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**inside** 3 Sections

# NAVARRE PRESS

THURSDAY, JULY 7, 2016 \$1.25 NEWS & INFORMATION

## Tough Mudder results disappointing

By Rob Johnson  
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The economic impact of April's two-day Tough Mudder event, while significant, was far less than the \$6 million that the company claimed at its one-day military-style obstacle course in March 2015, according to a new Haas Center study.

**"I'd call the results decent, but not what we were promised."**

**-Liz Horton, Tourism Development Council member**

Santa Rosa County's share of this year's estimated \$2.75 million impact on the region was about \$1.45 million, as calculated by the economic modeling used by researchers to assess the answers of 371 Tough Mudder participants who responded to survey questions.

See TOUGH MUDDER 9A

## Water company leader resigns

Staff Reports  
editor@navarrepress.com

Executive Director of Holley-Navarre Water Systems, Billy Sublett has resigned his position with the member-owned company saying in part in an email to Navarre Press, "My work here is completed."



Sublett

The position of executive director was created after longtime general manager Ken Walker retired. Walker's duties were split between the executive director and general manager. The utility's board of directors hired Sublett in March 2014 to take on the new position of executive director and promoted a 30-year employee, Paul Gardner to the general manager position.

See SUBLETT 8A

## Escaped inmate apprehended

Staff Reports  
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Fugitive John Wesley Saatio was on the run when he was apprehended by Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office deputies Sunday evening, July 3. Saatio escaped Saturday when he reportedly fled a private inmate transportation company's custody at 10:30 p.m. at the I-10 rest area at mile marker 29 in Santa Rosa County. Saatio was extradited last week from Costa Rica after escaping custody last year in Michigan. News reports state that Saatio also escaped custody in Costa Rica after he was initially caught - and then caught again.



Saatio

See SAATIO 8A

# Robledal Estates Navarre's history



Photographic illustration by Dickie Williams from submitted photos

## Navarre's earliest recorded heritage began with Spanish explorers in 1693

By Jon Crider  
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The neighborhood called "Robledal Estates" on East Bay Boulevard may seem like just another waterfront neighborhood. However, it was the scene the oldest documented history of the area we now call Navarre.

### Spanish exploration

While the story of the land encompassing Robledal

begins long before recorded history, we know that the area first received its name from the Spanish explorer, mathematician and scientist Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora. In Spanish, the word "Robledal" translates to "Oak Grove" - from the word "Robledo," meaning "Oakwood."

According to "The Beginnings of Texas and Pensacola" by Dr. William Edward Dunn, University of Texas, Robledal was first encoun-

tered during the expedition of Pez-Sigüenza which set sail from Vera Cruz on March 25, 1693. Captain Jordan de Reina, an officer who had taken part in the Baroto-Romero voyage of 1686 accompanied Pez and Sigüenza. In Reina's honor, Sigüenza named the river on which they traveled after his first name, calling it the River Jordan, which we know today as East River.

According to Dunn, on April 11, 1693, after the dis-

covery of the River Jordan, a group of Native Americans were spotted watching the Spanish ships from a nearby shore. When the Spaniards landed on shore, however, they found only a deserted camp, guarded by a fierce dog. The natives had fled in such a rush from the camp that they had left a fire with pieces of buffalo meat still cooking over it.

See ROBLEDAL 6A

## Walmart set to roll out grocery pickup service

By Brian Lester  
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The Florida market is relatively new to online grocery pickup service at Wal-Mart, debuting in the state late last year.

Navarre will soon offer the service, rolling it out July 13 at the store location on Navarre Parkway, and store manager Bryan Boney is excited about it.

"I think it's a great opportunity for people to be able to balance life and work by using the service," Boney said. "We're excited about it and hope people take advantage of it."

See WALMART 8A



Photo by Brian Lester

The Navarre Walmart is gearing up for the start of online grocery pickup service this month. It is one of two area locations that is adding the service for its customers.

