

APALACHICOLA HISTORY

APALACHICOLA AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Eastpoint is located on the eastern shore of Apalachicola Bay. With the completion of the John Gorrie Bridge in 1935 Eastpoint became an inexpensive site for the seafood industry to locate along the shore. The population of Eastpoint grew from 65 people in 1939 to 800 people just 15 years later.

One impediment to the seafood industry in Eastpoint was the lack of deep water along the waterfront. Although the seafood processing houses were typically built out over the water, at low tide the houses were high and dry. Boats could reach the processing houses to unload only on a high tide.



Photograph from the November 12, 1954, *Apalachicola Times*, showing a typical seafood house in Eastpoint at low tide prior to the dredging of the channel.

After the end of the Second World War the local community began advocating for the dredging of a channel to the Eastpoint waterfront, along with other waterway improvements in Apalachicola Bay. With the assistance of Congressman Bob Sikes a public meeting was held by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on October 28, 1947, at the Armory in Apalachicola. Approximately 100 people attended the hearing, which resulted in a request for a channel 9 feet deep by 100 feet wide parallel to the Eastpoint shore line for 7,500 feet. At the east end of the channel it would arc around for 1,500 feet to reach the deep water in St. George Sound.

Sixteen months later the Corps of Engineers recommended that a detailed survey be performed to determine the cost and justification of a channel at Eastpoint. The channel the Corps recommended was 6 feet deep by 100 feet wide by 6,000 feet along the shore line. An access passage 6 feet deep by 100 feet wide would be dredged from the center of the Eastpoint channel out to deep water in St. George Sound.

The Corps's survey resulted in a favorable report for the Eastpoint channel. In February 1954 a committee from Franklin County, consisting of C H. Bourke Floyd, Mr. and Mrs. Newt W. Creekmore, Bryant G. Patton, and Arthur L. Tucker, Jr., flew to Washington, D. C. to appear before a Congressional committee on behalf of the Eastpoint channel. Funding was appropriated and the McCullough Dredging

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Apalachicola History

THE CARRABELLE SEA SERPENT

The following report appeared in *The Ocala Evening Star* on August 24, 1896.

MONSTER SEA SERPENT

Carrabelle, Fla., Aug. 22 – The steamer Crescent City left Carrabelle dock about 11 o'clock for the snapper banks off Dog island, with about 30 on board, brought by a special train from Tallahassee, also a few from Asron, Ashmore, Lanark, and Carrabelle on the line of the C., T. & G. railroad. She is just back and has on board a huge sea serpent, which was hung by a troll line off Carrabelle about nine miles, before the banks were located. The troll was about 600 yards long, but only about 100 yards were paid out when the sea serpent struck the hook, which was a shark hook, baited with a couple of mullet.

It was thought by those present who were watching the troll that the hook had struck the rocks and had got hung. The water was smooth and the boat steaming slowly. Signals were given the boat to slacken, when it was ascertained by the crowd that something of enormous size had the troll. Everybody was panic stricken as the water began to foam at the end of the troll. Some one yelled "Pay out the line; turn the thing loose." The line was rapidly paid out for 200 or 300 yards and the monster made direct to the sea with the line, the boat following it under full steam; which was kept up for three or four miles, when it was ascertained that the monster was tiring and preparations were made to haul in the troll.

When nearing the boat the excitement increased, and when it was within shooting distance everyone on the boat who had a gun turned loose at it. The shooting was kept up for several minutes. At last one of the party got a Winchester bead on its head and fired. The monster made a lunge to the

paidout line, but soon rose to the surface, when it was seen that it was lifeless. The crowd and crew of the boat, with much difficulty, managed to haul it in on the lower deck with a hawser and capstan.

