

Happy New Year



Geneva County Reaper



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2005: Interesting Year for Geneva County

By Johnna Ingalls and Paige Howell
Geneva Newspapers

January

01-05-05
- Geneva County Schools swear in new superintendent- David Snell
- "Jane Doe" case intensifies; new leads arise
- Samson prepares for Centennial Celebration
- Samson Lady Tigers claim Red Level Tourney Title
01-12-05
- County Commission begins new year with discussion of overcrowding in the Geneva County Jail
01-19-05
- District Attorney Kirke Adams officially sworn into office
- GHS Seniors make trip to Presidential Inauguration
01-26-05
- County drug policy regarding hiring/firing of employees is questioned
- Jason Tomlin is charged with opening fire on Sheriff Greg Ward's residence

February

02-02-05



Kirke Adams officially took over as District Attorney after beating David Holmes in the November 2004 General Election.(Photo by Stephen Crews)

- K-9 units raid area schools
- Representatives of Geneva and surrounding cities meet with committee regarding the project to four-lane Highway 167
02-09-05
- "Jane Doe" identified as Julia Margaret Davis of Crawfordville, FL; husband, 72 year-old Jerry Davis was arrested and charged with 2nd degree murder
- Fatal helicopter crash kills one- Roy Dossey of Lakeland, FL- in the Gritney Community
02-16-05
- Lady Panthers advance to Substate in basketball playoffs
- County Commission meets regarding E911 funds
- Lady Panthers and Lady Tigers win individual area titles
- Samson Tigers claim Area title
02-23-05
- SYSCO plans distribution center for Geneva
- Sellersville Cash & Carry busted for meth labs
- Lady Tigers advance to Regional Tourney Finals

March

03-02-05

-Lady Panthers advance to Final Four

03-09-05

- Helicopter crashes in Bellwood; minor injuries

03-16-05

- County Commission reports that \$22 million is needed for road and bridge repairs & to improve jail conditions

03-23-05

- Complaints from Riverside area mount; Geneva PD begins investigation into several cases

03-30-05

-City of Geneva gears up for Easter with city-wide Egg Hunt

- Severe weather including damaging winds, sleet, and hail ravages Geneva County

- Count commissioners discuss questionable hiring policies for County Administrator's office

April

4-6-05

- Helicopter crashes as TAC-X near Samson, Alabama. Three were injured during the crash on Tuesday, March 29.

-Geneva deals with the

Support Our Troops

A support group in Geneva is taking orders for "Support Our Troops" t-shirts. The shirts can be purchased in various sizes for just \$7. The shirts list the names of each member of the Geneva Guard Unit. The support group for the Geneva troops meets the first weekend of each month. For more information on the support group you can contact Ann Burke at 684-0332.



Soldiers listed on the shirt and are currently fighting for our freedom at undisclosed locations are: Shirt Names: Jeffrey Adkison; Timothy Ard; Joshua Baker; Bobby Biddle; Charles Boatwright; Lareka Brazile; Allen Brewer; Christopher Burch; Robert Burk; Timothy Carroll; Timothy Childers; Charles Coker; Jeffrey Cook; Aric Cumbie; Christopher Edwards; Cornelius Frazier; Brandon Wood; Alan Gill; Daniel Wilson; Brandon Grantham; David Henderson; Matthew Hutchings; Stephen Radney; Jathan Redmon; Brandon Smith; Stafford Still; Max Tucker; and Jonathan Wilder. **Deadline to purchase a shirt is December 31, 2005.**



Stephen Lomax Preachers was found "GUILTY" of murder in the death of Angel Marie Whitley in July of 2005. This is one of the biggest stories for 2005. (Staff photo by Stephen Crews)

first flood of the century. One of the gates on the levee failed to shut properly resulting in some minor flooding in the southeast corner of downtown near the old railroad trussel and the city yard.

4-13-05

-Legality of employee hiring questioned. The legality of the hiring of an employee in the county administrator's office was questioned on Monday, April 11, 2005, by Commissioner Ray Minshew. Geneva and Elba face similar levee problems. Both the cities of Geneva and Elba dealt with minor problem pertaining to their first stress tests on their new levees.