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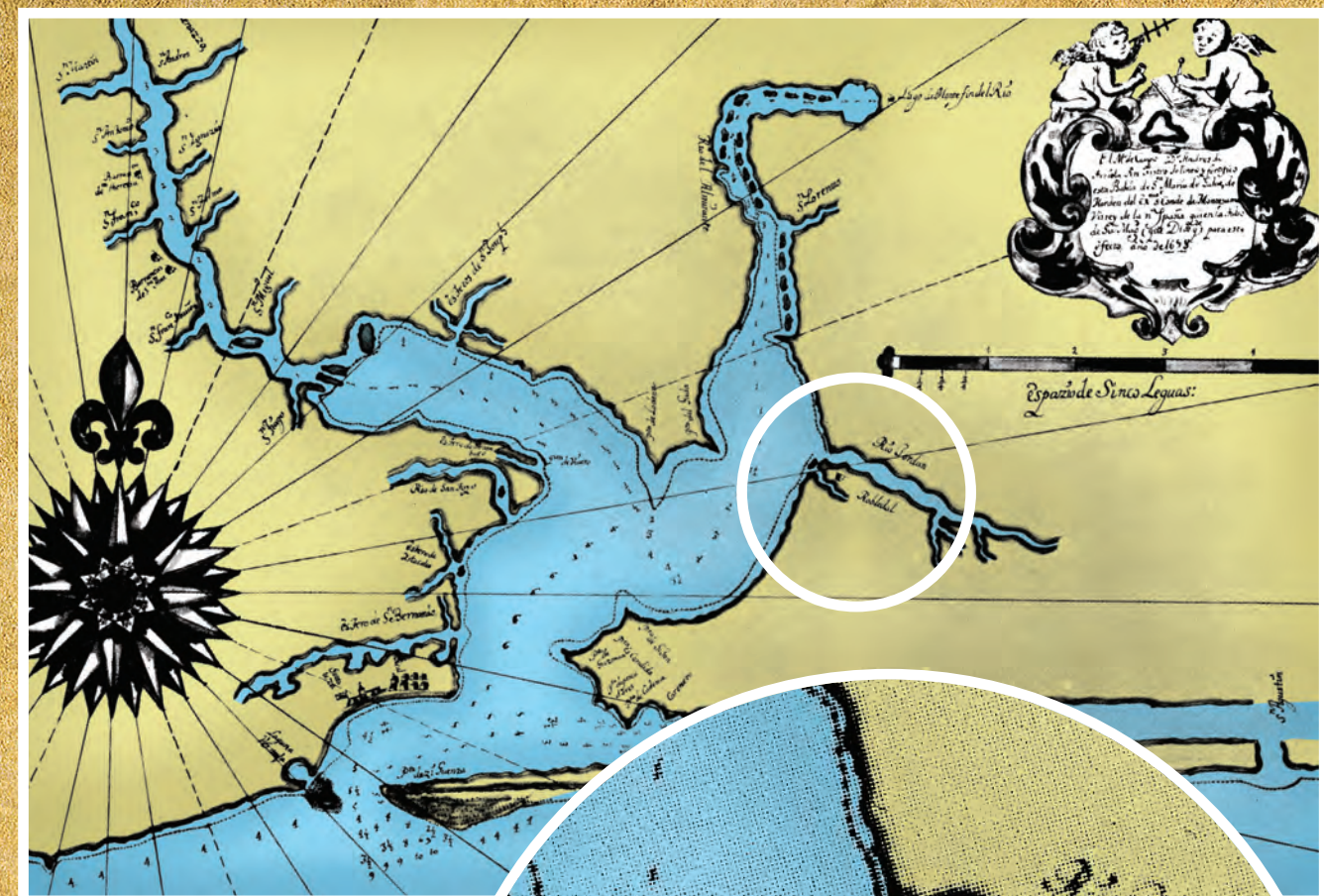
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# Historic Navarre

