

Berrien Sesquicentennial

Flat Creek Scene of First Election Consolidation

Editor's Note: *The Berrien Press* will join its readers in celebrating the 150th birthday of Berrien County with historical articles about our beloved county each week for the rest of the year. Some articles will be reprints from other historical documents. Others will be original works. This week we look at the first election for county officers.

This article originally appeared in the February 16, 1956 edition of *The Nashville Herald* with a notation that the information was taken from W. Henry Griffin's writings.

The election returns for the first election for county officers held in the new county were consolidated at Flat Creek, a community center about four and one-half miles North of the present city of Nashville, where they had had a postoffice of that name since 1847.

The place was more centrally located than any other community in the county; in fact there was only one other public place within the new county, that place being known later as Milltown (*Ed. Note:* now Lakeland), but at this particular time the community was called Alapaha, there having been a postoffice at that place since 1838.

County Starts at Country Store

William D. Griffin owned mills and gins and a country store at Flat Creek, and in addition to this operated a prosperous farm, all of which he had obtained from his cousin, Noah Griffin, who, with the aid of his sons and slaves had built up from the wilderness who had previously moved to Mud Creek Mills in Clinch County, hence the requirement in the Act creating Berrien County that the work of county organization begin at William D. Griffin's store.

Location of Griffin's Store

The site of William D. Griffin's store, important only because of its early association with the history of Berrien County, is passed by the present State Highway running from Nashville to the present town of Alapaha, four and one-half miles from Nashville. The stream, over which the highway passes, is spanned by a small bridge and has been known from the earliest history as Flat Creek.

The little slope just to the right of the highway and sloping down to the old dam and mill pit, long ago washed out and devoid of building, is the exact spot whereon the "store" was located. It was about sixty yards south of the mill race as it appears today.

Officers Take Charge

Immediately after this election consolidation the officers elected entered upon the discharge of their duties and before fall approached a new county had been located, new citizens began flowing in and old citizens changed their places of residence, a term of Superior Court had been held and other activities characteristic of new conditions and boom times were in evidence everywhere.

County Site Started

The new county site had been laid out and christened and stores, shops and eating houses and other industries had been launched, where only a few months before there had been a farm and cow pens.

Nashville's present court house and public square is the identical spot formerly occupied by Emanuel Griner's cowpens. Previous to the creation of Berrien County there had been for many years a farm and public inn located at this point on the Coffee Road, the only public thoroughfare of the county.

First Berrien County Elected Officials

Ordinary

John Lindsey

Clerk

R.A. Peoples

Sheriff

John (Jack) Studstill

Tax Receiver

John A. Money

Tax Collector

John M. Futch

Surveyor

Seaborn J. Bradford,

Coroner

James Dodson,

**Representative to the
Legislature**

D.F. McDonald