

# ALLEN GENEALOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Spring 2024

PO Box 789, Kinder, LA 70648

Issue No. 260



# ALLEN GENEALOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 2024

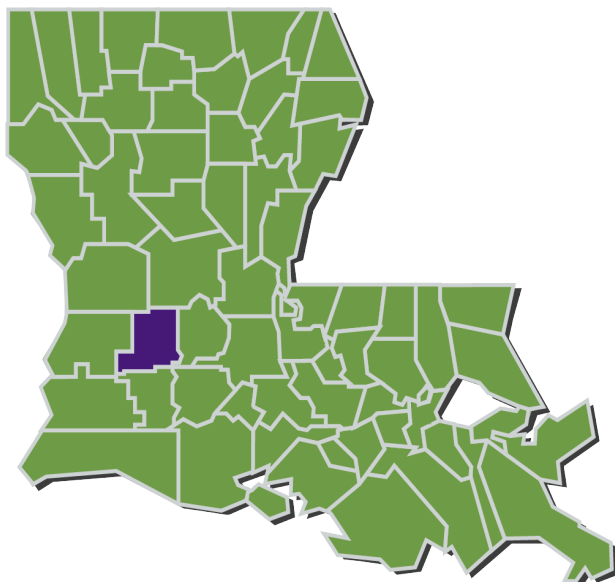
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THE ALLEN GENEALOGICAL and HISTORICAL SOCIETY was organized in May 1985 to collect, organize, process, and preserve genealogical material. The purposes of the Society are to promote interest in genealogy, to assist and encourage genealogical researchers in gathering material on historical events and people of Allen Parish, and to help complete family histories. AGHS was incorporated in march 1990.

AGHS regular meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month at 10:00 AM in the genealogy room of the Kinder branch of the Allen Parish Library, located at 833 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Kinder, Louisiana. Members are willing to help visitors with research, and to answer questions they may have.

MEMBERSHIP fees are \$20 per calendar year per person, and includes a digital subscription to the CROSSROADS newsletter. Any correspondence and dues should be sent to AGHS, PO Box 789, Kinder, LA 70648. The Society's email address is [allenghs.contact@gmail.com](mailto:allenghs.contact@gmail.com).

The Allen GHS website is [www.allenghs.com](http://www.allenghs.com). The website has a page dedicated to posting the current issue of CROSSROADS, as well as an archive of previous issues. QUERIES may be submitted by email, and all queries are posted on the "Queries" link of the website. When sending a query, please include all pertinent information such as names, dates, and places, along with your name and contact information.



**EDITORIAL POLICY:** We encourage and welcome contributions of genealogical and historical material that pertain to Allen Parish locations and families for inclusion in CROSSROADS. The Society does not assure responsibility for accuracy for an copyright infringement of submitted and published material. We reserve the right to edit an/or reject material we deem not suitable for publication.

**DONATIONS** of genealogical and historical materials such as books, periodicals, family histories, newspaper clippings, old photos, and filled out 5-generation charts are accepted by the Society and each item donated will be cataloged and placed on file in the genealogy room of the Kinder Library to be used for research. Memorials and honorariums are also welcomed by the Society.

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## New Logo Adopted by Allen GHS



The Allen Genealogical and Historical Society has adopted a new logo for its organization. “The work done by those who created the previous *Crossroads* covers through the years is greatly appreciated,” said Allen GHS President Laura Hall.

“The idea for a change to the *Crossroads* cover came to me early in 2023, after seeing the newly created logo for the Kinder Chamber of Commerce.”

Hall was so impressed with the Chamber’s logo, that she sought out its creator immediately. However, that person was backlogged at the time, and could not be available.

Soon thereafter, Hall put out an inquiry on Facebook, “...looking for an Allen Parish-based artist to create a logo.”

According to Hall, the overwhelming response was one name: Myka Guidry.

Hall subsequently reached out to Guidry, who listened to Hall’s ideas about the logo.

“I wanted to tell her everything all at once,” said Hall. “I wanted her to know about Allen GHS and its mission, but mostly about Brother Paul Leeds and his accomplishments, too numerous to mention.”

“Myka’s family roots were incredibly woven into Bro. Leeds’ time here. The more we spoke, it was clear we had the right artist.”

Myka’s work features a diversity of images associated with Allen Parish, including a silhouette of missionary preacher Bro. Leeds on horseback; train tracks denoting Kinder’s important north-south, east-west railroad junction; and a notation of the various communities that make up Allen Parish.

“Myka reached into the past and brought it to her canvas,” said Hall. “Using vibrant colors, she captured our region’s cultural and geographical significance and our pioneer industries.”

Guidry’s initial draft of the logo was shared with Society members, and a couple of revisions were made after Allen GHS members Fran Clemmons and Steven Fontenot gave input about adding lumber and cattle.