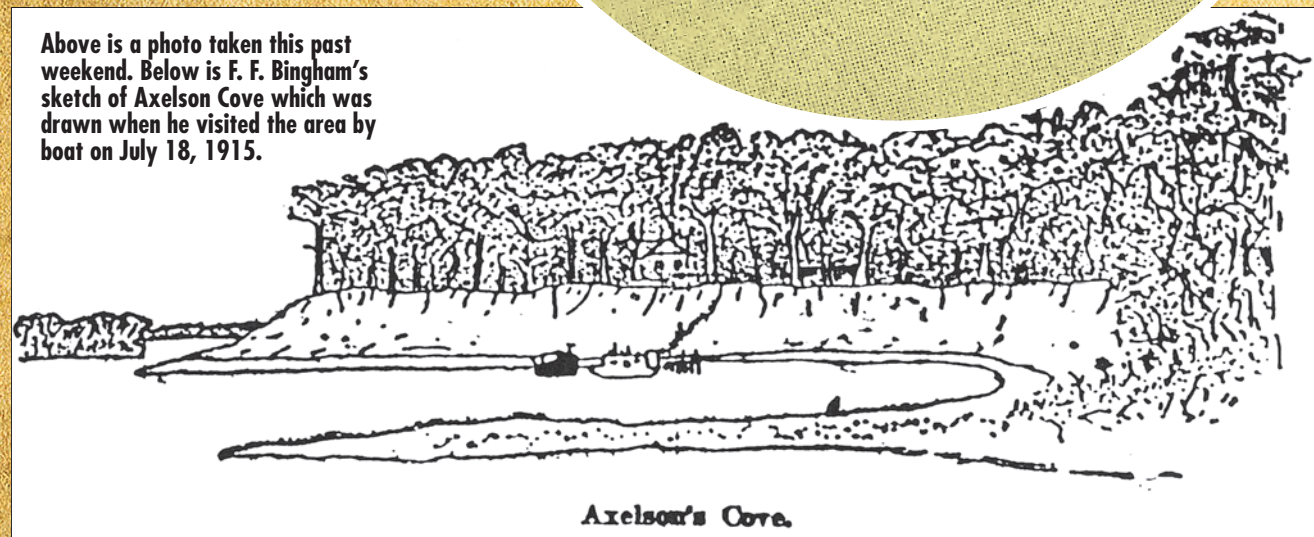
Photographs courtesy of the University of West Florida Archives and History Center, Axelson Collection (71-4).



This 1698 map of Pensacola Bay by Don Andrés de Arriola y Guzmán clearly shows Robledal.



Above is a photo taken this past weekend. Below is F. F. Bingham's sketch of Axelson Cove which was drawn when he visited the area by boat on July 18, 1915.



Axelson's Cove.



The home of Birger Swen Axelson still stands in Pensacola on South Florida Blanca Street.



Gustaf's Axelson's house is on the corner, right down the street from Birger's home.



John Newton Axelson and Christina Axelson are shown here in personal photographs from the early 1900s.



Photo by Jeff Bell

The Spanish explorers named their original campsite "El Robledal" because of the numerous oak trees in the area which were a prevalent part of the landscape.

## Robledal

Continued from page 1A

After erecting a wooden cross and leaving gifts for the natives, the Spaniards continued their exploration upriver. Later, when they returned to the campsite, the explorers noticed that their gifts had been taken. In return, the natives had also constructed a wooden cross and left a buffalo hide as a peace offering.

Due to the great number of oak trees in that place, the campsite was called "El Robledal." The earliest known map of Robledal is dated 1693, the same year of the Pez-Sigüenza expedition. In a map dated 1698 by Don Andrés de Arriola y Guzmán, the first governor of Pensacola after Luna's colony was abandoned, the Robledal location is also noted. This time however, the cartographer made note of a small house in his drawing, indicating a camp or settlement of some kind. In that 1698 map, the only other similarly drawn structures are located in what is now downtown Pensacola.

### The first family of Robledal

Following the Onís-Adams Treaty of 1819, Spanish control of all Florida lands ended and the Spanish turned Florida over to the American Government. Many more American and immigrant families arrived over the years to settle the new lands in Florida, seeking new beginnings and opportunity. According to "Pioneering in the Panhandle" by William J. Wells, the first family to homestead the Robledal area arrived in Santa Rosa County sometime in the 1850s.

