SUPERINTENDENT REPORTS:
SCHOOL NUMBER INCREASING

In his annual report to the Board of Public Instruction, Superintendent Rev. S.F. Halliday, was pleased to announce that Alachua County now has increased the number of public schools in operation to twenty two. Each of these schools hosts a term running from October to March. Superintendent Halliday reported that twelve of these schools had blackboards, Bibles, chairs and desks for the teachers; twenty schools have water buckets and cups, eighteen have water convenient to the building and fifteen have brooms. Superintendent Halliday was quoted “About half of the school buildings in use are comfortable and convenient.” The Superintendent stated that the major obstacles to progress in the schools remains lack of suitably trained teachers and lack of uniformity in the text books available.

Dennis Elected to Senate

The Honorable Leonard G. Dennis has been elected to represent Alachua County in the Florida Senate. Mr. Dennis, late of Massachusetts, has become a much admired and prominent citizen of the County. The campaign, however, was not without hazard, as Mr. Dennis received threatening letters, had shots fired at him during a campaign rally, and was sentenced to be hanged by a mock jury convened on Main Street.

Walls Wins Over Niblack

Mr. Josiah T. Walls, Republican candidate for the Florida seat in the U.S. Congress, has been elected over Mr. Silas Niblack, Democratic candidate. Mr. Walls, late of Virginia, became a resident of the City in 1867 and has since won many friends among the members of our community. In 1868 he served as the Alachua County delegate to the Florida state constitution convention. No doubt this experience helped Mr. Walls gain esteem among our voters.

AN ENLIGHTENMENT IN AGRICULTURE

It is truly rewarding to see that our local agriculturist have found enlightenment. While cotton remains a staple crop of great value, many of our more progressive planters have seen their way to expand their farming practices to embrace new and diverse crops.

The lesson of the past few years, with the devastation of the cotton crop and ensuing financial hardship or even bankruptcy, has not been lost on all. Prudent planters have sought new markets for crops and found a virtual gold mine in the vegetable industry.

The railway offers a pathway to provide the North, with its shortened growing season, an astounding array of fresh, wholesome vegetables even in the deepest of winter. No longer dependent on a single crop, Alachua County now boosts a renewed and vigorous agricultural economy.
Dear Mr. Editor,

I am writing this letter to you as I think back upon my dear husband who passed six years ago. He returned from the War before its end five years ago. My husband fought under General Finnegan in the Florida 1st Infantry in the battle of Olustee in February of 1864. He returned from the battle and his injuries were naught compared to many of his fellow soldiers. I shall never forget the joy I felt upon his return nor the sadness I felt when he took ill. He had a fever and first we thought it was typhoid. The fever turned out to be yellow jack and it took him, in spite of a fair amount of laudanum. I have since heard folks say that more soldiers died from sickness in the war than from wounds.

There is not a day that has passed that I haven’t thought of my husband, and on this fifth anniversary of the end of the War Between the States, I am compelled to take pen in hand and write to you today lest we forget what we have endured and how we have grown these past five years.

Although the War’s end and the assassination of Mr. Lincoln are nearly inseparable in my mind, my journal reminds me that General Lee surrendered on the ninth day of April, eighteen hundred and sixty-five and Mr. Lincoln was shot five days later on the fourteenth. Though life had been hard, it became harder after the War. Indeed, I have heard that Florida was spared the disruption that many of the Confederate states to the north faced. I have heard that Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia were drawn against the most difficult times. Across the south the important factories and rail yards were destroyed and many farms and homes were in ruins. Although a goodly portion of Florida’s railways and ports remained in tact, the rails to the north in Georgia and Alabama were not. Our currency became worthless. Be it Florida or Virginia we all felt despair as our lives were disrupted. Union troops moved in right after the War and declared the law and, with the local government still under military supervision since November of sixty-five, it seems at times, even now, that guns and knives settle disputes near as often as the law. Like many others, I was hopeful that Gainesville’s incorporation in sixty-six would have resulted in improved conditions since the town gained police force. Regrettably, our hopes were not met.

I have heard that Florida has recovered more quickly than some states because we were drawn up against less damage and many of the Yankees who served in the State became learned of its abundant lands and mild winters. Here in Alachua County we benefited by Gainesville being connected to the port in Cedar Key. Though I have never traveled by rail car, I have heard this is Florida’s longest railroad.

