

# Okaloosa Historical Quarterly

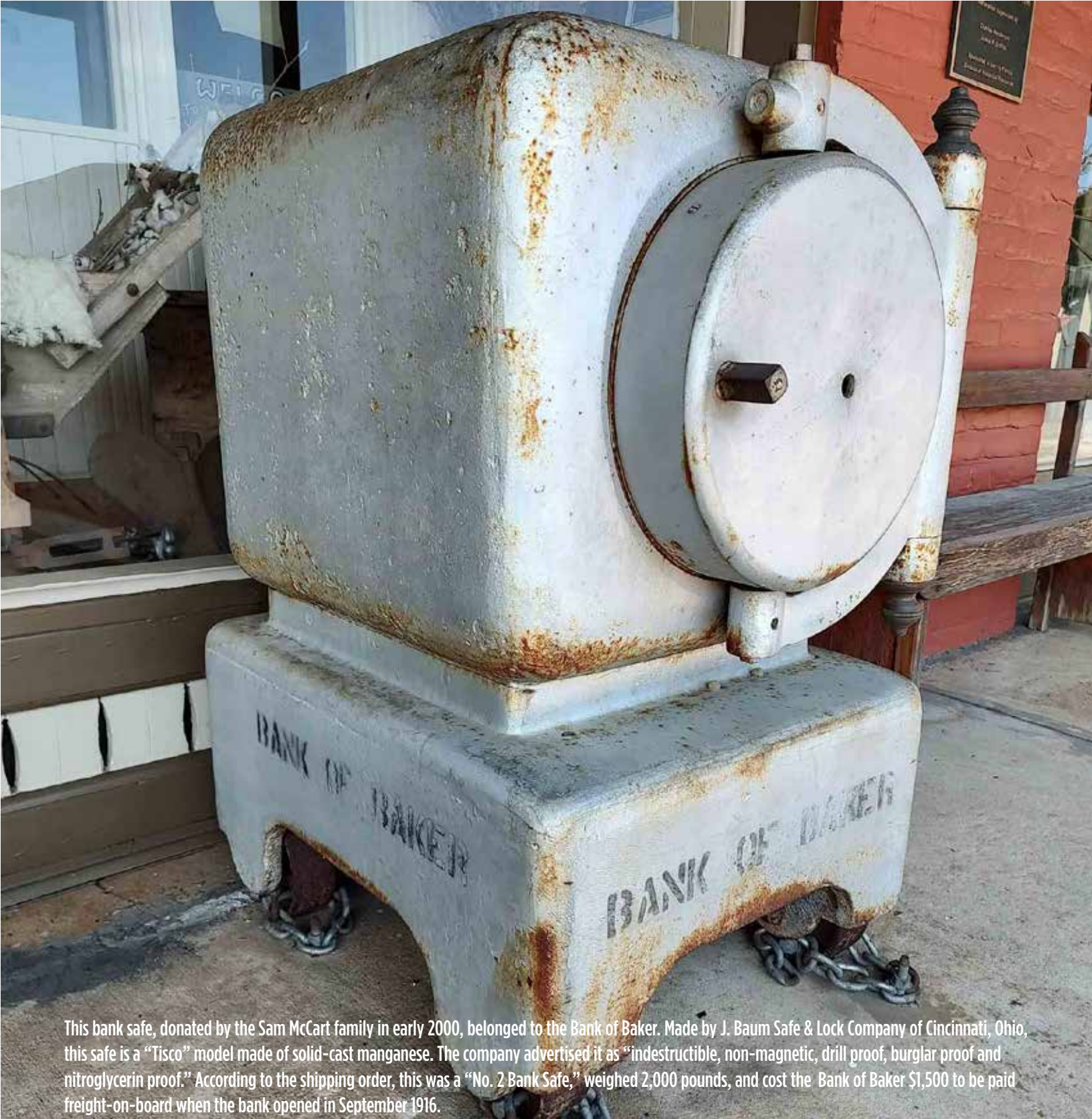
North Okaloosa Historical  
Association, Inc.



Vol. 4, Issue 1  
Winter 2024



Discover. Experience. Connect.



This bank safe, donated by the Sam McCart family in early 2000, belonged to the Bank of Baker. Made by J. Baum Safe & Lock Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, this safe is a "Tisco" model made of solid-cast manganese. The company advertised it as "indestructible, non-magnetic, drill proof, burglar proof and nitroglycerin proof." According to the shipping order, this was a "No. 2 Bank Safe," weighed 2,000 pounds, and cost the Bank of Baker \$1,500 to be paid freight-on-board when the bank opened in September 1916.

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Winter 2024, Vol. 4, Issue 1

**North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., Mission**

The mission of the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., is to collect, preserve, and promote the history of Okaloosa County, the northwest Florida Panhandle, and the surrounding communities.

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The Baker Block Museum is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization of the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., and is managed by its Board of Directors.

The *Okaloosa Historical Quarterly* is published by the North Okaloosa Historical Society, Inc., and is an authorized publication for distribution to Museum members and visitors. Contents of the *OHQ* is copyrighted, all rights reserved.

Items to be considered for the *OHQ* may be submitted to the Museum at P.O. Box 186, Baker, FL 32531 or emailed to bakermuseumnewsletter@gmail.com. Deadline for submission is March 15, June 15, Sept. 15, and Dec. 15 for consideration in the next quarterly issue. Articles received after the deadline will be considered for future use. All submissions will be edited for accuracy, clarity, brevity, and conformance with *OHQ* guidelines.

**On the cover:** The Bank of Baker was located on the northeast corner at the crossroads of what is now Georgia Avenue and State Roads 4/189, across the street from the Baker Block Museum.

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**FOLLOW ON**

bakerblockmuseum.org



# Baker Arts Festival

**Saturday, April 20, 2024**

**9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Heritage Park**

**For more info:  
850-537-5714  
[bakermuseum.org](http://bakermuseum.org)**



# Director's Notes



**A**s a non-profit organization, the Baker Block Museum depends on volunteer support to keep our programs running and our doors open. Without the generous contributions from our supporters, we would not exist. Along those lines, I'd like to recognize a few of the people who assisted with our end-of-year activities.

First, thank you to everyone who made our second annual Creepy Cabins event a huge success. We expanded it this year to include children's games and an outdoor movie. However, none of it would have been possible without the support of our volunteers: Games, Donald Simons and Melissa Barrett. Refreshments, Brenda Russell. All-around handyman, Phillip Garrett. Creepy Cabins organizers Tracy Curenton and Sharry Rustin. And finally, what's a haunted house without zombies? A special thanks to our zombies Doug Black, Austin Deason, Reina Elliot, Doug and Konnie Hibbing, Heather Hill, and Daniel Turner. They put the "creep" in Creepy Cabins.

Second, thanks to those who helped with our annual Heritage Day festival. Board member Brenda Russell and her crew of Raymond Russell, Mary Beth Jackson, and others took care of the festival food. Brenda also arranged the musical entertainment for the day, and Raymond and Keith Rustin set up the stage.

This year promises to be as fun-filled as last year. We're kicking off our 3rd Saturday events with a dedication of our genealogy and research library January 20. On February 17, the Florida Public Archaeology Network will give the presentation, "Tombstone Tales." And on April 20, we're hosting our third annual Baker Arts Festival in the Heritage Park. Vendor forms are available on our website at [bakerblockmuseum.org/events](http://bakerblockmuseum.org/events) and on page 32.

We have more fun lined up, so stay tuned to our website and Facebook page for updates through the year.

*Ann Spann*



The Museum's second annual Creepy Cabins expanded to a two-night event on October 20 and 21. The cabins were haunted by zombies with surprises around—and under—every corner.

# MUSEUM NEWS

# 3rd Saturday



The most-heard request from last year's Creepy Cabins was, "we want more." So more was added, in the form of children's games, free popcorn, and the 1989 movie, "Little Monsters" with Howie Mandel and Fred Savage, under the Pavilion.



Clockwise from left: Museum volunteer, Melissa Barrett, helps with the can toss as volunteer Phillip Garrett looks on.

