

Callahan's main street, Dixie Avenue, is shown before the advent of power and telephone poles. This turn-of-the-century glimpse between Mickler and Boothe Streets was for years the center of trade in the community. Here was the Andres Restaurant, the newspaper, a blacksmith and livery, Picketts General Store, doctors offices, drugstore, and the Boothe House.

CALLAHAN



n an old journal, carefully preserved among the historical files of Callahan Baptist Church, are written the records of Sharon Baptist Church which first met on May 25, 1841. In 1941, a 100th anniversary church paper read, "Just 20 years after Spain ceded

Florida to the United States, a small group met....at Sharon, Nassau County, East Florida and constituted the church. Florida was then just a territory.

Sharon Baptist charter members, believed to have first met in a log cabin, included John Higginbotham, John Jones, Mary Ann Jones, Elizabeth Jones, Elizabeth Crozier, Nancy Hagans, Hester Lawther, Henry F. Parmeter, Charity Tanner, Martha Bleach, Elenor Higginbotham, Salma Willis, and Anna Tyner. Mysteriously, no further references to Sharon have been uncovered, not until the next decade when construction of the Florida Railroad brought signs of development and a new name for the settlement.

By 1854, the firm of McDowell and Callahan had been commissioned by the Florida Railroad for construction of bridges and roadbed on the pioneering line. Daniel Callahan had been living at Fernandina in

1854 and 1855, preparing for the massive project.

Construction began and, in time, the railroad completed from three miles east of Harts Road (Yulee), to a point four miles west of the settlement of old Sharon, by November of 1856. The more difficult and time consuming bridge construction at the Amelia River and the many streams in the low lands of the coastal area would go on for some time. Construction through Sharon was finished in the fall of 1856 with Daniel Callahan there as an active participant in the construction of the railroad.

More than a hundred years later, a lifelong resident of western Nassau County, Mamie Cross Jones, related a story from her youth. She recalled that when she was young an elderly Julian Jones told her the story of the construction of the railroad, and of an old Irish gentleman who was a construction gang leader by the name of Daniel Callahan. Julian Jones related that Callahan moved on down the line after construction was complete near the settlement, but made a favorable impression on the inhabitants of the area. Soon all "the natives around got to sayin', let's all go to Callahan."

Thus we have the first recorded recollection of the community as Callahan. It is hard to say whether Callahan's behavior actually won him the honor of having this spot along the new railroad named for him or if it wasn't becoming tradition to name railroad towns after those associated with its construction, such as Yulee and Bronson. The name, however, caught on and by 1858 U.S. Postal Records show the establishment of the first post office at Callahan, Florida - Mr. Dowling becoming the first postmaster.

Daniel Callahan remained in Nassau County and possibly the local community to build and, it appears, operate a mill in the vicinity of the original depot site

in Callahan, south of the tracks. Eventually he moved on, probably constructing railroads in other areas. By 1871, his partner, William McDowell, by this time a resident of Baltimore, appointed Callahan as his "true and lawful Attorney," citing Callahan's residence as Savannah, Georgia. The two partners, by that time, were still attempting to secure financial settlement with the bankrupt Florida Railroad Company. About that time the partnership of Callahan and McDowell would sell 501.52 acres Nathaniel S. Upchurch of Callahan, exact location of the property unknown.

The 1856 arrival of the railroad system through this interior settlement brought with it access to the outside

Pictured is Henry Clay Pickett and his family at their home south of Callahan. From left to right (rear) were Will Brandies, Elworth, and Lewis Pickett. From left center is Memie Pickett, Desdemona Pickett, Henry Clay Pickett, Emily Denora Braddock Pickett, Grace Pickett, Lena Pickett, and John Pickett. In front is Ira Brandies, Martha Pickett, and Willie Pickett. Henry Clay Pickett was the son of John S. Pickett (who with several of his sons, including Henry, served in the Civil War), and grandson of Seymour and Rebecca Pickett who first came to Florida about 1800. Seymour was issued a Spanish land grant in 1803 on land south of what became Callahan, and later, after 1821, built and lived there at Hodquins, the Pickett plantation. The site was on what today is called Pickett Road, one mile south of Callahan. Seymour and his wife were possibly the first white settlers of the Callahan area.

Jean Hodges Mizell Collection



world previously available only to settlements along the rivers. Callahan and all that wished to settle along the new tracks, had available to them the markets of Fernandina and beyond. With this opportunity came new settlers and fairly rapid development.

Early religious history of Callahan is sketchy, with the exception of the Baptist and Methodist congregations. The Town of Callahan was cited in *Ripley's Believe It Or Not* as having a tiny parish of the Catholic Church, perhaps the smallest known. Though a Catholic Church was not established in west Nassau County until the 1950's, a small group of Catholics did reside in Callahan and the O'Donald family is believed the source of the Ripley notation. Within the O'Donald Cemetery located just north of Callahan on the present US 301, "there was a tiny chapel said to seat around six persons," according to Mrs. T.B. Wells' "History of Town of Callahan." She stated the "it was burned along with the undergrowth in the cemetery" (many years ago). The markers were moved to Jones Cemetery in the early 1960's, and attest to the existence of these early pioneers to the area.

"Hannah O'Donald died, Sept. 20, 1861"

John E. O'Donald died July 24, 1883"

Anna O'Donald, died July 15, 1880"

Hannah and John were young when they died, 22 and 16 years; Anna was 80 years of age. This certainly says that not all the O'Donald's are buried in Callahan, but the family of Catholics certainly existed here in Callahan or Sharon's early years.

During this early development, Callahan prospered, not only because of the railroad, but also because of the added advantage of traffic along the Kings Highway which had been there some 90 years. This road, sometimes called the 'Georgia Post Road,' carried a great deal of the land traffic from Peninsular Florida to the Savannah and Charleston areas. The heavily traveled route, combined with the railroad, spurred migration and made Callahan sort of a hub, or economic center for the many outlying communities which sprang up. Along the old highway, and surely here in this settlement, there were traveler's carriage houses, inns, or private homes that took in travelers. There were no newspapers closer than Fernandina that would have given us a ledger of 1850's Callahan. Just occasional correspondences to Fernandina papers telling of any important happening.

The community was in its infancy when growth of any kind was interrupted by the War Between the

States, which wrecked the Florida Railroad along much of its route. Fernandina was captured in March of 1862, and the remainder of coastal Florida was taken or blockaded shortly thereafter. Near all inhabitants along the coast abandoned their farms and plantations and escaped to the safety of the interior. In this respect, Callahan was fortunate; she gained new residents and was fairly well protected from Union aggression. Rarely did the Yanks let themselves become vulnerable to the regular Confederate forces or locals, many of whom had become excellent snipers.

But some penetrations were made into the pine forests by Yankee troops, as related by Union records of 1862. A detachment of cavalry was sent north from Trout Creek to Callahan where they "captured and destroyed two cars loaded with railroad iron (and) destroyed the telegraph office fixtures and apparatus. Some 20 horses and mules were taken; some 200 small arms of different kinds, about 2000 cartridges, and several large jars of powder. At the same time "they also arrested two men, Jos. Hagans and Washington Broward, burned the Wingate house, and drove off a number of cattle." Records tell of two other incidences in this area during the war. One took place in late July of 1862 when the Federals announced that they captured a locomotive and seven cars (four box and three platform) near Callahan.

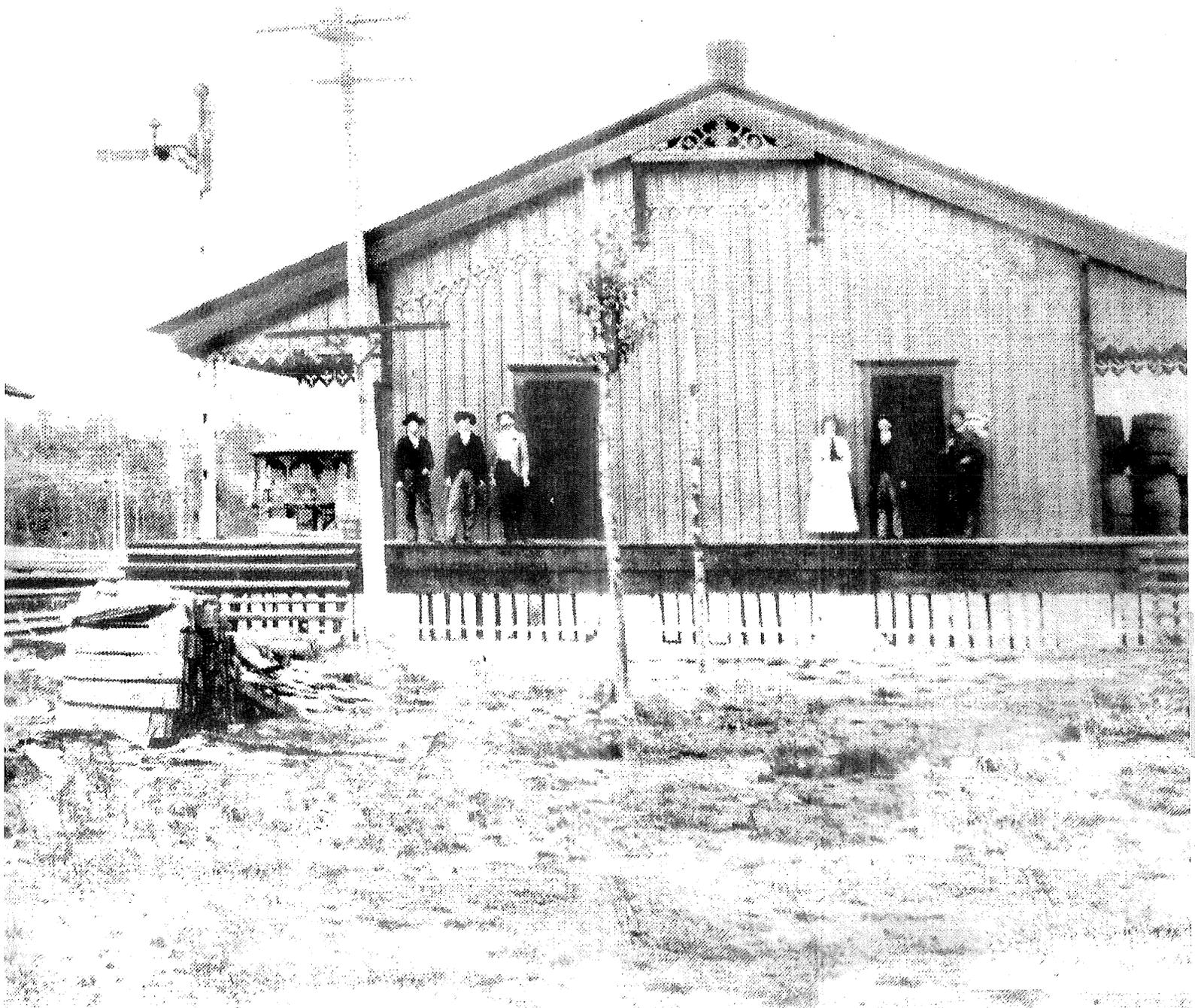
In January of 1865, nearing the end of the war, there is a lengthy account of a Naval officer and his men who sailed up the Nassau River towards a landing near Callahan. Their orders were to proceed to Callahan and procure the tax records and information from the County Clerk. It was during this period that the County Seat had been moved to Kings Ridge, 5 miles north of Callahan, to provide protection from Union forces in Fernandina. However, this invasion of the County's property was successful.

The party of men arrived at Holmes Mill on the river on the 12th. On the 13th they anchored off of Gassawuay Creek. From here they went ashore and into the interior. They reached "the home of Mr. Sheffield, having crossed the railroad track, and at 3:00 p.m..... started on our route....directly down the Florida Railroad. Crossed the Bridge over Boggy River at 4:30 and stopped for the night to close in. At 6:30 again commenced our journey and at 8:00 reached the town of Callahan. Reached our destination (Mr. Higginbotham is County Clerk of Nassau County) at 9:30 and made him a prisoner with his official books

The community of Callahan was centered around this late 1880 railroad complex, adjacent to Railroad (Dixie) Avenue. The Henry Plant System freight building on the right was believed built in the 1880's days of the Savannah, Florida & Western Railway Company. This building was not removed from active service by Seaboard Coastline until 1983, then being relocated for use as a museum and library.



Seen beyond the ramp to the left of the freight depot is the water tower. The concrete footings for the tower are still located where they supported the tower years ago. Before the tank was roofed, "kids from all around would use it as the community swimming hole" recalled a Seaboard employee, T.L. Butler. The passenger building to the left was jointly used by the north-south and the east-west rail lines. It burned something after 1911.



and papers, and started on our return. Passed through Callahan at 11:30 P.M., the bridge at 2:00 and at 4:00 of the 14th instance arrived at Mr. Sheffields.

Recovery from the war years in Callahan could be likened to that of many young Southern interior towns - slow and painful. The war had nearly destroyed her new livelihood in the railroad. The Kings Road remained, but the war had cut the travel down to a trickle.

Like everywhere up and down the rails, and throughout the South, Callahan would rebuild what damage it suffered, and life went on. One of the first signs of survival was the formation of a Masonic Lodge, one of the first in Florida. The fraternal order did much to stabilize the lives of these pioneer men and women. Mrs.

 T. B. Wells' "History of the Town of Callahan" told of the hall being located down on Dixie Avenue, lighted with homemade tallow candles until 1889 and heated by fireplace with wood cut and brought by members. The old building burned sometime in those early years, forcing the lodge to relocated to several other sites.

Rail reconstruction was completed and by 1872, the wood-burning steam locomotives were marked with the letters AG&WIT, the Atlantic, Gulf & West India Transit, and became known as the Transit Road. Lumber mills that closed or reduced operations during the war were revived and again operated at full capacity.

Local crops being grown at this period were rice, corn, cotton, cane and other crops to suit their immediate needs and two waterpower grist mills thrived rather nicely on Alligator Creek. Both locations, in 1975, showed vague remains of what once was. From the size of the embankments, which once held back the water, it appears that both mills were of fairly substantial size. Little is known of them except

that one was operated by the O'Donald family and the other by A.W. Mahoney. The O'Donald site is believed to be at the original crossing of Kings Road and the site of the 1778 Revolutionary Battle of Alligator Bridge. . There was a rice mill, the Newcombe mill, that was located west of Callahan near the crossing of First Street and the rails of the SF&W (Savannah, Florida & Western Railroad), a link between Waycross and Jacksonville.