Postal service to Gainesville was restored for the first time at the end of sixty-five, after having been interrupted by the War. Stores in Gainesville were plentiful at that time as well. There were fifteen; near twice the number before the war. It certainly was a blessing to have a new bolt of calico to make a new dress with. Although prosperity in our County of Alachua continued through 1866, with the largest cotton crop in the State at 3,000 three hundred-pound bales worth $630,000, the two years that followed were disastrous.

We must not forget the rains that fell all summer and fall and drown the crops, including the lovely cotton. Our livestock starved for lack of grazing and King Payne’s Prairie was entirely flooded. In September, what was left of the cotton was destroyed by worms. I know

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that the ache of our stomachs paled only in comparison to the ache of our hearts when we learned of the passage of the Reconstruction Act, which brought new state government into power. Gainesville was forced to re-incorporate and throughout the county, and much of the south, as I have been told, rule of law and order was and has been the worst ever. I dare say that those in power are determined to punish the South.

In spite of the government’s aggression, the state of affairs has continued to improve these last several years. Aside from several cases of yellow jack that I have heard of, I am optimistic of what lies ahead for Gainesville and all of Florida. The thought of yellow fever brings to mind the suffering of my Beloved and I pray that he can feel my love and knows that times are difficult, but not unbearable. I pray also that fever does not spread throughout the County and that our welfare is furthered yet. After all, we have tolerated so much.

Mrs. A.F. McLelland

Bargains! Bargains!! Bargains!!!
And no Humbug!!
I will close out my present stock of GROCERIES,
DRY GOODS,
Boots and Shoes,
AND MILLINERY,
At a very small advance on cost.
Come and call at my store opposite the Suwannee Hotel.

Sellers of Cotton, Wood, Beeswax, and other country produce, are always welcome to the cash, if they prefer it to goods.

JOHN H. MENGERT.
The Half Moon School is typical of early one-room schoolhouses from the late 1800’s. Boys and girls enter the building through separate doors. Children of many ages are taught together in the same room by a single teacher, with older children helping the younger ones with lessons. The children sit on benches without desks and do their schoolwork on their laps on slate boards, using chalk pencils. Lessons were usually memorized and recited; testing was oral.

Additional facts about school house: The Half Moon School was built in 1938–39 in Half Moon, near Newberry, and was moved to Morningside.

The Freedman Act of 1869 established schools for African Americans. Free schools were available to all children by 1870 but were unpopular with a large number of people due to Union associations and the pro-Union textbooks which were used. Rural children often attended school only when they were not needed on the farm for labor. Many children went to school “long enough to read and write a little.” Frequently groups of parents pitched in together to pay the teacher’s salary though even at a modest cost, some families could not afford school for their children.

The Sugar Cane Field is where the farmer grows sugar cane, the source of “cane syrup” the primary source of sweetener used for cooking.

The Cash Crop Field is where crops are grown on a large scale. These crops are for human consumption or animal feed, or for sale to earn the family hard-to-come-by cash used to purchase items they do not make themselves, such as cast iron pans, cloth and shoes. Crops grown in this field might include corn, oats, field peas, peanuts, and cotton (one of the most important crops in Alachua County).

The Syrup Kettle is used to boil down the sugar cane juice (sap) into cane syrup. Syrup making, which occurs near the first frost, marks the beginning of winter. It is also a major social event. About fifty, 6 ft. tall cane stalks are needed to produce 10 gallons of juice, which boils down into 1 gallon of the flavorful, brown syrup.

Families spent most of their day doing farm chores and trying to survive the rigors of an isolated life. But like all people they needed some time for fun. Children would play games in spare moments, usually with their many brothers and sisters. Toys and games were simple and used items found around the house such as buttons, yarn, barrel hoops, corn husks and corn cobs. Imagination supplied whatever else was needed.

Women from neighboring farms welcomed any opportunity to gather together for a “quilting bee.” Ladies would come together to work cooperatively stitching a quilt. A quilting frame might be set on the porch or lowered on ropes from the cabin ceiling. This quilting activity provided not only many hands to ease the burden of work, but also a time to socialize with other women.