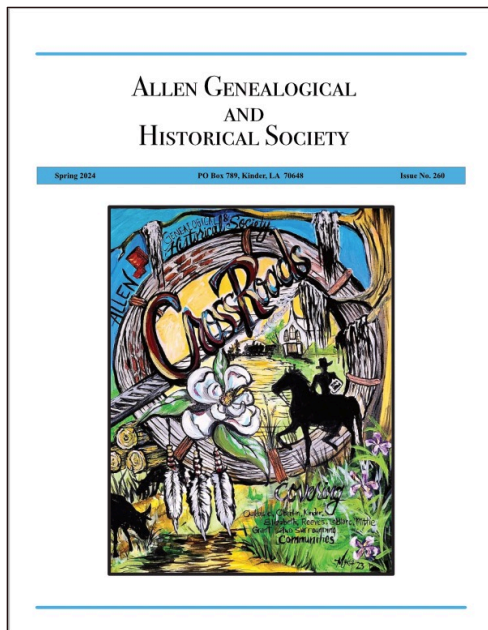
Guidry released to Allen GHS the rights for the use of the image.

“The possibilities are endless!” said Hall.



Myka Guidry with Allen GHS’s new logo.

## Crossroads Newsletter Goes Digital!



*First Digitized Cover of Crossroads*

*Crossroads*, the official publication of the Allen Genealogical and Historical Society, is going digital.

“We are excited about the renewal of the *Crossroads* newsletter,” said Allen GHS webmaster Dr. Buck Ford.

The last issue of *Crossroads* was published in January, 2020. Beginning at that time, several issues developed that caused the publication to be put on pause.

“The pandemic and its accompanying restrictions put a freeze on a lot of the country’s productivity at that time,” said Ford. “Our ability to regularly meet and continue our mission was hampered.”

Another key factor for the publication’s hiatus was a financial one.

“The cost of printing and mailing just got cost prohibitive,” said Ford. “We got to the point of assessing the cost of print publication, and asked the question, ‘Is there an alternative way?’”

The Society explored that question, and after an evaluation of many factors, decided to go paperless.

“Going paperless reduces our publication costs to zero,” said Ford. “That solved our financial problem.”

“In addition, it is environmentally neutral—no trees are going to be cut down to further the distribution of *Crossroads*. We in Allen Parish are acutely aware of the importance of responsible timber stewardship.”

One concern addressed was that some of Allen GHS’s members may not be digitally savvy, and may prefer having their *Crossroads* as a print publication.

“The digital publication of *Crossroads* is fully adaptable to most home computer printers,” said Ford. “Readers who choose to print out their *Crossroads* from the digital pdf copy can easily do so on their home printer.”

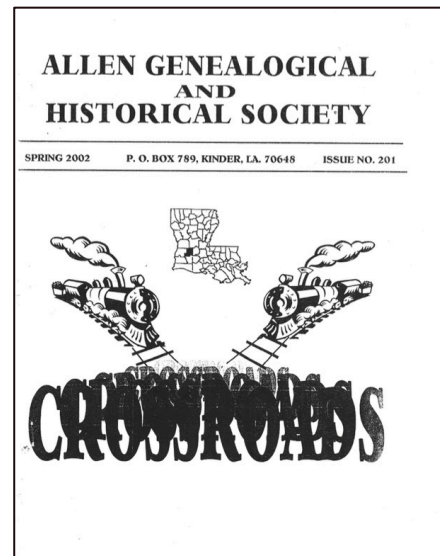
*Crossroads* was first published by Allen GHS in the Spring of 2002, with Issue #201. Ethel F. Sacker was listed as “Publishing Editor” at the time.

In 2008, Fran Clemmons was named “Publishing Editor.”

At the time, Allen GHS President Betty Sarver said of Clemmons, “Fran has served the Society well as reporter and historian for the past few years. We know she will serve in this new position with the same continued interest and reliability. This is her first issue of *Crossroads* and we think she is off to a great start.”

Clemmons has remained in that position until the present time.

“Going digital opens up a whole new world of creativity in the design, layout, and content of *Crossroads*,” said Ford. “We are excited about its future.”



*Cover page of the first issue of Crossroads, Spring 2002*

## In Memoriam–Betty and Charles Sarver



Betty Jo Sonnier Sarver, 82, was a native of Kinder. She resided in Lafayette for a number of years before moving back to the Kinder area. She was born on August 30, 1938, in Kinder, Louisiana and departed from this world to the arms of God on Saturday, February 20, 2021.

Betty was a member of Calvary Church of Ragley, where she served in various positions over the years. She was a Sunday School Teacher, Youth Director, Secretary and Treasurer, Director of The Calvary Ladies, Editor of Crimson Word, Graphic Designer for the “Sunday Night Live” recording ministry and a musician. Throughout her life she served as a Youth Director and a Sunday School Teacher in the churches she attended. She always kept a special place in her heart for the young people she taught throughout the years; always referring to them as her children.

