

Nostalgia of Malone, Florida

The scientific community has determined the area surrounding present day Malone supported inhabitants as early as 5000 B.C. Archaeologists have examined artifacts from this area which indicate they were hunters in small villages. From about 1000 A.D. to 1700 the tribes were game hunters, nut and berry gatherers and planters of corn and a few vegetables. The ponds, lakes and creeks were also instrumental in their survival. From the geological surveys, most of the registered artifact finds in this area were around bodies of water. Artifact registration numbers were issued for Baxter Bay and the Logan, Florida, Boggy, Bell and Hog Pin, Ponds. All are within a close proximity of Malone. By 1812 many runaway slaves and free blacks had migrated to the area. These blacks were living among the Creeks and Seminoles as well as in separate villages of their own. The early Mitchell Maps of 1800 establishes an east/west boundary. This boundary located four miles south of the Alabama line separated the Creeks and Seminoles. Geographically this line also crossed a section of land purchased by pioneer Israel Baxter in 1853/54. It is alleged that it was necessary for him to evict squatting Seminole's and Creeks before laying out a new home site. The land purchased included Baxter Bay, a huge source of food, shared by both tribes. Israel and Brother James had migrated from Georgia in 1827. Land records indicate Israel received 160 and brother James 240 acres in land grants. These grants were issued for lands approximately three miles south west of Malone. It was 25 years before Israel purchased the Baxter Bay property (one mile south of Malone) and the Native Americans were still squatters. General Andrew Jackson's Reconnaissance Soldiers had reported both Indians and Negroes occupying the area in 1815. White farmers had occupied areas in Georgia much earlier than 1815 and a large percentage of the runaway slaves were coming from there. By 1820 large numbers of white settlers were moving into the area. They began building homes and clearing land for farming. Present day Malone was part of the creation of Jackson County in 1822. Approximately 50 pioneer settlers were already occupying the land in Jackson County. This is substantiated by the 54 heads of family claiming titles under the land grant enactment of 1824. For a period of time after 1824 the Federal Government permitted any settlers whom were squatting on public land to purchase up to 640 acres at a price of \$1.25 per acre or in some instances as little as 25 cents an acre. The surrounding area of present day Malone was sporadically being populated by this public land purchase plan and other sales.

One of the first large single land purchases around Malone was made by Israel Baxter (mentioned above). In 1853/54 a purchased of over 600 acres was made south of present day Malone which became known as Baxter Bay. Shortly after Israel moved to the Malone area in 1827 he was joined by his son in law "Hardy Hart". Hardy purchased land a couple of miles north east of Israel in the present day Collins Chapel area. Brother's Jesse and Levi Hart joined Hardy and relocated to this area with him. They too purchased land joining Hardy's, however they later sold out and moved a few miles west to the Forks of the Creek area. The headstones in an abandoned Cemetery (in a heavy wooded area) off Sellers Road indicate the Hart's remained there for almost a century. An 1840 document establishes all the brothers as being area farmers. The two or three mile area presently encompassing Collins and Friendship Churches were the first to be home steadied and farmed by the pioneers migrating to this area

Joining the settlers in 1848 was Dougald McMillan from North Carolina. His son Lumuel was born in North Carolina in 1847 and daughter Margaret in Florida in 1849. By primitive standards of 1850, the present day Banner Road area had become a commercial settlement. Only a few hundred yards separated three businesses. Hardy Hart owned a general mercantile store and black smith shop and perhaps (based on property ownership) Dougald McMillan was the proprietor of the tanner shop. Also by 1855 David Collins from Baldwin County, Georgia had moved in and was an established land and slave owner. He purchased from Levi & Jesse Hart the land surrounding present day Collins Church. On the census rolls Dougald McMillan was house hold number 524 and David Collins was 525. The early settlers arrived many years before sawmills to produce lumber. Log construction was the alternative common practice. Documentation indicates only two of the original log structures were still standing in this immediate area in 1920. One was the house of Jesse Hart (first owner of the Hart Pond). It was located between Collins Chapel and highway # 2. This is a portion of the land David Collins purchased from Jesse in 1856. The other log structure still standing in 1920 was the old black smith shop located on present day Banner Road. Shortly after the middle of the century log construction had become obsolete. With the introduction of steam powered saw mills, log buildings were being replaced with saw mill lumber. The entire area was flourished with an abundance of choice long leaf pine timber. One of the first log homes to be replaced with saw milled lumber was owned by Hardy Hart. After the sale to Thomas Murdock in 1892 it became known as the Murdock Place. It was located with in view of Collins Chapel.