

# OKEFENOKEE HERITAGE CENTER NEWSLETTER

## Waycross Sesquicentennial & Ware County Bicentennial Remembering Dear Old Waresboro

Everyone comes from somewhere. We came from Waresboro. Whether you hail from Manor, Bickley, Millwood, Telemore or even that place where the ways cross, Waresboro is your ancestral home. Back when nary a car horn, train whistle, or airplane broke the piney silence from the Atlantic Ocean to Troupville, there was Waresboro, peopled by honest folk who came to make fresh beginnings on open land.

They came early, already here in 1824 when Ware County was carved out of Appling. And they set later generations a good example of hard work and vigilance, farming with a hoe in one hand and a musket in the other, always on the lookout for marauding Indians. Waresboro was located in a part of the Tallasee strip. This was Indian land, a vantage ground between the Indians and white settlers to the north, both sides contending for their rights. Later a penalty was meted out to the Indians for helping the British in the War of 1812 and the Indians were forced to relinquish their claims to the land and it was given to white settlers.

Many of these early settlers reached this area on a confluence of pioneer and Indian trails that ran through or near Waresboro. In an irony of history, it appears that if Waycross was where the rails crossed, then Waresboro was where the coaches crossed, stagecoaches that is.

There was the early Barnard Trail, the old Columbus Road, then the Old Train Road, that passed from Thomas to Camden counties, passing through Ware at Waresboro, later to traverse the Waycross area on what we now know as Gilmore Street. The Kennard Trail was another, leading from Chattahoochee County in west Georgia through Ware to St. Mary's.

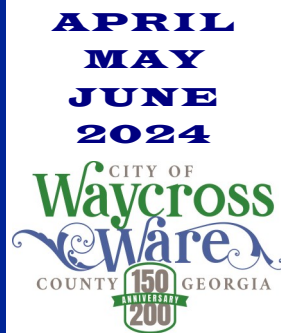
North to south, there was the Blackshear Road, the longest stagecoach route in Georgia at the time, stretching through the vast forests from Milledgeville to St. Mary's.

It was at Waresboro, known as Waresborough in those days, That Peter Bedford set up his tavern and waystation, and around this station a town began to grow.

And so it seems that transportation played a key role in the growth of both Waycross and Waresboro. As local historian Robert Hurst has explained in his book, "This Magic Wilderness," Where transportation goes, civilization follows."

The little hamlet continued to grow as not just "frontier speculators" but professional men arrived. The first newspaper in Ware County, the "Wiregrass Watchman" was begun in Waresboro, by a Col. Carey W. Styles, shortly before the Civil war.

"Affairs of the county were handled with pride in the growing town of wooden streets, stores of quality and people. It's name on maps, though still separated from other towns by wide areas, was receiving wide acclaim as a southeastern frontier settlement of note," writes Hurst. (cont. on page 3) Painting by: Roy Moore



### OHC Calendar

APR	OHC Photography Guild	Gallery
2 & 16	Pickin' in the Pines	6PM
3-	OHC Board of Directors	12PM
4-	OHC Learning Series ~ Garden	10:30AM & 6PM
9-	OHC Photography Guild	6:30PM
11-	OHC Writer's Guild	6PM
13-	Red Hill Cemetery Clean Up	9am-2pm
20-	Okefenokee Color Run	8AM
23-	OHC Art Guild	5:30PM
26-	OHC History Guild	6PM
28-	OHC Photography Art Recept.	3-5PM
MAY	Okefenokee Folk Art Exhibit	Gallery
1-	OHC Board of Directors	12PM
2-	OHC Learning Series ~ Old 9	10:30AM & 6PM
7&21	Pickin' in the Pines	6PM
11-	Red Hill Cemetery Clean-up	9AM-2PM
12-	Mother's Day	
14-	Clover Heritage Club	4:30PM
14-	OHC Photography Guild	6:30PM
16-	Business After Hours @OHC	5PM
21-	OHC Black Heritage Com.	6PM
24-	OHC History Guild	6PM
25-	Okefenokee Folk Festival/Sue Clark Day/Bicentennial Event	10AM – 4PM
28-	OHC Art Guild	5:30PM
JUNE	Local Artist in the OHC	Gallery
4&18	Pickin' in the Pines	6PM
5-	OHC Board Meeting	12PM
6-	OHC Learning Series ~ Ranew	10:30AM & 6PM
8-	Red Hill Cemetery Clean-up	9am-2pm
11-	OHC Photography Guild	6:30PM
25-	OHC Art Guild	5:30PM
28-	OHC History Guild	6PM

**NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR:**

The first quarter of 2024 was quite busy here at OHC. In January, the year got started with new presentations for our OHC Guilds. In February Black History Month was recognized at OHC with an art exhibition, presentation on the Red Hill Cemetery and the Okefenokee Opry with the Danny Dawson Band. Sadly, we honored the passing of SGT Kennedy Sanders. In March we announced the plans for our OHC Educational Garden highlighting our heritage and native plants and our pollinators. We also kicked off our monthly OHC Learning Series. Check out the very interesting and informative upcoming presentations. April 20th will be our 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Okefenokee Color Run and May 25<sup>th</sup> will be our Inaugural Okefenokee Folk Festival / Sue Clark Day. It's a Ware County Bicentennial and Waycross Sesquicentennial event you don't want to miss! We have been working on our Okefenokee Chief, cleaning, and painting the baggage car. Getting it ready to become an additional exhibit. Special thanks to CSX and GATX for helping to fund the renovations. The Okefenokee Heritage Center, we're on the right track!



*Carla Garrett Cornett, Executive Director*



**OKEFENOKE HERITAGE CENTER  
SUMMER ART CAMP ~ 2024**



**Wk 1: July 8-12    Wk 2: July 15-19**  
**FOR AGES 5 - 15    MON - FRI 9AM - 12PM**  
**\$75 FOR NON- OHC MEMBERS OR \$65 FOR OHC MEMBERS.**  
**FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL: 912-285-4260**  
**1460 N. AUGUSTA AVE.    WAYCROSS, GA 31503**  
**SEATING IS LIMITED SO SIGN UP TODAY!!**

**CHECK OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING!**



**OKEFENOKE HERITAGE CENTER PRESENTS**

**OKEFENOKE COLOR RUN 2024**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2024**

**5K RUN AT 8 AM      1 MILE RUN & WALK AT 9 A.M.**

Contact [okeheritage@gmail.com](mailto:okeheritage@gmail.com) for registration or Sponsorship information (912) 285-4260



**Inaugural OKEFENOKE FOLK FESTIVAL**  
**~ Sue Clark Day ~**  
**Saturday, May 25th ~ 10am - 4pm**  
**Okefenokee Heritage Center**  
**1460 N. Augusta Ave. ~ Waycross, GA**  
**For more information call: 912-285-4260**  
**Or email: [okeheritage@gmail.com](mailto:okeheritage@gmail.com)**

## Special Events:



**Congratulations to the WINNERS of the 2024 Steve Bean Youth Art Exhibition!!**



**Special thanks to the Black Heritage Historic Church Exhibit Artists for a wonderful art exhibit.**



The Danny Dawson Band put on an amazing show for our Okefenokee Opry in February. A good time was had by all.

**way green INC**  
www.waygreenc.org

**Vendors Apply Now**

**WAYGREEN'S LOCAL FARE MARKET**

First market is May 4th  
Okefenokee Heritage Center  
1460 N Augusta Ave  
Waycross, GA

**Special Thanks to:**

**Memorial Satilla Health**

**Georgia COUNCIL for the Arts**

**ART WORKS.**

**National Endowment for the Arts**  
arts.gov

(continued from page 1)

Pride in this young community suffered a blow when a movement began shortly after the Civil War to move the county seat from Waresboro seven miles east to Waycross, that young whipper-snapper of a community building closer to the rail junction. And here the plot thickens.

Through the dim recesses of time, we depend on the research of historians such as Hurst and Joe Ballentine. It seems that controversy began to brew that Waycross, as the up-and-coming transportation center, should be the county seat. Fans of Waresboro argued the element of time, that Waresboro had always been the county seat and should remain so.

