

NEWSLETTER
May 10, 1973

Carolyn P. McLendon, Editor

NOTICE OF MEETING

Our next regular monthly meeting will be held on May 15, 1973, at 7:00 p.m. in the Jefferson Davis Junior College Student Center at Brewton. Mr. Floyd Currie will bring the program. He will speak on some of the old roads through Escambia County. We have been having good attendance at our meetings and hope that this will continue on through the summer months. For the benefit of our new members, our monthly meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month.

WE ARE STILL GROWING! We had 100% renewal of the 1972 members and now have 165 members, the following applications having been accepted since the membership list was published last month: Brewton: Mrs. Emily Wallace Finlay, Mrs. W.W. Foster, Mrs. Helen R. Kelly, Mrs. Kate McMillan Owens, Paul D. Owens, Jr., Mrs. Dot Lewis, Earl Weaver, Norville Robertson (Bob) Finlay, Mrs. Mary Agnew Finlay, Mrs. Lillian B. Watson, Mrs. E. M. Lovelace, Ray Polk, Roger McDowell, Mrs. Annie H. Criswell, Miss Mary Holladay; Evergreen: Miss Elizabeth de'Autrey Riley, Mrs. Lillian D. Morgan, William D. (Billy) Melton; Atmore: Mrs. E. L. Coon; Other: Dr. Ralph W. Adams, Troy, Ala.; Curtis M. Bryan, Pensacola; Mrs. F.N. Hale, Biloxi, Miss.; Nicholas S. McGowin, Mobile; Miss Gloria L. Jernigan, Gulf Breeze, Fla.; Mrs. Eloise Garrett Stout, Middletown, Kentucky; Senator L.D. Owen, Jr., Bay Minette; Phelan L. Findley, Castleberry, Ala.; Mrs. Claudia K. Dixon, Andalusia; Mrs. Charles A. Collins, LaJolla, Calif.; J.C. Hand, Gulf Shores, Ala.; Charles R. Mixon, Sr., Mobile, Ala.; Mrs. C. Leon Ruth, Mobile, Ala.; J. H. Findley, Century, Fla.; Troy W. Simmons, Semmes, Ala.; Mrs. Fred W. Swanson, Mobile, Ala. We welcome these new members and trust that our associations will be mutually beneficial.

THE GARDEN PARTY was everything we wanted it to be, but this could not have been possible without all the cooperation and assistance so willingly given by all who were approached for help. A real big "THANK YOU" goes to our wonderful hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. McMillan, who made us so welcome as their guests, provided boiled shrimp, smoked turkey and draft beer to add to our menu, as well as supplying helpers to set up the garden area with lighting, seating and a tent in case of rain. Mrs. Wilbur Parker catered the balance of the delicious meal and did a wonderful job, especially in keeping the expenses down to \$225.00, in spite of the fact that we had a much larger attendance than we had predicted. Our sincere appreciation goes to Mrs. Parker and all those who assisted her. Our thanks to Charles Ralph Garrett for the lovely arrangement of yellow roses and purple iris displayed in Mrs. Rochelle Garrett's antique bread tray. We also heartily thank Fred Mitchell for helping to make arrangements for chairs and tables, Boy Scouts of America for use of the tent, National Guard for raising the tent and the use of their chairs, Robbins & McGowin Company, Brewton Universalist Church, and Brewton Country Club for use of folding tables, serving tables and table linen; Mrs. Ed Leigh McMillan II for use of potted begonias and fern and hurricane lamps; Mrs. Emily W. Finlay for many lovely flowers and helping to arrange and decorate the garden area. We also express our appreciation to Onree Owens for being our tour guide to the old record room of the courthouse. Miss Charlene Dantzler was our photographer for the occasion. She made no charge for her services. If you would like a set of the pictures, there are 23 color pictures which can be ordered for \$10.00. Several black and white were made but we do not know the exact number or the cost of them at this time.

HISTORY NOTES: The Brewton City Officials for the year 1907 were as follows: Mayor, James Sowell; Aldermen, James M. Davison, J.E. Finlay, D. Gillis, S.B. Parker, R.E. Park; City Clerk and Treasurer, T.S. Sowell; City Physician and Health Officer, Dr. S.C. Henderson; City Marshall, C.E. Hunter; Chief of Fire Department, H.C. Rankin. Brewton was incorporated by Act of the Legislature of Alabama approved February 13, 1885. The Mayors for Brewton from 1882 have been: W. Y. Titcomb, 1882; E. A. Gray, 1883-4; M.A. Rabb, 1885; C.F. Rankin, 1886-7; H.M. Matthis, 1888; C.F. Rankin, 1890-2; J.M. Davison, 1893; T.S. Sowell, 1894; E.T. Parker, 1895-6; C. D. Henderson, 1897; W.H. Strong, 1898-9; H.H. Malone, 1900; E.T. Parker, 1901-2; W.Y. Lovelace, 1903-6; James Sowell, 1907-8; W.H. Strong, L.G. Brooks; H.C. Rankin, D.B. Hayes, O.M. Colley, R.A. Smith.

We would like to complete this listing of City officials, and also gather like information from the other towns in the county. Could we have a volunteer or volunteers for this endeavor?

"Escambia has the political distinction of having been the first county in Alabama to vote alcoholic liquor out of legal existence under the local option law. The wicked who may be inclined to debate the distinction involved in this vote will not question another distinction that belongs to the county by reason of its possession of the first county high school to be opened in Alabama. For this, the county's eternal gratitude belongs to its Superintendent of Education, W.S.Neal, four decades ago. When Mr.Neal was appointed to this post in the '80's, his salary was \$125 a year. For five days of each week he taught school. On Saturdays, in his official capacity as superintendent, he visited all the schools of the county, using his own horse and buggy. He served both tasks so long and well and devoted himself so eloquently to the ideal of something better than public primary schools in Alabama that the state legislature of 1898 was persuaded to pass a local bill, drafted by him, redistricting the schools of Escambia and creating a county high school at Atmore. The same legislature subsequently passed a general bill, similar to the Escambia one, which established county high schools all over the state." Excerpt from "BOOK OF ALABAMA" Edited by John Temple Graves in 1933 for Protective Life Insurance Company.

