

# THE TUPELO COUNTY NEWS™

## THE WEWA NEWS™



*“The Good News Newspaper”*

DECEMBER 2023 >> No. 12-01<<A FREE LOCAL NEWSPAPER Take One!



### CITY OF WEWAHITCHKA WON \$850,000.00 LAWSUIT

*by Tom Wynn*

Mayor Phillip Gaskin said in the November city commissioners meeting that “the city of Wewahitchka won the firehouse lawsuit, thanks to our city Lawyer and her team”. He spoke, “The money is now in the bank as of three weeks ago”. The mayor assured all at the meeting that the firehouse will be fixed and completed soon, right at its current location. Ms. Jordan, the City Attorney, has completed all the paperwork necessary for the city to move forward on the project, with a very large amount of money to give us a fine firehouse. This does not include grant money and the original remaining funds for the firehouse construction.

Commissioner Ralph Fisher and Commissioner Brian Cox have switched responsibilities. At the Mayor’s request within the city organization so that Mr. Fisher can oversee the rebuild, due to his many years of experience in building such buildings. We will have an “Eagle-Eye” on the project moving forward. The other Commissioners and the Mayor will continue to give their input as they continue with the building. The mayor requested a workshop for the Commissioners to get started on the project.



### THE WEWA NEWS©™

#### THIS IS THE FINAL ISSUE OF THE WEWA NEWS AS A MONTHLY NEWSPAPER

*by Tom Wynn*

The December issue will be the last of The Wewa News monthly paper. Having created the First Editions of THE WEWA NEWS back in 1995 for a year, to prove there is always good news in Wewa, Tom Wynn and family have made the heartfelt decision to no longer publish the free newspaper monthly. Above are The Wewa News’ biggest fans, the Emerald Coast Federal Credit Union Ladies. They have served us well over the past 32 years, always smiling and happy to see the Wewa News each month. Pictured here holding the October issue, they were always thankful for their copy of the Wewa News, are (left to right) Ms. Kathy, Katie, Gwen and Penny)

**(see page 2 to continue story )**

### WEWAHITCHKA CITY LIBRARY AMAZING NUMBERS SAYS “FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY”

*by Tom Wynn*

“The Friends of the Library” gave a glowing report to the city commission during the public time to speak, during the November city meeting. Ms. Cindy Dunn, a member of the Friends of the Library organization, gave a report of our Public Library and all the hard work that the staff and volunteers has done over the past year, from October of 2022 to date. Come by the Library for copy of the list.

**From Page 1-The Wewa News Story Continues-**We have made it our mission to help get the community to come together in all sorts of ways, and bring Gulf County to thinking as a family, helping one another to make it a better place to live and enjoy life, after all this is “God’s Country” as expressed by the Spaniards, when they arrived in Florida back in the 1500’s.

We love one another for sure, and now all can see that today. The Old Court House in Wewa will be 100 years old soon, the firehouse will be brand new shortly, we are getting a New City Hall, and so much more. It is time for my family to take a break and enjoy the fruits of our labor. Wewahitchka Historical Society is working hard to preserve our local and Florida history before progress causes it to disappear. Our Friends of the Library have worked so hard to make the Public Library a place to enjoy history, books, and programs. Our Librarians have done a wonderful job to bring folks into the place of learning. I love to go into the library to see the history sections and admire the historical artifacts. God is Good and he is good to us in Wewa. We are a blessed City so let’s take a breath and enjoy what we have now, before all goes away and we will wish we got out more to see and take in our beautiful city and county.

**“I LOVE YOU WEWA! Never forget that!”**

**Note:** The Wewa News will remain online for those that want to read or re-read back issues. Also, I am thinking of doing a Historical Periodical later. So be looking for that online as well. I will give you notice in the local Facebook pages and on The Wewa News website when I write more history stories etc. So please pray for Wewa and Gulf County, love and pray for those that are our leaders in government and pray for those in need in our area. Grandpa Tom

**THE PORT ST. JOE STAR NEWSPAPER GETS NEW EDITOR**

*by Tom Wynn*

Mr. James Jackson has now joined the Port St. Joe STAR Newspaper down in Port St. Joe Florida. Their new office is located on Reid Ave. James came to the November Wewa City meeting. He has a lot of experience in reporting on Sports and as a reporter in general. He is replacing Ms. Wendy Weitzel who has transferred as Editor of a newspaper in Maryland near Washington D.C. last month. We are all proud of her. James has come just in time to start a new year of local news reporting.



**LETTER TO THE US VETERANS; GULF COUNTY LAW OFFICERS; OFFICE WORKERS; FIRE AND MEDICAL STAFF OF GULF COUNTY.**

Thank you for your service to our county and We the People. Thank you for your efforts to make America a safe place to live and to enjoy the freedoms that we have today. Without your efforts and sufferings on the job and elsewhere, we could not stand so tall, knowing that life in other countries is not so free and loving. I know, I have seen Marshall Law upfront and personal in other countries during my career in the USCG. Please know that we indeed worry over you and pray for you. May God continue to bless you and love you firsthand. With All Sincerity,

Senior Chief Tom Wynn USCG (Ret. )



**A WORD FROM OUR LOCAL GULF COUNTY PROPERTY APPRIASER ON HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION FOR 2024**

*by Mr. Mitch Burke*

If you’ve ever bought or considered buying residential property in Florida, you’ve probably heard of the state’s homestead exemption, and with good reason. The Florida homestead exemption is a powerful tool that reduces the tax burden on the state’s homeowners. But what is the homestead exemption in Florida and how does it work?

