

1938 FDR visit remembered

BY PHILLIP RAMATI

The Associated Press

BARNESVILLE — Rebecca Goolsby remembers the day Franklin D. Roosevelt visited Barnesville as being very hot.

The 83-year-old Goolsby, one of about 150 who attended the recent dedication of a historical marker commemorating that Aug. 11, 1938, visit, was 11 at the time and her job was to wear a white cap and pass out campaign buttons.

The historical marker commemorating President Franklin Roosevelt's visit to Barnesville is located in front of the football field at Gordon College off College Drive. There also is a display at the school's library through the end of the month about life in rural Georgia during the years of the Great

Depression.

"It was very exciting," she recalled. "It was a really hot day. A friend of mine's father had a business in town and sold out all of his Cokes. They were five cents each."

Grover Worsham was 8 during FDR's visit, which was twofold, a ceremony to turn on electricity to all the rural parts of Lamar County as part of the New Deal's Rural Electrification Administration, and to stump for U.S. Senate candidate Lawrence Camp, who was challenging incumbent Walter F. George.

Worsham said that when they arrived on the football field at what was then Gordon Military College, there were lots of tents set up on the field as merchants hawked electrical appliances hitherto useless

to rural farmers in Georgia and most of the rest of the country.

"Our house was wired, but there was no electricity," he said. "When we came back (from the speech), there was electricity. It was real unusual. I remember it all. It was something to see and good to have."

The unveiling of the plaque at Gordon College marked the end of an almost four-year quest by former Gordon College student Anthony McCalla and humanities professor Peter Boltz to get a plaque that marked FDR's visit.

McCalla was taking a history class in 2006 when he learned about FDR's trips to Warm Springs. On a lark, he searched the Internet to see if the president ever came to Barnesville.

When he found a photo of the visit, he searched for more information about it and was shocked

to discover there was no plaque commemorating the event.

It took four attempts before the Georgia Historical Society finally accepted Boltz's and McCalla's academic work and approved a marker.

"It's very exciting," McCalla said after the plaque was unveiled Tuesday. "I can't believe it's finally done. To work toward your dream and actually have it come true is very humbling."

Barnesville Mayor Peter Banks doesn't remember FDR's visit. He wasn't born until the next day. But he does remember a story his mother told him about her physician being on the same stage as the president.

"He told my mother that if she went into labor, she'd have to have the baby by herself," Banks said with a chuckle.