4-20-05

-Drug bust nets three arrests. The Geneva County Drug Task force busted their second lab in a matter of three days, which resulted in the arrests of three individuals, Steven Michael Brackin, Shaunda Lynn Harris, and Kelly King.

- Gas driveoffs on the rise. An increase in the number of driveoffs at local convenience stores had owners concerned

about their operating procedures. Pre-paid requirements were quickly initiated.

4-27-05

-Concerned citizens address commission. Things got heated during a commission meeting as the news spread about an employee being hired by the commission despite failing a drug test.

May

5-4-05

-Saturday events cancelled for the first time in River Festival History. For the first time in history, entertainment events were cancelled during the River Festival due to an excessive amount of rain that Saturday.

-Governor Bob Riley visits Geneva on Tuesday, May 10. Governor Riley made a special trip to Geneva for a groundbreaking ceremony of Sysco Systems of the Gulf Coast.

5-11-05

-The wait is over. Mayor Karen Simmons made several special presentations to SYSCO Executives and State Officials. Facility up-

grades to begin within the next three weeks. Along with the presentations made by Mayor Karen Simmons was Governor Riley who was the honored guest for the commemoration of SYSCO's opening.

5-18-05

-New jail discussed during commission meeting. One of the issues during a recent commission meeting was a plan for a new county jail.

5-25-05

-Geneva School Board approves several changes. During the Geneva City School Board of Education meeting, several changes were approved amongst the Geneva City School System, including many retirements, promotions, and hirings.

-Graduation of the Class of 2005 was on May 21, 2005, at Robert Fowler Memorial Park.

June

6-1-05

-Drug task force has busy week. The Geneva County Drug Task Force has been busy during the past two weeks with four metham-

Review, see page 7A

2005: Geneva County Commission Deals with Numerous Issues that Result in Controversy

Stephen Crews
Editor

The Geneva County Commission was dealt with many different issues during the past year. So many issues that a top 10 was created for them.

10. Larry Everett pulls rocks out of his pocket during a meeting earlier in the year - Everett said that he was giving the commissioners actual stones to throw for once. The incident took place during discussion on the hiring of an employee who was hired by County Administrator Donna Jones

9. County Audit Is Better - After a terrible audit during 2004, the 2005 audit proved to be much better for the county.

8. Fail(ed) System - The commission has recently learned that the heating and air system put into the county jail in 2004 is now working properly. The system was put in by Fails Heat and Air in Dothan.

7. Budget Woes - The commission had four separate motions before they agreed on a budget this upcoming year.

6. Pretrial Diversion Bill Almost Held up by Commission - The commission voted 3-1 to approve a pretrial diversion program that was being requested by District Attorney Kirke Adams. The problem seemed to be the fact that the lone no vote, Commissioner Larry Everett, might be enough to keep the bill from being passed by Senator Harri Anne Smith who

requires a unanimous vote for items presented to her. The item eventually passed.

5. Jail Overcrowding - Jail overcrowding has been a big concern for Sheriff Greg Ward now for many years. The problems have intensified in recent years and the issue finally took center stage in 2005. The end result appears to be the temporary structures approved by the county commission and a plan in the works to put a tax referendum on the ballot for the 2006 general election.

4. Hospital Issues - The county commission dealt with issues of who to select to the Geneva County Hospital Authority Board after the Authority sent the commission a revised plan that would not allow the commission to have the

final say on appointments.

The matter led to several discussions between the two groups, concerned citizens and even the Geneva Mayor and City Council. The situation has since been changed to meet the satisfaction of the commission and the authority.

3. Adkison Refuses to Allow Bauman a Chance to Speak - Geneva resident Bill Bauman was denied the opportunity to address the county commission three times about his concerns over the Geneva County Health Care Authority Board.

2. Drug Policy Problems - County Administrator Donna Jones hired an employee for her office after giving them a second drug test. The second test was given after the individual



Igloos are soon coming to Geneva County.

failed the first test. The employee has since quit but the issue created quite a stir that resulted in the drug policy being made tougher.

