

# HardisonInk.com

---

## **Old Seminole village unearthed in Dixie County; *Confederate gold reportedly still in the Suwannee River***



**H. Dale Herring tells the audience that Willie Johns, Chief Justice of the Seminole Tribal Court of the Brighton Reservation (Glades County) has flown into Dixie County twice by helicopter to see the site.**

### **Story and Photos**

**By Jeff M. Hardison © Feb. 11, 2018 at 2:58 p.m.**

**DIXIE COUNTY** – Members and guests at the monthly meeting of the Dixie County Chamber of Commerce on Thursday (Feb. 8) enjoyed listening to H. Dale Herring speak about his discovery of Seminole Indian artifacts on his property.

As a result of finding pottery and other relics that are a couple of hundred years old and were left by members of the tribe -- and even from British and American soldiers of the time -- Herring has entertained visitors from the Seminole Tribe and from The History Channel.

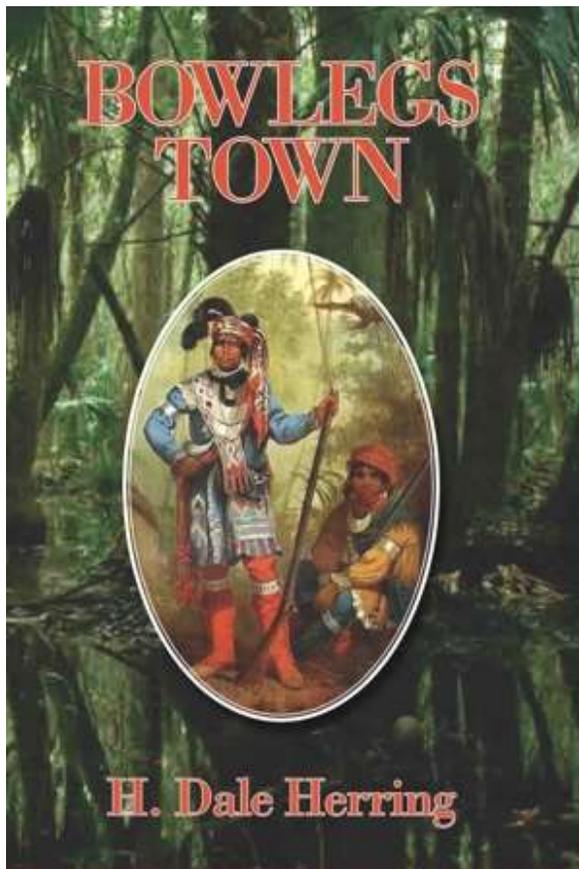
Another spinoff from the discovery was becoming the author of the book Bowlegs Town, named for a chief of the tribe back then.

Darbi Chaires Cupp, a Chamber member who lives in the Old Town area and is a neighbor of the keynote speaker that day, mentioned to Herring during the meeting that she would like to have a copy of his book. He gave her an autographed copy of Bowlegs Town.

# HardisonInk.com



**Darbi Chaires Cupp accepts the book from the author H. Dale Herring**



**This is a closer view of the cover of the book.**

Ruth Ann Lovelace and Cindy Bellot provided the lunch for the afternoon meeting. Chicken spaghetti casserole, from a family recipe and cooked by Lovelace, was the main dish.

Beyond the casserole that was delightfully delicious, there was a broccoli salad, celery sticks stuffed with a special cheese filling, crescent croissants, strawberries and for dessert – magic cookies.

They are known as magic cookies because they taste buttery, salty and sweet simultaneously. Those cookies are magically, mouthwateringly yummy.

Chamber President Carol West led the meeting with her own inimitable grace and style. Chamber Treasurer Debbie Dembo provided a positive financial report for the group, showing the Chamber remains fiscally sound.

# HardisonInk.com

---

Debbie DeWeese, a longtime force in the Dixie County Chamber, provided listeners with a recap from the annual meeting and she reminded folks about dues.

As far as the Chamber, it is in a very healthy state. The single biggest immediate and relatively urgent need is a set of willing and able volunteers.

The March 24 Cross City Airport event is fast approaching. The Dixie County Chamber is dishing out some sort of dollars to pay a Gainesville TV station for ads to promote the airport event this year.

With all of those people driving over to Cross City from Gainesville, it is bound to be even more crowded than when, during the past three years, it has attracted people from the Tri-County Area of Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties.

President West mentioned that the Chamber joined forces with the Dixie County Tourist Development Council to pay for ads from the TV station. The TDC is funded by a fee that goes into the public coffers from tourists who spend nights in Dixie County.

Jeff Cary is the committee leader for the airport venture this year, but he missed the monthly Dixie County Chamber of Commerce meeting in February.

As for Herring, he was happy to share his perspective from finding Seminole and British military relics and remnants from centuries ago.

He told a story, too, about the lost \$25 million worth of gold of the Confederacy. Gold hunters have sought the allegedly missing gold for years – looking mostly on land so far.

After a boat left Galveston, Tex., with that gold headed for Cuba, “the Yankees” (United States Navy members) followed it and sank it somewhere in the Suwannee River about three miles up from the mouth where the river empties into the Gulf of Mexico, Herring said.

Beyond the fame of being on TV and from being covered in the monthly publication of the Seminole Tribe, and in addition to the fortune of having artifacts as well as the revenue from being an author, Herring hopes to continue his Bowlegs Town adventure of fame and fortune.

This may happen with help from other developers.

Herring has proposed that the Florida Legislature amend a bill to allow for archeological mitigation. Currently, when a developer needs to impinge on wetlands, he or she can mitigate the damage by helping wetlands in another part of the state. Herring believes that archeological mitigation could help him in a quest to create a museum and preserve “Bowlegs Town” for tourists to see and for posterity.

