



THE TOWNS HISTORIAN

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The NEWSLETTER of the TOWNS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOL. 9 ISSUE 2

www.townscountyhistory.org

SECOND QUARTER 2025



The Towns County Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and sharing the rich history of our area. We meet the second Monday of each month at the Towns County Civic Center

P.O. Box 1182
900 North Main St.
Hiawassee, Georgia
(706) 781-8611



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County Historian

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Deputy Historian



Mary Ann Miller
Graphic Designer

President's Message



This has been a long, cold, and dreary winter. I will say I have enjoyed the 'hibernation' it provided due to the cold weather. However, the flowers at the Old Rock Jail have started poking through the ground and that tells me that it is time to dust off and get back to work for the year.

I recently returned from a week's travel across 10 states, where I visited places such as NYC, Philadelphia, Lancaster, DC, Gettysburg, and more. And, while it was interesting, I have to say that there is no place more beautiful than Towns County, and there is no group more dedicated to history than our society. It is evident the dedication you put forth, and I thank you for everything you do!

We are excited to announce that we have finally secured a place to store our archives, which are currently being housed in the Old Rock Jail. Thanks to the support of Commissioner Bradshaw, the Law Library was relocated to the courthouse, previously situated in a room adjacent to the Old Rock Jail, and we now have access to this space. The MBRA has already stepped in and removed the carpet and ceiling tile, allowing us to clean, paint, and install new floor and ceiling tile.

The Swappin' Stories team is excited to come back this year, with an exciting twist. After federal cuts to the grant that funded the project last year, an anonymous donor has offered to help us with the project this year. This year's project will focus on Seekin' Stories, where we will identify people and stories that need to be recorded and preserved for history.

We are also excited to be celebrating with the Georgia Mountain Fair at the 75th Fair this year! We will soon begin giving the Historic Presley Post Office some TLC to repair some of the siding and paint the exterior. The MBRA has already given us a huge helping hand by rebuilding the stairs into a functional and beautiful landing with handrails that make it easier to access the historic building.

As always, thank you to all of our members and volunteers for everything you do! Your support of our organization is the drive that keeps us going, and we couldn't do it

Cupid Falls

by Beth Connors and Helen Adams Harvey of the Enotah Garden Club with special thanks to Alice Sprinkles, Jerry Taylor and David Sellers for their assistance.



The little city of Young Harris lies at the foot of Georgia's highest peak in Brasstown Valley, an area within the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest. There are many reasons the area is often referred to as enchanting, but probably first and foremost is our Cupid Falls.

Cupid Falls is a 13-acre park with trails, a boardwalk, two pavilions, rest rooms, a rain garden, and, of course, a beautiful waterfall. The waterfall is 10 - 15 feet and the trails could take you 10 to 20 minutes to walk; most of the trails are easy and level. If needed, you can also view the Falls from the car.

Following the Cherokee land lottery in 1832, the white settlers poured into the area to mine for gold and to farm the available land. One pioneer settler was John Bryson (1800-1874) who acquired sizeable holdings in Brasstown Valley. It was he, no doubt, who built the first grist mill in the community to grind the corn into cornmeal. Later, in 1892 after the founding of the college, J. D. Cooley, a miller, moved to the area from Mossy Creek in White County. It was he who constructed the cement dam at the top of the falls and built a flume to route the water to the mill, a good distance away.

Around the 1930s with the availability of commercial milling products in grocery stores, the Mill operations ended and the Mill was torn down around 1950.

For nearly two centuries, Cupid Falls and Corn

Creek have been a family and kid-friendly recreation area. Remembering earlier times before modern technology of televisions, cell phones and the internet, local residents fondly remember Cupid Falls area as their neighborhood playground. As for the Young Harris College students it is a beautiful setting for "Cupiding", the appeal of seclusion and natural surroundings. It is not known how Cupid Falls got its name, but it seems appropriate that it started with the Young Harris College students.

The Enotah Garden Club takes great pride in supporting the City of Young Harris by helping maintain the Cupid Falls recreation area. The Enotah Garden Club actively promoted the concept of and in 2024 paid for the installation of a new bridge to connect the trails. The Mountain Beautification and Revitalization Association completed the construction. Cupid Falls also receives support from students at Young Harris College and the Towns/Union Master Gardeners. Visit youngharrisga.net for more information.