Below is a guide to using this exemption to maximize the value of Florida homeownership and minimize your tax burden. **What is the homestead exemption in Florida?**

The Florida homestead exemption is a property tax break that's offered based on your home's assessed value and provides exemptions within a certain value limit. With it, you can reduce the taxable value of your home by as much as \$50,000 if you owned your property on January 1 of the tax year.

**But what is the purpose of Florida's homestead exemption?** The purpose is to reduce the tax burden for the homeowner. The amount you pay can differ according to the millage rates applied by the municipalities within the county you live in. Recent data shows the average Florida homeowner pays \$1,752 every year. If you already own a home in Florida or are looking to buy real estate, the Florida homestead exemption can help you reduce that burden.

Let's explore how the homestead exemption works, how to submit your documentation, and how much you can save on your homestead property taxation. How does the homestead exemption work? If this is the first time you are applying for the homestead exemption, you may be confused by how it works. It's a tiered system based on the value of your home. For instance, the exemptions could look like this: Up to \$25,000 in value is exempted for the first \$50,000 in assessed value of your home. The above exemption applies to all property taxes, including those related to your school district.

You pay full taxes on any value between \$25,000 and \$50,000. For any assessed value between \$50,000 and \$75,000, an additional \$25,000 is eligible for exemption. This exemption does not apply to school district taxes. Properties valued at or over \$75,000 are exempt at the previous levels, and then fully taxed for the portion over \$75,000.

**Perhaps some examples can better understand how the homestead exemption works.** \$48,000 home: For this home, the first \$25,000 in assessed value would be exempt from all property taxes. The remaining \$23,000 is assessed value and is taxed normally. \$70,000 home: For this home, the first \$25,000 in assessed value would be exempt from all property taxes. The next \$25,000 would be taxed normally. The remaining \$20,000 in value would be exempt from all property taxes except school district taxes.

\$90,000 home: For this home, the first \$25,000 would be fully exempt from taxes, the next \$25,000 would be fully taxed, the following \$25,000 would be exempt from all but

school district taxes, and the final \$15,000 would be fully taxed.

**How do you qualify for a homestead exemption in Florida?** While the tax savings from an exemption could be significant, not everyone is eligible. The Florida homestead exemption rules include the following requirements:

- 1.** You are the property owner.
- 2.** The property you want to claim the exemption for must be your permanent residence.
- 3.** You must have lived at the property on or before January 1 of the tax year in question.
- 4.** The property you want to claim the exemption for may not have been rented for more than 30 days in a given calendar year. (Renting the property for more than 30 days for two consecutive years or for more than six months is considered an abandonment of the Florida homestead exemption.)

**How much do you save with a homestead exemption in Florida?** Calculating the Florida homestead exemption starts with three distinct valuations for your property. They are as follows: **Just value.** This is your property's market value. **Assessed value.** Your property's assessed value is the just value without the assessment limitations. **Taxable value.** The taxable value of your property is its assessed value minus exemptions. This is the value the tax collector uses to calculate the taxes due. Every home is different, but a homestead exemption in Florida can exempt up to \$50,000 of your home's assessed value from tax liability.

When to file for a homestead exemption in Florida? The next two questions are: What is the homestead exemption in Florida's filing process and when should you start?

To get a homestead deduction on your Florida taxes, you have to fill out an application form, the DR-501 and demonstrate proof of residence by March 1 of the year for which you wish to qualify. For example, if you want to qualify for a Florida homestead exemption on your 2024 property taxes, you must have filed this paperwork by March 1, 2024. Late filings are permitted, but you will need to explain the extenuating circumstances that caused you to miss the March deadline.

**You have three options for completing and submitting it:** **1.** Complete the form online at [www.gulfpa.com](http://www.gulfpa.com) along with all the required backup information and email to our office. **2.** Print the form, fill it out, and mail it to our office along with all the required backup information. **3.** Visit our office at 1000 Cecial G. Costin Sr. Blvd., Rm. 110, Port St. Joe, FL. 32456. There, one of our staff can guide you through the process. Whether you complete the form online

or in person, you'll be asked to provide proof of your residence at the address you want to claim the exemption for. You should confirm what is acceptable with the county property appraiser's office, but a few examples of documents you may need include the following:  A Florida driver's license or state ID  A Florida vehicle registration number  Florida voter's ID  Immigration documents if you're not a U.S. citizen.

Proof of previous residency in a place other than Florida, plus proof that that residency has ended. Evidence that you've given up a driver's license from another state.

Declaration of domicile and residency in Florida. The name of your current employer. School addresses of any dependent children you have. A bank statement or proof of address of a financial institution. Two (2) Proofs of payment of utilities at the homestead address.

**Does my Florida homestead exemption expire?** One nice feature of the Florida homestead exemption is that you don't have to reapply every year. Unless you take action to cancel your exemption, the state allows your homestead to automatically renew. Sometime after January first of each year, after you're first approved for the homestead exemption, our office will mail you an exemption renewal. Unless you cancel the homestead exemption, there is no reason to sign and send it back in. The flip side of this is that it's your responsibility to contact our office if and when you're no longer eligible for the exemption.

You are no longer eligible if one of the following is true:  
The home is no longer your primary residence. You rent the property for more than 30 days per year.

The home has changed ownership, either because of a sale, divorce, marriage, death, or another event.

**Can I keep my FL homestead exemption if I move?** You are not allowed to transfer your Florida homestead exemption when you move from one Florida homestead to another Florida homestead. One must reapply regardless if you stay in the same county or move to another within the state of Florida. However, Florida law allows for "portability" which means that you can transfer some or all of the assessment difference. This can lower the assessed value of the homestead. In order to use the Save Our Homes (SOH) assessment limitation, you must complete Form DR-501T along with a new homestead exemption application.

