Damaging Freeze

January 19th and 20th, 1857, were the coldest days since 1835. Temperatures of 16 and 18 degrees, respectively, were recorded, and ice two inches thick formed on pools and along the margin of the river. People were seen sliding and trying to skate on the ice.

Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1857

In the early part of the summer of 1857, an epidemic of yellow fever raged at St. Marys, Ga., and from that place it was brought to Jacksonville in August, it was said later by Nathan Vaught. Mr. Vaught's house stood on a bluff just east of the intersecton of Bay and Broad Streets, and it was there that the epidemic started. That locality was never considered very healthful; McCoys Creek near-by was a dirty, stagnant stream, and much of the land in the vicinity was low, marsh land. The summer was described as hot and murky, with frequent rains and much decaying vegetable matter. It is a noted fact that three crops of weeds grew during the season, and some people tried to connect this unusual circumstance with the spread of the fever. In these surroundings the disease gained a foot-hold. The McFalls lived near the Vaughts and soon took the fever; then it spread to the Currys living close by on the bank of McCoys Creek. In the meantime some of the other residents, both men and ladies, hearing of the distress out there (that section was considered out of town then) went to nurse the sick. In this way the contagion spread through the town. Most of the people left, and there was an entire suspension of business. But one store remained open—a drug store conducted by Dr. E. P. Webster. Dr. Webster kept his store open all during the epidemic and dispensed medicines gratuitously to those who did not have the means to pay.

During the period of the disease the streets were deserted and grew up in grass. The steamers did not stop here and the town was isolated from the rest of the world. Doctors and clergymen courageously remained, and those of the residents that stayed ministered to and nursed the sick night and day and buried the dead. Clothing and food were freely dispensed to those in need. Never were a people more sympathetic and generous. Fortunately there came an early frost (on October 26th, and on November 20th the temperature