

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE WDC

THE WATTERS DISTRICT COUNCIL for Historical Preservation, Inc. (WDC) was officially chartered under the laws of the State of Georgia on March 2nd, 2010. The function and constitutional purpose of the WDC, as given in its by-laws, states that it is to be: “an entity by which items and records of historical significance” are to “be recorded, maintained, and preserved” and made “accessible by public display, open records and other means for, and to, the benefit of area residents, students and other interested parties”.

NOTWITHSTANDING, with such a mandate in place, it would be inappropriate not to present the history of the WDC organization itself, and the twenty-year series of events that led to its founding in 2010. Public efforts to recognize historical characters/events started in 1990 with the naming of the County-owned, 23-acre park and Boy Scout cabin at Shannon. The naming ceremony took place in the old historical courthouse building in Rome Georgia when the Floyd County Board of Commissioners presented a proclamation that officially named the property “Shag Williams Park”. Mr. Sharon Henry “Shag” Williams (1907 – 1996) was the organizer and founder of Shannon’s Boy Scout Troop 30 in the early Thirties. Shag was also the Troop’s first Scoutmaster. Shag and his scouts built their first “scout hut”, a log cabin, in a wooded and secluded area of Brighton Mills’ property at Shannon. The cabin only lasted some two or three years before it was destroyed by fire. Since arson was suspected, the Mill’s manager, Mr. Julian K. Morrison, recommended that the Scouts should build back in an area of the Mill’s property where “we can keep an eye on it”. So, Shag and his scouts went to work, and constructed the second Scout Cabin in a more central spot next to what was then the baseball park. The Scout Cabin is still located on that same spot of ground, today.

IT WAS SOME FORTY YEARS LATER... when Floyd County’s Board of Commissioners presented a proclamation officially naming the property, surrounding the Scout

Cabin, as “Shag Williams Park”. At that occasion the Commission was honored to have Shag and five of his original Boy Scouts present at the event. These six individuals had been part of the group who had built both the first and the second Scout cabins.



ONLY MONTHS AFTER the naming ceremony of Shag Williams Park, Troop 30’s second Scout cabin was destroyed by fire in February of 1991. At this time, the Cabin and surrounding property belonged to Floyd County. As it turned out, since having built those first two log cabins for the Scouts, Shag Williams and his son Charles had become contract builders of log houses. So, now comes Shag Williams and those same five Scouts who had been at the naming ceremony... James Nasworthy, Sam Talley, Malcom Couey, Manual Smith and Roy Powell... all qualified, ready and volunteering to help the County build what would now become Shannon’s third Boy Scout Cabin. Floyd County readily

Blaze kindles memory

Old scouts recall constructing hut

By JOHANNA VAN DER WAL
Staff Writer

Several of the original Boy Scouts who built the Scout hut in Shannon in the 1930s felt déjà vu when it burned last month. Last month's fire is the second in 58 years, and the second time arson has been suspected, said 71-year-old Malcolm Couey, 113 Rollingwood Circle, one of the Scouts who built the hut.

"I felt depressed to no end," Couey said.

The fire, which took firefighters about three hours to extinguish, started on an outside wall and eventually

Staff photo by Paul O'Mara

James Nasworthy, Sam Talley, Malcolm Couey, Roy Powell and Manuel Smith, original members of Boy Scout Troop 30, stand behind their Scoutmaster Shag Williams at the Shannon Scout hut.

in Shannon, rounded up all the young boys there and proposed to start Boy Scout Troop 30.

chimney also had to be built, Williams said.

"We knew of a rock mason

suspected. "The Scouts were broken-hearted, but ready to build again," Williams said.

accepted their offer... quite possibly because at the time Shannon’s own Jack Dickey was the Chairman of Floyd County’s Board of Commissioners.

THE REBUILDING of this historical structure began almost immediately in the most unorthodox, “politically incorrect” method imaginable. There were none of the typical studies made. No architect or building contractor was engaged. The project was a complete joint effort between local government and its citizens. Shag Williams

and Jack Dickey designed the building and oversaw its construction. The County's bridge foreman with his prison inmate crew did the construction. Local industry and citizens donated furnishings, lighting, curtains, etc. The resulting structure turned out to be one of the best structured, most economically built and usable facilities the citizens of Floyd County have... to this very day. The keys to the new facility were passed out to various leaders of the Community including the Scoutmaster, the Senior Citizen's Club, Roy Powell, Jack Dickey and others.