To get to Cupid Falls, take Maple Street in Young Harris and continue through the Young Harris College campus. The road becomes Thomas Town Road. When parking at the first lot on the left, turn left towards picnic tables to take the short walk to the falls. View the signage on the way to learn the history of the Corn Creek Preserve and how to create a rain garden. This is an easy walk that is great for kids. Leashed Pet friendly. Coordinates: 34.9350125,-83.8403023

Your Guide to Speaking Like a True Appalachian

Bald – A treeless area on a mountain.

Blackberry Winter – Time where there is cool weather at the same time as the blooming of wild blackberry shrubs in May

Blind House – Windowless cabin

Blockading – Making illegal whiskey or moonshine

Booger – Ghost

Boomer – Red squirrel

Branch – Small stream

Cove – Small valley surrounded by mountains

Dogwood Winter – Time of cold weather at the same time as the blooming of dogwood trees in mid-April

Dome – A mountain with a rounded top

Foxfire – Something that glows in the dark, like certain mushrooms

Gaum – A mess

Gap – Low spot along a ridge or mountain range.

Granny Woman – Midwife

He-balsam – Spruce tree

Hollow – Small sheltered valley (holler)

Jag – Small amount

Leather Britches – Green beans dried in the pod by threading on a string and hanging

Lick – To hit with a hammer or axe

Long Sweetening – Maple syrup

Painter – Mountain lion

Poke – Small bag

Poor Do – Boiled cornmeal

Ramp – Wild garlic

Shamp – To cut hair

She-balsam – Fir tree

Short Sweetening – Sugar or honey

Simples – Medicinal herbs

Slaunchwise – Crooked, sideways, slanting diagonally.

Slick-faced – Without a beard

Sorry – Something of little or no value

'Tater Hole – cold cellar under the cabin floor where foods are stored.

Wish Book – Mail-order catalog

Varmint – Wild animal

A View of Towns County in 1901, from Georgia - Historical & Industrial

A View of Towns County in 1901, from Georgia – Historical & Industrial Towns County was formed out of Union and Rabun counties in 1856, and was named in honor of G. W. Towns, who represented Georgia in Congress in 1834, and was governor from 1847 to 1849. He died in the city of Macon in 1854, at the age of 54 years.

Towns county is bounded on the north by the State of North Carolina, on the east and southeast by Rabun and Habersham counties, on the south by White county, on the west and southwest by Union county. Hiawassee river flows from north to south through the center of the county. Other streams are Hightower, Fodders, Bell and Brasstown creeks.

This is a mountainous country, but on the river and creeks are some very rich lands.

The climate is cool and bracing; the water, freestone, clear and cold. The loamy black soil along the mountain streams is well adapted to corn, rye, oats, fruits and vegetables. The clay, mulatto soil of the uplands is well adapted to all crops. Clover, though not extensively raised, gives fine yields on good land. Red top is best adapted to this county. The natural grasses that grow about the lowlands are the chief reliance for hay. Peavines, wherever planted, give an abundance of hay.

The average yield to the acre of the various crops under ordinary methods of cultivation is: corn, 25 bushels; oats, 30 bushels; wheat, 12 bushels; rye, 10 bushels; Irish potatoes, 60 bushels; sweet potatoes, 50 bushels; field-peas, 20 bushels; ground-peas, 20 bushels; crab-grass hay, 4,000 pounds; corn fodder, 1,000 pounds; sorghum syrup, 100 gallons. With

continued on page 5

News From The Old Papers

According to reports of some of the oldest citizens of the county, the first paper used for legal advertising was the Blue Ridge Post, published at Blue Ridge, Ga. by Ben Holden somewhere around the early 1890s. On August 11, 1892 the first edition of Hiawassee Times under the editorship of J. M. Hackney came rolling off the press and served as the official organ of the county until 1899 when W. B. Pass became the editor. Mr. A. L. Howell and a Mr. Coffee were editors during 1902. Otto Sligh was the editor from 1903 to 1905. This paper was called the Young Harris News and seems to have lived only a few years, but was re-established in 1909 by Mr. J. H. Stephens who served as editor until 1915 when the paper was again discontinued. The next paper adopted as an official organ of the county was the Hiawassee Banner established in 1905 by S. M. Ledford, editor, R. A. Kimsey, associate editor and T. W. Gibson, publisher. This paper was later edited by P. G. Burch and E. S. Burch. The North Georgia News, published at Blairsville, Ga. by E. L. McCravey, served as official organ of the county during 1907 and then again in 1921.

