

YORE LORE

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

Volume 29 No 9

September 2021

Baldwin County Genealogical Society Presents

Paula L. Webb

‘Such a Woman –

The Life of Madame Octavia Walton LeVert

September 11, 2021

**10 a.m. Foley Public Library Meeting Room
319 East Laurel Avenue, Foley AL.**



In researching for the book “Mobile Under Siege: Surviving the Union Blockade” author Paula Lenor Webb, came across a woman unlike any other who lived in the 1800s. Octavia Walton LeVert, living in the wealth and wilds of the expanding United States, influenced those around her. Paula realized how fascinating this story was, set out to discover more, years of traveling, visiting archives and private collections, Paula Webb has written the true story of a woman ahead of her time.

Join us to find who was Octavia Walton LeVert, nee Octavia Celestia Valentine Walton, listed in the Alabama Women’s Hall of Fame, an American socialite and writer, and one of the first female southern writers to achieve national recognition with her book, “Souvenirs of Travel”. Widely known socialite of the 1850s, find out why her Union sympathies during the Civil War ended it all.

Author, historian, librarian, Paula L. Webb has always wanted to write more about the city she was born, Mobile, Alabama. Paula has participated in several events in 2021: *The Wonderful Wednesday’s* series at Bellingrath: *Life in Mobile during the Civil War* and *Such a Woman- LeVert Collection Tour* and Book Signing at the Historic Oakleigh House Museum, Mobile Alabama.

RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED

Email: BaldwinGenealogy@gmail.com with your name. Maximum seating: 50.

Web site: <http://baldwingenealogy.org> or Baldwin County Genealogical Society – Home | Facebook

All meetings are open to all interested public.

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BCGS Long Time Member Harold A. Wells Died August 14, 2021



Harold A. Wells, age 92, died August 14, 2021 at his home. A native of Cannon Falls, Minnesota and resident of Rosinton, Alabama since 1984, Harold had served in the US Navy retiring after 32 years in Pensacola, Florida, retiring again from a private helicopter industry. In Rosinton, Harold was member of Zion Lutheran Church, Masonic Lodge, Baldwin County Cattlemen’s Association, was presented the Pioneer Cattleman Award in 2002, was selected Father of the Year by the Baldwin County Cattlewomen in 2002.

Harold’s wife Clareen preceded him in death in March, 2020, having been married 67 years. Harold is also preceded in death by his parents, Ethel Josephine Nelson Wells and Harold Vincent Wells, sister Patricia Gusa. He is survived by two daughters, Apryll Stalcup, Merrily Flores (Ysidro); son Joel Wells (Heather); 7 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren.

Both Harold and his wife, Clareen, did extensive research on their families and copies of much of their research is in the Alabama, Local History & Genealogy Collections, Foley Public Library. Until health issues curtailed Harold and Clareen, both were active members of the Baldwin County Genealogical Society. The Genealogy Collections at Foley Public Library was the recipient of generous donations over the years from both. We will miss Harold both as a member and friend.

Funeral Service was held August 25 at 10 a.m. at Zion Lutheran Church, Silverhill, Alabama; burial following at Pittman Cemetery, Robertsdale, AL. Memorials may be made to The Pittman Community Cemetery in care of Director AL Clingan, 29533 Co Rd 64, Robertsdale, Alabama 36567

DUES were Due in June, please.

Upcoming programs:

Oct 9, 2021 - Janell R. Duxbury, Retired emeritus UW-Madison Senior librarian (BS, MS, MA), author of three genealogy journal articles: *“Researching German Heritage: Tracking Down A Family Legend in Meckleburg-Schwerin”*

Nov 13, 2021 – Jeanette Bornholt, Librarian, Alabama, Local History & Genealogy Collections, Foley Public Library:
“Genealogy 101 Workshop”

Dec 11, 2021 – BCGS Christmas Potluck: “Around the Table at Christmastime”

Obit Committee meet every Wednesday, 1 p.m. in Genealogy Collections Room

BCGS Board Meetings will continue to meet at 9 a.m. Board Room.

PLEASE NOTE TO ALL MEMBERS:

The Board is in process of updating our website and looking for input, suggestions from BCGS members on what you would like to see included or changed. You may email: baldwingenealogy@gmail.com Thank you.

