The blaze that destroyed the Wright House on Sixteenth Street earlier this year reminds us that fire has been one of Apalachicola’s worst enemies. From its earliest days fires have ravaged the town, frequently destroying huge swaths of the city. Some of the blazes over the year have included:

1833 A fire destroyed nearly one third of the buildings in Apalachicola and the records of the custom house were destroyed.

April 1842 A fire started in the Apalachicola theater and spread through the entire block containing nineteen wooden buildings. All of the buildings were burned.

April 1844 A fire started in G. S. Hawkins’s drug store. This brick building and two adjacent ones were destroyed.

October 1846 A fire started by an arsonist burned two blocks of the city and caused $53,700 worth of damage. Eight brick buildings, ten wooden buildings and over one hundred bales of cotton were burned.

Thursday, May 23, 1857 Fire destroyed a large section of downtown and 2,450 bales of cotton. The fire originated in the Union Warehouse, which was located in the block bounded by Avenues D and E and Market
Street and Commerce Street. The warehouse was built around a central open courtyard and housed about 2,000 bales of cotton at the time. South of the Union Warehouse, along Avenue D, were the post office, the office of the Apalachicola Advertiser newspaper, and other offices in wooden structures. All of these buildings were consumed by the flames, as well as buildings to the north of the Union Warehouse on the same block. The fire jumped Avenue D and consumed two blocks between Commerce and Market Streets. The ice house was burnt, leaving a pyramid of ice amidst the ashes. The old hospital was also burned. Fifty families were left homeless by the blaze. Total loss from the flames was estimated at $200,000; $160,000 of which was the value of the lost cotton.

February 2, 1860 A fire near the intersection of Avenue C and Fourth Street destroyed five houses. Horace Dodd, a clerk from Maine, described the scene in a letter to his girlfriend: “Yesterday at 11 A. M. a fire broke out neat the “Hotel Hancock” & burnt five houses & was only stopped then from extending over the whole upper part of the town by a fortunate change of the wind & tearing down a barn, all of which excitement enough, but a daylight this morning a fire was accidentally discovered very snugly laid under the house of a merchant which in five minutes more would have been in flames & all in the house asleep. As you may suppose, it is not very pleasant to imagine that there are incendiaries about, in a town where the cotton extends from one side of the town to the other on the levee & is scattered in all the back streets, for when the stuff gets on fire it is next to impossible to put it out & utterly impossible to tell when it is out. I have seen a bale of cotton seemingly drenched with water after catching fire break out again after everyone had left it. It is dangerous stuff. Tonight both the engines are at the ends of the two principal streets on the wharf & pails full of water at each corner down town. Of course there being no regular fire companies, every body turned out yesterday & worked, for the engines are miserable things at best, & couldn’t draw water from the only well in the neighborhood, so we formed two lines from well to fire & saved Hotel de Hancock from “the devouring element.” But my unfortunate shoulders feel the effects of passing full pails of water for one all hour. To show you what foolish things people do at times & specially at fires, I, your most devoted, hearing feminine squeals of distress in the house, rushed in like a Knight Templar & found a young lady lamenting because she could get no man to come in & move the sewing machine, so I picked it up & toted it (the confounded Wheeler & Wilson!) out of the house & as far as across Roadway in front of your house, & then carried any quantity more, all of which in addition to getting wet through didn’t tend to improve my health which consisted at that time of a bad cold,... I think it strange what foolish things people do at fires! One gentleman yesterday hauled his bedstead out on the upper piazza & dropped it, of course utterly smashing it. Now if any one can tell me the particular use of the operation I’d like to hear it. He tore his carpet all to pieces too & the whole furniture was fully insured against fire & after all the house didn’t burn. A gentleman in the next house which didn’t burn, too, tore down his marble mantle & broke the slab in his hurry, house of course fully insured and at the time in no particular danger of burning.”

October 1890 A fire in the scrap pit of the Kennedy Lumber Mill, along the waterfront between Avenues G and H, spread to the mill itself. The mill building and about 850,000 feet of lumber were soon blazing away. Sparks from the fire ignited the ice...
house four blocks away. From there the blaze continued to spread south, consuming Grady & Co.’s store, Munroe & Co.’s office, the iron works, McGlynn’s furniture factory, and, eventually, the Kimball Lumber Company’s mill near the mouth of the river. The Kimball Lumber Company lost about 4 million feet of lumber in the fire as well as their sawmill and planning mill. Total dollar value of the lost property was estimated at $163,500.

