

YORE LORE

Baldwin County Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 108, Foley, Alabama 36536

Volume 28 No 6

June 2020

Baldwin County Genealogical Society
July 11th, 2020, 10 a.m. Meeting Room - Foley Public Library
Meeting Room limited to 20 people.
Please register to attend by calling Tina Graham 251-978-2137
leaving name and number to verify.

PROGRAM

“Worst Nightmares in family Tree, so help me!”

Jeanette Bornholt, Librarian

The family pedigree that collapses, no dates, places. *No pedigree chart* with box full of documents, photos and letters so who belongs to who? Family copied from internet that have duplicate children, mistaken documentations and/or no sources so why have taken as your own?

Jeanette Bornholt can safely say she may have seen it all in worst nightmares of family history in the nearly 30 years working with the public as well as additional twenty years of her own family research worst nightmares. She has been working with the Foley Public Library nearly thirty years and nearly that on her own creating her own worst nightmares. Ask her about the wonderful information she found years ago, but she did not cite the source, cannot find source now, so is afraid to use it without documentation.

Jeanette will explain some of these horrors in an entertaining way while stressing the importance of certain dos and don'ts in putting together your family history. Benefit would be not only to you as a researcher but for future generations of your family or folks researching the associated surnames.

In aid because of the attendance limitations due to virus and those unable to attend, handouts available at meeting will also be available in the Collections Room for pickup. Will scan via email or mail if you will contact jbornholt@cityoffoley.org

Obit Committee is meeting with respect to social distancing. 3rd Thurs of each month in AL, Local History & Genealogy Room

BALDWIN COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY MINUTES: No Meetings scheduled for April or May

~~

Additions to Alabama, Local History & Genealogy Collections

MEMORIAL: Claren Wells *from Jeanette Bornholt:*

Goodhue County (Minnesota) in the World War, short history of the World War, Service Records of Goodhue Co Boys, Numerous War Activities, pub Sept 1919 Red Wing Printing Company

~~

Additions to the Alabama, Local History & Genealogy Collections

The OverMountain Men, Battle of King's Mountain, Cumberland Decade, Sate of Franklin, Southwest Territory by Pat Alderman, (name index)

Vernant Park, Baldwin County, Alabama



St. John the Baptist Catholic Church Grotto Vernant Park



St. John the Baptist Catholic Cemetery



Vernant Park Baptist Church Cemetery est 1855



Collins Lane, Vernant park

Vernant Park, located in southern part of the county near Bon Secour, was settled by the **Creoles** of **French** and Spanish descent. In article *Down in Creole Country*, Paul Deutschman writes “near Alabama’s Gulf Coast a fast diminishing colony of river people live much as their French and Spanish great-great-grandfathers.”

As early as 1740, **Gregoire Gullory** and his wife **Jeanne LaCasse**, native inhabitants of **French Creoles of Little Dauphine Island**, were mentioned as living at Fish River near the settlement of today’s Vernant Park and nearby Bon Secour. The name of Bon Secour (Safe Harbour) was named by French, its security in time of storms.

The Creoles love the water, any map giving Spanish grants show their oblong spaces, uncut by the land surveys, facing bay and rivers, few away from the water. No doubt the chinaberry trees not native to this continent was brought to the area by the French by way of their West Indian Islands. Land grants under the French as well as the Spaniards found on English maps have as names of such as **Daniel Ward, Henry Baudin, Nicholas Weeks, Durette, T. Powell, L. Plock** and east of the bay, **J. Fernandez, Fr. Simon, John Courrege**. Besides **Weeks** on left bank was on the right the mile-square place of **Collins. John Ward** in 1793 purchased a land tract a mile from mouth of the bay from **John Even**. Other names to populate the area of **Vernant Park** would be **Augustin La Coste, W. E. Kennedy, Francis Baker, Eslava, Laurendine, Laurent**, among others.