**Can you get a Florida homestead exemption on a mobile home?** Some mobile homes can qualify for a homestead exemption. If you own a mobile home and the land it sits

on, then you must permanently affix the mobile home to the land to qualify for the exemption. You must visit your local tax collector's office to receive a Real Property (RP) decal to mark your mobile home as real property. Mobile homes on leased or rented land do not qualify.

**Other property tax exemptions in Florida** the Florida homestead exemption is a powerful way to reduce your property taxes – but it's not the only tax exemption available to Florida homeowners. Depending on your circumstances, you may also qualify for one or more of the following:

**Construction for an older family member: Added a mother-in-law apartment to your home?** You can apply to have that construction reduce the value of your total property. Complete the Original Application for Assessment Reduction for Living Quarter of Parents or Grandparents form. Note: you'll have to re-apply for this exemption every year. **Longtime limited-income senior exemption:** This one's a county-by-county exemption and is available only to those who are 65 or older, have lived in Florida for at least 25 years, and have income below a certain threshold. If you meet these criteria and your home is worth less than \$250,000, you may qualify for a 100 percent exemption. Complete the Adjusted Gross Household Income Sworn Statement and Return form.

**Deployed service member:** State law says this exemption amount depends on how many days you were deployed during the tax year. Complete the Deployed Military Exemption Application. **Disabled veteran:** A Florida state law may allow you to take this exemption on top of others you qualify for if you're 65 or older and were injured during combat. **Survival of a spouse killed in military service:** Florida's Fallen Heroes Act outlines the details of this exemption. See the county property appraiser for the correct paperwork. **Surviving spouse of a first responder:** If your spouse was a first responder and was killed in the line of duty, Florida law may make you eligible for this exemption. See the county property appraiser for the correct paperwork.

**Other disabled people:** Various other disabilities (including blindness, permanent disability, use of a wheelchair, and others) may qualify you for a \$500 Florida property tax exemption. You will need a Physician's Certification and the Homestead Exemption Application to get this exemption. One final note: Florida's property tax exemptions reduce the amount of property taxes you're responsible for paying; they don't actually change the value of your property. When you're choosing a homeowners insurance policy, it's important to choose one that insures the full value of your home. **MB**

**(Editors Note:** We had to combine the sentences and reduce spacing in order to make room for the information, to be complete, this information is important to homeowners).

**IN CASE YOU DIDN'T KNOW...**you are reading a free local newspaper, which exercises any and all rights given by The Most High and supported by the community we call, these United States of America, The United States Inc., The U.S. Constitution and the three bodies of government in their various institutions as protectors of our rights and privileges of "We The People". We all stand in unity to protect one another from domestic and foreign governments and individuals that may infringe upon our eternal rights as children of the Most High, as contractually given by the author of, "The Holy Bible."—**The Editor**

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### **New Bingo Machine**

by Jo Ellen Campbell

October 31 was not only Halloween, but the first time the Innovation bingo machine was used at the Wewahitchka Senior Center. There was also an excellent

Potluck dinner, including lemon meringue Pie, corn bread casserole, green beans, chicken, and more.

This machine was purchased by Ms. Rebecca Kite and her mother Mrs. Vivian Stokes through the donations they

raised. For several months this mother and daughter duo have been volunteering on Tuesdays and Fridays to call Bingo for the Senior Citizens at 314 N 3<sup>rd</sup> St. And over that time, they have brought prizes and previously upgraded the system at the Center. There were 11 people in attendance for lunch at Bingo Tuesday. Free meals are supplied for people 60 or over Monday through Friday.

Rebecca and Vivian are our Bingo heroes. They are still fundraising for prizes. If you are over 60 and enjoy Bingo or pool(table) or Chicken Feet or cards, come and check us out. The center also offers chair exercises Monday and Wednesday at 9:30 AM The Center is open from 9 AM to 5 PM. Bingo starts at 10:00 AM Tuesdays and Fridays. Come for Bingo and fellowship any day. **JC**

## **Dead Lakes Origin Discussed**

by Harland Pridgeon

**(Editor's Note:** This is a petition of a report given to the Area Conversationist in connection with an application for a dam on the Dead Lakes under the terms of the Watershed bill, **this was written many years ago**)

Many stories have been told and all known records have been searched but, no one has come up with any indisputable facts about the origin of the Dead Lakes What appears the best and most practical version, widely agreed and accepted, is the one that hypothesizes that the Chipola River and the Apalachicola River were at one time very narrow and deep.

With the settling of white man civilization along the banks of these rivers came the inevitable soil cultivation and cutting down of foliage accelerating an age-old force nature—erosion.

This rapid increase in erosion filled up the bottom at a rapid rate. Now since the volume of water flow remained constant, the river channels became shallower and shallower. The water spread out over the adjacent lowlands in an ever-widening area, eventually covering the area now commonly known as the Dead Lakes.

People from all over the world will never forget the wonderful hours spent here pulling in those large black bass, blue gills, shell crackers, and many other species of the finned tribe.

Many thousands of dollars have been spent in Gulf and Calhoun counties by sports fishermen. The amount spent annually by a sports fisherman has been conservatively estimated at \$100 per person. There are approximately 30 fish camps, hotels, and tourist courts located on this famous

body of water. They have a combined total of over two hundred rooms and 500 boats. In years gone by, there were many days when no camp, hotel, or court would have a boat left to rent after 5 a.m. and many brought their own boats. On occasion, during these days of yore, the Game and Fresh Water Commission counted, from an airplane, more than 1,000 boats on the lakes at one time.