The 1880 construction of the SF&W sparked an increase in the milling interests around Callahan. By 1884, the mills of B.G. Dyal and John Grantham were known to be the largest in production in the area. On Wells Corner, the present day intersection of US 301 and Florida 200, there was a lumber mill owned by

Tom Wells. He also operated a blacksmith shop and a separate shop where he carried on his occupation as a wheelwright. Wells built many of the seven-foot wheels and carts, appropriately named logging carts, used in dragging logs from the forest to the mills.

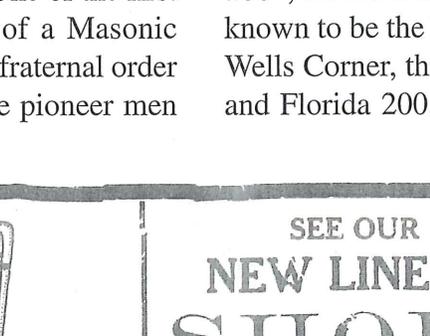
In 1871, a *Florida Gazetteer* noted two Callahan stores, one operated

by John O'Donald and the other by J.H. McGinnis. This was a conservative number as numerous sources on milling and other activities during that postwar period indicate a thriving little community.

Fernandina's *Florida Mirror* carried the following news report of Callahan, dated December 21, 1878: "Our lands are undeniably good. Very good crops of cotton, cane, potatoes, etc., are made annually. Another important fact is they can be purchased cheap.

"We have no 'lovely lakes' to wax poetical over, but one thing is certain - we are not so far out of the world. We get mail twice a day; are in speaking distance of Jacksonville and Fernandina (if we had a telephone) and our election results are known all over the country as soon as the inspectors learn them."

A letter written to the editor of the *Mirror* in



SEE OUR
NEW LINE OF
SHOES
Just Received

CALL AND SEE THEM

THEY'LL PLEASE

S. J. Baldwin
Callahan - - - Florida

November of 1885 not only reinforces the opinion that Callahan was progressive, but also mentions the first known newspaper printed there. "The arrival and departure of sixteen or more trains with all the attendant exchange of passengers, baggage and freight, makes a pretty lively daily scene. Its dozens of store keepers look happy and contented. Callahan has a newly-elected mayor and council. The new hotel building is roomy and attractive and would be a credit to any town. The (*Florida*) *Record* makes things interesting hereabouts. Just think of the less fortunate country editors! You can readily understand why he writes with so much snap."

Over the years since the *Florida Record*, the newspaper mentioned above, several newspapers have come and gone. That early *Record* was edited and published by O.J. Farmer and information about it, as well as copies of it, are near nonexistent. The *Nassau County Leader*, which was established in 1912 by Cricket Prewitt, operated for a few years before moving its offices to Fernandina. It was the 1931 establishment of the *Callahan News*, by Alex McQueen of Charlton County, which has survived up to the present. For more than 40 years, the publication continued under the ownership of Lloyd Herrin as the *Callahan News* and *Nassau County Record*. Mr. Herrin purchased the paper from McQueen within the same year it was established. It continues in 1999 as the *Nassau County Record*.

As news publications found stable growth in the late 1800's, so did other commercial interests in Callahan. Several hotels were doing a thriving business along Railroad Avenue. The firm of Boothe and Boothe operated the Boothe House at the south corner of Railroad Avenue and the street that also bore the Boothe name. Many of the social events of this era were held within the walls of this grand old house. Another of Callahan's fine hostelries was that of John

O'Donald, which was believed to have later been operated as the Sikes Hotel at Railroad Avenue and Mickler Street. Both of these buildings burned on different occasions following the turn into the 20th century.

The Central Hotel was advertised in the *Florida Record* in 1886 as being opposite the railroad depot. This hotel is also supposed to be the establishment that took the name of the Sikes Hotel in later years. At least five stores of general merchandise could be found along the main streets of Callahan through the 1870's and 1880's, those of R. Coy, S.D. Jones, W. A. Mahoney, O'Donald & Sons, and Upchurch & Son.

The main street of the day was Railroad Avenue.

A restaurant was operated by Claude Buford and a liquor establishment by Daniel Higginbotham. In the block between Mickler and Boothe Streets was the office and drugstore of Dr. G.W. Smith. Within the same block was the concentration of commercial establishments. For some twenty years, names such as Upchurch, Higginbotham, Jones, O'Donald and Mickler dominated the business life of Callahan.

Another of the lumber mills was near the old Fernandina Highway (which is known today as Musselwhite Road) between Mills and Boggy Swamps. It took timber from the holdings of the

Higginbotham family.

Sometime prior to 1895, a brickyard was started in the area east of US 301 on the south side of the track. This yard was operated by S.I. Baldwin and later, adjacent to it, O.O. Mickler had a similar operation. Both produced many thousands of brick, of which homes in Jacksonville, Callahan and surrounding communities were built. Some of these dwellings still stand in Callahan, such as the Brandies home, which today is the Callahan Funeral Home, the H.H. Jones home, and those of L.G. Blount and the Page family. Much of the construction of homes and buildings in



the Callahan area was supervised by W.W. Cushing, including the old Callahan Methodist Church.

Most of the masonry work in the structures reflects the expertise of William "Sonny" Morgan, who later passed the art on to his son, Elmer, who in time passed it on to his son, Major Elmer Morgan. All are gone now but their life's work leaves a legacy for all to see. Sonny built the Baldwin home shown on page 220, the Brandies home on page 217, and the Conner Building on page 234.

A spur line was built off the main rail line just east of U.S. 301 where railroad cars could load, and here, at the crack of dawn, one could hear the wail of the brickyard whistle, assuring its owners that all of the help would arrive on time. Mr. Ernest Cushing, son of the earlier contractor, remembers the tram road running from behind his present home on Lem Turner, into the brickyard area with lumber for the kilns. He recalled how, after tourist travel from the north began to flow through Callahan, people would often stop to report huge fires which appeared to be blazing out of control just off the highway. Little did they realize the

importance of these "reflections" of progress billowing from the kilns of the brickyards.

In later years, another brickyard emerged between the present site of West Nassau High School and the north-south railroad. Modern kilns were built but never perfected....the mill lasted but a few years before shutting down operation.

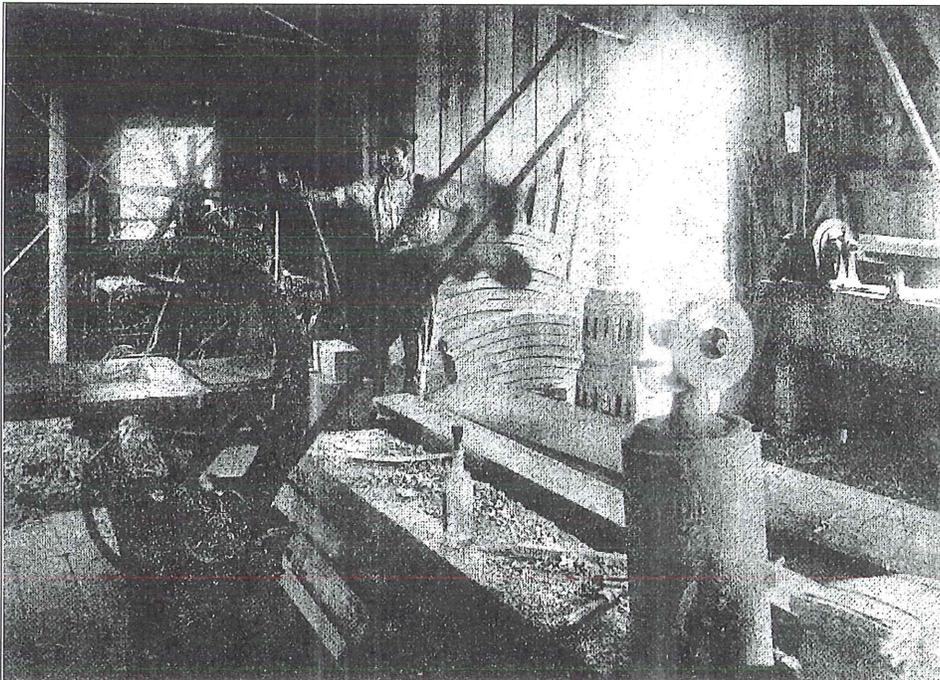
Near the turn of the century, a pencil factory opened east of Wells corner and a few years later the Coca-Cola Company opened a bottling plant on Mickler Street between Railroad and Green Streets. Many of the elderly residents who were interviewed recall a lake created by the Baldwin and Mickler brick operations. Large amounts of clay were taken from the ground southeast of the yards, leaving a lake which was ideal for children of the area to take their after-school or Saturday morning dips. This lake became known as the "ole clay hole." It was rivaled by the man-made lake known as "Lake Galilee" on the west side of Callahan near the Savannah, Florida & Western Railroad tracks. This creation was the result of the construction crew's efforts to provide an elevated roadbed for the railroad in 1880's.

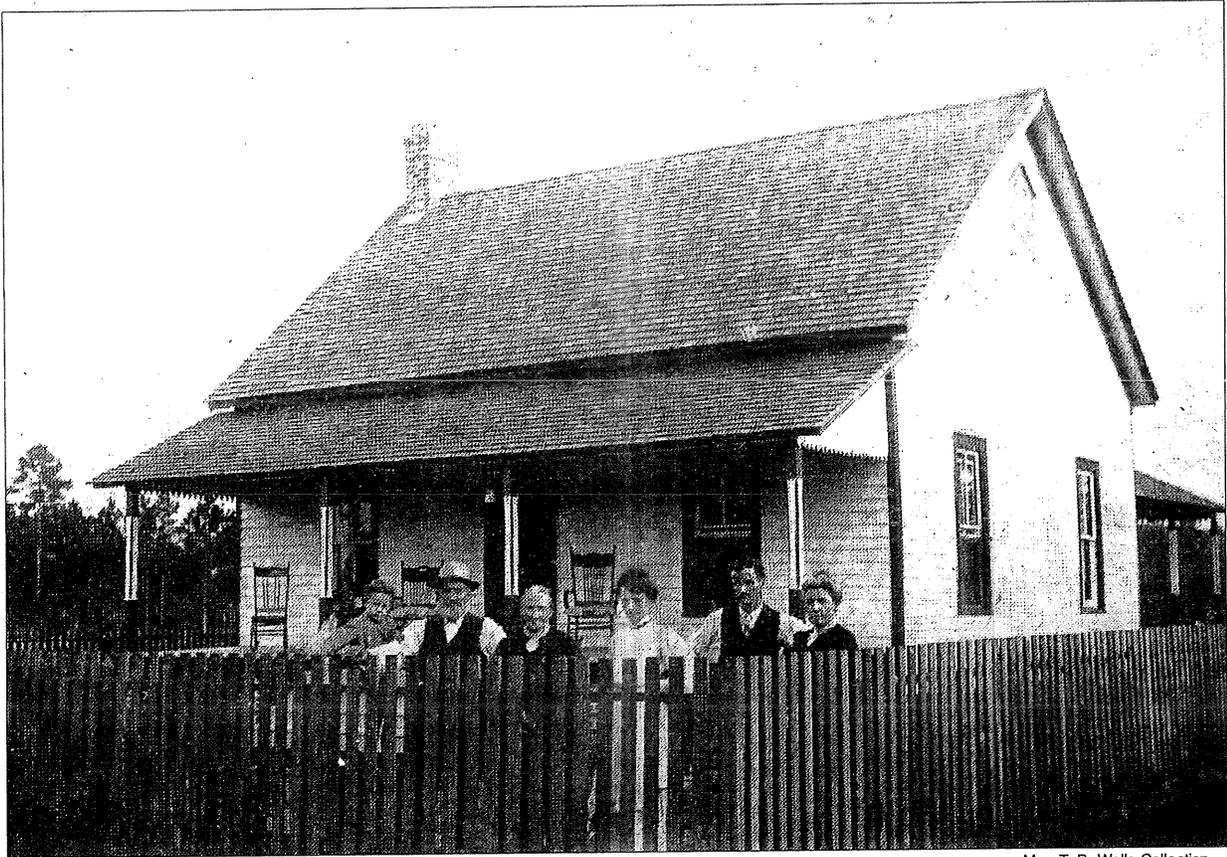
Schools near the turn into the 20th century were somewhat as they were shortly after the end of the Civil War. In the 1870's, the county had established a county school system that enforced black and white schools already existing at Callahan. It reverted financial responsibilities and teacher certification requirements to the county level. The white school was housed in a two story wood frame building and the black school in two single-story buildings more typical of the majority of rural schools throughout the county. Both schools are pictured on page 231.

Turning into the 20th century, development ebbed and businesses were

Before the turn into the 20th century when the timber business was at its peak, there was a need for the wheelwright. In Callahan it was ~~Dave~~ Wells who operated a saw mill, blacksmith shop, and wood shop where he skillfully produced the 7 foot wheels and carts used to haul timber out of the woods. His shops and mill were located on the northeast corner of today's U.S.1 and A1A, adjacent to his home pictured to the right..