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BALDWIN COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING 2021

DATE 14 August, 2021

MEMBERS/GUEST 23/13 total 37

GUEST SPEAKER: Olivia McCarter speaking on “Solving Cold Cases Using Investigative Genealogy”.

CALL TO ORDER: The August meeting was called to order at 10:03am by Vice-President Barbara Thompson in the absence of President Peg Power who is out of town.

MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING- Were published in “Yore Lore” and accepted as read.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Tina Graham stated we had a starting balance of \$1070.34 on 1 July 2021. Deposits of \$127.00 & expenses of \$169.05. For an ending balance of \$1028.31 on 31 July 2021.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Membership: Maureen Lee stated were two new members last month. Janice Hudson and Paula Mund.

Sunshine: Maureen also stated she mailed 1 hope you are better card.

ACQUISITIONS: Tina Graham stated that we acquired the book “Callahan Connections: Bridging the Congressional Divide” by Harriet Outlaw, which was donated to the Foley Public Library in memory of Eddie Bornholt, member Jeanette Bornholt’s husband.

OLD BUSINESS: We’re still looking for someone local to help revamp our website. Barbara ask if anyone was interested please let her or Tina know.

NEW BUSINESS:

- The Foley Public Library asked if we would participate in the Halloween extravaganza. We need five or six volunteers to help man in the booth on October 23 between 5-8. Please see Tina Graham if you’re interested.
- Barbara Thomas stated that for the rest of the year all meetings will have reservations required. This is due to COVID-19 as we will be limited in space. At present time Masks are required.

GENEALOGY MINUTE: Dot Brown did the Genealogy Minute on Official US Census Dates. The date the census taker wrote on his form isn’t as important as the official date set by the state: Enumerators were supposed to list individuals ages as of the date specified by the Census Bureau. Census days have changed from year to year enclosed is a official US census day chart from 1790 to 1940. After 1940 All census days are April 1.

UPCOMING EVENTS: The speaker for September will be Paula L Webb , Author-Historian-Librarian. She will be speaking on her book “ The Life of Madame Octavia Walton LeVert

HOSTESSES: Barbara thanked the Hostess for the August meeting who were Alan and Gloria Griggs.

DOOR PRIZES AWARDED: There was 5 door prizes awarded.

ADJOURNED: The meeting was adjourned at 11:49am to meet again on 11 September 2021 at 10 AM in Foley Public Library meeting room.

Respectfully submitted: Billie Nardell, Recording Secretary

Alabama Local History and Genealogy Collections

MEMORIALS

Edward “Eddie” Bornholt from Baldwin County Genealogical Society:

Callahan Connections: Bridging the Congressional Divide, conversations collected and compiled by Harriet Outlaw

Leila Morton Vanney, Estate of, from Nancy Morton Price:

Historical Maps Book, state by state atlas of U.S. History 1790-1900 by Allison Dolan, editors of *Family Tree Magazine*.

Historical Atlas of American Cities, 1800-1920 by Allison Dolan, editors of *Family Tree Magazine*.

Berdine Rittenhouse from Dorothy Skipper Brown:

Early Pennsylvania Births 1675-1875 by Charles A. Fisher

Edward “Eddie” Bornholt from Dorothy Skipper Brown:

Kossuth County, Iowa

ADDITIONS:

Free African Americans of North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina from the Colonial Period to about 1820, Vol 1 families Abel to Drew by Paul Heinegg

Mississippi Territorial Petitions, etc. 1800 (1795-1804) by John Stemmons

Mississippi Territorial Petitions, etc. 1810 [1805-1814] and West Florida 1820 Petitions [1815-1824] by John Stemmons.

Alabama 1800 Petitioners [-1804] by John Stemmons

Alabama 1810 Petitioners, etc. [1805-1814] by John Stemmons

Alabama 1820 Petitioners, etc., [1815-1824] by John Stemmons.

Notes from a Native, notes about the Coastal People of Alabama by Joy Callaway Buskens

History of Fayette County, Alabama compiled, edited by Herbert Moses Newell, Jr and Mrs. H. M. Newell, Jr.

Bobo Cousins by the Dozens by Herbert M. and Jeanie P. Newell



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE CLASSIFICATION OF GENEALOGY BOOKS in Alabama, Local History and Genealogy Collections, Foley Public Library

No two libraries are alike, but regardless of their size, most of them use a classification system for their books in order to keep together and refile books on a given subject. Two classification systems generally used are the Library of Congress and the Dewey Decimal. The Foley Public Library use the Dewey Decimal System.