She was a charter member and presiding President of the Allen Genealogical and Historical Society, a position she held for seventeen years. The Society received its charter under her leadership. She was also a member of the National Genealogical Society. She enjoyed helping people explore their family history and authored Family History Books and also, a Christian novel, published in 2010, titled “Living with CIC – Christ in Charge”. She had also served as a Board Member of Lyles Cemetery Association of Oberlin. She was a former president and member of “Friends of the Library – Oberlin Branch”. Betty was retired, having worked for United Gas Pipe Line Co. and Rollins, Inc. in Lafayette, LA.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Joe and Dena Cole Sonnier and her husband of fifty-one years, Charles Sarver.

Those left to mourn her loss and cherish her memory include numerous relatives and friends. Among those closest to her heart are: Michele, Joshua and Caleb Phillips, of Kinder; Alan Nichols, of Florien; Cameron and Aaron LaFargue, of Hornbeck, to whom she was lovingly known as “Aunt Betty”; her aunt, Myrtle Hurt; and cousin, Michael Cole, of Indiana. She dearly loved all of her husband’s family and also, her Calvary Church Family, which were very important in her life.

Betty was laid to rest at Lyles Cemetery in Oberlin.

Funeral services for Mr. Charles A. Sarver were held on Saturday, November 14, 2020, at Faith Tabernacle, Kinder, with Reverend Adrian Littlefield officiating. Interment was at Lyles Cemetery, Oberlin, under the direction of Rush Funeral Home, Kinder.

Charles A. Sarver departed from this world to the arms of God on November 10, 2020. He was born in Crowley, La on November 13, 1943 and resided in Lafayette a number of years before moving to the Kinder area in 1974.

He was a member of Calvary Church of Ragley, where he faithfully served on the Board of Trustees, as a Church Elder, as a sound technician for the church internet broadcast, “Sunday Night Live” and formerly served as a Co-Youth Director and Sunday School Teacher with his wife, Betty.

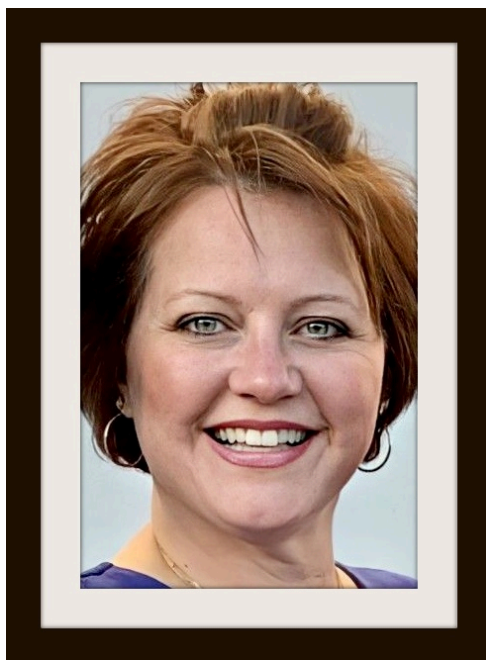
Charles served in the U. S. Army’s First Air Cavalry in Vietnam, where he earned various medals including two Purple Hearts. He was a member of the VFW, DAV and Military Order of the Purple Heart. He was also a faithful member of the Allen Genealogical and Historical Society, where he served as administrative assistant.

He was retired from the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development where he was Parish Specialist for Allen, Beauregard and Jeff Davis Parishes. He enjoyed hunting, fishing and gardening. He loved to share his fruit and vegetables with friends and family and also have them come fishing in his pond. He was a mentor to many boys and young men; always in a kind and gentle way.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Alcy B. Sarver and Amelia Smith Sarver; five sisters, Mae Standish, Joyce Sarver, Alene Daigle, Jeanette Dennies and Opal Ashby; and three brothers, Ebert Benoit, Buford Benoit and Luther Benoit.

Those left to mourn his loss and cherish his memory include his loving wife of fifty-one years, Betty Sonnier Sarver, of Kinder; two brothers, Hollins Sarver, of Iota and Woodrow Sarver, of Crowley; numerous nieces and nephews and his Calvary Church family, who were an important part of his life. important in his life were Michele, Joshua and Caleb Phillips, of Kinder, Cameron and Aaron LaFargue, of Hornbeck and Alan Nichols, of Florien. He was their “Uncle Charles.”

## Laura Hanchey Hall Named New President of Allen GHS



*This article was originally published online at [www.allenghs.com](http://www.allenghs.com) on March 25, 2021.*

Laura Hanchey Hall has been named the new president of the Allen Genealogical and Historical Society. Past president Betty Sarver, who held the position for seventeen years, passed away in February.

“Spring 2021 appears to be bringing a bit of much needed recovery, renewal, and some welcome changes,” said Hall, as she contemplated her upcoming tenure as the Society’s leader. “We were happy to learn that our Allen GHS meetings can resume in April, although they will not be the same without President Betty Sarver and our friend, Mr. Charles Sarver. For many years and to many people, Betty and Charles have been a gift of true friendship. Both leave a legacy of kindness and excellence to remember as we do our best to go on without them.”