Fall provided an important social event called a “cane grind.” Neighboring farmers would bring their harvest of sugar cane to a central location with a cane mill. While the sugar cane was being ground to juice and that juice boiled to syrup, families had time to share a meal and play together. The younger children might engage in singing games while older children took advantage of this time to engage in “play parties.” A play party was a social dance or game with singing accompaniment as opposed to instrumental music. Some play party songs you may know include “Paw Paw Patch”, “In and Out the Window” and “Jimmy Crack Corn.”

Additional facts about the Sugar cane Press: Our annual “Cane Boil” is on the last Saturday of November.

The music of north Florida’s rural people is likely the same as the music of the piedmont of Georgia and the Carolinas. The music of everyday people from these regions was an amalgam of traditional Anglo-Celtic folk tunes, such as “Barbara Allen”, or “Mable Groves”, American folk songs, like “Banks of the Ohio”, songs popularized by traveling or minstrel shows from the 1850s onward, like Stephen Foster’s “Beautiful Dreamer” (1865) or “Little Brown Jug” (1869), and church music, including “Amazing Grace”, and “Remember Me, Oh Mighty One.” Much singing was learned from one’s parents and relatives or from religious experiences and was sung while working. When people got together instrumental music, sometimes accompanied by singing, would break out. The fiddle and/or banjo were the usual instruments. The guitar was not in general use for the popular music performed by rural people until sometime after Reconstruction ended. The guitar was associated with European-style parlor music, along with the piano, and was largely confined to wealthier urban dwellers.

Musical instruction was largely passed on from player to player and tunes were learned “by ear.” Fiddle playing ranged from simple melodic accompaniment to an Anglo-Celtic style that obviously formed the basis for the later “bluegrass” style of playing. Banjo was played “hammerclaw” style; the picking styles that characterize bluegrass music was a later innovation from the African-American musical tradition.

Split Rail Fencing, found around the cabin, crop areas and the barnyard, is easily constructed by placing split “lighter’d” pine logs on top of one another in a zigzag or “worm fence” pattern. This technique enables the farmer to quickly fence former barnyard space for planting.

The farm animals are often relocated to other pens and are not specific to the number on the stations. The photos represent typical animals of the breeds described but are not necessarily the animals on the farm at this time.

The family depends on this “milch” Cow for milk and dairy products but usually not for meat. Jersey cows are the most common breed of “milch” cow used in this area. They are dairy breeds, specially bred to produce milk. Beef and leather for the family come from Cracker cattle, a semi-wild breed that the farmers allow to roam the woods and round up when needed.

Horses and mules are an important source of power for the farm. They pull the plow during planting or harvesting, pull a wagon into town, drag downed trees, and turn the cane press. They are also the only means of transportation besides walking. Mixed breed “grade” horses or cracker horses are common. Mules, a cross between a horse and a donkey, are prized as work animals because they are stronger than most horses and can survive on poorer and less feed.

The Sheep are a source of wool, leather, and sometimes meat for the farm. Their wool is shorn once each year, usually in the spring and is used to spin into yarn for woolen clothing and blankets, or as stuffing for “ticks” or mattresses.

Additional facts about sheep: One very common breed is called “Gulf Coast Native” originated from the sheep brought to Florida by the Spanish explorers. Unlike other breeds, they are adapted to Florida’s heat. Their legs have relatively little hair, keeping them cool in the Florida heat and discouraging insects.

The Hogs are an important source of meat for the family. They provide bacon, sausage, ham, ribs and chops, as well as cooking fat. Their fat is also an important ingredient used in the lye soap that is made each fall. The bristles from the hog’s hide can be used to make brushes for hair, teeth, or scrubbing.

Additional facts about Hogs: The Spanish explorers brought red hogs for fresh food when they sailed from Europe to Florida. Ossabaw Island Hogs are descendants of Spanish pigs brought to the New World over 450 years ago. These hogs resemble the Pinney Woods hogs of Cracker Florida. They are considered an endangered breed by the American Livestock Conservancy.

The Chickens provide the farm family with meat, eggs, and feathers. Their feathers are saved to fill mattresses and pillows. Chickens are often turned loose in the garden to eat insect pests. The black and white chickens are “Dominickers,” a multi-purpose breed prized for their thick feathers. They were one of the first breeds developed in America. The other various colored chickens are Dorkings, a very old breed brought by colonists. If you look closely, you may be able to see their five toes (most chickens have only four).