The papers mentioned above were intermittently official organs until the 1920s when the Tri-County Advertiser published at Clarksville, Ga., F. D. Singleton, editor, became the official paper followed by the Towns County Advertiser published by W. J. Wellborn at Young Harris, Ga. In the fall of 1928, the Towns County Herald was established by L. P. Cross.



HIAWASSEE TIMES: May 4, 1893 - J. Miles Berrong is making preparations to go into the real estate business. He will handle mineral lands and all the numerous kinds of valuable timber which is found in abundance in this section. He speaks of getting up an exhibit for the World's Fair which if carried out, will be worth hundreds of dollars to Towns County.

HIAWASSEE TIMES: Nov. 10, 1892 - Sheriff Burch and Oliver Wyly went to Murphy Tuesday night and carried the election returns for The Constitution: Cleveland - 366; Harrison - 203; Tate 373; Pickett - 86.

TRI-COUNTY ADVERTISER: May 4, 1922 - The Committee appointed by the State Board of Education arrived here Tuesday and examined the college (Young Harris) Property Wednesday. They were Dr. Dempsey, Dr. Smith, Col. Traywick and Col. Ware. They are to determine whether or not Young Harris College should be moved to Waleska, or Rhinehardt to Young Harris.

TOWNS COUNTY ADVERTISER: Sept. 29, 1922 - Mr. Jennings Caldwell has purchased at first 1923 model Ford we have seen in Young Harris, and we notice many improvements over the old models.

Tom Jenkins of Young Harris shipped several good dogs this week to parties in South Georgia. If you need good dogs, write him and he will furnish you.

TOWNS COUNTY ADVERTISER: Oct. 6, 1922 - The annual Towns County Fair will be held at Hiawassee on Friday and Saturday Oct. 6 and 7. Dr. J. A. Sharp, Young Harris, Ga., Dr. A. E. Brown, Asheville, N.C., Dr. F. C. McConnell, Atlanta, Ga., and Prof. Phil Campbell of Athens, Ga. will be the speakers for the occasion.

A View of Towns County in 1901, from Georgia - Historical & Industrial *continued from page 3*

scientific farming the lands do even better. Towns county pro- and white, large as a peck measure, and weighing 15 or 20 pounds. Turnips of immense size and excellent flavor are raised in great quantities. Fruits, melons and berries do well, but remoteness from the railroad prevents the raising of more than enough for home consumption. Apples are on exception, however. Large numbers of them are sold and at good profits. Nearly every farmer has plenty of peaches for home use. Most of the chestnuts found in the markets of our Georgia cities and towns in the fall of the year come from Towns and other counties of this section.

At Osborn there is a small vineyard producing the best varieties of grapes.

There are no dairy farms in the county, but there is a considerable amount of butter made on the farms. The people raise some cattle for beef, and there is considerable improvement in the breeds of both dairy and beef cattle. Some pure breeds, especially bulls, have been lately brought into the county. The poultry and egg industry is decidedly on the increase.

The stubble fields and meadows give excellent pasturage, and there is good mountain range for cattle, sheep and horses, and a fair supply of ma.=t for hogs, which grow fat on acorns, hickory-nuts and chestnuts. In 1890 Towns county had 4,242 sheep with a wool-clip of 7,093 pounds, 2,998 cattle, 504 working oxen, 980 milch-cows, 406 horses, 292 mules, 6 donkeys, 4,731 swine and 37,374 domestic fowls of various kinds. Among the products were 268,033 gallons of milk, 61,673 pounds of butter, 29,914 dozens of eggs and 9,590 pounds of honey. There is abundance of mountain trout in the streams, and in the mountains some game, such as bear, deer, turkey, wolves and panthers.

There are about 75,000 acres of forest land, mostly in hardwoods. The most valuable species are oak, hickory, poplar, walnut, chestnut, cherry, Lynn birch, maple, ash and locust. The price of the timber is from \$8 to \$10 a thousand feet. There are 3 sawmills getting out timber for the home supply.

The mountain streams afford abundance of water-power, varying at different points from 1 to 1,000 horse-powers.

There are some few small flour-mills and grist-mills scattered through the county, grinding for the county custom, probably about 30, all but 3 of which are operated by water.