Mrs. T. B. Wells Collection

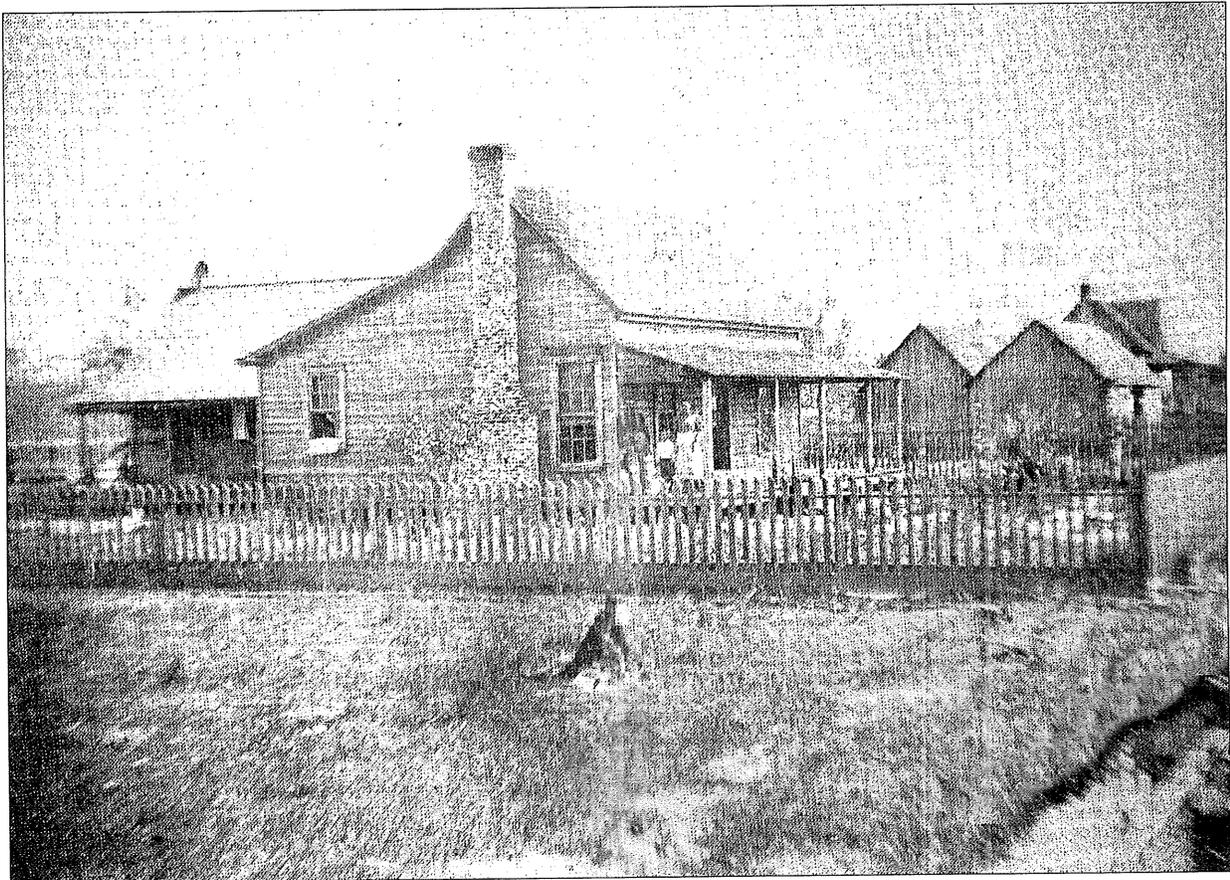




Mrs. T. B. Wells Collection

Two Wells brothers came from Canada and settled in Callahan. They were Jack R. Wells, pictured above with his family, and Tom Wells, below with his wife and children. Both homes were within a hundred feet of the present intersection of SR200 and U.S.1.

Mrs. T. B. Wells Collection



not so apt to appear as to relocate or merely change hands. Railroad Avenue continued to bustle with activity. Arches were erected on either end of town over the Kings Highway welcoming visitors to 'the Artesian City' of Florida. Callahan was known and acclaimed for its exceptionally fine drinking water.

Traffic along the old Kings Highway would never slow as this was one of the main roads in and out of the Florida East Coast to the mid-American states. Central and South Florida began to develop and though many travelers from the northeast came on steam boats, those from the inland states came by train or car through Callahan. Kings Road, in the days around the turn into the 20th century, and up into the 1920's, traveled down a narrow country road west of the tracks between Hilliard and Callahan that is CR115 today. Just north of Callahan it crossed the tracks, as does CR115, turned south on today's U.S.1, then turned right onto Dixie Avenue. It was there on Dixie Avenue that Callahan's commercial district centered along the tracks of the Fernandina to Cedar Key railroad. Those tracks were removed in the 1970's making it somewhat more difficult to visualize this commercial center of old Callahan. In any case, there were built the hotels for travelers, the liveries for horse and buggy, and general stores for everything else from candy to coffins.

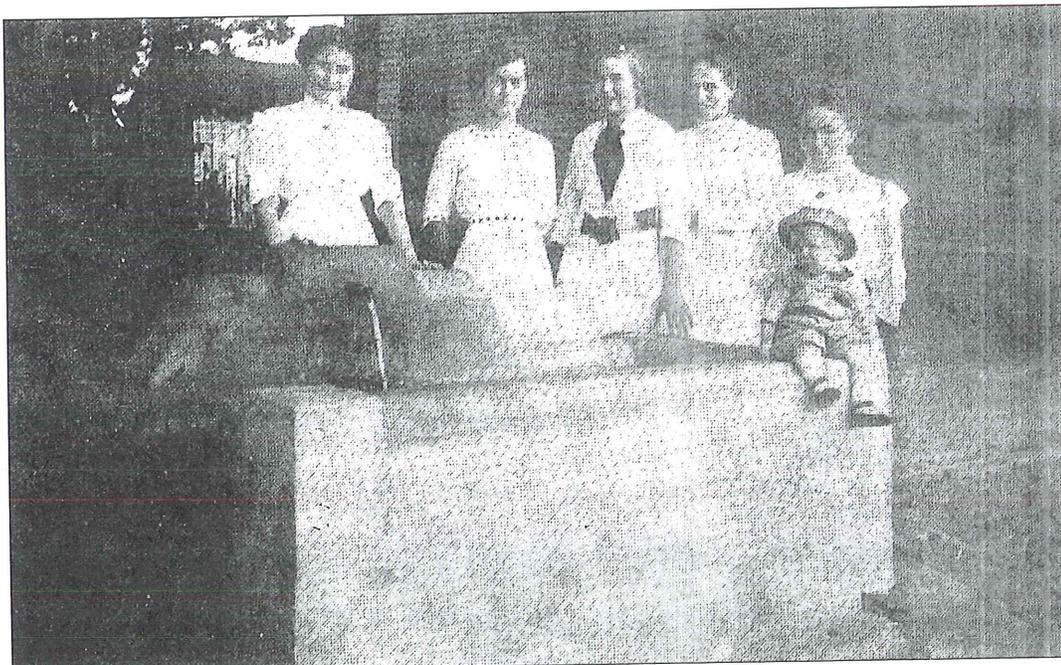
Leaving town to the south, Kings Road crossed the tracks just north of today's new viaduct, turned south along the railroad to a point a mile north of Ratliff where it crossed the tracks again and headed east and south into Duval County. It was a winding, turning, dusty, ratty

drive, yet beautiful through the pine forests and farm lands.

On May 23, 1911, the Town of Callahan was chartered. City officials were M.Z. Brandon, Mayor; W.A. Johnson, Treasurer; and W.B. Wingate, Clerk and Tax Collector. City Councilmen were W.W. Cushing, W.W. Hodges, L.L. Jones, O.O. Mickler, and D.W. Wells.

In 1995, Edgar Mickler visited his old home town of Callahan and through the *Nassau County Record* recalled his youth there. Edgar was born in Callahan in 1905, and had vivid memories of a happy life here. Dixie Avenue was still the "main drag." When the train we called "Old Short" came through in the morning and afternoon, we loved to go down to the depot where it made its stop. It ran from Fernandina to Baldwin and back every day. My father had a mercantile store on the corner where Teenie's Beauty Shop is today. Next door, on Mickler Street, was Dr. Brewster's Drug Store. On the opposite corner of Mickler Street and Dixie Avenue stood the Sikes' Hotel. The hotel was the only place in town that had a sidewalk. Our two story home was located on Dixie Avenue, east of Buck Pickett's store. It burned when I was a baby. We lived upstairs over my father's store until our new home was built. It stood where the Baptist church parking lot is today, on the corner of Mickler and Green Streets. It was later known as the Conner home."

Edgar continued, "The Callahan Bank was located in what is now the newspaper (*Nassau County Record*), and next door to the bank was the Carter Building. Mr. Carter was a well respected black man and one of Callahan's leading citizens. He owned and operated a



The community well was the most popular meeting place as evidenced by this crowd of Callahan ladies. There were several of these wells and concrete holding tanks that served as a source of drinking water for man and beast alike, and was the primary source of water when fire threatened the area.

sundries shop in his building and it was a known fact that Mr. Carter made the best shakes in the world.”

“My father, Edgar, was mayor of Callahan when I was a young boy and Mr. Andrews was the town marshal. Mr. Andrews was a stern enforcer of the law. In 1918, my father sold his mercantile business and his brick manufacturing business and we moved to Tallahassee.” He graduated from school there and the family moved on to Miami.

In the 1920’s and 1930’s, improvements to county, state, and federal road systems found the route of the King’s Highway moved from Dixie or Railroad Avenues to its present position through Callahan. During that same period, devastating fires along Dixie Avenue encourage merchants to move from the sparks and cinders of the large rumbling old locomotives that

were a threat to their existence. Two fires, one in each decade, wiped out nearly all signs of brick and wood-frame structures along the tracks. As new construction began, store fronts were found facing a new Kings Highway.

Like all communities, the advent of the automobile affected the life-style and layout of Callahan. As travel increased along the highways, and businesses realized the ever-increasing number of autos passing through the community, it was natural that the attention shifted from the rails to the highways. The new Kings Highway was cut through the pine forests out of Duval County, through Callahan, to Hilliard and on to Boulogne and Folkston, Georgia, entirely on the east side of the old Savannah, Florida & Western Railroad, today’s CSX Transportation line, without the turns,

In 1910, you could have called it the King’s Highway, Dixie Highway, the Federal Highway, or Railroad Avenue. They were all the same in Callahan’s business district during that time period. The two story brick building at the right was at the corner of Mickler Street. This had been Callahan’s main business district since before the Civil War. There were beautiful stands of oak, numerous stores, and lots of traffic moving up and down the.

Nassau County Record / Dorothy Brewster



fording of creeks, and low marshlands.

In the 1920's and 1930's, much of the power to homes and businesses came from small generators that many homes had in a shed in the back yard. Early on, Mr. Decker operated a larger generator back near the old jail, and sold the power to residents and businesses. It wasn't until 19__ that Florida Power made electricity available on a larger scale.

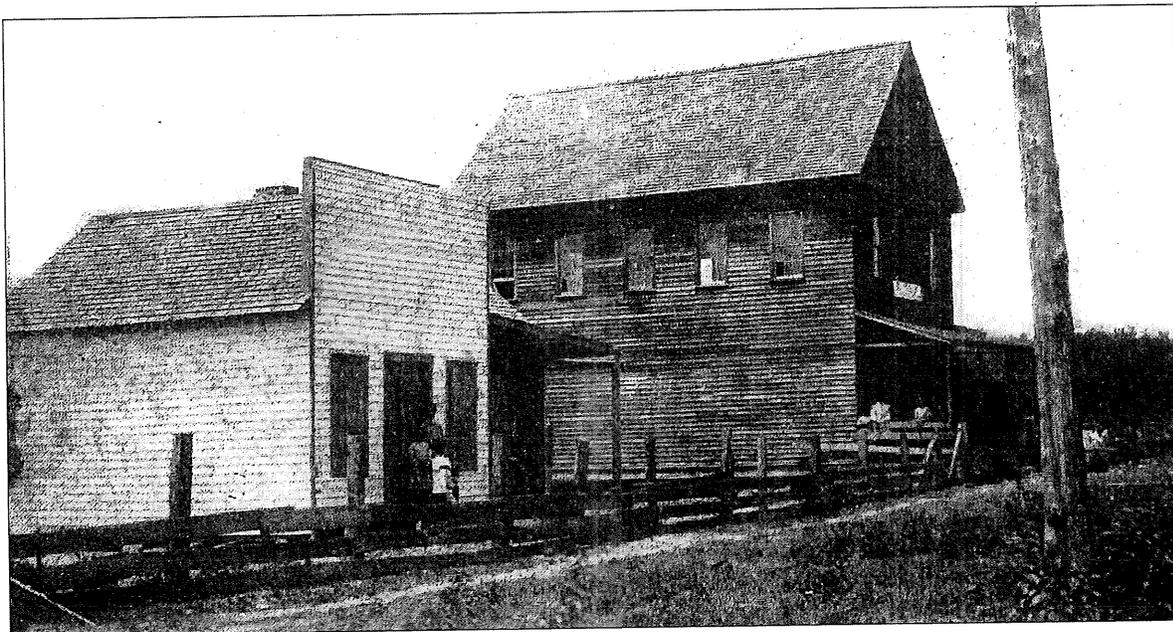
There was a county-wide organization of the WPA, in 1933, in the midst of depression, that took on the construction of new roads, bridges, utilities, and so much more. The WPA, convict labor, and the Town of Callahan even constructed an airport just north of the intersection of U.S. 1 and Musselwhite Road. A Florida-Georgia News article of July 3, 1937 stated, "The completion of an airport at Callahan was spurred on tonight by the passage of a local bill that would give the State Road Department authority to use convict labor in completing this project." Several years later the airport was taken over by the Navy, renamed Emergency Landing Field (ELF) Callahan, and served throughout the war as a part of the Navy's Jacksonville based aviation training programs. Numerous military aviators flying in the area, needing to land because of problems, touched down safely at Callahan's Navy airport.

The overpass at the western edge of town was just finished in late September of 1935, and paving of State Road 13, the road to Bryceville began in January of 1936. Construction began on a new white high school on Wells Road between Boothe and Mickler Streets. The school opened in mid-May of 1936, and remains as the nucleus of the current elementary school. The Conner Company, on the Dixie Highway near Green Street, was running full page ads selling groceries, toys, clothing, and yes, even caskets. By March 4, 1937, James P. Page had sold nine Plymouths and one Desoto from his Callahan dealership since the first of the year. In spite of a national depression, Callahan was a somewhat progressive and beautiful little tree-lined community of the mid-1930's.

In 1937, WPA historian, Alice P. Youngblood, wrote of a tour through the county having high praise of the Callahan area and a poultry industry second to none. She stated that "the most interesting part of the county is the Pine Breeze Farms, the largest poultry industry in the southeast. About 2 miles east of Callahan are the Pine Breeze Farms which are divided into two sections. The one where the office is located covers about 700 acres. The chicken houses are all well painted and shaded by a very fine stand of pine trees. Acres and acres of modern chicken farms. There is an

N.W. Rutherford moved to Callahan about 1898 and bought an old store on Brandies Avenue near the present offices of the Nassau County Record. In 1907, one of Callahan's many fires burned the structure to the ground. Rutherford then moved to another location down Brandies Avenue toward U.S.1. (below). The second floor of the building on the right was used by the Order of Odd Fellows and the Masons. These buildings remained in the center of old Callahan until the 1970's.

