and Earle Sinclair McKey, III, *left*, the first copies of *In Search of the Hollidays* on October 1, 2008.

This Just In!

The reprint of *In Search of the Hollidays: The True Story of Doc Holliday and his Holliday and McKey Families* has just arrived at the museum. The book was written by Susie McKey Thomas and the late Albert Pendleton and was illustrated by Earle Sinclair McKey III. It is an account of the families related to John Henry “Doc” Holliday. The price of the newly printed book is twenty dollars, and is available at the museum’s store.

The new edition of the book contains a few improvements over the 1973 print. The book is bound with a spine and, not spiral bound like its predecessor. A new addendum contains pictures of Holliday and his family, friends, and associates.

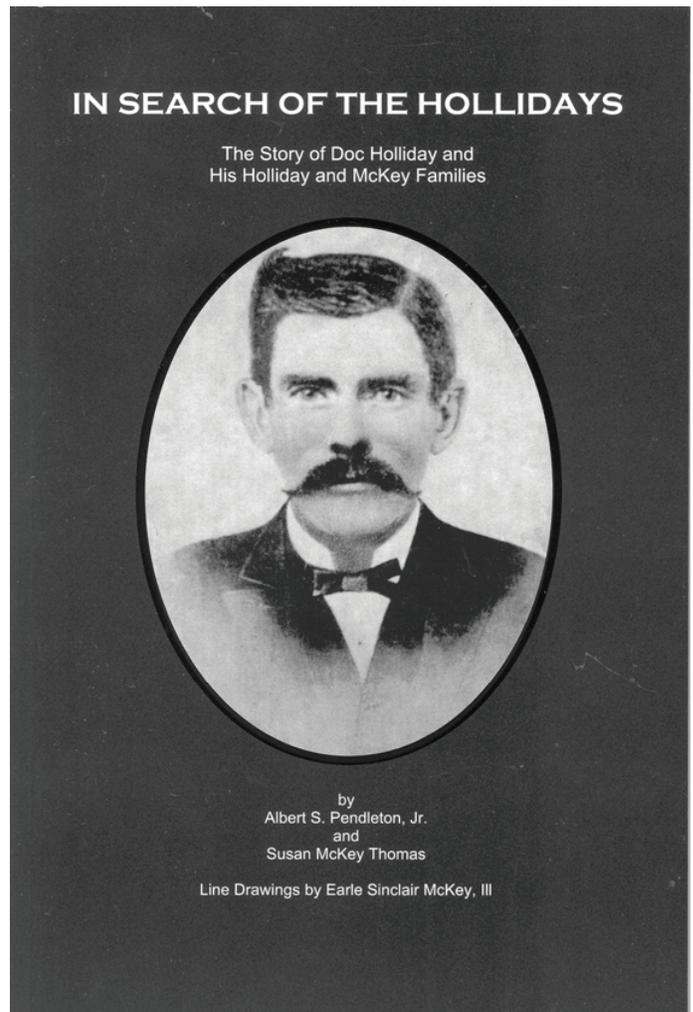
Society Hosts a New Walking Tour Downtown

Do you know where Doc Holliday’s first practice was? Or how a tragedy in Valdosta made the United States a safer place? Or the story of Dr. Brewster who kept a human skeleton in his office?

A new walking tour of downtown Valdosta focuses on the buildings of the town and the early history of the city. The first tour was on Friday, October 17, and coincided with “Art after Dark.” The “Art after Dark” program is designed to bring crowds downtown on the third Friday of every month.

The first walking tour turnout exceeded expectations. The starting point was at Hildegard’s. Steve Burrell, the tour guide, led the group south on Patterson Street. Along the way, he pointed out the building that Doc Holliday used as his first dental office. He also showed where the historic Valdes Hotel was located and offered anecdotes about its existence. Then the tour headed east on Hill Avenue, where Phillip Pendleton was discussed, along with his efforts to preserve the city after the Civil War. The next leg of the tour was north on Ashley Street and the black business district of the past. The tour ended with the last leg heading west on Central Avenue back to the starting point.

