
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O.Box 276

Brewton, Alabama 36426

Newsletter,
April 11, 1974

Editor,
Mrs. Carolyn Pugh McLendon

NOTICE OF MEETING - This month's meeting will be on Tuesday, April 16, at 7:30 p.m. in the Student Center of Jefferson Davis Junior College. A program on "RAILROAD BILL" will be presented by your editor. Mr. Ed Leigh McMillan, son of Escambia County Sheriff E. S. McMillan who was killed by Railroad Bill, has graciously given permission for me to display his memorabilia regarding this criminal, the only person of the colored race from this area who ever reached such notoriety although there were many white criminals and gangs from this area: Frank Hare (who used Sanders Cave at Brooklyn as a hideout), the Salter Gang, Bob Hardy, Jesse and Frank James, Brown Bowen, John Wesley Hardin, Rube Burrows, the Murrell Gang, and scores of others. Although he had a compassion for the poor, he was a ruthless killer, never giving his victims a chance to cry out for mercy. The mere mention of his name caused men, women and children to cringe in fear, hence, it was no wonder that people rejoiced at news of his death. Come and bring a friend!

GARDEN PARTY - Plans for the annual Garden Party on Thursday, May 16, 6:00 p.m. at Mr. and Mrs. John David Finlay, Sr.'s historic homestead on Alcoa Hill are shaping up. This year only members and their spouses (or dates) may attend. There will be a small charge, probably \$1.00. The May newsletter will come out in time with complete details so that you can send in your reservation and check. Mrs. Harriett Miller, Chairman of the Garden Party Committee, will be calling on several members to help with the many details. We are becoming famous for our Garden Parties, but I don't mind!

ARTS & CRAFTS-POLITICAL RALLY DAY, April 27 - Be sure to contact me or call me, Carolyn McLendon at 867-4881 or 867-2382 to let me know what you can let us display to make our exhibit attractive.

SHOW AND TELL - I hope you are all working on your part for the "Show and Tell" Program to be held at our June meeting, you are IT.

APOLOGIES! The printing job for the March quarterly was of poor quality as I did not realize until too late that the stencils were faulty, however, no apology is necessary for the contents. Everyone seems to have enjoyed Henderson Potter's story.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS -

Mrs. Ernestine McGowin Nettles has contributed cemetery lists and histories for "The Sam McGowin Cemetery," "The McGowin Perry Cemetery," and "The McGowin Cemetery" for which we thank her for her many hours of effort.

Mr. and Mrs. L.E. Shelton and Reginald McFarland have presented to the Society a copy of their book just off the press, "HEADSTONES AND HERITAGES," for which we thank them.

NEW MEMBERS - 7 total now 254: Mark F. Powell, Flomaton; and Mrs. Ruby Burkett, J.F. Carter, Mrs. Ruby Horton, Mrs. Emmett Brooks, Mrs. J. Fred Mitchell, and James E. Hart, Jr, all of Brewton.

DUES for 1974 are now delinquent. If you did not receive the March quarterly you have not paid your dues of \$5.00. A reminder has been mailed by Dr. E.D. Rosemore, Treasurer, to those who have not paid. No more reminders will be sent, your name will be dropped.

BOOKS AVAILABLE -

"HEADSTONES AND HERITAGES", cemeteries of Escambia County, Alabama, by McFarland and Shelton. 106 cemeteries in Escambia County, Alabama recorded, many unmarked graves identified, additional genealogical information added, completely indexed, over 11,000 names listed, hardback 574 pages, an impressive book. Regular price \$17.50 plus \$1.00 postage and handling. Special price to members of Escambia County Historical Society \$15.00 plus \$1.00 postage and handling. Available from Mrs. L.E. Shelton, 2616 Poplar Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36107.

"THE FOLKS FROM PEA RIDGE" in Covington and Conecuh Counties, Ala. by Wyley Donald Ward, 3428 Darlene Circle, Huntsville, Ala. 35810. Sorry, I don't have the price for you. The people for the most part in this book lived on the "pea" ridge which followed the Conecuh River, the families of Ward, Feagin, Kendall, Padgett, Mock, Hassell, Hart, Godwin, Lunsford, Bagley, Brooks, Beck, Gafford, Thomasson and Knowles are featured, also has narratives on their early histories, community development, maps, Civil War data, and the Reconstruction Period.

"NIX FAMILY, BUTLER COUNTY, ALA." by Miss Fern Nix, Wayfarer Apt. 18, 732 Highway 90 N., Milton, Fla. 32570, large section also on the Crittenden family, the Van Pelt family, section on Robert E. Owen. A good many of these people lived in the "Oakly Streak" district of Butler County. Price \$10.50.

RAILROAD BILL

Many verses for folksongs were written about Railroad Bill, because he was believed to have had mysterious powers. He was upheld by the very poor as a hero, but as the verses say, he was a mighty bad man.

Railroad Bill cut a mighty big dash,
Killed McMillan like a lighntnin' flash.

Railroad Bill cut a mighty big dash,
He killed Bill Johnson with a lighntnin' flash.

Railroad Bill mighty bad man,
Kill McGruder by de light o' de moon.
Ole McMillan had a special train,
When he got there was a shower o' rain.

Ole Culpepper went up on Number Five,
Goin' bring him back, dead or alive!

Railroad Bill did not know
That Jim McMillan had a forty-four
And didn't it rain, rain, rain, rain, rain!

Railroad Bill was settin' at the tank
Waiting for the train they call Nancy Hank,
Railroad Bill.

Railroad Bill was settin' at the curve,
Waitin' for the passenger, but he didn't have the nerve,
Railroad Bill.

Railroad Bill was a desperate man,
Shot the lantern from the brakeman's hand,
Railroad Bill.

Railroad Bill had a .44 Colt,
Shot all the buttons off the brakeman's coat,
Railroad Bill.

Railroad Bill, so mean and so bad,
He took all the money the po' farmer had,
In the morning jes' fo' day.

His father sent him a letter,
His mother sent him a stamp,
Saying, "Come home, Railroad,
Or you'll have to tramp! In the morning jes' fo' day."

But Railroad Bill said to his darling wife
He was gwine to be a hobo if it cost him his life,
Ride on, Railroad Bill!

He went up on a mountain,
Tried to make a "jo,"
Heard a mighty rumblin' from a big .44,
Saying, "Come on down, Railroad Bill!"

Railroad Bill was standin' on a curve,
Grabbing at a freight train--Great Lawd, what a nerve!
In the morning jes' fo' day.

Railroad Bill, Railroad Bill,
Never worked and he never will,
And he'd ride, ride, ride.

Railroad Bill,
Sitting on a fence,
Trying to make a dollar out of 99 cents.

Oh, you can kill me a chicken,
Send me the wings,
Ya think I'm working but I ain't done a thing.

Ev'body tol' him he better turn back,
Bill was a-going down the railroad track;
Well, it's ride, ride, ride.