



“VALDOSTA THE RICHEST CITY PER CAPITA Not Only In Georgia, But In United States”

By Donald O. Davis: Technology is certainly allowing us to find clues and answers to long standing questions in our local history. On occasion I quizzed those keen to local history concerning the specific origin of Valdosta being titled, at one point in history, as the “richest city of its size per capita in the nation.” Everyone knew that it had to relate to the 1910s, but they, and then I, could only give as an answer, “We don’t know the specific source, we have just always heard it.” Finding where Valdosta was so specifically titled from 1913 articles in other location newspapers, led to noticing mentions in the *Valdosta Times* as early as 1895 of Valdosta’s particular prosperity.

Very little of the *Valdosta Daily Times* is searchable electronically via Georgia Library services, only 1908 through 1912, and this in only the biweekly *Valdosta Times* rather than the *Valdosta Daily Times*. For many years after the *Valdosta Times* became daily in 1905, it continued to publish the biweekly edition that repeated some articles from the *Daily Times*. In these south Georgia newspapers online, Albany electronically searches from 1845 through 1901; Thomasville, 1873-1922; Waycross, 1884-1914; Americus, 1870-1921; Bainbridge, 1872-1922, and some other small papers.

However, Valdosta information can be found in other newspapers. When searching by topic in the Waycross newspapers for information relating to the January 1913 opening of the college, “Lo, and Behold!!” an article appears that contains the long sought source information of Valdosta as the “richest city per capita.”

The title of this article, the headline above on this page, is the same title from the *Americus Weekly Times-Recorder*, January 16, 1913. *The Atlanta Constitution* used a similar title with the article on January 12, 1913 as did the *Waycross Journal* on January 17. *The Atlanta Constitution* cites their article as Valdosta, January 11; *Americus Times-Recorder* cites as Valdosta January 13; and the *Waycross Journal* cites as Valdosta January 14. Since the ability to electronically search Valdosta papers ends with 1912 (1908-1912), I have not had a chance to manually check the 1913 microfilm. If someone can find the referenced article in the *Valdosta Times* or *Valdosta Daily Times* please let us know at the museum.

The article below, citing “Valdosta, Ga. January 11,” is taken from the *Atlanta Constitution* January 12, 1913. The same article appeared in other Georgia newspapers.

Valdosta, Ga., January 11 (Special)

Figures compiled by President John T. Blalock, of the Chamber of Commerce, show that besides being unique in the matter of name, there being no other Valdosta on the map, this city is the richest town per capita in the United States. The banking resources here are nearly \$6,000,000 with deposits of about \$2,500,000. The number of telephones in use, the receipts at the post office, the business done by the railroads and the number of post office boxes far exceed those of any town in the state of Valdosta’s size. The 1910 census gave this city less than 8,000 people.

This city also enjoys the distinction of being the largest inland long staple cotton market in the world. The Chamber of Commerce will begin this year a more extended campaign than ever to let the rest of the country know what Valdosta is.

Below: Postcard circa 1915. West Hill Avenue looking east. The first three buildings on the right, including the five story are now demolished. The ambitious plans of city leaders beginning in the 1880s had helped make Valdosta a booming center of commerce.

