

John T. Diamond Family Collection

(For Genealogical and Historical Research Only – Not for publication)



EARLY PIONEERS OF PINE LEVEL

Santa Rosa County, Florida

John T. Diamond

1878 – 1963

(Written about 1949)

Compliments
Of
Jay Historical Society

Early Pioneers of Pine Level

John T. Diamond

1878 – 1963

(Written about 1949)

So far in this article the names of none of the early pioneer citizens who came to Pine Level and helped to develop its resources and began to build its institutions, legends, traditions and history have been mentioned except incidentally. Since the History of any country or community is but the legends, traditions and accomplishments of its people it seems fitting to mention the names of a few of Pine Level's early pioneers who played important parts in developing its resources and marking the course of its History.

Of course the first white men to reside on the big Pine Level country were the early Spaniards. To them we are indebted for the name Pine Level Country and much of its early legendary lore and traditional History. We do not know the exact date the first Spaniards traveled over this beautiful Pine Level country or slept beside its cool springs and clear creeks under the protecting shelter of forests primeval. Neither do we know when first they build their lonely cabins on sloping hills or on the brows of steep bluffs beside springheads around the fringes of the big level. We do know however, the Spaniards made their first settlement in Pensacola as early as 1698 and that it was destroyed in 1719, but almost all the people in the settlement moved to Santa Rosa Island or along the shores of the bays and bayous connected with Pensacola Bay.

A few years later efforts were made to rebuild Pensacola. These efforts were continued until a permanent town was established. As soon as Pensacola had a degree of permanence a trading post was established at the head of the Escambia Bay known as Florida Town. From the port of Pensacola and the trading post around Florida Town the enterprising Spaniards began exploring the area north of these towns immediately by traveling up the Escambia River in small boats and canoes and overland following the Indian Trails they found leading from the coast in the surrounding country. From what we know of the development of Pensacola and Florida Town we can reasonably assume the first Spaniard were sojourning in these areas approximately one hundred years before Florida was purchased by the United States in 1819. Florida became a territory in 1822.

We know from reliable traditional History that many Spaniards lived along the fringes of Pine Level many years before any Land Grants were taken up by them. When the first English speaking people came to Pine Level they found plenty of convincing proof of this in the remains of dilapidated log cabins, camping lean-to's, little clearings for cattle pens, stubs of old China trees and mulberry trees near

springheads and along streamlets. They also found in the woods stumps where big tall trees had been cut and logging roads leading to the river as proof the Spaniards had been cutting big trees for timber and floating them down the river to market many years before any Land Grants were ever issued. They also found near some of the ruins of cabins a few graves marked differently from the graves in the regular burying grounds of the Indians.

The records show that Land Grants were issued to the following Spaniards conveying land on Pine Level or adjacent to the level as follows:

1. James Brewster, containing 639.96 acres. This grant is located east and a little south of the Mt. Carmel Methodist Church.
2. Daniel Maloy containing 638.96 acres. This grant is situated east of Jay.
3. Miquel Quiggles, containing 714.94 acres situated on the Escambia River bordering the state line.
4. Needham Parker, 639.22 acres situated on the Escambia River south of the Miquel Quiggles grant.
5. Elijah Holmes, containing 638.56 acres located northwest from Jay.
6. John Edgly and Edward Townes, containing 1260.37 acres. This grant contains much swamp land and extends up on a creek first known as Edgly Creek, later as Barrow Creek and later as Bray Creek.
7. Mary Weaver, containing 560.48 acres, located along the Old Stream Mill Bluff Log and Timber Landing and out on the creek first known as Governor's Creek, later as Gaylor Creek and now known as Campbell Creek.
8. Joseph Nelson, containing 638.12 acres taking in the Old Dead River Log and Timber Landing and a portion of the Jay-Flomaton highway.

We also have the traditional History handed down by some of the above named Spaniards who took up the above named grants and a few other Spaniards who remained here after Florida was purchased by the United States. Among who may be mentioned the following:

Elijah Holmes, Nathaniel Hawthorn, Daniel Maloy, Needham Parker, James Brewster, and Rix Gaylor. These men were here probably many years during the Spanish Occupation. Then we have much traditional History handed down by many of the earliest English speaking settlers who were here from five to twenty years before the end of the Spanish Occupation. Among this group may be mentioned the following:

Grandfathers Tom Sunday, Gabe Capers, Neil Campbell and Hayes Forbes. These men learned much legendary lore and traditional History from the Indians and early Spaniards that add interest to the early History of Pine Level and its adjacent areas. As a small boy my first lessons in the History of Pine Level were given to me by Grandfather Neil Campbell, Grandfather Tom Sunday and Uncle Gabe Capers. There were here while the tall copper colored men of the forests were traveling up and down the old Indian Trading Trails leading across Pine Level carrying their valuable furs and hides from the settlements of the Creek Indians along the shores of the Conecuh River to its head beyond where the city of Troy is now located to the Spanish Trading Posts at Florida Town, Pensacola and perhaps at other trading posts along the coast. They were here when Indian wigwams and tepees were plentiful in villages on high hammocks around crystal springs and along clear cool creeks. They were here when all livestock on the range had to be protected from fierce bears, packs of big gray timber wolves and cold blooded panthers. As a small boy nothing delighted me more than to sit for hours at a time and listen to the experiences these men had in dealing with Indians and fierce wild animals. To hear these pioneers of the big woods relate their experiences always made me wish I had been here when they were boys so I could have had the wonderful experiences they had during their early boyhood.

Shortly after the news of the purchase of Florida by the United States spread into the states north of Florida a brilliant young man by the name of Isaiah Lindsay Cobb with his bride, a Miss Ware, came from the Western part of the State of Georgia settled in the southwestern corner of Pine Level. Their home was located a few hundred feet west of the original Pollard-Milton road near the top of the red clay hill half a mile south from a clear branch known now as the Fortner Branch. The home was a short distance from a red clay hill on the road known as the Pollard Hill. No doubt this young man had either been down in Florida on military duty fighting Indians or had heard of the country from soldiers who had made military trips through this area to Pensacola. Be that as it may, he had heard of the beautiful Pine Level country way down in Florida better known as the Land of Flowers and the abundance of pine timber available here. He also had learned of the foreign timber market at Pensacola, from which port much timber was being shipped. Since the Escambia-Conecuh River was the only transportation line the enterprising young man settled not far from the river and was soon engaged in the logging and timber business.