North Okaloosa Historical Association board member, Brenda Russell, dishes out free popcorn (top).

Volunteer Donald Simon watches as kids try their hands at the witch hat ring toss (above).

It's a family affair as one of the smallest visitors tries her hand at the can toss (left).





# 3rd Saturday



## Heritage Day

Mostly cloudy skies didn't keep the crowds away at November's 17th annual Heritage Day festival. Vendor space was a sellout, filled with food, arts and crafts, and information of all sorts.

There was music under the pavilion, hamburgers and hot dogs for sale, a quilting demonstration in the dog trot cabin, and a large antique tractor display set up in front of the Museum. Even Smoky Bear, courtesy of Blackwater Forestry, showed up for photographs with kids of all ages.



(Top) Smoky Bear warmly greets one boy while another contemplates the large furry bear standing before him during the Heritage Festival.

(Left) Visitors chat about cane syrup set up at the Park's syrup kettle, a permanent display in the Museum's Heritage Park.



What's better than fresh-squeezed lemonade? Tractors, of course. This year, a quilting demonstration was set up in the dog-trot cabin.



Left: Kids got hands-on experience on a hand-cranked corn sheller.

Above: The steps of the Otahite post office make a perfect place for a family to enjoy a hamburger or hot dog.

Below: Heritage Day visitors enjoy gospel music under the pavilion.



## GROWING THE COLLECTION



one side (top) and a tenaculum on the other side (bottom). The instrument can be found in the Museum with other medical items on display.

### Pocket surgical instrument

This pocket surgical instrument was used in the 1890s by Robert Small, an Indiana doctor. It was donated to the Museum in November by Doug Walker from Brewton, Alabama, who lives part time in Holt.

The tool was made by George Tiemann of New York City and bears a patent mark of January 1864. Tiemann, who immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1826, was considered one of the finest surgical instrument makers of the 19th century.

The 3 1/2-inch double-bladed pocket instrument has a tortoise shell exterior and is equipped with a gum lancet on

### Certificate of deposit holder



This plastic certificate of deposit holder from the First Bank of Crestview was donated to the Museum by North Okaloosa Historical Association board member Nina

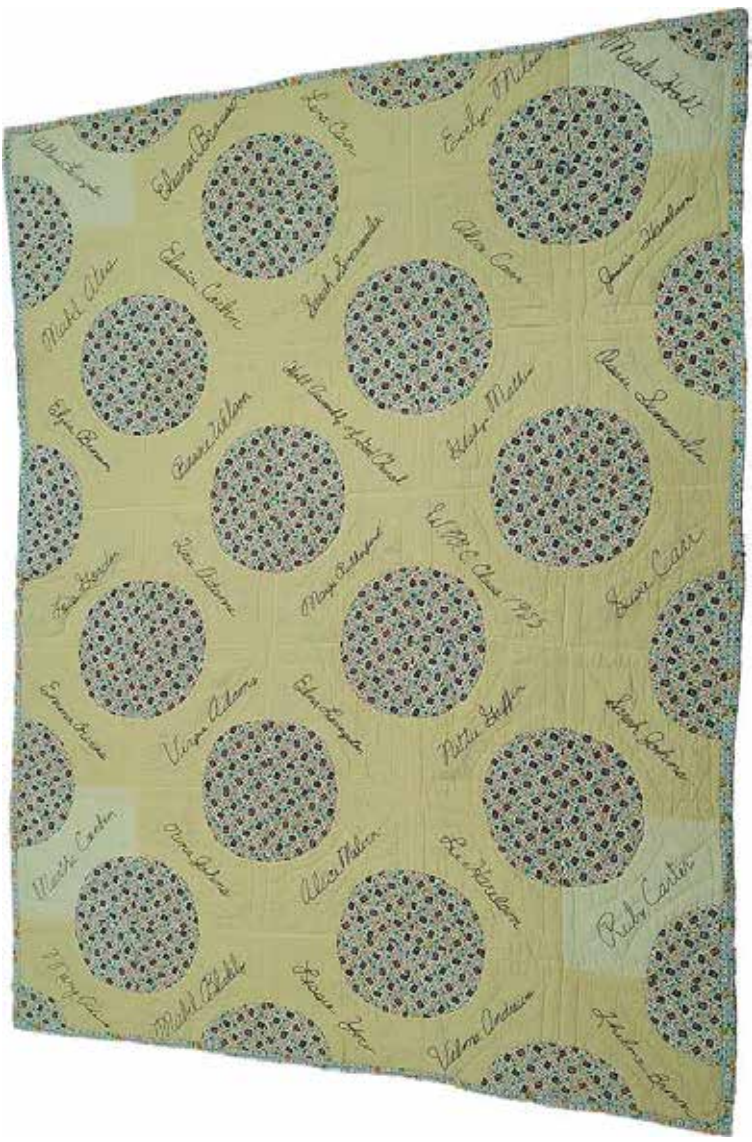
Adams of Holt in November. It came from her family collection, the Johns, also of Holt. This is on display with other financial artifacts in the Museum's display case.

# Holt School 8th grade diploma

Norma Lee Wilson received her grammar school diploma from the 8th grade, her ticket to high school, March 27, 1931. Holt School principal at the time was J. Perry Hodge.



# Holt Assembly of God signature quilt



Shirley Parker, who grew up in Holt, donated this signature quilt to the Museum. It was sewn by the Women's Missionary Council Club of the Holt Assembly of God Church in 1955 and contains a number of familiar Holt names.

Nellie F. Bowers, a civilian employee at Eglin Air Force Base, received two certificates of accomplishment in 1959 and 1961.

In 1959, she was awarded with a sustained superior performance award (right). And in 1961, she received an outstanding performance rating (below).

Both recognitions were awarded while she was assigned to the Air Proving Ground Center at Eglin's Air Research and Development Command.





## Escambia Farms wins “C” cage title in 1956

In 1956, first-year basketball coach Dan Green took the smallest high school in Florida and produced a state championship boys basketball team. With a total enrollment of only 28 boys in the upper four grades, Green proved that practice, discipline, and determination could produce champions.

In the semi-final game during the district playoff, the Yellow Jackets of Escambia Farms upset the much-favored Laurel Hill Hobos who had beaten the Jackets twice in regular play. As the final buzzer sounded, co-captain LeRoy Madden was fouled with the game tied. Madden hit both free throws to seal the victory. The Jackets’ final district game was against Poplar Springs with Escambia Farms ahead by four points.

From District to State playoffs in Gainesville, Florida, Escambia Farms disposed of Jennings 48 to 40 after a seven-point halftime deficit in a quarterfinal game, then dusted off Hilliard 51 to 28 in the semifinal game before moving to the final, taking on

powerhouse and highly favored Wewahitchka who came to State with a 25 and 2 win/loss record. At the half, it was Wewahitchka 36 to 32. However, the team pulled together, and with Howard Phillips, a 16-year-old guard, icing the cake with eight straight foul shots in the last four minutes, it ensured a Yellow Jacket victory by a score of 67 to 60.

Fred Peacock, who shot 22 points and snagged 19 rebounds, and Tommy Parker, with 10 points and 18 rebounds, were named to the All-state Class C team.

Members of the starting team were Fred Peacock, Tommy Parker, LeRoy Madden, Robert Cunningham, and Howard Phillips. Additional team members included Jerry Angle, Coleman Madden, Royce Cunningham, Clyde Steele, and LeRoy Martin.

The basketball shoes above belonged to Phillips and were donated by his wife, Ruby, in November following his death September 4, 2023. They are on display in the Museum with other area school items.

MAR 56



**The 1955-1956 Escambia Farms Yellow Jackets Class C State Champions:** (standing from left) Leroy Madden, Fred Peacock, Coach Dan Green, Tommy Parker, Robert Cunningham, Howard Phillips; (seated) Leroy Martin, Royce Cunningham, Jerry Angle.



From left: Howard Phillips, Tommy Parker, Fred Peacock, Robert Cunningham, Leroy Madden.