1. Igloos Anyone - The county commission approved placing domed temporary jail facilities on the grounds of the Geneva

County Courthouse to deal with jail overcrowding. The decision was a 3-2 vote with Probate Judge Harry O. Adkison, Commissioner Larry Everett and Commissioner Gary Shields voting in favor of the facility while Commissioners Ray Minshew and Fred Hamic voted against the plan.

Review

Continued from Page 1A

phetamine busts in the past two weeks, with arrests of Bobby Allen Russell and Michael Ray Tindell, Mary Loretta Smith, Douglas C. Moore, Chriti Lynn Davis, and Jerry Marcus Wilkerson.

6-8-05
-Relay for Life Celebrates 20 Years. This past year, Relay for Life commemorated its twentieth year of celebration.

-Hurricane Season Arrives!

6-15-05
-Temporary solution for jail's overcrowding issue? During the Geneva County Commission meeting on June 13, plans to provide relief to the overcrowding jail were discussed, and presentations were made to that effect.

6-22-05
-Howell guilty of rape. Douglas Johns Howell, who was 16 at the time of raping a seven-year-old relative, was convicted of first degree rape.

-Herring convicted of manslaughter. Franklin "Gene" Herring was convicted of manslaughter after murdering William Travis Thames following a Halloween party on November 1, 2003.

-Nunn pleads guilty; sentence to 25 years. In a case prepared to go to trial on Monday, June 13, the defense and the DA were able to reach a mutual agreement at the last minute that will send Joel Nunn, who pleaded guilty to a charge of possession of marijuana and trafficking cocaine in 2004, to prison for 25 years.

6-29-05
-Former Slocomb student's terrorist threats uncovered. Israel Parales, a former SHS student, was arrested on June 22, 2005, after the Geneva County Sheriff's Department uncovered plans to commit "terrorist-like activities" made by Parales through his emails and instant messages.

-Mathis announces his intentions to run for governor. Former state Representative Nathan Mathis announced his intentions to run for Governor of Alabama as an independent candidate.

-Taste of Geneva begins Saturday. This year, the Geneva County Historical Society organized the first annual Taste of Geneva Festival to commemorate the Fourth of July.

July

07-06-05
-Government sues Second Chance over defective body armor

-48 year-old Travis Woosley drowns accidentally in Black Creek

-City of Geneva donates old Geneva Fire Station to the Geneva County Historical Society

07-13-05
-Hurricane Dennis ravages Southeast... Minor damage to Geneva County
-Deadly crash on Co. Road 43 claims three lives
-Wiregrass Medical Center celebrates 50 years of service to Geneva County

07-20-05
-Murder charges filed against David Gilley in Co. Rd. 43 wreck

-Accident at Lake Cassidy injures 27 year-old Geneva woman

07-27-05
-Second Chance Body Armor opens for bids by interested companies

August

08-03-05
-Armor Holdings, Inc. recognized as high bidder for Second Chance Body Armor

08-10-05
-Jury returns "Guilty" verdict in Preachers trial; Preachers, a Samson native, was given a sentence of life without parole

-Herring verdict- Guilty of Manslaughter; Herring sentenced to 11 years

08-17-05
-David Gilley charged with 4th murder charge in 7-13 wreck on Co. Rd. 43

-25 members of Geneva National Guard Unit deployed for "Operation Iraqi Freedom"

08-24-05
-Huge crowd attends send off reception for the 140 members of the Alabama National Guards

8-31-05
-Sting operation nets one arrest; more to come. A sting operation led by the Geneva PD led to one arrest after a high speed chase through Geneva and part of Florida.

-No major damage caused by Hurricane Katrina in Geneva County.

September

9-7-05
-Gas prices soar. Gas prices began to rise even more on Tuesday, August 30 after information began to surface on the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

-Geneva banks come together to aid victims of Hurricane Katrina.

-Harri Anne Smith Considers run for Governor of Alabama.

9-14-05
-Geneva High School Homecoming 2005.

