

## **Black Creek RV Resort**

Toll free: 877.999.2278 or eMail: [info@bcrv.net](mailto:info@bcrv.net)

FREEPORT -For more than 150 years Freeport has served as a crossroads for Walton County. In its early years, Freeport was where passengers and cargo would leave boats and travel inland on rutted paths to the communities of Euchee Valley. Today, Freeport is at the crossroads of U.S. Highway 331 and State Road 20. Drivers crossing Choctawhatchee Bay on the U.S. 331 bridge must travel through the community.

Freeport began around 1830 when settlers were attracted to the natural harbor of LaGrange Bayou located near the eastern end of Choctawhatchee Bay and the mouth of the Choctawhatchee River. In his 1911 book, "History of Walton County," John L. McKinnon wrote that his father, Col. John McKinnon, was among the first white settlers to show an interest in the Freeport area. McKinnon bought 40 acres near Fourmile Creek and cleared the land. One of the first stores was opened soon after by Giles Bowers, McKinnon's son-in-law...

The Civil War came to Freeport in 1864 when a column of Union soldiers marched from the recently captured Pensacola to Marianna. AS part of the advance, Union troops were sent to Freeport where they were ferried across the bay to Point Washington.

After the war, Freeport continued its role as a harbor. Steamboats regularly traveled up the Choctawhatchee River as far north as Geneva, Ala., and west to Vernon. One of large, boats was called the Aurora and was built in Freeport. By 1871 a post office was established in Freeport and in 1874, Freeport's oldest continuing church, First Baptist, opened its doors. When the church started it was called Mission Baptist and its members worshipped in a one-room, wooden chapel built about where the current sanctuary stands on Kylea Laird Road. Many of Freeport's first residents are buried in Hatcher Cemetery off of Bay Loop Road. The cemetery was started in 1852 and gravestones mark the deaths of pioneer children, Confederate veterans and many who lived long lives.

By the early 1900s timber and sawmills were the town's main industry. Freeport's business district was along the northern end of LaGrange Bayou and it was still easier to move cargo on boats and barges than it was to try and ship goods overland to Pensacola and south Alabama.

"I could hear five sawmill whistles blowing every morning," recalled Harvey Casey. Casey was born in 1900 across the bay from Freeport in Point Washington. At the age of 5, Casey's family moved to Freeport from where his father captained the commercial boat, Minnie Lee.

Casey made numerous trips with his father up the Choctawhatchee River or to Pensacola on the Minnie Lee. The Minnie Lee would pull barges to construction sites, drag timber to mills and deliver the mail. The wooden boat, built in Freeport, was one of the first gasoline powered boats on Choctawhatchee Bay, but that power source didn't last long.

"Gasoline went to 10 cents a gallon and my father said he couldn't stand that," Casey said with laugh. Out went the gas engine; in went the wood-fired steam engine..."

**Excerpts from BRUCE ROLFSEN's**, article written for the Daily News – ca. 1990