Arguments became heated between Waresboro and Waycross. In May, 1872, an election was held and Waycross won, becoming the new county seat of Ware County.

The need soon arose for a courthouse, but Waresboro wasn't in the mood to lease or move theirs.

Now about this original Waresboro courthouse, and the history thereof, much has been speculated. Its recorded that it was a "large one-story log building with two small side rooms used for offices." It had been criticized because of a certain jury's having to retire to the woods to deliberate in the company of the bailiff, there being no room for such in the log structure.

If they couldn't use Waresboro's courthouse, they would build one of their own. Dr. Daniel Lott built a handsome two-story wooden courthouse reportedly on the site of the present Ware County Courthouse. (Mrs. J.L. Walker in her history also credits Dr. B.F Williams and William Bailey.)

It was to this building that fire was set on the evening of Oct. 12, 1874, destroying practically all the records pertaining to the early settlers of Ware County. By sunlight the next morning, petitions were already being circulated to return the county seat back to Waresboro, which, of course, was still in possession of its one-story courthouse.

Well, folks knew a solution for that. They would bring the courthouse to Waycross. And that's what they apparently did. In the middle of the night. Legend and Mrs. Walker have it that they dismantled the structure and loaded it on flatcars; others say on wagons. It must have been quite a sight, but history and lore tell us it was done.

As Hurst records, in 1887 a red-brick courthouse was dedicated in Waycross over the "dead-but-not-forgotten" ashes of the earlier structure. This brick "castle" the, became the third courthouse in Ware County, succeeding the Waresboro log affair and Dr. Lott's two-story building.

Although this marked the end of Waresboro as a county seat, it was far from the end of Waresboro. Good families continued to raise good citizens and the town continues to serve its residents, but the trickle of folks eastward to newer Waycross had begun. From time to time since then animosity between Waycross and Ware County has bubbled up, quieted down, only to bubble up again. As a young lad growing up in the county, but close to the city limits, I have always wondered if our bad feeling began with this bad start.

Those looking for reasons and beginnings of the animosity that has historically existed between citizens in the city of Waycross and the county that surrounds it need look no further than this incident from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We started off on a bad foot and we've been squabbling ever since. A noble gesture toward reconciliation was made in 1936, and that's a story for next time.

**By, Larry Purdom**

# Okefenokee Heritage Center

1460 N. Augusta Avenue  
Waycross, GA 31503  
912-285-4260

[www.okefenokeeheritagecenter.com](http://www.okefenokeeheritagecenter.com)

## OHC Mission Statement:

The Okefenokee Heritage Center is a cultural art center and local history museum for all people, which seeks to promote an appreciation of the arts and an increased understanding of history and development of the Okefenokee region through its cultural and educational programs, collections, and exhibitions.

*Proudly serving Atkinson, Bacon, Brantley, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Pierce & Ware.*



## **OHC Board of Trustees 23/24**

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Danny Barnes, Vice Chair

Stephen Winge, Vice Chair

Judy Kurrasch, Treasurer

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\* Denotes Life Member

### Ex Officio Members:

Dr. Brandon Carter, RESA

Greg Smith, City of Waycross

Donna Cox, Waycross Service League

### Staff:

Carla Garrett Cornett, Executive Director

Sherian Barnes, Office Manager

A special thanks to ALL of our  
**OHC Members!!**  
Thanks to YOU....  
“We’re on the Right Track”!

## Invite a friend to join the Okefenokee Heritage Center

Individual	\$36
Family	\$60
Heritage Club	\$100
Sue Clark Society	\$200
Small Business	\$150
Business Sponsor	\$500
Corporate Sponsor	\$1,000
Corporate Partners	\$5,000

\* Join one of our many Guilds

**All donations are tax deductible**

## **RENT OUR SPACE**

You can rent the facilities at the Okefenokee Heritage Center for parties, reunions, etc.

Community Room	\$200
Community/Kitchen	\$250
Depot	\$300
The Venue	\$250
Warehouse/ Depot	\$400
Grounds	\$200

(Tables & Chairs available for rent)  
For more information call:  
912-285-4260

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For video interviews  
[okeheritage@gmail.com](mailto:okeheritage@gmail.com)

