

Crossing the Withlacoochee

With a new bridge being constructed across the Withlacoochee River below Clyattville it seemed a good time to review the wooden 1895 Horn's Ferry Bridge and the 1940 bridge, currently being replaced, which had in turn replaced the 1895 bridge. When gathering research on these structures other somewhat obscure but "new" Withlacoochee crossings and bridge information began to surface.

Thus, this story began diverging from its original emphasis to making sure that new "odd-lot" bits of local history being found were recorded for the future.

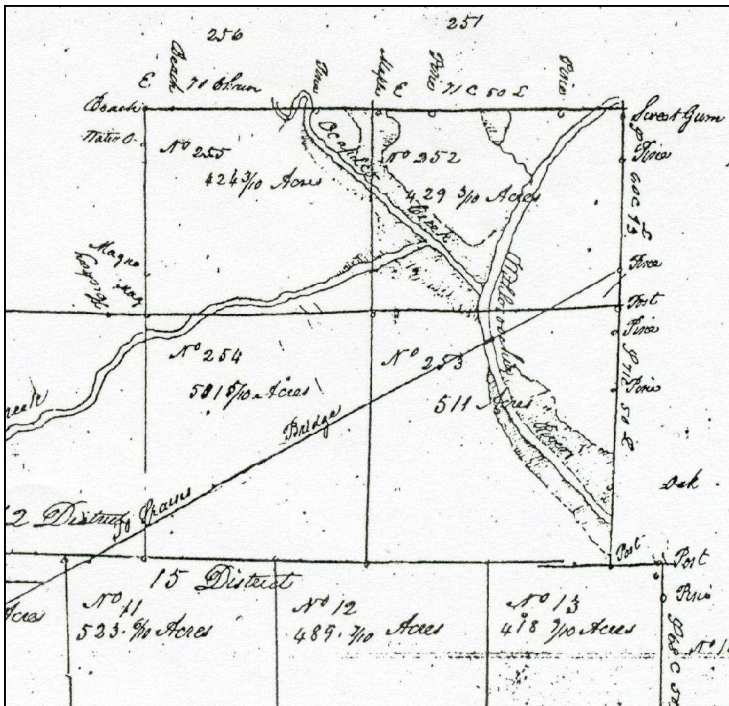
Spain Ferry, yes; but Spain's Bridge?

On current Lowndes County maps we can locate Spain Ferry Road a bit below US 84 west. The name is self explanatory designating a road that led to an early ferry crossing of the Withlacoochee River.

When looking closely at a plat drawing from the *Jeremiah Wilson's Original Land Surveys 1844-1866* something appeared that was unknown to us in local history. In the plat map **at left** note the diagonal line, representing a road, that was not actually that straight, above which is written "To Spain's Bridge." The plats of this land, which took more than one page, were "of the Estate of John W. Spain. Resurveyed between the 12 and 28th days of October 1857 in Lowndes County Georgia." The area west of the Withlacoochee River would become Brooks County in 1858.

There is a copy of the *Jeremiah Wilson's Surveys* in the Huxford-Spear Library in Homerville. It is 215 pages with two property surveys on most pages. An index for the survey entries in the journal was made in 1978 by the Cracklins class at Valdosta High School. This index allows for effective use of the survey.

Still this was the only example of the existence of Spain's Bridge. Early state capital, Milledgeville, newspapers provided information showing that in 1843 and 1844 the legislature approved that John Spain could build a bridge across the Withlacoochee River. This was just below where the combined Piscola and Okapilco Creeks enter the Withlacoochee. Piscola became the postal name on the Spain property. Later 1840s, and 1850s postal routes imply crossing the Withlacoochee at Spain's Bridge. Perhaps the arrival of the railroad or John's Spain's death led to the later demise of the bridge. But it has fascination that John Spain could and would construct a bridge across the Withlacoochee and join his lands on both sides.



Below: The wooden Horn's Ferry Bridge was constructed ca. 1895 and replaced in 1940. **Right:** 1943 aerial photograph still showed the old road and 1895 bridge location on the right at the bend in the Withlacoochee. Each of these bridge and ferry crossings were in the 16th land district lot 163, east of Warner's Ferry, in lot 162, the 16th.