We, in our *Alabama, Local History & Genealogy Collections*, do add in the cataloging our material and on the spine label Areas, ex: **GEN States ALA 929.3 Bornholt** - translated: Genealogy (in) State (of) Alabama 929.3 (vital statistics) Bornholt (author's last name) OR **GEN Countries Scotland 355 DOW** - translated: Genealogy (in) Countries (of) Scotland 355

(miscellanies, bar & court records, historical records survey) DOW (author's last name). Others would be ex: **ALA 796.332 BAU** (Alabama History 796.332 (Alabama Football) BAU (Author last name or first 3 initials) OR **REF ALA 796.332 BAU** (Reference Alabama History 796.332 (Alabama Football) BAU (Author last name or first 3 letters).

You may find a title such as *Kentuckians in Illinois* classified as **GEN 929.3 SPRAGUE** (GENEALOGY- Vital Statistic - Author) because it is not limited to one state and could possibly be missed by a researcher if placed only in either Kentucky or Illinois. So do not overlook material listed **GEN** (*Librarian jb's term 'General Genealogy' covering more*)

If a book is for a specific county/parish in a state or country, it would be label as such, etc: **GEN States ALA Baldwin 929.3 Bornholt** (Genealogy State (of) Alabama (in county of) Baldwin 929.3 (vital statistics) Bornholt (author's last name or first 3 letters)

Let's take a bird's-eye view of some of the classes of Genealogy books with the following being a sample, but certainly not all, of what you may find in a genealogical collection and the way it will be arranged on the shelf, using the Dewey Decimal System of classification:

016	Bibliographies and Indexes
283 - 287	Church Histories & Vestry Books
336	Land Records & Tax Digests
347 - 355	Miscellanies, Bar & Court records, historical records survey
369	Patriotic Societies
378	College Directories
910 - 923	Gazetteers & Business Directories
923	General Works, Covering more than one location or family
929.1	Handbooks, Manuals. Methods and tools of genealogy
929.2	Family Histories
929.3	Vital Statistics, By State.
929.4	Personal Names. Name origins, Spanish, Irish, etc.
929.5	Epitaphs & Cemetery inscriptions
929.6 - 929.8	Heraldry. Titles of honor, landed gentry, peerage, etc.
940.3 - 940.5	World War. Rosters & Histories
973.2	Passenger List & Miscellaneous Colonial Records
973. - 973.4	Revolutionary War Period
973.5	Other Wars
973.7	Civil War Period
974.1 - 979.9	Local Histories. Filed by areas of the country as settled. New England States are first, down east coast to Virginia, on through Carolinas to Texas on to western states and to west coast.

Microfilm and Maps filed in separate drawers. Periodicals can be filed at the beginning or the end of the collection or interfiled with the collection pertaining to the subject.

Submitted by Jeanette Bornholt, Librarian, Alabama, Local History & Genealogy Collections, Foley Public Library.

Acknowledging with thanks to Molly Peterson, past Director, and Bobbette Ibert, previous cataloger, of Foley Public Library, for their expertise in originally setting up the system we found that has worked easiest and quickest in helping patrons in their research.

Steelwood Community, Baldwin County, Alabama



1948 ad for Georgia Hardwood Lumber, "Band Mills: Mississippi, Arkansas, North & South Carolina and Alabama, affiliated mills throughout the south"

Steelwood, the community created, built, and supported by timberland, located just south of **Stapleton**, north of **Loxley**.

No records have been found as yet to show how **William Houston Gwin** acquired the land or if he even lived in Baldwin County, but in 1932, for the consideration of \$1.00, he sold to his wife **Zackie R Gwin**, Section 8 T4S R3E. In *January*, 1946, he and his wife, in turn, sold the 80 acres to **Georgia Hardwood Lumber Company**. The property would become the base of operations for the Company from Augusta, Georgia, and would become **Steelwood**.

Gwin, a civil engineer and land surveyor, was called from **Jefferson County to Mobile** in 1917 to help survey land purchased by **Tennessee Land Company**. It is interesting to note that in *February*, 1946, **Tennessee Land Company** granted the **Georgia Hardwood Lumber** company full right and privilege of cutting and removing from their lands certain timber. The sale stated Georgia Company had already "*acquired a site for the sawmill and equipment, the lands so acquired from third persons*" (**Gwins**)

While the surname **Steele** is found in nearby **Stapleton** and **Loxley**, the origin for the community seems to be descriptive and environmental as lumber from Baldwin County timbers was popular because of its strength. Just east is lake also named **Steelwood Lake**.