The Commission has many times taken a creel census. Almost invariably, it would show a per-person catch of fifteen or more fish. What has happened to all those sportsmen who once filled the lakes? What could happen to the lakes level because of a man-made wall (Dam). Two dams in the chain are almost complete.

They will impound 84,500 acres of water. Two more dams "up-the-country" are on the drawing board; they will impound 57,000 acres. In addition, the Apalachicola River in now in process of being dredged, from the Woodruff Darn to Apalachicola (about 100 miles), to a depth of nine feet and a width of 100 feet at a zero-gauge reading at Blountstown. According to information from the District Engineer's office, when the tri-river system is completed, the Apalachicola River at Blountstown will be maintained at a three-foot level gauge reading.

When the water gauge at the town of Blountstown reads three feet, try as you might, you cannot find the Dead Lakes at Wewahitchka. There is nothing *left, then, but the spine of the Dead Lakes, the Chipola River.*(HP)

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### **JUST A NOTE FROM GRANDPA TOM**

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### **Collins Cafe: Wewahitchka's Newest Culinary Gem**



*by Tom Wynn*

Tucked away in the quaint sweetest little city in Florida, lovingly referred to as Wewa, "Collins Café" has emerged as a delightful addition to the burgeoning culinary scene. Situated conveniently on Highway 71, across from Centennial Bank, this charming eatery has swiftly captured the hearts and

tastebuds of locals and passersby alike



Just a few weeks ago, Collins Cafe opened its doors, introducing the town to a blend of exceptional flavors curated by the culinary ability of Karen and Collin, along with their staff, the passionate proprietors behind this new establishment, have given our taste buds a wakeup call! Their commitment to delivering top-

notch food, warm hospitality, and affordable prices has quickly positioned Collins Cafe as a must-visit destination since their opening day.

What distinguishes Collins Cafe isn't just its strategic location; it's the tantalizing array of dishes featured on its menu. Renowned for its tantalizing seafood selections and an eclectic mix of other savory offerings, each dish at Collins Cafe is a testament to culinary finesse and dedication to quality. Whether it's the freshest catch from the sea or savory comfort foods, the menu caters to a diverse range of tastes.

Karen and Collin's culinary passion and knack for creating memorable dining experiences have earned the cafe rave reviews from patrons. Their insistence on using only the finest ingredients and a knack for culinary innovation have contributed to the establishment's growing popularity.

Amid Wewahitchka's recent surge in population and business ventures, Collins Cafe symbolizes the town's evolving identity. It's not just a place to indulge in delicious food; it's a gathering spot for locals, a welcoming haven for travelers, and a testament to the entrepreneurial spirit thriving in this corner of Florida.

Beyond serving mouthwatering meals, Karen and Collin have fostered a sense of community within their cafe's walls. Their genuine warmth and personalized service create an atmosphere that feels like an extension of home.

Whether you're seeking a quick breakfast or lunch, a leisurely dinner, or simply craving a taste of Wewahitchka's culinary delights, Collins Cafe on Highway 71 promises an unforgettable experience. With its delectable cuisine, reasonable prices, and the genuine hospitality of its owners, this charming eatery has swiftly established itself as an integral part of the town's dining landscape. As

Wewahitchka continues to evolve, Collins Cafe remains a beacon of exceptional dining experiences in this thriving community, which is based on love for one another and community in general. We are being blessed by this couple, Enjoy! TW.



**St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church**  
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see <http://mukappa.net/sjbec> for full schedule

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First Corinthians 15**



## THE WEWA LIBRARY

by Joyelle Linton

Merry Christmas from the Wewahitchka public Library! What an exciting time of year! We have a great selection of Christmas books and DVDs to choose from. If we don't have the item in our library, we can request it

from one of the other six libraries in our system.

Are you looking for something to do with kids, then look no further! Every Tuesday at 10:00 is our Budding Bookworms Storytime for children 0-5 with a caregiver. Each Thursday at 3:30 is our weekly Lego Club for ages 3-12. Homeschool meetup is held once per month and the next one is on Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am. This month's Full STEAM Ahead we will be do Christmas coding with the binary alphabet. As it gets closer to Christmas, we have some special events scheduled. On Monday, December 11<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 pm we will have a family Sneaky Santa Gift Exchange. Parents and children are asked to bring a wrapped gift of \$5 or less to be exchanged at this festive program. **Our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Cookies with Santa and Mrs. Claus will be held on Friday, December 15<sup>th</sup> from 3:30-5:30 pm. Enjoy Christmas stories followed by cookies and hot cocoa. Drop in to have your picture taken and create a fun craft.**

Let's not forget our adults. There are programs for you, as well. If you enjoy crafts, join us as we create a ribbon pinecone on Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm CT. Tupelo Needleworks is held once a month, the next meet up is Thursday, December 10:00 am. Bring any craft and join others for social time. Book Club will be on Monday, December 11<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm. Books are available at the library. Friends of the Wewahitchka Library will have their next monthly meeting on Thursday, December 14<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am. Learn how you can help support our library and participate in fundraising. Last but not least, the Gulf County Extension office will be presenting a program on jelly canning and homemade gift giving. This will be held on Monday, December 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am.

