What Do You Do When You Win a World War?

You Memorialize It, That’s What . . . or Build a Bridge

On January 10, at 7 pm in the Martin House, Thomas Waits, civil engineer with the Parsons Transportation Group, specializing in bridge construction, will tell the story of the Victory Bridge and how it fit into regional plans for converting the Old Spanish Trail into a major east/west corridor from California to Florida.

As Thomas will tell us in some detail, the bridge generated substantial publicity, including poetry and unsuccessful attempts to get Henry Ford to drive the first automobile over it. It also symbolized the end of steamboat traffic on the Apalachicola.

The end of World War I coincided with a number of developments in America: the coming of age of the automobile being the most prominent. With the passage of the first federal highway bill in 1916, plus the rollout of the Model T – something most families could afford – everybody, it seemed was taking to the road. The Lincoln Highway took travelers east and west; the Dixie Highway took them north and south. It was the beginning of an age of heroic engineering and architecture that included skyscrapers and bridges. In Middle Florida, it meant the construction and opening of the Victory Bridge over the Apalachicola River near Chattahoochee in 1922.

This should be a good one. Y’all come.
Did you attend the Tallahassee Veteran’s Day parade this past month on Monroe Street? Were you wondering at the silence when the parade stopped at 11 am? That was the time the First World War Armistice was signed on November 11th at 11:00 am, 1918. Now time would be given to show respect for those who had died in that struggle. Beginning at the Vietnam Memorial a bugler stood at attention on every corner to West Tennessee Street. In succession, every bugler played the haunting tune of “Taps” until each, all the way down the highway had played. When the last one finished, the parade began again. Did you know the bugle was played for much more than parades and funerals? The earliest known War Department reference to bugles came in 1825. During the Civil War one of the toughest jobs of both armies was that of the bugler. In the infantry alone buglers were required to memorize 49 calls, of which 25 were for general calls and 24 for skirmishers. The calls not only had to be played accurately, but also had to be the right ones at the right time. These calls were sounded every day for months on end, from waking up in the morning, to going to sleep at night and for every duty in between. Additionally, the calls directed troops in battle. By the end of the Civil War the artillery, cavalry, and infantry were all sounding bugle calls because that instrument could be heard over drumbeats and fifes during artillery fire.

The calls included: Reveille (Wake up) – 5:00 am, Guard Mounting – 8:00 am, Sick Call – 9:00 am, Retreat – 7:30 pm, Tattoo (Quiet and lights out) – 8:30 pm and Taps (Sleep) – 9:00 pm. Other calls required were for Breakfast, Church and Drill call. For skirmishers the calls included Fixing the Bayonet, Forward, Halt and Cease Firing.

Most buglers were young boys. Among them was a boy of 12, Gus Schurmann. He ended his army days as a 15-year-old sergeant and veteran of 10 battles.

Are you an antique and collectible aficionado? If you are searching for an authentic period bugle, it will be difficult. You must do your homework! Beware the thousands of copies being produced today in India stamped with the “7th cavalry.”

In your search remember you are looking for a light, not heavy instrument. It will be made of copper, brass, sometimes brass with a silver wash and occasionally – solid silver (an officer’s model). All Civil War bugles must have dovetailed (zipped) seams all the way down to the opening of the bell. Mouthpieces of the era were made of raw brass or German silver. The country of origin stamp wasn’t required until 1896; there should only be a city of origin: New York or Boston for instance. “Made in Japan” should be a sign to put the bugle down immediately!

These are but a few of the many points you must learn. A good place to begin your bugle education is the article, “Collecting Civil War Bugles” by Chris Nelson. Images there show the many types of bugles. It is located in the North South Trader’s Civil War Magazine on the Internet at www.tapsbugler.com. Scroll down to page 54 and be enlightened.

This Civil War Quartermaster Regulation Cavalry Bugle is guaranteed 100% authentic (How do you know?). It is available on the Internet now for $3,895.00.

Bibliography
7. Villanueva, Jari. (Taps Historian and Bugler) Taps Bugler at www.tapsbugler.com
The Apalachee Redux 3

We looked for years . . . priced all sorts of real estate (just kidding) and finally settled on an old friend, the Martin House. It’s ours . . . well, a small part of it, anyway. At least until they kick us out.

For an 85-year-old organization, the TALLAHASSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY has been somewhat rootless. We have met in various locations around the city: the Old Capitol, various restaurants and bars, and members’ houses. There is even a rumor that we met in a cathouse once. Just a rumor. For some years now, we have been meeting in the Governor John Martin House, 1001 Desoto Park Drive. But we’ve never had someplace we could call ours, some place where we could store our stuff, where we could hold business meetings, some place whose address we could put on our letterhead.

We have found it, at last. And it was staring us in the face the whole time. Thanks to the efforts of Mary Glowacki, our state archaeologist, and the higher ups at the Department of State, we may now officially call the Governor Martin House our home. Don’t get carried away; we don’t get the whole thing. We get to share it with the archaeologists, but we have a key; we have a cubicle where we can store our voluminous financial records (sarcasm intended). It is a place where we can meet people and discuss the burning issues of history. And, of course, it will remain the place where we hold our larger meetings on the second Thursday of every month from October through May.