-Katrina relief efforts still underway.

9-21-05
-Geneva Piggly Wiggly Broken into on.

-Geneva Homecoming: Varsity football team prevails over St. James.

-Teacher brings gun on Samson School campus.

9-28-05
-Sheriff discusses overcrowding jail.
-New ER Management Company at Wiregrass Medical Center official began on September 26, 2005.

October

10-5-05
-No real change? The main subject for the Geneva County Health Care Authority Board meeting on September 29 was to address allegations that were shared during a Geneva City Council meetin on September 19.

10-12-05
-Let the sun shine in. The "Sunshine Law," of Opens Meetings Act, was ratified by the Alabama Legislature.

10-19-05
-Budget approved on fifth motion. It took the county commission five different times before they finally approved a county budget on Friday, October 14.

-Drug busts made in samson.

10-26-05
-Two car accident kills one in Samson. A two-car accident on Saturday, October 22 just north of Samson left four people injured while another was fatally injured.

November

11-2-05
-Accident claims Geneva sophomore. A one-car accident claimed the life of Geneva High School sophomore Jessica Seay, 15, and Enterprise High School senior Stacy Powell, 17, on Sunday, October 30, 2005.

-Geneva man dies in automobile accident. On Saturday, October 29, 2005, an automobile accident took the life of Geneva resident Steve Lamar Creel, 31.

11-9-05
-Horroric accident claims Samson man after a work-

related accident.
-Former Samson teacher indicted on gun charges. Judy Hudson, 46, was indicted by a Geneva County grand jury for bringing a gun to school.

11-16-05
-Round three: Geneva vs. UMS-Wright. Geneva High School varsity football team reached the third round of the state playoffs.

11-23-05
-Growing debate! The temporary jail issue was raised once again at the Geneva County Commissioner meeting on Monday, November 14. The commission is planning to move forward with their plans.

11-30-05
-Kris Kringle Market. Second annual Kris Kringle Market was scheduled for those having trouble finding a gift.

December

12-7-05
-Hospital Board appointments made. Commissioner Fred Hamic made both of his appointments to the Geneva County Health Care Authority on Monday, November 29.

-Samson Centennial final celebration. The final ceremony of Samson Centennial 2005 was held Sunday, December 18, 2005.

12-14-05
-SYSCO off and running. SYSCO Services of the Gulf Coast set aside a special day on Saturday, December 10, to commemorate the newly opened business and its employees and their families.

-Temporary jail facility approved. The Geneva County Commission approved a low bid of \$249,999 from Dome International to construct a temporary jail facility at the Geneva County Courthouse.

12-21-05
-Inmate found dead in county jail.

-Samson Lady Tigers



Jeremy Turns One

Jeremy David Shirley celebrated his first birthday with a Winnie the Pooh Party at his home December 17, 2005.

Jeremy is the son of John and Martha Shirley of Hartford. He has a big brother Chris.

He is the grandson of the late Janie Sue (Waters) McDonald of Hartford, the late Joel Hendrix of Geneva; Sue Hendrix of Geneva and Bob and Barbara Shirley of Hartford.

Aunts, uncles, friends and family helped celebrate his first birthday and fun was had by all.

were ranked number one in the First Class 2A ASWA State Basketball Poll.

-Park fees approved at Geneva Council Meeting.

During the December 5th Geneva City Council meeting, the board approved fees to improve facilities at Robert Fowler Park.

Top 10 Sports Stories for 2005

1. Samson Lady Tigers finish as state runner-up in basketball.
2. Geneva advances to round three of the state playoffs in football.
3. Geneva girls advance to Birmingham for the final four in basketball.
4. Jeremy Whitaker takes over as head baseball coach at Geneva County.
5. Kirke Norris takes over as the head Slocomb basketball coach.
6. Slocomb boys make playoffs under first year head coach Jeff Mitchell.
7. Geneva County, Samson, and Geneva all make it to regionals in Troy for basketball.
8. Samson boys make it to Troy under first year coach Brent Johnson.
9. Chris Cox resigns as head baseball coach at Geneva.
10. Greg Thompson named new Geneva baseball coach.

