



Board of County Commissioners

Office of the County Administrator

P.O. Box 99/200 East 4th Street • Woodbine, GA 31569

Phone: (912) 576.5601 • Fax: (912) 576.5647 • www.camdencountyga.gov

Press Release

Contact: Capt. William Terrell

Phone: (912) 510-5171

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

4:30PM EDT, November 21, 2014

(This is the third in a series of releases aimed at highlighting some of the important but not well known county provided services. This is in conjunction with the “You Are Why We’re Here” communication campaign.)

Bryan-Lang Historical Archives

Woodbine, Ga. (November 21, 2014) – The Bryan Lang Historical Archives, tucked away near the courthouse in Woodbine, is not a dry dusty repository of tattered tomes and brittle papers. Instead, it is a place where the rich history of Camden County is very much alive. It is a vast treasure trove of items that hold the story of a place and the people who inhabited that place.

The Bryan-Lang Library, as it was known then, opened in 1987. In 2009 the name was changed to the Bryan-Lang Historical Archives to more accurately reflect the nature of the documents and artifacts in the collection. The collection is largely the work of two remarkable women, Beatrice "Bebe" Lang and Mary Bryan. Lang was a member of a long standing Camden County family interested in preserving local history. Mary Bryan was a State Archivist tasked by the Georgia Archives with trying to preserve the documents and papers, the history of Georgia places. The two women's synergy and hard work created something truly extraordinary. The collection was donated to Camden County with two stipulations; it had to be housed in Woodbine and had to be open to the public.

Their work and the work of many others is a tremendous resource for genealogists, historians and the merely curious. Moving through the shelves is like literally walking back through time. There are newspapers on microfilm from almost a century ago. While it is hard to say which record is the oldest there are many from as early as 1800. In addition to official documents the collection contains more than 3,000 family history files.

The collection contains the stories of the people from every stripe of life. The lives of rich planters, of yeoman farmers, of sharecroppers and even of slaves wait to be explored. It also contains the history of the places. The first county seat in Camden was at a place called Jefferson. It sat on the Satilla River and

“Leadership that Listens”

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County Administrator

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TONY SHEPPARD
Commissioner, District 5



was a natural loading place for the county's bounty of lumber and naval stores. The county seat was then moved to downtown St. Marys as the trade and the population shifted. In 1927 the county seat was moved to Woodbine which is closer to the geographical center of the county.

No county is an island. The history of a county, of a community of people, is never isolated from the history and stories of people of the adjoining communities or the region of which they are such an integral part. The Bryan-Lang Historical Archives reflect that reality and house items from the history of southeast Georgia, from Charlton, Brantley, McIntosh and Glynn Counties as well as from north Florida.

Judy Buchanan became the Director/Archivist in 2007. She said the value of the collection is not just in the items themselves. "It is the repository of memory. The information, the family connections made here has put smiles on the faces of thousands of people."

Ms. Buchanan and her staff are very knowledgeable and can assist everyone from the dedicated historian to someone just looking for information about their ancestors.



The Bryan-Lang Historical Archive is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. The telephone number is (912) 576-5841.

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