There is one tannery. The people are anxious for manufactory, especially such as will work up their hardwoods, which are very valuable.

There is abundance of granite and serpentine gneiss for building and other uses. Gold is mined to some extent. Iron, chrome and magnetite,, manganese, asbestos, talc, ochre, yellow and red plumbago, buhr, some gems and plenty of corundum are found. A very large plant is now being constructed at a cost of \$100,000 at Tate City, in the eastern part of the county for mining corundum.

Hiawassee, the county site, has several successful mercantile establishments. A new court-house is being built at a cost of \$8,000.



Other post-offices are Mountain Scene, Osborn, Visage, Welch and Young Harris. At this latter place is a fine school endowed by Young L. G. Harris, of Athens, Georgia, and under the control of the North Georgia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Here young men and young ladies of limited means can obtain an education at the least possible expense. There is also at Hiawassee a good school under the patronage of the Baptists. Methodists and Baptists are the leading Christian sects. Their churches are scattered at convenient distances throughout the county. There are some 26 schools of the public school system, with an enrollment of 1,350 pupils. Of these 23 are for whites and one for colored. The average attendance is 790 white pupils and 14 colored.

Murphy, North Carolina, is the nearest railroad town. In this and several Georgia towns the products of the county are marketed. The area of Towns county is 168 square miles, or 107,520 acres. Population in 1900, 4,748, a gain of 684 since 1890; school fund, \$3,210.80.

By the Comptroller-General's report for 1900 there are: acres of improved land, 91,712; of wild land, 23,241; average value of improved lands to the acre, \$1.91; of wild lands, \$0.45; city property, \$20,095; money, etc., \$40,815; merchandise, \$16,450; capital invested in mining, \$210; household and kitchen furniture, \$19,140; farm and other animals, \$61,099; plantation and mechanical tools, \$9,641; watches, jewelry, etc., \$716; value of all other property, \$4,716; real estate, \$219,339; persona] estate, \$163,754. Aggregate value of whole property, \$383,093.

Property returned by colored taxpayers: number of acres of land, 360; value, \$125.00; money, \$60.00; household furniture, \$55.00; farm and other animals, \$169.00; plantation and mechanical tools, \$5.00; value of all other property, \$4.00. Aggregate value of whole property, \$424.00.

The tax returns for 1901 show a decrease of \$23,379 in the value of all property since 1900.

Population of Towns county by sex and color, according to the census of 1900: white males, 2,341; white females, 2,336; total white, 4,677; colored males, 38; colored females, 33; total colored, 71.

Domestic animals in barns and inclosures, not on farms or ranges, June 1, 1900: 1 dairy cow, 14 horses, 11 mules.

Source: *Georgia, Historical and Industrial* By Obediah B. Stevens, Robert F. Wright

SOCIETY MERCANTILE

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Upcoming Programs

August 11

Traveling Trunk program presented by Sid Turner and Sons of the American Revolution

September 8

Jerry Taylor will present "**Ben Taylor, Towns County's 'Poet Laureat'**"

October 13

Rosemary Royston will discuss the **Future Plans of Young Harris**

November 10

Jason Edwards, Towns County's deputy historian, will present "**What Might Have Been: The Failed Enterprises of Towns County**"

December 8

Christmas program

PLATINUM SPONSOR
THANK YOU!



SINCE 1999

THE TOWNS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY WOULD LIKE TO SAY THANK YOU TO GARY MILLER AND THE TEAM AT MCKINNEY HEATING AND AIR FOR BEING OUR PLATINUM SPONSOR FOR THE PAST YEAR. YOUR SUPPORT HAS ALLOWED US TO CONTINUE OUR MISSION OF PROTECTING, PRESERVING, AND PROMOTING THE RICH HISTORY, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE OF TOWNS COUNTY!





Towns County Historical Society
P.O. Box 1182
Hiawassee, Georgia 30546

Thanks to our Sponsors!

Friends of the Society:

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232 Chatuge Way, Hiawassee
(706) 896-6442

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(706) 896-4186

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(706) 896 - 1800

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Main Street Program -Young Harris
50 Irene Berry Dr., Young Harris
(706) 379-3171

DONATIONS

Thank you to the following people for their generous donations to the historical society.

Lisa Hulsey

Berrong-Oakley House Brick Paver
in Memory of
Dr. & Mrs. W.P. Andrews

Anonymous

Funding for projects and
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