**Friday, May 25, 1900** The most famous fire to strike Apalachicola burned six blocks of downtown Apalachicola. At noon the alarm was sounded. The kitchen of Mrs. Broughton’s house, located just south of the Methodist church, caught fire. The flames quickly spread to the Methodist church next door. The wind, which had been out of the south, veered around out of the west, driving sparks toward the downtown section of town. The opera house and the new armory on 4th street soon caught fire and were ablaze, sending up additional sparks flying over the town. From Fifth Street to the river, nearly every building was consumed, including the post office, *The Apalachicola Times* office, the bank and the custom house. East of Market Street the fire spread to the blocks south of Avenue D, destroying the Central Hotel, the ice house, and the engine house of the marine railway on Water Street. In all a total of seventy-one buildings were destroyed in the conflagration. The only structures spared in the affected area were the sponge exchange, the Ruge Brothers store at the corner of Water Street and Avenue E, the three story brick building next door to the Ruge store, and the Kimball residence at the corner of Avenue D and Fourth Street. Total losses were estimated at $165,420.

**Monday, January 1, 1906** Two blocks of downtown that had escaped destruction in the 1900 fire were consumed in a blaze that started in the Griggs Building on Water Street. This building was located in what is now the vacant lot between City Hall and the Fire Station. The fire, discovered at 5:30 a.m., soon spread to other buildings in the block. A wind out of the east spread the flames across Commerce Street igniting Adolph Flatauer’s building on the corner of Avenue E and Commerce, from whence it quickly spread to other buildings on the block. The entire block was consumed except for an old two-story wooden building owned by the Ruge brothers near the north end of Commerce Street. In the first block the only structure to survive was the brick building on the corner of Water Street and Avenue E, which is now the City Hall.

**Saturday, February 7, 1920** The Apalachicola Northern Railroad depot and freight warehouse caught fire and burned to the ground in the early morning. Several thousand dollars worth of freight stored in the warehouse was destroyed, including $5,000 worth of shoes belonging to Mr. J. Rothman, who planned on shipping them to Tampa. The fire was of suspicious origins. It started in the warehouse, where there was no stove.
No fire had been built in the stove in the depot for the previous two days. The depot and warehouse were located between Avenues G and H, and between Water Street and Commerce Street.

**Thursday, February 23, 1939** The Acme Packing Company, one of the largest seafood packing companies in Florida, caught fire and burned. The company was located on the river just south of Leslie Street. The fire started on the docks, and, fanned by a strong east wind, the flames soon spread to the building and the ice plant owned by the same company. Boats moored to the dock were cut adrift to save them, but not before several were badly damaged. Warehouses belonging to the former Popham Oyster Farms were saved with great difficulty, and the pilings supporting the Gorrie Bridge were threatened. Damage was estimated at $75,000. Three hundred people were employed at the packing house at the peak of the season.

**Monday, February 17, 1975** A fire gutted Buzzett’s Drugstore on Market Street. A little after seven that evening a strong thunderstorm moved through the area. Lightning struck the building and ignited the fire. Nick Fortunas was driving by in his patrol car when he noticed that the lights were out. Walking up to investigate he heard a sound like “a volcano ready to erupt.” As he was calling in the fire the plate glass window exploded. Fire destroyed the interior of the store, but the heavy rain and the firemen kept the roof from catching fire and the flames from spreading to other buildings.

**Saturday, March 3, 1973** A warehouse at the corner of Avenue D and Market Street and the two-story brick building next door to it were consumed in a blaze. The wooden warehouse which formerly housed the Dreamland Theater, was being used as a warehouse for styrofoam. Four young men discovered the fire around 2:40 a.m. The Apalachicola and Port St. Joe Fire Departments responded to the call. The flames of the burning structures could be seen from Eastpoint. One observer commented that if the second building had not been made of brick the whole west side of Market Street between Avenues D and E would have gone up in flames.

**Saturday, November 15, 2008** The Apalachicola State Bank Building on the corner of Avenue E and Market Street burned after being rammed by an errant seafood truck early in the morning. Quick response by fire departments from Apalachicola, Eastpoint, St. George Island and Carrabelle prevented the fire from spreading beyond the bank building. The remnants of the building were demolished and a new bank building is under construction.

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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: ______________________________
The next five years will mark the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War. As we move through the anniversary we will highlight the role Apalachicola played in the conflict and the impact the war had on the local community.

With the election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860, many Southern states agitated for secession from the United States. The Florida legislature scheduled an election on December 22 for delegates to a state convention to meet in Tallahassee on January 3, 1861. Franklin County was represented by two men at the convention: Samuel W. Spencer and McQueen McIntosh.

Samuel W. Spencer was a 40-year old physician in Apalachicola. He was born in Maryland and had a wife and two children. In 1860 he owned fourteen slaves.

McQueen McIntosh was elected to represent the 5th Senatorial District, which consisted of Calhoun and Franklin Counties. He was a federal judge for the U. S. District Court of North Florida until he resigned over the election of Abraham Lincoln. He lived on a plantation in Calhoun County along the Apalachicola River south of Blountstown and owned 63 slaves. He was married and had three sons.

Both Spencer and McIntosh supported secession. At the convention in Tallahassee McIntosh introduced a resolution declaring the right of and necessity for secession, which passed by a vote of 62 to 5. The Ordinance of Secession was then drawn up and approved 62 to 7.