The following item was submitted by Mrs.Lillian Dixon Morgan of Evergreen, daughter of the late Charles Rufus Dixon of Pollard. Mrs.Morgan, one of our new members, states that Rev. R.W.Brooks was a Baptist minister who, with his wife, managed a large hotel at Pollard, near the railroad station.

A BIT OF RAILROAD HISTORY
by R.W.Brooks, Atmore
(about 1930)

When the original Alabama & Florida Railroad came through from Montgomery to Pensacola in 1857 or 1858 it meant history for that section of the country. Especially was this advantageous to the saw mill towns as it afforded a means of transportation for their products. Other towns sprang up as the result of the railroad being operated. There was only one town in existence at the building of the railroad. This town was Greenville, located in Butler County.

Later probably the most prosperous town was Sparta, two miles from where Evergreen is now located. Its prosperity was due to the fact that it was situated ideally between the cotton fields of East Alabama and the cotton shipping points.

The first town that originated because of the new railroad was Pollard, which got its name from Charles T.Pollard, the first president of the newly laid railroad. This new town was the junction point for the Pensacola and Mobile sections. Railroad shops were located here, also the "turn table" which in those days used to turn trains around.

During the Civil War the Southern soldiers tore up the railroad track from Pollard to Pensacola and burnt the bridges. When the line was to be restored, the builder or engineer found it would be cheaper to turn off the main line below where Century, Florida, is now. Thus Pollard no longer was the junction point. (This line later became part of the Mobile & Montgomery Railway and in 1900 became the property of the L.& N. which operated it under lease for the previous 20 years.)

There was a telegraph line running on the Old Stage Road from Montgomery to Stockton and it was taken down and moved to the railroad. C.H.Edwards, from the North, was made the first operator at Pollard and he remained in service until he became too old to perform his duties.

Pollard, the first town on the first railroad in this section, is almost on the bank of the Escambia River, with its beautiful magnolias, and wide spreading cypress trees that would be the envy of any artist. On the south runs Little Escambia Creek whose clear limpid waters would have made Ponce de Leon think he had found the fabled Fountain of Youth. There is one feature about Pollard that distinguishes it from other towns in the state. It is noted for its flowing wells.

Many fine homes of by-gone days are still there, and some people as fine as the country affords still live there, and remember the prosperity of a few years back.

REMINESCENCES OF RESIDENTS OF YESTERYEAR

By John David Finlay, Sr.

A minister approached Morris Watson while he was employed at Robbins & McGowin in about the year 1915, telling Morris that he "wanted him to give something to the Lord." Morris after looking the minister over replied, "I think I will see the Lord about as soon as you do and I will hand it to Him myself."

While running for legislature, a man whose father was a legislator previously told J.E.Finlay while he was campaigning, "I am following in my fathers' footsteps." Mr. Finlay, sniffing, replied, "Yes, but your breath doesn't smell like his."

Dr. Mason from Bay Minette was running for State Senate about 1930 and solicited votes by saying that he was running on an economy platform. Mr. J.E.Finlay, knowing the fight-fisted reputation of the Brewton Masons told him, "If you are any kin to Joe Mason and Dr. Mason (of Brewton) I am inclined to believe you."

Hilliary Tippins, an insurance agent in about the year 1920, had a very small car, while waiting to cross the railroad track which a passenger car had blocked, was embarassed by one of the passengers who called out of the window of the train, "If you'll let the top down you can drive under."

In the 1930's Gus Odom was always asking when coming into Robbins & McGowin Store to trade, "What you going to give me today, John?" On one occasion John David Finlay thought about some suspenders in the store in which the elastic had gone bad, and he said, "Gus, I will give you a pair of suspenders." When he handed them to him Gus pulled them out to see how strong the elastic was. The suspenders remained the length he pulled them to. Gus said, "John, you didn't give me much."

We gratefully acknowledge the following history contributions:

From J. H. Findley of Century, Fla., The History of Magilbra Findley born 1796 in South Carolina;

From Reginald McFarland of Pensacola, record of the Claiborne Cemetery;

From Ray Polk of Brwton, Miscellaneous Title Papers and Veterans Certificates of John Gay, a veteran of the Indian Wars;

From Frank Harris and his assistants, Miss Judy Johnson, Mrs.Wanda Day,Mrs.John Day,Jack Blair, Will Rice, Matt Jernigan, Tram Black, Misses Betty and Brenda Harris, HerbJernigan, Bill Manning, Stella Walker, and Riley Harris the following records: Dixonville Cemetery, Pollard Cemetery, Odom Cemetery, Mancile Cemetery, Foshee Cemetery, Moore Cemetery, Lindsey-Gay Cemetery, Henderson Cemetery, Dixon Cemetery, Hill Crest at Pollard; Strength-Hammac Cemetery, Douglasville Cemetery, Old Travis Cemetery, and Story of Three Notch Road and Henley Ferry;

From W. T. (Will) Rice, information on the Billy Jernigan family

Mrs.Lennis Shelton reports that she has a copy of Marriage Book A, Escambia County, copied from WPA records at the Archives and History Building. She states that there are many errors in these records. She would be glad to send us a copy of this record if some member of the Society would index it and make corrections, if possible, from cemetery and other records. Could we have a volunteer for this?