

APALACHICOLA HISTORY

APALACHICOLA AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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DR. ALVIN WENTWORTH CHAPMAN



Alvin Wentworth Chapman as a young man. Photograph courtesy of the Florida State Archives.



Dr. A. W. Chapman is seated on the left in the back row in this 1896 photograph. The other people in the picture are not identified. Photograph courtesy of the Florida State Archives.

This account of Dr. Chapman's life was written by C. I. Kimble shortly after Dr. Chapman's death on April 6, 1899, and published in an unidentified newspaper.

On Friday, April 7th, in the old cemetery of this city, there was laid to rest all that was mortal of Alvin Wentworth Chapman, B.A., M.D., L.L.D. – educator, physician, scientist, author and botanist – a man known and honored in two continents. He was the youngest of five children and was born in Southhampton, Mass., September 28, 1809, the year which gave to the world Gladstone, Darwin, Lincoln, Tennyson, Holmes, and

many more illustrious men with whom he may well be classed, and whose names will be their most lasting monument. Of English ancestry, he was descended on his mother's side from the Pomeroy's, of Devonshire, England, who trace descent to the Norman conquest, but was the last of his name and family in this country, although the two granddaughters of his wife (Mrs. Fort, of Nashville, Tenn., and Miss Wood, of this place), mourn in him the love and affection of a grandfather. He graduated at Amherst College in the Class of 1830, and came to the South in May of the following year, teaching and studying

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medicine in Georgia and North Carolina.

He took his medical diploma in Louisville, Ky., and in 1835 came to Florida, practicing medicine first in Quincy, and afterward in Marianna. It was here that he made the acquaintance of Stephen Croom, an eminent botanist of those days, and in the friendship which followed, became interested in Southern flora, taking up the science as a pastime at first, but becoming more and more interested, until later it became the best loved and principal work of his life. About this time he met and married Mrs. Mary Hancock, of New Bern, North Carolina, and thus it was peculiarly pleasing to him when the University of North Carolina, in 1886, conferred upon him the entirely unsolicited degree of Doctor of Laws. The following quotation from his letter of acknowledgement to the Hon. Kemp P. Battle, President of the University of North Carolina, will show how deeply it was appreciated:

“Singularly enough, in the allotment of human destinies, it has happened that nearly all of the intimate associates of my earlier years have been natives of your time-honored State, and many of them alumni of its University, while the happiness of forty years of domestic life commenced with my marriage with one of her fair daughters.”

“From the institution of no other State, therefore, could the bestowal of this high and dearly cherished honor prove so gratifying to my feelings, and in accepting it I beg you to receive for yourself and convey to your associates, my grateful acknowledgement.”

In 1847 he came to this place and has since resided here almost continuously, being always prominently connected with the business interests of the place, and having filled the office of County Judge, Mayor and Collector of Customs from 1866 to 1870, when the revenues of the city were among the largest ever known. He was a successful physi-

cian, but in the interests of science, is most widely known and honored, his voluminous correspondence being for many years largely foreign and from those highest in the scientific world, many of whom came here to see and consult with him. One of his visitors was a lady of title, and member of the household of the Queen of England.

Honorary degrees were conferred on him as follows: member of the New Orleans Academy of Sciences in 1854. Of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences in 1861. Of the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences in 1866. Associate Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Boston, Mass., in 1866. Honorary member of the Botanical Society of America in 1895.

Yet such was his modest and unassuming character that these recognitions of his work in the cause of science, were never known by those with whom he was in daily intercourse for years.

A contemporary and life-long friend was the late professor Asa Gray, of Harvard University, the celebrated botanist and author, and his friendship saved from confiscation the plates of the first edition of “Southern Flora” during the troublous times of the civil war. Dr. Chapman was also connected with the Smithsonian Institute at Washington in meteorological and entomological work, furnishing to that institution their first specimens of the chrysalis and plant food of some of the butterflies of this locality – and had at that time a large and beautiful collection of Southern moths and butterflies. His first and most complete herbarium is owned by Columbia College. Biltmore, the palatial estate of George W. Vanderbilt, has one collected later, and, also, many of his valuable books, together with the original manuscript of “Flora of the Southern United State.”