Mr. Isaiah Cobb reared three boys: John, James and Frank. John made his home on Pine Level a mile or so east from where the Mt. Carmel Methodist Church was located several years later. He married a daughter of Pioneer citizen Ben Barrow. Mr. Barrow first built a saw mill on a creek first known as the Barrow Mill Creek. This mill was washed away during an all day and night down pour of rain soon after it was built. Mr. Barrow then built a mill just across the state line in Alabama on what was later known as the Pew Mill Creek. Mr. Barrow built his home on the east side of the old Three Notch Road a few hundred yards north of what was later the location of the Mt. Carmel Methodist

Church. A large oak tree planted directly in front of his pioneer home is still standing. The home was directly across the road from the springhead forming the head of the Pew Mill Creek.

James Cobb married a Miss Kennedy and settled in the eastern side of what was then Santa Rosa County at the head of Wilkinson Creek. Frank Cobb married Miss Melissa Dixon and built his home on the east side of the old Three Notch Military Road three miles from where the village of Jay is now located.

Soon after Isaiah Cobb came to Florida another brilliant young man by the name of Benjamin Cobb came to Florida and settled on Pine Level between the Maloy Branch and Gillberry Branch not far from the head of Gillberry. Here he reared three sons: Farrah, Anderson and Ben Cobb. Anderson built a home among a group of towering white hickory trees approximately two hundred yards east of the Three Notch Military Road a quarter of a mile south from the forks of the Pollard-Milton road and the Pine Level – Johnson Ferry Road. He lived at this place until his family of girls were grown and then moved from Pine Level to be near some of the family. Farrah Cobb built a home four miles from where the town of Jay is now located on the east side of the Old Three Notch Military Road near the middle springhead forming Cobb Creek. Here Farrah, Jr. was born. The family moved from this place to Monroe Saw Mill on East Cold Water about 1880. F. H. Cobb, Jr. became one among Santa Rosa County's outstanding business men. For many years he managed a large logging business. He is now 88 years old, still active in lumber and timber business. He has been residing in Milton more than 30 years. Each of his three boys since manhood has occupied important business positions.

Ben Cobb grew up here on Pine Level where he with other boys of his age attended Pine Level's first school for the education of the children in the community. It was what was called in early pioneer days a "Pay School." A few years after Ben grew to manhood he went to Texas and became an outstanding "Cow Boy." It was said of him that he became one among the best "Ropers" of wild cattle and wild mustang ponies of the Plains. He was an expert at riding and taming the wildest of the Texas Mustang Ponies.

He later returned to Pine Level where he lived for many years. After returning from Texas he was known as Texas Ben. There was another younger man in the county by the same name. This Ben Cobb added a "T" to his name by signing it B. W. T. He was the most entertaining man in the community. As a boy he had learned all the legendary lore and traditional history of the early pioneer life on Pine Level. In Texas he learned all the legendary lore and traditional history of Cow Boy life on Texas plains. He spent much time hunting on Pine Level and its adjacent woods. He knew the wild life of this area and he hunted with the hunters and camped with them in all sorts of weather and all sorts of woods. He had chased and killed bears with them, also, panthers and wolves. He had led in coon hunts and fox chases with them. He had stood on all

the deer runs and killed fine deer when they came his way. He had chased the deer by his friends where they sometimes made a kill. He knew all the habits of wild turkeys, their favorite feeding grounds and their roosting places. He knew the feeding places and feeding hours of the large dark fox squirrels and the little gray cat squirrels and how to shoot them from the tops of the tallest trees on the Level or in the river swamp.

B. W. T. Cobb was especially entertaining to all boys who were interested in wild life or in the riding of horses either for sport or driving cattle or range horses. From him brother Henry and I learned the technique and tricks of penning range cattle and horses. We learned the technique and tricks of riding the wild yearlings and ponies. When we were in our middle teens we often had the privilege of trying B. W. T. Cobb's technique and tricks in handling cattle and horses. They always worked exactly like he said they would. He lived here to a ripe old age and was buried in the "Cobb Old Field Cemetery," in the land he loved so well.

Soon after B. W. T. Cobb's father came to this community a cousin of his, another brilliant young man came here from the same neighborhood in Georgia. His name was James Thadeus Cobb. He settled on Pine Level a few yards north of the present location of the town of Jay. This place later became known as the "Cobb Old Field." Later it became a focal point, a sort of central point, the point from which all roads led to other points on the big Pine Level County. It was at the point over which all travel passed in moving over or across the big level country known as Pine Level. It was for years the most noted place in the north west corner of the county. It seems everybody who had ever seen Pine Level or heard anything of it knew about the "Cobb Old Field."

James Thadeus Cobb reared four boys: James, Thadeus, Peter and Lindsey. Thadeus lived for several years on the place where he was reared. Thadeus Cobb owned and managed a large herd of fine range cattle. After his death his widow managed the herd successfully for several years. Peter Cobb built a home at the Spring forming the head of Gillberrry branch. Peter Cobb died leaving a widow and four children: Joseph, Thadeus, James and Florida. His widow continued to live at the same place until long after the children were all grown and had homes of their own. Like Thadeus Cobb, Peter's widow was named Mary. After her husband's death she was known among her friends as Aunt Mary Pete. Her husband left her a large herd of fine range cattle. The widow managed them successfully for several years. She also managed a large herd of goats very successfully. Of course, the three boys knew how to look after cattle and probably did almost all the labor in looking after the livestock. Florida Cobb married Peter Nowling. She and her husband are now living in Milton.

Lindsey Cobb settled on the east side of the old Three Notch Military Road, four miles south from where Jay is now located from the Cobb Old Field right at the point where the Milton-Pollard road turned southeast toward Milton.

A few years later he and his wife moved to Monroe Mill on East Coldwater Creek. The boys were named Penn and Houston. James Cobb settled on Pine Level but soon moved to another location and never returned.