In view of the lapping waters of the East Bay and the live oaks of Robledal, Frederick A. Axelson (born in Oland, Sweden on Dec. 29, 1825) and Margaret Hunter Axelson (born in Orkney, Scotland on Oct. 18, 1825) would build their homestead and raise their family. In total, the couple had five children, four sons and one daughter. The Axelson boys were Frederick (born Jan. 11, 1854, in Algiers, New Orleans), Gustaf (born April 10, 1858, in East Bay), Hjalmar (born July 4, 1864, in East Bay), and Birger Swen Axelson (born Dec. 1, 1860, in East Bay). Their daughter, Margareta Axelson, was born June 26, 1856, in Milton according to her tombstone.

### A shipyard in Robledal

Soon after their establishment in Northwest Florida, the Axelsons constructed a large shipyard at Axelson Cove along the southern shore of East Bay which is now part of Robledal Estates. There, the family had a business building and repairing large ships. Many of the oak and long-leaf yellow pine trees so admired by the Spanish in 1698 were put to good use by the family in the creation and repair of multiple seafaring vessels. According to Wells, two large ships are known to have been constructed at Axelson Shipyard, including the Donna Christina and the Hjalmar. According to Dr. Brian R. Rucker, Professor of History at Pensacola State College and local historian, the Axelsons had a broad influence in this part of Northwest Florida over the course of their naval activities. "The Axelson family is representative of many immigrants coming to America in the 1800s," Rucker said. "The maritime endeavors of several generations of Axelsons were felt in South Santa Rosa County and in Pensacola."

During the Civil War, according to Rucker's article West Florida's Unionists, Frederick A. Axelson seems to have been a supporter of the Union, a hazardous political view in West Florida at the time. While many other southern families were hurt by the federal blockade of the Gulf Coast, Axelson was known to trade openly with Union officials. According to Rucker, on one trip Axelson was able to obtain a barrel of flour and 25 pounds of bacon to take home through his trading with the Federalists. Luckily for the family, during the scorched-earth policy of the Confederacy in 1862, while Miller's mill burned (located at Miller's Point, across from Robledal), the Axelson shipyard was somehow spared.

Like their father before them, Birger Swen, Gustaf and Hjalmar all became captains and skilled shipwrights. According to Wells, their only daughter, Margareta, became a school teacher. Even as a seafaring people, the Axelsons did not hesitate to buy large swaths of land in Santa Rosa County. At one time, the family owned over 500 acres in the area, much of it with forests of valuable lumber. Aided sometimes by his sister, Frederick Axelson seems to have been heavily involved in looking after the family's lumber and land holdings. According to the 1900 Federal census, he listed his occupation as a carpenter.

As evident from notebooks kept in the Axelson Collection at the University of West Florida Archives, the family was highly educated and had a great love of literature, especially poetry. In that collection is one of Gustaf's personal copybooks. In this notebook which he took with him during his times at sea, he recorded and copied many great works of poetry and literature, along with his own personal thoughts. A very thoughtful man, the following is a quote from the preface to one of his books as an answer to those who would say his writings were a waste of time: "Life at its longest is composed of but a few years, therefore let us with the useful mingle as much of the agreeable as we can. Of course we cannot exist by contemplating the flowers or the stars or by listening to the music of the birds on a summer morning, but an hour thus spent ever once and awhile will cause us to forget our cares and make us conscious that life is not all a warfare."

Through Gustaf, the Axelsons became connected to another prominent area family, the Newton family of Mary Esther. According to the notebook of the Rev. John Newton, Gustaf was married to Esther Newton on Jan. 17, 1883. Esther Newton and her sister, Mary, were the individuals for whom the town Mary Esther was named.

### Tragedy

In 1883, Frederick A. Axelson passed away at the age of 58 in Robledal. He was followed into the afterlife by his son Hjalmar on June 16, 1890, in Milton. Hjalmar, who died from tetanus resulting from a wound he received while working in the shipyard, was much mourned by the family. As an added trauma, soon after Hjalmar's death and burial, his body was stolen. According to Wells, it is supposed that some of the Axelson's neighbors did so in order to sell his remains to a doctor in Milton for the doctor's study.