The Twin Crib Barn houses the feed and fodder (hay) for the many barnyard animals. It is a double “crib” (a room with space between the logs for ventilation) design using round logs and “saddle” notches at the corners. Its large overhang provides shelter for animal pens as well as storage for tools. The barn’s open rafters also provide shelter for wild animals like snakes and owls that prey on rats or mice that might eat the animals’ feed.

Additional facts about the double crib barn: The Twin Crib Barn was originally built in Levy County by Samuel Jefferson Clyatt, sometime in the 1880’s.

The Forge is a workshop used for making and repairing metal items such as horseshoes, wheel rims, plows, hooks, tools, nails and hinges. Most farmers do not have forges on their farms, so a skilled blacksmith is highly sought after. The Shiloh forge is an important source of outside income for the family.
Additional facts about the Forge: Shiloh Forge Blacksmith Shop is a reconstruction from an example in Cades Cove, Tennessee. It was built with pines harvested from an area infested with Southern pine beetle in 2002. Construction of the shop was funded by a grant from the Junior League of Gainesville. The shop was furnished with tools donated by the Florida Artisans Blacksmith Association (FABA).

BLACKSMITHING

A blacksmith was an important part of a community in the 1870s. Though he would have been skilled at making shoes for the farm horses, he also made or repaired farm implements such as plows, hoes, wagon axles, logging chains, etc. His skills were not limited to agricultural items as he also forged door hinges, fireplace fixtures, and household items like cooking forks.

COOPERING

In the 1800's barrels were commonly used for shipping and storing many products. Flour, salt pork, and nails are just a few of the things packed in barrels. By 1870 most barrels were made in factories, but barrels could still be made by hand. A craftsman called a “cooper” was a specialist in making and repairing barrels and buckets. A cooper used special tools to form the “staves” (individual pieces of the barrel) that are held together by a metal hoop or a wooden band.

The Fruit Patch provides crops which the farm family can consume or barter. Many fruits thrive in North Florida’s climate, giving the farmer profitable “cash crops.” The farm has orange, tangerine and fig trees and several blueberry patches.

The Smokehouse, located just beyond the kitchen door, is a small, and completely enclosed building used for curing, smoking, and storing meats. “Curing” is a method of treating meat with salt to preserve it without refrigeration. Smoking dries meat, keeping it free of insects and bacteria and adds flavor. Another method of storing meat is to put it in pots. “Potted meat” is cooked, and then stored in pots with a thick layer of fat over the top to keep out air, insects and bacteria.

The kitchen is typical of a detached kitchen that is an addition to the original cabin. This structure is separated from the main cabin by a “dog trot” (a covered walkway). Kitchens are detached to reduce the hazard of fire consuming the entire dwelling and because woodstove cooking creates a lot of heat. The kitchen has a small pantry, a cooking area with wood stove, and a dining area.

Additional facts about the Clark Kitchen: The Clark Kitchen was built in 1900. It was not the original kitchen for the cabin, but is very similar in style. It is constructed of “board and batten” (two wide boards with a narrow board covering the gap) indicating lumber produced by a local sawmill.
FOOD/COOKING

The typical Cracker family ate breakfast after milking and feeding the livestock (usually before dawn), a main meal at noon (dinner) and leftovers in the evening (supper). Corn was a major component of each meal, eaten as grits or cornbread. Pork was the most often served meat. Menus were supplemented with wild game such as deer, squirrel, turkey, bear, and with native nuts, berries and "greens." Vegetables from the kitchen garden would round out the diet. Sweeteners such as "white" sugar were costly and most Crackers preferred the use of cane syrup in cooking and eating.

Vegetables and fruits could be dried or canned. In general, the diet was plain and did not include much variety. It was often described as "grits, greens and gravy" for most meals.

LAUNDRY

Laundry would generally be done on a regular schedule, sometimes only once a month. Clean clothes would be worn to church or other special occasions. Laundry day would start with building a fire in the yard under a large cauldron of water to be heated to boiling. The clothes would be scrubbed with lye soap on a washboard and boiled to remove oils and dirt. The process was very harsh and wore the material while leaving a grayish soap residue.

