

# Cities are new, names have been around awhile

What's in a name? In the monikers of North Fulton's two newest towns, plenty.

Both Johns Creek, Ga., and Milton, Ga., were born without significant natal pains on July 18. And, though infant municipalities, each came into being already firmly rooted in the early history of this area.

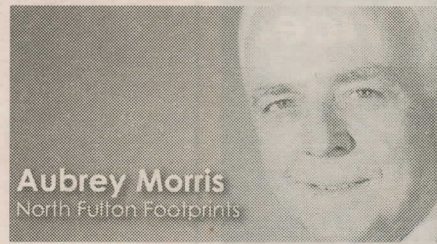
As of now, though, Mike Bodker, chairman of the Committee for Johns Creek, avers: "I just want to get started and have a really great city."

Johns Creek bears the appellation of John Rogers, (1774-1851), great-great-grandfather of the late Will Rogers, (1879-1935), world-famed cowboy actor, homespun philosopher/humorist and Broadway super star.

I was just a kid during the height of Will Rogers' popularity, notably as a radio entertainer. Now, every single Johns Creek kid should make sure to see funny man Will's statue in the U.S. Capitol on the family's next visit there.

Will Rogers' great-great-grandfather, and his full-blooded Cherokee-Indian wife, Sarah Cordery, daughter of Susanah Sonicoorie Cordery, farmed a large spread through which the stream flowed, long before the infamous Trail of Tears.

Johns Creek still meanders quietly through suburban homes to the Chattahoochee River, through the hustle and bustle of a new municipality at



every crook and turn.

According to Roswell Historian Clarece Martin, the meandering creek that still flows through the vast Rogers homestead and takes its name from John Rogers. He was a wealthy white planter who farmed hundreds of acres along and adjacent to the Chattahoochee.

He and his Cherokee wife built their still-extant two-story home on Bell Road in 1803.

I phoned the Will Rogers Memorial Museum, in Claremore, Okla., the day after Johns Creek came into being as a city down in the Rogers family's original home territory in Old Milton, now north Fulton County.

Michelle Lefebvre, executive director of both the museum as well as the adjacent Will Rogers Library, heard the news of one of the newest towns in booming Metro Atlanta, for the first time.

"Wow. This is great!" Ms. Lefebvre yelled to her fellow staff members, then excitedly told me: "Thanks for letting us know."

After a brief pause, she added: "A new city honoring Johns Creek, the John Rogers Family and the old homestead, dating back to Cherokee Indian days, goes a long way in validating all of Georgia's Cherokees, bearers of the true, native American torch."

The home in which Will Rogers was born in Indian Territory to part-Cherokee parents is a now an elegant state park, Ms. Lefebvre told me. (She can be contacted at the Will Rogers Memorial museum, Box 157, Claremore, Okla., 74018. Phone: 918-341-0719; e-mail: michele@willrogers.com.)

After thanking her, I remembered something from my early Georgia history classes: the infamous "Trail of Tears." In 1838, some 14,000 North Georgia Cherokee Indians were removed by the U.S. Army to Oklahoma, about 4,000 of them dying on their westward journey.

The history books tell us that only some of the John Rogers Family, including Will Rogers' immediate forebears, elected to join their other Indian, or part-Indian, kinfolds in Oklahoma. Others were allowed to remain in these parts, and I'm told some of their descendants are around today, having been born in Old Milton County.

So, history does, indeed, sometimes revisit us, choosing not to rest eternally in the dusty records of libraries and archives. As one newspaper headlines blared out:

"Johns Creek, Milton opt for cityhood."

Since I spent the first decade of my life as a resident of Old Milton County, by the Grace of God and a healthy helping of voters in Northwest Fulton, chances are I'll while away my last in Milton... maybe in the widely-touted, loudly projected, seemingly politically-viable, reincarnated Milton County as well.

Meanwhile, Joe T. Reynolds, III, retired corporate executive, longtime Alpharetta resident, whose home at Crabapple is across the street from the newly formed city of Milton, plans to continue his campaign to locate the exact Burke County burial spot of John Milton, the Revolutionary War hero, in whose honor old Milton County (Dec. 18, 1857-Jan 1, 1932) and the newly born city of Milton were named.

Reynolds plans to return full honors to a guy who fought gallantly in the American Revolution spent nine months as a prisoner of the British in the dark and dank dungeon at St. Augustine, Fla. After his release, he went on to be Georgia's first secretary of state.

