

APALACHICOLA HISTORY

APALACHICOLA AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

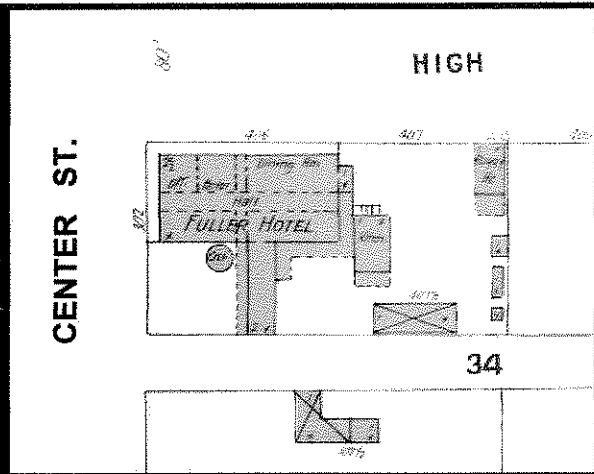
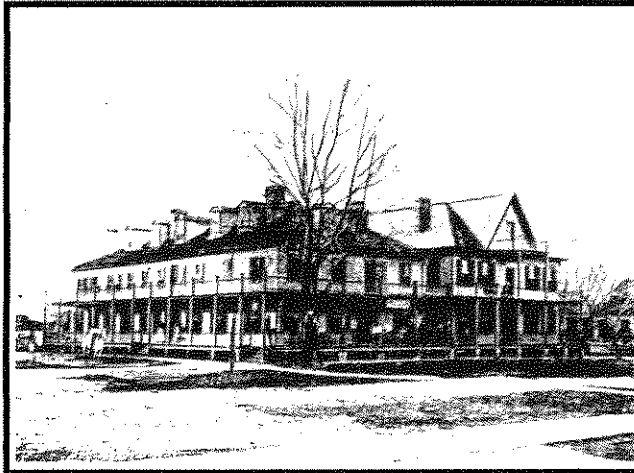
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Photograph of the Fuller Hotel after 1897
(source: State Archives of Florida)

1897 Sanborn Map of the Fuller Hotel

FULLER HOTEL

by Mark C. Curenton

The premier hotel in Apalachicola in the years prior to 1900 was the Fuller Hotel, located at the southern corner of High and Centre Streets (today know as 4th Street and Avenue D), the present location of Superior Bank. The Fuller Hotel was named for and operated by William Fuller and his wife, Mary Adeline Fuller, although there was a hostelry at this location long before they owned the property.

The earliest records available show that Anson Hancock owned this property prior to the Civil War. Mr. Hancock was an affluent businessman, originally from North Carolina, acquiring large land holdings in the county over the years. He was active in local politics, serving at various times on the city council. In the 1850 census he listed his occupation as tavern keeper.

The Hancock hostelry was located on Lots 3, 4, and 5 of Block 10 in the City of Apalachicola. These are the lots where Superior Bank is now located. The 45' wide by 90' long building was located along High Street (now known as 4th Street). Sometime between 1897 and 1903 a large 38' by 70' addition with a steeply pitched roof was built next to the alley. A single story porch ran along High and Center Streets and joined the two buildings. A 20' by 30' kitchen stood behind the hotel.

At his death in 1865 the property was left to his wife, Susan, for her life. At her death it was to go to his youngest son, Nathaniel. Susan Hancock died in 1887. Nathaniel died a few months later in Savannah. In his will Nathaniel directed that the property be sold and the proceeds divided equally between

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Virginia Hancock, his mentally impaired sister, and Miss Nina Bryan.

The executor of his estate, John E. Grady, sold the three lots to William Fuller and Spartan Jenkins on January 3, 1889, for \$2,000. Evidently there was a hotel operating on the property prior to the sale as the probate records mention rent from a hotel as part of Nathaniel Hancock's assets.

It is likely that Anson Hancock originally operated the hotel on his property. After Mr. Hancock's death the hotel operation was probably leased or rented by William Fuller. William Fuller was listed in the 1880 census as a hotel keeper and in *The Florida State Gazetter and Business Directory 1883-84* as operating a boarding house. When the property came up for sale in 1889 Mr. Fuller, along with his partner, Spartan Jenkins, purchased it.