Hall can trace her Allen Parish family lines back six generations. “My genealogical areas of research have naturally and even unintentionally gravitated mostly to Allen Parish,” she said. “The soul knows, I guess.”

Hall graduated from South Beauregard High School in Longville, Louisiana, then worked in the chemical industry, eventually ending up at LyondellBasell in Westlake, Louisiana. She then took an early retirement, and went about raising her three boys, all of whom went on to graduate with honors from high school and college. “They are my pride and joy,” she said.

Hall’s previous position in the Society was Researcher. In that role, she took on a wide range of research responsibilities, including assisting people who submitted queries to the Society seeking information on their ancestors.

Moreover, one of her loves is cemeteries. “My love for cemeteries started as a curiosity,” she recently said, “then it turned to a deeper interest, and pretty quickly was out of my hands—I couldn’t have stopped if I wanted to.”

Her love of cemeteries has led her on several genealogical journeys, including the 2020 hunt for and discovery of the military headstone of Albert Grover Baggett, a World War II veteran who had lain in an unmarked grave since 2008. Through dogged persistence, and with the help of the local American Legion Post # 244, the headstone was located, and has been placed at its rightful location.

“I have seen unmarked graves before,” she said. “They are unmarked for various reasons, and I’m familiar with that. But this one kept me up at night.”

Hall’s vision for the future of the Society includes trying to interest the younger generations in the value of genealogy and history. “What a sad thought, that genealogical and historical preservation would not be maintained as it competes in this age of new fascinations,” she said. “These subjects must be kept fresh and interesting.”

In conclusion, Hall said, “I first want to express appreciation and recognition for our previous and current members. I am so thankful we can continue to learn from those still with us, and for what was passed on by those now gone. Their contribution is of untold value.”

“It has been my honor and pleasure to be an Allen GHS member, and I pray that I will be of useful service in my role as President.”

“We look forward to our growth in 2021, and in the years to come.”

## The Search for a Civil War Ancestor

### *Descendent Re-traces Steps of a Vicksburg Veteran*



*Duane Clemmons at monument commemorating the 27<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry at Vicksburg National Military Park, Mississippi.*

Duane Clemmons recently took a trip to Vicksburg National Military Park in Mississippi. He had been to Vicksburg several times. As a history teacher, Duane had studied the siege in 1863 that led to a Confederate defeat at the hands of Union General Ulysses S. Grant. With the fall of Vicksburg and later Port Hudson in Zachary, Louisiana, the Mississippi river was controlled by the Union through the duration of the American Civil War.

Recently, however, Duane learned through Ancestry.com and from relatives about an ancestor named John Wray Wrinkle. Mr. Wrinkle is Duane's gr, gr, gr, great grandfather on his mother, Francis's side of the family tree. Wrinkle was born in the Kisatchie area of Natchitoches Parish. On April 3, 1861, he married Angeline Cox, whose family was from Vowells Mill.

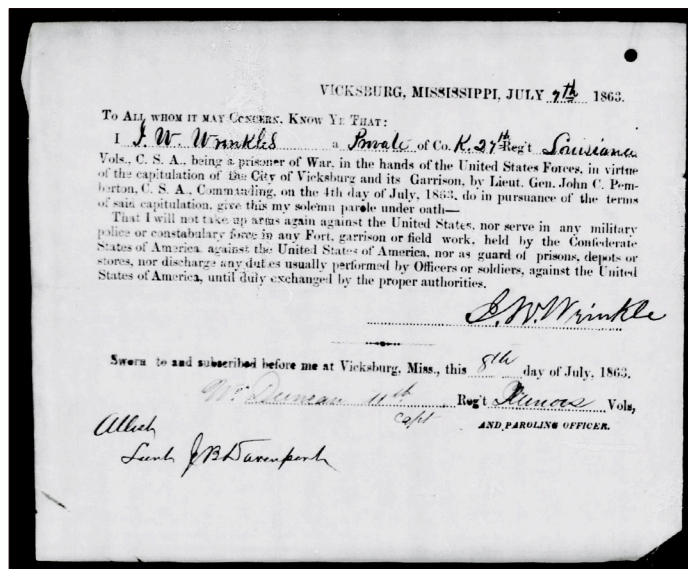
He also was a Confederate soldier with the 27<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, and was posted in the defense of Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Duane began to research more on this ancestor and his actions in Vicksburg.

To begin, Duane examined the Prisoner of War release that John Wray Wrinkle received on July 9, 1863. He then examined his discharge papers and Mr. Wrinkle's wife's appeal for a widow's pension. From these documents, Duane began to seek more information.