Rutherford Family Collection



office with telephone and electric light systems. Mr. Irving is the owner. Mr. Irving is a very brilliant man but somewhat displeased at not having better roads through this section. Pine Breeze Farms maintained a private airport and company aircraft." The Pinebreeze poultry farm began in 1911 and by 1926, was producing 90,000 dozen eggs annually of which 20,000 dozen were used in incubators in the production of baby chicks. This was during a period when Nassau County led the southeast in poultry production, according to a county promotional brochure.

In 1947, Leon Hodges purchased the Callahan Telephone Company and changed its name to the Nassau Telephone Company. A new dial system was installed and the old candlestick phones and local operators drifted into history. Phone numbers were four digits in 1947 and everybody knew everybody else's number. Annette Wry was the telephone operator before the system went automatic.

In 1999, Callahan is the smallest of incorporated municipalities in Nassau County with a population of approximately 1,000, and a greater Callahan area (zip code 32011) population of 11,500.

Butler-Jones Hardware Co.

AGENTS FOR

Fairbanks-Morse &
Co.'s Engines
Oliver Chilled Plow
Works
Rapid-Fire Hay Press
"Darling" line of Stoves
and Ranges

**Butler-Jones Hardware
Company**

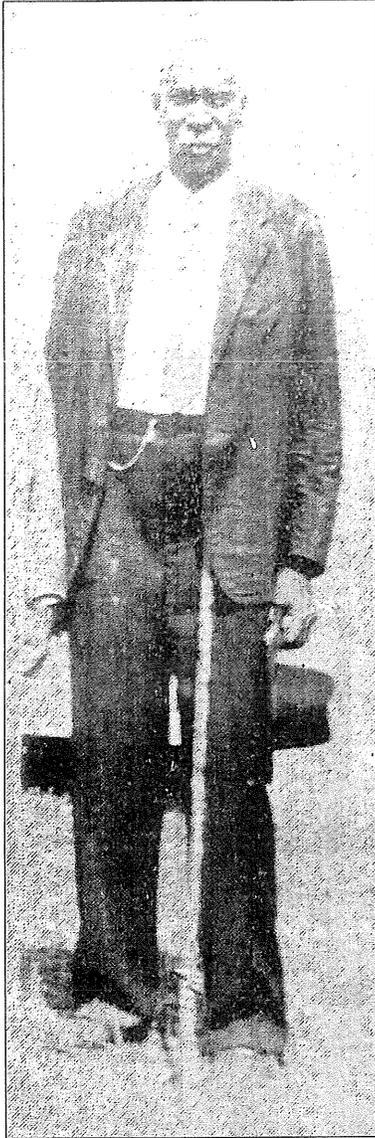
EVERYTHING IN HARDWARE

Callahan, - - Florida

Today's Brandies Ace Hardware building began about 1915 as a farmer's cooperative selling items from wagons, wheels to feed. Later it served as the Spurlock Meat Market and Jones' General Merchandise before being converted by Frank Decker to a garage downstairs and the town's silent movie house upstairs. Here was the piano player and a sign that read, "Don't spit on the floor - Remember the Johnstown flood." Brandies Hardware began here in 1945. The Ace franchise was obtained about 1968.

Lucelle Brandies Collection

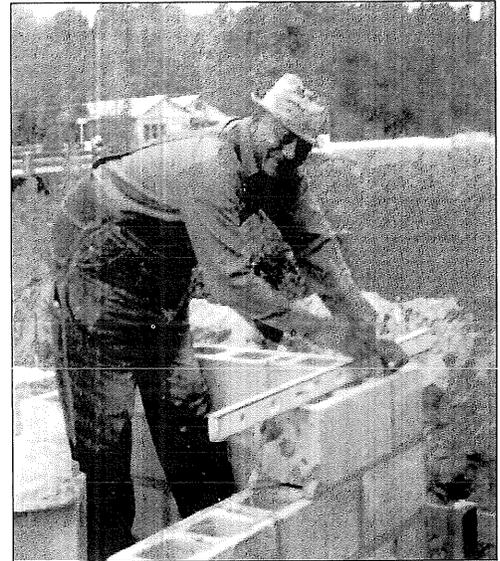




Jean Hodges Mizell Collection

William "Sonny" Morgan

Sonny Morgan skillfully moulded, for many years, the many brick and block buildings that survive today as monuments to turn-into-the-20th century architecture. As a brick mason, Sonny traveled by horse and buggy to many of the surrounding counties, building homes, chimneys, turpentine stills, fixing springs and dipping vats. Sonny's wife, Ann, and his large family worked his farm while he was gone, harvesting the crops, digging potatoes, grinding cane, thrashing peanuts, and readying corn and rice for the mill. His son, Elmer, continued his father's work, and Elmer's son, Major, when old enough, was also taught the trade. All three of the Morgans are said to have had an excellent eye and were gifted craftsmen.



Elmer Morgan

Pleezing Foods, and the Callahan News occupied two Brandies Avenue buildings that still stand along the line of Florida's first Atlantic to Gulf railroad. Fitzhugh Jones and Will Brandies owned the Pleezing store. One of the men in the shadows of the News entrance is Lloyd Herrin who was owner/editor of the paper for many years. In the years before this early 1930's photograph was taken, this was the location of the "Pressing Club" cleaners, Carter's Sundries, Rutherford's general store, and the Bob Jones and Sikes stores.

Elizabeth Baldwin Pratt Collection

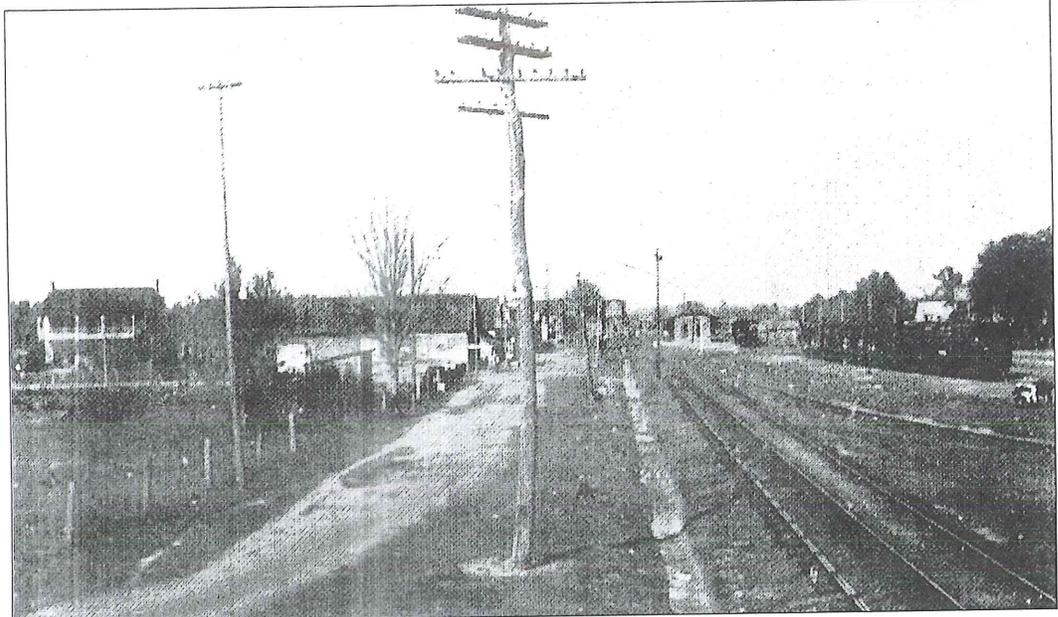




David Petree Collection

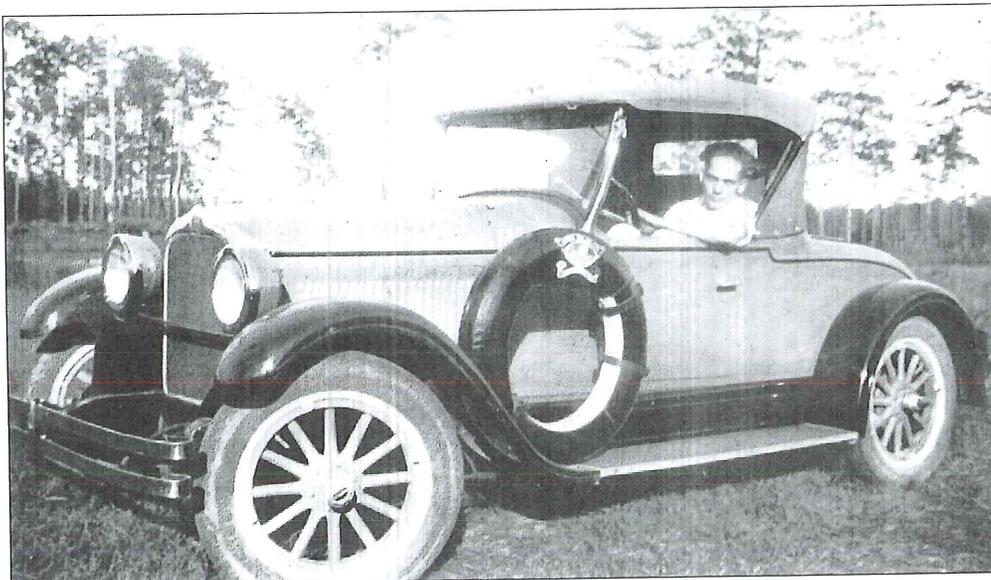
D.H. Petree working his garden on 1912 Green Street. The camera faces west with the 60 year old Callahan business district along the tracks in the distance. The garden is now the residential area surrounding the intersection of Green and Boothe Streets.

There is little comparison between today's Brandies Avenue and this 1911 view to the east across Mickler Street. Here, Brandies Avenue passes through the middle and Railroad Avenue (Dixie) is to the right on the far side of the train. On Brandies Avenue is the old post office, the jail, the Jones store, the railroad water tower, the original railroad depot, and a number of other businesses out of site.



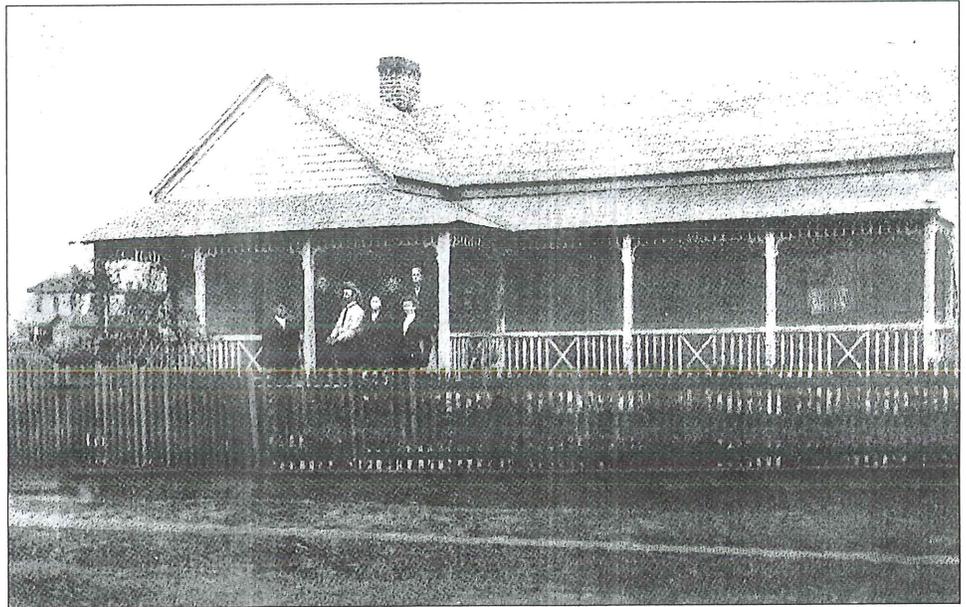
Linder Butler Collection

Lucille Brandies Collection



Cliff Brandies shows off his new sport coupe in the late 1920's. Clifford Brandies was born in Callahan, son of William "Will" Brandies, and as a young man operated a drag line and crane for with the railroad in the Carolinas. There he met and married the daughter of a railroad agent, Lucille Maynard in 1932, and brought her back to Callahan.

Callahan once boomed with tourists in an era when the junction of the railroads and the jitneys of King's Road were as much as the community could handle. Here is shown the family and guests of Julia Ann Tison in front of the boarding house she operated at the foot of Railroad Avenue.



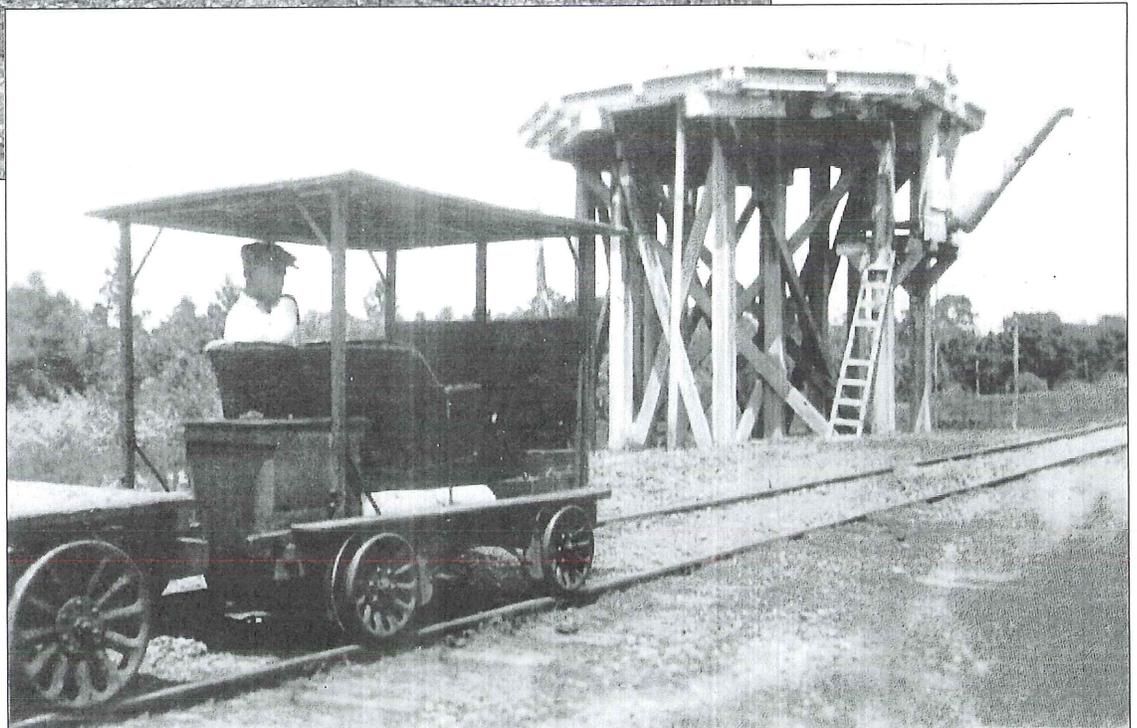
Lucelle Brandies Collection



The old railroad pump house supplied water for the water tower.