William Fuller was 78 years old when he acquired the hotel that bore his name. Born in Baltimore, Maryland, he was married to Mary A. Fuller, who had been born a slave in Jackson County, Florida. They lived across High Street (4th Street) from the hotel.

Spartan Jenkins was born about 1857 in Alabama. In 1870 he was in school in Eufaula, Alabama. Ten years later he had come down the river to Apalachicola, where he was employed as a domestic servant.

Just two years after acquiring the hotel William Fuller died. He was buried in Chestnut Street cemetery. His wife sold her interest in the Fuller Hotel to Spartan Jenkins. She continued to live across the street from the hotel and probably remained active in running the hotel. Upon her death in 1905 the *Apalachicola Times* stated, "Her husband, William A. Fuller, died in 1891 leaving the hotel business in her charge,

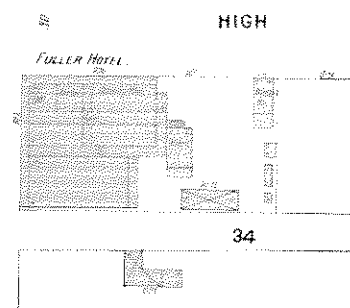
which she conducted with propriety and the good will of many prominent white guests."

The Fuller Hotel continued to operate under the sole ownership of Spartan Jenkins. The construction of the Franklin Hotel (later renamed the Gibson) just down the street in 1907 displaced the Fuller as the premier hotel in town. At some point the Fuller was converted into apartments. The Fuller continued to operate through the Second World War.

In the late 1930s Belle Jenkins, Spartan's wife, was injured by a fire in the kitchen of the hotel. Joe Taranto, who lived next door, jumped the high board fence that separated the properties to pull Mrs. Jenkins from the flames. He wrapped her in a blanket and took her back to his house. She died from her injuries a few days later.

Spartan Jenkins died in 1942. The hotel property was sold by his estate to Cory Hendrikson in 1945. Fire damaged a portion of the structure about the end of the Second World War. Mr. Hendrickson tore down this portion of the building, recycling some of the lumber to build a modern motel, The Rancho, on Highway 98 at the western edge of town.

The remainder of the Fuller Hotel remained standing for several years longer. It was finally torn down in the early 1960s.



1903 Sanborn Map of the Fuller Hotel

**MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
OF THE APALACHICOLA AREA
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

March 30, 2009 was an important date for AAHS since it marked the end of the first year that the Raney House Museum has been open to the public at least 20 hours each week. Our three docents, Geneva Jones, Joe Terrell and Bedford Watkins, welcomed 2,902 visitors during that period, almost all of them from out of town, many from out of state and even a surprising number from other countries. Attractive posters and counter cards have helped to inform potential visitors about the Museum.

Our ability to open the Museum for so many visitors this past year was made possible by a sustaining grant from the Franklin County Tourist Development Council (FCTDC) to which we owe a debt of gratitude. Also, the FCTDC and the City of Apalachicola helped to finance needed repairs and improvements to the Raney Museum and Garden that made the facility much more inviting to visitors.

In February I traveled to Columbus, Georgia at the invitation of the Columbus Museum to present an address on the long history shared by the City of Columbus and the City of Apalachicola. Between 1828 and 1928 two hundred and four steamboats plied the Apalachicola and Chattahoochee Rivers carrying food, clothing and imported manufactured items from Apalachicola to Columbus and returning with cotton from plantations in Georgia and Alabama for shipment to New England and Europe.

My presentation, made to a luncheon gathering of 72 persons, was well received, and hopefully will

encourage tourists and business people from Columbus to visit Apalachicola.

The interior of our Museum presents a fresh new face thanks to painting the walls in subtle colors used in the 19th century, and to new (antique) light fixtures obtained by Lynn Wilson, head of the Interior Design Committee. Member John Hankin was kind enough to repair several antique windows that had broken glass and frames.

Our exhibits have increased and now include a 19th century steamboat whistle found in sand dredged from the Apalachicola River and loaned to the Museum by Jerry Garlick. Other exhibits include additional antique maps, Confederate Bonds, a flintlock musket manufactured in 1828 and converted to percussion cap between 1840 and 1860, and a U.S. Army non-commissioned officer's sword manufactured in 1863.