Having a physical location is more important than it may seem at first blush. It connotes stability, permanence, and a renewed dedication to our community and its history. It is a step in our progress toward being a more significant player in the affairs of Tallahassee.

On the other hand, don’t expect too much yet. Nobody from THS is going to be sitting behind a desk from 8 am to 5 pm . . . yet. No paid staff . . . yet. Which means if you want to meet with your incredibly hardworking President and Board, make an appointment. We’re still a voluntary organization.

Everybody, it seemed, had a grand old time at the Tallahassee Historical Society’s Christmas dinner, held at the Old Willis Dairy on Centerville Road. In addition to delicious barbecue from Sonny’s (after all, what says Christmas better than barbecue?), we got to hear Johnathan Grandage from The Grove give an update. We also signed up several new members, all of whom promised that they would renew (ahem, you know who you are).

Vice President Marjorie Holladay and Treasurer Andy Wright wait for the next potential victim . . . er . . . member, at the December 15 and 16 Winter Solstice Festival and Mission San Luis.

A Word From Our Fearless Leader

An Orphan No More!

by Bob Holladay, President

For an 85-year-old organization, the TALLAHASSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY has been somewhat rootless. We have met in various locations around the city: the Old Capitol, various restaurants and bars, and members’ houses. There is even a rumor that we met in a cathouse once. Just a rumor. For some years now, we have been meeting in the Governor John Martin House, 1001 Desoto Park Drive. But we’ve never had someplace we could call ours, some place where we could store our stuff, where we could hold business meetings, some place whose address we could put on our letterhead.

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Our Brand-Spanking New Home
The Tallahassee Democrat had two historians who masqueraded as journalists for a number of years: Clifton Paisley and Gerald Ensley. Neither one tried to write much beyond their local community (well, all right, Gerald sometimes), which in a weird kind of way, made what they wrote universal. Both were grounded in Tallahassee.

Clifton Paisley died a few weeks after I moved to Tallahassee, on October 26, 2000, a week before the infamous 2000 election, which he probably would have preferred to miss. He spent more than 50 years as a reporter and PR flack. He is best remembered though, for the two books he produced 20 years apart. From Cotton to Quail: An Agricultural Chronicle of Leon County, Florida, 1860-1867 is unique among all county histories because it is not a story of the building up of the antebellum cotton empire, but the story of survival and adaptation in the aftermath of the Civil War. It is a story, not of the wholesale abandonment of agriculture as a way of life, but of shifting emphases, particularly the shifting of the large plantations from cotton agriculture to quail hunting, primarily by their new, postwar northern owners.

The presence of state government and Florida State University meant that by the 1960s, “farming . . . was largely part time and casual and the total production had little impact on an economy liberally supplied with federal, state and local government appropriations.”

From Cotton to Quail was published in 1968 and was reprinted in paperback in 1981. Both editions are hard to find.

Paisley spent the next 20 years researching his “prequel” to From Cotton to Quail, published in 1989 as The Red Hills of Florida, 1528-1865. I have never seen this book in hardback, so I assume that the University of Alabama Press only did it in paperback, which is ok. By the late 80s, publishers, particularly scholarly publishers were printing their books on acid-free paper, which guaranteed a longer life.

What makes both of Paisley’s books so historically valuable is that his research was meticulous, detailed, and footnoted for the reader. Don’t minimize that. Part of the dumbing down of American culture is the tendency of authors and publishers not to footnote, or to provide general lists of sources at the end of chapters, without the specifics. When I walk into a bookstore and pick up a new history book, the first thing I check is whether it is footnoted. Clifton Paisley’s two books are sourced the right way.

I tried several times to get Gerald to publish a collection of his columns before his death last February, but he always put me off with copyright considerations, and other projects, so the book that his family and the Democrat put out in December, We Found Paradise is a lovely legacy. I suspect that he had too much restless energy to sit down and produce something like Paisley’s books, but he did not need to. His columns were essays, really, modes of exploration and quite often the thing that he was exploring was his own mind. He had opinions – some of which I disagreed with – but he never lost his curiosity.
In the last issue of Claude's Corner I discussed the first religious observance of Christmas in the U.S., occurring right here in Tallahassee in the winter of 1539 at the DeSoto site, near the Gov. Martin House. This time we will explore the beginning of the secularization of Christmas, from its inception in Tallahassee in 1824 to the latter 1800s. Interestingly, a diary written by a young girl in the village in 1824, identified only as Betsy, wrote about the preparations that her family made for Christmas. Her mother insisted that their Christmas be observed just as much like the Christmas in Virginia, where they came from, as they could. For gifts Betsy would make shot pouches or bags out of rabbit skins for her father and brother. For her mother she would make a basket out of pine needles. Her mother, in turn, was making Betsy a pretty dress. Additionally, she wrote: “The Hutchinsons are going to take Christmas dinner with us, and we are to have a party and tree at their house that night.”