Our library will be closed in observance of the Christmas holidays on Monday, December 25<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, December 26<sup>th</sup>. Our normal business hours are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday from 9:00-5:00 CT. Please contact us at (850) 639-2419 for additional information. **JL**

**IF you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to find you guilty?**

### BIBLE STUDY TOOLS

**If you are interested in using Bible study tools online for free, check this website out: [www.esb.bible](http://www.esb.bible)**

## FRIENDS OF THE WEWAHITCHKA LIBRARY ESTATE SALE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8<sup>th</sup>

9:00 AM until 2:00 pm

IGA Parking Lot

Friends of the Wewahitchka Public Library meet on Thursday, 14 December at 9:30 am in the Charles Whitehead Public Library. We are a 501c3 non-profit organization that assists our local library with purchasing books, periodical subscriptions, crafts, supplies and equipment that is not included in their budget. We also provide a weekly janitorial service to help keep your library neat and clean. Come join us!

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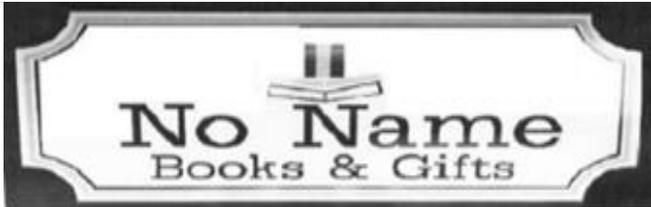
## "Tupelo Radio Group"

COME JOIN US!

In case you didn't know: "The Tupelo Radio Group" is making a GMRS Radio network, where the repeaters are to be located has yet to be determined. We have started doing regular testing on Sunday afternoons at 4pm to track our progress. We are looking for some Ham Operators in the Wewa area to join us. If anyone is interested in joining the group, please contact: **Mr. Dudley Balmer at: 317-379-1644.** (Radioddity email address: [www.radioddity.com](http://www.radioddity.com))



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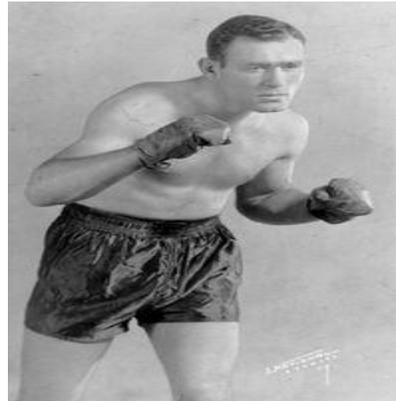
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### **Corn Griffin: A Champion's Legacy in Wewahitchka, Florida Part 2**

by Tom Wynn

Wewahitchka and Blountstown share in the Glory of John "Corn" Griffin the heavyweight boxer who was born in Blountstown and later settled in our lovely little city of Wewahitchka.



The love of his life lived here and so they raised up a wonderful family near the famous Dead Lakes. Corn Griffin was a very good friend of Mr. James F. Rish, his neighbor who later when he built a new subdivision behind his home, on about 10

acres of land, he named one of the streets after his famous friend. Thus, the street that some 24 families live on today.

This famous Floridian, having a street named after him, helps keep this an amazing man fresh in our local history books and brings him to mind every time we drive down that dusty road, which needs pavement to this day

The county and the city of Wewa have been working on the dirt road, to reduce complaints from the locals that live on the street. It will cost approximately \$250,000 to complete the work of paving. All concern is praying and hoping for

the city of Wewa and the County to find the funds soon to pay this Famous Street of Wewahitchka. John Charles "Corn" Griffin (July 24, 1911 – January 9, 1973) was an American heavyweight boxer whose career lasted from 1930 to 1936 and included the memorable June 14, 1934 TKO loss to James J. Braddock, memorialized in the 2005 film Cinderella Man.

After winning his first fight, a 1930 bout with Charles "Ranger" Pond, he turned professional in 1931 with much promise, but was KO'd by Bob Godwin in 1933. The only heavily publicized fight with Braddock in Madison Square Garden the following year was the highlight of his career and, as dramatized in Cinderella Man, had Russell Crowe (as Braddock) punching it out with Polish boxer Art Binkowski, portraying Griffin.

During his professional career, he also served as a sparring partner for former world heavyweight boxing champion Primo Carnera. Following his final bout, a 1936 Fourth of July loss to Barney Brock, he left the ring, working in a number of jobs and serving in the army during World War II. After retiring from the ring, Griffin found a new home and a fresh chapter in the serene town of Wewahitchka, Florida, home of the Famous Dead Lakes.

It was here that he met and fell in love with a local woman named Dorothy, who would become his steadfast companion and pillar of support in the years that followed.

Griffin's retirement from boxing did not signal a retreat from the world of sports. Instead, he channeled his passion and expertise into coaching and mentoring aspiring young athletes in the Wewahitchka community. His gym became a sanctuary for dreams, where he imparted not only boxing skills but also life lessons of discipline, perseverance, and the belief in one's own potential.

Beyond the gym, Griffin and Dorothy became active members of the Wewahitchka community, contributing to local initiatives and lending their support to causes close to their hearts. The couple's generosity and commitment to service endeared them to their neighbors, leaving an indelible mark on the town they had come to call home.

The Griffin Foundation, established in his honor, continued its mission of providing opportunities and support to young individuals, a testament to Griffin's enduring commitment to making a difference. Corn Griffin's story remains an inspiration to all who hear it, a reminder that greatness can emerge from even the most challenging circumstances. Corn Griffin's legacy continues to shine as a beacon of hope and a reminder that with determination and a steadfast belief in oneself, anything is possible. **TW**

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE, HERE IS A GREAT YOUTUBE YOU WILL ENJOY: MESSIAH:2030 I highly recommend it to watch and share. It was well done and is based on a book written in 2002. Check it out!**

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## RIVER BOAT CAPTAINS

by Tom Wynn

(This information was gathered from a book by Edward A. Mueller, called Perilous Journey: A history of Steam boating...) Mr. Mueller was an Engineer and gave the greatest of details in his book, more then I have ever seen in such a book.