In person he was of commanding presence and magnificent physique, with the

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old time courtliness of manner and deferential courtesy which constitute so charming a personality; at the same time his sound judgment, high sense of honor, firmness and decision of character, with great kindness of heart, impressed everyone with whom he came in contact. He loved every living and growing thing, and welcomed each season as "the book of nature turned its leaves," rejoicing in them all, from the coming of the martins in spring to the first arrival of the migrating butterflies which heralded the winter. In his reading, he one day came upon the following quotation from Coleridge:

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All things, both great and small,
For the dear Lord who loveth us
Hath made and loves them all."

"That," he said, in his impressive way, "is my creed." He was always busy and always interested, yet found time to read much, and regularly read Greek, Latin, German and French, having taken up the study of German after he was seventy years of age. His writing and all his work was done with the most beautiful precision, and the accuracy of his memory, his vivid powers of description and impressive manner, made his narration of events like a mental picture. The only faculty which failed him was his hearing, and over this he was so sensitive as to become in later years somewhat of a recluse, but the vigor of both his mind and body was something remarkable.

Although in his ninetieth year, his step was firm and assured, and within a week of his death he walked between two and three miles, to secure the blossoms of a rare species of the ash tree. But for some years he had been subject to periodical attacks of heart trouble, and on Thursday, April 6, after a busy and happy day, he was seized with an attack which did not, as usual, yield to treat-

ment, and in one short hour, with little suffering, he had passed from among us.

The funeral from Trinity church was one of the largest known here, the mills and stores being closed, and all prominent business men being present to show respect to the last representative of the business men of Apalachicola's palmy days. As the casket rested in the church there was placed near it flowers wreathed and crowned with a cross and anchor of flowers; the old music stand from which Dr. Chapman, many years before, led the singing of the church choir. Following the casket to the grave, was a faithful attendant and a former slave, whose faithful service of fifty-nine years entitled him to that place of honor. The passing of Dr. Chapman is to this community like the fall of a mighty oak which leaves the landscape desolate. Purple morns and melting noons and glowing sunsets will all remind us of this dear friend who "looked through Nature up to Nature's God."

April 10th, 1899

C. I. Kimble



Dr. A. W. Chapman's house at the corner of Avenue E and 6th Street. This photograph was taken prior to 1922. The street signs on the picket fence still have the original street names: Chestnut Street (Avenue E) and Broad Street (6th Street). Photograph courtesy of the Florida State Archives.

The following autobiographical description of Dr. Chapman was taken from a letter he wrote to Mrs. Coombs in 1898.

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF MY LIFE

I was born, the youngest of a family of five children, on the 28th day of September, 1809, at Southhampton, in the State of Massachusetts, of English parentage, my paternal ancestors emigrating from the North of England, and my maternal from the Pomeroy's of Devonshire.

I attended the public schools of the town for eight years, and then commenced the study of the classics preparatory for entrance upon a collegiate course, and in 1826 joined the class of that year at Amherst College, graduating with honor in September 1830. In May of the following year I came to Georgia as a teacher in a family on White-marsh Island, near Savannah, and two years afterwards was elected principal of the Academy at Washington, in Wilkes County, where I commenced my professional studies with

Dr. Albert Reese of that county. In the winter of 1835, at the solicitation of the late Dr. Nicholson, of Gadsden County, I came to this State, which has been my residence ever since; first at Quincy, then at Marianna, and since 1847 in this city.

My life has been uneventful, and I am known, mainly, beyond the limits of this city as a botanist, and the author of the "Flora of the Southern United States" which has received the approbation of botanists both at home and abroad.

At my great age I find myself the sole remaining representative of my race, my college class, my scientific correspondents, and of the business fraternity of this city in its former palmy days.

In 1839 I married at Marianna Mrs. Mary Ann Hancock, of New Bern, North Carolina, who died at Rome, Georgia, in 1879, and I have no surviving children.

