

THE WEWA

NEWS[™]



MAY 2021 » A VERY SPECIAL

WEWA & IOLA HISTORY COLLECTORS EDITION »

Vol. 3 No. 003-3

A FREE LOCAL NEWSPAPER-Take One!

THE TUPELO HONEY FESTIVAL

By Tom Wynn

“WEWA family reunion” is on this year. The Tupelo Honey Festival, to me, has always been a day of “Family Reunion” as well as The Annual Tupelo Festival, when you can get the best of the best honey, fresh off the cones. Our local Beekeepers work very hard to bring us the finest and best tasting honey in the world. Weather conditions and timing of the blooms are very important to getting that bright yellow-green appearance of Tupelo Honey into the jars. Together with the bees and nature, they capture the finest table honey the world desires. The Apalachicola River basin is the only place in the world that Tupelo Honey is produced commercially.

With everyone hugging and kissing and “glad handing,” it is a full force family reunion in my eyes. **15 May 2021 Saturday is the BIG DAY! So be there or be square!**

It should be a great day for all honey lovers, and a time to relax. It will be held in open air at the city park on Lake Alice. Come early so you can find a parking spot, 9 to 4. **Bring lots of “Money” for your “Honey,” and for Tee shirts and hats as well.**

I just love to see the joy in my friends and family member’s faces when we run into each other. I look forward to it each year, and so do most honey lovers. **OH WHAT FUN!** Please come and enjoy the food, fun, and live music by **Dickey Merritt & The Original Bama Jam**. Join in with us Old Men, who love to “Chew the Fat” and tell tall stories as we drink our sweet tea and eat whatever we fancy **under the Ole’ Oak trees**. Miss Tupelo Pageant at 6 pm. Take a seat and enjoy Festival.

Bring a friend and show them a “good ole’ time.” **All are welcome!** Check out the documentary I did with **Jim Rish** and a few other local Beekeepers back in 2002, called “Tupelo Honey & The Amazing World of Bee Keeping.” You can find it on Youtube.

“THE FAMOUS DEAD LAKES”



Photo by Tom Wynn

Standing on the Dam Road Bridge built in 1959.

DON'T FORGET THE GULF COAST ELECTRIC CO-OP MEETING MAY 1!

This year will be “Virtual” due to the Covid 19 policies. The date is set for **May 1@ 10 am CT**. Call **850-420-0339**. Prizes and such will still be given out; including a \$5 credit on your Electric bill for those members that take part in the Virtual Meeting. Contact the CO-OP for any further info. **Find out more about Elections; Visit Elected Officials at: www.votegulf.com**

WEWA Boys’ Weight Lifting Champs!

April 23-Alex Williams, Treston Smith, Keegan Calhoun; Wewa Champs! Amazing young men lifting weights beyond the norm, brings Wewa to their feet as they each took home trophies. Amazingly, Keegan came in second in his weight class in spite of an injured (broken) arm from playing football for the WEWA GATORS last fall.

**What State Champions you guys are!
Wewa is proud of you!**

THE CHARLES WHITEHEAD PUBLIC LIBRARY GETS SELECTED FOR A \$3000 LOCAL HISTORY GRANT!

To create a local history exhibit celebrating WEWA’s History; an American Library Association initiative that helps library workers better serve their small and rural communities. The competitive award comes with a **\$3,000 grant** that will help the library create a local history exhibit **(story continued on page 10)**

BEEKEEPERS OF THE PAST & TODAY

By James E. Rish-Beekeeper

A few years before Judge Taunton passed away I had gone to visit him about what I do not even remember. What I do remember is his sharing with me of his findings of an old newspaper from the **1870's** in this area. It had an article about the various vocations that people in Wewa area were involved in. He found it significant that about every third person was listed as an **"apiarist"** (Beekeeper).

When growing up in Wewahitchka in the 50s and 60s there were still a good number of beekeepers. Across 4th street was Mr. L.L. Lanier whose dad had started with bees in the late 1890's. Across from him (Lake grove Road) was the Mayhanns and they too had been heavily involved with bees.

Two doors down from them towards the river is when the town watch repair fix-it man (Mr. Tom Grimsley) lived. When he was young he too had bees.

To the north of my dad's house (274 Lakegrove Road) across from the Hartleys (whose grand daughter and her husband recently had bees) was Mr. Author who had kept bees as well. Up the road towards the old Court house (that my grandfather was the foreman over the construction crew who built it) was Mr. Claudous Lanier who was in the marine patrol at the time and who also kept bees. Just up from him in the area behind the old community building is where a nice blond haired lady lives (Mrs. Stripland) ...not sure if it was her husband and/or her dad who had bees down in Howard Creek.

To the west of my dad's house was my grandpa's house (built in 1916) and across the street from him was the Roberts' family. Mrs. Helen Roberts , I believe she got her first bees from buying out a black fellow on the west side of town. Not sure of his name.

Moreover, the assertion that Wewahitchka is famous for the Dead Lakes and something called Tupelo honey...is a historic fact! I got my first introduction to a bee yard (apiary) at age 6 (1958) because my dad likewise started when he was 6 (1926) and as he once explained that is when his dad got started (James F. Rish Sr. born 1886) was learning the trade in 1892 as a young boy.

His dad, H.A. Rish and his wife Rebecca are the ones who got us into this; best educated guess the 1880s. Mr. Tom Godwin, a local history buff an amateur archaeologist found that the Rish family were on the census of 1870 for this part of Florida (then the south half of Calhoun Co.). Mr. Tom Wynn discovered a document that stated the Rish Family was beekeeping in 1882 (found in 2002) in Iola.