First, Duane reached out to Louisiana park rangers at Pineville's Fort Buhlow and Randolph historical site. From the information given, Duane was able to discover that Mr. Wrinkle joined the Confederate army in Natchitoches, Louisiana, in March of 1862.

According to information from Pineville archives, John Wrinkle was mustered into the 27<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, and sent to Camp Moore in Tangipahoa Parish. It was there that the men of the 27<sup>th</sup> were drilled and trained to become soldiers.



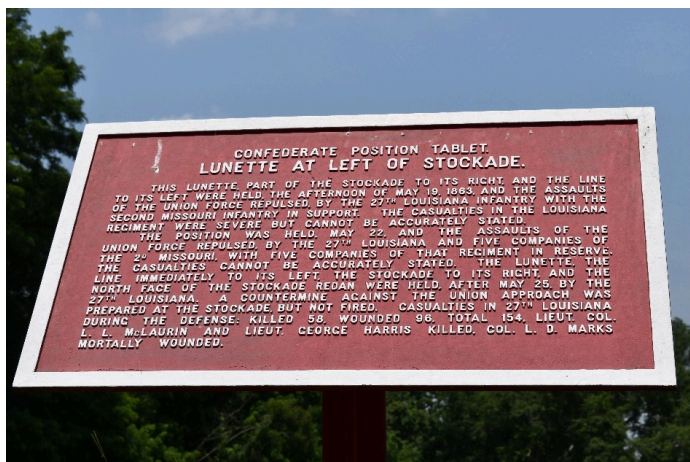
*John Wray Wrinkle's POW release from Vicksburg, 1863.*

According to Frederick Adolphus, a writer and military uniform historian, the 27<sup>th</sup> received their Appler style jean wool uniforms, and were eventually issued their weapons and supplies to be deployed to Vicksburg.

The 27<sup>th</sup> joined with fellow units from Louisiana, including those of the 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> regiments. The 27<sup>th</sup> was given the nickname McLarin's Invisibles. The regiment was attached to Brigadier General Francis Shoup's brigade, and was under the command of division commander, Major General Martin L. Smith.

John was a member of the regiment's Company K, which also included his father-in-law Robert M. Cox, and two





Marker denoting the Louisiana 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry's defensive lunette at Vicksburg.

brothers-in-law—Davis Collie Cox, and Philom Cox. Davis would not survive the fighting at Vicksburg.

The 27<sup>th</sup>'s duty was to defend the Graveyard Road in the Northeast section of Vicksburg. This narrow road sat on a bluff that ran straight into the city of Vicksburg. Union soldiers were assigned to take this position and exploit a rupture in Confederate lines. The area of their defense became known as the Stockade Redan.

It was at the Stockade Redan where the Union executed massive assaults on May 19 and 22 of 1863. Both times the Union army was repulsed by the fierce defenders from Louisiana who were joined by artillerymen from Missouri and Arkansas. The 27<sup>th</sup> had built a lunette to defend their position, and fought off charges from Union infantry units from West Virginia, New York, and Illinois.

Eventually the Union siege took its toll on the defenders and civilians of Vicksburg who had withstood constant artillery barrages. Supplies to the Confederate army were scarce, and the soldiers resorted to eating their horses, boiled leather, and rats.

The pitiful diet of the Confederate soldiers proved to be especially harmful to John Wray Wrinkle. He had survived bombardments and assaults, but his poor diet had begun to affect his digestive system. When Vicksburg fell on July 4, 1863, Wrinkle was extremely ill.



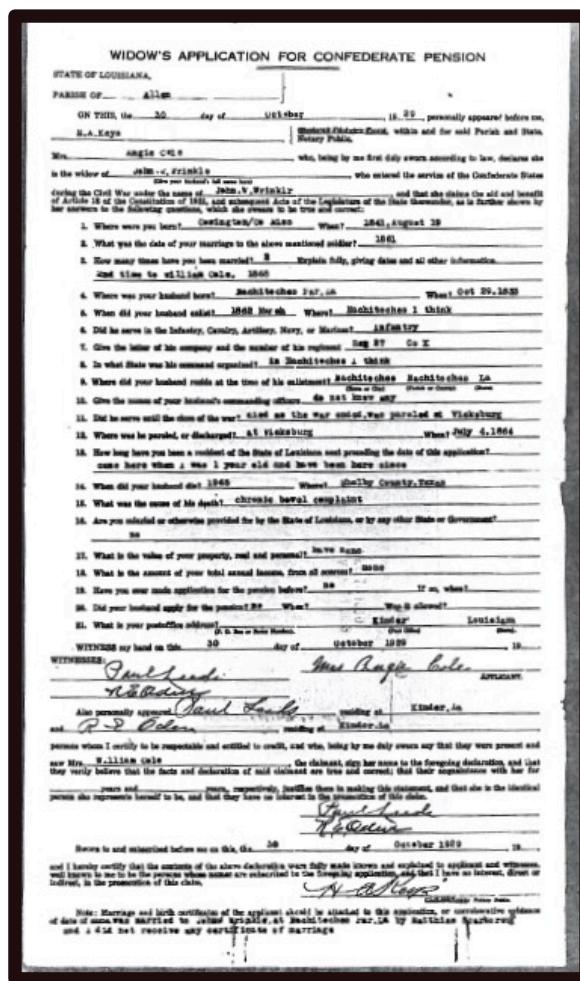
Union approach to the Stockade Redan at Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Wrinkle and many of his comrades were paroled five days later with the agreement that they would no longer fight against the United States. Many of the soldiers of the 27<sup>th</sup> went home to return to serve in Pineville in the defense of Forts Randolph and Buhlow. Other members of the 27<sup>th</sup> joined armies headed to the Eastern theater of war, while a few more joined General Richard Taylor's army defending Louisiana in the Red River Campaign.