On Nov. 16, 1909, Birger Swen Axelson passed away in Tampa, Fla. Aboard a ship initially bound for Cuba, he left Pensacola thinking his illness was only minor. Contrary to Wells' book, he did not die lost at sea. Instead, according to the Pensacola News Journal, dated Nov. 18, 1909, Birger stopped his ship in Tampa once his illness became serious. In the time that it took his message to reach his family, he had already lapsed into a coma. At 4 o'clock on Tuesday, he breathed his last.

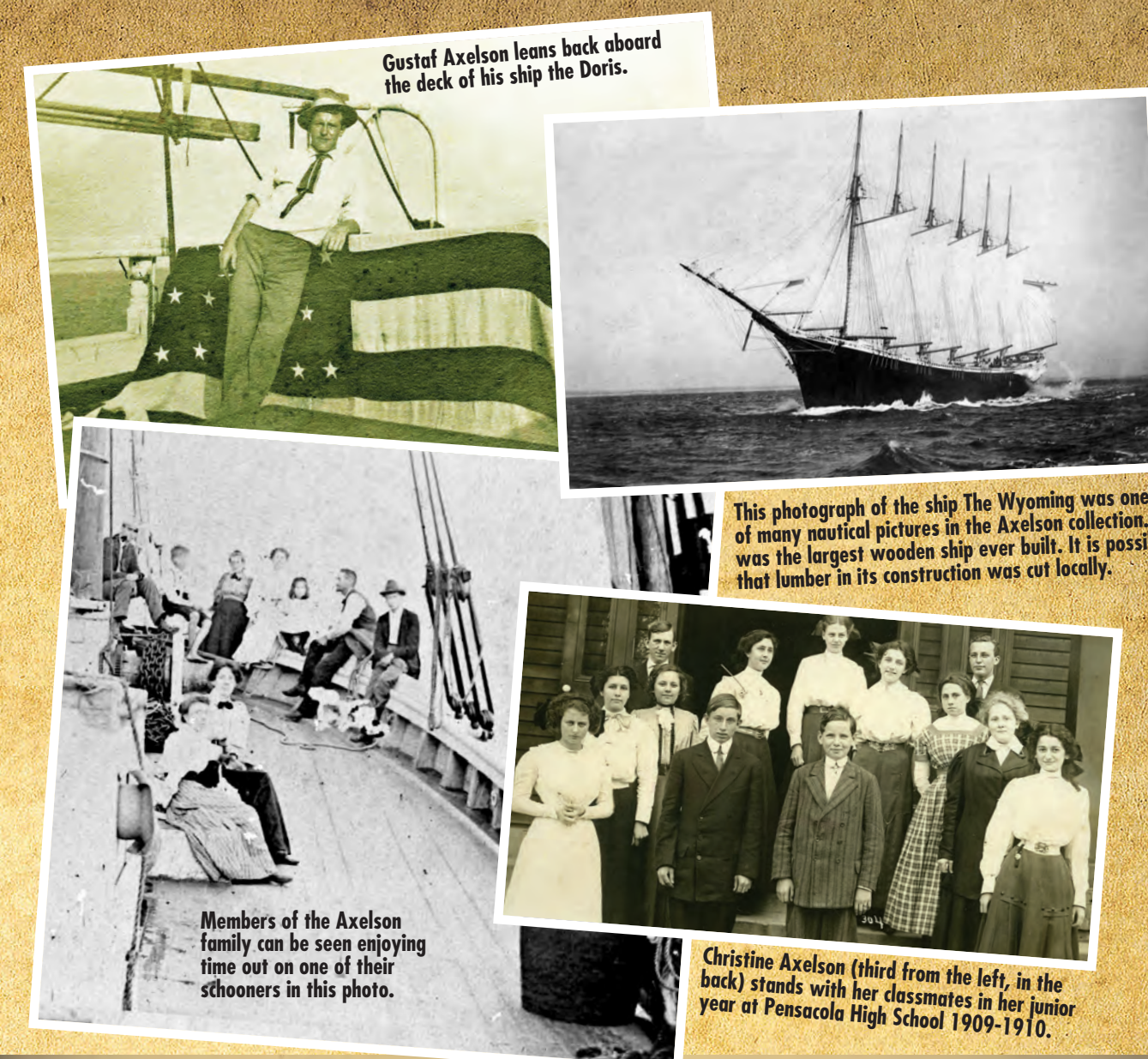
Marked by tragedy, the family was doomed to suffer yet another loss. On Dec. 8, 1910, Gustaf Axelson was swept off the deck of his ship Doris during a fierce storm near "Belize, Honduras," according to his headstone. His body was never recovered. Surviving him were his wife, Esther and his two children John Newton and Christina.