Lucelle Brandies Collection

John W. Page and Will Brandies were among the best known section leaders of the old railroad days. Here, Page's car has been pulled up to the Callahan water tank where the picture was taken.



The Callahan State Bank

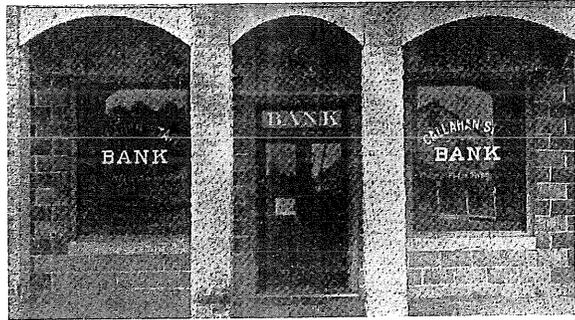
ORGANIZED FEBRUARY, 1910

Our Facilities . . .

FOR GOOD BANKING SERVICE ARE UNSURPASSED, AND WE OFFER OUR CUSTOMERS EVERY COURTESY AND CONVENIENCE.

We Want Your Account, LARGE OR SMALL

AND IT IS TO YOUR INTEREST TO BANK WITH US IF YOU APPRECIATE SAFETY AND GOOD JUDGEMENT, WITH A BROAD AND LIBERAL POLICY. HELP US TO HELP YOU.



OFFICERS—

P. A. WILSON, President
R. H. JONES, Vice-President
M. Z. BRANDON, Cashier



DIRECTORS—

A. E. Ogilvie
W. W. Hodges
H. L. Hodges
M. Z. Brandon
R. H. Jones
L. L. Owens
P. A. Wilson

A 1916 newspaper ad and view of the Callahan State Bank. Officers and Directors were those men that were turn-of-the-century leaders of the community. This is the location of today's Nassau County Record.

Town of Callahan Collection

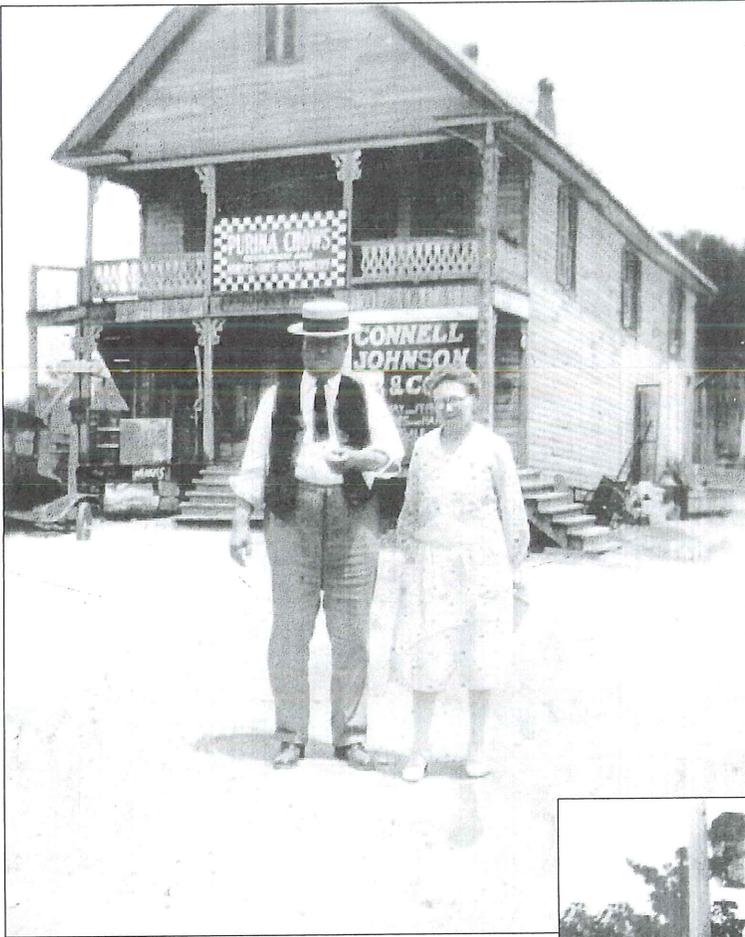
The Mickler name has been one of those dominating names in Callahan since Civil War times. Boothe, Mickler, and Brown were the first streets named for the community's founding families, merchants, and community leaders. O.O. Mickler owned and operated a mercantile store for many years and a brickyard that, with the nearby Baldwin yard produced brick for Jacksonville and many surrounding counties. O.O. Mickler was one of the first mayors of the Town of Callahan.



O. O. Mickler



One of the earliest businesses along the old Florida Railroad was Brown's General Store at the present Mickler Street and Brandies Avenue. This 1900 picture caught merchant Richard B. Jones, barely visible in the middle, William Brown and Mrs. Essie Tison in Saturday morning conversation.



In the 1920's it was the Connell Johnson Company Feed Store when this shot was taken. Johnson occupied this wood frame structure into the 1930's when it was purchased by the Clarks' and converted into a restaurant known simply as Clark's Restaurant. The building was located on the site of what now is the town hall. Next to it was William's Fish Market with a Standard Oil Station on the corner.

Lucille Brandies Collection

Lucille Brandies Collection

This was the William Henry "Will" Brandies' home, built about 1912 on what became Brandies Avenue. Wil was the son of Henry Brandies, first of the Brandies to have come to this area, in 1866, from South Carolina. Henry married a Martha Ann Adams of Dutton and bore ten children, one of the oldest being William Henry.

The Brandies family owned the home until the early 1970's when it was purchased and converted into the Callahan Funeral Home. This is one of the early brick structures built by William "Sonny" Morgan.





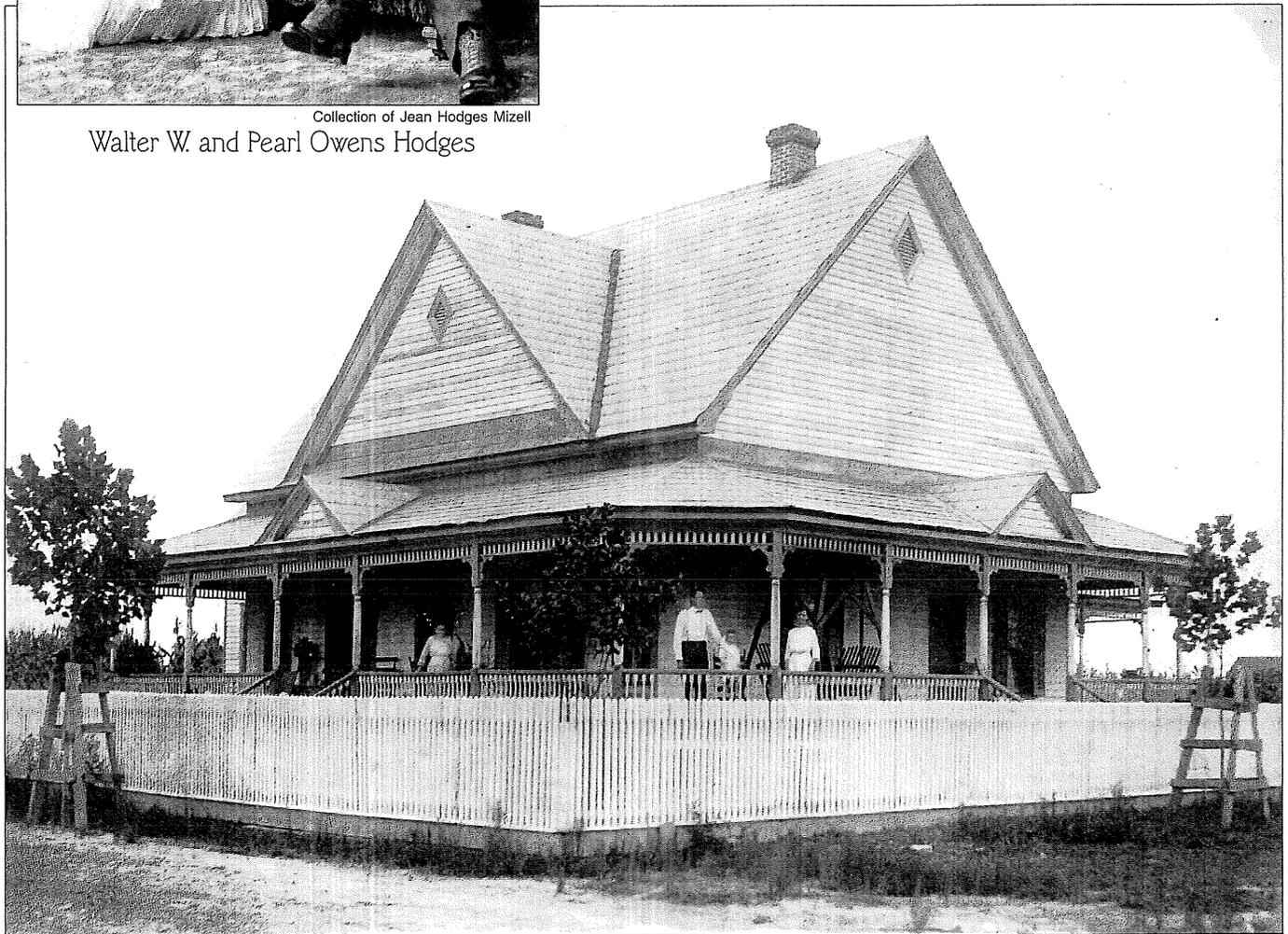
Collection of Jean Hodges Mizell

Walter W. and Pearl Owens Hodges

Willis A. Hodges was born November 8, 1852, at Moniac, Georgia, and as a young man lived at Trader's Hill. He married Sarah Stokes, lived on the Georgia side of the St. Marys until after 1910, and owned a saw mill southwest of Callahan since before 1900. Their son, Walter W. Hodges married Pearl Edith Owens of Moniac and worked in the timber business with his father. Walter owned a grocery in Callahan just after 1900, and built a fine home there about 1909 (below). Walter sold his grocery to Newt Conner in 1921, and pursued other interests, in the years to come, investing in real estate, agriculture, ownership and operation of saw mills, and was on the Board of Directors of the Callahan State Bank. By 1929, he had entered the poultry business remaining in that endeavor successfully for many years.



Willis Alexander Hodges



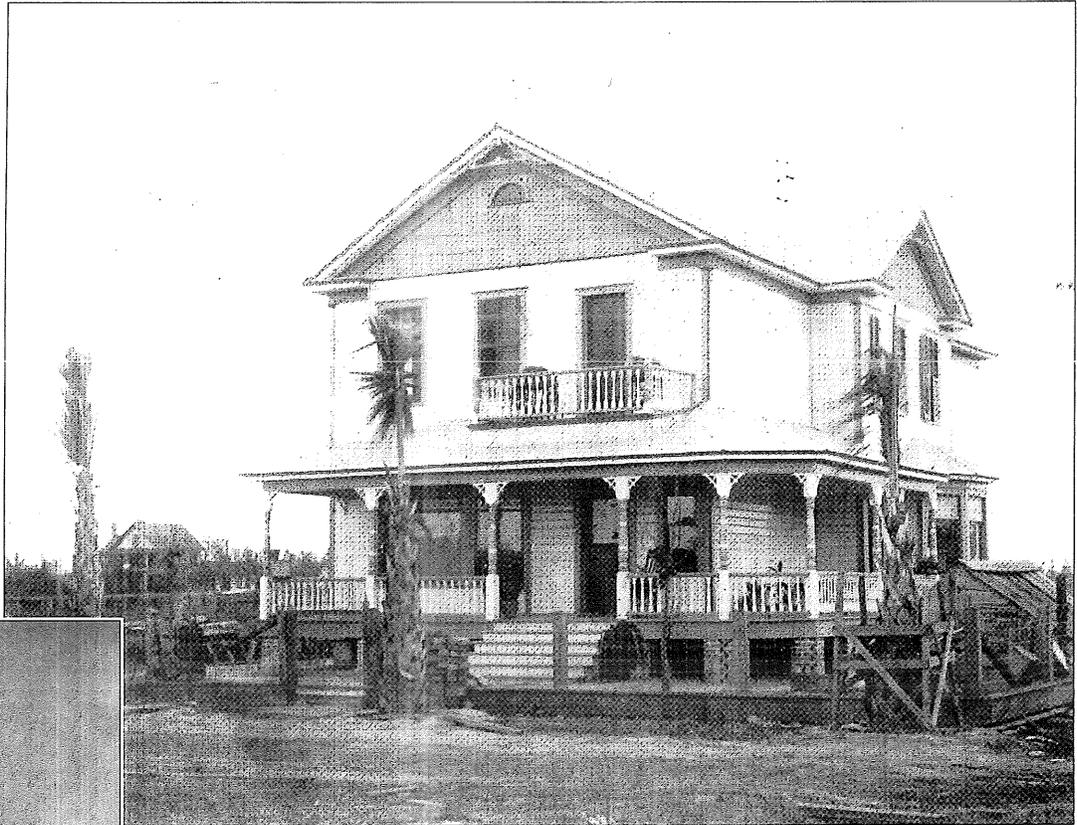
Collection of Jean Hodges Mizell

W.W. Hodges stands on the porch of his home with arm resting on the shoulder of his son, W.W. Hodges, Jr. His wife, Pearl, stands nearby while her mother, Laura F. Plunkett Owens, poses on the left. This well preserved home remains today adjacent to the community's post office.

