

AAHS Newsletter

January 2021



Preserving the Port's Past

GRANTS UPDATE JANUARY 2021

The AAHS has applied for a grant from the National Park Service for much-needed exterior work on the Raney House, totaling \$385,000. Historic sites in all of the Panhandle counties affected by Hurricane Michael are eligible for funding from the just over \$8 million in "Hurricane Michael NPS Subgrants." Similar funds, which were expected from the State's Division of Historic Resources, were line item vetoed last fall by Governor DeSantis, leaving the Raney House without \$198K in expected funds. The AAHS has also applied for additional NPS funds for repair work in the Chestnut Street Cemetery, totaling \$42K.

The State, which is managing the grants for the National Park Service, expects to convene a review session in January 2021.

CHESTNUT STREET CEMETERY NEWS

2020 was a year of much progress for the Chestnut Street Cemetery. Charles Sorensen of CW Metal Works in Eastpoint was contracted to repair the century-old perimeter fence around the cemetery. It was purchased from the Stewart Iron Company in Cincinnati, OH in 1915. Some of the fence panels were so damaged that Mr. Sorensen had to fabricate entirely new panels. The Apalachicola Area Historical Society spent \$9,067.35 from the cemetery fund to pay for this restoration. The money in the cemetery fund comes from entry fees at the twice-yearly Ghost Walk. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the May Ghost Walk due to concerns about the corona virus epidemic, but the fall Ghost Walk went ahead as planned. Two weeks prior to this event, the historical society sponsored a clean-up day and bake sale at the cemetery. Scores of people – some toting lawn mowers, weed whackers and tree trimmers - turned out to help, and later many people commented that they had never seen the cemetery look so good. Thank you to all! At the Ghost Walk on Halloween night, ten locals portrayed ten permanent residents of the cemetery to an audience of 300+ people. The event added over \$2,000 to the cemetery fund.

Shan Raetzloff, a new resident in Apalachicola, is cleaning headstones in the cemetery. On her own initiative, she has educated herself in the proper techniques for cleaning stone and is slowly working through the cemetery. Another volunteer, Linda Buchanan, president of Andrew College in Cuthbert, Georgia, and a part-time resident of Apalachicola, is cleaning and repainting the corner posts on the perimeter fence. In December, she worked on the post at the corner of Avenue E and 8th Street. Stop by the cemetery and take a look at the work these two women have done and, if you see them at work, thank them for their efforts!

In August, the historical society applied for a \$42,000 grant from the National Park Service to repair damage to the cemetery from Hurricane Michael. We are waiting to hear if the grant has been approved.



GHOST WALK CHARACTERS

Each fall and spring, the AAHS puts on its popular Ghost Walk at Chestnut Cemetery. Local people dress in costume and portray famous and infamous residents of the cemetery. This past fall featured, among others, a recurring character, Marie Murat Hickey (1867-1907), whose lovely monument stands at the front right corner in the cemetery, near the Chapman House. She was vividly played by Mishele McPherson. Marie is remembered for having killed her husband and then herself. Mr. and Mrs. Hickey were among the most prominent and wealthy residents of Apalachicola, and the murder-suicide caused much interest throughout this section of the state. Before her marriage, Mrs. Hickey ran a lucrative millinery business in Jacksonville under the name of "Mrs. Murat." According to reports, she had been suffering for years with temporary insanity for which she was treated at a number of private asylums. Only three weeks prior to the tragedy, her husband took her home from a sanitarium where she had been under treatment. She was a daughter of Antoine Jean Murat, a Greek fish dealer who served as mayor of Apalachicola in 1871 and is said to have been related to Napoleon Bonaparte.



Information on all the characters is available on our website (apalachicolahistoricalsociety.org). Click on "Events" and then scroll down to "Past Events." Our next Ghost Walk will be on May 1, 2021. PLEASE JOIN US!

A GOOD SWAP

Last fall we received a request from a Pennsylvania woman for information about early Apalachicola residents James and Elizabeth Montgomery, her husband's great-great-grandparents. Our exchange was a win-win! After we shared with her all that we know about the Montgomery family, she sent us photographs of James (1860-1913) and Elizabeth (1861-1920).