**The Philosopher of Escambia Farms**

## Dan Green: A Man and His Work

A few years back, Dan Green enjoyed the double honor of being one of the most feared and respected fellows around Escambia because of his great basketball teams. And respected because of the man inside the stubby frame.

When Dan Green put five boys on the floor to play basketball, you could bet they represented the best five Escambia Farms had to offer. They, in fact, were probably the only five.

Dan Green never had to worry about numbers or people running into each other at practice sessions. There simply weren't that many folks running around the campus at Escambia Farms, a small community near Baker.

Oh, some years he'd have eight, 10 boys to work with. Those were the good times.

"Most of the time we only had 22 people in all four grades," Dan said the other day while reliving some of his past.

Escambia Farms is still there today. Not the school, but the community. And Dan says they even have phones now. In his era, the 50s, telephones were something only talked about, not over.

"Heck, most of our players had never seen a restaurant, let alone a phone. You got to remember my boys worked on farms. When we finished practice in the afternoon they would have to go home to do their chores."

"I suppose you might say I held a captive audience. Not like today when the kids have so much to do. My boys played because they wanted to play. And they knew when the day was over there was more work to do at home."

Dan took that small offering in talent and beat just about everything that moved on a basketball court. He went to the state tournament in Gainesville — with all of 10 players — and won the thing. The year was 1958.

"I had the greatest bunch of boys in the world to work with in those days. I never had to worry. They gave me 100 per cent every time they walked onto the floor." Boys like Tommy Parker, LeRay Madden, Fred Peacock, Leroy Martin, Clyde Steele, Robert Cunningham, Howard Phillips, Coleman Madden, and Wesley Gatewood, just to mention a few.

And the coach gave 100 per cent of himself to his boys.

By 100 per cent, Dan means five boys giving their total for four quarters. Or two against five for a half, sound strange? Listen to this.

"I remember once we fouled out three of our players in the first half. I believe we were playing Laurel Hill. Well, we played that second half with only two boys." Escambia Farms lost by only 45 points. Against the odds, the score should have been 141.



**Fred Brown**  
News Sports  
Writer

The 100 per cent of Dan Green was coaching and working with kids. Driving them in practice to excel in the teeth of defeat. And driving them home after his work was done.

"I guess I must have driven 100 miles a day getting the boys home. If they ever tell you they had to walk, well . . . I wouldn't let them walk home. I might run them a little," he said with an ever so slight smile.

Money was about as scarce as diamonds around Escambia Farms. When Dan wanted uniforms or his team, they had to sell cars to earn the money. Those uniforms lasted during the eight or nine years he coached that team.

"They really knew how to make clothes last in those days," he said jokingly.

Dan doesn't coach any more. Nor does he live in Escambia Farms. But he still works with kids in a foster grandparents program in Fort Walton Beach.

"I don't go to games very much any more either. I get to coaching too much."

Would he like to coach today?  
Not for anything.

"Now, I don't want to make any of my coaching buddies sad, but I wouldn't be in it for any amount today. The kids have too many outside interests. Too many things going on for them today. Why, some even have their own cars to drive around."

Then he'd laugh and look away. You could tell his mind was shifting back the years to the days his boys played the game.

"I was the luckiest guy in the world," he said. The sparkle in his eyes made you believe he was right.

As a friend of mine once said, I wish I knew more Dan Greens.

*Pensacola News, October 30, 1968, page 9*



The team celebrates its state championship with Coach Dan Green.



# SPONSORS

The North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., would like to thank our sponsors for their continued support of the Baker Block Museum.



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Trevia Buckner, CPA



The Restroom



## BAKER AUTO PARTS





# Little Free Library<sup>®</sup> in the Heritage Park

Take a Book. Share a Book.

**Did you know the Museum has TWO Little Free Library<sup>®</sup> book exchanges in the Jeanette and Charles Henderson Heritage Park? The little red schoolhouse library near the day care center has children's books while the cabin library facing Georgia Avenue has reading material for grownups.**

**The libraries are near large oak trees with bench seating so readers can sit and enjoy their book selections.**

**Both libraries are registered with the Little Free Library<sup>®</sup> system.**



# Explosion Takes Lives of 17 Men At Eglin Field

*It was a dark day at Eglin Field during World War II when the base experienced its largest single loss of life in the history of the base.*

by Stephanie Holcombe

In 1943, members of the 867th Engineering Aviation Battalion were working on the Eglin Proving Grounds when an accidental explosion took the lives of 17 U.S. Army Air Corps servicemen. Another 51 men were injured in the blast. Of the 17 killed, 15 were African American troops assigned to the civil engineering unit whose mission was to construct, repair, and camouflage small overseas airfields in desolate areas at lightning speed.

During World War II, the War Department activated 157 self-contained engineering aviation battalions. Of those 48 were segregated African American units, known as “colored” battalions. The 867th EAB was aligned under the 93rd Engineer Aviation Regiment that served in the European theater of operation during the war. These battalions trained at stateside bases such as Eglin. In the case of the 867th EAB, the training mission included cutting through dense forest and building new roads, buildings, and bridges, transforming Eglin’s landscape into the test range it is today.

EGLIN FIELD, Fla., July 12.—(Special)—Two officers and 15 enlisted men were killed by an accidental explosion here this afternoon. Fifty-one others were injured. Although the extent of their injuries is not yet certain, most of the men are not thought to be seriously hurt.

Captain William W. Lang, public relations officer of the field, said that the cause of the accident has not been determined. A board of officers appointed by Brig.-Gen. Grandison Gardner, commanding officer of the air force proving ground command, is making an investigation.

Captain Lang said that names of the dead would not be released until next of kin had been notified.

He said the men were engaged in clearing out stumps at the time of the accident. The accident occurred at approximately 5 o'clock.

On July 12, 1943, members of the 867th EAB were working on the routine range clearing of trees and stumps on Eglin Field. When an explosive failed to go off, enlisted men followed their lieutenants out to the targeted area to see what the problem was. Unfortunately, the explosive detonated, killing and injuring members of the unit.

Eglin Field issued a short press release that stated the men were “removing stumps” at the time of the explosion. Associated Press and United Press news services ran the release which was picked up in newspapers nationwide. Not much more information

was released in the following days except to inform the public that 15 of the 17 killed were Black soldiers and to provide a list of their names. Some hometown newspapers provided background about their native sons. The bodies of the 15 Black soldiers killed were transported to a Pensacola funeral home, one of the only funeral homes that accepted people of color at that time.

### Nitromon

What wasn't revealed at the time was the engineers were using a newly acquired explosive material called nitromon, a compound based on ammonium nitrate developed by du Pont in 1934. Considered a highly stable compound, a 1935 Newsweek article said du Pont called the explosive "foolproof" and "the ultimate in safety." It requires an electrically operated detonator to set it off. Nitromon has the same chemical properties as aluminum nitrate fuel oil—also known as AnFo—the compound used in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah federal building and killed 168 people, including 19 children, as well as the hundreds of thousands of roadside bombs used to kill American service members in Afghanistan and Iraq during the war on terrorism.

Lieutenant Colonel Allan D. Howser, a training officer with the 867th EAB, witnessed the explosion. He verified that the event was not a routine training exercise, but a training mission to clear the area. "It was to test the firing of this new explosive," he said during a

#### Killed were:

##### Enlisted

Private Peter Brown, Charleston, South Carolina  
Private First Class Freddie J. Burley, Royville, Louisiana  
Private Senior J. Covington, Washington, D.C.  
Private First Class Otha Cox, Binger, Oklahoma  
Private Thomas Daniels, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
Private Fred Davis, Bessemer, Alabama  
Technical 5th Grade Carlton Dusch, New York City, New York  
Private George W. Foreman, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
Private First Class Theodore H. Hamilton, Foxworth, Mississippi

## Bodies of Blast Victims Are Here

Bodies of 15 Negro soldiers killed in an explosion Monday afternoon at Eglin field, in Okaloosa county, are being held by Benboe Funeral home, Pensacola.

Two white officers also were killed by the blast, the cause of which is now being investigated by a board of officers appointed by Brig Gen. Grandison Gardner, commanding officer of the air force proving ground command.