The City of Valdosta as asked the museum to continue the tour into the future.



Georgia Southern and Florida Railroad Historical Society Workshop a Success



Dr. Chris Trowell, *above*, of Douglas, Georgia, gave a lecture about the railroads around the Okefenokee Swamp



Dr. Revis Butler, *left*, and James Wheeler, of Valdosta, inspected the South Georgia Railroad depot in Morven. They found some remnants of the old tracks.



Mark Mosley of Warner Robins, the president of the Georgia Southern and Florida Railroad Historical Society, looks over records at the Brooks County Historical Society in Quitman with the help of Jean Logan.

In late September, the Georgia Southern and Florida Railroad Historical Society held a workshop at the Lowndes County Historical Society Museum. They focused on the Valdosta Moultrie and Western Railroad and the Atlantic Valdosta and Western Railroad.

The Valdosta, Moultrie, and Western was a short lived railroad that was to travel between the two named towns. The railroad never actually ran to Moultrie. The railroad had to acquire track rights to travel the rest of the way into Moultrie. It only lasted for a little more than a decade in the 1910's and 1920's.

The workshop began on Friday evening and Ed Willis presented a PowerPoint lecture on the importance of railroads to Valdosta. This PowerPoint can be seen if you set up an appointment with the Museum.

On Saturday morning, more lectures were presented, including one discussing railroading in the Okefenokee Swamp. After lunch, the attendees traveled to Morven to see the depot and to Quitman to visit a former switching yard from the Atlantic, Valdosta, and Western Railroad and to visit the Brooks County Historical Society which houses more information about railroads in South Georgia.

Every year, the Georgia Southern and Florida Railroad society holds workshops at different locations that were once serviced by their namesake railroad.



Dr. Revis and Mrs. Kathy Butler, of Atlanta, stand in front of one of his handcrafted reproductions. This is a model of the railroad depot in Day, Florida.



MEMORIALS



Dr. Joseph H. Brannen

By

Donald O. Davis

Mr. and Mrs. John B. Lastinger

Anita Hatcher Shelton

Dr John C. Huxford

By

Mr. and Mrs. Botie Q. Chitty

Felton Davis

By

Mr. and Mrs. Botie Q. Chitty

Donald O. Davis

Anita Hatcher Shelton

Dennis Hampton

By

Mr. and Mrs. Botie Q. Chitty

Exciting News From Around the Museum

The Museum has had a flurry of construction, repairs, and restructuring of late. Outlined here are some of the improvements that have taken place throughout the summer and fall.

The Lowndes County Historical Museum's Archives Gets an Overhaul

If you have visited the museum in recent weeks, you have probably noticed boxes, files and papers scattered throughout the building. This is because in recent weeks, the staff at the museum worked diligently for the entire summer to reorganize the archives. This included the inventory of over 70,000 items, consisting of, but not limited to, rare photographs, old documents, land surveys, military uniforms and paraphernalia. As these items were catalogued, they were carefully preserved and stabilized so that future deterioration could be avoided.

The next step in this process is incorporating the data into a searchable database, called ARCHON. Once this step is accomplished, it will be possible to search for items in the museum's collection in the comfort of your own home. Then, you can come into the Museum and ask for the specific box required for your research.



Emily Crews, a Valdosta State University Student from Hortense, Georgia, standing in front of the newly cataloged archives. She is one of the museum's staff that was instrumental in the reorganization of the extensive amount of materials.



Jason Frost (*left*) and John Miller assess the damage to the bell's wheel

The Institute Bell Gets Serviced

The bell that once hung at the Valdosta Institute was damaged a few weeks ago during Tropical Storm Fay. High winds detached the rope from the wheel and yoke, making it impossible to ring. Jason Frost and John Miller climbed into the belfry to reattach the rope to the 119 year old bell.

Jason no longer works at the museum, because is a training at the Tifton Police Academy to become a police officer with the Valdosta Police Department. We wish him well.