It is worth the purchase if you are interested in the history of north Florida, Steamboats etc. Here is just a taste of his book that concerns our local River Boat Captains).

**Omri J. McDaniel** was from Liberty County, Florida and once a purser on the CITY OF EUFAULA recalled his river pilot, Sam Cameron:

"Sam Cameron was the best river pilot who ever steered a boat from Columbus to Apalachicola. He could run the narrows and the cutoff at full steam. One time he would have the bow of the boat in the limbs on one side and the wheel almost touching the bank on the other side."

"Another time Sam put the boat (next to the bank) and stopped her until the engineer got up more steam. Low steam can beat a pilot to death trying to keep a boat in channel."

Omri J. McDaniel went on, "We would leave Columbus, Ga. early Monday morning and make it to Apalachicola by Wednesday." Fertilizer was the main product downbound and barges loaded with the product often accompanied the CITY OF EUFAULA. "We carried a lot of turpentine and resin up the river, to River Junction. From there it was shipped by rail to Jacksonville, Pensacola and Savannah."

McDaniel recalled the many beekeepers along the river. They would ship honey to Columbus and the steamboats would carry beehives to points along the

Chattahoochee in Alabama and Georgia so that the bees could make honey from the crops in bloom in that area. "Then we would return hundreds of hives to the platforms in the lower reaches of the Apalachicola River. This business was in operation at least as early as 1912.

One **A. E. Root** from Ohio would ship hives by rail to Columbus and then distribute to areas along the Apalachicola, and lower Chipola where tupelo trees were located. The hives were placed on tall timber stands so as not to be disturbed by high water.

McDaniel remembered an incident that reminded one of how painful the honey business could be. "One night (on a steamboat) a hive of bees was torn apart and spread around in the dark. The pilot, Sam Cameron, put the hive together, being stung many times. "He took off his clothes and there were 25 bees in them".

River pilot Will Carpenter told of the time he was a cub pilot on the CITY OF COLUMBUS. His father, C. E. Carpenter, "was pilot on the CITY OF COLUMBUS. It was a highwater time and a rock took a plank right out of the side of her. Down she went. We got on the J. F. C. GRIGGS and the next night she hit a floating sycamore tree. That tree came right up through the hull and into the cabin. Down she went."

Will Carpenter related, "I went on the river when I was 15 as cub or apprentice to my daddy, C. E. Carpenter, who was a pilot. I finished my apprenticeship at 19, but couldn't get my license until I was 21.

"But I served on the old river boats until 1906. I saw about then that the railroads had the business sewed up and that traffic on the river was on the way out, so I got out of the steamboat business." Captain Carpenter served on the NAIAD, QUEEN CITY, W. C. BRADLEY, J. W. HIRES and M. W. KELLY.

"There were no locks or dams below Columbus in those days and the boats had to be very shallow draft vessels to navigate the tricky waters.

"Most of the boats drew about 18 inches loaded light or running empty pulling a barge. In high or medium water, the boats could be loaded down until they drew six or seven feet.

"We carried every kind of merchandise imaginable up and down the river - and we carried passengers and mail too. There were some little towns and settlements on the lower reaches of the Chattahoochee River and on the Apalachicola that had no other link with civilization.

"We toted a lot of cotton and naval stores in those days, and

a lot of drummers calling on the river towns."

Will Carpenter noted that the boats would "burn 60 to 80 cords of lightwood a week. We could make up to 10 miles an hour upstream, and up to 20 going down, depending on the water."

A pilot had to know every foot of the river. "We ran it day and night and we did not have any powerful electric lights either. You just had to know where the channel was. They could wake me up any minute of the night and I could look out and tell you exactly where we were."

Pilots made good money in those days. "Bank clerks were making \$50 a month and I was making a hundred - with room and board. All I had to spend was two bits a week for laundry."

However, Will Carpenter did not get rich on the river. "Didn't save a nickel. I came off the river owing money. Those drummers like to play poker and then you know how young fellows are ..."77

#### **CAPTAIN POLEY MCDANIEL**

The last of the rivermen to survive until the 1980's was Captain Poley McDaniel. He often related his story, and it has been published often.

He received his unusual name from the place where he was born, Poley Ford, a small branch running into the Chipola River south of Wewahitchka.

"My daddy was working for my granddaddy as a logger at Willis Swamp in 1895 when I was born. "Our cabin was at the branch", Poley explained.

Initially, Poley "went to work on the river by my daddy, Captain W. A. McDaniel, when I was 12 years old. That was back in 1907. He was captain, pilot and purser, so I helped him out. My daddy didn't like baseball, and he didn't want me playing ball. So, I started out during school, working Saturdays and Sundays. Those were the busiest days. Then I worked all week during the summer."

Poley started as a cook and cabin boy and his wages were \$10 a month in a time when "the best captains made only \$150 a month ... and most of them made \$100."

In 1907, Poley's first run was "with his father on a small sternwheeler ... (on) the Chipola River from Wewahitchka to Clarksville. (It was) only 26 miles by land but a great deal more on the river. The Chipola is as crooked as a snake."

Apalachicola was a busy place and steamboats

were also sharing the good times in the 1900's, according to Captain McDaniel. "The first year we ran the CHIPOLA after she was built, we paid her cost, \$10,000, and cleared \$3,000 for Mr. John W. Callahan. We traveled loaded. We would have to open up the hatch, use every bit of space. Even the engine room was stacked with 12-pound sacks of flour."