In Pensacola, John Newton Axelson would become a name of prominence. As the owner of the Pensacola Excelsior Company, he was a prominent businessman in the community. He would also go on in his life to marry Marjorie R. Quina. After her affair with a married man, Guy H. Wyman (a man who at one time owned much of Navarre), John and Marjorie Axelson would divorce in 1931. A veteran of both world wars, John Newton attained the rank of major in the U.S. Army Reserve as an artillery officer during World War II. He has only a humble military grave marker as his headstone.

While the family cemetery was originally located on their land in Robledal, the graveyard was later relocated. Due to the frequent vandalism and disruption of the graves in the family cemetery at Robledal by those nearby, John Newton chose St. John's Cemetery in Pensacola as the new resting place for his loved ones. Today, all of the Axelson family is buried there. A short drive away from the family plot, the old Axelson home in Pensacola on South Florida Blanca Street still stands today. It is among the houses listed in the Historic American Buildings Survey begun by Charles E. Peterson in 1933.

### Preserving the past

While the Spanish explorers, the Native American camp of Robledal, the Axelson family, and their homestead on East Bay may be gone, evidence of their existence all remain. When Navarre Press interviewed current residents of Robledal Estates Jerry Merritt, Susan Curran, and Max Weger, they all described artifacts of Robledal's history found on their properties. "Almost any digging you do here results in the discovery of Indian pottery and other artifacts," Merritt said. "When our house was being constructed, my wife and I were even able to recover pieces during the digging by the builders."



Gustaf Axelson leans back aboard the deck of his ship the Doris.

This photograph of the ship The Wyoming was one of many nautical pictures in the Axelson collection. It was the largest wooden ship ever built. It is possible that lumber in its construction was cut locally.

Members of the Axelson family can be seen enjoying time out on one of their schooners in this photo.

Christina Axelson (third from the left, in the back) stands with her classmates in her junior year at Pensacola High School 1909-1910.

## THE MILTON GAZETTE

MILTON (SANTA ROSA COUNTY), FLORIDA, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1910

### Live Local Items City and County

**Personal, Social and General News Told in Paragraphs**

A merry Christmas to all.

Mr. E. W. Speed, L. & N. auditor, is here this week.

Miss Belle Roberts visited Pensacola this week.

The First National Bank and business houses generally will close on Monday in observance of Christmas.

Mrs. Henry Fisher and children of Holt spent a few days here this week.

Mr. Dave Mitchell made a business trip to Pensacola Tuesday.

Miss Louise Roberts of Pensacola is expected home the last of the week to spend Christmas.

Mr. S. J. Sykes had the misfortune one day this week to break a leg in slipping from the roof.

Miss Doris Smith left Thursday morning for Tampa and Clearwater, where she will visit relatives. We all hope to see "Doris" back home again soon.

Miss Myrtle Smith has accepted a position as night operator at the Telephone Exchange office.

Ladies, come in and look over the beautiful new goods at Day's Jewelry Store.

Mr. A. Tomassoli, of the Military School at Gainesville, Ga., is home for the holidays.

Mr. W. F. Harrison made a tour.

Mrs. D. T. Williams left this week for Pensacola to spend Christmas with relatives there.

Miss Frank Harrison and Miss Annie Manaway spent Monday in Pensacola.

Miss Elizabeth and Addie Stewart came home Wednesday from Tallahassee, where they are attending school, to spend the holidays with their parents.

Dr. Gustaf was a visitor to Pensacola Monday.

Mrs. F. E. Day left the first of the week to spend Christmas with relatives in Evergreen, Ala.

Your watch will run correctly when repaired by F. E. Day, next door to First National Bank.

