

The Vintage Rabun Quarterly

THE RABUN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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CHIEF JUSTICE LOGAN E BLECKLEY

One of Rabun County's most distinguished native sons is Logan E. Bleckley. Many Rabun County residents may only be aware that his portrait hangs in the courthouse or that there is a stone memorial to him in the Clayton City park. Some may know that Bleckley County in Georgia was named to honor him.

Logan Bleckley was a self-taught lawyer, an Associate Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court, and later Chief Justice. He was well respected for his knowledge of the law and his ability to provide clear

and concise explanations of complex legal matters. His decisions were straight forward and often sprinkled with humor or a stanza from one of his poems. He was described as having "great intellectuality, love of justice, deep learning, simplicity, integrity, unflinching kindness, and gentleness...".

The response to his death in 1907 demonstrates the great respect Georgians had for him. Judiciary courts were closed across the state and flags were flown at half-mast. The Georgia Supreme Court read into their minutes a report of his life and character, as well as, several other addresses praising his contributions. Two years later the Georgia Bar Association published a book, *A Memorial of Logan Edwin Bleckley*. The book was reprinted in 1982 after being out of print for many years. The

historical society received a copy of the book from Judge Bleckley's daughter-in-law, Mrs. Edwin Herring Bleckley, the former Nannie Wood.

Early Years

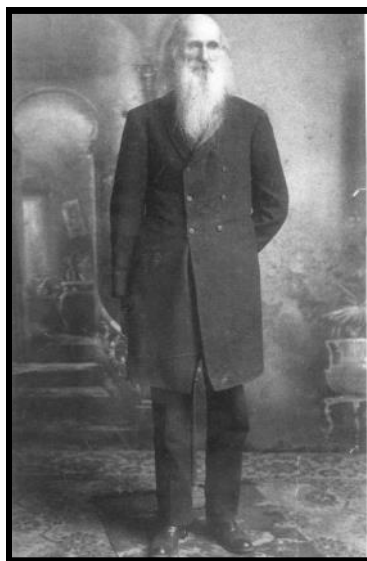
Like other early settlers in Northeast Georgia and North Carolina, Logan E. Bleckley's parents, James and Catherine Lutes Bleckley, were a combination of Irish, English, and German heritage. They were married in Buncombe County,

North Carolina in 1823, and three years later moved to Rabun County, Georgia. They rented a home east of Clayton, and James began farming. Besides farming, James served at various times as Sheriff and the Clerk of three courts-Inferior, Superior and Ordinary. He also served as a Justice of the Inferior Court. He was known to be of good intellect and superior character. Chief Justice Bleckley said that he was taught the value of Truth from his father.

In July of 1827, Logan E. Bleckley, the second of eight children, was born in a small cabin that would have been near

the current Hunter Funeral Home in Clayton. As was typical of the time, his formal education was limited.

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Chief Justice Logan E. Bleckley

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THE VINTAGE RABUN CHALLENGE

When was Chief Justice Bleckley's cabin on Screamer Mountain destroyed by fire?
The answer is on page 4.

Bleckley continued from page 1*Lawyer and Judge*

Logan's interest in the law was piqued at age eleven when he began working in his father's office. He took it upon himself to study law by reading statutes, and familiarizing himself with legal documents and forms of procedure. At seventeen, he borrowed a copy of *Blackstone's Commentaries* to aid his study, and he was admitted to the bar at age eighteen. Being under 21, his admission to the bar required a special act of the Georgia Assembly. For the next two years, he practiced law in Rabun County, but only realized minimal earnings. Knowing he would need to seek other employment in order to earn sufficient money to open a law practice, he took a job in 1845 as a bookkeeper for the Western and Atlantic Railroad in Atlanta. After a few years, he left to take a job as one of the governor's secretaries at the state capitol located in Milledgeville. When there was a change in administration in 1851, he resigned and opened a law office in Atlanta the next year at age 25.

A year later, he ran for and won a four-year term as Solicitor-General of the Coweta circuit, which included eight counties and the city of Atlanta. After his term, he returned to his law practice, which was later interrupted by the Civil War. He joined the Confederate Army, but was discharged shortly after because of poor health. However, he continued to serve the Confederacy by helping out on their legal matters. In 1864 he was appointed Reporter to the Supreme Court. He resigned after three years and returned to his law practice. In 1875 at age 48, he was appointed Associate Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court. He served until 1879; he resigned because of the strain of the heavy workload. He was appointed again to the Georgia Supreme Court in

1887, but this time as its Chief Justice. The burden of heavy workloads were again an issue and negatively impacted his health. He left the Supreme Court in 1894; he was nearly seventy. Only after his resignation did the State of Georgia increase the number of judges to aid the management of the judges' workload.