Names of the victims have not yet been announced. Fifty-one soldiers were injured but none critically.

Pensacola Journal, July 14, 1943, page 1

2009 video interview by the Okaloosa chapter of the NAACP. "As I recall it, it was an exercise to explode a newly acquired type of explosive. It was a 40 pound quantity of nitromon, which was new to us."

After the explosion, Howser described the scene as "death." "It was remnants of everything," he said.

### Remembered

Eglin Air Force Base's African American Military Heritage Society will place a memorial bench in honor of the 15 Black soldiers killed by the 1943 explosion at the entrance of Eglin's Air Armament Museum with the names of those killed in the incident engraved on a plaque.

Private Lynwood Hargrove, Kenbridge, Virginia  
Corporal Lucien J. Payne, New Orleans, Louisiana  
Private Governor Robinson, Birmingham, Alabama  
Private Clifton Summerlin, Pulaski, Georgia  
Private Buddie Walker, Vernon, Alabama  
Private George J. "Juggy" Walker, Monongahela, Pennsylvania

##### Officers

Second Lieutenant Marvin P. Hollander, Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
Second Lieutenant William H. Myers, Birmingham, Alabama

# **3rd Saturday**



**At the Baker Block Museum**

## **Join us in 2024 for the following events**

**January 20, 1 p.m., Library dedication**

**February 17, 1 p.m., library  
Tombstone Tales, presented by the Florida  
Public Archaeology Network**

**April 20, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., park  
Baker Arts Festival**

**July 20, 1 p.m., library  
Archaeology of Northwest Florida, presented  
by the Florida Public Archaeology Network**

**October 19, 6:30 p.m.  
Creepy Cabins**

**November 16, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., park  
Baker Heritage Day**

**Keep checking social media and our website  
for more 2024 events.**

# The Bank of Baker

*Everything went smoothly as Baker began planning for a bank until the majority of the stockholders voted to cancel the charter filed with the State of Florida and failed to pay for the incorporation. This started a snowball effect of trouble for the proposed bank.*



The Bank of Baker was located on a lot “between [the] Concrete Building and the [railroad tracks].” This is looking east down Georgia Avenue where the traffic light is located in Baker.

by Stephanie Holcombe

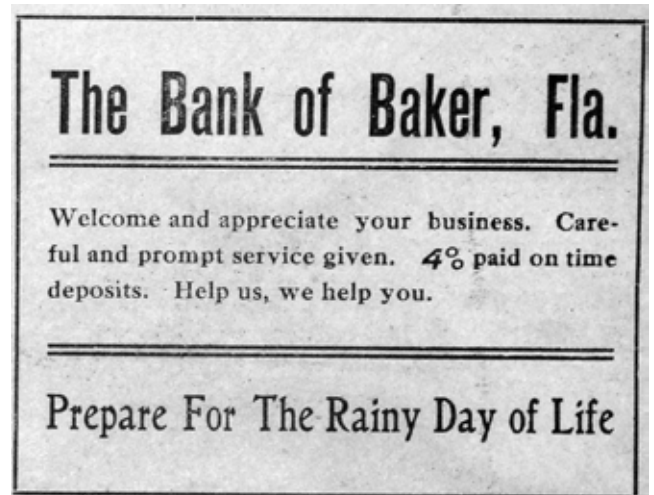
**R**ailroads, timber, and turpentine contributed to the growth of many towns in northwest Florida in the late 1880s and early 1900s. Regions of Santa Rosa and Walton counties were no exception. Like many small communities during this time, the town of Cobb, located in Santa Rosa County on the Florida, Andalusia, and Gulf Railroad, began to grow. Cobb, renamed Baker in 1912, had grown to the point that in 1915, its citizens thought a bank was needed. Up to this point, people banked at the Bank of Laurel Hill or traveled to Crestview for their banking needs.

In 1915, a group of 89 or so Baker citizens met to discuss opening a bank in their growing town. During a meeting held October 21, 1915, the attendees elected J.A. Hart as chairman of the newly established building committee, with J.C. Hicks as secretary. A week later,

during a particularly productive meeting, the citizens came back together to discuss a name for the new bank. Three names were suggested—Citizens Bank, Baker State Bank, and the Bank of Baker. Citizens Bank received 39 votes; Baker State Bank only received four votes. The Bank of Baker came out on top with 46 votes.

During the same meeting, the group selected nine directors of the newly named bank. Those elected were J.D. Stokes, J.A. Hart, Y.F. McCart, J.D. Cobb, J.W. Baggett, Jr., W.H. Monroe, J.A. McVicker, L.F. Jeter, and W.J. Rice. A decision was also made to construct a two-story brick building versus renting one for the new bank. The location would be a lot between the “concrete building” (the Museum building) and the railroad tracks, owned by J.W. McCart, W.E. Moore, and J.D. Lee.

With the bank building decision settled,



*Okaloosa News=Journal*, January 11, 1924, page 2

the group than focused on raising money for the new bank. A committee to raise and sell stock in the bank consisted of Hicks, J.W. McCart, Sr., and J.W. Moore. Next, a committee was appointed on a "permanent organization" and consisted of W.E. Moore, Cobb, and Rice. Then a building and equipment committee was appointed: Hart, Stokes, and Cobb.

After all the committees were appointed, the decision was made to apply for a charter to incorporate the bank. The request for a charter, signed by the 27-member committee, was presented to the State of Florida December 27, 1915. It stipulated that the bank would operate with \$15,000 in capital stocks divided into 150 shares among the undersigned. The corporation would operate with a president, one or more vice presidents, a board of nine directors, a cashier, and other officers and employees as authorized. The directors would be elected by the stockholders at the annual January meeting. Elected as bank president was J.W. Baggett, Jr.; W.E. Moore, vice president; B. Robinson, cashier; Z.W. Moore, Henry G. Baggett, J.A. Hart, J.L. Crawford, W.A. Richards, L.W. Nelson, and J.A. Richbourg, directors.

### Planning the bank

A two-page contract between the Bank of Baker and the Bank Construction

Report of the Condition of	
<b>THE BANK OF BAKER</b>	
At Baker, Florida, in the State Florida, at the close of business December, 31st, 1923.	
<b>RESOURCES</b>	
Loans on Real Estate..	\$11,100.98
Loans on Collateral Other than Real Estate.....	8,083.00
All other Loans and Discounts .....	1,485.70
Banking House, Furniture and Fixtures.....	3,500.00
Other Real Estate.....	700.00
Due from Incorporated Banks.....	968.86
Cash Items .....	89.00
Cash on Hand.....	2,275.39
Cash on Hand in transit to other Banks.....	10.00
Interest Paid.....	85.61
Expense and Earnings... ..	2,905.43
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$31,194.97</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>	
Capital Stock Paid In... ..	\$15,000.00
Undivided Profits (Less Expenses and Taxes Paid).....	1,284.03
Dividends Unpaid .....	829.51
Individual Deposits Subject to check.....	2,978.79
Demand Certificates of Deposit.....	136.00
Time Certificates of Deposit.....	10,832.92
Cashier's Checks Outstanding.....	42.96
Old Drafts Outstanding..	37.38
Exchange Collected.....	53.38
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$31,194.97</b>
State of Florida, County of Okaloosa, ss.:	
I, S. J. Baggett, Cashier of the above-named Bank, do solemnly swear that the above statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.	
S. J. BAGGETT, Cashier.	
CORRECT—ATTEST:	
J. W. Baggett, Jr. W. E. Moore, J. H. Hart, Directors.	
Subscribed and sworn to before me this 5th day of January, 1924.	
ROSA KIERCE, Notary Public.	

Okaloosa News=Journal, January 11, 1924, page 3

and Supply Company of Louisville, Kentucky, was drawn up and signed November 11, 1915, by Stokes and Cobb with Rice as agent. It listed the specifications for the new building.