In the family oral tradition H.A. Rish and his wife had bees behind the old Rish Hotel in Linton Town (S.W. New Iola) that he and his dad John Rish, a wounded Confederate soldier, had built when coming here out of

Donaldsonville, Georgia. Incidentally, there was also a 10 acre cotton field behind the hotel and like 90% of the white men in the south we picked our own cotton. Only the really wealthy could afford to buy slaves.

However, we were up town "Crackers" as we had our own cattle to crack the whip over. The James Rish part of the family and one of J.F. Rish Sr. brothers (the one who was one of the first city commissioners) were the beekeepers and cattlemen of the family. Others were cattlemen, lawyers, engineers, and real-estate men.

In closing, I can still remember my first bee sting, at the old apiary where the old honey house once stood (now at pioneer settlement up in Blountstown). We were approaching the first row and out of nowhere a bee whose flight path I was in, stung me! I said nothing, even though it did hurt. Then when puffing the smoker for my dad; another one stung me. I then said: "Daddy lets go home".

I still remember the dreadful remark that he made to that suggestion; "We just got here". None the less, despite the modern day pest (South African Hive Beetles, Varroa Mites, and Viruses and spores) plus the usual problems with four legged, as well as, two legged bears etc. it is nice to be home, self employed, and work in the great out back of Gulf County. Respectfully Submitted
James E. Rish, Beekeeper and Veteran, U.S. Marines.

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"Gage"
Rudy
Gaskin
shoots a
Turkey
up on
Hwy 20 at
his
favorite
hunting
spot. He
said he
shot the
old bird
with a 12
gage shot
gun pellet
to the
head. No
blood, a
clean
shot!

**OLD GULF COUNTY COURT HOUSE
LOSES AN OLD FRIEND-AN OAK TREE,
AND SUCKS A COUNTY TRUCK INTO A
DEEP HOLE... OOPS!** By Tom Wynn

In late April, Wewa suffered yet another terrible storm, which took out several rooftops and several trees, including the old Oak



Tree on the right side of the The old Court house in Wewa (built in 1925). In the process of cutting up the old tree, the Gulf County truck that was being used to remove the pieces of the cut up tree, suddenly dropped down into a small sink hole next to the tree trunk. I drove up just after it happened and saw one of the crew walking away at a fast clip from the truck toward 2nd street. I asked if everyone was okay. He replied yes, and said there must have been a hole under the grass they didn't know about, which caved in, dropping the back right side of the big truck down under! Later, I drove by again and the truck was gone. That was a close call!

In the winter of 1840, Harman G. Harlan was well established in present day Calhoun County, seven miles above Iola, Florida. Iola was a port village on the west bank of the Apalachicola River. To the West is Dead Lake and to North, the present day community of Maryville. Harlan's homestead consisted of a two story dwelling house, detached kitchen, store building, smoke house, corn crib, other buildings, and animals. Living with Harlan was his wife, two sons, one fifteen, and the other nine years old, as well as a guest named, William Burkley. -Monday Jan. 27, 1840-

Harlan and a neighbor, James Nall rode away from Harlan's homestead, they had gone a short distance when they heard Harlan's dog barking furiously. Nall yelled, "Indians". Both men raced back to Harlan's homestead. Harlan veered off toward a branch that ran through his property. Nall charged into a clearing one hundred yards from the dwelling-house. He saw Indians in the yard pulling a tick from a mattress (Ticking is a cotton or linen textile that is tightly woven for durability used to prevent down feathers from poking through the fabric of mattresses and bed pillows.). Nall yelled at them. Almost two years later on, -December 16, 1842- Nall gave the following sworn statement: "About a quarter from the house when I heard the dogs barking-(he, H.G. Harlan and myself had started to go to my house...and we heard yells-and I was astonished at first-but on a moments reflection I was confident it was Indians. I ran back toward his house, and he did too. He ran down a branch toward the house, and I run up in open view of them-I supposed about one hundred yards of them. They were emptying a bed tick; so I called a halt-hollowed at them, and I saw them gather their guns I wheeled my mare, as I wheeled they fired on me, and kept on firing after I had run my mare I should say about one-hundred yards. They were in the yard. As soon as I turned off I went home as fast as I could, expecting to find them but I saw no more of them."

On September 15, 1842, eighteen months after the attack, Harlan gave this account, "Nall hollowed at them, and they fired upon us two volleys, I suppose some twenty guns, and I should judge between fifty and sixty of them, though I can't say with certain. We were unarmed at the time, and retreated of course, and I went for help to Nall immediately, about five miles off. When I got there, I discovered that Nall had reached there before me; and for security, he had gone with his family." Unarmed, Harlan retraced his steps back to his home.

During the five mile ride darkness descended upon him. When he arrived, his eye fell upon a scene straight from hell. Fires were devouring every building which by his own hands, toil and sweat had built. The flames performed as elaborate dance of destruction. That which lay beyond their frenzy gyrations was roasted to death. The wood hissed, crackled and caved in on itself, sending a fire storm of hot glowing embers flying in every direction. From the ground, **(Story Continues page 4)**

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THE HISTORY OF WEWA & THE GHOST

TOWN OF IOLA- Story of ...