Others of the large Cobb family coming to Pine Level during its early pioneer days were Joseph, Riley, Ceburn (Seaborn) and Washington. They were distant cousins of the early pioneers, Isaiah, Ben and James Thadeus. They all came from the same area in West Georgia. Little could at this late date be learned of Joseph. It seems he married on Pine Level and reared some children. However, before any of the children were grown, he moved with his family to another location. Not much information could be obtained about Ceburn (Seaborn). It seems he reared some children who soon moved on seeking more desirable locations, probably looking for adventure in the Great Western Plains, as did their cousin, Texas Ben. It seems Ceburn Cobb remained here or returned here after being elsewhere a number of years and is buried on Pine Level.

Riley Cobb settled in the north eastern part of Pine Level, where he reared some children among who may be mentioned were Walker Cobb who settled in what was named in early pioneer days “Holly Fork,” Holly Branch and West Coldwater. A daughter of Riley Cobb’s married Lomax Jernigan and resided for a time in the northeast corner of Pine Level. Later she and her husband moved to Brewton, Alabama.

Washington Cobb settled on a small creek branch near the Florida-Alabama state line. For a few years this branch was known as “Cobb Branch,” named for him. Later it was and still is known as “Fortner Branch,” being named for Robert Fortner who resided near it for many years until his death. Later Washington Cobb moved to a location now known as, “Cobb Hill,” overlooking the Escambia River Valley half a mile north from the Winding River Road not far from where the Riz Gaylor residence, known as “The Gaylor Mansion” or “The Gaylor Double Pen Log House” was located. Later he moved on down the river and settled on a small creek known to this day as “Cobb Creek.” Here he operated a small mill. Later he moved to the south side of Moore’s Creek where he died at a ripe old age. He owned and managed a herd of range cattle and horses.

Mr. Walker Cobb was among the early pioneer citizens of Pine Level. His home was in the Northeast corner of the big level country near West Coldwater Creek. The homestead was located on the west side of Coldwater Creek and on the north east side of Holly Branch. The area was better known as Holly Fork.

Washington Cobb was another of the famous Cobb Family to migrate from Georgia to this part of Florida. He resided on Pine Level only a few years before he moved further down the Escambia River and settled in the Coon Hill

Community on a small creek known later as Cobb Creek. After operating a small mill here a few years he moved three or four miles southeastward on the south side of Moore's Creek, where he raised range cattle and horses.

The original Cobb families coming to America came from Wales, England and landed during the colonial days of our county on the coast of the Carolinas. Gradually they migrated westward. The ones coming to Pine Level all came here from the western part of Georgia. Traditional history indicates some of these early pioneer settlers had seen the Pine Level Area while passing over the area while serving in military service with the United States Army. Many people traveled over the old Three Notch Road across Pine Level enroute to Pensacola and learned of the great pine forest here and its accessibility to the Pensacola log and timber market. All the men among the several Cobb families residing on Pine Level as early pioneers were engaged in logging and timber work. Several of them, however, engaged rather extensively in livestock production on the range [of] cattle, hogs, goats and horses. The foundation stock for their cattle herds were brought here by the Spaniards. This stock was a cross between the Spanish pinto horses and the snow white Arabian horses. That is where the early ponies raised here got their surefootedness, speed and durability. Perhaps some of the foundation stock for the production of sheep and goats was brought here by the Spaniards. The writer has definite information that livestock sales were held occasionally up and down the Escambia River before Florida was purchased from Spain.

Lindsey Cobb settled four miles south from where Jay is now located on the east side of the Old Three Notch Road. He died leaving his widow and two small sons, Penn and Houston. His widow was known as Nancy Ida Cobb. She moved to the Mims Mill on east Coldwater Creek about 1883.

Steve Jones, a son of the famous Willis Jones who lived a few miles east of Pine Level on the east side of West Coldwater, had his home on a plateau extending down between White Water Branch on the east and the Barrow Mill Creek on the south to within a half mile of the Escambia River swamp. He was engaged in logging work. He also owned a herd of extra fine cattle, made so because they ranged much of the time in the cane breaks and reed marshes of the river swamp. Mr. Jones was killed in the prime of life. After his death his widow looked after the herd of fine cattle for many years, until she married again. She was known as Mrs. Betsy Steve Jones.

Another one of Pine Level's early pioneers was Mr. Van Jernigan who settled here during the early territorial days. His home was at the head of the south prong of Cobb Creek on the east side of the Milton-Pollard road. Mr. Jernigan was engaged in timber and logging work. He also owned one of the largest herds of range cattle on Pine Level. The cattle remained on this range for many years after Mr. Jernigan's death. The estate sold them in the early 1890's.

Bill who was more religious than Lige turned and pointing a finger at him undertook to administer a hasty rebuke by saying: “ Li, ---- Li. ---- Li, -----Li----- Li, ---- Li, Li – gy, yu, --- yu, --- yu, ---yu,--yu, --- yu, -----you, shu, --- shu, ---- shu,---- shu, --- shu, --- shu, ---shouldn’t, sa,-- sa, --- sa, ----- sa, ---say, d,---- d, ---- d, ---dd,-- -DAMN.”

Lige then looked straight at Bill and said: “ B, -- B,--- B,--- B, ---B--- B,--- B, -- Bill, I, --- I, ---I, -- I, ---I, -- I’m a, --- a, --- a, --- a, -- a,--- sha, --- sha, ----sha, ----sha, --- sha, shamed , -o, -o, -o-of, yu-yu,--yu, - - you sa, ---sa,---sa,--sa,---say—ing d,---d, --- d, --- d, --d, -- d – DAMN, like that.

It was reported they both then became mum as a stone and walked two miles home together without either of them attempting to speak a word.

Levi White was among the earliest English pioneers to come to Pine Level after the purchase of Florida. He came here with his wife, two girls and five boys during the early 1830’s. He lived here until a year or so after Texas became a state in 1845. About 1846 he moved with his family to Texas. Within two or three years he died and was buried in Texas. His entire family came back to Pine Level shortly after his death. Within a few years John the oldest boy married and moved to Alabama.

Andrew, Drew, Joe and Levi, lived on Pine Level until their large families were grown. They then moved to Alabama. Joe continued to live on Pine Level until he was approximately 80 years old when he passed from labor to rest. He reared one boy and three girls. The two daughters coming back from Texas later became Mrs. William McCurdy and Mrs. Jack Odom. Mrs. Odom lived here with her husband until their large family was grown and then moved to Alabama. Joe was one of the first deacons of the Shady Grove Missionary Baptist Church. He was elected in 1888 when the church was first organized and remained a deacon until his death many years later.