Frank Penton was taken in charge in this city yesterday by a United States deputy marshal and taken to Pensacola.

The following Tallahassee students are home for Christmas: Miss Marie Corbett, Addie Stewart, S. E. Stewart, Maggie Johnson and Harry Lee Corry.

Mrs. E. G. Bower and little Miss Virgie and Miss Laura Bradshaw were the guests of friends in Pensacola for one day this week.

Mrs. Minnie Gray Fleming, given as Mrs. Master Brownson, goes to her home in Atlanta for Christmas.

Mrs. J. W. Ames of Tallahassee, is expected this week to spend the holidays with her daughter, Mrs. H. L. Corry.

Mr. J. M. Hamilton of Fort Ridge was taken suddenly ill in town Tuesday. He was sent to his home.

Mr. Ralph K. Andrews, representative.

### A Red Letter Day for Milton

**Last Monday Things Were Moving Some in This Good Old Town**

Monday was a busy day in Milton. Farmers and others began to arrive at an early hour and by 10 o'clock the streets of our town presented an animated appearance.

The demonstration for the Farmers' Institute, placed their chairs in the courthouse and held a large number of interested farmers during the whole of their program. The limited space prevents going into details at this time.

At 11 o'clock the W. A. Board spoke to a crowded audience in the courtroom. The Farmers' Institute demonstrators giving away for him for the time being. Mr. Board was laudatory and convincing. He stated that he would like to see the best interest of the State's people and strengthened the state, the state's best interest, the people. A more extended column, after a more extended column, was the splendid dinner given by the Merchants' Association of Milton, was thoroughly enjoyed. Our citizens have some need on a good day, and last Monday was in fact a good day for our individual interests.

Take that old world to the G. E. Day and let him make it a thing of beauty a few years.

Mr. W. W. Harrison, representative.

### To the Citizens of Santa Rosa County

WE WISH YOU

A Happy Christmas

AND

A FIRST

Today, the headstones of Birger and Gustaf Axelson rest in St. John's Cemetery in Pensacola.

## Interesting Robledal tidbits

According to Commission Minute records of Santa Rosa County, the first voting precinct for the East Bay area was established in 1869. The site of elections was the Axelson home in Robledal. For the November 2, 1869 vote to determine whether or not Alabama would annex West Florida, Frederick A. Axelson was one of three inspectors of the local election.

According to Susan Curran, a resident of Robledal, ballast stones from the ships of Axelson shipyard still sit at the bottom of East Bay off the shore from the neighborhood.

One known sketch of the old Axelson house in Robledal is featured in Dr. Brian Rucker's book, The Log of the Peep O' Day: Summer Cruises in West Florida Waters, 1912-1915. Through comparison of this sketch with current photographs of Axelson Cove, the original location of the Axelson house seems to have sat on property that is now between the addresses of 6451 and 6455 Avenida de Galvez Street. One of these properties is proudly owned by Debi and Stephen Rojeki.

According to Jerry Merritt, the old Axelson Road, which was used for transporting lumber and supplies to Robledal, can still be seen today. Though most of it is submerged under a small lake west of Calle de Hidalgo Street, Merritt stated that the remaining part of the road can be seen clearly on the west side of the lake. The exact location, according to Merritt, is off of Avenida de Galvez Street about 100 yards inland from the benches near the levee.

In 1974, Carl Barnard was the man responsible for subdividing the old Axelson homestead property. He is also credited for giving the area back its Spanish name of "Robledal."

Also according to Merritt, multiple evidence of the Axelsons' shipbuilding presence have been uncovered over the years. "I have heard that there was a large anchor in someone's front yard for a time many years ago," Merritt said. "They apparently discovered the anchor while digging the foundation for their house."

There are two houses still standing in Pensacola which belonged to members of the Axelson family. The house at 318 South Florida Blanca Street was owned by Gustaf Axelson and later his son, John Newton Axelson. His brother, Birger Swen, owned the house at 314 South Florida Blanca Street. Both were probably built around the same time in the 1890s.



Max Weger holds up a hand iron which he found, most likely one belonging to the Axelsons.