Forgotten Treasures Tucked Away into the Museum's Archives

During the massive reorganization project at the museum's archives, the staff has uncovered many treasures that have been long forgotten. Among the items rediscovered are two rare newspapers; one from Savannah, printed in 1864 that warns of Sherman's approaching army. The other is a newspaper printed in 1811 in Charlestown, Virginia.

The staff uncovered many postcards of early Valdosta that depict demolished buildings. These postcards are the only records of some of these structures. In addition, postcards are easy to date using postmark dates.

Employees also uncovered a very rare set of work clothes that date from around 1850. They are unusual because people are more apt to save military and formal attire; work clothes were used to create quilts and rags.

New Additions to the Museum's Backyard Are Completed



Above, a view of the kiosk. Below, L-R Chris Johnson, Todd Earp, and Roger Johnson stand in front of their creation



In addition to all of the other improvements to the museum, the backyard now has new structures to help tell stories of yore. They include a kiosk, which was constructed next to the newly renovated caboose, and a chimney and fireplace for the sugarcane kettle.

The idea behind these additions is both aesthetic and functional. The planned backyard project is going to be a timeline of Lowndes County history from the native Timucuan Indians to the advent of train travel. These projects help advance this ongoing plan.

The kiosk for the caboose is designed to resemble a train depot. It has a protective roof that extends over the deck and has mock windows. The mock windows will soon house information about the railroads of early Valdosta, and how they facilitated change and progress in the area.

The kiosk has practical applications as well. The steps leading to the caboose are steep, and difficult to negotiate. The builders added a safer, more reasonable staircase so that there is less opportunity for injury for visitors.

The chimney and fireplace added onto the sugar cane kettle is functional, not a façade so the kettle can be operational. Future plans include building a shed around the kettle.

These additions supplement the existing sugarcane farming implements already housed at the Museum. The museum already boasted a mule-driven cane press, which extracted cane juice, a cast-iron kettle, which boiled juice into syrup, and a small patch of sugarcane.



These masons had to erect scaffoldings to complete the chimney, which stands twelve feet tall.

L-R Ernest Foster Jr., Ernest Foster, and Shepherd Jackson stand in front of their structure

The Valdosta Boy who was mayor of New York

By John Kater Miller

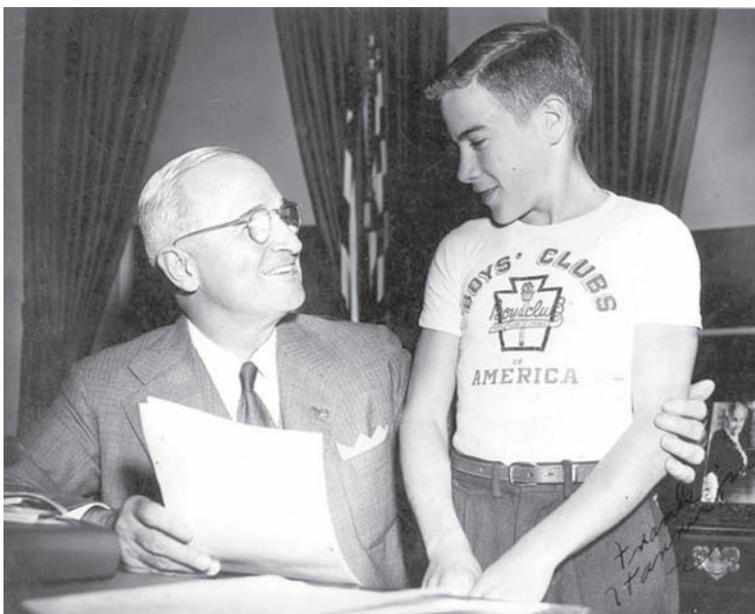
Fifty years ago, a youth named Frank Harrison became a household name in Valdosta. *The Valdosta Daily Times*, the *Atlanta Journal*, and Associated Press all covered his exploits. That is because he was named the 1948 Boy's Club National Boy of the Year. He was selected out of a field of almost 300,000 other boys.