Personal Life

Chief Justice Bleckley was well over six feet tall with hair to his shoulders and a beard to his chest. His clothes were inexpensive and suited to his taste rather than the current fashion. His interests were not limited to law. When time allowed he studied philosophy, higher mathematics, metaphysics and wrote poetry. He enjoyed going to his cabin on Screamer Mountain for relaxation and reflection. The cabin no longer exists; it was destroyed by a fire.

He once said that his greatest accomplishment in life was marrying Clara Caroline Haralson, the daughter of a Georgia legislator. They married in 1857 and had five children. Their long-term marriage ended in 1892 when Clara died.

Approximately a year and a half later, he married Chloe Herring, nearly 40 years his junior. She was the daughter of William Francis Herring of Fayette County, Georgia, and Mr. Herring was a good friend of Chief Justice Bleckley. Chief Justice Bleckley and Chloe had five children with four living to adulthood.

On Wednesday, March 6, 1907 at the age of 79, Chief Justice Bleckley died in Clarkesville, Georgia. His body was taken to Atlanta by train where it was placed in the center of the Capitol Rotunda to lie in state on Thursday. That Thursday at 3:15 his body was moved to the Supreme Court room where funeral services were held. Burial was at Atlanta's historic Oakland Cemetery. His

grave was marked by a large rough rock placed over the grave with a bronze tablet attached.

Chloe would live twenty-one more years. In 1909, she began construction of a house in Clayton near the Earl House on Screamer Mountain. She had additional residences in Atlanta, Clarkesville, and a second residence in Clayton where the current post office stands. The Clayton Tribune reported Chloe died after a short illness at her residence, the Blackstone Apartments, in Atlanta on March 4, 1928. She was buried in Oakland Cemetery next to her husband.

The following is a poem written by Chief Justice Bleckley from the top of Screamer Mountain.

A Mountain View***"As I stood alone******Upon a mountain cone;******Beneath me in the wild******A fertile valley smiled.******Beyond which north or west******Rose high a mountain crest;******And next beyond were set,******Some taller summits yet;******And further off were seen,******The highest ribs of green;******More distant ribs of blue******Extending still the view******Succeeding rim to rim,******The last so faint and dim******So far away and fine,******It seemed a fading line.******O'er all this landscape lay******The splendour of the day-******A dream of sun and sky******In the slumber of July."***

**M E M B E R S H I P I S T H E H E A R T O F O U R
H I S T O R I C A L S O C I E T Y**

Your membership is important to us and without your continuing support, we would not be able to do our work. The participation of our members in volunteering their time during our open hours and working on special projects is essential to our success. We heartily welcome the following new life members:

Gus Arrendale

Randy Speed

NEW EXHIBIT

Our latest exhibit is a "Timeline" of Rabun County from 1819-1999. You will not want to miss this. It answers all your questions of when all the important events occurred in Rabun County. Along the timeline are pictures representing these major events. Here is just a sampling of the events on the "Timeline".

1819—Treaty with Cherokees; county created

1823—Clayton becomes county seat

1823—John Morris discovers gold on Dick's Creek in Tallulah District

1840— Late 1840's, 4 paths had been made in Tallulah Falls Gorge by visitors

1851—Mr. and Mrs. Childs build first building in Tallulah Falls

1852—Blue Ridge Railroad started in Rabun County

1859—Blue Ridge Railroad work halted

1861—Rabun County delegates, Sam Beck and Horace Cannon, go to the Georgia Convention and voted not to secede from the Union

1862—300 Rabun County men subject to military duty, 211 of which were married

1862—60 Rabun County families owned 248 slaves

1875—Rabun County native, Logan E. Bleckley, named to the Georgia Supreme Court

1882—Railroad reaches Tallulah Falls

1886—Professor Leon walks across Tallulah Gorge on a high wire

1887—Logan E. Bleckley named Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court

1889—Tallulah Falls incorporated as a town

1894—Iron bridge over the Chattooga River opens

1896—York House opens as a boarding house

1897—Clayton Tribune starts publishing

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“Preserving the Past for the Future”

Take Note

Meeting Time We meet the third Thursday of the month. The meetings are held at 5:30 p.m. at the historical society building, 81 North Church St., Clayton. Please join us.

Volunteers We always welcome volunteers. To volunteer, call the Rabun County Historical Society at 706-782-5292.

Hours of Operation Monday & Friday: 10 am-2pm
Wednesday: 12:30 pm-4:30pm

Membership If you are not currently a member, we welcome you to join. Membership dues are:
Annual—\$15.00 Life Membership—\$100.00

Answer to Vintage Rabun Challenge: 1907

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Website: www.rabunhistory.org