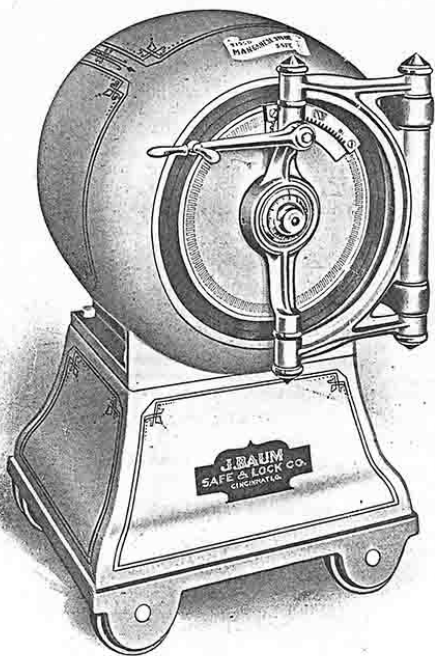
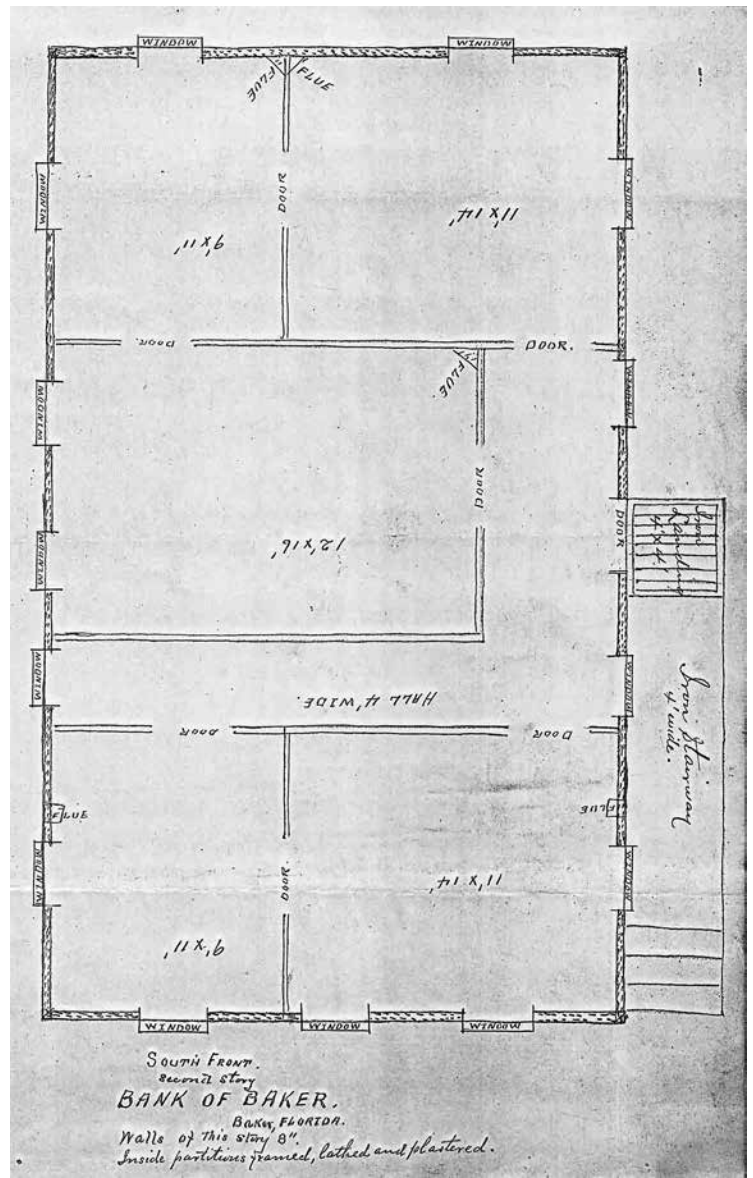
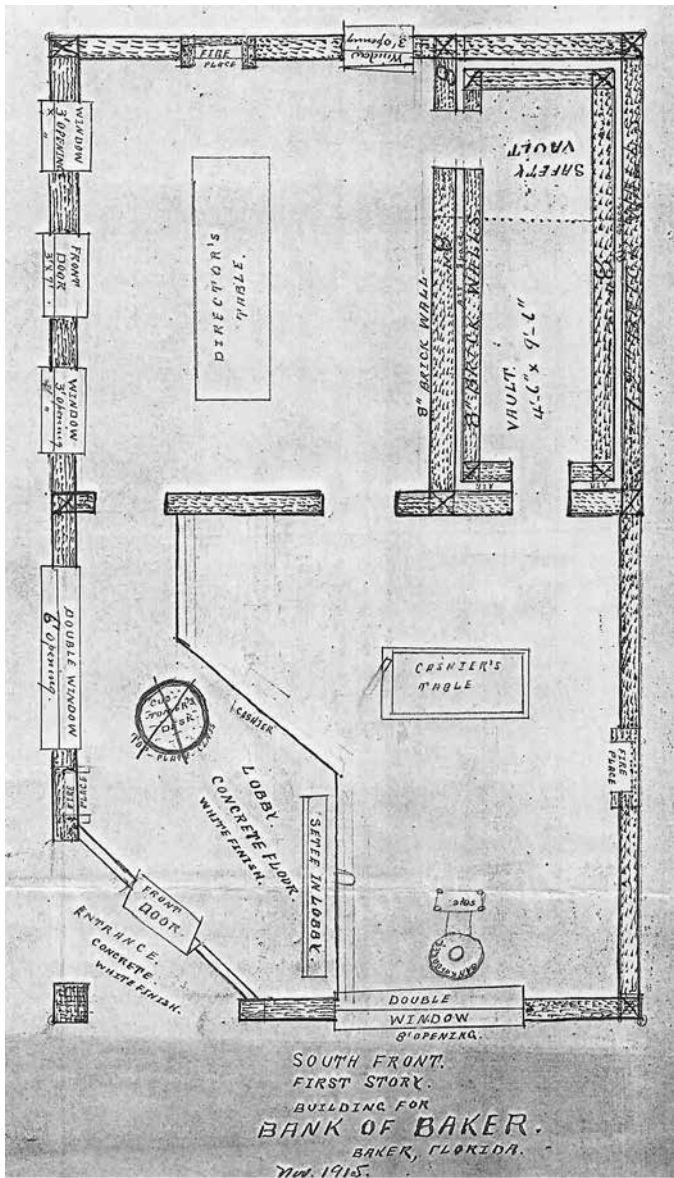
The first floor of the bank was to be used for banking business and the second would contain office space. At 40 feet by 24 feet, the building ostensibly contained around 1,600 square feet. The height of the ceiling in the first-floor banking area was 12 feet high with 10-foot ceilings in the office space above.

The floors of the building were wood made from "No. 1, well seasoned yellow pine...not over four inches wide." The lobby area was made of concrete, specifically, "Keen's white Portland cement.

Walls of the new building were made from "good, well burnt building bricks" with specification that "no 'soft' bricks" were to be used in the outer walls exposed to the weather. The outer walls were to have a "nice brick cornish" on the south, north, and west sides. Inside, the walls were to be plastered with a white coat of lime putty and plaster of Paris.

The building was to have a flat roof with a fall of not less than one foot in ten with gutters and a downspout. Once the roof was constructed, it was covered with some type of fire-proof composition roofing material, then covered with tar or pitch.

Entrance to the building was to be through two sets of doors. The outside doors were to be two three-foot by seven-foot doors with glass panels in the upper



Standard No. 2 "Tisco" Manganese Safe.  
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Strongest, Indestructible, Non-magnetic, Drill Proof, Burglar Proof and Nitroglycerin Proof.

Solid Locking jaws fitted Manganese on Manganese. Solid cast, no bolts or any part bolted or nutted. All one Part Manganese steel, both body and door. Safe securely locked with automatic and time lock, or fitted with combination lock and time lock. Can place extra combination lock on outside for day lock. Made in the following sizes:

SAFE No.	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	
2	24	24	24	27	18½	18½	14½	12	13½	7	2½	30	34	6	43	38½	4	1800	12	200
3	28	28	28	31½	22	22	17	14½	15½	8	3	36	36	8	50½	46	6	2550	3	225
5	31	31	31	34½	25	25	20	16½	17½	8	3	36	36	8	55½	50½	6	3200	5	300
7	35	35	34	37½	29	29	23	18½	19½	8	3	38	38	10	60½	55½	6	3950	7	350
10	40	40	34	38½	34	34	22	24½	25½	8	3	40	40	12	66½	67	8	5000	10	400
15	48	48	34	38½	42	42	33	30½	31½	8	3	48	48	12	73	80	10	7250	15	900

The proposed bank floor plan, above, shows a two-story building with five offices on the second floor.