“The Last Indian Killing”

(The Second Seminole War 1835-1842)

(“Quoted from the written writings of Sam Walker”)

By Tom Godwin

Local Historian and Researcher

The second Seminole War (1835-1842) was ragging in the Territory of Florida. Newly elected Governor **Robert R. Reid**, informed the Florida Legislative Council, “We are on the verge of desperation.” Men sleep with Arms under their pillows.” On 17 January 1840, Sam Walker of Texas Ranger, and Walker Colt fame was living in Iola, Florida. He wrote to his brother, “the Creek Indians are still in the vicinity.” Walker’s sister-in-law said, “the people in Iola are very much frighten they hear guns every night over the river.” “Over the river,” is today, Liberty County.

glowing red coals stared unblinking at Harlan, the smoke billowed up, raced into the emptiness of space, taking with it Harlan's dreams. A worried man mounted his tired horse and rode alone, the seven miles down to Iola. Unknown to Harlan, his guest, William Burkley had already alerted the Iola Citizens that the Indians had set fire to Harlan's Homestead. A group of men immediately rode to Harlan's homestead and later in the night returned to Iola, empty handed. The Captain of the Iola Volunteer militia was Francis Arnou, at dawn on Tuesday - **January 28, 1840**- Arnou, Harlan, and the Iola Militia rode to homestead. The homestead had been reduced to smoldering heaps of ashes. Potatoes, papers, and clothing articles were strewn about. Alex McAlpine, a militia member swore under oath, "I saw that his dwelling-house, kitchen, smoke house, and all outer buildings were entirely destroyed by fire, which caused the destruction of his bee-hives, his orchard, and vineyard."

The Militia found human bones in the ashes of the kitchen, nearby lay a knife that belonged to Buddy, Harlan's nine year old son. The Evidence suggested to Harlan, that he was looking at the charred remains of Buddy and his wife.

An hour into the search a voice rang out from near the garden, "Come here, Harlan, here is your wife," It was the voice of William Blunt, a militia man. Mrs. Harlan lay behind some pine logs, her throat cut to the bone, she had been shot in the back, arm, and temple. The temple shot was at close range for the ball patch stuck in her skin. Captain Arnou gently removed the patch.

Harlan's son, Buddy lay sixty feet from his mother. His head was bashed in with a lighter Knott. A Witness told Governor Reid, "The boy still exhibited signs of life. Harlan dropped to his knees and embraced him, calling, "Buddy! Buddy!", then ran to the corpse of his wife and clasped her in his arms, crying out, "Oh my dear wife."

Dr. Reuben Hicks from Virginia was present, he bandaged Buddy's head and placed his cold feet in warm water.

Alex McAlpine swore, "We found the bones of Harlan's oldest boy, lying in the doorway of the kitchen, we gathered them partly with our hands, and buried them."

Mrs. Harlan was buried and a litter was constructed for an unconscious Buddy. The Iola volunteer militia mounted their horses and rode out in pursuit of the Indians.

Buddy was placed on the Litter and taken to Iola. Samuel Lofton, cared for Buddy and described him as, "Not dead, but insensible." -**Wednesday, January 29, 1840**-

Without having regained Consciousness, nine year old Buddy Harlan, died, thus becoming the last documented fatality of the Second Seminole War in Calhoun County, Florida. **Governor R.R. Reid** signed into law, an act concerning Indian depredation and other purposes. A three man committee was authorized for East Florida and a committee for West Florida. The Official Title was, Board of Indian Commission for the senatorial district of East or in our case, West Florida. Any Person living in the Territory

of Florida could file a claim against the government for Monetary loss due to Indian depredation. The three man board interviewed the claimant, his witness, and swore them to their statements. The board approved or rejected the claim. IF approved, the board granted the claimant a cash settlement. -On September 15, 1842-the board convened in Iola, Florida. Harman Harlan appeared before the Board of Indian Commissions, one member was not other than, Captain Francis Arnou. Harlan presented his claim and gave his deposition to the Commission, "I Harmon G. Harlan, do hereby desire to claim from the United States, Compensation for losses which I have sustained by depredation committed by Indians upon my property"... Harlan provided an itemized list of his losses, burned dwelling house, smoke house, and kitchen, and other out building, destroyed fruit trees, and vineyard and destruction of his bee hives, provisions on hand for use, specie (animals) on hand, paper money one hundred dollars, three beds and furniture, ready made clothing on hand for sale, 173 pieces, at 1.50 cent a piece, 1 box tobacco, at 140 lbs. 1 at 1.10 do 250 lbs. (I sold at 62 1/2 cents per Lb.) Wearing apparel for the family, 6 fancy counterpanes, 13 head of beef cattle at 15.00 per head (that I believe the Indians killed) 1 sett of carpenter tools, farming utensils, glass and crockery ware, for sue and sale. Sweet potatoes on hand about one hundred bushels. Strange as it sounds, there was not a gun on the list. Three months later on December 16, 1842, the three man board met in Saint Joseph. Once again, Harlan, with his witnesses present, went before the board and handed them his claim, which in part said, "Upon the 27th day of January, 1840, after they had most inhumanly murdered my family, comprising my wife and two sons-one fifteen years, and one nine years---". Witness after witness testified on Harlan's behalf. Harlan claimed \$3,771.75 in losses. To quote in part what the Commissioners reported, "We therefore, the undersigned and bound to fix and award to said claimant, Harmon G. Harlan, the sum of twenty-five hundred dollars, as the amount of damages sustained by him, by having his property burnt and destroyed by Indians..."

In 1844 James Nall was appointed Justice of the Peace in Calhoun County. He went on to other jobs in the government in the area. The Nall Family name existed in Maryville until the 1930's. Ninety five year old Vilas Pope of Maryville said, "I remember an old Lady named Mrs. Nall, who lived in an Old Clap board house about a mile from us. She was paralyzed and wheel chair bound. I want to say sometime around 1935 Mrs. Nall's house caught on fire, she was unable to get out and burned to death." Ten years after the Indian attack, Harmon G. Harlan remarried. The last we heard of him, he was living in Jackson County. During the night of 27 January when the moon has waned to 37 percent full, as it was on the night of January 27, 1840, if you dare, drift down the Apalachicola river below Brown's Lake, **(Story continues on page 5)**

-you will hear that which no man dare speaketh. You certainly will recall the words of Samuel Beech and James H. Davis, who swore on May 20, 1842, "Buddy was laying about fifteen or twenty yards from her, his head badly cut and skull fractured with a light-wood knot, and to appearance was there all night in the most excruciating pain."

