

William Brinton Hooker 1800-1871*

Captain William B. Hooker was an outstanding figure in the pioneer history of south Florida. He was born in Montgomery County, Georgia, May 3, 1800, the eldest child of Stephen and Elizabeth (Brinton) Hooker.

William's parents moved to Tattnall County from Montgomery, or were cut into it when Tattnall was created in 1801. William served as Coroner of Tattnall County, 1822-24, and was Ensign in the militia, 1819-20. In 1824, he moved with his parents to Appling County, and in August of that year was appointed Sheriff by the Inferior Court. He served as Captain of the militia in the 451st district until 1830 and when Ware County was formed from Appling in December, 1824, William was elected its second Sheriff, having been elected in January 1828.

In early 1830, William B. Hooker moved with his parents to Hamilton County, Florida, where he married, August 1, 1830, Mary Amanda Hair, daughter of William Hair. William set up his home on the Suwannee, near White Springs, his plantation being known as "Hooker's Ferry". He owned 489 acres, located in Township 2 North, Range 16 East. Deed records from Hamilton County show that in April of 1843, William deeded his property to his brother John I. Hooker, as trustee for the grantor's children: Ann E., Eliza Jane, Martha H., William J., Mary E., and Winnefred M. On April 27, 1843, John Hooker leased out the ferry rights for ten years to William H. Dowling. Marks and Brands Book #1, page 3, show that William Hooker registered the brand WH on Dec. 14, 1831 for use in Hamilton County.

Captain Hooker participated in the Second Seminole War, 1835-42, while a resident of Hamilton County. He commanded a company of volunteer militia and took part in the battles of Wahoo Swamp and Withlacoochee. In 1838, Captain Hooker was chosen as delegate from Hamilton County to the Florida Constitutional Convention being held at St. Joseph. He signed the first Florida Constitution which was the product of that convention.

In the year 1843, after passage of the Armed Occupation Act which opened up south Florida for settlement, Captain Hooker and his family moved to Hillsborough County, settling at Simmons Hammock, near present day Seffner. Upon moving to south Florida, he engaged in the cattle business and soon became one of the largest stockowners in the area. According to Covington's History of Southwestern Florida:

"Hooker's cows roamed as far as they wished through the uninhabited Alafia and Little Manatee River sections and grew fat upon the rich grassland. When the cattle were ready for market, they were driven to a point on Tampa Bay, known as Hooker's Point, and shipped to Cuba. It was said that Hooker owned more cows than any one else in this section when he sold out to Captain McKay."

* This biographical sketch of William B. Hooker was researched, compiled and contributed by a great-great-great-grandson, Kyle S. VanLandingham, P. O. Box 1779, Fort Pierce, Florida 33450.