(left) The bank would have a vault and a "Standard No. 2 'Tisco' manganese safe" that was touted to be indestructible, non-magnetic, drill proof, burglar proof, and nitroglycerin proof.



portion. The inside doors were two-and-a-half by six-and-a-half and made of clear panels. Transoms were required above both inside and outside doors. All the hardware—locks, transom lifts, handles—were to be made of bronzed material.

The contract ended with a hand-written amendment for an eight-foot concrete sidewalk along the front (south) and west side of the building with “buff-colored bricks” on the front corner.

A separate contract addressed the inside of the building, including the safe, vault, furniture, books, printed material, and office supplies, down to the number of rubber bands.

The safe was a “No. 2 ‘Tisco’ manganese steel burglar proof safe [sic]” made by J. Baum Safe and Lock Company of Cincinnati, Ohio. Weighing 2,000 pounds, it was equipped with a standard triple time lock and covered by burglar insurance for three years for the sum of \$5,000.

The vault was also a “No. 2” bank vault, as displayed in a U.S. Bank Furniture Company catalog. It measured 77 inches by 32 inches and was designed with three horizontal and two vertical bolts made of one-inch cold-rolled round steel, and weighed 600 pounds. Furniture inside the lobby was oak and included a check desk, director’s table, library table, a settee, stool, twelve chairs, and six spittoons.

Books consisted of ledgers for individual accounts, receivables, drafts, collections, teller’s daily cash received, and other miscellaneous record keeping. Printed material included 5,000 pocket checks bound in books of 50 made so they folded in the middle; 10,000 customers checks; another 5,000 checks, bound in books of 50, for other uses; 1,000 notes-due; 1,000 regular-sized and 500 large envelopes; and 10,000 deposit slips. Also included was “one doz. spools transparent tape, one doz. tubes Weis’s library paste, one box assorted rubber bands, one box Gem clips...six ‘ideal’ fountain ink stands, one quart Arnold’s writing fluid, one half pint red ink...one dozen pen holders, one gross Easterbrooks, Bank, [sic], pens and 500 advertising pencils with the

name of BANK OF BAKER stamped in gold.” A handwritten addendum included rubber stamps and “one nest of 25 safety deposit boxes.”

Total cost for the construction and safe, fixtures, furniture, and other items outlined in the contract amounted to \$5,917.30. Once the pre-construction details had been worked out, actual construction of the Bank of Baker began in 1915. Bank construction was completed by January 1916.

### **Bank mystery**

After the annual stockholders’ meeting in 1916, an adjourned stockholders’ meeting was held February 6 to discuss a resolution to reject the incorporation of the Bank of Baker granted by the State of Florida. The motion was passed by a majority. Neither a reason nor a discussion for this was given in the meeting minutes. The resolution was signed February 14 that relieved each stockholder of his obligation toward the capital stock for the bank. This meant the bank would have no operating funds.

Next, the stockholders, through J.W. McCart, received a letter dated February 13, from L.W. Nelson, a Pensacola lawyer. The letter informed McCart that the contractors hired to build the bank filed a bill in equity in order to get the money owed them for the bank construction. Shortly thereafter, on March 4, the Bank Construction and Supply Company filed a suit against J.W. McCart, et. al., for lack of payment. Included in the lawsuit with Bank Construction was W.A. Ray Hardware Company, Dolores Brick Company, Price Evans Founder Company, Decatur Cornice and Roofing Company, and Beech Rogers Company.

The lawsuit stated that “for some reason some of the incorporators of the bank...became dissatisfied without any cause whatsoever” with the contractors. The lawsuit continued to state that an agreement was made to build the bank on lot 20 of block 7, property owned by W.E. Moore, J.D. Lee, and J.W. McCart, Sr., and that the three men would deed the property to the bank. Bank Construction built the bank on lot 7, and furnished it according to the contract on the designated property.

However, Moore, Lee, and McCart refused to turn over the deed to the bank. Because the charter and incorporation was refused and the stockholders were relieved of their obligation to pay the capital stock, there was no money to pay Bank Construction and its subcontractors for the bank's construction and furnishings.

At issue were the amounts owed to the construction company and its contractors:

- Bank Construction & Supply Company, \$5,917.30
- W.A. Ray Hardware Company, \$459.09
- Delores Brick Company, \$326.19
- Price Evans Founder Company, \$40.00
- Decatur Cornices and Roofing Company, \$93.25
- Beech Rogers & Company, \$87.50
- Total: \$6,923.33

Plus an additional \$700 in legal fees.

The lawsuit sought payment for services rendered; was to force Moore, Lee, and McCart to sign the deed over to the bank; to have a lien placed on the building, furnishings, and lot; stipulated that the bank and furnishing were to be sold to pay the debt incurred from building the bank; that the stockholders would be required to pay 10 percent of the legal fees; and to impose a personal judgement against the stockholders for the amount of indebtedness due. A subpoena in chancery was issued against J.W. McCart as representative of the Bank of Baker.

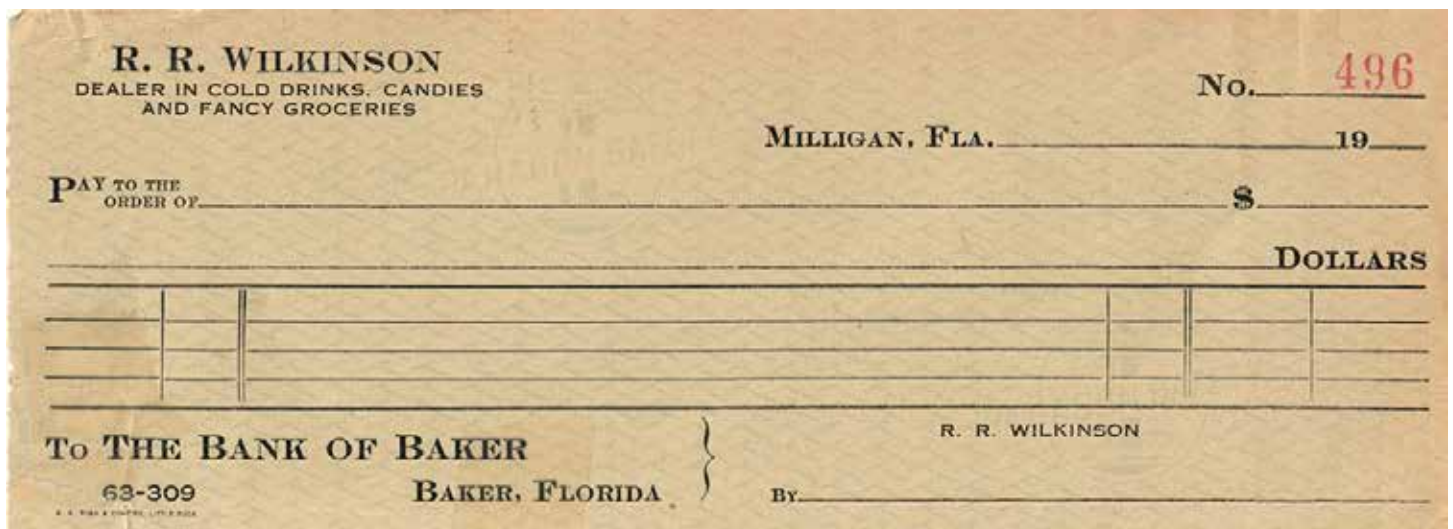
A letter dated March 11 from Pensacola attorney L.W. Nelson to the law firm Blount & Blount & Carter suggested that the crux

of the issue between the creditors and the stockholders lay with the involvement of "Mr. Rice and Mr. Hart. The letter went on to say that if Rice and Hart sold their stock, of which Rice had 40 shares and Hart had 10, and established a receivership to be in charge, the issue could be resolved and the bank could open for business and start making money.