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In case you were wondering, *THE WEWA NEWS*

is A Locally Owned and Operated Newspaper, created solely for the enjoyment of the people who live in the Wewa area. Our purpose is to bring "Good News" and "Whatever" to our locals attention. I hope to bring back some joy and fun into our lives again, and bring us closer then ever before.

Thank you to those that support our effort with your Ads and help bringing our local news to the sweetest little City in Florida! Thank you City Workers and Commissioners for your Care and Hard work! Keeping us safe and running like a well tuned machine. I love it when you save us money, yet get the job done satisfactorily. Job Well Done!

MYSTERY SOLVED!

In the April issue of The Wewa News we posted a photo of bricks on the side of lola Road to see if anyone knew why they were there. They were in fact placed there by the County to use as fill to fix roadside pot holes according to the Wewa City Hall Clerk, Ms. Rachel Jackson.

If you desire to Support The
Wewa News call 850-630-3468



"BUSY AS A WEWA BEE..."

BOOK REVIEW

"IMAGES OF AMERICA WEWAHITCHKA"

By a Local Author Beverly Mount-Douds Published 2015

What an amazing piece of work Beverly did on this book. She has since passed away, a few years ago, but that does not take away her legacy as a brilliant woman who loved people and knew our history like nobody's business.

She was able to capture the local Wewa history in her many pages of photos and information of our sweet little city. As you read through the many pages and photos, you can see that Wewa was made up of many heroes, legions, and determined people, born in a time of war and daily struggles. They filled Wewa with fruit trees and beehives, yet they made it a place of desire, and filled the air with the smell of home cooking, beautiful lands, and gardens. The Land of MILK AND HONEY. Wewa was and is, "God's Country".

She was able to capture the true spirit of WEWA, showing real people doing real things, to create our history in the making. If you desire to know the roots of the names of those that live here, read this book! It was well done by Beverly, and her life was spent well, giving us the chance to know our fellow men and women who worked and played hard here in lovely Wewa, Florida. The book can be seen at the local public library in Wewa and is sold at a little bookstore and sandwich shop in Port St. Joe, called: *NO NAME CAFE Books and Gifts* on Reid Ave. See Barbara or Emily, they will show you where they are displayed. Enjoy the read, I know I did. It now is a reference book in my collection of books.



GFWC WEWAHITCHKA WOMAN'S CLUB

If you think you might want to join the Wewa Woman's Club and help our community please, contact **Patty Fisher at 850-832-9436**, or **The President of the local Club, Laura Baxley 850-819-5827**. Help them help Wewa be a better place to live and work.

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GATOR NEWS!
By Katie Bryant-Kohler/ Christi Easter



Kaylee Easter, age 17, is Wewa's First Female Wrestling Champ, first to be going to College on a wrestling scholarship as well. WE ARE PROUD OF HER!

This past month, high School Junior Kaylee Easter traveled to Des Moines, Iowa and competed at Twin River Dual Girls Wrestling Nationals with her National Dual Team, Charlie's Angels, from Morris Fitness out of Georgia. Kaylee managed to not only help her Team come home with a 3rd Place Medal by going 5-3 during the meet, earning Wewahitchka High School's first AAU All American Status in Wrestling. Kaylee started wrestling just three years ago, becoming the first girl on the team, and has worked very hard to get to where she today. Kaylee has inspired other girls to join the team and hopes her accomplishments and dedication will continue to inspire other girls to join her team.

This past season Kaylee finished the regular season with a winning record of 26-22. She Placed 5th at the 2021 Florida High School Girls Championships in February as well.

Kaylee is currently preparing for 2 Large Tournaments which includes the Spartan Nationals in Jacksonville, FL and National Scholastic Dual Tournament this coming June at Disney World.

There has been several colleges showing interest in her to wrestle for their school but is still waiting for an official offer. Girls wrestling is the fastest growing sport in the Nation at this time. The coaches and Kaylee hope to have a full girls team this coming season.

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A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

By Grandpa Tom

Now is the time to love one another, a time is coming when you will wish your family members were here to talk to. Laugh and enjoy the time together. Time flies and the old-timer's are but a memory now. Ask those questions now, while they can still remember. Visit them often, enjoy their company before it is too late. **Don't wait until it is too late Folks!** Have you told someone that you love them lately? It is never too late to say it, while they are living. After they pass, it is too late. Have you hugged your neighbor lately, your old friend? That lady that does your hair, or the person who cooks your eggs just right. Have you called your Aunt, your brother, your sister, your Mom or Dad? Tell that person that delivers your packages or mail, **Thank YOU!** May God bless you today my friend! They will be glad you did, and be shocked to hear it.

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POLLY SAID, HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THOSE WEWA
FOLKS BORN IN MAY.



Psalm 34:18



What is left of the Old Stone Grist Mill on the Stone Mill Creek, near the Bridge Crossing. (Photo by Tom Wynn)



OLD BUILDINGS OF WEWA



The Old Gulf County Court House Photo Circa 1925, From an old original Post Office Card The Wewa News obtained recently. **James Rish's** Grandfather was the Foreman on the project build. Post card Given was to The Wewa News by **Heaven Sent Thrift Store, Owner Mrs. Janet Wood.**

An Old Stone Mill Completely Forgotten

By Nichole Oliver

Stone Mill Creek the name itself was a question to me. Being new to Wewa, one place I visited and fell in love with was, "Stone Mill Creek." I immediately noticed there was no mill. I saw remnants and an old wooden wall in the creek. I started asking questions and speaking to locals that owned the properties surrounding the supposed site of the mill.