Wrinkle, however, rejoined his wife at Vowells Mill, where their son George Robert was born in 1864. They subsequently crossed the Sabine River into Shelby County, Texas, where they sought refuge from the effects of the war in Louisiana. It was there that John Wray Wrinkle died in 1865 of "chronic bowel complaint," possibly brought on by his diet in Vicksburg.

He died just two weeks before the official surrender of the Confederate army under General Robert E. Lee to Ulysses Grant.

Most of the information that is available on the 27<sup>th</sup> Louisiana is in the form of official military records from Camp Moore and Vicksburg. The limited information on the 27<sup>th</sup> could be caused by the fact that most of the officers (the most literate and educated of the men) were killed during the defense of Vicksburg. There are limited primary sources of the regiment such as journals or letters home.



Genealogical information on John Wray Wrinkle submitted on a Widow's Application for Confederate Pension.

## Albert Baggett, WWII Hero, Commemorated with Headstone



*A Hero's Grave*

When Laura Hall, research officer for the Allen Genealogical and Historical Society, wanted to recognize deceased WWII veteran Albert Baggett with a military headstone, she had no idea the journey she would embark upon.

“Last year, I was doing a mapping project at LeBlanc Cemetery,” said Hall, “and I noticed this man did not have a headstone.”

“He was not the only one without a headstone, but in the course of taking the census of the graves, I came to know he was a World War II veteran.”

That particular veteran was Allen Parish native Albert Grover Baggett (1923 – 2008).

Hall added, “Not only that, but he had actually landed on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day!”

### **Who was Albert Grover Baggett?**

Baggett’s roots in Allen Parish ran deep. Four generations of his Baggett forefathers were buried at LeBlanc Cemetery, including Civil War veteran Milton Brown Baggett Sr, his great-great grandfather. He was a long-time member of the LeBlanc Pentecostal Church.

Hall said, “Every person I talked to about him said he was quiet, nice, generous, gentle, caring, honorable, and deserving. He never married, and lived his entire life in LeBlanc.”

“I have seen unmarked graves before,” Hall added. “They are unmarked for various reasons, and I’m familiar with that. But this one kept me up at night.”

At that, Hall was determined to find out what happened to Baggett’s military headstone.

She contacted the Department of Veterans Affairs, but because she was not family or an “approved representative,” discussions with them were unfruitful.

Undeterred, Hall then contacted Eric Kuyper, Commander of American Legion Post # 244 in Kinder. She explained to him the circumstances—that a World War II veteran was lying in an unmarked grave—and he took it from there.

“Comdr. Kuyper told me that he was the last person I was going to have to call about this,” said Hall. “And he was right!”

Kuyper’s contact with Hall was on March 8, and he immediately went to work to resolve the predicament. One of the first things he had to do was to be designated as an official representative of Albert Baggett, who had no direct family members qualified to engage in his behalf with the government.



*Albert Baggett with his mother Grace.  
(Photo contributed by Kim Lenhart)  
(Colorized by Carole Ford)*



## House Renovation Prompts Reunion in LeBlanc



*Descendants of Loni and Catherine LeBlanc  
(photo by Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford)*

*This article was originally published online at [www.allenghs.com](http://www.allenghs.com) on December 14, 2021.*

About three and a half years ago, Ricky Dowden was driving down Methodist Camp Road in LeBlanc, Louisiana. Little did he know he was embarking upon a new chapter in his life.

It was on that drive that he spotted an old, abandoned home place. It was weather-beaten, and barely standing. It was nestled across the street from the LeBlanc Cemetery, at the end of a long driveway beautifully lined by magnificently aged Louisiana oaks.

Something drew him to this spot, and to this house. Although the home was just a shell, Ricky envisioned it as it once was--the heartbeat of a family homestead vibrant with life and its ebbs and flows.

Dowden, who had kinfolk in the area, thought the location was an ideal place to retire.

Although the property didn't have a for sale sign on it, Dowden called the owners, made them an offer, and they accepted it. Dowden now owned the property, and the deserted house that went with it.