Blount & Blount & Carter asked the State of Florida whether the Bank of Baker was incorporated. The state comptroller's office stated that the Bank of Baker "failed to pay the charter tax and therefore, letters patent were not issued." The Secretary of State received the bank's charter for incorporation December 13, 1915, but the fees were never received.

By March 25, the attorneys representing both sides proposed a compromise: the deed would be delivered to the bank when it opened, about \$6,000 in stock would be paid, a charter of incorporation would be acquired, and the bank would open. In return, the stockholders wanted to be relieved from any liability of the capital stock, construction and furnishings.

During the back and forth of negotiations, it was revealed that Rice, as stockholder agent, "on his own account, undertook to promote the organization of a bank...and induced [the] defendants" to become subscribers of the articles of incorporation. It was also pointed out that although Cobb, Hart, and Stokes, appointed as the building and equipment committee, had no authority to sign any construction contracts without the stockholders approval. The stockholders also said the bank



building was only partially completed, lacked gutters and downspouts, was not covered with a fireproof composition roof, that the roof was of an inferior quality, the building was not furnished, and that there was no safe. No invoices for labor and material were ever submitted to the building committee. Finally, Moore, Lee, and McCart denied that they agreed to freely deed the lot to the bank, that no such agreement appeared in writing. All this amounted to the resolution passed February 16 to relieve stockholders of any obligation to the bank.

It took the rest of the spring and part of the summer to resolve the issues embroiled around the Bank of Baker. By late August, the deed to the lot the bank was built upon was in the hands of the court.

Amid all this controversy, an *Okaloosa News* article in the July 2, 1916, edition announced the Bank of Baker would be opening its doors August 26. However, opening day happened quietly three weeks later on Wednesday, September 6, with a cash capital of \$15,000. According to the September 8 issue of the *Okaloosa News*, although few people knew of the bank's opening, by the end of the first day of business, the bank had accumulated an additional \$5,000 in deposits.

The lawsuit between the contractors and the stockholders was dismissed at the request of the complaints (i.e., the contractors) in late October 1916.

### Epilogue

Within the two-story building, banking was conducted on the first floor; office space occupied the upper level. Doctors Olin and Jut Enzor had offices there before they built the Enzor Brothers Hospital in Crestview.

In 1928, burglars attempted to rob the bank. They gained entrance from a window, removed a light bulb, attached an electric drill, cut a hole in the front of the safe, and removed the dials; however, the doors weren't removed. The burglars left fingerprints behind and a fingerprint specialist from Escambia County was called in to dust for prints. A Malcolm Miller and Bert Willis were arrested the next

# BANK BURGLARY FAILS AT BAKER

## Officers On Trail Of Men Who Drilled Safe

Burglars knocked the combination dials off a safe in the Bank of Baker, Fla., 50 miles northeast of Pensacola Wednesday night, according to word received by Sheriff Mose Penton yesterday.

Deputy Robert C. Forrest, Escambia county fingerprint expert was called to Baker to assist in the investigation.

The yeggs probably will be arrested by this morning, Forrest declared on his return late last night. The burglars, removed a globe from a light socket, attached an electric drill and cut a hole in the front of the safe. The dials were then removed, but the door was never opened. They left fingerprints on the globe, and on the door beneath the dials.

Sheriff Steele indicated he had clues to the robbers, and had them under surveillance. Entrance was gained through a window.

*Pensacola Journal*, October 12, 1928, page 1

day and released.

The Bank of Baker ceased operations December 11, 1929, and was placed in receivership. A number of depositors lost their life savings when the bank closed. The bank's remaining assets were sold March 10, 1931, to J.O. McCall for \$100. The receivership was discharged July 1, 1931.

# Be a volunteer!



**The Baker Block Museum is looking for people who:**

**Like history  
Like interacting with Museum visitors  
Can do light computer work  
Can organize files**

**Flexible hours**

**See Museum Director Ann Spann  
850-537-5714 or [bakermuseum@aol.org](mailto:bakermuseum@aol.org)**



## Western wear for men and women

Cinch, Roper, Ely Cattleman, Red Dirt Hat Co., Old South Apparel, Tanner Mark, and more!

1307 Georgia Avenue, Baker

850-865-7060

Open Tuesday-Sunday



**Where families live forever**

**Make a discovery.**

**Share a memory.**

Learn how to preserve family pictures, documents, stories (both written and audio), and connect and share with other family members.

Elder and Sister Riser, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, will be on hand **each Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.** in the Genealogy and Research Library to assist researchers with FamilySearch.

# SHOP

All items are available in the **Baker Mercantile Gift Store**.



**Mid-century Italian apothecary jars: \$50/set**

These vintage apothecary jars are valued at \$200-\$300 online. Made of porcelain, these jars are usually found separately. The Mercantile has three for sale as a set: Cassia, Borax, and Senega.



**Pyrex glass pie plate: \$3.99**

This Pyrex No. 229 can be used in either the oven or the microwave.



**13"x16" retro tin poster signs: \$11.95 each**

These tin signs would look great on any wall. Many other themes available.



**Quartz geode: \$4.95**

The Mercantile has this half-polished quartz geode with crystals for \$4.95 along with smaller polished rock bags for \$1.95 each.



**My Mermaid doll set: \$4**

The mermaid doll set comes with two brushes and in multiple colors.



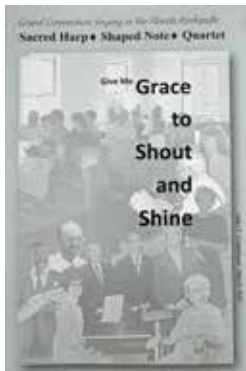
**Legends of the Wild West Bowie Knife: \$3.50**

This two-piece toy knife set is designed after the famous Bowie knife. Made from soft rubber, the knife fits smoothly in a sheath that slides on a belt.

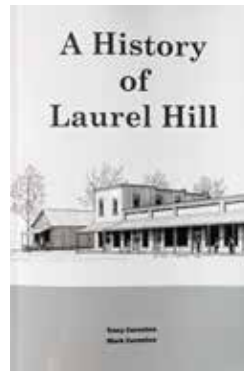
All this and much, much more is available in the **Baker Mercantile Gift Store**.

# Okaloosa County History Series

Available for sale in the **Baker Mercantile Gift Store**, on eBay, by email at [bakermuseum@aol.com](mailto:bakermuseum@aol.com) or by calling the Museum at 850-537-5714. **\$20 each.**



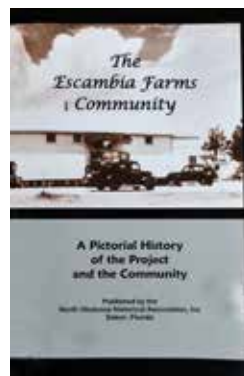
*Give me the Grace to Shout and Shine*, the newest book in the history series, focuses on the three most prominent gospel singing methods in the northwest Florida panhandle throughout the years: Sacred Harp, also known as fasola, five- or seven-shape note convention singing, and later, the gospel quartet.



Drawing from interviews, newspapers, public records and photographs, *A History of Laurel Hill* tells the story of this historic town. The book covers the early history of the area under Spanish rule through the Civil War, the coming of the railroad, the Great Depression and into the modern era.



*Turpentine in the Florida Panhandle* casts turpentine as a significant element impacting the way of life in the Northwest Florida panhandle. It describes an integrated experience—culture, industry, and human condition—in the lives of those who lived it.