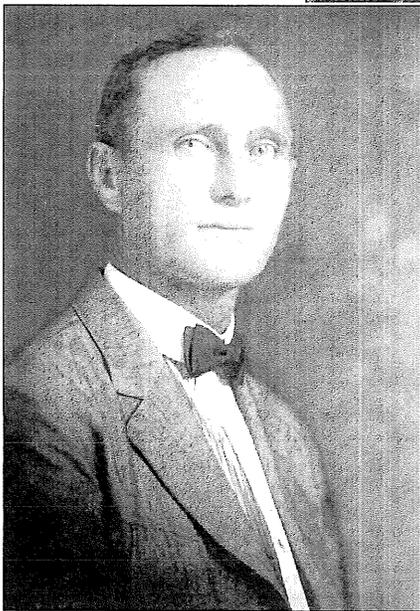
This marvelous view looks southwest down Green Street, through its intersection with Boothe Street, toward Callahan Baptist Church. This was the center of turn-of-the-century affluent residential Callahan. Residents strolled or buggied their way from home to business, in a golden-era of sorts for many county communities. At the left is the W.W. Cushing home later the home of the Petree family. In the center is the Nelson house, known as the "Virginia White House," presently the Jones home. At the far center is the Baptist Church which was new when this image was taken. This photograph was taken shortly after the turn into the 20th century.

David Petree Collection





Betty Ray Collection



A. E. Ogilvie

The Honorable A.E. Ogilvie's newly constructed home, in 1907, was a handsome addition to a growing Callahan. Soon after this picture was taken, the grounds were landscaped with flowers, fruit trees and shrubs. Mr. Ogilvie was an extensive land owner advertising, in 1914, two to three thousand acres for sale at \$8 to \$10 an acre. Ogilvie was engaged in the timber and cattle business and served Nassau County in the State Legislature for two terms. His fine home above remains at the corner of Boothe and Dixie Avenues.





David Petree Collection

The beautiful Nelson home was popularly known as the "Virginia White House." In the mid-1900's, termite damage forced the removal of the ornate porches surrounding both floors. The home remains, in 1999, as a reminder of 19th century victorian period architecture.

Home of the S.J. Baldwin family and later the Page family. Shown, left to right, are Will Meares holding Mary Hall, Mrs. Hardee and Reverend Hardee of the Methodist Church, Roberta Perry, Mrs. S.J. Baldwin with Mattie May Baldwin, Gertrude Perry West, and Mrs. Will Meares. The house was constructed in 1910 and the photograph taken in 1913.

Elizabeth Baldwin Pratt Collection

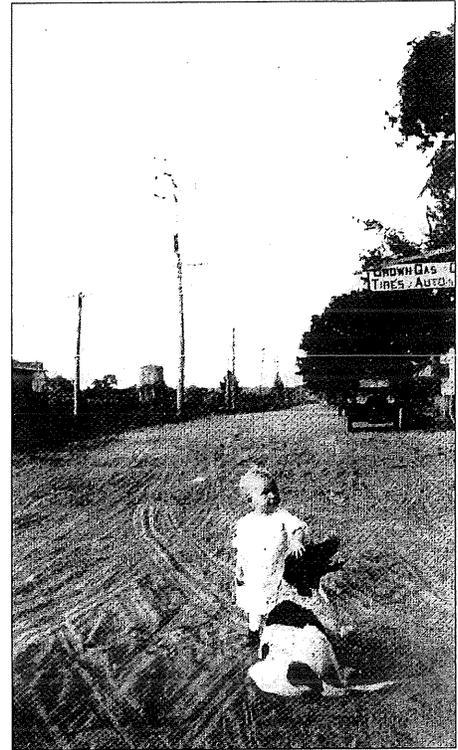


The old King's Highway, after about 1910, was rerouted across Alligator Creek at the present location, then crossed the tracks and turned right down Railroad Avenue. This was the main street of Callahan and sometimes served as a playground for young children and pets. Though heavily traveled by the automobile, the slow speeds made this practice relatively safe.



Many homes and businesses were erected within Callahan's borders under the masterful hand of W.W. Cushing. He is pictured above with his wife Lizzie.

Right - An ad from the Nassau County Leader of 1916.

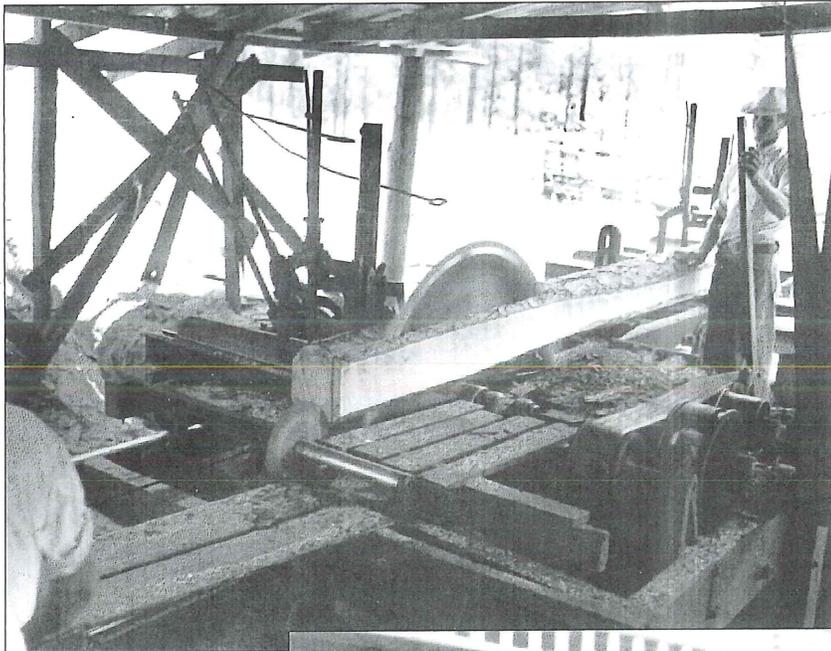


W. W. CUSHING

CONTRACTOR AND BUILDER

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS FURNISHED ON SHORT
NOTICE.

CALLAHAN. : : FLORIDA



R. Lyndol Armstrong
Collection

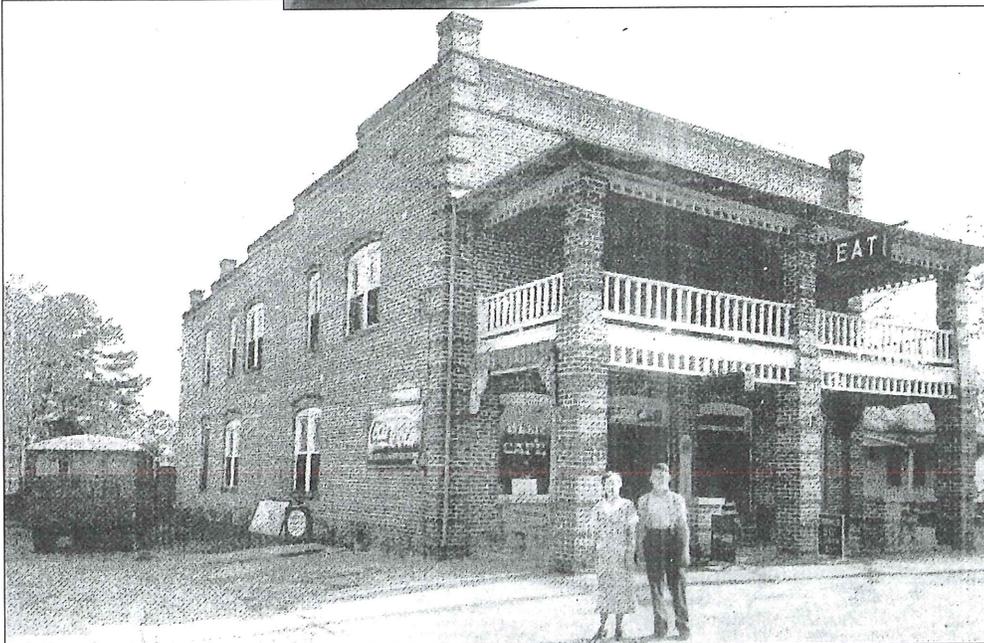
The Roy Jones saw mill west of Callahan about the year 1950. Pictured at right is Frank Jones guiding a piece of timber through the blade.

Jean Hodges Mizell Collection

J.A. MacIntosh and Mike Brandies are caught by the camera in front of the Calida Hotel..



R. Lyndol Armstrong Collection



The Calida Hotel was built in 1923 and lasted through the heaviest highway traffic period of the 1920-1950's before closing in 1964. It is the only hotel in Callahan that did not meet its fate through fire. The hotel was stripped of its porch and gas pumps when King's Highway was widened, sitting dormant for years before its demise. J.Q. and Elizabeth Whittemore (left) built the hotel and sons Jimmy (left) and John helped keep it going through the years.

OFFICERS:
W. W. HODGES,
 PRESIDENT.
E. E. JONES,
 VICE-PRESIDENT.
ERNEST PETREE,
 SECRETARY
J. G. PAGE,
 TREASURER.

Nassau County Dasheen Growers Association

DASHEEN—The Wholesome, Delicious Food Product

DIRECTORS:
W. W. HODGES
E. E. JONES
ERNEST PETREE
J. G. PAGE
J. S. HIGGINBOTHAM
J. S. BRADDOCK
PASCO JONES

Callahan, Florida

The Dasheen was a potato like product grown and sold primarily to the oriental food market. It was first experimented with, in this country, in 1908, and marketed by Rudolf W. Froitzheim of Callahan. Rudolf, J.G. Page, and Ernest Petree founded the Dasheen Growers Association.

David Petree Collection



Above is Carl M. Froitzheim, father of Rudolf and owner of Sandy Ford Farm where the first dasheens were grown in Nassau County. At right is the Nassau County Dasheen Growers Association pictured in 1923.



Town of Callahan Collection

W. P. MEARES

DEALER AND SHIPPER OF

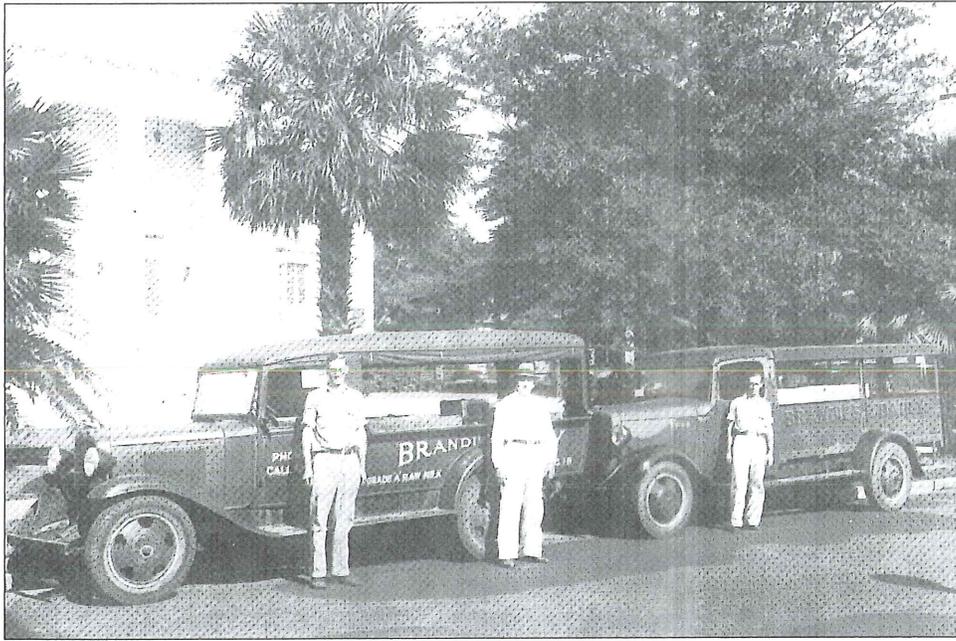
SWEET POTATOES

CARLOAD LOTS A SPECIALTY

Callahan, Florida.

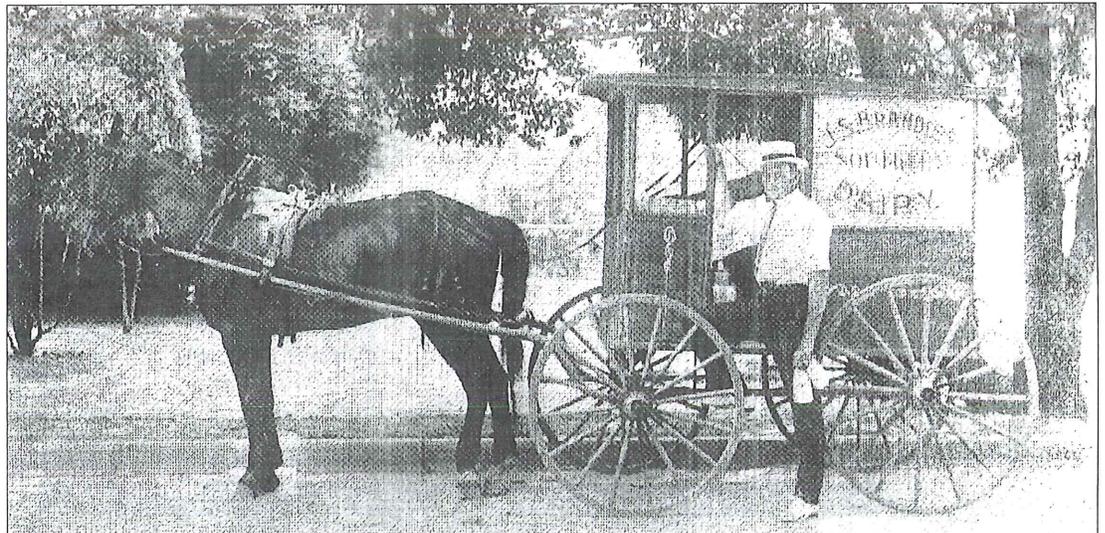
William P. Meares

He came to Callahan in 1912, at age 40, and invested his life in community and county interests. He entered the mercantile, produce, shipping, saw mill and timber businesses, and served as School Inspector for the Nassau County School Board. He was one of the first mayors of Callahan and served as Justice of the Peace for 25 years. He was a member of the Callahan Baptist Church, was Worshipful Master of the Callahan Masonic Lodge No.32, and was first Worthy Patron of the Callahan Chapter of the Order of Eastern Star. This Callahan man was simply called "Judge" by all those who knew him and his cheerful disposition.