He then set about on a soul-driven mission to restore it.



*The old, abandoned home place. View from Methodist Camp Road. (photo by Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford)*

### THE ALLEN GENEALOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Two months ago, Dowden made a phone call to the Kinder Courier newspaper. He wanted to know who to contact in regard to the home he was restoring in LeBlanc.

The editor gave Ricky contact information for the Allen Genealogical and Historical Society, and the rest is history.

"Ricky called us and told us of a project he was working on with an old home," said Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford, an officer in the Society. "He wanted to know if the home had any historical value."

Society members discovered that the home did indeed have a historical value, surviving over 120 years of Louisiana hurricanes and floods.

The story that follows is about that home, and the people who built it, the people who lived in it, and the people who are now restoring it.

### THE JOHN L. "LONI" LEBLANC HOME

"This home was built by my grandfather Loni LeBlanc," said Mary Morrow, when describing the home's origin. "He built the home following the death of his daughter Anna."

Mary went on to describe how Anna, the family's six-year-old daughter, died tragically of rheumatic fever in 1900. She was buried in LeBlanc Cemetery, and a heartbroken Loni built a small shelter above her grave, "...because Anna was afraid of lightning." Mary choked on her words, and tears welled up in her eyes as she told the story. "My grandfather built the little house so that she would feel protected from lightning."



*The shelter over the grave of Anna LeBlanc, who died in 1900. (photo by Ricky Dowden)*



*The Loni and Catherine LeBlanc Family  
(photo colorized by Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford)*

Prior to Anna's death, the Loni LeBlanc family lived on property adjacent to the cemetery. Following her death, the grieving father couldn't continue living there anymore, and began construction on a new home across the street.

In that new home, Loni raised a family of eight boys and one girl.

#### LIFE AT THE HOME

Loni LeBlanc died at the home in 1937 at the age of 72.

"At that time there was a back porch on the home," said Mary. "The day he died he had visited Matt Johnson and returned home on his horse. He sat on the back porch, and asked Uncle Mid to unsaddle his horse because he didn't feel good." He died shortly afterwards.

Although Mary does not remember her grandfather Loni, she warmly remembers his widowed wife Catherine Turner LeBlanc. Her Grandmother Catherine continued living in the house until her death in 1960; she was 85 years old.

"I can say with all my heart that my Grandmother Catherine was the sweetest lady that ever walked this earth," said Mary.

Mary was born and raised in a house just a field over from the Loni LeBlanc home. Her father, George Washington LeBlanc, drove a school bus.

"After I got home from school, I would run across the field to my Grandmother Catherine's house," said Mary. "I love those memories of her."

Mary remembers that her grandmother, "...cooked so good--like a pioneer woman would do." To this day she uses many of the recipes that her grandmother passed down to her.

Mary added that Catherine would get meat from the smokehouse, and she remembers her making blackberry and mayhaw jelly. "She also had the most beautiful aprons. She made her own aprons, and they were so fine."

After Catherine's death, and over time, the home that once was the heartbeat of the family fell into disrepair. Mary estimates no one had lived in the home since the 1980s.



*The Loni and Catherine LeBlanc Home  
(photo by Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford)*

#### THE RESTORATION

A true aficionado of architecture and carpentry, Dowden immediately was impressed with many of the home's features.

The home itself displays some features of classic Creole architecture. One of these features, thought to be of French-Canadian origin, is the high gabled roof, the ridge of which is parallel to the street, which accommodates the porch as well as the mass of the house.

Another feature is the interior chimney. Located in the center of the house, it pierces the ridge line of the roof, and has back-to-back fireplaces that services two rooms. Its bricks are all original.

"These support piers are made of red cypress, and they are original to the house," said Dowden, pointing out the round logs of support piers that surround the house. "The cypress on these piers was over 200-years old when it was cut," he said, while measuring the ring marks of one of the support piers. "That makes the wood over 300-years old--and it's still hard and has no deterioration!"

He then shows off the horizontal support beams, made of longleaf pine, that were hewn by axe. Each of these 120-year-old beams bears the individual axe marks of its hewer.

Longleaf pine trees, which take 100 - 150 years to reach full size, were valued for their hardwood qualities. Once found



*The interior chimney.  
The fireplace faces two rooms.  
(photo by Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford)*



*Ricky Dowden shows off pier and support beam.  
(photo by Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford)*

abundantly in the South, they were blindly ravaged by untethered lumber demands in the 1800s, and nearly went extinct. Only 3% of original longleaf pine forest remains.

Dowden has an appreciation for preserving the home's historic character and



*Cardboard was used for both insulation and wallpaper.  
(photo by Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford)*

understands the special quality of longleaf pine. “This pine is hard wood,” said Dowden. “You can’t even drive a nail into it—it’s so hard.

Longleaf pine boards line the interior walls of the house, and these walls were insulated by cardboard. Says Dowden, “When we began removing the interior walls, we discovered that they were added to the house at a later date. And between these interior walls and the original wall were sheets of cardboard!”

