

From the
MILTON
Historical Society



THE HISTORY OF Crabapple, Georgia

BY ROBERT MEYERS

The history of Crabapple Georgia is little known but well worth telling, for it is unique and colorful. It is a tale of transition from small largely subsistence farms to a vibrant modern community.

Land that was to become the Crabapple settlement was part of the land the Georgia legislature used to create Cherokee County in 1831 from land ceded to the state by the Cherokee Indians. With some 7000 square miles of territory, the new county was unwieldy, and in 1832 the legislature divided it into ten smaller counties. Due to the inordinate amount of time it took for residents to travel to their respective county seats, in 1857 the legislature created Milton County out of portions of Cherokee, Forsyth, and Cobb counties with Alpharetta as the county seat. Two years later portions of Gwinnett and DeKalb counties were added. The county was named after John Milton, Revolutionary War hero and Georgia's first Secretary of State.

Following the Civil War, in 1874 settlers built a log cabin schoolhouse beside an old crabapple tree and called the community Crabapple.

Cotton was the main cash crop and times were good for a while. However, the lack of infrastructure, drought, the boll weevil, and the Great Depression destroyed the local one-crop economy, and in 1932 Milton County was merged into Fulton County. If you look at a map of Fulton County today, you will see a bulge at the top of the map which represents the former Milton County.

In 2005 a citizens committee was established to study the feasibility of creating a new city from a portion of unincorporated Fulton County. The Georgia Legislature approved the creation of the city of Milton which was incorporated on December 1, 2006. Most of the Crabapple settlement was included in the new city and has become a thriving, growing business and residential area.



Buren and Bessie Wright Cowart store cotton on their front porch to protect it from the rain until they have enough to make a bale. The Crabapple area relied heavily on cotton production.

Photo courtesy of Connie Mashburn.

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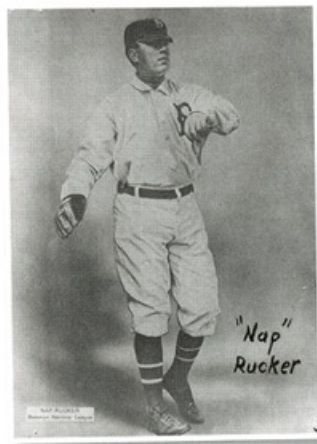


A five-way crossroads in downtown Crabapple is anchored by a large brick building built circa 1900 by one of Crabapple's pioneers John Broadwell, known for his invention of new strains of cotton. He boasted that his "double-jointed" cotton produced three bales on one acre with up to 700 bolls on a single plant. His brick building housed Broadwell's dry goods store. The bricks were handmade beside a local creek and sun-dried. The building is still in use today.

Several other historic buildings are found in the crossroads including the Reese House, built-in 1906. It is an elaborate Queen Anne style home with interlocking gables and a large wrap-around porch typical of the country homes constructed in the area at that time.



"Broadwell Building, circa 1902. Originally a dry-goods store, the structure was built with locally manufactured bricks by farmer John Broadwell one of Crabapple's most important early citizens. Over the years it served a variety of uses including lodging for travelers and a hall for community meetings and square dances.
Photo credit: Ben Statham.



On September 5, 1908, Nap Rucker of Crabapple became the first left-handed pitcher to throw a no-hitter in Brooklyn Dodger history.
Photo credit: Connie Mashburn.

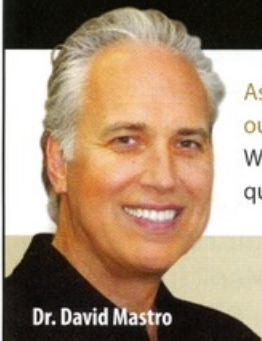
Baseball played an important role in Crabapple's history. According to local historian and baseball fan Connie Mashburn, Crabapple's first organized team, the Moss Back Nine, dates back to 1885.

Two Crabapple natives had successful careers in the major leagues. George N. "Nap" Rucker pitched left-handed for the Brooklyn Dodgers from 1907 through 1916. He is sometimes given credit for inventing the knuckleball pitch. His best season was 1911 when he won 22 games. Nap's nephew Johnny Rucker played center field for the New York Giants from 1940 through 1946. Known for his running speed, he was called the "Crabapple Comet." Johnny graced the cover of Life Magazine April 1, 1940.

The Milton Historical Society was established in 2018 to preserve and communicate the multifaceted history of Milton and Crabapple to current and future generations. The Society's first project, funded by the City of Milton, was the installation of 28 historical markers throughout the city. With its headquarters located in downtown Crabapple, the society welcomes interested residents to become involved in its activities. For further information, see their website www.miltongahistoricalandsociety.com and their Facebook page.

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