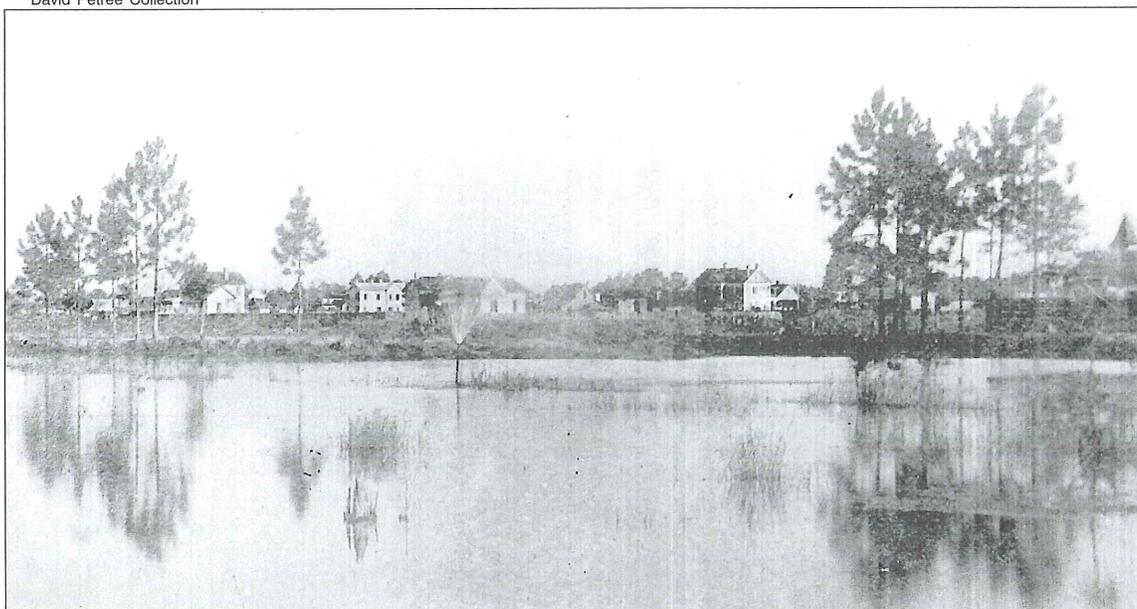


Brandies Dairy trucks pose for this photo in Jacksonville in front of an ice cream company. The Callahan dairy transported milk to the company on a regular basis.

Delivery trucks of Brandies Dairy changed, as did the size of the operations when moved from the Golfair district of Jacksonville to Callahan. A dairy was established on the east corner of US301 and SR200 about 1920.



David Petree Collection

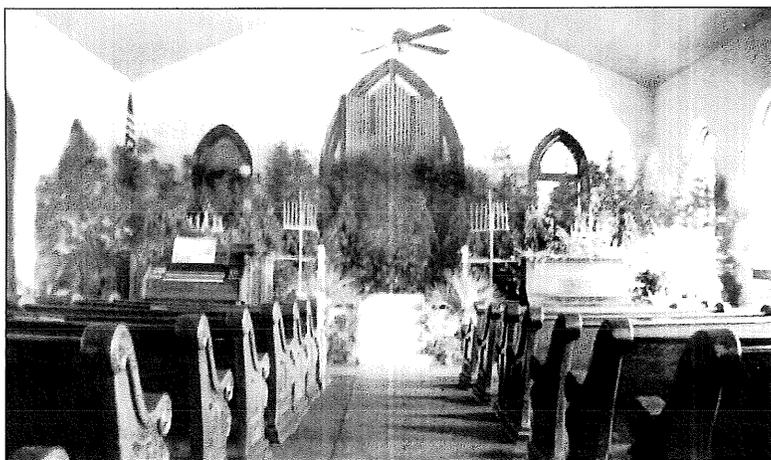


Lake Galilee was at the present site of West Nassau High School.

Little is known of the settlement of Sharon that existed prior to the railroad and the area that became the Town of Callahan. It is known, however, that Sharon Baptist Church was organized by those early settlers of Nassau County, on May 15, 1841, in the days when Florida was still a territory. The founder and first pastor was Elder James McDonald. The first sanctuary was dedicated December 21, 1842. The photograph of the Callahan Baptist Church shows the building as it was from 1908 until 1960. A fellowship hall and education building were built in 1948, by 1955, construction began on a two phase building project that produced an educational unit by 1959, and by May 8, 1960, services began in the present sanctuary. The Last service in the building to the right was April 10, 1960.



Callahan First Baptist Church Collection



R. Lyndol Armstrong Collection

Sanctuary of First Baptist Church of Callahan. Circa 1943.

A church history which appeared in 'Literary Florida' in October 1948, noted "at the time of its organization, many of the charter members where "slave owners." And it revealed that eight of the Negroes were named as part of the first members of the organizing body."

Ladies at Callahan Baptist Church in the mid-1920's: Sitting left to right are Miss Patton, Maggie Gupton, Essie Butler, Mamie Jones and Mrs. Jackson. Standing is Julia Wilson, Dallie Jones, Mary Ann Ogilvie, Ellis, guest Abraham Ogilvie, Cora Ogilvie, Carter, Maggie Jones, Florence Pickett, Mary Ann Jones, Preacher M.D. Jackson, Lee Sauls, Julia Ann Tison, Flora Boyles, Rachel Jones, Lucille Spurlock, Winnie Mae Ogilvie and Mrs. Rachel Jones.

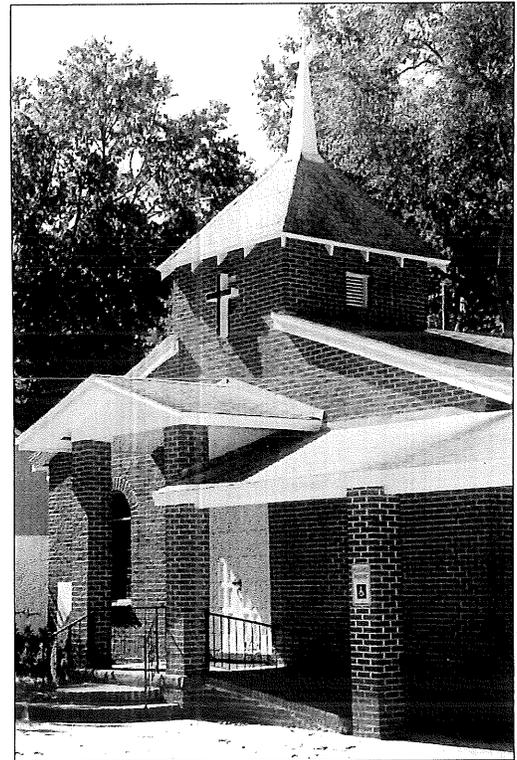
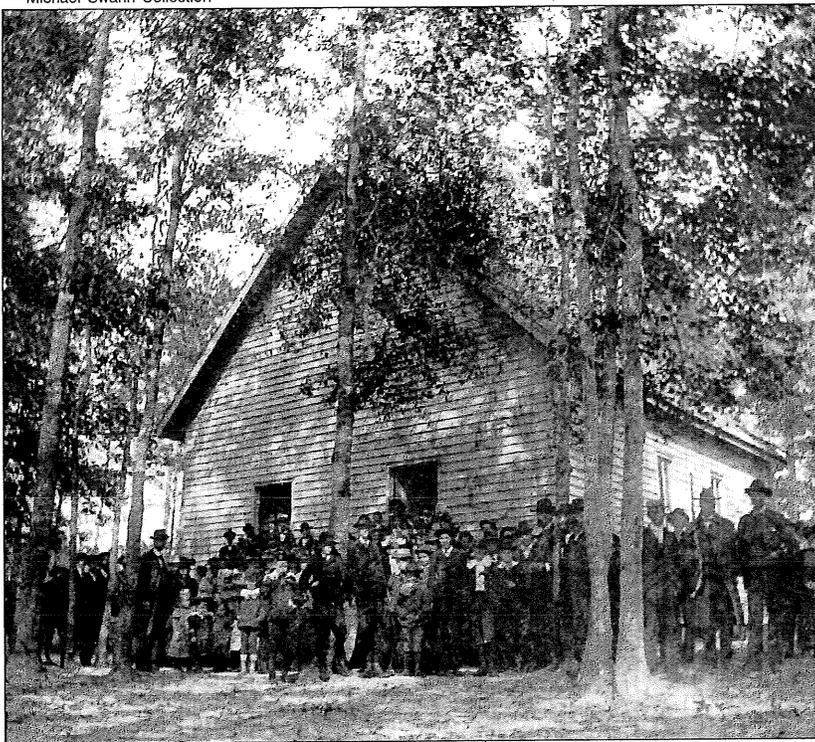


Greater Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church

Mt. Pleasant was organized in 1872 on the north fringe of old Callahan, originally called Bush Harbor Church, named so because of the beautiful surrounding bushes and trees. For more than a hundred years, this church was located along side of the black schoolhouse, acting as its guardian and encouraging black education. The church, in 1999, celebrated 127 years of its existence.

Historic Churches of Callahan

Michael Swann Collection



Author's Collection

Thomas Creek Baptist Church, in 1887, was attended by many from Callahan, Ratliff, and areas from both sides of the Nassau-Duval County line. The church was organized in 1883.

Author's Collection

New Bethel AME Church

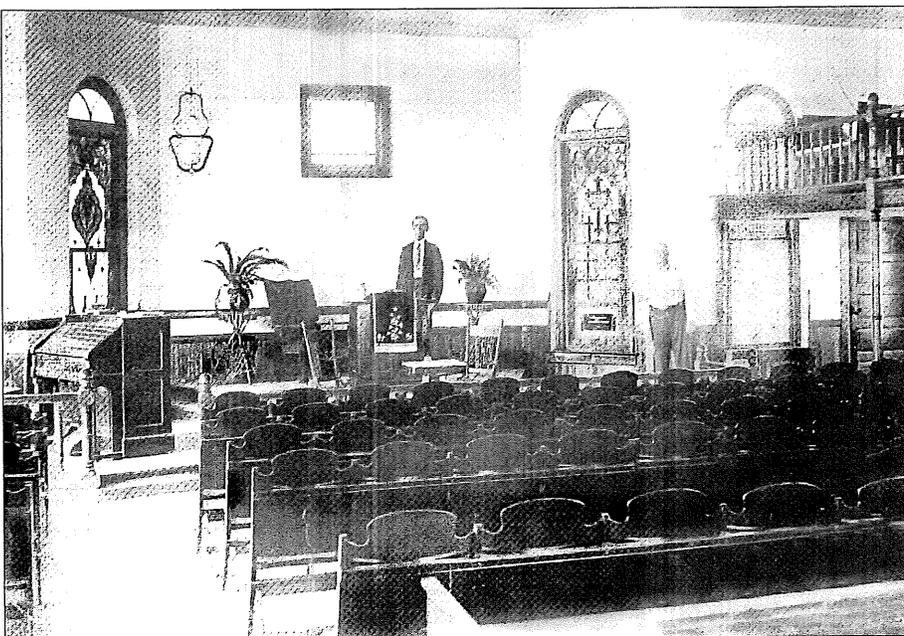
New Bethel was organized in 1868 and is believed the first black church in Callahan. The first families were Bryant, Jones, Wilson, Miles, and Grooms. The current building, pictured, was completed in 1973.



Records relating to the Callahan Methodist Church date back to at least January 30, 1886, when a quarterly conference for the Nassau mission was held that the Callahan parish participated in. The pastor that year was Rev. John Duncan and Mr. J.R. Boothe was superintendent of the Sunday School. In 1887, O.O. Mickler was named superintendent and served for many years. The church building was completely destroyed during the great hurricane of 1896, but "immediately rebuilt on U.S.1 in the center of town" says a church history. A parsonage was erected in 1905 and by 1910, a new church building was completed that served the community for many years.



Below is a view of the interior of the Methodist Church with Rev. E.J. Hardee at the center and W.W. Cushing looking on.



Ice Cream Festival.

The ladies of Callahan will give an ice cream festival next Friday night at the residence of Mrs. C. P. Mahoney, for the benefit of the pastor of the Methodist church. Ice cream, cake and other refreshments will be served, and a pleasant time is promised to all who attend. Come out and have a good time, and at the same time contribute to the support of your pastor whose labors among you have been so faithfully discharged.

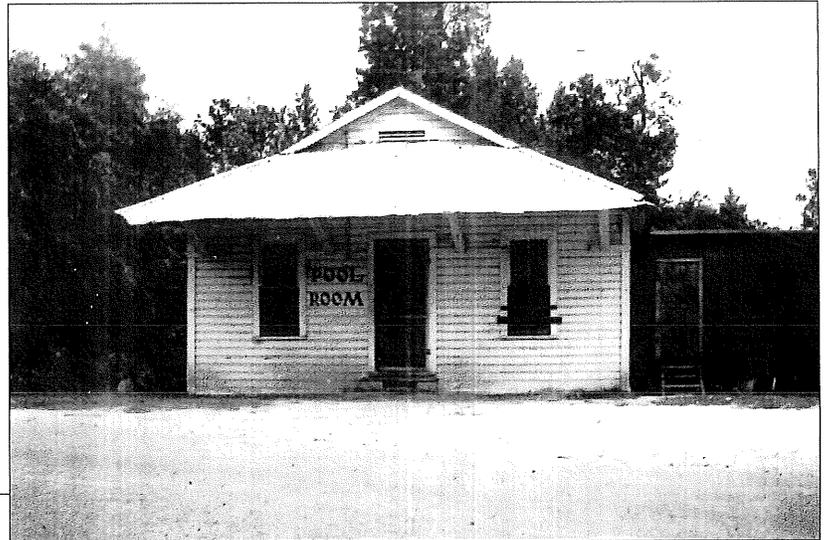
The Florida Record - 1886



The men were just back from a successful hunting trip as they posed in front of what is today's diner on U.S 301.