Automobile Accident Takes Life of Geneva Student

Stephen Crews
Editor

At approximately 5:30 p.m. on December 24, 2005, a Geneva High School student was fatally injured in a 1 vehicle accident occurring 2 miles north of Geneva on AL 85 in Geneva County.

Kirstie Gale Hare of Geneva was fatally injured in the one-vehicle accident. The 15-year-old was traveling in a 1996 Acura. She was not wearing her seatbelt.

The accident is still under investigation by Trooper G Furukawa.



I Remember Papa and the Christmas Express

By Dr. Alan Spann
Special to Geneva Newspapers

It was a cold and damp day, the sky overcast from a canopy of gray cloud cover. It was December 1949 in Samson, Alabama. I was four years old and my maternal grandfather, Willie B. Hoffman, "Papa" informed me that he was taking me on my first train ride far away to the City of Geneva to see the arrival of Santa Clause.

It was early that eventful day as he took my hand and pulled me up to the boarding area at the Samson depot. I was initially apprehensive of what appeared to be a huge, monstrous mass of black metal, hissing steam, bellowing white smoke, clanging bells, and loud whistles. I became aware this was the iron horse that was to whisk me away to Santa Land. The whistle blared loudly in my ears. Papa assured me that

everything was alright. He would talk with me softly, providing me with the details of our trip that day. He told me that the railroad passenger service between Samson and Geneva was short-lived and would soon, "belong only to the ages".

We boarded the warm comfortable cabin car and I was escorted to a window seat. There I observed the activities within the depot. The conductor yelled, ALLLLLLLLA-B-O-O-OA-D!"

We were soon inching away from the station, slowly moving at first, jerking and chugging down the tracks. Within what seemed like seconds, we were rolling past southern pine trees, cows grazing in pastures and mistletoe laden oak trees. Abruptly, the terrain was flying past my window as the train accelerated to break neck speed. The sounds of the wheels were heard singing clickity-clack,

clickity-clack, clickity-clack, clickity-clack, click-click. I marveled at the sights outside my window. Papa held my hand tightly as we raced down the twelve-mile ribbon of steel to Geneva. Green flashes of tree moss danced outside as splotches of gray from the Spanish moss hanging from the trees growing through a gray pond quickly dashed past my eyes within the blur of light.

I was a bundle of eyes and ears as the train started to slow and we eased to a stop at the Geneva station. The hissing white clouds of steam reappeared and the conductor, announced loudly, "GEEEE-NEEE-VAH!" Papa explained we needed to walk to the street where Santa would be arriving. He gingerly dragged me from the depot and I found myself street side with many grown-ups. Some of the men were dressed in white shirts

and fedora hats, others had various types of work clothing. Rudy faced children laughed and screamed with excitement, their breath casting clouds of vapor into the chilly air. The women wore different patterns of pokadotted dresses, funny looking hats and interesting leg hose. The hose had black lines down the back of women's legs. Papa placed me directly in front of the street just as the main man himself appeared to my left, riding on his crimson and white float. He was all decked out in his bright red suit complete with his white fully hair and beard. His helpers, donned in green outfits accompanied him throwing candy to the crowd. Suddenly, he looked straight at me and winked!

I hadn't caught my breath from this experience before I was back on the train and returning to Samson and pulling into the depot upon

our return. As I reflect upon this experience, I realize the most precious memory of that day was the time, knowledge and love provided to me by my beloved grandfather. This fascinating pre-Disney trip through an earlier South included the enchantment of Christmas and Santa, however, the magic was within my grandfather's love. He will always be in my mind, heart and soul at Christmas and always.

Notes: Papa was within his seventh decade of his life at that time. He lived to the age of one hundred and two years and passed on at the Masonic Home in Montgomery, Alabama on August 5, 1981.

This story represents the intellectual property of Dr. Alan Spann, SHS Class of 1963 and a presentation of the Spann Group, a division of Piranha Productions. Dr. Spann may be reached at dr.spann.cox.net.