By April, 1946, Georgia Hardwood Lumber was registered with Alabama Secretary of State as business dealing with lumber, timber, etc. Thus the birth of **Steelwood** began, built upon the abundance of Long Leaf Pine surrounding it.

Elida Utter was employed as secretary at "Steelwood Industry being established near **Stapleton, Ala.**" read the **Silverhill** news, Jul, 1946. By August, *The Wedge*, a monthly publication wrote "*Watch STEELWOOD! It is destined to become a name in the ever thinning ranks of exclusive Long Leaf Producers!*"

In 1941-45, **Georgia Hardwood Lumber** was largest supplier of lumber to the U. S. Armed Forces during World War II. The result was the need to expand for supplies and result the plant's growth in **Steelwood**, no doubt, of the effects of the war.

Stapleton News: Mr. and Mrs. **J.C. Booth** were welcomed to community as **Booth** was employed at the Lumber Plant at Steelwood. By the end of the year, Steelwood workers numbered nearly 250. **C. F. Young**, general manager, said "the sawmill, dry kilns and planning mill were in full operation with additional machinery being installed." Most of the lumber being produced was going out of the county to wholesale dealers but numerous Baldwin county dealers were also obtaining the timber. Some 50,000 acres of long leaf pine was in selective cutting from land leased from **Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company**.

The body of **Robert Buckley**, 37, was found in February, 1947, across the road from the plant in Steelwood. **Buckley**, an employee of GHL, died from natural causes leaving behind his widow, **Ruth A. Buckley** and three children, **Nancy Elizabeth**, 10, **James Robert** 8, and **Wanda Jean** 3.

An expansion program of structure to have a million feet of lumber capacity was started in late 1947 which considered the plant one of the most modern lumber processing plants in the South and producer of top grades of pine lumber. They had a 20-year lease to cut timber on 50,000 acre tract of long leaf pine belonging to **Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company of Birmingham**.

Mr. and Mrs. **Charles Clayton** of East **Brewton** moved to **Stapleton** where Charles was employed at Steelwood. Two months later in Jan, 1948, the commissary building and the offices adjoining the plant was destroyed by "\$25,000 Blaze." Two watchmen, **Spence** and **Gandy**, a fireman **James Cloy**, colored, discovered the blaze and brought a hose to put out the fire. It was noted "thirty new houses for employees of white clapboard had been built and ready occupancy for colored employees with a white project being planned to start in the spring."

The same year of 1948, a post office was established in Steelwood. Also, **Georgia Hardwood Lumber** voted to change their name to **Georgia-Pacific Plywood and Lumber Company**. The company owned and operated eight mills in the south including the one at Steelwood. It was also about that time that two local hunters made the mistake of hunting on Steelwood land "*without the necessary permit and were presented with invitations to call on the judge.*"

J. A. Duncan became new manager in June, 1949, of the **Georgia Pacific Plywood and Lumber Company's** lumber plant in Steelwood. He and his wife made their home in **Robertsdale**. In March, 1950, President of the Baldwin County Interdenominational-interracial Ministerial Association Rev. **James A. Zellner** announced a committee met with large group of colored people from the GPHCo. at **Steelwood** and from the **Bryers Turpentine Operation at Stapleton** to discuss organization for a union church for the colored people of **Stapleton, Steelwood** and vicinity. A school was established at Steelwood as it was used by the State Health Department for "*Every Person in Baldwin County blood tested for Diabetes, All Ages and Syphilis law required for ages 14 to 50, Chest X-rayed for Heart disease All Ages and Tuberculosis (sic) law required for ages 13 to 50.*"





Golf Course overlooks Steelwood Lake

Paster **Rev. J. Williams** of Ebenezer M. B. Church, Loxley, with the **Silver Queen Singers** motored to Steelwood, for services which they reported were good. **C. H Fitzgerald and J. A. Duncan** both of Steelwood, were on Honor Roll for renewing or subscribing to the **Baldwin Times** newspaper by the end of 1950.

Listed in marriages in 1951 were **Floyd Nolan Ball, 21, to Shirley Babette Navello, 21,** both of Steelwood. In that year, two Buffalo, NY men were captured at the lumber mill in Steelwood for a series of burglaries, apprehended by Baldwin County Sheriff Taylor Wilkins and two other officers.