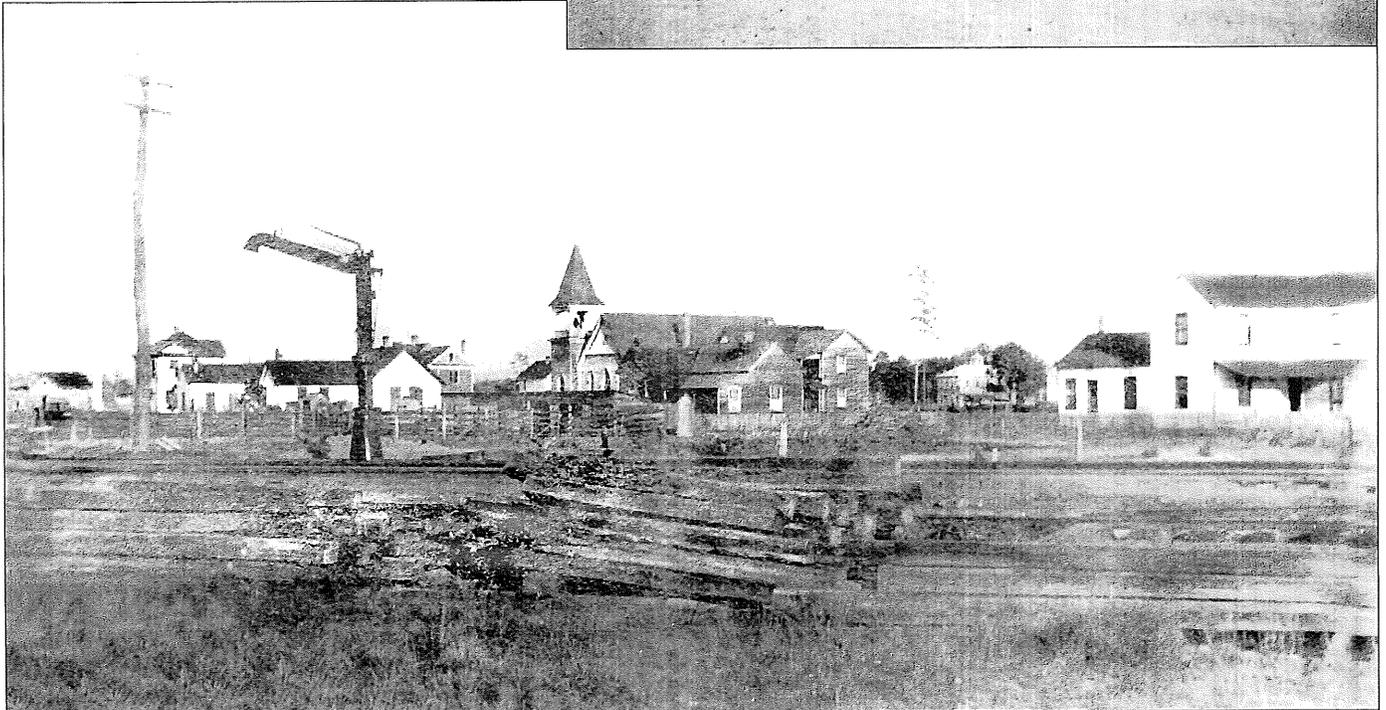
Lucille Brandies Collection

The Callahan Pool Room was at the north end of Brandies Avenue and managed, at one time, by a Mr. Kicklighter.



Looking almost due east from the Brandies Avenue railroad crossing toward the Baptist Church in the middle, the Sikes Hotel at the right, and the white school between the two. Circa 1910.

David Petree Collection



On Black Schools in Callahan..... A schoolhouse for black children is believed to have existed here years before the Civil War, in the days of the community of Sharon. Retired black educator Doyle Arline, himself a student of local black history, related his personal knowledge from research and stories passed down. Doyle purchased the property and now lives in the old school house half a mile north of Callahan's center that was known as Callahan's black elementary and junior high school since way before the turn into the 20th century. This is his way of helping to preserve the community's black history. There are two buildings, one in which Doyle and his wife live, the other waiting for Doyle's crafty hands. The buildings were once connected by a common gabled roof and walkway. "This side," with Doyle pointing at one end of the building, "was Helen Carter's room and I believe she taught third and fourth grade. On the other side was first and second grade. Grades five through nine were in the adjoining building." At the front of the upper-grades building is a 10 by 20 foot concrete slab that was at one time the school cafeteria. Water was available by carrying buckets from a well on the back side of the buildings. There were about four teachers that he could remember, and more than a hundred students.

In the rear was the woodshed, the wood house, two or three privies for the girls, and the faculty privies. The boy's privie's were on the opposite side of the buildings. In a field in the rear was where the boys played baseball. Each school day started with the different grades lining up at the flag pole near the main double doors (photo at right, top) on the south side, where they recited the pledge to the flag before marching in to their classes. Midweek there was assembly with the everyone marching to the chapel before being dismissed for the day. In the days before the cafeteria, those who did not bring lunch went across the street to John Paul's store where they could buy a drink and crumb cakes. Doyle remembers that in the 1940's, one of Callahan's beloved educators, Mrs. Whitfield, was the principal. She had spent a lifetime devoted to the children of Callahan and later several schools in Duval County.

Doyle referred to another black school location saying "it might have been there before they had this one, just south of where White Street intersects with CR115." Doyle told of the Whitfields and the Carters and of Ulysses Carter going off to Florida A&M. "Ulysses entered the service and, with a commission, came back to Callahan with a car, the first local black to have a car - and that was something exciting. The Whitfields and the Carters were the educators in the black community here." In 1953, the Pine Forest School was completed on CR115 and the old school doors were closed forever.

Celebrating the grand opening of the Pine Forest school, Callahan's first brick school for the colored. The school was located a quarter of a mile north on CR115 and is now the Callahan Middle School. Callahan had arches on the north and south entrances into town on King's Highway before widening to four lanes in the 1950's. Photo circa 1953.

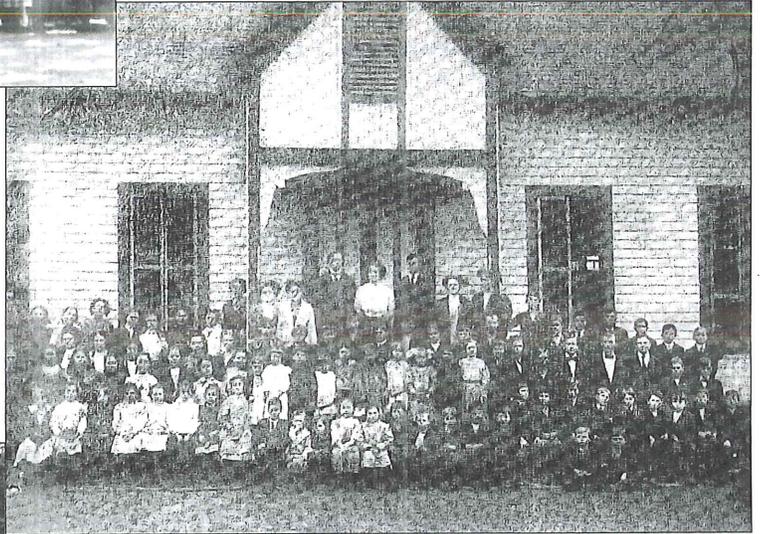
Leon Hodges Collection / Photo by James P. Floyd





At the left is Callahan's colored school until the Pine Forest school opened in 1953. It remains today north of town in a thicket of hardwood, on a short dirt road called Historical Lane, befitting the nature of the surrounding structures. Photo circa 1950's.

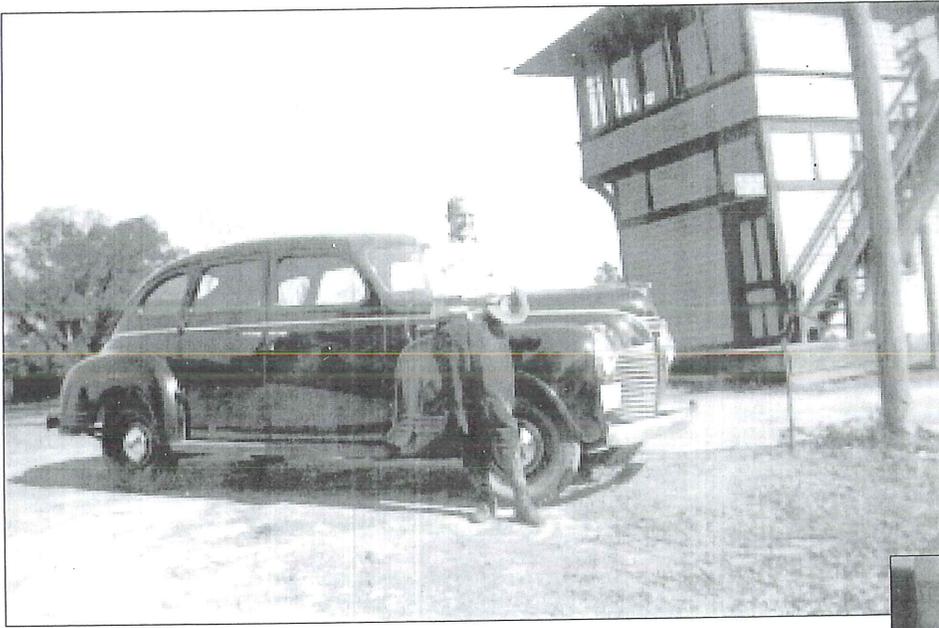
The old wood frame school is believed to have been built in the 1870's serving the white community until 1910 when the brick building below was constructed. This early picture may have been all of the school's student body. The school was located near Green and Railroad Avenues.



A first and second grade school was at Mickler and U.S.301 that today is a private home.

The second white school in Callahan was built about 1910 near Boothe Street and Second Avenue. In 1936, there was a fire on the second floor which did an extensive amount of damage. Fortunately a new school was ready for occupancy in September of that year. In the process of the move to the new building, it was learned that the boys had stashed a five gallon jug of moonshine in the old outhouse.





Railroad Agent Hollis Ray proudly posed at the Callahan switching tower where he worked many years of his railroad career. Circa 1940's.

Below, agent Linder Butler carried on his childhood career dreams of pulling levers, lining up the rails, and running the local railroad depot. Linder retired in 1981 with 40 years of proud service with the Seaboard line.

Ben Butler Collection



T. Linder Butler

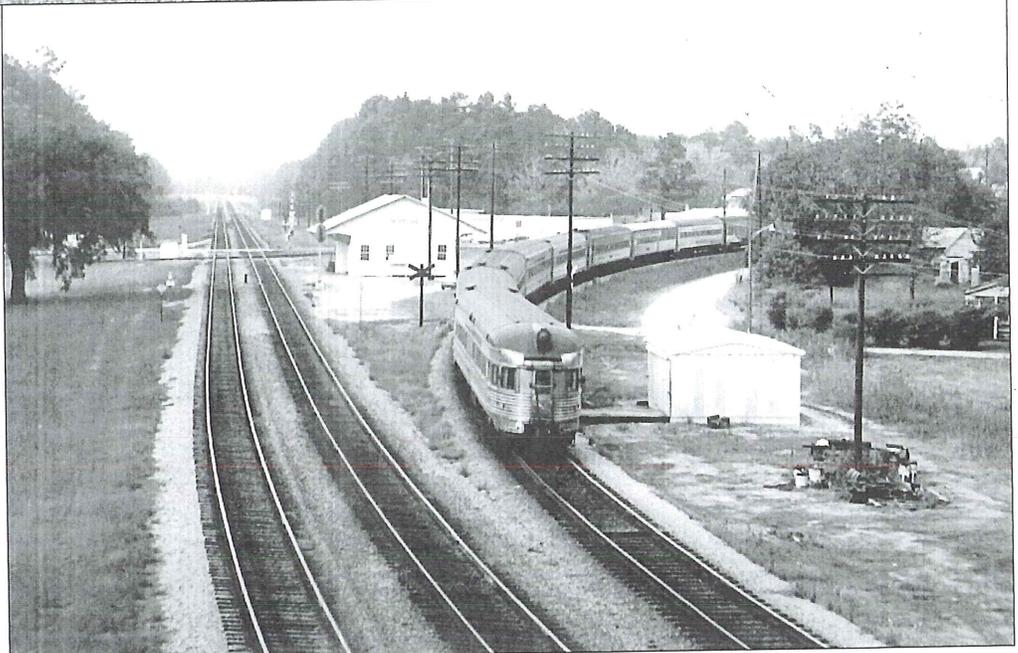
Ben Butler Collection

Tom Butler Collection



The Seaboard Coast Line freighter "Fanny" paralleling Brandies Avenue to the left. This track was removed in the 1970's. Circa 1968.

At right the Amtrac passenger train #84 takes the turn to parallel Brandies Avenue. The depot is the same as pictured on the right of page 203 after being moved here in the 1960's. It eventually was returned to near its old location and restored as a museum.





Patricia Brandies Fachko Collection

The Brandies Guest House advertised as “modern and comfortable - Your home away from home.” Guest houses had been around for hundreds of years before the advent of the motel with every small community having two or three. The Brandies Guest House was on U.S.1, directly across the street from today’s McDonald’s restaurant. The phone number at the Brandies Guest house was 2351. Though this had been a residence for many years prior, the Brandies did not begin taking guests until about 1950 and operated until the late 1960’s.

Frank & Barbara Speal Collection

The name Rainbow has been a landmark at the intersection of SR 200 and U.S.1 for many years as a restaurant or tire and auto repair facility. This postcard photograph is believed taken about 1950.



Betty Ray Collection



Mayor Hollis Robert Ray, Sr.

Hollis Ray came to Callahan in 1940, and soon after married Lucinda Ogilvie, daughter of a pioneer Nassau County family - Mr. and Mrs. Tom Ogilvie. Hollis Ray was as a telegrapher with the Seaboard Coastline Railroad, for many years at the Callahan tower, then with its closing, at the tower in Folkston. At his death in 1970, he had been Mayor of Callahan for 10 years.

U. S. ROUTE 1, THROUGH CALLAHAN, FLA.



Jean Hodges Mizell Collection

Peacefully beautiful were the trees of U.S.1 in this scene looking south from Green Street just beyond the Conners Building on the right. Unfortunately, the trees were removed when the highway was widened. The Conner Building was built in 1927 by John Newton Conner and initially housed Conners General Merchandise. After 1940, the store continued with brothers Red and Bill Conner as owners. Albert Conner operated the drug store which some may recall having an old fashioned soda fountain. The drug store was sold in 1959, to Stanley Long who operated it as Long's Sundries, a favorite hangout because of its cherry smash sodas and pool table. Late one February evening of 1992, fire consumed the 65 year old building, leaving only pleasant memories of years gone by.

Moving south of the location of the photograph above several blocks, turned around looking north, is this 1950's shot through U.S.1 and SR200. To the right is the building that housed Clark's Restaurant (page 217), the Calida Hotel on the distant right side of the road, and the Conner Building on the distant left side of the road. Seventy years ago this was Wells intersection, tree lined with a dairy on the right behind Clark's Restaurant, beautiful trees, and a few homes.

Dorothy Shaw Collection