Another prominent family to come to Pine Level during the early pioneer days was three Polk brothers: Pony, Bill and Bob with their mother. This family came to Pine Level after the father and husband, Robert A. Polk died in Alabama only a few miles north of the State Line near Pine Level. The boys all married on Pine Level and established homes here.

Later Pony Polk moved to Texas but after many years returned to Pine Level where he died approximately 30 years ago. Bill was engaged in logging for several years. He then became a farmer and operated his own cotton gin. Robert was engaged in logging for a few years. For a number of years he operated a large merchantile business. Later he operated a grist mill and cotton gin using water power on the Maloy Branch. He was prominent in Church work and was elected as one of the first deacons in the Shady Grove Missionary Baptist Church. Each of the brothers reared large families.

One among the earliest pioneers to come to Pine Level was Jack Jones. He came during the early territorial days of Florida. His son, Louis was also an early pioneer. During his earlier days he was engaged in timber and logging. He was an expert hewer. He could dress a stick of hewn timber as smooth as if dressed by a modern planing mill. Later Mr. Jones became a farmer cultivating some large fields in the Escambia River swamps and hammocks down near the Betts Lake Log and Timber Landing. Mr. Jones reared two boys and three girls. Tom Jones living near the Holmeshead is one of the boys. Mr. Jones was a leader in the organization of the Mt. Carmel Methodist Church and remained a consistent member until his death.

Pine Level's only Dutch pioneer family was a mother and four stalwart young men by the name of Wolf. The father Cape Wolfe, Sr. died in South Carolina. Later the mother and his sons Oliver, Mac, (W. W.), Cape and William came to Pine Level. Oliver and Cape settled in what later became the Mt. Carmel Community. William (Bud) settled a mile or so west from where Jay is located. Later moving twenty miles southeast from Pine Level on a clear creek known later as Wolf Creek. Each of the brothers reared large families.

Many of the children are still living on Pine Level. Cape was a leader in the organization of the Mt. Carmel Methodist Church and remained a faithful member until his death at a ripe old age. It is my understanding the other three brothers were members of Baptist churches. Like almost all other pioneers on Pine Level the Wolf boys engaged in timber and logging work until the supply of timber was exhausted. They then engaged in farming. Oliver and Cape once owned large herds of range sheep.

Pine Level's only Irish Pioneer was Uncle Patrick Burk. He lived way down on Malloy Branch. I do not know just when he came to Pine Level from Ireland by way of the Carolinas. However, I think it was during the early territorial days of Florida. When I first knew him in the middle 1880's he was approximately 80 years old and a typical old time Irishman. He moved to Escambia County, Florida in the early 1890's with his sons, Ike and Bud and his son-in-law Frederick Rhodes and his spinster daughter Miss Florida Burk.

Pine Level's only pioneer citizen coming direct from England was W. J. Jackson who settled in the Mt. Carmel neighborhood soon after the Civil War. When I first knew him in 1885 he was approximately sixty years old and a typical Englishman speaking the old time English dialect. He reared a large family all of whom married and settled on Pine Level.

Grandfather Jeff Jernigan lived near the state line about two miles northeast from where Mt. Carmel Church is now located. He was on Pine Level shortly after Florida became a Territory of the United States. His home was close beside the Old Three Notch Military Road on a beautiful level plateau. He reared a large family almost all of whom settled in Alabama or east of Pine Level in the Berrydale Community.

Dan and Joe Griffis were among the early pioneers in the Mt. Carmel Community. About the time Joe was grown he left Pine Level and later settled near Bagdad two or three miles below Milton. Dan settled near the state line where he reared his family.

Grandfather Neil Campbell was here soon after the Purchase of Florida by the United States. He built his huge log mansion close beside the old Historic Indian Trading Trail, later beaten out as the Winding River Road. So well did he build until four generations of his family lived in the house before it was torn down after it had served well approximately one hundred years. In this home he reared a large family. Two of his boys went to Texas as young men and made their homes there.

Wash and Neil Campbell remained on Pine Level throughout their long lives. Wash continued to live in the old Campbell mansion until his death. There he reared a large family. Neil lived for a few years south of the Holly Mill Creek, and a few years away from Pine Level. During the 1890's he settled on the Old Three Notch Military road a little more than a mile south of where Jay is now located.

The Campbell brothers were engaged in timber and logging work until the supply of timber was exhausted. They then became farmers. Neil reared three boys and one girl. Two of his boys are still living a short distance south of the present Jay Public School, Herbert and Hugh. Wash reared three girls and five boys. Some of them still live here.

James White may be classed among the later pioneers on Pine Level having come here later than the other family of White's. James made his home down the east side of Maloy Branch where he developed a splendid farm before his death several years ago. Like all other pioneers on Pine Level for several years he engaged in logging and timber work, and became a farmer after the supply of timber was exhausted. One little incident in James White's life it seems to me is worth mentioning here. Once when he was working in or about the saw mill operated by water power on what is known as the Lindsey Mill Creek located on the east side of the Conecuh River about half way between Mr. Carmel Community and Brewton a flood in the creek caused by a down pour of rain blew the mill house out and washed it away while James was attempting to hoist the flood gates to save the mill and timber in the creek below the mill . One of his thighs was broken in two places as he was jammed between heavy timbers. The leg was also broken below the knee and his feet and ankles badly bruised and skinned in several places. One arm was also broken. His body and head also received many bumps. In this condition he managed to catch hold of an overhanging limb as he was driven among the swiftly moving logs, timber and torn up mill house and pulled himself from the water upon a steep bank where he held on until the timber, logs and wrecked mill had floated past and help came to his rescue. It was more than a year before he was able to work.

The broken leg was an inch or so shorter than the other one. Even in this condition, James White was one of the most tireless workers who ever lived on Pine Level. This incident is mentioned because of its rarity and the danger and the miraculous escape. The men who saw him washed away with the mill, timber and logs knew he would be killed in the jam of timbers or drowned beneath the floating swirling mass. In their opinion he was saved only by a miracle. He reared a large family of children many of who inherited the energy and working spirit of their father.