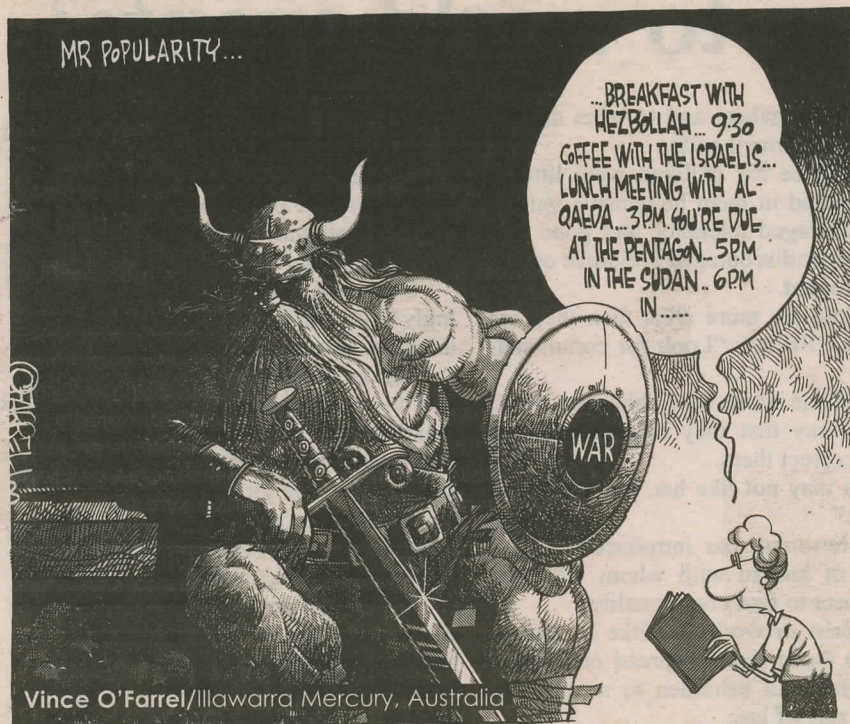
Mr. Reynolds figures the new town of Milton, as well as the re-birth of Milton County, named in Capt. Milton's honor, "would be just fine."

And, by the way, now that the

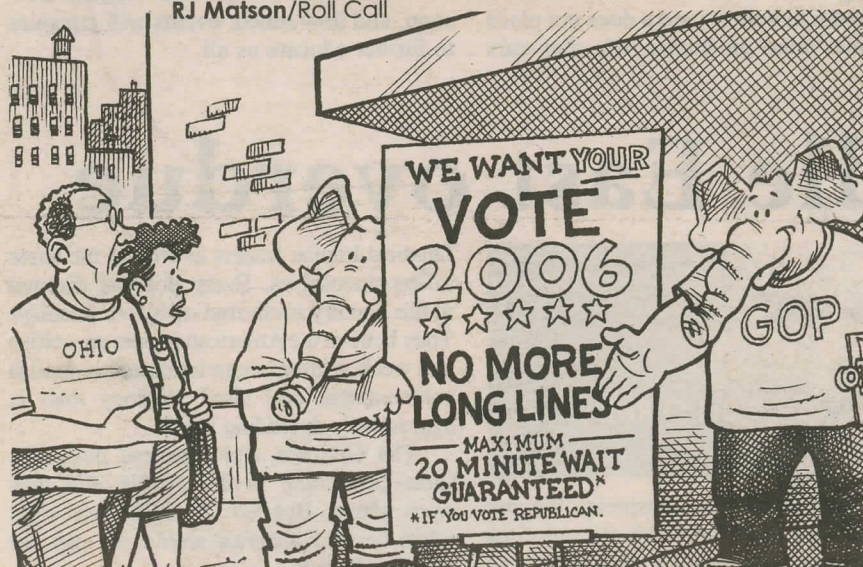
**See NAMES, Page 16**



## Other Voices



RJ Matson/Roll Call



## Names:

Continued from Page 14

town of Milton is for real, Mr. Reynolds would like to see the bordering Town of Alpharetta, the county seat of Old Milton, press the Georgia Historical Commission to "correct" the commission's marker, erected in 1955, and standing near the entrance to the Alpharetta City Hall.

The marker says Old Milton County was named for Homer V. Milton, a General in the War of 1812, though, quoting from the marker, "some claim the name was for his ancestor, John Milton, first Secretary of State of Georgia." (According to the Dictionary of Georgia Biography, U. of Ga. Press, Homer Virgil Milton was John Milton's only son.)

City of Milton historians, true to the role of the town's namesake, might consult

Page 786, Paragraph 1 of the authoritative book, "Georgia's Landmarks, Memorials and Legends," by famed historian Lucian Lamar Knight, M. A. Princeton, COMPILER OF THE STATE RECORDS OF GEORGIA, 1913:

"MILTON: created by Legislative Act, Dec. 18, 1857, from parts of Cherokee, Forsyth and Cobb, originally Cherokee. Named for Hon John Milton, a patriotic public official, who kept the records of the State from falling into the hands of the British during the Revolution."

The late, great Atlanta historian Franklin M.

Garrett, in his published, multi-volume "Atlanta and Environs," allowed the Legislature's Act of 1857 "represented a somewhat belated honor to Georgia's first secretary of state, a faithful public servant."

With names steeped in the history of this land, these two new cities are now ready to make history of their own.