THE BOY AND GIRL SCOUTS, along with the local "Seniors" group continued with their weekly meetings at the Cabin. The Cabin also became the new voting place for the Watters District precinct. In an effort led by local historian Roy Powell, citizens of the Shannon Community and surrounding area then started collecting large amounts of historical artifacts, data and old photographs, which could be stored and displayed at the Cabin. The amount of this material was nothing less than astounding... especially for a community as small as Shannon. Not only did the Group collect up a large trove of historical items, but through Powell's diligent research many here-to-now forgotten or unknown facts of local history were revealed, such as: how Shannon got its name, why and how Brighton Mills came to Floyd County and from whom Brighton bought its 1,000-acre development site back in the Twenties.

SO, FROM ROY POWELL and the "Seniors Group" came the establishment of Shannon's Optimist International®. The newly organized Shannon Optimist Club quickly took up the continuation of historical preservation. So, starting in early 2000, the Shannon Optimist Club became the community's backbone for the preservation and promotion of local history along with the heritage of the political area of Floyd County known as the Watters Precinct (District). The Shannon Optimist Club was originally organized, and chartered, with some thirty-two members on its rolls. Among them were community patriots and leaders including: Shag Williams, Coach N. S. Woodard, Roy Powell, Col. Waldo Dodd, Robert "Bunky" Jones, Pharmacist Bobby Jones, Mill President Khon Sanders, Richard White, J. D. Earl, David Willis, Marti

Baird, Fred Fricks, Thad Rush, Chuck Huffsteller, Roy White, Dr. Nevin Jones, Pete O'Dillion, Dr. Seaborn Whatley, Jack Dickey and Dr. J. R. McCurdy.

THEN, FROM THE SHANNON OPTIMIST, and its members, came the sponsorship of both the Shannon Boy and Girl Scout Troops. Along with member, Dr. Nevin Jones, the Club planned and carried out the highly successful 2002 centennial celebration of Model School. The left-over funds from that event were used to create the Model and Johnson School Foundation, Inc. The new Foundation's incorporators, directors and officers were mostly Shannon Optimist Club Members.

SHANNON OPTIMISTS WERE also responsible for, and paid for, the re-erection of the historic WWII school monument at Model School's new campus in 1996. At that time Optimist member Roy Powell brought it to the Club's attention that there was another WWII monument at the flagpole in front of what was then Galey and Lord Mills. That monument had been erected and dedicated on November 10th, 1946. So, the Club then included that monument's recognition along with the dedication of the School monument during their Memorial Day Ceremony of 1996. This event came about exactly fifty years after the 1946 dedication, and thereby started the annual Shannon Memorial Day event, which continues unto this day.

IT WAS LATER LEARNED that the Shannon WWII memorial marker, erected only a year after the ending of WWII was, and is, probably the first such monument erected in the USA in remembrance of WWII fatalities. So, throughout all these accomplishments, the Shannon Optimists continued to amass one of the largest collections of historical pictures and artifacts in the area. Indeed, these had been the great years of Shannon Optimist. But now, the membership was growing old, and many of the charter members were no longer living. Newer and younger prospects were not joining, and weekly meetings turned into monthly meetings. National due requirements were becoming hard to meet. So finally, it was decided to shut down and disband, all together, the affiliation with Optimist International.

THE DISBANDMENT from Optimist International did not diminish the group's momentum, however... not one bit. For by not having regional and international obligations, the group became more able to concentrate on its own local projects... especially those of historical significance. So, on March 2nd of 2010 the Watters District Council for Historical Preservation, Inc. (WDC) was incorporated under the laws of the State of Georgia. The purpose and object of the entity is pretty-well summed up in its title, "Historical Preservation". Early on, the WDC established an Internet WEB Page. This Site provides an excellent medium for archiving and making available the great history and heritage of the Shannon Community. Today, the WDC continues the tradition its founders envisioned and promoted... going back to the days of Hermitage's bauxite mining, Mr. Shannon's sawmill, Ridge Valley Iron Works, Brighton Mills, Bells Ferry, Model Boarding School, Shanda Farms and many more community ventures of the past. It's all available and continues to be recorded at www.wattersdistrictcouncil.org.