A Brief History of Spalding County, Georgia

The land which is now Spalding County was claimed in the 1540's by the Spaniards as part of Florida. In 1629, England declared the land part of South Carolina. It wasn't until 1764 that this area officially became part of the Georgia colony.

Led by Chief McIntosh, the Creek Indians ceded all land between the Flint and Ocmulgee Rivers and north to the Chattahoochee River on January 8, 1821, in the First Treaty of Indian Springs.

In 1823, just two years later, the treaty was declared invalid because of rumors of bribery and coercion. Chief McIntosh signed another treaty with the white man and was subsequently executed by a faction of the tribe that was opposed to giving away lands. Although no Creek settlements existed in Spalding County, the familiar McIntosh Road, was an important trail leading to Indian Springs, a meeting place for Indians. The Springs' highly sulfured waters were thought to have healing powers.

After the treaty, five counties were created by the Georgia General Assembly: Monroe, Henry, Fayette, Houston and Dooly. The next year, Pike County was carved from Monroe and Henry. Not until December 20, 1851, was Spalding County founded. It was created from parts of Pike, Henry and Fayette Counties.

Griffin:

Early leaders were desperate to settle the newly acquired land, so it was given away in a lottery system. Winners almost always used their 202.5 acre lots for farming, especially cotton. The only way to transport goods to Macon, the nearest market, was by wagon. Better transportation was a necessity. The solution to the problem was tracks, rails and locomotion.

The Monroe Railroad, owned by General Lewis Lawrence Griffin, received authority to build a line from Macon to Forsyth in 1833. More charters were granted to other companies. Tracks were planned to connect Macon to Savannah, Augusta to Madison and Chattanooga to a tiny town called Terminus.

General Griffin envisioned a town that would prosper at the crossings of a North-South line and a tract running East-West. After determining where these railroads would meet, he bought 800 acres in Pike County from Bartholomew Still. Griffin made a plan for the new town which included wide roadways, plots for six churches, two schools, parade grounds, and a cemetery. William Leak bought the first acre on June 8, 1840 for the tremendous sum of $1000.00. In 1842, the first steam engine came through town.

The railroad attracted cotton growers who supported merchants in town. Soon, professional people were settling in a place which was wilderness only a few years before. Griffin was officially incorporated on December 28, 1843. That same year, Marthasville (once Terminus) was incorporated, and in two years would be renamed Atlanta.

The Depression of 1843 halted the Monroe Railroad's construction. Plans of an East-West line to connect in Griffin were forgotten.

After the Monroe Railroad was sold under court order, the Georgia Railroad's line was extended to Atlanta, not Griffin, as the General had hoped. In 1855, a fire destroyed an entire block on the east side of Hill Street. But also in that year, the town emerged from the depression, cotton flourished once again, and business and population boomed.

Important People to Spalding County:

Thomas Spalding
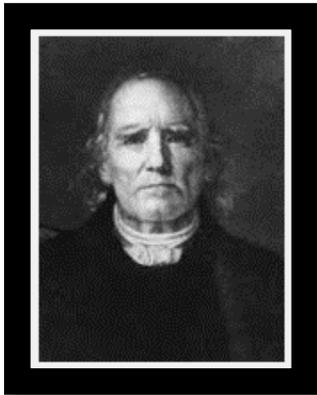
Known as Georgia's Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Spalding was born at Frederica (on St. Simon's Island, Georgia) on March 25, 1774. His ancestors were from the Highlands of Scotland, and were among the band of hardy warriors which Oglethorpe brought to Georgia to form a bulwark for the New Colony against the Spaniards in Florida. His great-grandfather was John Mohr McIntosh, leader of the clan which settled Darien.

His service to agriculture was almost limitless. It has been said that the Experiment Stations of ante-bellum days were the plantations of Thomas Spalding and a neighbor, James Hamilton Couper.

Spalding was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1798, and, in 1850, was a member of the Great Convention at Milledgeville. He was the only man to serve in both of these distinguished gatherings, and was elected Chairman of the 1850 Convention. This gathering, largely through Spalding's guidance, produced the Georgia Platform, which meant that Georgia would accept the Compromise of 1850. Other Southern States fell into line, and the Secession of the South was postponed another decade. This was Spalding's last service to his state and country. On his homeward journey, he reached the home of his son, Charles, at Darien, in sight of his beautiful Sapelo Island, and passed away January 4, 1851. He was interred in St. Andrew's Cemetery at Darien.

Thomas and Sara Spalding had sixteen children, only five of whom survived. There are close ties between the Spalding Family and our County. The Kell's at Sunny Side, Georgia were his cousins: Captain Kell and Thomas Spalding both being descendants of John Mohr McIntosh, the highlander who settled McIntosh County. Captain Kell's sister, Evelyn, married Charles, a son of Thomas Spalding. For many years, Evelyn & Charles Spalding lived in Sunny Side, Georgia.

General Lewis Lawrence Griffin

Around 1810, a young man named Lewis Lawrence Griffin settled in Twiggs County. The very poor native Georgian would become president of the Monroe Railroad and the founder of the city of Griffin.