Joe Daughett came to Pine Level during the early 1870's and worked for the Milligan, Chafin Mill Company. During the first few years he resided in the farm house headquarters half a mile west from the red clay hill on the Pollard – Milton Road. The house was located on a high bluff overlooking the river swamp to the west and a big spring head to the south. A short distance from the house this company had cleared a swamp field containing approximately eighty acres of fertile flood plain land. When this company abandoned the cultivation of this swamp field Mr. Daughett moved to what was then known as the Ben Barry place near the Mt. Carmel Church. This was about 1885. The cultivation of the field was abandoned because the flood waters in the river often destroyed the entire crop. If the crop escaped the damage or destruction of flood waters the birds, crows, opossums, raccoons, squirrels, wild cats and big swamp rats destroyed by far the larger portion of it before it could be harvested.

Note: Joseph Daughette called Joe married Francis "Fannie" Cobb, the daughter of Isaiah Cobb, Jr.

Mr. Walker Cobb was among the pioneer citizens who were reared on Pine Level. His home was in the north east corner of Pine Level not far from the State Line and Coldwater Creek.

Uncle Tom Purvis came to Pine Level in 1885 and took up a homestead embracing the Northeast corner of Section 22, T. 5 North of Range 29, West. His homely philosophy of life expressed in dry humorous pioneer terms made him one among Pine Level's most unique characters.

In 1885 Mr. Henry Bray constructed a small mill on what was known then as the Ben Barrow Creek for cutting square timber and grinding grist. He brought to Pine Level at this time his two sons Jon and Joe, a Mr. Barnum and the widow, her daughter and son Marion.

Walter Sherwood was a little Scotchman who came to Pine Level by way of the Carolinas and Georgia in the 1870's. Some years later he married a daughter of pioneer Louis Jones. He lived on Pine Level in the Mt. Carmel community for many years and died at a ripe old age. He reared no children.

Jack Person was a logging man on Pine Level in the early 1870's. For a number of years he lived on the east side of Moore's Creek approximately a mile from its head.

While residing here he logged for the Centennial Mill located on Moore's Creek in the southern part of the Coon Hill Community. In 1885 he moved to a homestead located between Hurricane Springhead and Gillberry Branch and began logging for the Chaffin-Jernigan Mill Company on West Coldwater Creek. He died here early in 1886 leaving a widow and two small boys.

William Magaha was a good Scotchman. Bill as he was known came to the Coon Hill Community and engaged in logging work before the Civil War. After the War he came to Pine Level where he married. He continued in logging work moving from one logging camp to another until 1892 when he settled on a homestead two miles south of where Jay is now located. He resided at this place until his death at a ripe old age. He reared a family of four boys and four girls.

S. L. Lord came to Pine Level in the late 1870's and settled three and a half miles southwest from the present location of Jay on what was then known as the Pine Level-Johnson Ferry Road at a springhead now known as the John Hudson place. Before coming to Pine Level he had lived at Cape San Blas, Port Saint Joseph and at Point Washington all on the Gulf coast west of Apalachicola in this state. When he left the coast country he lived a few years in Jackson County. He married in Jackson County and a year or two afterward came to Pine Level. Steve as he was known far and wide was a log sawyer of the old pioneer class, - a knight of the FIRST ORDER. It was often said of him, "He never did anything but saw logs until none were left to saw." He then became a farmer. Mr. Lord bought the Jack Pearson place down on Moore's Creek two miles from his old home on the Pine Level-Johnson Ferry Road and moved there in 1885. He had three boys, Thadeus, Walter and Garfield.

James W. Nelson spent much of his boyhood days on Pine Level and adjacent communities. He built a home and settled on the Pine Level-Junction Ferry Road, (Flomaton was then known only as the Junction) a quarter of a mile northwest from the well known Rocky Hill Pass at the head of Wolfe Pen Branch in 1874. A few years later he moved to a homestead a half a mile southwest. He lived here until his death at a ripe old age. Uncle Jim as he was called by all who knew him was a log sawyer of the first order, a hewer with a big broad ax and the best raft hand who ever piloted a raft of hewn timber or round logs down the Escambia River. It was said of him he knew the exact location of all the shallows, dangerous snags, whirlpools and coves in this river from many miles up in Alabama where it is known as Conecuh to the Ferry Pass at the head of the Escambia Bay. He reared four boys and four girls all of whom settled on Pine Level. Uncle Jim was known as the best turkey hunter in West Florida and S. Alabama. His wife Aunt Mary Ann (Diamond) Nelson is still living and is now nearing her NINETY EIGHTH BIRTHDAY. (*Note: Aunt Mary Ann (Diamond) Nelson was born in 1851. Written in 1949.*)

Peter L. Diamond was reared in the Coon Hill Community adjacent to Pine Level on the southwest. As a small boy he drove freight wagons pulled by one, two or three yoke of big log oxen over all the pioneer roads on Pine Level. During the Civil War he hauled salt made from boiling sea water from the Escambia Bay across Pine Level crossing the river at Eldridge Jernigan's ferry. Some times this salt was delivered to agents of the Confederacy at Pollard and sometimes it was delivered to them at steamboat landings on the Alabama River north of Mobile. He moved to Pine Level in 1881 when the writer of this article was three years old and settled at the head of the Holley Mill Creek three miles southwest from where Jay is now located. He was engaged in logging work here until the supply of timber was pretty well exhausted. During these years he engaged in all phases of logging work. He reared one girl and seven boys. The boys were sometimes referred to as "The Seven Sons," or as "The Seven Little Diamonds in the Rough."

John W. C. Mann came to Pine Level from the Old Kentucky Blue Grass area. He settled beside the trail with towering hickory trees beside what was known during the early Spanish Occupation as the Indian Trading Trail traveled by the Creek Indians, who inhabited the area in Alabama east of the Conecuh River in bringing valuable furs and hides to the Spanish Trading Post at Florida Town and Pensacola and perhaps at other points on the coast, perhaps to be traded for trifles and trinkets. This trail later became the Old Three Notch Military Road. This home was located approximately one hundred yards east of the present Jay-Milton paved highway directly in front of the present location of the Jay Public School. Here the Colonel reared two stalwart boys. Their names were John and James. Many years later John was elected Tax Assessor of his county and served with credit. James was killed through a case of mistaken identity about the time he was grown. The tragedy is related here because of its peculiarity.