James's parents were Peter and Catherine Montgomery who came from Galway, Ireland to Apalachicola around 1850. Peter worked on the wharves as a stevedore, but died in his mid-forties when his son, James, was only a baby. As an adult, James started out as a sailor, switched to work as a stevedore, and then became a successful commission merchant. He also served for a time as harbormaster. In 1883, he married Elizabeth Egbert, daughter of a German immigrant who owned a grocery store in town and, in 1888, James Montgomery built the Queen Anne-style home on the corner of Avenue G and 6th Street. Eventually, he bought up every lot in the block. James outlived his father, but only by ten years. The house he built stayed in the Montgomery family for the next century. The ten-lot property and the house are currently owned by realtor Olivier Monod.



GLADWIN GIFTS TO THE RANEY HOUSE

The Raney House was the recipient of three beautiful antique pieces this past fall. William Gladwin, Jr. of Tallahassee donated and delivered a fully restored, 180-year old square grand piano (see *Apalachicola Times* article "A Most Rare Piano," October 19, 2020) as well as an imposing 19th century Empire chest of drawers and a large lithograph from the same era. The chest of drawers, in excellent condition, is made from mahogany and has decorative side columns and lion feet. It now graces the back bedroom upstairs. The lithograph, in a gilded frame, is of a watch tower with a small wall and a distant lake. It will soon hang over the piano which is a prominent feature of the parlor.

Bill Gladwin spent thirty years in the Navy, has degrees in history, anthropology/archaeology, international affairs and law. He has taught at FSU's College of Business for nearly three decades, and he plays the piano. Bill's great-grandfather named one of his sons Raney Whaley in honor of his friend and colleague, George Pettus Raney (1845-1911), whose father built the Raney House.



The AAHA manages the David G. Raney House Museum located at 128 Market Street in historic downtown Apalachicola. The museum is owned by the City of Apalachicola, operated by the AAHS, and supported by the Franklin County Tourist Development Council. The Raney House is open from 10:00 to 4:00, Tuesday - Saturday. Admission is free, but door donations are gladly accepted.

AAHS phone number: 850-653-1700

AAHS website:

apalachicolahistoricalsociety.org

AAHS Facebook page:

Apalachicola Area Historical
Society

Apalachicola Before 1861 by Harry P. Owens
Is available for sale at the Raney House Museum.
This 1966 FSU PhD thesis is the most comprehensive
history of the town. All proceeds benefit the AAHS
Paperback \$15 Hardcopy \$35

AAHS BOARD January 2021

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HELP US HELP

The inbox on our AAHS Facebook page has led us down a lot of interesting rabbit holes. People write with requests for help with their genealogical research and queries about their ancestors and places they remember hearing about. We're always happy to help, but sometimes we run into brick walls due to a lack of recorded information.

If you are a native of the Apalachicola area and have documents, stories, and/or photographs of family members who came before you, we would love to have copies to keep in our archives. If you are not a native, but live in an older home and know something of its origins, we would appreciate your sharing that information, too.

Assembling local history is a community effort!

APALACHICOLA AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

\$15 INDIVIDUAL; \$25 FAMILY; \$100 SUPPORTER ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

Become informed and be involved in the history of Apalachicola and the surrounding area and receive notification about events and activities. The AAHS is dedicated to preserving our history through the preservation of land, buildings, cemeteries, artifacts, and verbal and written materials, and we need your help.

AAHS operates the David G. Raney House Museum (owned by the City of Apalachicola) funded in part by the Franklin County Tourist Development Council. We welcome visitors to this valuable historic building. Special tours can be arranged, call 850-653-1700 or through email: AAHS.Raney@gmail.com; www.apalachicolahistoricalsociety.org (Memberships and renewals also available online)

NEW MEMBER: _____ RENEWAL MEMBER: _____

NAME(S): _____

EMAIL ADDRESS (please): _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

CONTACT PHONE: _____

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A VOLUNTEER: YES NO or SERVE ON A COMMITTEE: YES NO

WHAT ARE YOU INTERESTED IN: _____

AMOUNT PAID: _____ CASH: _____ CHECK: _____ OTHER: _____

RETURN FORM TO: Treasurer AAHS P. O. Box 75 Apalachicola, FL 32328