

APALACHICOLA HISTORY

APALACHICOLA AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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HOW OLD IS THE RANEY HOUSE?

The date traditionally given for when the Raney House in Apalachicola was built is 1838. Where did that date come from and is it correct? First we will examine the existing evidence and then draw what conclusions we can based on these facts.

The earliest reference found about a residence for the Raney family is an advertisement in the April 16, 1836, *Apalachicola Gazette*. It states, "For Sale or Rent. THE House at present occupied by the subscriber. Possession given on the first of May next. Apalachicola April 16. DAVID G. RANEY". This same advertisement continues to appear in the *Apalachicola Gazette* until at least October 1, 1836.

David G. Raney is listed in the 1840 census as living in Apalachicola with one white male under 5 years old, one white male 20 to 30 years old, one white male 40 to 50 years old, and one white female 20 to 30 years old.

In *The Columbus Enquirer* on Wednesday, April 9, 1845, there is an article reprinted from the *Apalachicola Advertiser* of March 29 about a fire that destroyed part of Apalachicola. It appears from the article that the block that burned was Block F2, which is bounded by Avenue E on the South, Commerce Street on the east, Avenue F on the north, and Market Street on the west. This is directly across the street from the front of the Raney House. The article mentions, "The beautiful dwellings of Messrs Brooks and Raney, were also at one time in great jeopardy, the latter actually having caught once or twice, and was only preserved by the most strenuous exertions."

The Franklin County Courthouse burned in November 1874, destroying all the local property records prior to then. Only a few deeds prior to this date were subsequently re-recorded in the Franklin County Deed Records.

The Bridge Edition of *The Apalachicola*



Times on November 2, 1935, had an article by Mrs. Sarah Orman Butterfield entitled "Colonial Homes Still Stand Which Were Built In 1838". This article states that "The Raney House, built in 1838 is still in a fine state of preservation; now owned and occupied by Dr. and Mrs. J. S. Murrow."

The Apalachicola Times on Friday, June 4, 1954, contained an article by Fred Sawyer, Sr. entitled "Old Home Being Dismantled Here". This article states, "Another old home built in 1834 is the

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Raney[sic] Place still standing at the corner of Market and Ave. F.”

The Historic American Building Survey documents for the Raney House prepared by Blair Reeves in February 1962 state, “Traditionally this structure was built in St. Joseph, Florida about 1838. It was moved to its present site in the early 1840’s because of the yellow fever epidemic.”

The National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form prepared for the Raney House on July 23, 1971, repeats the statement about the house traditionally being built in St. Joseph in 1838 and subsequently moved to Apalachicola. It is also noted that this statement is probably not true. George Dodd, a meticulous local historian, is noted as not believing that the Raney House was one of the structures moved to Apalachicola from St. Joseph.

A March 13, 1972, letter from W. J. Oven, Jr. to G. Rodman Porter, both Raney descendants, states, “I was unable to find any exact information as to the date the old Raney home in Apalachicola was constructed.” The letter goes on to repeat family lore that W. J. Oven, Sr. was born in the same room in the Raney House where his mother was born. His mother, Frances Harriet Raney Oven, was born on September 20, 1843.

A June 17, 1975, letter from Phillip A. Werdli to Mr. N. H. Holmes, who were both working on the history of the house, states that Mrs. J. S. Murrow cannot provide any information about the age of the house.

A November 1979 Florida Master Site File form for the Raney House states “Built in 1838 and

remodeled in 1850.” without giving any source for the information.

All of this evidence reveals that there is nothing that definitively states when the house was constructed. Sarah Orman Butterfield was the earliest person to state that the house was built in 1838, but she was not born until 1869, so she would have no personal knowledge of when the house was constructed. It seems reasonable to believe that it was built prior to 1843, since Frances Harriet Raney Oven was born in the house.

The advertisement published in the 1836 *Apalachicola Gazette* seems to provide the strongest clue to when the house might have been built. As early as April 1836 it seems that David G. Raney believed he would be leaving his current residence no later than the end of April 1837. This could have been because he was building another house and knew it would be completed before May 1, 1837.

Based on this evidence it seems probable that the Raney House was built from 1836 to 1837 and completed sometime before May 1, 1837.