As a result of his winning the award, Harrison had a whirlwind year. At the age of fourteen, he received an all expense paid to New York, due to the generosity of the Atlantic Coast Line.

Harrison met several important people as a result of his award. He personally met Governor M. E. Thompson of Georgia. He also met President Truman, and they had a ten minute conversation about life in Valdosta.

While in New York, Harrison appeared on many national radio shows. He also met with Joe DiMaggio and attended the Ringling Brothers Circus. But perhaps the quirkiest part of the story was when Harrison toured New York City Hall. The Mayor of New York, Vincent Impellitteri conferred his powers on Harrison. He held the post of Mayor for five minutes.

When Frank Harrison returned to Valdosta, he was a bonafide celebrity. Through it all, Valdosta was proud of Harrison. Even with all of the attention, he was lauded for his modesty and humility.



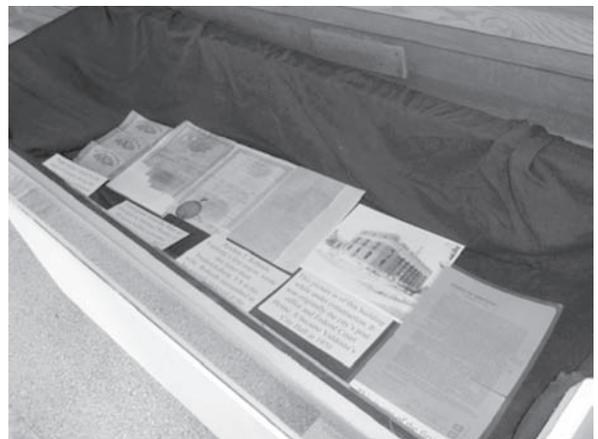
Frank Harrison, 1948 Boys' Club National Boy of the Year, meets with President Harry S. Truman.

Lowndes County Museum's Display at City Hall

A display of old photographs and documents is on display at the Valdosta City Hall. This is just one of a few displays that have been created for several non-museum entities. There are also two displays at the Valdosta Regional Airport, and one at Moody Air Force Base.

The Museum and the City of Valdosta have been working together as of late to put on lectures and walking tours of the city. With the sesquicentennial of Valdosta approaching, we are expecting more cooperation between the two groups

The displays that are currently housed outside of the Museum are designed to facilitate interest in the history of Lowndes County and surrounding areas.



The City Hall display contains one of the original land sales from Valdosta, and Confederate money, and a land deed from the 1830's

Mystery Ball Costumes on Display

The Lowndes County Historical Museum has recently taken down its special display of old textiles. In its place is an exhibit of Mystery Ball Club costumes from years past. There are currently eighteen of these festively colored garments on display. This exhibit will be a feature at the Museum Holiday Open House on December, 6th.

The Amazing Life Story of Professor W. Renijah Christie

By John Kater Miller



Lieutenant Colonel Wesley Renijah Christie and his wife Constance(Connie). Col. Christie is wearing his formal Marine Corps Uniform.



Christie, *left*, posing for the camera during the Korean War, where he was injured. The man standing with Christie is unidentified.



The USS Quincy (CA-71) was the ship that Christie was assigned to for most of World War II

Most people remember Dr. Ren Christie as a longtime professor at Valdosta State College. He became the head of the Department of Communication Arts in 1967 and held the position for seventeen years. While holding this role, he was a member of many service organizations and seemed to always have time to volunteer. He was president in several of these organizations, including: Valdosta Rotary Club, and Valdosta’s chapter of the American Association of University Professors. He also volunteered to read to children at elementary schools around town. Christie was an ardent supporter of Valdosta High School Football, and was involved with the Valdosta Touchdown Club.