The Raney House kitchen, located in a separate attached structure just behind the back door of the main Raney House, is being renovated as an historic kitchen that might have been found in the late 1800s. For years this neglected room has served as a storage/junk/trash dump that no one wanted to go near. It has now been cleaned, painted and the old brick fireplace restored. The modern, unacceptable linoleum floor has been replaced with a floor of wooden planks taken from a 19th century warehouse. A wonderful old coal burning iron stove, popular in the late 1800s was donated to the Museum by Susan Clementson, and has been placed in the kitchen surrounded by 19th century kitchen items. The work is still in progress.

We have at last received a digital reader for the Raney House archives that was proposed several months ago by (continued on page 4)

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Laura Moody. The delivery was delayed by the manufacturer's changes in the reader which have improved the reader considerably. A room in the Carriage House will be prepared for use of the reader, a computer donated by Vince Bishop, and a monitor donated by David Adlerstein.

Take a look at our website, www.ApalachicolaHistory.org; for new historic publications including: *Apalachicola: Antebellum Cotton Port*, by Dorothy Dodd; *Sail and Steam*

Vessels Serving the Apalachicola Chattahoochee Valley by Harry Owens; and three articles from The New York Times about Apalachicola: The 1857 Fire, the 1890 Fire, and the 1894 Storm.

Our meetings are scheduled for the last Thursday of each month at 5:30 pm at the Raney Carriage House. Hope to see you there.

Bill Spohrer

President of the Apalachicola Area Historical Society

Thank you for your generosity

The Apalachicola Area Historical Society extends its sincere gratitude to all those whose generous donations helped to fund this past season's Ilse Newell Fund for the Performing Arts concert series. It would not have been possible without you.

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Ben Watkins

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Ilse Newell Concerts make for Record Attendance



Jill Anna Ponasik Performs February 8 at Trinity Episcopal Church

In what appeared to be record attendance, the Franklin County community delighted this past year in eight concerts that comprised the 2008-09 Ilse Newell Fund for the Performing Arts concert series.

The first of the Sunday afternoon concerts was Nov. 23, when Australian-born violinist, composer, and teacher Mark Russell opened the season at Trinity Episcopal Church. Shirley Adams was the featured artist in the reception following the concert in Benedict Hall.

The second concert, the annual Community Christmas program anchored by the Bay Area Choral Society; was on Dec. 14, under the

direction of conductor Tom Adams. As usual, the concert drew one of the largest audiences of the year. The paintings of Alice Jean Gibbs were showcased at the Benedict Hall reception.

The third concert, always one of the most popular of the year, featured Trio Internazionale on Jan. 11. Performing were Martha Gherardi on violin, Luciano Gherardi on contrabass, and R. Bedford Watkins on piano. A catered reception for contributors followed the concert.

A renowned harp duo from the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra performed at the fourth concert of the year Jan. 25. Mary Brigid Roman,

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associate professor of harp at the Florida State University College of Music, and her former student, Jamie Gossett, were an unusual treat. The paintings of artist Ed Springer were on display at the reception.

The fifth concert offered concertgoers a repeat performance of vocalist Jill Anna Ponasik on Feb. 8. Singer and actor Ponasik, who has performed twice over the past six year with the series, presented "First Impressions," with music that spanned four centuries, representing the sacred and secular, and coming from opera, Broadway shows, and rock-and-roll. The reception afterwards highlighted the dioramas of artist Joan Matey.

One of the best-attended concerts of the year was March 8, and featured the Bay Area Choral Society with a program devoted entirely to the magic of Broadway musical, featuring works by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. The society, conducted by Merel E. Young, was accompanied by pianist R. Bedford Watkins. The paintings of artist Lynn Wilson Spohrer were on display afterwards.

The seventh concert on March 29 featured 17 members from the extended families of the three Bowles sisters, daughters of the late Rev. Samuel and Eugenia Bowles. Performing vocals, instrumentals, and theatrical works were the families of area residents Eugenia Bowles Watkins, Ruth Bowles Eckstine and Matilda "T" Bowles McLain. Afterwards, artist Geri Anderson displayed her pottery, with all proceeds going to a charity to supply wheelchairs to the needy.

The eighth and last concert of the year took place under sunny skies at Lafayette Park April 26. The Orange Avenue Pan Groove Band, under the direction of Kayleen Kerg, performed under the bandstand before an audience spread out on the lawn.