Mr. Domino Demunck now owns one of the properties on the creek and it is beautiful. He is doing an amazing job with his creekside property.

After speaking with Domino about the history of the area, he directed me to speak to Mr. Higdon Swatts, a living relative of the Stone family. I spoke with Mr. Swatts by phone, he was happy to speak with me. Mr. Swatts informed me he is the great great great grandson of **Terrell Higdon Stone**, a son of **James Bennett Stone**. Mr. Swatts told me that the only history he knew of the mill itself was that in fact James Bennett Stone started the mill sometime around 1870. To his knowledge it ended production around 1879.

I did further research and all I got was sometime after 1877 a man named James Bennett Stone originating from Marianna Florida, relocated his family on a creek four miles north of Wewahitchka. Mr. Stone created a saw and grist mill right on the creek. Later giving the creek the Name "Stone Mill Creek." James Bennett Stone worked the mill with his five sons. Hauling and falling logs out of the creek and from the surrounding area.

I currently have found no other time line of events or information surrounding the Mill itself. What I have found is that Terrell Higdon Stone and the Stone family is the real story. The Mill was not a dead end. In fact this has now become an adventure about the history of Calhoun-Gulf County and The Stone Family Legacy.

Join me in the next issue of "**The Wewa News**" to find out about the Stone family that made the history of Gulf County and the Wewahitchka Florida area.

MAY 29 Fishing Tournament

The Annual Bream Fishing Tournament with Fish Fry will start sharply @ 7 in the morning. Weigh-in time is at 3 in the afternoon @ Howard Creek Upper Landing. The cost is \$50 bucks per boat. The Masons and or, Shriners will be available for registration to sponsor your boats. Plates of Fish with the various fixings will also be available (price \$10 bucks). **Join in the Fun!**

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Wewahitchka It's True meaning

By Tom Wynn

Polly Bee wants you to know... The true Creek Indian name, English Translation for "**Wewahitchka**" means, "**Place of many waters**" or literally, **Water is Here**" as per the then sitting Creek Indian Chief, Alonso, when we questioned him about the name during an interview in the the documentary I filmed, produced and directed, called: "**Tupelo Honey & The Amazing World of Beekeeping**". We filmed it in the 2002 Honey Season in Gulf County. Featuring our local beekeeper James E. "Jim" Rish and including other local beekeepers as well. Look for it on Youtube, Enjoy!

*** **May 10-14, Port St. Joe- Gulf Co. High School Art Show**
See the Student art display from 7 to 8:30 PM @ **The St. Joe Center for the Arts.** See the talent of Local Kidos! **850-224-5012*****

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“THE WEWA NEWS” CONTEST!

HELP NAME MY LITTLE BEES,

My Name is “Benny Bee”



My Name is “Polly Bee”



THE WINNER OF THE CONTEST IS: Melissa Williams
She Won a “WEWA NEWS” TEE SHIRT. THANKS MELISSA!

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22 APRIL WEWA CITY MEETING

Present: Mayor Phillip Gaskin, Three Commissioners, City Manager & City Clerks, Mr. Chipper Wade, Sheriff Harrison, several citizens and local business owners. Not Present: City Lawyer (Due to death in the family)

Tom Wynn Reporting

1. The City Park was discussed in detail, topic: the Woman’s Club needs help finishing the flag project in front of the City Park. Mr. Fisher agreed to provide blocks and the City will do a quick beautification around the flag area before the Tupelo Honey Festival Event. Tupelo Honey Festival date is May 15th.
2. Discussion about folks living in campers on their own property in the City. Counsel agreed to discuss this topic in the future.
3. The Public was present and the City Commission all agreed that: when a City meeting is canceled the following Monday will be the held meeting day. A 2 day notice to the public should go out if the change occurs.
4. Discussion about The city workers, who will be doing smoke tests on the sewage system.
5. An issue was presented by the public about a problem with a street damaged, with pot holes, and being too narrow for the public to use properly (neighborhood behind Ace Hardware). The Council agreed to make repairs to help the situation.
6. Discussion about a rise in our Sewage bills, needed in order to

comply with recommendations by The Florida Rural Water Association. A representative will come to the next city meeting to explain this need to the public who are invited to attend the May city meeting. Mayor Gaskin and the Commissioners all agreed we need to slowly raise the cost of our monthly sewage bills over the next few years to lower the impact on the public, instead of all at once. The City of Wewa has been very good about keeping down the cost of our utilities over the years, but, without this increase, we are in danger of not qualifying for grants to help pay for improvements on our City Sewage System in the future.

7. The Owner of the Corner Cafe’ bought up an issue with pot holes near her Cafe’ that the city workers began a few years ago but never completed. The City agreed to fix the issue immediately.

8. Several other topics was discussed with the Public. After the Minutes are approved and ready, the public can ask for a copy of those minutes to see what was discussed in more detail. See The City Clerk.



BENNY BEE SAYS, IT IS TUPELO HONEY SEASON FOLKS! Get ready, the Tupelo Honey Festival is this month 15 May 2021. Hope to see you there. Bring the whole family. Spread the word. The festival is on, according to City Hall. Contact The City if you are interested in a booth to sell honey, other products, or food. If you are an organization looking to give away paperwork or other free items, the spots are FREE. WEWA City Hall: 318 S. 7th St. PO Box 966 Wewahitchka, FL 32465 (850) 639-2605 for additional information.

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Colossians 3: 23-24

Learn New Words Daily-Etymology "CONSTITUTION"

1680s, "pertaining to a person's (physical or mental) constitution," from constitution + -al. Our first meaning is "beneficial to bodily constitution" from the 1750's. Our second meaning is from 1765, "authorized or allowed by the political constitution." Constitutional monarchy is recorded from 1801, from the French.