For Sale or Rent.
THE House at present occupied by the subscriber. Possession given on the first of May next.
Apalachicola April 16. **DAVID G. RANEY.**
SUGAR & FLOUR—4 hhds P. R. Sugar
50 bbis Canal Flour
20 do Western Flour, received by the late arrivals, and for sale by
April 9 **G. L. MIDDLEBROOK.**

Advertisement in the September 24, 1836, issue of the *Apalachicola Gazette*. This advertisement first appeared in the April 9, 1836, issue





Photograph courtesy of the Apalachicola Municipal Library

LOST APALACHICOLA

The brick Coca-Cola bottling plant at the corner of Avenue E and 11th Street was built to replace the tin building on Water Street that had served as the bottling plant. Construction was started in October 1938 on the Art Deco building designed by J. A. Gambing of Atlanta. The 85' by 34' building was built of red brick laid in Flemish bond. With Flemish bond the headers and stretchers alternate in a course.

The building was completed in February of 1939 at a cost of \$15,000. The new bottling equipment installed has a capacity of 27 bottles a minute. The operation was moved into the building from the Water Street location on Thursday, March 16, 1939.

Over the years additions were added to the building, altering its appearance. It operated as a bottling plant at least into the late 1970s. The building was torn down in September 1992, after three months of contentious debate in front of the Apalachicola Planning & Zoning Commission and the City Commission over the fate of the distinctive structure. The

building that currently houses the CVS Drug Store was built on the site.

The Coca-Cola plant being demolished in 1992.



REMINISCENCES OF JOSEPH MESSINA

In the late nineteenth century the timber industry had revived Apalachicola's fortunes, literally and figuratively. Northern capital flowed into the area, and the lumber sawn in Apalachicola's mills was exported to Europe and South America. Lumber men, such as James N. Coombs, were nationally known figures.

Many men were employed in the industry, from cutting the trees to rafting the timber down the river to cutting the timber into lumber at the mills and loading it onto ships out in the bay.

Another lucrative source of income at that time was the sponge trade.

In 1946 Joseph Messina, who owned and ran the Bay City Packing Company, was waxing nostalgic about the days of Apalachicola's past. He was about 80 years old at this time. In July he contributed an article listing the various fishing vessels and their captains who operated out of the city. On August 2, 1946, he followed that article up with one listing the people involved with the sponging and logging industry in the past.

Spongers And Loggers Of By-Gone Days

The following Schooners were engaged in the Sponging Industry from 1880 to 1900:

The Liberty, Rosina Clara, J G Ruge, Alice, Henrietta Sharit, Lillie B, Jessie May, Little May, Chiefton, Wabash, Minnie Grey, Golden Age, Sloaps, Old Fawn, H S Grady and Sadie.

Captains, Catchers and Skullermen:

WHITE

Dan Gillis, Theo Floyd, Wm Floyd, Andy Wing, Nick Dumont, M Tarantino, A E Messina, John Zingarelli, Wm H Pyle, Henry Pyle, Neal Hodges, Joseph Roan, Wm Daiffie, Joe Sangaree, Manuel Rodgers, John Rodgers, John and George Warren.

Sam Montgomery, George Long, Charles Montgomery, George Knight, Dick Reynolds, Henry McQuire, Joe Henderson, Larry Anderson, Benjamin Sharit, Amos Sharit, Joe B and Will Sharit, Gad Barmore, Henry Lashley, Jim and Joe Ewton, Edd Black, Claude Black, Cracker Harris, Antone Campo, T Kemp, Santo Defravio, John Edwards, Geo Williams, Vincent DeCosmo, Frank Sangaree,

Ronat Sangaree, Genaro Zingarelli, Lewis Hall, and Aleck Campo.

COLORED

Tony Archer, George Archer, Noah Gardner, Joe, Chas and Austin Fisher, James Bates, Jerry Austin, Frank Austin, William & Sam Walton, Smart, Winslow and Jake Walton, Charles Smith, Will and Henry Price, Joe and George Ramsey, William Sloan, Chas Price, James Dorsey.

After the sponges were caught, the vessels sold some here, at St Marks, Tarpon Springs, and Key West. The buyers were M Brash, sr., J G Ruge, and Joseph Messina. The vessels would dock at City Wharf, unload their catch and we three buyers would inspect them, both sheep wool and grass sponges and make sealed bids. The highest bidder securing the sponges.

My customers were, The Langley & Michaels Co., San Francisco; Col J B Green Fielder Co, Saint Louis, Mo.; Biedler Bros and Jackson, Baltimore, Md. and McKesson and Robbins, New York City. It was quite a source of revenue in those days. The crews shared over \$100 for four to six weeks trip.

For the past forty years the Greeks with their fine diving vessels and diving suits would catch sponges in water off St Martins Reef in 10 to 30 fathoms deep. Sponges in past forty years, has advanced over eight hundred percent, in value.