Not many years after the Civil War a notorious robber and murderer by the name of Brown Bowen plied his trade of robbing trains, banks and business houses in South Alabama and West Florida and murdered all whom in any way interfered with his business or attempted to apprehend him. One afternoon the police officers in Pensacola received a tip that Brown Bowen was on a train arriving there a little while before night and requesting them to look out for him. They also received a tip that he would probably jump from the train a few hundred yards before it arrived at the depot. The police stationed guards near the track on either side a reasonable distant from the depot. As the train neared the depot young James Mann jumped off and started walking only a few steps to the home of the friend he intended to visit. Almost by the time he had regained his balance from the jump a plain clothed police officer ordered him to halt and stick up his hands. It was thought young Mann did not hear the command because of the noise made by the moving train. Anyway he failed to obey the command and was shot and killed instantly, while Brown Bowen, disguised as he was, stepped from the train in the yard and walked by the police guards unrecognized.

Uncle Frank Cobb built his home two miles south from the home of Colonel Mann beside the same old trail and road in a beautiful grove of towering trees as previously stated in this article. Colonel James Mann and Uncle Frank Cobb were lifetime friends. They were probably the two most unique characters among all the earliest English speaking pioneers who ever lived even for a short time on Pine Level. They also worked together, hunted together, frolicked together, toddied together, worshipped together and in all things socialized together. For this reason they are mentioned here together.

Almost all of the logging and timber work was done on Pine Level in cutting logs and moving them to log and timber landings down on the river by way of the famous Rocky Hill Pass. During their later years they might have been in a small way connected with some logging work down on Gillberry Branch or Cobb Creek. During the early days Colonel Mann opened a log and timber road from east of his home to the river. This road was known for years as the “Jim Mann Road”. All the people who knew Colonel Jim still speak of it as the Jim Mann Road. In speaking of this log and timber road Colonel Jim took great delight in describing it as, “The best log and timber road in the world because it’s down hill all the way to the landing and halfway back.”

Uncle Frank Cobb also had a log and timber road during the early days leading across the level from the head of Cobb Creek at his home to the head of Holly Mill Creek and on the river via the Rocky Hill Pass. For many years it was known as the “Frank Cobb Road.” As the area through which it led was cleared and became farms the original location of this road was changed a little. At present the road leading from the Jay-Milton Highway through the Berry Nall lane to the place is really the road known for more than half a century as the “Frank Cobb Road.”

Colonel Jim wore a long white spreading beard and a mustache to match entitling him to the name PATRIARCH. Uncle Frank wore a white goatee beard and a mustache trimmed to match in imitation of the old Vandyke beards once popular in paintings. Colonel Jim smoked a pipe having a long crooked stem permitting the big bowl to hang just above his flowing beard. Uncle Frank smoked a clay or a corncob pipe having a straight reed stem extending horizontally from his lips and holding it in his hand.

Colonel Jim wore a black derby hat, a long Prince Albert coat and striped trousers with creases like razor blades. He wore light gaiter shoes except when working. He always referred to them as his dancing shoes. Colonel Jim was Justice of the Peace on Pine Level Precinct Number 4 and precinct politics leader for thirty years or longer. He was very proud of this distinction. He was never happier than when he was holding court under a group of hickory trees in a corner of his front yard. He always moved a table to the yard and kept on this table what he called his Digest of the Law, a few legal papers and an old time pen standing beside a bottle of ink. He sat in an old time straight white hickory chair having a bottom of rawhide containing short smooth red hair. When holding court he always wore his long

Prince Albert Coat and other dress clothes to match. He explained this was done to uphold the dignity of the Law and the honor of the court. If the crown attending his court was large he held the court in the lane in front of his home a little to the east of his front gate under what he called a real dignified group of towering hickory trees, made so by having had court held beneath their protecting shade for more than a quarter of a century.

Uncle Frank Cobb always wore a black felt hat having a broad straight brim with the crown mashed in telescope fashion. He wore a plain black sack coat and striped trousers with razor blade creases. He too wore light gaiter shoes except when working. Uncle Frank always took an active part in the politics of his precinct. He always put his whole soul, mind and body into any proposition he was for or against. He always had definite opinions on every question under consideration and expressed them in unequivocal language easily understood by plain piney-woods pioneers.

Colonel Jim rode a small snow-white racking pony of Arabian stock named Prince. Uncle Frank rode a small jet black racking pony of early Spanish stock having a round white spot in the middle of his forehead. This horse answered to the name of Ball. Colonel Jim and Uncle Frank seemingly enjoyed riding astride these pretty hardy racking ponies along the smooth level roads of Pine Level. They both enjoyed the old time square dances as young men and in this respect remained young for many years. They continued to attend such dances and take an active part in the dancing until they were more than three-quarters of a century old. Many a time as a small boy I heard them talking about riding together astride these little racking ponies ten or fifteen miles to attend an all night square dance. Each of them would occasionally take a little toddy to pep him up for another set. In later years they each required a little extra toddying to keep them well peppered up until the wee small hours of the morning. In such cases they would usually return home in time for breakfast, sometimes between the break of day and sunrise pretty well stove up. Colonel Jim always gave the same explanation to Miss Emeline his good wife, and was lucky enough to get by with it for many years.

“Prince is getting old. The d – rascal fell down in a mud hole with me last night. Sorta twisted my knee and wrenched my back. It begins to look like I’ll have to trade him.” Everybody, including Miss Emeline, knew Colonel Jim had no intention of trading Prince. Everybody, including Miss Emeline and Colonel Jim knew that Prince had been taking care of him, (Colonel Jim) for many years and without Prince he would be unable to take these long rides after an all night square dance. Especially was this true when extra toddying was required to keep him pepped up until the last set was over.