A. W. Chapman, L.L.D.

Apalachicola, March 13th, 1898.

From the President

Over the past year the Apalachicola Area Historical Society has hosted a successful series of programs. On Sept. 24, 2009, Dr. Joe Knetsch spoke on Apalachicola in the Civil War and explained how the war caused the Apalachicola River to literally change its course.

On October 29, 2009, Beverly Mount-Douds introduced her new book, *Apalachicola*, published by Arcadia Publishing, to the society. This engrossing picture book is a welcome addition to the documentation of our town's history.

Kenneth S. Tucker, a native of Eastpoint, spoke about his memoir, *Last Roll Call*, at the January 28, 2010, AAHS meet-

ing. His book recounts his experiences growing up in Eastpoint and serving as a tail gunner in a B-17 bomber over Europe during the Second World War.

I presented the program on February 25, 2010, speaking on the 1890 strike by the sawmill workers in Apalachicola.

On March 25, 2010, Craig Dengel, the archaeologist at Tyndall Air Force Base, spoke about the prehistory of the Tyndall area. This fascinating program was well illustrated with photographs and actual artifacts collected from the base.

Upcoming events are listed on page 8. I hope each one of you will be able to attend these programs in the future.

Sincerely,

Mark C. Curenton

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

The Apalachicola Area Historical Society wishes to extend its sincere gratitude to all those whose generous donations helped make the 2009-2010 Ilse Newell Fund for the Performing Arts concert series possible. Without these bountiful contributions the concerts would not have been possible.

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APALACHICOLA ICE AND CANNING COMPANY

In December 1885 the Apalachicola Ice and Canning Company was formed. The following articles of incorporation are recorded in Deed Record C, Page 439 in the public records of Franklin County.

The following named persons, W. R. Brown, George H. Whiteside, Wm. T. Orman, W. R. Moore, M. T. Bergan, and T. H. Moore, their associates, successors and assigns, hereby constitute themselves a body corporate under the general laws of the state of Florida, under the name and style of the Apalachicola Ice and Canning Company.

The principal place of business shall be in the City of Apalachicola, County of Franklin, State of Florida.

The said company is organized for the purpose of manufacturing Ice, canning oysters, fish, vegetables, and such other matters of a nature.

The amount of the capital stock is at present ten thousand dollars, which amount is all paid in, which serves the Company purpose to use in said business, with the power and authority to increase the same, when the Company shall desire to do so, to forty thousand dollars.

The said corporation shall commence and be in operation from the filing of these articles and continue in existence for the period allowed by law, with all the rights, privileges, immunities & conditions granted and imposed by the general law under which this Corporation exists, with full power & authority to make all necessary By laws for the government & management of the said Company.

The officers of the same shall be a president, secretary and treasurer and general superintendent, whose powers and duties shall be prescribed by the by laws, also a board of Directors to consist of not less than three, who shall be chosen annually, severally until otherwise provided and at such time

and place as the By laws shall prescribe. The highest amount of indebtedness to which the company can at anytime subject itself at any one time shall not be over five thousand dollars. And the said company having duly perfected its organization by choosing & electing the officers herein setforth, herewith ask that these their articles of incorporation may be filed as the law directs, This 21st day of December A. D. 1885.

<i>W. R. Brown</i>	<i>President</i>
	<i>{Secretary</i>
<i>Geo. H. Whiteside</i>	<i>{Treasurer</i>
	<i>{Superintendent</i>

The company built their ice plant on the riverfront just south of Centre Street (today's Avenue D). It was a frame building with power provide by wood burning boilers, although by 1909 coal was also used as a fuel.

The building was burned during the fire of May 25, 1900. The loss to the ice company was estimated at \$6,000, only \$1,000 of which was covered by insurance. The business rebuilt, however, and continued to operate until 1925 when the company filed for bankruptcy.



Photograph courtesy of the Florida State Archives

ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF THE TERRITORY OF FLORIDA PASSED AT ITS EIGHTEENTH SESSION, WHICH COMMENCED ON THE SIXTH DAY OF JANUARY, AND ENDED ON THE SECOND DAY OF MARCH, 1840.