The monster measured 46 feet and 2 inches in length and 72 inches around its body in the largest part. It is eelshaped, with the exception of its head and tail. It has a spoonbill shaped head, with a mouth resembling a shark's, except that it is a great deal larger. Its teeth are set at an angle of about 45 degrees backwards in the mouth, and it has a long forked tongue. The tail is armed with formidable fins 6 to 8 inches long. The color is brown, with a greenish back, making it appear black in the water. The under side is yellow. It is a horrible slimy monster. It has been landed on Carrabelle dock, where it is now being viewed in amazement by the entire populace. This is the only sea serpent ever captured in the Gulf of Mexico.



The Crescent City docking at Eastpoint, about 1910. State Archives of Florida, *Florida Memory*, <http://floridamemory.com/items/show/63471>

THE OWL CAFÉ IN 1908

This popular place owned and operated by those hustling caterers, Nichols Bros., is open to the public. 'Tis a place where a lady or gentleman can secure a lunch or a meal in a few minutes. Those who have known the Nicholls Bros. in the past feel sure that in their new place of business, which, by the way, looks as neat as a pin, they will serve their patrons in a way that will commend them. Quick orders for outside lunches will be a special feature.

The following notice appeared in the August 1, 1908, issue of *The Apalachicola Times*.

1858 DESCRIPTION OF APALACHICOLA

The following anonymous letter was first published in the Bainbridge *Argus* and was subsequently reprinted in the *Apalachicola Commercial Advertiser* on March 10, 1858. The writer gives a good description of the various churches in the city immediately prior to the Civil War.

APALACHICOLA, Feb. 27, 1858.

MR. EDITOR: - Apalachicola has, I should say, a very industrious population, among the lower classes. I have seen but few if any loafers; have not seen a drunken man since I came here. The upper *tons*, old and young; all seem to have something to do and I find them always busy; fewer idle clerks here than any location I know of. In fact, there is a good deal of "Yankeedom" in this place; all hands at work, and always at it, is the motto here.

I should judge from what I see and hear, that there is more intelligence in this community than you will find in a "one horse" city. My business has called me to the houses of the citizens, and I must say that I have seen more good books, and fewer bad ones here, than any place I have known heretofore. 'Tis said that the Merchants stand No. 1 in New York. I take them to be a very intelligent class of men. Simplicity in manners and social intercourse mark the general character of the community.

A word as to the religious character of the place. There are five houses of public worship in the town. The Baptist Church is served by Rev. Mr. Webb. I understand the white membership is small; the colored society is larger. A Sabbath School is connected with the Church. The building itself is ordinary.

The Catholic Church is served by "Father Gibbons," a tall, stalwart, fine-looking young man, I should say fresh from "swate Ireland." He is said to be a very good man, exercising much control over his people. They have a good house of worship, a clever congregation, and I believe a Sabbath School.

The Episcopal Church has for its pastor Rev. Mr. Saunders, a very clever-looking man, quite clerical in his appearance, who according to the rules of the Church, reads prayers and sermons every Sunday. *Quere*: If to read prayers and sermons is pray-

ing and preaching, would not the reading of prophecies be prophecying? I understand there is some forty communicants in this Church. They have a good house of worship, and a clever Sunday School.

The Methodist Church has for its pastor the present year, the Rev. Mr. Smith, of the Florida Conference. This gentleman has but recently come to the place; is comparatively a stranger; I should say, in his boots, he stands about five feet eleven inches; spare made, black hair, blue eyes, rather lean, with stentorian lungs, and looks as though he had gone through the sunshine and shower of twenty five years in the ministry, and has to all appearance constitution enough left to bear him up twenty five more. He preaches without even note before him. The crowd gangs to his Church, which is an excellent house and numbers, I understand, over a hundred communicants. They also have a large Sunday School in connection with this Church.

The colored Church (Methodist) is a comfortable house of worship; has a large congregation and a large membership. Service is held here every Sabbath afternoon and at night, conducted by the regular pastor and local preachers, assisted by the colored preachers. I find quite a number of white persons attend the afternoon services in this church. Sea Captains and their wives and others are attracted hither by the beautiful singing of the colored people.