MAKING A HOME

The single family farm was typically an isolated patch of land—mostly pine flatwoods or hammock. These settlers raised their families in isolation with houses built from the land. Logs and lumber were cut from nearby stands of trees, shaped by hand, and fitted one timber at a time. The pioneers built out in the open, in a place cleared of any trees and underbrush, for fear of fire.

Pine needles and any other debris were raked and swept away from around the house for the same reason. Frequent lightening strikes of the tall pines could ignite fires which could wipe out their home and all their earthly possessions.

Single room or "single pen" was the first construction effort of any pioneering homesteader. Log cabins in the South have porch-stands of trees, shaped by hand, and fitted one timber at a time. The pioneers built out in the open, in a place cleared of any trees and underbrush, for fear of fire.

Clothes were hung from wall pegs. Trunks were used for travel to the family's new home and could later store extra bedding or heirlooms (items kept in the family for their memorable value).

HOME FURNISHINGS

Furnishings were scant and were mostly handmade. Furniture in the cabin was sparse but included a simple "rope bed" (ropes provided the support for the "tick" or mattress), table and chairs. The "tick" was stuffed with corn shucks, Spanish moss or feathers. Clothes were hung from wall pegs. Trunks were used for travel to the family's new home and could later store extra bedding or heirlooms (items kept in the family for their memorable value).

Lighting was provided by open windows in the day time, and by the fireplace, candles, or kerosene lanterns at night. Before the addition of a kitchen, the fireplace would be used for open-hearth cooking as well as heating. The baby's cradle was placed between the fireplace and bed for warmth and mother's convenience. The washtub in the main room held a pitcher and bowl for washing the hands and face. The spinning wheel and loom were used to produce yarn and cloth for the family's needs.

In the kitchen a "pie safe" (a cabinet with screen sides and door) protected food from insects and rodents. Cooking was done on the woodstove. The high worktable made the constant preparation of food easier. Kitchen utensils were stored along this work table or hung on the wall for quick access. Large tools were also needed in the kitchen area, such as a corn cracker, grain grinder, butter churn, or sausage grinder. The pantry allowed for some storage of dry goods and tools. The ironing was done after washing day in the kitchen. "Sad irons" were heated on the stove and then used on the ironing board. Every item that could be ironed was, as it smoothed and softened the clothes and towels.

CLOTHING

Clothing was one of the items in short supply just after the war. Northern mills continued to produce ready-to-wear items; however, lack of money prevented most rural people from buying ready-to-wear. In most farm families members had a minimum of clothing, most of which was produced at home. People wore whatever they could obtain. Rural people did not spend much time worrying about proper fit, matching patterns, etc. Women patched their dresses, cut off bottoms to make skirts, made petticoats from ragged skirts, and turned unusable clothes into quilts or rugs.

Women owned one or two dresses of simple cloth such as cotton calico or wool. Many colorful cotton prints and patterns were available, though outfits were often seen with miss-matched prints and colors. It was not uncommon to see a family in matching clothes, meaning that they had saved money by purchasing a single bolt of cloth. A long apron was worn over the dress to protect it from soiling. Women wore a hat or sunbonnet when working outside. Hair was long, parted down the middle, and tied up at the neck. Underneath the dress they wore a "corset" or " stays" (a supportive layer that provided the smooth, upright figure of the time), a “chemise” (a slip-like garment with short sleeves), “drawers” (mid calf length panties) and one or more petticoats. Girls dressed much like their mothers with long skirts and long sleeves. Shoes were worn outdoors, but indoors women and children often went barefooted.

Men and boys wore long trousers with button flies and no back pockets, and a long sleeved collarless shirt. Men almost always wore a vest. Men also wore "braces" or suspenders buttoned to pants to hold them in place. A broad-brimmed hat was worn outdoors. In cool weather, a wool "sack" coat would be worn. Underwear was either a "union suit", which was a one piece wrist-
ankle undergarment, or cotton drawers, usually running the full length of the leg. Because of hazards of snakes, scorpions, etc. shoes were worn by men more than by women.

Baby boys and girls were dressed in long dresses, short or long sleeved until about age five. As they grew to toddlers the skirts were shortened to give more freedom of movement. Boys’ outfits were decorated in a more masculine fashion. Older children’s clothing copied the styles of adults.