The house which **Nicholas Weeks** built in 1803 for his bride is still standing on the south shore of the bay named after him, near Vernant Park, sometimes called **Weeks settlement. Mrs. Mable Pons** whose father was a **Weeks** and mother a **Chastang** inherited 1/50th of the thousands of acres **Nicholas Weeks** received from the King of Spain.

Creoles, ardent Catholics, built **St. John the Baptist Catholic Church**, the first Catholic Church in Fish River in 1882 on land denoted by **John Nolte**. One of the earliest tombstone dates in the Catholic Cemetery is **John Nolte, 1824-1908**. Other early dates include **D. W. Weekes 1828-1907** and his wife **Roslie (Evens) Weekes 1838-1913, Modeste Voltaire 1842-1935, Louis Collins 1853-1947, Ulysess Barnard 1855-1941**. The **Cooks, John J, Augustin and Leonard** also early gravesites but no dates are listed.

By 1911, the **Vernant Park Improvement Society** held benefits for the **Kruger** School; also joined with citizens of Magnolia, Yupon, and Fish River to discuss the road conditions. The intertwined relations of settlements of Vernant Park, lower Magnolia and Weeks Bay were present for birthday celebration of members of the **Holk** family, namely Mr. **Holk** and son **Nels**, in February of 1913. **Annie Romand** was awarded the ladies prize for a Vernant Park masquerade gathering in April, 1913.

It was noted **Katherina Foerster** died at the home of her son **Wm Foerster** of Vernant Park Sept 16, 1913. **Neil McPhail** of Vernant Park advertised a “12 acres under culture farm for rent with 4 room house, barn, hen house, horse, 3 cows, farm implements, etc.” Postmaster Thomas received notice, June 1915, that a R.F.D. was granted from Magnolia Springs to begin operations of mail being carried by motor boat to supply nearly 100 families along Magnolia River, Weeks Bay and in Vernant Park, Yupon, etc.”

By 1914, under the leadership of **Rev. M. E. Hulbert, Vernant Park Baptist Church** was organized meeting in Magnolia Springs Community Hall until 1933 when the meeting place changed back to **Vernant Park Community**. Mr. **M. J. Breton** who was appointed to teach the White House Fork School for the coming term in 1915 died at her home in Vernant Park and buried in the **Lipscomb** private cemetery.

In a Vernant Park news column in Nov 1920, one would find comments about residents **N. J. Robinson** and son **Warren, Grace Kruger, H. P. Kruger, Herman C Kruger, Mathew and Herman Nolte** adding *every body in this section are busy making syrup and digging potatoes*. Also that month, **N. Z. Lipscomb** died suddenly leaving a wife and son beside many other relatives to mourn his death.

John Nolte completed his new bungalow in July, 1921 while **Mrs. Ben Oldemoppen** and daughter **Marguerite, Mrs. Mack Hand, The Noltes, and Herman Kruger** were business callers in nearby Foley. In 1925, A Creole was reported to have harpooned and fought hours to land a six foot tarpon, weighing 168 pounds at Waterhole on Fish River.

“**Frank Baker, Creole, Laid to Rest Saturday**” headed the obituary for Baker, age 67, “creole of Vernant Park, whose funeral was conducted at Vernant Park Cemetery” May 1929.

It wasn't until 1952 when the “Creole students at **Weeks school** in the picturesque Magnolia Springs” would be offered a full 12 years of school or the first time. Prior to this, the school offered up to 10th grade. A school bus was also provided for the school, by 1957, there were four teachers for the school. **Weeks aka Creole School** teachers included William Wallace, Merle O. Benson, Jean L. Brown, Aarabella Rachel, Patricia Tweed, Bernadett G. Oldemoppen

Benefits for the school continued with what became the **Vernant Park Community's** seafood festival with recipes passed down for generations with the infamous Creole Gumbo. The festival promoted oysters in half shell, baked in homemade bread loaves, broiled on toast, also crabs and crab claws had people all over the country coming to enjoy. But the infamous gumbo kept folks coming. The recipe that begins with a roux, made in huge cast iron pots so large it was stirred with a boat paddle, simmered over fire pits.