“We found Bowlegs Town,” Herring said as he started his program, “that had been lying dormant for 200 years. We’ve unearthed over 3,000 amazing artifacts.”

Other items found are from military occupation. Herring has an eagle that was meticulously hand-carved out of an 1809 American 50-cent piece. Herring said he thinks that soldier made it to be a hat pin.

Willie Johns, Chief Justice of the Tribal Court of the Brighton Reservation (Glades County) has flown in by helicopter twice to see the site, Herring said.

There have been stories in the monthly publication that is named the Seminole Tribune, he said.

In the early 1800s, Herring said, Cow Keeper, Billy Bowlegs and Micanopy were among the chiefs living in the Payne’s Prairie area of what became Alachua County.

They were hunting and fishing and had a large herd of cattle back then, Herring said. They were growing organic crops, long before it became the fad of the day as it is now. Their cattle were not treated by antibiotics and the animals ate on the open range.

# HardisonInk.com

---

Around 1812, Herring said, militiamen from Georgia came to Payne's Prairie in an attempt to run the Indians out of the area, because they wanted to take their property and their cattle.

"The Indians pretty much whipped 'em and sent 'em back to Georgia," Herring said. "But Cow Keeper was a very old and wise chief. He was about 80 years old.

"He told the Indians," Herring continued. "He said, 'Look. They're going to come back, and they are going to be stronger and more forceful.'"

The chief told the tribe that he knew of another place where there was a beautiful river and springs bubbling out of the ground. The chief said fight the good fight, but if there was a need to relocate, he knew where the tribe should move.

There is an abundance of game in this new place, Herring said as the chief spoke about Old Town.

Herring said this chief could have been the first leader of the Dixie County Chamber of Commerce, because he knew how to promote the attraction of the resources in the area.

In 1812, Col. Daniel Newnan was ordered to go to Payne's Prairie, Herring said. There was a battle. Chief Cow Keeper was shot during the battle and he died later from that wound, Herring said.

Members of the tribe fled to Old Town with everything they could bring. The Spaniards had been in this part of Florida in the 1770s, Herring said.

The Spaniards got to Old Town in the 1770s, Herring said. The Indians got there in 1812.

"And I got there in 1997," he said.

The tribe established itself there, he said, with about 200 people.

For several years, from 1812 to 1818 more or less, they lived in peace. They traded deer skins with the British at Clay Landing, Herring said, in exchange for guns, lead and other British goods.

All that went well until United States Army Gen. Andrew Jackson (March 15, 1767 - June 8, 1845) was ordered to "wipe out the Indians in the First Seminole War," Herring said. Jackson later went on to become President of the United States of America.

Herring said two British officers Alexander Arbuthnot and Robert Ambrister had worked with the Indians in the trade of deer skins for merchandise.

During a trial where Herring found a transcript, he said an Indian was asked if he ever saw those two British officers. Gen. Jackson was prosecuting the two British soldiers for helping the Indians resist the invading troops from the United States.

They were charged with helping the Indians in the battles against Jackson's invading force. This was Spanish territory at the time and they were British officers.

One of the Indians said he had seen Ambrister, Herring reported the transcript noted.

"And what he (Ambrister) would do," Herring said, "was that he would put his uniform on and parade around the settlement (of Bowlegs Town)."

About a year ago, Herring said, seven British uniform buttons were found. He is relatively certain those buttons are from Ambrister's jacket.

Herring said that when Ambrister was captured by Jackson's forces, he left his jacket on the ground there.

The two soldiers were tried for helping the Indians. Jackson had asked U.S. Army Gen. Edmund Pendleton Gaines to try the men.

# HardisonInk.com

---

They were found guilty for helping the Indians, Herring said.

The men were sentenced to 50 lashes and a year of hard labor, Herring said.

Gen. Jackson said that was not enough of a sentence, Herring said, because they would return to the area after that and restart their trade with the Indians. Jackson sentenced them both to death.

Gen. Jackson ordered Arbuthnot, an officer in his seventies, to be hanged and Ambrister, an officer in his twenties, to be shot.

Arbuthnot was hanged from the bow of his boat, Herring said, and Ambrister was shot by a firing squad.

In 1819, Spain sold Florida to the United States and in 1821 that deal was complete. Herring said that as a real estate broker, he would have closed the deal more quickly but he was not around then.

The Territory of Florida was an organized incorporated territory of the United States that existed from March 30, 1822, until March 3, 1845, when it was admitted to the Union as the State of Florida.

In 1997, Herring bought the property in Old Town (Bowlegs Town). Herring later met archeologist John Edwards who used a metal detector and started uncovering relics of the past from the time when the tribe lived where Herring lives today.

That was the start of the Bowlegs Town adventure that continues today.

As for Bowlegs Town on television, Herring spoke about a couple of points where he was able to help direct The History Channel's coverage last summer. At one point his grandson asked to be on TV riding a horse.

Herring said he and his grandson were pictured for a moment on horseback.

In another number of seconds of that TV program, Herring told the camera operators that they should come in close when Herring went to greet Chief Justice Johns.

As the property owner approached the helicopter that landed at his homestead, he mentioned to the tribal justice leader that the last time the Seminoles arrived on the property, they did so by horse and on this occasion, a member of the Seminole tribe had arrived by helicopter.

One part of Herring's presentation may have inspired listeners to learn how to scuba dive and to buy underwater metal detectors.

Herring said that he and his partners have not looked in the river yet to find the \$25 million worth of Confederate gold, because the water has been too high and murky; although he intimated that this potential exists – especially since they have found an anchor and some whiskey flasks that could be dated back to that point in Florida history, when the ship reportedly carrying gold was allegedly sunk in the Suwannee River.