In attending public worship here, I have noticed with pleasure the good order observed by all who go to church; everybody seems to have profound respect for the house of God and the services of the sanctuary.

To sum up, I have seen no place better supplied with houses of worship; I have seen no place with a better supply of Sunday Schools; I have seen no place where the masses seem to pay more respect to religion; and, take Apalachicola all in all, it is a desirable locality, and no one need regret to have his lot cast among this people - intelligent, hospitable, social, religious.

"This land has few such glorious homes
To show the human eye."

TRAVELER

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Company was hired to do the work. This company also dredged the ferry landings at Cat Point and Dog Island, the Bob Sikes Cut and the yacht basin on St. George Island at the same time.



1953 aerial photograph of Eastpoint prior to the dredging of the channel. The shoal water along the Eastpoint waterfront is evident.

At 7:40 a.m. on Friday, September 10, 1954, the McCullough dredge started dredging the Eastpoint channel. The channel was dredged to a depth of 8 feet even though the authorized depth was 6 feet. It is standard practice to dredge deeper than the authorized depth to allow for the silting in of the channel. The spoil that was dredged up was placed on the waterward side of the channel to create two sand bars, each 2,000 feet long, which provided some protection from rough weather.

The new channel had an immediate economic impact on Eastpoint. Boats could unload their catch at the processing houses at any time of the day, and larger boats could reach the Eastpoint waterfront, resulting in larger catches being landed.

Shrimp boats up to 56 feet long, drawing 6 feet of water regularly used the Eastpoint channel. Among the vessels that used the channel were the *Jennifer Mitch*, *Laura J*, *Sonya Nita*, *Captain Ed*, *Little Lady*, *Captain Jordan*, and *Captain's Lady*.

The channel was last dredged in 1977 when 30,000 cubic yards of material was removed.

The sandbars created with the spoil from the channel were still in existence in the mid 1970s. They provided some protection from rough seas for boats tied up along the waterfront, but they were easily overtopped during storms. Whenever a tempest threatened, all of the men in Eastpoint would go down to the shore to keep an eye on their boats, to ensure they were not battered to pieces against the docks by the wind and waves. At night they would bring their children down to the waterfront with them, leaving them in the back seat of their cars until the bad weather passed.

In the 1970s Franklin County began to work with the Corps of Engineers on having a permanent breakwater built out of stone. A local committee consisting of Willard M. Vinson, Xuripha Miller, Maxie Carroll, Carl Ard, Bruford Flowers, Aaron Taylor and James Miller, guided the project. One of the main concerns was to protect the water quality in Apalachicola Bay. The County and the Corps of Engineers worked with the University of Florida to develop a hydrodynamic model for the breakwater project, as required by the State of Florida. The State also insisted on requiring upland spoil sites for future maintenance dredging prior to giving approval to the breakwater project. Later, however, the State of Florida relented and agreed to allow maintenance dredging with open water spoiling provided that appropriate monitoring was conducted.

With this agreement in 1983 the breakwater project was able to move forward. The breakwater was built in 1984. On August 11, 1984, the breakwater was dedicated. Due to her hard work on getting the breakwater approved and built, and for her general efforts to improve and support the Eastpoint community, Xuripha Miller was declared "Queen of the Breakwater" and that day was declared "Xuripha Miller Day".

In 1985 two hurricanes, Elena and Kate, struck Franklin County. The storm tide overtopped the new breakwater and filled in much of the Eastpoint channel. Since that time Franklin County has been trying to have the Corps of Engineers redredge the channel.

Most recently, in 2003, the County was notified that \$1.5 million had been allocated in the federal budget for dredging the Eastpoint channel. A search proceeded for suitable upland spoil disposal

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sites. On September 2, 2003, the County was informed that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection had agreed to let the Corps of Engineers submit a dredging plan that would include open water disposal on the breakwater. This effort came to naught when the Corps reallocated the funds to other projects in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

The Board of County Commissioners has continued to request funding to dredge the Eastpoint channel, but no appropriations have been forthcoming. The Corps of Engineers currently estimates that 180,000 cubic yards of spoil needs to be removed from the Eastpoint channel to return it to its authorized dimensions.