Like other experienced pilots, Captain Poley knew the river system thoroughly. He rated the Apalachicola and Chattahoochee as being treacherous and the Flint as being peaceful. "The Chipola was the hardest to navigate because it is so crooked, I enjoyed it most of all. I studied the river until I knew what was ahead. I have been through the Dead Lakes at night when you could hardly see ahead, but I knew where I was all the time."

Poley related an incident concerning his best friend, Mason Nisbet. "Mace was at the wheel on the steamer, RUTH NO. 2, going through Lee Slough when he hit a log.

The rudder caught on the log, and the force threw Mace right up to the top of the pilot house. He fell back on the floor, knocked out dead as a door nail.

"The Negro striker grabbed the wheel, backed the boat and tooted the boat's whistle, hollering for Capt. Billy Russell. He came, saw Mace and carried him to his room like he was a baby."

McDaniel suggested that Billy Russell and Captain Billy (Will) Fry of Apalachicola were the best mates on the river.

**Poley concluded his remarks. "The old sternwheelers are gone, and all the old captains I knew are dead. But, my, wouldn't I love to get ahold of a wheel again! There's nothing I'd rather do than feel that wheel and that current when it throws water against the rudder. I'd just feel it, hold it and turn the boat loose."**

Poley remembers that one day when he was working as a cook, his dad said, "Poley, don't you want to take the wheel?"

"McDaniel recalled, "there were some colored people fishing and they just laughed when they saw me standing up on my tiptoes to see over the wheel. That was the first time I ever piloted a riverboat.

"The JOHN W. CALLAHAN had a lot of power. When she started off, I used to fall backward against a rail." In recalling river hazards, Poley remembered, "The Chipola is a tricky river. You had to know every tree and every stump, or you couldn't get through. I knew every one of them. "When he was behind the wheel,

he kept on reminding himself that there was little room for mistakes. "Pa had told me that when I had the wheel, everything was in my hands. So, I was always careful. I was always concerned about safety." When the Callahan vessel pulled alongside one of the wharves at Bainbridge or elsewhere, people scrambled to watch.

Poley especially relished an account of how he managed to show up a senior pilot. Serving out of Columbus, as first mate and relief pilot for Captain T. A. "Bose" Marcum, he recalls Captain Marcum telling the other pilot, "Take Poley, go to the pilot house and show him Chattahoochee River." However, the pilot refused to turn loose the wheel all the way down. When the Chipola Cutoff was reached, the pilot began cursing. At Pea's Point, the steamboat was caught in a difficult situation. "The wind was just ablowing and he would go backwards and this way and that. Finally, the striker pilot said, 'Sit down and let Mr. Poley take the wheel. He'll pull us through. I worked hard and got the stern away from the bank. He exclaimed in amazement. From then on he was my buddy."

When Poley was 20 years old, he passed the exams for his Master Pilot license. In company with his father, Captain McDaniel, and his brother in-law, they purchased a small vessel, the MARY and went into business for themselves, mostly on the Chipola and thence to Apalachicola.

The MARY was 52 gross wt., 42 net tons and had been built in 1907 in Geneva, Alabama. She was 100' by 19.3' by 4.2'. She had a crew of eight and a 25 hp engine.

Poley recalled a 1919 experience. "We were having a Persian flood. The W. C. BRADLEY, THREE STATES and a barge were tied up at the Mobile-Girard Railroad Company pier. The watchman had tied a cable around the three, but trash and logs kept piling up and caused such a pressure that it caused the capstan on the BRADLEY to be pulled loose and the boat went careening down the river." Using another boat, Poley raced to The W. C. BRADLEY and tied her up. They went further downstream in the flood waters and secured the barge, having to travel hazardously over overflowed lands covered by stumps. Finally, they were able to get safely back to Columbus with the barge.

"And the girls came down there, too. One day his future wife, Dee Brown of Washington County, saw him. "She sure pretty, you bet she was pretty. After we got married, sometime, I used to let her take the

wheel, but at other times, she helped in the kitchen.”

Danger was part of the job. Poley remembers and instance in the 1920’s when “we were trying to tie up to the dock at Apalachicola Bay.” A waterspout lashed the MARY. “That waterspout came down and was tossing boats all around and then it came across our flat deck. It pulled the lines loose and broke a 4 by 4 timber in three places. It was scary, but nobody was hurt.”

Poley calculated that, “If I had to do it all over again, I guess I’d have to do the same thing. I wanted to play baseball, but I never got to play much.”



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### INDIAN MOUND DATES TO NINTH CENTURY A.D. IN BLOUNTSTOWN FLORIDA

By Tom Wynn

I love finding stories of this nature, the artwork of the Native Americans is amazing, to say the least. Chief John Blount, an esteemed Indian Chieftain during the mid-1800s, played a pivotal role in the history of North Florida, which we call today, Calhoun and Gulf County as well as Franklin County before they were divided into three counties.

The city of Blountstown stands as a testament to his legacy. Blount led a small, yet influential tribe known as the Lolees, and his contributions to General Andrew Jackson's efforts in 1821 earned his people a significant piece of land along the Apalachicola River, which eventually became Calhoun County.

The aid Chief Blount provided to General Jackson included crucial information about Indian settlements across Northwest Florida. As a gesture of gratitude, Blount was granted land for a reservation to accommodate his people.