The Ilse Newell Fund is funded primarily by the generous contributions of committed sponsors, patrons, associates and friends, and is administered by The Apalachicola Area Historical Society, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserving the rich history of Apalachicola and the surrounding area.

You are invited to join the Apalachicola Area Historical Society. Dues are \$10 per year. Fill out the information to the right, make your check payable to "Apalachicola Area Historical Society" and mail to P. O. Box 75, Apalachicola, Florida 32329.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

The following description of Franklin County was taken from *Webb's Historical, Industrial and Biographical Florida, Part 1*, published in New York in 1885.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Some 690 square miles, or 441,600 acres in area. Population in 1880, 1,791.

The territory of this county, except a small portion on the west side of the Apalachicola river near its mouth is embraced in the extensive grant made by the Indians in 1819 to Forbes & Co. and English trading house, and is known as a part of the "Forbes Purchase."

Apalachicola, the county site, is at the mouth of the great river of that name. At present the lumber business is the leading industry.

Very little agriculture is pursued in this county. Immediately along the river banks are some very handsome orange groves that give promise of inducing more extended investments in that direction.

ST. JAMES ISLAND is one of the most attractive and important points on the Gulf coast. The island is formed by a tidewater bayou known as Crooked river, which connects with the Carrabelle river at the west end and the Ochlockonee river on the east. It is located about midway between St. Marks and Apalachicola.

The island is the highest elevation on the coast between Pensacola and Tampa, ranging from twenty to seventy feet above the Gulf level. It is 21 miles in length, and averages about 4 miles in width.

At the west end of the island the town of Rio Carrabelle is rapidly building up, and becoming a milling

point of importance. At this place is the well known Dog-Island Harbor, claimed to be the best harbor on the Gulf coast. The entrance is by way of East Pass, through which ships drawing twenty feet readily enter and anchor in the harbor in twenty-four to twenty-seven feet of water, with mud bottom anchorage.

Tributary to this harbor are the Chattahoochee, Flint, Apalachicola, Carrabelle, Crooked, Ochlockonee, and Sopchoppy rivers. From all of these streams both hewn and sawn timber is rafted or lightered to ships loading here, and thence transported to Northern and foreign ports. The immense pine forests on these rivers are a mine of wealth to support the town which must inevitably become the Gulf port of Middle Florida.

The soil on the mainland adjacent to the island is principally sandy, with a clay subsoil, and considered some of the most productive in the State.

Being in the same latitude with St. Augustine the same crops can be produced that mature there.

APALACHICOLA is an important lumberport. In anti-bellum [sic] days and before the up-river country in Alabama and Georgia was intersected by railways, large quantities of cotton were brought by steamers to this point, and shipped thence to New York and New Orleans. When railroads turned the cotton bales to the eastward to be shipped from Atlantic ports the business of the place declined. Through the lumber business it is again entering into life and real estate is again appreciating. The location of this little city by the sea is peculiarly beautiful and pleasant. In the early spring the town is quite a resort for excursionists down the river on the commodious boats from

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points in Georgia and Alabama. Much of the old spirit of hearty hospitality hangs about the town. The milling business is on the increase, and will in time assume more considerable portions. A brisk and profitable trade is also being done here in fish and oysters by boats on the river. Corn, salt and fertilizers are conveniently and cheaply introduced by vessels coming for lumber. The spongers on the reefs, not far east of this place, find also at Apalachicola a convenient depot for supplies, and the disposition of their catch. The water in the bay is 9 ½ feet deep. Population about 2,000. *The Tribune* is published here.

BRICKYARD is a country post-office, situated 26 miles north of Apalachicola, on the Apalachicola river. The surrounding population is about 150.

CARRABELLE – Located at the junction of Carrabelle river and Dog-Island harbor, on the western end of James Island, was settled in Dec. 1877 by O. H. Kelley (the postmaster), and now has a population of between 500 and 600. A stage line tri-weekly connects with Tallahassee; fare, \$4. Lumbering is the main industry, the mills producing 10,000,000 feet per annum.

ST. TERESA is called the Long Branch of middle Florida. It is a delightful summer resort on the eastern end of St. James Island, about midway on the Gulf coast between St. Marks and Apalachicola. The citizens of Tallahassee and other points inland, spend the summer months here, leading a cottage life with Gulf breezes and bathing.

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