Most people are familiar with the word's different usages, but the term's origins are a bit more involved and date as far back as the 12th century. What might come as a surprise to some: Despite the 800 year history, the ever so popular legal term "un-constitutional" wasn't used until 1734.

The Latin Root for the word, "Constitution" comes from the Latin word, "*constituere*," meaning "to cause to stand, set up, fix, place, establish, set in order; form something new; resolve." While this definition seems to lend itself to how the term is now used in legal contexts and documents, that was not the case until the 1600s. Prior to that time, the word referred to an individual, an animal, or even inanimate object's "physical make-up" ... with respect to health, strength, and appearance."

Surprisingly enough, the notion of a constitution as a system of fundamental principles by which a community is governed, only came into use about 1730; just 50 years or so prior to our written document known as "The U.S. Constitution", which is the oldest "Constitution" still in use today. So even though we are a young country compared to those in Europe, or the Middle East, or even China, we have the most powerful, "freedom filled" document ever created by modern man. Our system of government is based on Biblical texts from both the New (Matthew Chapter 5) and the Old Testaments (Torah); or more correctly, "The Blood Cut Covenants." I have seen and read Statues that are word for word right out of the Biblical text. So when the news media talking heads, during an interview, say our system of government is based from the Judeo-Christian system of laws, they are very correct.

Iola's Old Post Office

By: Beverly Mount Douds of St. Joe/ Tom Wynn of Wewa
{Written 24 Nov 2000}

Iola, Florida was a very busy town near the little city of **Wewahitchka**. It has been said by old-timers that Iola was a much larger city than Wewa in its hey-day (but it only had 106 people including their slaves). It lay on the shores of the Apalachicola River's West bank. With it's Ole' River Stream Paddle boats traveling up and down the ancient river carrying passengers and supplies to and fro from cities and towns of North Florida, the place was teaming with people of all walks of life. A rich southern flavor was present throughout the area.

The air was filled with sound from the wagons, horses and the smoke of fireplaces of so many log cabins and home-made cedar board houses within the city and along the banks of the river. Its history is important to Gulf County because it was a large part of who we are.

The Florida Times Union of February 11, 1962 carried a story about Iola's old post office, which was still standing at

that time. Neal Lumber Company of Blountstown, now owners of this area, allowed the Florida State Game and Fresh Water Commission a perpetual easement on three acres of land on which to build a boat ramp. In order to locate the land it was necessary to find the old roadbed of the St. Joseph and Iola Railroad of 1839. This they did, and the old roadbed was clearly discernible, "about 20 feet in width, with furrows on each side from which the dirt was obtained."

According to this 1962 story, the old post office was about all that remained of the old town, which was established in 1835, about the same time that old St. Joseph was established. The post office dates back from October 16, 1838, with James Hudson as postmaster. The building was dilapidated, but with a newly painted sign saying, "Iola Post Office." Part of the building had been restored, but the plates were hewn and had pegs instead of nails and were probably as old as the old railroad.

Mrs. Rosenia Kilbourn, a resident of Wewahitchka, (in her 90's at present-Nov 2000) as a little girl, used to go to the Iola Hotel owned by Mr. Claude Rish. Mr. Rish would come to Wewa and get the mail to and from the Wewa Post Office and go back to the Iola Hotel. The hotel would be full of folks from Georgia and Alabama down for the great fishing in the area. Little Miss Rosenia Meriweather, the daughter of Doctor Thomas Meriweather of Wewahitchka (came from Bainbridge Ga.) loved to go on the boat with Erin Rish to Iola via the Jehu boat landing. Erin was the cousin of James Rish Jr., a local Beekeeper. Rosenia's father would tell her, "don't eat the green oranges or you will get a stomach ache," talking about Orange groves in Iola.

Mrs. Rosenia came to Wewahitchka in 1917 on board one of the Callahan Steam Paddle boats. She came in at the Magnolia Landing, where the Steam Paddle boats docked for pickup and delivery of passengers and or supplies. The landing was where the Bozeman and Walburn properties are today in Lands Landing near Wewa.

The site of the old Iola town is still listed on maps as late as 1958. One map published by the State Department of Agriculture clearly shows it. Most of Iola's town folk are all dead and the town is now a ghost town with very little evidence of ever being there. But the people and the town still remain in the hearts of the locals and in the history books of Calhoun/Gulf County and Florida.

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Psalms 121:1-2

Wewahitchka Florida Population in 2019:

2,133 (0% urban, 100% rural). Population change since 2000: +23.9% Males: 1,202 (56.4%) Females: 931 (43.6%) Median resident age: 41.8 years Florida median age: 42.4 years Zip codes: 32465. Estimated median household income in 2019: \$48,283 (it was \$25,755 in 2000) Wewahitchka: \$48,283 FL: \$59,227 Estimated per capita income in 2019: \$23,436 (it was \$13,731 in 2000) Wewahitchka city income, earnings, and wages data Estimated median house or condo value in 2019: \$111,792 (it was \$52,800 in 2000) Wewahitchka: \$111,792 FL: \$245,100 Mean prices in 2019: all housing units: \$173,791; detached houses: \$184,510; mobile homes: \$122,958 Median gross rent in 2019: \$819. March 2019 cost of living index in Wewahitchka: 81.2 (low, U.S. average is 100) Read more: <http://www.city-data.com/city/Wewahitchka-Florida.html>

Local Historian and Researcher Tom Godwin's Private Collection Indian Arrowsheads-Spear Tips & Axe Head Found in the Wewa and Iola Area



WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT WEWA?

Do a little Research...