This reservation, situated in what is now Calhoun County, became a sanctuary for the Lolees. However, the landscape of the reservation drastically changed in 1834 when the US Government bought the land. This acquisition led to the relocation of more than 250 Native Americans from the area, resettling them in Texas.

Nestled just 4 miles away from Blountstown, a significant historical site has captivated the interest of researchers for years an Indian mound. Dating back to the 9th century A.D., this mound has undergone multiple excavations, primarily conducted by scholars from the Case Institute of Technology and Case Institute of Technology Western Reserve University of Ohio. These excavations unveiled a rich tapestry of ceremonial artifacts and structural remnants.

(Note: CWO3 Tom Semmes of Wewa and others when they were boys found many Indian artifacts and thus, they have donated several to the Wewahitchka Library for viewing by the public),

The findings from these excavations unveiled the presence of ceremonial clay walls, marking the boundaries of a grand ceremonial plaza. A network of sturdy posts encircled the edges of this plaza, showing the significance of this space in ancient rituals and gatherings. Furthermore, remnants of house wall foundation trenches and clay platform floors shed light on the lifestyle and architectural practices of the inhabitants who once thrived upon this land. The Indian mound stands as a silent testament to the rich cultural heritage and historical significance of the indigenous people who inhabited the area centuries ago. It serves as a window into their intricate ceremonial practices, community structures, and architectural prowess. These findings have supplied invaluable insights into the lives and customs of those who walked the lands long before the city of Blountstown bore its name. Historians continue to delve deeper into the mysteries held by this ancient mound, it still is a symbol of reverence and admiration for the indigenous tribes that called this region home. The resilience, wisdom, and cultural richness of these community’s echo through the layers of history embedded within this sacred site.

Chief John Blount's legacy endures not only through the city that bears his name but also through the remnants of history unearthed from the grounds near Blountstown. As visitors and scholars explore the Indian mound's secrets, they pay homage to the heritage and legacy of Chief John Blount and his tribe, ensuring that their stories and contributions are honored and remembered for generations to come. **TW**



## A NEW WOMEN CLOTHING STORE OPENS IN WEWA

by Tom Wynn

A new Apparel Store opens up in the former Wewahitchka State Bank building. A fresh look for downtown Wewahitchka. Located at the traffic light. It looks like a fun place to shop for the Ladies. Thanks for dressing up downtown Wewahitchka.

**PEARL APPAREL.**



## TURPENTINE TOOLS OF YESTERYEAR



### A Rare find, a Turpentine tray made of Clay

This part of North Florida was home to some of the largest Turpentine Companies back in the day. The Lister family comes to mind when I think of this very special product of pine trees in the old south.



### Turpentine tray made from Tin

This is a tin style what we were use to seeing when we were boys. BELOW: A hard working man putting the trays just under the cut in the bark, it doesn't hurt the tree. Turpentine is used in many products and was used to seal large ships during WW1 and is used in medical treatments as well. TW

## Better Baking Mix

**Makes:9 Servings**

From biscuits to pizza dough, this baking mix makes can be used for many recipes.

### Ingredients

4 cups all-purpose flour; 4 cups quick rolled oats (or whole wheat flour); 1 1/3 cups non-fat dry milk

4 teaspoons baking powder; 1 teaspoon salt; Directions

1. In a large mixing bowl, stir all ingredients until well mixed. 2. Store in a closed, covered can or rigid plastic container, or sealed heavy plastic bag. 3. Label and date the container. Use within 6 months. 4. Stir lightly before use in recipes.

**Notes:** To use old fashioned oats, whirl the oats in a blender about 30 seconds to make smaller flakes.

Better Baking Mix used in the following recipes:

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**Source:** Washington State University Extension.

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## ETYMOLOGY OF THE NAME “PALMER”

The Palmer surname has been found to date to the 1200’s and is considered to be English, of Norman origin. Palmer is a deviation of the old French ‘paumer’ and refers to those who have made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

## ETYMOLOGY OF THE NAME “JESSICA”

Based on the Biblical name Jesca, from the Hebrew Yiskah meaning, “God Beholds”. Genesis 11:29 TW



**MS. PAM PALMER** a member of the local Beekeeper’s Association teaches beekeeping to locals interested in Beekeeping as a hobby at the Wewa Library in mid November. Several locals came to learn how to take care of their bees and the benefits of beekeeping as an individual and as a family. TW



Twice a month once in Wewa and once in Port St. Joe. Free Food. Last month there was over 100 cars came for free food, at the Wewa Library. Person to Contact:

**Amy Rogers, Program Coordinator**  
[gcucdci@fairpoint.net](mailto:gcucdci@fairpoint.net)  
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The Wewa News is a locally owned and operated local 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 than ever before. Thank you to those that support our efforts.

**Notice:** The Wewa News operates in the Private. Freedom of speech and of the Press are fundamental to our effort of expression, as well as God given rights as men and women on the land called Florida. The publishing day is the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month, unless notified otherwise.

## Up Coming Events and Other: Mark Your Calendars

**The Local Bee Association** meets at 6pm in the Gulf County Extension Agents meeting room on the first Tuesday of each month at 6pm, but is subject to change, we are growing fast.

**The Friends of the Wewa Library's** meet at the Wewa Library on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month, 9:30 AM. Come early and meet and greet with us in the conference room.

**Wewahitchka Historical Society** meets every month on the Third Thursday at 6pm at the Presbyterian Church in Hwy 71.

**City Hall Meetings:** The City meetings are held on the last Thursday of each month sharply at 6PM CT, unless posted otherwise.

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**Check out our new website: myWEWA.org**

Created for you by Aaron Wynn