Christie was born in Parrott, Georgia in 1918 and enlisted in the Marine Corps with his twin brother in 1936. He became a drill instructor on Parris Island for the last two years of his enlistment. Christie came back to Georgia to attend college, and was only a few credits from graduating when the Japanese forces attacked Pearl Harbor.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Christie wrote the Commandant of the Marine Corps to be reinstated at his old rank of sergeant. The Marine Corps accepted his petition to rejoin, but he was ordered to go to Officer Candidate School and received a commission. From there, he received orders to serve on the USS Quincy. Marines that received sea duty generally resented the assignment, and Christie was no different. He wished to fight on Guadalcanal, but was denied the opportunity

Leatherneck, the official magazine of the Marine Corps felt that Christie’s time aboard the USS Quincy was great enough to warrant a full length article. In early 1944, Christie received a promotion to captain. Immediately afterward, the ship embarked for Belfast, Ireland to take part in the D-Day invasion at Normandy. While in port, General Eisenhower visited the men on the Quincy, and the ship’s personnel bragged that they had a conversation with the Supreme Allied Commander.

Christie also fought during the Korean War. He was assigned to the First Marine Division and was there for thirteen months. He was wounded mid-1952, but refused a purple heart because he was not injured with a bullet. According to a 1982 interview with the Valdosta Daily Times, the hardest part of the Korean War was keeping his Marines in a fighting mood amid constant rumors of a cease fire.

Christie retired from the Marine Corps in 1961 after twenty-four years of distinguished service. He attended several Georgia colleges, and received several degrees including a doctorate in Speech Education from the University of Georgia. Upon receiving the degree, he was hired as a professor at Valdosta State College, and became an important fixture to the local area.

The USS Quincy’s Storied Past

The USS Quincy was one of the most storied warships of the US Navy during World War II. According to sailors that served on the vessel, the Quincy was the first to receive and return shells from the beach on D-Day. The ship was capable of firing twenty-three miles inland, so the ship loitered until mid-June off of the French coast and continued to support ground troops. The ship bombarded towns in France, then steamed to Italy to support troops fighting there. In 1945 the Quincy headed to the Pacific to take part in the Okinawa invasion, the largest amphibious assault of the war. The Quincy’s gun crews were commended for their accuracy in support missions. The ship was a support vessel for the USS Missouri when Hedeki Tojo signed the surrender documents ending the War in the Pacific.

After the D-Day landings, the Quincy hosted some important dignitaries. Christie, when asked what the greatest moment of his career was, answered that it was when the Quincy transported President Roosevelt to the Yalta Conference. Other dignitaries included, Winston Churchill, King Farouk of Egypt and King Haile Salassie of Ethiopia.

MUSEUM UPCOMING EVENTS

- Nov. 27-29 Museum closed for Thanksgiving. Will reopen Monday, December 1st
- Dec. 6 Holiday Open House, 10AM -2PM
 - *In Search of the Hollidays* book reprint celebration
 - Susie McKey Thomas present for book signing from 11-1
 - Mystery Ball Club costumes featured
 - Jingle Bell Christmas Tree on display
- Dec. 14 Lake Park Area Historical Society "Tour of Homes," Info 559-5771
- Dec. 25-Jan. 3 Museum closed for Christmas Holidays. Will reopen Monday, January 5th

Officers & Executive Committee

1st Vice President: H. Lamar Cole; 2nd Vice President: Martha N. Gibson; Secretary: Joseph Tomberlin; Treasurer: Redden Hart; Past President: Julie Smith; Executive Committee: Mary McRee, Anita Shelton, and Susie Thomas

Lowndes County Historical Society & Museum

305 West Central Avenue
 P.O. Box 56, Valdosta, GA 31603
 (229) 247-4780
 Fax: (229) 247-2840
 E-mail: history@valdostamuseum.org
 Web page:
<http://www.valdostamuseum.org>

YESTERDAY & TODAY

Newsletter of

Lowndes County Historical Society

President

Patsy Giles

Newsletter Editor

John Kater Miller

Kid's Page Editor

Emily Crews

Museum Staff

Steve Burrell

Executive Director

Donald O'Quinn Davis

Administrative Director

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Lowndes County Historical Society
 P. O. Box 56
 Valdosta, Georgia 31603-0056