September, 1951, **Wilson E. Gilbert, 64,** died when a tall pine tree that was lodged among other trees dislodged, falling upon him during timber cutting operations in the forests near Steelwood. Survivors included his wife, **Mrs. Wilson E. Gilbert**; three daughters, **Mrs. Dorothy Nelson of Brewton, Mrs. Dean Gilley of Mobile and Mrs. Annette McKissack of Pine Grove**; four sons, **Laun of Colorado, Elmus, James and Robert,** all of **Pine Grove.**



In 1952, Baldwin County had more that 800,000 acres of forestland being kept vigil over by **Department of Conservation** men in 10 lookout towers, such as the **Simerly Tower,** standing at 203 feet at **Steelwood.**

Army Pvt. **Jake Kemp,** former employee of Georgia-Pacific Plywood Lumber Co., **Steelwood,** in April, 1957, was receiving basic combat training with the 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Benning, GA. His wife, **Elnora** and mother **Mrs. Nellie Staple** lived on Rt 1, Steelwood, Loxley. In December, 1957, a marriage license was issued to **Prezel Elder** and **Genr Mae Clay,** both of **Steelwood.**



In the winter of December, 1978, a "branch of the **Carson and Barnes Circus,** the small retinue of managers, keepers and animals spent the winter in the Baldwin Community of **Steelwood.** The small group of three families along with a somewhat larger group of animals, made the process of converting the old sawmill along Highway 59 into a workable off-season dwelling. One of the large barn-like buldings held eight African and two Indian elephants while another building housed several performing cats. A performance cage ws set up to continue the training.

South Baldwin veterinarian, **Doctor Jim Heil,** was called to treat one of the elephant stating it was quite a unique experience from his usual farm animals calls.



Dawn Redwood tree

"Baldwin's only redwood tree begins to reach for the sky" stated the headlines March, 1982. The tree stood on former **Georgia Pacific Plywood and Lumber Company,** today is **International Paper Company** land at **Steelwood.** It resembles a cypress with a broad base tapering quickly upward to a spire tip. Many think of it as the "*steelwood redwood*" but is more probably a Dawn Redwood.

Tommy Wright, forester with **International Paper Co.** at the time, said the redwood tree was growing when he moved in 1954 into the house on site where the tree grows. **Neil Letson, Alabama Forestry Commission** urban forester, knew of only one other redwood tree, it growing in Mobile's Lyons Park. **Letson** measured the Baldwin Redwood at height of 25 feet, diameter of 16 inches, 4 ½ feet from the ground at that time. **Wright** says it is the only redwood tree he knows growing in Baldwin County.



Steelwood Golf Course overlooking Steelwood Lake



Air view of Steelwood Lake with Stewart Lodges, Steelwood Country Club and Golf Course

By 1988, **Steelwood** was almost surrounded by timberlands owned by **International Paper Timberlands Operation Co.** In the year 2021 "*tucked away in serenity of privacy as an exclusive escape from everyday life ... and outdoorsman paradise*" are Stewart Lodges, Steelwood Country Club and Golf Course, golf course designed by former U.S. Open Champion Jerry Pate.

Steelwood, the community built by timberland.

Sources: *Steelwood*, Heritage of Baldwin County, Alabama, c2001, pg 16,74; *Place names in Alabama*, by Virginia O. Foscue, Baldwin County Courthouse deeds/records, Bay Minette, AL; Business Entity search, Alabama Secretary of State; *1910 US Census, Alabama, Jefferson County*, ED 120, image 6 T624; *Silverhill News Notes*, Fairhope Courier newspaper, 1946; *Stapleton News*, Baldwin Times newspaper, 1946, 1947; The Onlooker newspaper, Jan 1948, 1949; <https://www.topozone.com/alabama/baldwin-al/tower/simerly-lookout-tower/>; <https://alabama.hometownlocator.com/maps/feature-map.ftc.2.fid.164419.n.simerly%20lookout%20tower.cfm>; Jackson's Ramblings: Simerly Tower, <https://vimeo.com/494717154>; *Baldwin's only redwood tre ...*, Mobile Register, mar, 1982 pg 9; <https://www.arboday.org/trees/treeguide/TreeDetail.cfm?ItemID=914>