McQueen McIntosh was appointed as a judge by the Confederate States of America. He died in Pensacola in 1868.
Message from the President

Dear Friends and Fellow AAHS Members,

What a great historic city Apalachicola is, but we all know that, don’t we!

I am very pleased to be the new president of our valued society. Our goal is to preserve, protect and create greater awareness of our incredible history, structures, and artifacts. This is profoundly important on many levels, but most of all the community pride we can achieve. Both long time residents and recent arrivals to our beautiful city should be encouraged to learn the amazing history of this area. I personally feel an immense satisfaction every time I see a structure rehabilitated or well maintained. To know an individual or a family committed the resources to invest in our historic area tells me they appreciate the uniqueness of what we have and that they will be good stewards for everyone’s benefit. I believe pride in our city will be infectious and when we spread this enthusiasm, amazing progress will happen.

I ask myself. “Why isn’t everyone a member of the Apalachicola Area Historical Society?” Perhaps people believe that they may be required to attend meetings or participate. Maybe they are just too busy trying to make a living. It’s hard for me now to contain my exuberance, but as a boy attending Chapman Schools the beautiful school building that I entered each day was nothing more than a structure. I look at this today and see an amazing architectural masterpiece that cries for appreciation, attention and useful purpose. AAHS can be the catalyst to awaken this community to recognize the value of what surrounds us. This is our charge; this is what we need to achieve. Membership in AAHS is a vote that what we do will have purpose, and our history is an important component of our future. Let’s get people involved.

There are several initiatives currently underway that may be of particular interest in our community.

Ghost Walk at Chestnut Cemetery: October 30 we plan to have individuals playing some of the unique historical figures of our community and recounting interesting aspects of their lives. Dolores Roux, our local cemetery historian, is leading this effort. The event should be great fun for participants and visitors. Everyone is welcome to participate in acting, costumes, scripts or logistics. What a great way to celebrate our history!

Raney House Inventory: Mark Curenton has graciously agreed to lead this effort. Our goal is to build a computer database to list, digitally photograph, and document all artifacts maintained in this wonderful museum for our permanent records. Contact Mark, if you have time to contribute to this valuable effort.

Bill Spohrer has done a great job in expanding our displays. If you haven’t been to Raney Museum lately, go and enjoy this truly fine slice of Apalachicola history!

New Raney Home Air Conditioning System: We have just installed a brand new, highly efficient Trane system to replace the old units that died in late July. This also required all new ducting. Obviously we have incurred a substantial expense, depleting most of the funds available. Any contributions are always appreciated!

Apalachicola Area Timeline: David Adlerstein is leading a wonderful project to format a timeline of the Apalachicola area. He is currently researching methodology and soft-

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ware that might already be available as a vessel to contain this information. This will be a living process that will allow us to add, revise and document historical events on a continuing basis. I am sure David could use some help in gathering this information.

**Accumulation of Historic Pictures.** With collaboration from The Apalachicola Municipal Library we are encouraging anyone with old photographs to make an appointment with librarian Caty Greene and have their pictures scanned and stored digitally so that we can build data bases of structures, families and events for future posterity. If you would like to assist in this project, please contact Caty at 850-653-8436 or amlib@fairpoint.net.

Thomas Daly
President

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**ILSE NEWELL CONCERT SERIES**

Nicole Nordschow and Rebecca Fadell perform *Duetto dei due gotti* by Gioacchino Rossini during the March 14, 2010, concert at Trinity Episcopal Church sponsored by the Ilse Newell Fund for the Performing Arts. The 2009-2010 concert series was a rousing success, with large crowds at most of the concerts. This season’s concert series will resume in December.
**Upcoming Events**

Thursday, September 30, 2010—Dolores Roux will kick-off our fall speakers with a presentation on Apalachicola in the past. As a life-long resident of the town she has a wealth of knowledge about the people and events in Apalachicola’s history. The meeting will be at 5:30 p.m. in the Carriage House at the Raney House, 128 Market Street.

Thursday, October 28, 2010—Former President Bill Spohrer is scheduled to speak at our October meeting in the Carriage House at the Raney House, 128 Market Street.

Saturday, October 30, 2010—In the evening there will be a Ghost Walk in Chestnut Street Cemetery, where former residents will return to relate their lives in Apalachicola. For more information, or to volunteer to help with the Ghost Walk, contact Dolores Roux at 653-9081.

December 2010—The Ilse Newell Concert Series will resume for its 2010-2011 season. Specific dates of concerts will be forthcoming.

Thursday, January 27, 2011—Stanley Colvin, the Lighthouse Keeper on St. George Island, will speak on the history and present use of the St. George Lighthouse. The meeting will be at the Carriage House.

Apalachicola Area Historical Society  
P.O. Box 75  
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