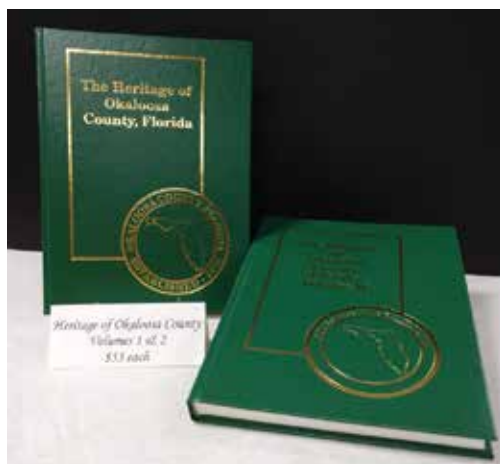
Present Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal program included aid to American migrant workers and tenant farmers. The Resettlement Administration created a planned farming community in the northwest corner of Okaloosa County in 1936 known as Escambia Farms. By 1939, the community had grown to 72 families and included a school to educate the more than 220 children.



Okaloosa County has a rich military history. *Okaloosa Strong: The Homefront* is a sampling of the people, places, stories, and events during wartime in the county.



Officially founded in 1883, Crestview became a stop on the Pensacola & Atlantic Railroad. The geographic center of the county, the town became the seat of the newly established county in 1917. Crestview is situated on a rise between the Yellow River 4 miles to the west and the Shoal River 4 miles to the east. *A Pictorial History* shows in photos how Crestview changed into the largest city in the



## Okaloosa County Heritage Books

Volume I & II

**Limited Quantity**

Includes a history of Okaloosa County, pioneer families, industry, schools, churches, towns, family stories, and genealogies.

**\$53 each**

# Baker Arts Festival

**Saturday, March 16, 2024  
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**



## Vendor Application

\$40 per 10' x 10' space

\$50 per 10' x 10' space with electricity

Limit of 2 spaces per vendor

- Spaces are assigned by the date the application is received.
- Exhibitors must furnish tables, chairs, tents, covers and any other items required for their displays.
- Exhibitors must be set up and in place by 8:30 a.m. and stay until 3 p.m. the day of the event.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of art or craft:

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Do you require electricity?   Y   N

**Children attending the event with parents must be under adult supervision at all times.**

Complete the form and return it no later than March 11 to:

Baker Block Museum  
PO Box 186  
Baker, FL 32531

For more information, please call the Baker Block Museum at 850-537-5714 or email at [bakermuseum@aol.com](mailto:bakermuseum@aol.com).

**Sponsored by the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc.**  
Baker Block Museum • 1307B Georgia Ave • Baker, Florida • 850-537-5714 • [www.bakerblockmuseum.org](http://www.bakerblockmuseum.org)





# Create a Legacy

## Make a legacy gift to the Baker Block Museum



### How would you like to be remembered?

Legacy gifts are one of the most significant demonstrations of commitment to the community an individual can make. A legacy gift, deferred gift, or planned gift is one you decide upon now and that provides for your favorite nonprofit program later.

You can leave a wonderful legacy to the Baker Block Museum by including the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., in your estate planning. There are many tax advantages when you make a planned gift. We encourage you to consult with your attorney or financial planner for your specific circumstance.

### Bequests

While there are a number of ways to build a legacy contribution, a charitable bequest is one of the easiest and most popular ways to leave a lasting impact on the Museum.

You may designate our organization as the beneficiary of your assets by will, trust, or other instrument. Simply specify an amount, a percentage of your estate, or what remains of your estate to the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., after you have provided for your children or other beneficiaries.

For more information on legacy gifts, contact the Baker Block Museum at 850-537-5714.

*The North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., is a non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Donations are tax deductible.*

# SUPPORT

North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc.

## Membership News

### NOHA Board Members

- **President - Brenda Russell**
- **Vice President - Lucile King**
- **Treasurer - Sharry Rustin**
- **Secretary - Stephanie Holcombe**

### Members:

**Nina Adams**  
**Joyce Arnett**  
**Mike Bush**  
**Tracy Curenton**  
**Doug Hibbing**

### Emeritus Members:

**Judy Cadenhead**  
**Phyllis Enzor**  
**Jeanette Henderson**

**New family membership: Tim and Gloria Rudd, September 2023**

### 2023 Goals

- **Increase membership by 30% — goal reached**
- **Complete the historical marker application**
- **Finish the pavilion with flooring, lighting, and a stage — received \$5,000 grant**
- **Purchase needed equipment for digitalization — purchased copy stand**

## Why become a member of the North Okaloosa Historical Association?

Besides supporting the preservation of the history of Okaloosa County, membership in the NOHA has its benefits:

- » Membership card
- » *Okaloosa Historical Quarterly* magazine
- » 10% discount off books and calendars published by the NOHA
- » Email notification of special events
- » Invitation to the annual meeting in January

Lifetime members receive all of the above, PLUS:

- » 20% discount off books and calendars published by the NOHA
- » Recognition in the annual report
- » 10% off nomination for any Family Heritage Wall of Honor submission

# North Okaloosa Historical Association



## Membership Form

Membership in the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., is open to anyone interested in preserving and documenting the history of Okaloosa County and its pioneering families. NOHA serves as the governing body for the Baker Block Museum. Member benefits include the *Okaloosa Historical Quarterly*, e-mail notification of special events, discounts in the Baker Mercantile store, and an invitation to the annual meeting in January.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State and Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of membership (check one)

- Individual      \$25 per year
- Family            \$50 per year
- Student          \$15 per year
- Lifetime         \$250

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to volunteer at the Baker Block Museum

\_\_\_\_\_ I have items I would like to donate to the Baker Block Museum

\_\_\_\_\_ I have photographs that I will allow to be scanned for the Museum's collection

Return this form with your contribution made payable to:

**North Okaloosa Historical Association**  
Membership  
P.O. Box 186  
Baker, FL 32531

The North Okaloosa Historical Association is a 501(c)(3) organization. Membership and any donations are tax deductible.

**Jeanette and Charles Henderson  
Heritage Park  
Pavilion Rental Agreement**



The pavilion at the Jeanette and Charles Henderson Heritage Park may be rented for half-day or whole-day events. Reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Pavilion Rules**

- The Park is open to the public at all times.
- A reservation gives the reserver the right to use the pavilion for the allotted time frame. If the pavilion is occupied upon arrival, the reservation receipt should be presented to those using the area.
- Please leave the park in good clean order upon completion of your rental.
- No drugs or alcohol are allowed on park premises at any time.
- No fires are allowed in the park.
- Motor vehicles are prohibited inside the fenced area of the park.
- Public toilets are not available. They may be rented at the expense of the reserver.

A **reservation fee**, applied to the rental cost, is required 30 days prior to any scheduled event to reserve the date.

\_\_\_\_\_ \$25 for half-day rental

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50 for all day-rental

Rental fees must be received 10 days prior to rental date or the Baker Block Museum will consider the reservation canceled. **Cancellations made less than 5 days prior to the event will forfeit the reservation fee.**

A \$25 refundable clean-up deposit is required to rent the pavilion. If the pavilion is not returned to its original condition, the deposit will not be refunded.

\_\_\_\_\_ \$25 clean-up fee (refundable)

\_\_\_\_\_ \$100 half-day (approximately 4 hours)

\_\_\_\_\_ \$200 whole day (approximately 8 hours)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Person / Event

\_\_\_\_\_  
Event Date / Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# EVENTS

January							February							March						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3						1	2
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29									
													24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
													31							
1	New Year's Day						2	Groundhog's Day						10	Daylight Saving Time begins					
15	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day						11	Super Bowl						16	<b>3rd Saturday</b> Museum is open from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.					
18	North Okaloosa Historical Association Board meeting, 6 p.m.						13	Mardi Gras						17	St. Patrick's Day					
20	<b>3rd Saturday</b> Museum is open from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. <b>Library Dedication</b> 1 p.m.						14	Ash Wednesday						19	March Equinox/First Day of Spring					
	<b>Regular Museum hours:</b> <b>Tuesday-Friday, every 3rd Saturday, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.</b>						15	North Okaloosa Historical Association Board meeting, 6 p.m.						21	North Okaloosa Historical Association Board meeting, 6 p.m.					
							17	<b>3rd Saturday</b> Museum is open from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Presentation: <b>Tombstone Tales</b> , an FPAN presentation 1 p.m., Library						24	Palm Sunday					
							19	President's Day						29	Good Friday					
													31	Easter						