Susan Eppes wrote, “Of all the festive days of the Old South Christmas came first. It was par excellence, the day of days . . . the great feast day of the year.” There were balls and parties held for the legislators and prominent people; and this was the season for horse racing, extending sometimes right before Christmas and sometimes right after New Years Day. It was also the time when dentists came down for the winter and Tallahasseeans could get dental service.

In 1841, James W. Fisher invited “the Gentlemen of Tallahassee and Vicinity” to a New Year’s Eve Ball, at his saloon, City Hall, with a supper to be served at 12 o'clock.” Ellen Call Long, writing in “Florida Breezes,” in 1883, described Christmastime in the 1840s as “a season for the negro's carnival, wherein they get a week off and those of the plantations visit the town in their best attire, hence, general greeting, feasting and dancing among them.” She also mentioned that eggnog before breakfast on Christmas morning was expected to be partaken by every member of the family, white and black.

In her diary of 1860, Molly (family name unknown) of Spring Hill Plantation also describes the interior of the downstairs of their house as “a bower of evergreen with now and then sprays of holly, thick with bright red berries. The mistletoe is there, too – the gentlemen saw to that.” On Christmas morning everyone (house servants and field servants that could fit in, gathered in the ball downstairs and the overflow crowd stood on the porch outside) for prayers. Dinner consisted of “deliciously baked fowls, roasted pig, plum puddings, cakes and everything good imaginable.” Her sister Bettie also kept a diary. In 1864, towards the end of the Civil War, she wrote: “Christmas Day. No news from father or Cousin Harry. Everybody is trying to fool everybody else into believing everybody is brave and full of hope. No Christmas party tonight. The negroes have all run away except Vina and George. Poor mother.”

Advertisements beginning particularly in the 1870s, more and more catered to the Christmas holidays and New Years. Anything could be purchased, from gold watches, jewelry and silver goods, to toothpicks, toys, hats, boots, shoes, clothes, fire crackers, fireworks, all kinds of nuts, mince meat, superfine silk and satin neckties, silk handkerchiefs, lace bows, kids gloves,
doilies, baked cakes, pies, bread, candles of all kinds, vases, statuary, novelties, etc., etc., etc. As far as can be determined the first mention found of Santa Claus in the Tallahassee Weekly Floridian was in an advertisement in Dec. 1875 entitled “Santa Claus’ Headquarters at the Jewelry Emporium of Myers & Gorman, where can be found a display of Holiday Goods suitable for Christmas and New Years Presents . . . “.

And then there was sports. The Dec. 24, 1890 issue of the Weekly Floridian carried a blurb entitled “Christmas Games.” It tells of the recent organization of the Get There football club. An invitation and challenge was made to any other football club anywhere in Florida, to come on Christmas day at 4 p.m. for a match game on the old baseball grounds.

And most surprising was an 1891 ad by the proprietor of Tallahassee’s two Racket Stores stating that they would both be “Open on Christmas Day.” The reason given was that there were such immense crowds at the two stores just prior to Christmas, that he wished to accommodate those who were unable to previously shop.

Thus it is that Christmas in Tallahassee began as a religious holy day among Spanish missionaries and explorers in 1539, became a family oriented observance in the earliest days of the town, and then became equally a social event in the middle 1800s, and finally beginning in the 1870s to the commercialized holiday that we are now more than familiar with. As we can see, our modern holiday has its roots from long ago.

**How About a Bicentennial Song?**

From the October 10, 1924 Tallahassee Daily Democrat

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**Upcoming Events**

On Saturday January 12 at 10:00 am, St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church will host an informative meeting concerning the Tallahassee Community Remembrance Project, an effort to remember four African-American men who were lynched in Leon County between 1897 and 1937. The discussion will be facilitated by Evan Milligan, a member of the Equal Justice Initiative’s Memorial Monument Placement Initiative Team in Montgomery, Alabama. Mr. Milligan works closely with the Race and Poverty Initiative and assists with public education, community outreach, and research efforts around EJI’s Community Remembrance Projects.

To RSVP, please email office@saintmichaelandallangels.org or call 850-681-0844. Please invite your friends. All are welcome!
The Perfect New Years Resolution

TALLAHASSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY – 501 (c)(3)
Membership Application

Annual Membership Dues: Individual – $20; Family – $30; College – $10; High School, $5 membership – extends one year from payment date.
Make Checks Payable to: TALLAHASSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. and include this form with your payment.
Hand Deliver at Event or Mail to: Membership Coordinator, TALLAHASSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC., P. O. Box 3713, Tallahassee, Florida 32315

Membership Type (Check One):  □ Individual  □ Family  □ College  □ High School

Amount Paid: ___________________________ Date: _______ / _______ / _______
Name: _____________________________________________________________ Family Member(s) if applicable:
1) ____________________________________________ 2) ___________________________________________
Address: __________________________________ City: _________________ State __________ Zip _______
Phone: ( ______ ) ____________________________ Email: __________________________________________

Thank You For Your Support!