Home of the best tasting honey in the world. Wewa has grown at a rate of over 20.5 percent in the 21 years. Wewa is the 7,365th largest city in the United States. The current population of Wewa is 2,133 which is at its peak to date. Wewa people love one another, and many folks return to Wewa after many years of being away, to retire to the "Good Life" of peace and joy. Wewa is known as "God's County" because it is plumb full of the sweetest honeys, fresh water, fruit and veggies, great fishing, hunting, milk, gardening, and fresh air every morning at breakfast, (because the many trees clean the air during the night). In case you forgot! 45 min. to I-10, 8-11 hours to the mountains, 5.5 hours to Atlanta, 5.5 to Orlando, Disney World, etc. Just 4 hours away, Cruise ships in Mobile and on and on! Gotta love the place! Tom Wynn

(LIBRARY GRANT-Continued from Page 1) celebrating Wewahitchka's history. Library staff will receive training in facilitating "community conversations," and will then host an open discussion about Wewahitchka's history at a community fish fry. Grant funds will also be used to create a local history collection and exhibit at the library. If you are interested in getting involved, or taking part in the conversation, please contact **Mimi Minnick (850) 229-8879** or **Joyelle Linton (850) 639-2419**.

THINGS TO SEE AT THE LOCAL LIBRARY!



This amazing Alligator was made by our famous local Artist **Earnest Hand**. He sees the animal in the wood before he even starts to carve it, he told me many years ago. You can see this baby at the local Wewa Library. Earnest Hand made this Snapping Turtle as well. Look for it, but be careful...it BITES!



The Charles Whitehead Public Library Has NEWS!

They are open Mondays and Fridays from 9-5, as well as Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9-1. Some of the services offered are computer service, WI-FI, faxing, copying, and scanning, In case you didn't know! They are proud to announce that they now offer notary public services during normal business hours. This is a free service paid for by the friends of the Gulf County Public Libraries. Each week the library offers free take home crafts kits for children; recommended for ages 3-8, however they are available to any age. Also, we now have a monthly adult activity packs that includes adult coloring pages, word searches, and more. They are very pleased to announce that the Gulf County Public Libraries in Port St. Joe and Wewahitchka have been approved for a grant from the Tapper Foundation for additional juvenile nonfiction books and books on home schooling.

The University of Florida, Gulf County extension office and it's volunteer master gardeners have begun landscaping a native educational garden at the parking lot entrance to the library. There will be a variety of grasses, shrubs and small trees that are all native to our area.

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Emily & Shannon-Hair stylist

LIBRARY SYSTEM

Call our local Librarian Ms. Joyelle

Linton, the branch manager for their hours of operation or her

co-workers Ms. Katie, Ms. Melissa or

Ms. Sharon.

They are great to talk to and will show you all we have on the history of our lovely city. The Library is looking for donations of Wewa High School Year Books, check with Joyelle on the years needed.

Library phone number is: 850-639-2419

Check it out! It is beautiful and a peaceful place to read. They have Computers to use too.

History of Wewahitchka Area- Circa 1875

By Tom Wynn

Founded in 1875, the town of Wewahitchka soon became the sweetest little City in Florida. Its development was slow and peaceful for the most part, starting in the early 1800's. After the Indian Wars & *The War Between The States*, its people began to see value in the place. With its twin lakes, bountiful fish and game, its closeness to large rivers, and access to the Gulf of Mexico, Wewa and its good growing seasons, soon became the perfect place to live and work. The rail roads, fishing, hunting, bee & honey businesses, and various types of tree buisnesses (saw-mills), made good money for some. The land was, and is, perfect for cattle and horses to graze in. High ground made it possible for housing and warehousing of products and such.

The bee business took off and, by accident, the sinking of the paddle boat, "The Callahan," gave us the Tupelo trees and their wonderful tasting honey. All along the Apalachicola River Basin, the near perfect weather helped produce productive Tupelo trees. Soon Citrus Trees planted by Captain Smith, as well as Pecan Trees and Palm Trees planted by Old Mr. Cleckley, made Wewa a Paradise! Or "God's Country" to those that discovered it.

Many have passed through, not knowing they just passed through one of the best places in Florida to visit or ever to live in. Wewa has, from its beginning, been "A City With A Heart." Folks described Wewa as being a "Warm, friendly City. It is true that Wewahitchkans generally are more than just friendly. In them, we find something of that "Old Southern Hospitality" which distinguished the south in the earlier days of this country. Wewahitchka was the first permanent settlement in what is now called Gulf County. Gulf County broke away from Calhoun County in 1925 and as the story goes, Mr. Stone (who served in the Florida Government), was the cause of this break away from Calhoun County. Wewahitchka became the county seat in 1925 (Jim Rish's Grand Father was the Foreman for the Construction of the Court house). Later on it was voted to move the county seat to Port St. Joseph, about 20 miles south of the Old Court house in Wewahitchka. That is yet another story be told here in *The Wewa News*.

Wewa was called Double Ponds in its beginnings by the earlier white settlers. But local Natives, called the area "Place of many Waters or "Water is Here". I asked the Creek Indian Teacher who taught the Creek Language to her people several years ago, she agreed. I did a documentary with her and filmed a tour of the Creek Indian Artifact Museum about 26 years ago (which I will release on Youtube soon).

So I got my answers to the history of the place from Chief Alonzo and the Indian Teacher (both have since passed away). The local native Indians, because of its location on the "Twin" or "Spectacle" Lakes, used the area around the Lakes to trade their goods with other Tribes.

Later named Lake Julia and Lake Alice, after the twin daughters of Dr. John W. Keyes, today they have become the center point of our Sweet Little City of Wewa.