In 1960 a feature article about the tiny restaurant **Meme's** sitting on the bay in Bon Secour near Vernant Park, brought worldwide attention to the area when **Charley and Meme Wakeford** were featured in *Ford Times* magazine sent monthly to Ford owners. People came from all over the country to get a taste of the seafood on their menu especially their popular “Creole Sea Food Gumbo” Meme and Charlie credited to their employees of Creole descent with the menu recipes.

The awesome faces of residents of Vernant Park



Jerome Weeks



Will Collins



George and Mabel Pons



Gus Eslava

Today, Vernant Park has been discovered by the overflow of surrounding towns and cities. The Creole families today are intermingled with other early settlers but if you take the time, or you are a native of south Baldwin County, you will realize the strength of kinship, pride of the descendants of Creoles and other early settlers who love the bay waters, the smells of the family recipes cooking, fresh farm products, that still saturate Vernant Park with the rich history

Sources: Colonial Mobile by Peter J. Hamilton, c1910, pgs 169, 170, 509,511,516-517; Tracing the descendants of Nicholas Weekes & Marie Gore compiled by A. J. Laurent; *Down in Creole Country* by Paul E. Deutschman, Holiday, Jan 1953, pg10; *History of Vernant Park Baptist Church*, www.vernantparkbaptist.com; *Baldwin Times* newspaper, 1911, 1913, 1915, 1918; *The Onlooker* newspaper, 1920; *Fairhope Courier* newsletter, 1963; *Food, Fun, and Fable from Meme's on Bon Secour River* by Charley and Meme Wakeford 1965; *Holiday Magazine: Down in Creole County*; Magnolia River Manufacturing Corp. Compiled by Jeanette Bornholt, Librarian, FPL

Vernant Park's James Lipscomb and His Heirloom Corn

Settling in 1875 in what is now **Vernant Park Community**, **James Phillip Lipscomb** brought with him a corn variety from Marengo County, Alabama. Over several years, he built up a seed stock to plant several acres. While some of the corn was used for eating, the majority was dried and used for cattle feed. This heirloom variety, commonly known as “Indian Corn”, only changes into its multitude of red, yellow, orange, purple, and blue colors, after it begins to dry. **James Lipscomb** grew the corn until year he died in 1933 at age of 80. His grandson, **Ira Lipscomb** saved some of the corn to continue growing it with his six sons, **Lawrence, Edward, Claude, Sheldon, Oswalt** and **Albert**, until his death in 1979.

The **Lipscomb brothers** grew the corn until in 1987 when agriculture industry slowed and the last two brothers stopped planting their family corn to trim production. One brother Claude set aside not much more than 1 pound of the corn in an old barn freezer. There the corn stayed for 24 years until 2011, **Edward, Claude** and **Sheldon** pulled out what they called “grandpa Jimmy's corn” to divide it, revive it; one brother having only 98 kernels. In spring of 2015, Sheldon planted five acres not quite knowing what to do with it. His wife tested several recipes but it was **Sheldon's** grandsons **Josh and Jarred Higgingbotham** discovered the corn milled into cornmeal made a cornbread with a very unique, natural and flavorful taste.

In July of 2015, when a trip to the local farmers market sold out the first day, Josh and Jarred quickly realized the cornmeal fit in with the interest for local and heirloom products. This led to **Bayou Cora Farms Heirloom Corn Products** which now includes grits, corn flour and fish fry, along with the cornmeal.

Six generations later when in 1875, **James Lipscomb** brought his heirloom corn variety to **Vernant Park**, his descendants have brought it back to abundance in Baldwin County for all to appreciate and enjoy. In 2017, **Josh and Jarred** opened their first store front shop in nearby downtown Foley. Source: excerpts from *Current Events*, heirloomcorn, exitrealtygulfshores, bayoucorafarms