LOGGING

The Logging Industry – Its Logmen: John Howard and 3 sons, Capt Hathcock and four sons, Capt Tom Branch and five sons, Capt John and Jack Fowler, Ed Fowler, Capt John Hose, J P Marchant, Miller and Enzors, W P Yearty, Dan and Will Clifton, Jep Worthington, Louis Huber, John Porter, Patrick Long, Richard Porter and 2 sons, Henry Gas-kin, Lat Armstead, John and Charles Griffin, Joe Roberts, W C Faircloth, Capt Henry Hale, Tom Johnson, John Pace (carpenter), John Barmore, and Frank Comforter, pilot.

Capt John Brown was the champion Log Getter, getting the logs from the bottom of the river.

Surveyors – All white men:

Capt S A Floyd, C S Estes, Capt H B Marchant, Wm E Montgomery, Capt J H Hoffman, Rich-

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ard Cumming, Capt August Mohr, John J Berry.

All these surveyors worked Independent of each other.

The Boat Builders, Capt J H Shipkey, G Zingarelli, Sam J Johnson, Geo Houston, Louis Hall, Joseph Zingarelli, Capt Antone Fraddozia, William Sarvis and sons and Willie Gibson.

Contractors and home builders – Geo Marshall, David T Maddox, Geo M Vanhorn, Jas T Davis, James Farley, J D Glass, Ed Fowler, Ed Aulick, Chas T Wathen, George Egbert, George Bailey, Bob Mahon, Bob Mahoney, Chas Campbell, Albert Jenkins, Joe and Ben Gibson.

Of all of these men listed in these five articles over 145 of them, only 13 remain.

The balance have gone to their Eternal Reward.

As Surveyor, Capt A B Marchant, past 85.

As Capt and Sponger, Dan Gillis, past 86.

As Sponger and Merchant, A E Messina, past 82. As sponger, John Zingarelli, past 75. As sponger, Will Sharit, past 72. As sponger, Jerry Austin, (colored) past 68.

As builders – Will and Joe Gibson, past 65. As Builders, David Maddox, past 68. As Builders, Albert Jenkins, past 70, Ben Gibson, past 79.

As Loggers – J J Brown, past 77, J P Marchant, past 78.

Looking east on Avenue E at a collection of sponges displayed in the street. The Sponge Exchange is shown to the right and the three-story brick building in the background housed Herman Ruge & Sons. It is possible the man and the woman in the center of the picture might be John and Fannie Ruge. This picture was taken around 1895.



Photograph courtesy of State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <https://floridamemory.com/items/show/230>

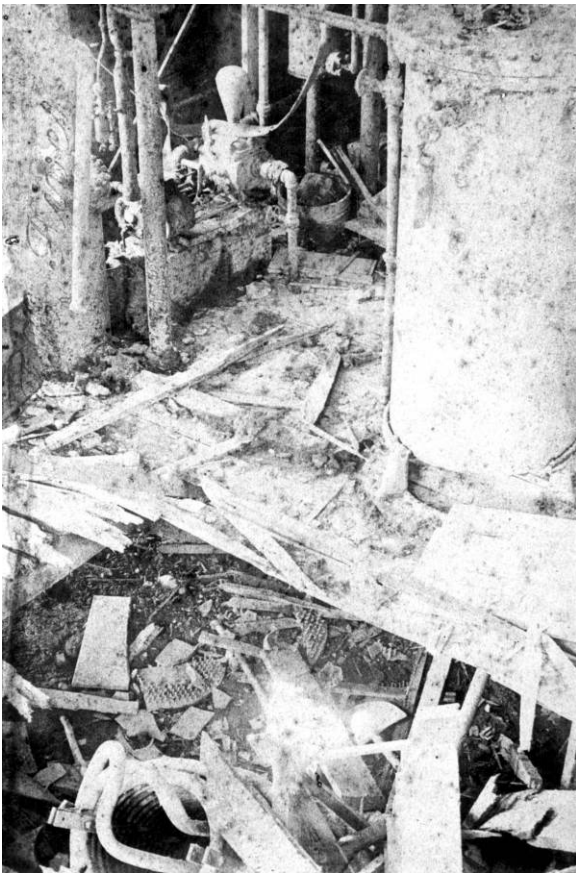
KILLER ICE EXPLOSION

The Apalachicola Ice Company was organized in 1885 and built an ice manufacturing plant on the riverfront just south of Avenue D. Less than a year later, on November 27, 1886, there was an explosion at the ice plant. The ammonia boiler in the building exploded, killing Apalachicola City Commissioner Charles A. Glazier and fatally wounding Captain William Moore of Columbus, Georgia. Several other men were injured in the blast, and the plant was wrecked.