1994 aerial photograph of the Eastpoint channel.

NEWS FROM MAY 1, 1915

Capt. James Bivins reports that in about a month the Canal from Lake Wimico to St. Andrews Bay will be open to traffic. In the meantime some parts of the Canal will be farther deepened by the dredge to allow the uninterrupted passage of large vessels.

Mr. J. S. Stovall is associated with the Kaufman Cigar Factory, of this city, as Secretary and Treasurer, and it is the intention of the Company to make a strong bid for the cigar trade of not only Apalachicola but that of adjoining towns as well. Mr. Kaufman was recently in Tampa and while there purchased a large stock of wrappers and fillers of both foreign and domestic which will be used in the factory in Apalachicola. This is a home enterprise and our citizens generally should do everything in their power to make it a success. The goods manufactured are of excellent quality, and the prices quoted to dealers are attractive.

THE OCCUPATION OF APALACHICOLA

Apalachicola 150 Years Ago

On the morning of June 1, 1865, a convoy of six ships from Pensacola arrived at Apalachicola Bay bearing over a thousand Union troops from the 161st New York Infantry and the 82nd U. S. Colored Infantry. Their mission was to occupy Apalachicola and establish a post “to command the harbor, the mouth of the Apalachicola River, and the surrounding country, and to protect all public property that may be collected at that place.”

When they arrived in town they found “All the places of business except one cotton press were closed, the streets were covered with grass, the houses and sidewalks were falling into decay, all the churches were closed, and an oppressive quietness everywhere prevailed.” One infantryman wrote home to New York, “We found a few fishermen and old pilots here with their families, some of them blacks but mostly of a mongrel white race.”

The troops were quartered in empty houses and buildings around town. They found their surroundings hot and sandy. Oysters and fish were abundant, but after a steady diet of both the men soon longed for variety. Fruit and vegetables were nearly impossible to come by.

The troops tried to supplement their diet and entertain themselves with hunting and fishing. In early June a party went on an excursion and returned two days later with “a large quantity of fish & turtle eggs about 2,000 and a large turtle about 300 weight and some young eagles.” The search for vegetative sustenance was less successful. William Davis and John Lamphier went huckleberry picking one morning in the middle of June. After walking three miles they only gathered one quart of berries. It was very hot, and William Davis wrote in his diary, “wished a hundred times I had never went.”

Other expeditions were more successful. On one trip up the river a party stopped at a small clearing and filled up on blackberries “in jig time.”

The 944 bales of cotton found in the city were placed under guard until the federal government could determine what to do with them. Supplies were sent up the river to Major General Wilson’s command in Macon, Georgia. The lighthouse machinery was replaced. The obstructions in the

Apalachicola River were inspected. The chain that was stretched across the river in 1862 had created a log jam two and a half miles long upstream, completely blocking the channel. Boats traveling on the river detoured through Moccasin Slough to avoid the obstructions.

People were starting to return to Apalachicola, from both the South and the North, intent on resuming their prewar occupations. Steamboats from upriver started arriving with cotton for shipment overseas.

The Union forces decided that a proper celebration of the Fourth of July should be observed, so the officers met to arrange an appropriate program. At 10 o’clock on the morning of the Fourth a public meeting was held at a vacant lot near the center of town, probably on the Mansion House Square where the first Confederate company from Apalachicola had been sent off to war four years earlier. One of the officers read the Declaration of Independence, and the Chaplain of the 161st New York delivered an oration expounding on the benefits of the just concluded war. At noon a 37-gun salute was fired, and the afternoon was given over to athletic games including foot races, sack races, climbing a greased pole and catching a greased pig.