No. 10 – An Act to incorporate the members of the Apalachicola Library Association.

Section 1. Be it enacted by the Governor and Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida, That Thos. H. Thompson, L. S. Chittenden, A. K. Allison, B. F. Nourse, J. B. Browne, C. E. Bartlett, R. J. Floyd, John Trevott, J. C. Boote, Robert Myers, C. Salisbury, R. G. Porter, Benj. Hurd, H. R. Taylor, A. Crook, Geo. F. Baltzell, Lewis Leland, W. H. Brockenbrough, R. Robinson, A. G. Semmes, E. Wood, H. W. Terry, W. G. Porter, H. Manley, V. Vallain, C. G. Holmes, H. B. Stone, George W. Ross, David G. Raney, Thomas Baltzell, Henry White, H. W. Brooks, and such other persons as they may hereafter admit into their company, agreeably to such rules and by-laws as they may establish for the beneficial and orderly management of their institution, shall be, and they, their successors and assigns, are hereby declared to be one community, corporation and body politic, for twenty years hereafter, by the name of “The Apalachicola Library Association,” and by that name they shall be, and are hereby made able and capable in law to have, purchase, receive, possess, enjoy and retain to them, and their successors, lands, tenements, rents, annuities, pensions, and other hereditaments, in fee simple, or for a term of years, life, lives or otherwise, and also goods, chattels and effects of what nature or kind soever, and the same to grant, demise, alien, or dispose

of, and by the name aforesaid, to do and execute all other things touching the same: Provided, that the clear yearly value of the real estate of said corporation, exclusive of any house which they may hereafter possess for the keeping of books, maps, and other effects of the company, exceed not the sum of three thousand dollars.

Sec. 2. Be it further enacted, That the said company, and their successors, by the aforesaid name, shall be for twenty years hereafter, able and capable in law, to sue and be sued, plead and be impleaded, answer and be answered, defend and be defended, in any courts of record, or any other place whatsoever: and also to make, have, and use a common seal, and the same to break, alter and renew at pleasure: and also to assemble and meet, at such times and places as they may agree upon, and publicly notify; and to ordain, establish and put in execution, such by-laws, ordinances and regulations, at to them shall seem necessary and expedient for the government of the company, the same not being contrary to the laws of this Territory, or the constitution and laws of the United States: and generally to do and execute all such acts, matters and things, as to them shall or may appertain to do.

Sec. 3. Be it further enacted, That until there shall be made under this act an election of officers, necessary to the ends of the institution, those now acting, or who may hereafter be appointed to act, under any existing regulations of the company, shall continue so to do, according to the provisions heretofore made; and such regulations shall, till lawfully altered, be deemed as valid and obligatory as if made since the passing of this act.

[Approved 14th February, 1840]

You are invited to join the Apalachicola Area Historical Society. Individual dues are \$10 per year, and the membership year runs from June through May. Please complete this application, make your check payable to “Apalachicola Area Historical Society” and mail to P.O. Box 75, Apalachicola, Florida 32329.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone No.: _____

E-Mail: _____

Upcoming Events

April 18, 2010—Ilse Newell Concert in the Park. The Leon Anderson Jazz Ensemble and soloist Pam Laws will perform. The concert is free and open to the public. It will be held at 4:00 p.m. at Lafayette Park in Apalachicola.

April 22, 2010—David Adlerstein will present a program on the history of newspapers in Franklin County. The meeting will be held at 5:30 p.m. at the Carriage House, 128 Market Street, Apalachicola, Florida.

May 20, 2010—Vincent “Chip” Birdsong will speak on the Florida Master Site File. Mr. Birdsong is the administrator and supervisor of the Master Site File. The meeting will be held at 5:30 p.m. at the Carriage House, 128 Market Street, Apalachicola, Florida.

June, 2010—Annual Business Meeting. The annual business meeting and election of new officers will be held at a time and place to be announced.

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