Griffin became a General in the Georgia Militia after fighting in the Indian War and other wars against the Creeks. He served in the Legislature in 1829 and 1830. He lived in Monroe County and Macon, all the while amassing a large fortune. General Griffin purchased 800 acres of land and planned a city at the crossing of his Monroe Railroad and another line.
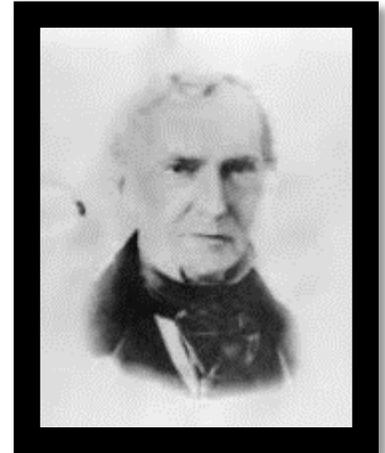
Not long after June 8, 1840, when the city's first lots were sold a depression hit the nation and the Monroe Railroad and Banking Company collapsed. General Griffin lost most of his fortune and moved to Aberdeen, Mississippi. There, he remarried, raised a family, and acquired another fortune. He died in Aberdeen in July of 1867, survived by his wife and two children. General Griffin's ante-bellum home still stands across the street from Aberdeen's city hall and is owned and occupied by his grandchildren.

John Henry Holliday
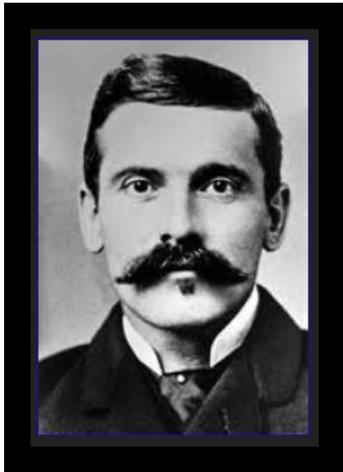
Born on August 14, 1851 and baptized on March 21, 1852 in the Presbyterian Church of Griffin. John's mother, Alice and father, Henry were respected Griffin citizens. Alice ran a very religious household. Henry was the first Clerk of Superior Court of Spalding County. He was part of the Confederate Army and in 1862, left it with the rank of Major. The family moved to Valdosta, Georgia a few years later. John attended and completed school at the Valdosta Institute. In 1870, he entered the Pennsylvania College of Dental Surgery, where he soon graduated in 1872.

"Doc" Holliday then moved back to Georgia and built a successful dental practice. It was at this time that Doc was diagnosed with tuberculosis, which severely threatened his health. He was given two options: to stay in Georgia and maybe live 6 months or to go out west to a dryer climate and survive 2 years. It didn't take long for him to take the advice of his doctor and move to Dallas, Texas in 1873. In Dallas, Doc attempted many times to continue his dental practice, but his continuous coughing deterred patients.

Doc was an educated man and learned the skills of poker very quickly. In the saloons, patrons paid no attention to his constant coughing, and there, Doc could also drink to ease the pain of his disease. On November 8, 1887, Doc died in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Because of his

participation in the famous gun fight at the O.K. Corral that lasted less than one minute, Doc's name will live forever in western history. He should, however, also be remembered by his earlier accomplishments and that he had survived his tuberculosis for a remarkable 15 years. Doc's distant cousin still resides in Griffin and has taken the responsibility of preserving the history and legacy of his famous relative.

During the war years Griffin was not the site of any Civil War battles, but nonetheless it was a vital location during the war. Camp Stephens, located two miles north of McIntosh Road, was a mobilization point for infantry. Cavalry were mobilized at Camp Milner, which is now the grounds of the city park. Two military companies from Griffin and seven from Spalding County were organized to fight. Not only was Griffin the first stop for troops and the home of many soldiers, it was also a hospital town and a printing center. Trainloads of sick and wounded poured into hospitals, public buildings, the courthouse, stores, colleges and even private homes. Much Confederate money was printed in Griffin as well as most of the Confederate government's stamps. At one point, Spalding County even printed its own currency. Although not destroyed physically by Union soldiers (only one warehouse was burned), Griffin was devastated financially. Three hundred miles of railroad, the city's lifeline, had been demolished. Yet once again, as it did after the depression, the town recovered. A new development in Griffin helped it to survive Reconstruction and the postwar era. The 1880's saw the birth of textile manufacturing in Griffin. In 1888, the Kincaid Manufacturing Company opened. It continued to expand by buying other mills in the area. Today, the company is known as Dundee Mills/Springs Industries and is one of Griffin's largest employers.

Oak Hill Cemetery

Oak Hill Cemetery was a part of Lewis Lawrence Griffin's original plan for the city. Many persons crucial for the establishment of Griffin and Spalding County are buried there. Nationally known figures buried in Oak Hill include James S. Boyton, governor of Georgia after the death of Alexander Stephens, a hero of the Confederate navy, John McIntosh Kell and Martha Eleanora Holliday, Doc's sister who died in infancy. The cemetery is one place to walk through Griffin's history.

Stonewall Confederate Cemetery and Griffin's Memorial Park

Many who died in the battles of Atlanta and Jonesboro were left without a proper burial. Around 1867, a group of women organized to form the Ladies Memorial Aid Society to create a cemetery for the fallen soldiers. They, and other volunteers, went to Lovejoy's Station to collect remains. Over 500 Confederate dead and 1 Union soldier were interred, marble headstones were acquired and a monument was dedicated on August 17, 1867. Monuments for the dead of the Revolutionary War, both World Wars, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and for the women who nursed soldiers in Griffin during the Civil War are also located in the Stonewall Confederate Cemetery and Memorial Park. The cemetery and monuments are located on East Taylor Street across from the Flint River Regional Library.