The town was named by the grandfather of Miss Amanda Richards, a member of one of the oldest and most prominent families in the area. The story goes, that after the Reverend John W. Richards preached the first sermon in the little log house which had been built to serve as both the local church and school, he was asked to name the town and he wrote above the door of the building,

"Wewahitchka", meaning water is here. **(see doumentary, "Tupelo Honey & The Amazing World of Beekeeping" 2002-2003).**

History would have you believe that white settlers came to Wewa shortly after the War Between the States, some of them Confederate veterans seeking a new life on the Florida frontier. But nearby Iola was settled long before the Civil War (the War over States Rights and Taxation), in 1838, or even earlier. Most of the settlers came down from Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama, and some of them from older nearby settlements of an earlier day. Iola and Fort Place, both only a few miles from the present City of Wewahitchka, had settlers back in 1830's.

Back to "Miss Amanda," now long deceased, there were about ten white families in the area when her father, Norman came from the City of Chipley in 1874, and in 1875 and 1876 there were twenty-five or thirty more families in Wewa area. It appears that Mr. Stone had settled the area just North of Wewa, what we refer to as "Stone Mill Creek" about that same time. We should have an article on that area soon, if not in this issue.

Besides Richards, Keyes, Stone, Weeks and other names we must include: Mitchell, Maddox, Donaldson, Stone, Strange, McDaniel, Bell, Alderman, Spencer, Rivers, Smith, Redd, Burgess, and a little later, Linton, Hunter, Gaskin, Higgins, Griffin, Pridgeon, Whitfield, Rish. Again later on the family lines of Glenn, Williams, Lister, Bozeman, Carter, Wynn and others. Descendants of most of these people are still in this area and have continued in prominence through the years.

Quoting Charles Smith of Port St. Joe, descendant of the early orange growing Captain Smith of Wewa: "These hardy and industrious settlers cleared the land, planted citrus groves which were in a decade, laden with fruit, began to build up apiaries for the production of honey, raised stock, and furnished timber for the small saw mills in the area."

The bulk of the timber, however, was rafted down the river to large mills located in Apalachicola. Many of the early Wewahitchkans were riverboat men on the steamboats flying down the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee, and Flint River systems form Columbus, Georgia to Apalachicola. During the 100 year span of steam boating on these rivers, no less than 150 different steamers plies their waters. The steamboats were the mode of transporting to market the many barrels of **(Story Continues on page 12)**

honey and hundreds of boxes of oranges produced annually in our local area. (Blue Gator Area was the Baptist Church and was one of the first Churches in the State of Florida (in my most recent research-see next month issue).

The first church of Wewahitchka was Methodist, **although it served many denominations. The Reverend John Richards** preached one Sunday in each month (without pay) for a period of two years. According to 'Miss Amanda,' he was the same John Richards who had lived for several years in St. Joseph and had served as the first postmaster before coming to the Wewahitchka area. **The first church stewards were Norman Richards, Thomas Spencer, Sidney S. Alderman and W. J. Rivers, who was the first postmaster of Wewahitchka.** The first school was also in this little log house and the first teacher was Dr. W. G. Mitchell. The school term was for three months and the parents paid the cost of the school according to their ability (like we do today, called Property Taxes). In 1880 a second church was built, a frame building, which served the Methodists and Baptists. The two ministers, the Reverends Daily & Langley, used the building alternately. **Early Wewahitchka boasted a newspaper, THE CALHOUN TIMES,** which was published once each month for \$1.00 per year. It was advertised as the official paper of the county. And as early as 1883 Sam Spence of Lafayette, Alabama came to teach "Pic" Higgins telegraphy. A line was cut into Apalachicola, and both Marianna and Wewahitchka had telegraph service.

There was no mail delivery at that time. Settlers brought mail from Marianna (Mr. Stone and his wife, of The Wynn's from Newton/Waterford Junction, Alabama) when they picked up their supplies, and steamers stopped at Alderman and Magnolia Landings to pick up and drop off the passengers. With many of the families living miles apart, life was lonely for some people in those days. T. H. (Terrell Higdon) Stone, in an interview several years ago told of a Mrs. Selden Williams, who, previous to 1874, had not seen another woman in twelve years.

Written By AECs Tom Wynn Jr. USCG (Ret.) using information provided by the **Wewahitchka Library** and other sources in the Wewa area, including men and women of the community, and Genealogical research of the mentioned family lines.

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The Wewa News

OLD ISSUES ARE NOW AVAILABLE TO READ ON LINE

GO TO: www.wewa.news

Gen. 1:1, John 1:1, John 14:6, Rev. 2:28

**WEWAHITCHKA
I'M PART OF IT!
I'M PROUD OF IT!**



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Our Town Puzzle Answers

Across

- 4 Our golden liquid
- 5 Festival held here
- 6 One of our founding families
- 8 Small people educated here (initials)
- 9 A beloved breed of dog
- 10 Old family bee keeper name

Tupelo
Lake Alice
Richards
WES
Hound
Lanier

DOWN

- 1 Find the Café here
- 2 Our town
- 3 Festival month
- 7 Alice's Sister

On the Corner
Wewahitchka
May
Julia

NOTICES

GFWC Is selling Bricks for The Veteran's Park at Lake Alice. Price is \$56 for each Veteran brick and that includes the name of the Veteran, rank and service emblem they serviced in. Mail all information and check to P.O. Box 94 Wewahitchka, Florida 32465. Make check payable to: GRWC Wewahitchka Woman's Club. Local Meetings are on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. Contact Patty fisher @ 850-832-9436 or President Laura Baxley @ 850-819-5827.

Ms. Peggy Causey is selling a 1875 commemorative plate with most of the City of Wewa's old land marks on it. It is a great piece of history. The cost is \$20 and is a fund raiser for the Woman's Club. Check it out at Fisher's Building Supply.

The Subway is looking for Help! In search of Sandwich Artists to train ASAP! Go by and have a talk with Ms. Vicki

THOMAS WILLIAM WYNN JUNIOR & MARY EVELYN WYNN
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