Uncle Frank sometimes came home from an all night square dance dragging one foot from too much dancing, as it had been caught under a big stick of hewn timber. Like Colonel Jim, he always gave the same explanation to Miss Malissa, his good wife. He too was able to get by with it for many years. “Ball is getting old and

evidently doesn't see as well as he used to. He left the road at a curve last night and bumped my knee against a tree. If his eyes don't soon get better I'll be forced to trade him." Everybody, including Miss Malissie, knew Uncle Frank had no intention of trading Ball. Everybody, including Miss Malissie and Uncle Frank knew that Ball had been taking care of him. He knew if it were not for Ball that he would be unable to take these long rides after an all night square dance. Especially after an extra lot of toddying had been required to keep him pepped up through the wee small hours of the sleepest part of the morning.

Everybody on Pine Level, including Miss Emeline, Miss Malissie, Colonel Jim and Uncle Frank, knew that Prince had not fallen in a mudhole and tumbled Colonel Jim, twisting a knee or wrenching a back, as well as Ball had not left the road at a curve or any other place and bumped Uncle Frank's knee against a tree or any other object. They knew perfectly well these old codgers had strained their dry joints and stiffening muscles in trying to outdance some other jolly old pioneer codger comrade.

Colonel Jim and Uncle Frank were both quick in conversation, full of Irish wit and had pleasing personalities. This won for them many friends, whether they agreed with their unique philosophies of living or disagreed with them. Colonel Jim's most used bywords were, "I gad." He used this expression when pleased to express outstanding joy. He used it when disturbed to keep from using profanity. He used it when engaged in conversation to add force to his expressions and to clarify his thoughts. Uncle Frank's most used bywords were, "Sir, I wonder." He used these words to express surprise. He used them to express joy. He used them to suppress profanity. He used them to keep his conversation in perfect harmonious balance.

It was amusing to observe at close range these unique characters engaged in a lively conversation and listen to the constant successions of, "I gad, Frank" and "Sir, I wonder, Jim." One couldn't help admiring the art and skill with which these old patriarchs used these expressions, always getting them in just the right place to add interest, pleasantness and force to the conversation. It was indeed a wonderful accomplishment, one that could be learned nowhere except by pioneers in a big piney-woods.

I cannot now recall any more unique sight passing before me during my early boyhood days on the big Pine Level country than seeing these two pioneer patriarchs astride their ponies riding side by side along a stretch of a beautiful rustic road and watching the great whorls of gray smoke from their favorite pipes rise and waft away among the stately pines. It was indeed inspiring to stand quiet and listen to the rhythm of the racking hoofs striking the hard surface of the road in unison and watch the gray beards of these old patriarchs waving keeping perfect time with the striking hoofs. If the little spurs worn by the riders were used to quicken the racking steps of the little ponies the waves of the gray beards too quickened, always staying in unison with the sounds of the hoofs.

After the Baptist Mission Station was started at Holmeshead and the Shady Grove Missionary Baptist Church was organized Colonel Jim and Uncle Frank became leaders in the church work. They had been Baptists for years in their philosophy of life and seemingly were glad to have a church of their choice on Pine Level. Colonel Jim was a member of the first board of deacons, Church Clerk and Superintendent of the Sunday School when one was held. Uncle Frank was a splendid singer and often led the singing at the church services and at Sunday School for the Colonel. Colonel Jim wasn't much of a singer, but always would follow along with his friend Frank. Each one put his whole soul, mind and body into the singing and in doing this opened his mouth wide. Many a prankish piney-woods boy often was amused looking at these two old patriarchs standing side by side singing watching their patriarchal beards keep time with the music as their chins moved up or down or were held still according to the notes of the music.

Uncle Barney Owens and his brother-in-law Dave Sorrells came to Pine Level in 1884 and settled between the north prong of Cobb Creek and Hurricane Branch. Uncle Barney brought a fine four yoke log team to Pine Level with him. He operated this team for a few years and sold it because the available supply of timber was getting scarce. He then began farming on a small scale. He was also a carpenter, wheelwright and a blacksmith. He soon built a little shop near his home. His greatest contribution to the community was his work in the little country blacksmith shop. He left one daughter who resided for several years on the old homestead.

Dave Sorrells was what was called an ox driver or a teamster. The only work he ever did was hauling logs with a long team of oxen. Mr. Sorrells was past middle age when he moved to Pine Level. He died at a ripe old age about the time the supply of Pine Timber on Pine Level became exhausted. He left two girls and three boys.

Dr. Frank W. Abbott a medical doctor and a Missionary Baptist preacher and his Aunt Miss Lizzie Abbott who was also a medical Missionary came to Pine Level in 1887 and purchased what was then known as the Farrah Cobb place approximately four miles south from where Jay is now located on the Jay-Milton Highway at the head of the middle prong of Cobb Creek. Dr. Abbott took up a homestead at this place. He was crippled in one hand and in one knee and foot from rheumatism early in life. He was first a Missionary for the Missionary Baptist Mission Station at what later became the Shady Grove Missionary Baptist Church. He was instrumental in organizing this church in 1888. He served as its pastor for a few years after its organization. Dr. Abbott also practiced medicine all over Pine Level and adjacent communities. Dr. Abbott was instrumental in getting the Post Office known as Cora established at his home April 17, 1890. He also served as local supervisor of the first public free school established in the area also known as Lower Pine Level No. 17. Dr. Abbott's contribution to the early History of Pine Level was outstanding in the field of church work, in education and in civic accomplishments. After his death in the middle 1890's, his aunt Miss Lizzie Abbott practiced medicine.

In 1890 Dr. Frank W. Abbott's father, step-mother and two boys came to live at the Abbott homestead. He took up a homestead a mile or so down on the Cobb Creek. He engaged in farming at his son's place. Later he constructed a gristmill and a cotton gin a mile or so down on the south prong of the Cobb Creek. This was the first cotton gin constructed on all of Pine Level. Prior to this time all cotton produced on Pine Level was hauled to a gin near Brewton, Alabama or to Pritchette's gin beyond Bluff Springs in Escambia County, Florida. The building of this gin was a great convenience to the first cotton growers on Pine Level. The Abbott's left two sons, John and Luther who resided on Pine Level for a number of years.