**QUILTING**

One of the skills taught by every mother to her daughters was sewing. Not only were most clothes made at home, but warm bedding (quilts) was also produced at home. Quilting provided sewing practice for girls. They would start with a simple pattern and advance to an increasingly more difficult pattern as their skills improved. Quilting was an opportunity to recycle all types of fabric, usually worn-out clothing, into something useful. Intricate patterns in the quilts were also a way for Cracker women to bring color and beauty into their homes.

**BASKET MAKING**

Baskets were important storage containers as well as being useful for carrying items. Cracker baskets could be made of pine straw or oak “splints” (thin strips of oak wood). There were many different shaped baskets, each shape determined by the basket’s function.

**SPINNING**

Because of material shortages brought about by the Civil War, many families revived the art of spinning in the home. Both wool and cotton could be spun but some preparation of the raw material was needed. First the wool and cotton must be “carded” (combed with wire brushes) to remove dirt (or seeds from the cotton) and to straighten the fibers. This prepared material could then be spun with either a “drop spindle” (a hand held device looking like a long handled top) or the spinning wheel. Most girls began their spinning lessons with the drop spindle. After the spinning process, the yarn could be used for weaving or knitting.

**WEAVING**

After the yarn is spun, it is transferred to the loom. The yarn is wound on a “shuttle” and the shuttle is then passed between warp threads on the loom. Foot pedals open the path for the shuttle to pass through the warp. The cross strings, or weft, are tightened against each other by pulling a “beater bar” against them, then the finished cloth is wound onto a roller at the bottom of the loom. This lengthy process produces cloth that can be used for clothes, blankets, rugs, etc. The loom found in Hogan’s cabin is a floor loom.

**HEALTHCARE**

Some of the most common diseases of the day included yellow fever, dysentery, typhoid, and tuberculosis (consumption). In 1871, Gainesville suffered a yellow fever epidemic lasting from November to December. This outbreak killed approximately 50 citizens in four weeks. The Shakers were the first to produce patent medicine. These medicines were made from herbal extracts and were of good quality for the time period. Seeing the success of the Shakers, many people began producing “miracle cures” that were advertised to cure everything from ingrown toenail to baldness and anything in between. Women on farms were expected to treat most sickness and injury in their family using herb lore and home remedies passed down from mother to daughter. Doctors were used only in extreme circumstances. Not all of the herbs could cure all ailments, but a great deal of the time they were as effective as, and safer than, accepted medicines which sometimes contained mercury, lead, arsenic or sulfuric acid.

Toothbrushes of hog bristles or tree twigs such as dogwood or sweet gum were used. Homemade toothpaste of charcoal, soda, chalk, orrisroot, and peppermint oil was also used. People bathed much less frequently than they do today. Therefore most people had quite an odor. However, since everyone had an odor, it was not considered offensive.

**KITCHEN GARDEN**

The Kitchen Garden is used to grow herbs and vegetables that the family will eat during the year. The fence around the perimeter keeps out deer and other animals that might eat the family’s store of food. Due to Florida’s temperate climate, there are two growing seasons: cool and hot. Cold hearty leaf and root crops such as collards, broccoli and carrots are planted in the fall for winter harvest, while heat loving crops such as potatoes, beans and squash are planted in the spring for summer harvest. The family relies heavily on the kitchen garden to supplement their diet. In addition to vegetables, the kitchen garden also provides herbs for seasoning and for medicinal purposes.

**CHILDREN’S CORNER**

Frame Puzzle (Bessie and her cousin)

Make the frame of four words of eight letters each, so that the letter A shall come at each of the four corners where the words intersect. The words mean: Sweet-smelling, to make a scale, a fillet, an ecclesiastic.

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Easy Enigma (N.K.K)

My first is in dark, but not in light;
My second is in girl, but not in boy;
My third is in peace, but not in light;
My fourth in mourning, not in joy;
My fifth is in flowers, but not in weeds;
My sixth is in kind, but not crueld;
My seventh is in drives, and also in leads;
And my whole is a beautiful jewel.

Easy Square-Word (K)

1. Soothing ointment.
2. A bitter-tasting plant.
3. Knowledge gained from reading or study.
4. Mild of temper.