The photograph at the left shows the wrecked interior of the ice plant after the explosion. The photograph below shows the exterior of the building. A section of the wall of the building was blown out by the force of the blast along with the windows.

Charles A. Glazier had just purchased the original parcel for the Magnolia Cemetery when he was killed. He purchased it because the City did not have enough funds at that time to acquire the land for the new cemetery. Mr. Glazier's widow later sold the property to the city.

Photograph courtesy of the Apalachicola Municipal Library



Photograph courtesy of State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <https://floridamemory.com/items/show/25811>



KILLED BY A FALL

The following tragic death was recorded in the *Apalachicola Times* on Saturday, April 11, 1914.

Megallie Armingala climbed to the roof of his residence on Commerce Street Saturday morning of last week to dislodge a kite that had gotten the best of young Armingala and had lodged on the roof. He climbed to the roof of the kitchen and then reached higher and began to climb the steep roof of the dwelling. While on the main roof he lost his footing, rolled down the roof and fell off, striking the fence that runs close to the dwelling, hung on the fence for a moment and then his body hit the ground with a heavy thud, his neck broken. Shortly after he hit the ground he was picked up by neighbors and taken into his dwelling, where he lingered until Sunday morning. Although his neck was broken he was conscious until a short time before he died.

Armingala was conscious of his approaching dissolution, and his thoughts were of his wife and

son. He begged Mr. Joseph Messina, his employer, to send them to France, his wife's former home.

Armingala lived in Apalachicola the past seven years. He was foreman in the rawhouse of the Bay City Company.

During the Spanish-American war he was a non-commissioned officer in the Spanish army, serving in Cuba. He was at Santiago and often spoke to his acquaintances here of the battles between the Americans and the Spaniards. His description of the fleshy General Shafter always brought smiles to the lips of his listeners. Armingala was Spanish and enlisted in the army in Spain. He wore a gold medal for bravery won on the field of battle.

His age is given at 37 years. Monday morning the remains were interred in Magnolia Cemetery in the presence of a number of friends, all of whom brought with them beautiful flowers with which they decorated his grave.

The citizens sympathize with the widow and the orphan in their bereavement.

THE APALACHICOLA TIMES

Saturday, November 8, 1913

Would Give Flights Here.

A communication has been received here from The Inter-State Aviation Company, of Chicago, Ill., who would like to come to Apalachicola and give

some exhibitions in the art of aviation. Just what the proposition of this company is has not been learned definitely although in a brief letter they suggest a big trade week. Such a week would be a big thing to Apalachicola and alone it is agreed that the flying machine would be a rare treat to Apalachicola.

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: _____

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings

We have a wonderful schedule of events coming up this season. For our first General Meeting, on September 24, 2015 at 5:30pm at the Carriage House, The Florida Public Archeology Network (F-PAN) will be talking about cemetery preservation. F-PAN returns October 29, 2015 for an all day workshop beginning at 8:30am at the Carriage House and ending with an afternoon of cemetery work. I can't tell you how thrilling it is to continue our work on Chestnut Cemetery! We have gotten a second grant to finish the mapping of the cemetery, to create a webpage and to develop a plan for restoration and preservation of this valuable historic site. So, please be sure to go to the F-PAN site at <https://commerce.cashnet.com/uwfevnpay?itemcode=EVN-FPANCWP> and sign up to participate in the workshop if you are interested in hands on experience. We have spots left. The cost is \$10.00. Lunch is on your own with light snacks and water served throughout the day.

And of course, on Halloween, October 31, 2015, we will have another Ghost Walk at Chestnut cemetery starting at 6:30pm. The Ghost Walk committee is hard at

work getting actors to play our graveyard visitors and volunteers to be guides and sell tickets. The cost is \$5.00 and if you have not renewed your membership you can pay \$10.00 and get in free, such a deal!

Again this year we will be hosting the Festival of Trees at the Raney House. Last year was our first Festival and we had such success that we have added a preview cocktail party on Monday, November 23 from 5:30pm to 7pm. The event is free to members and all those who are not members may join at the door for \$10.00.

We are working on exciting plans for our January general meeting and speaker. Stay tuned for press releases in the paper and Oyster Radio as well as e-mails to our members.

Last but not least, in February, the month of passion, we will again have Lois Swoboda speaking on Mayhem and Murder in Apalachicola. See I told you; it is an exciting season for the Apalachicola Area Historical Society. I'll see you on Thursday, September 24th at the Raney Carriage House.

Happy History,
Carrie

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