The cardboard, used as insulation, originally served as wallpaper. “They painted the cardboard as interior color,” said Dowden, displaying cardboard sheets painted in both blue and pink.

“I’ve built stuff my whole life,” he said. “This is a challenge. It’s something I haven’t done.”

### LEBLANC REUNION

Dowden’s project led to a small reunion of descendants from the Loni LeBlanc family. On a cool breezy May afternoon, these family members were treated to a shin dig at Dowden’s

pavilion where they were served jambalaya and entertained with live music. Huey Buxton entertained the folks with his violin and others sang along with him.

“It was a wonderful reunion,” said Georgia Mae Fontenot, Mary Morrow’s sister.

A trip to the LeBlanc Cemetery capped off the festivities, as descendants visited the graves of their ancestors, including Loni’s parents Jacque Loni “B B” LeBlanc and Mary Bureaux LeBlanc, and the patriarch and matriarch of the family, Loni’s grandfather Jean C. “John” LeBlanc, and his wife Dinize Fruge LeBlanc.

### A LABOR OF LOVE

Work on the home is a daily project for Dowden. On the day we talked with him, his son Justin was helping. His vision is to have it once again in habitable condition, a place for his daughter to move into sometime this summer.

“I’m having fun,” said Dowden. “It’s a sense of accomplishment. It makes me feel good inside. I’m taking my time, having fun. It’s something to leave my kids.”

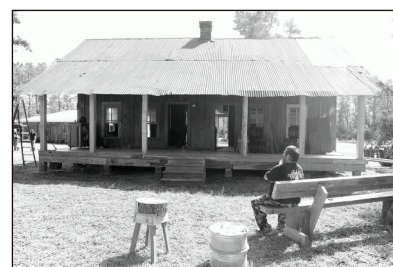
It is truly a labor of love.



*Ricky and Justin Dowden feel good about their restoration work. (photo by Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford)*



*(Clockwise from top left) Grave of Anna LeBlanc (LeBlanc Cemetery); Huey Buxton entertains at the reunion; Granddaughters of Loni LeBlanc; Ricky Dowden imagining his dream; Graves of Loni LeBlanc and Catherine Turner LeBlanc (LeBlanc Cemetery).*



## Local History Books for Sale



Allen GHS has sponsored the second printings of three books of local history.

*Patteran: The Life and Works of Paul Leeds*, was written by Kathryn S. Johnson, and includes original material from Rev. Paul Leeds. It was first published in 1964, and is 237 pages.

Leeds' ministry as a pastor and missionary preacher ranged from the 1890s into the 1950s. His outreach extended into the local communities, as well as to the Coushatta Tribe.

Johnson assembled writings from Leeds' diaries, along with personal notes, memoirs, interviews, and old newspaper clippings.

"Bro. Leeds' determination to bring Jesus Christ to everyone he could reach was accomplished by a lot of walking, even swimming the river if he had to," said Allen GHS President Laura Hall. "For years, he went on horseback to deliver his message, many times making several stops a day."

"He finally did get a vehicle, but I personally like to picture him in his horseback days, doing all he could to help settle the rough backwoods."

*Patteran* delivers a hero in Bro. Paul Leeds and also contains good genealogical information.

*Looking Back at Kinder*, written by Ethelinda J. Andrus and Grace H. Cornish, was first published in 1985. Its first edition was limited to 300 copies, and they have long since been sold out.

The book thoroughly records the early settlers, founding churches, original businesses and schools, and community organizations. Included are many oral histories from numerous founding families, relating their exciting and colorful tales.

The book's 353 pages include many interesting old photos, in addition to a 75 family name index.

Stanley Leger, in a column published in the *Kinder Courier* in March of 1986, wrote, "*Looking Back at Kinder* is the kind of book that you will find hard to put down once you start browsing through its pages."

"It's a sentimental journey through the town's history. And this is a genuinely heart-warming experience. It's like attending a large family reunion."

"The authors' narrative is both interesting and witty and reflects the affection they have for their home town."

*Oberlin: The First 100 Years, 1893-1993*, edited by Pat Carroll Marcantel, was first published by the Oberlin Chamber of Commerce in 1994.

The book beautifully captures the spirit of its subject, and puts into words the legends and love that would have inevitably been lost forever. Past persons and places are now archival material in this enormously rich and evocative book. Topics include the local Coushatta tribe, Cajun culture, nearby small communities, early school, local politics and businesses, and founding families. Detailed maps of 33 original cemeteries are also included for genealogical research.

The book is 200 pages and is full of old, historical photos. The second printings of all three books were published by Wise Publications, based in Sulphur, Louisiana.

Persons interested in purchasing the book may send a check for \$30 to Allen GHS, PO Box 789, Kinder, LA 70648.

Proceeds from the sales will go toward support for the Society's non-profit mission.