About 1888 Grandfather Cannon and his two sons, Marion and Tom and his son-in-law, John Thompson, moved to Pine Level from Alabama. Tom's father-in-law Ben Pyburn who had been a resident of Pine Level and Coon Hill communities many years before also returned to Pine Level. Within another year or so another one of the Cannon brothers, Wiley came to Pine Level. These people had been farmers in Alabama and continued in the same line of work here. The three Cannon brothers made splendid contributions to the development of farming on Pine Level. Marion reared one girl and four boys. Tom and Wiley each reared one boy and one girl.

About 1890 Uncle William Nowling and his seven sons came to Pine Level and settled directly west of where Jay is now located. Three of his sons, Henry, Charley and James T. were married and established their own homes. His single sons were John, George, Pete and King Solomon. Uncle William was what was called on Pine Level at this time a wagoner. He did public hauling with a wagon pulled by oxen. Henry and Charley were both wheelwrights and carpenters and worked at various phases of logging work for a few years. J. T. built a small frame store building where Jay is now located in 1901 and thus became the founder of the town of Jay. At one time he operated in connection with his mercantile business a sawmill, a cotton gin and a sales stable. J. T. also made splendid contributions to the development of the Agricultural resources of Pine Level. He also served his district as County Commissioner. Uncle William's other three boys soon married and settled on Pine Level.

About the time Uncle William Nowling came to Pine Level his sister-in-law Mrs. Nowling came with her five boys and one girl all of whom were single. Peter soon married Miss Florida Cobb, the daughter of Pioneer Peter Cobb. Peter soon engaged in logging in a big way and became one of Pine Level's most successful business men. He became a farmer after all the timber on Pine Level and the surrounding country was exhausted. Peter has made an outstanding contribution to the development of Pine Level's natural resources. He and his wife are now living in Milton. Nowling's other children Maggie, West, George, King David and William soon married and settled on Pine Level.

Mrs. Babbs, another sister-in-law of Uncle William Nowling also came to Pine Level about the time he came. Along with her came her two sons-in-law, Bill Dunsford and Dan Johnson. Mrs. Babbs also brought with her three single daughters who soon married and settled on Pine Level.

In 1891 W. R. Diamond moved to the place known many years later as the Henry Diamond place. The next year he erected a new home half a mile east on the same homestead and moved to the new location. Several years later he sold the place to Mr. Green Nall, the father of Mr. Berry Nall who still occupies the place. When W. R. Diamond moved to his new place W. W. Cartwright moved to the place he vacated. After living a few years Mr. Cartwright bought land near by and erected a new home. In 1893 Elijah Padgett moved to the place known now as the John Hudson place. Mr. Padgett occupied this place for about ten years and sold it to Mr. Hudson.

During the years 1892-93 there was a lull in logging work on Pine Level. The word "Hard times" was often heard. There was no work on Pine Level. Crops were grown in the small fields scattered over the country. The few bales of cotton produced on Pine Level during these two years sold for from three to five cents per pound. During this period no new families came to Pine Level seeking homes.

About the middle 1890's the Skinner and McDavid Company began to sell cut over land on the level to farmers. Soon thereafter new clearings were made and new homes erected. Among the new families coming to Pine Level during the next few years may be mentioned: Ed Harrison, John Faircloth, Columbus Wright, C. L. Fail, Will Standford and Hix Hudson.

Shortly after 1900 when almost all the supply of merchantable timber on Pine Level had been cut and carried to the timber markets and agriculture was rapidly becoming permanently established as the chief industry, a number of additional families purchased cut-over lands and established permanent homes and farms. Among those settling on Pine Level during this period may be mentioned the following: J. W. Echols and three Shell brothers, Perry, Levander and Henry, the two Hawsey brothers, Jack and Truss and their nephew Will Dobbs, A. C. Mixon and his son, Victor and the three Higdon brothers, Burleigh, Frank and Bodie. R. P. Barnes, R. J. Burgamy and the Harrison brothers, George and Marion, Will Joyner and his two sons, Renna and Ernest, Poly Booker and his two sons, Milton and Newton, James Ward, W. J. Moore and his sons, Robert, William, Herbert and Grover and the two Hudson brothers Pat and Bill, Green Nall and his son Berry and Ed Barrington.

I wish space would permit the use of several pages to describe in detail the hardships and accomplishment of each person who served as a lonely piney woods pioneer on the big Pine Level Country in preparing the way for those who came later so those now occupying the land and those yet to occupy it might better understand the hardships, disappointments and obstacles to be overcome by those

who pioneer in any wilderness and the patience, perseverance, endurance and long hours of the hardest toil required as the price of success. At first it was pioneering in the logging work and pioneering in livestock production on the range. It was pioneering in transportation and in all phases of agricultural production. Then came pioneering in heroic efforts to build a better social order, -- the building of institutions for the training of men and women to serve better the high purposes for which all men and women are created. This is the pioneering requiring more patience, more perseverance and more endurance than all the other pioneering activities in which men and women have engaged. However, this paper is already too long. Therefore suffice it to close with a few words descriptive of their accomplishments as a group of brave, sturdy and unyielding pioneers who knew not the words falter or fail.

These men and women were courageous. They met the problems of their day and generation like the earlier pioneers who first landed on the Atlantic coast and began to build America, the greatest country in the world, great because it reflects the courageous upright character of those early pioneers who planned the building and began to erect the structure. They were resourceful. If difficult times blocked their progress they didn't stop and whine. They moved the difficulties or made a new and better way around them. They possessed sharp penetrating vision and used it. The proverb, "Where no vision is, the people perish", was a familiar watchword for pioneers in all American frontiers. It was the guiding watchword for these piney woods pioneers. Because they had this smart penetrating vision they saw Pine Level from the earliest, was, is and will ever be the choicest land in all the country. They accepted the challenge and had the vision to make it better year by year. To the high and noble purpose they dedicated all their energy, courage, resourcefulness ability and even their lives.

The people now residing on this beautiful level country and enjoying its many blessings certainly do owe a lasting debt of gratitude and appreciation to all the sturdy pioneers – men and women, alike who drove the savage Indians and fierce destructive wild beast from around their cabin doors, cleared away its massive forests primeval and laid broad and deep, firm solid foundations upon which it is our task to build greater institutions to serve future generations. May we too accept the challenge and the responsibility and in doing so know not the words "FALTER or FAIL."

John T. Diamond (Former Santa Rosa County Supt. of Schools)

(For Genealogical Use Only – Not for Publication)