The 161st New York was transferred out of the area at the end of July 1865, leaving the 82nd to garrison the town. Gradually, as more units were mustered out of the Union army, portions of the 82nd were transferred to other localities that needed garrisoning. By April 1866 only one company, less than 100 men, remained in Apalachicola.

At times there were conflicts between the Union occupiers and the former Confederates that returned to the area. When Mr. Messina hoisted the Stars and Stripes on his sloop to celebrate the 4th of July in 1866, Captain Joseph Dunham, the former commander of a Confederate artillery battery, ordered him to haul it down. The Union commander arrested Captain Dunham and was ordered to arrest Mr. Messina also if he refused to make an affidavit about the incident.

At the end of August 1866, the last Union troops left Apalachicola. The occupation was over.

CHESTNUT STREET CEMETERY INVENTORY COMPLETED

An inventory of the Chestnut Street Cemetery in Apalachicola was conducted from November 8, 2014 through March 22, 2015. Four people assisted in conducting the inventory, Tom Daly, Jan Thomas, Lowell Thomas and Mark Curenton.

For each grave an inventory form was filled out which recorded the name of the person buried there; the complete inscription; the type of marker; the height, width and depth or length of the marker; the material of the marker; the condition of the marker; who surveyed the grave and the date of the survey. If the grave was located in a plot it was also noted which plot it was in. These inventory sheets were cross referenced with the grave number assigned when the previous inventory of the cemetery was taken, probably during the late 1980s. Several graves that have been placed in the cemetery since that time, and several graves that were missed during the previous inventory, were assigned new grave numbers.

If there was any indication of a grave it was recorded. There were several sunken areas with no marker that were recorded. The previous inventory noted many graves that had no information. The current inventory was able to identify the location of most of those graves. The location of the unidentified graves relative to other landmarks was noted on the inventory sheets to aid future searchers.

Some of the "No Information" graves from the previous inventory could not be identified from the information available. Grave numbers 89, 90, 267, 299, 315, 412, 418, 433, 450, 451 and 452 in the previous inventory were not identified during this current inventory. Most of these graves probably have been recorded with a new number in the current inventory.

David G. Raney Jr. had two entries in the previous inventory, grave number 187 and 191. In the current inventory he is listed as grave number 187.

A total of 567 inventory forms were completed. Some of the markers were for than one individual. In these cases just one sheet was filled out, but the names were entered individually on the summary of the inventory. Some individuals had more than one marker. In these cases all the markers were noted on a single inventory sheet. This was most common for military veterans.

There are a total of 595 individuals or graves

noted on the current inventory. Not all of those individuals are buried in Chestnut Street Cemetery. William Augustus Farley (Grave No. 33) was lost at sea. It is possible that Annie Allen Clark (Grave No. 570) was removed to a cemetery in Bangor, Maine in the 1800s, and it is not certain that that all the children listed on the tombstone of Arietta Schuyler Farmer Jenkins (Grave No. 507) are buried in Chestnut Street Cemetery. What is certain is that there are many individuals buried in the cemetery who have no maker of any sort.

Only one grave identified by a name in the former inventory could not be located this time: grave number 282, J. W. Knight. According to a map keyed to the grave number on this old inventory this grave should be in the same plot as Eliza A. McKnight (Grave No. 283) and Mary A. McKnight (Grave No. 284). There is no sign of J. W. Knight's marker in that plot and it is not located in the immediate area around this plot. There are several pieces of marble in very poor condition at the base of an oak tree about four feet west of the southwest corner of the McKnight plot. No sign of any inscription is visible on any of the pieces. It seems unlikely, though, that a marker that was legible less than thirty years ago could have deteriorated so badly in that short of a period of time.

The original inventory forms are in the files of the Apalachicola Area Historical Society. Copies of the summary digital files have been made available to the City of Apalachicola and the Apalachicola Municipal Library and a copy has been posted to the Apalachicola Area Historical Society website: www.apalachicolahistoricalsociety.org.



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.

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