

THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 276
Brewton, Alabama 36426

NEWSLETTER,
OCTOBER 8, 1974

EDITOR,
Mrs. Carolyn Hugh McLendon

Annual Membership Dues -\$5.00

SHOW AND TELL, AGAIN! Because our June Show and Tell meeting was such a success, several of the members asked that we schedule another. Soooo for our meeting on October 15th at 7:30 p.m. at the Student Center of the Jefferson Davis Junior College, YOU are the program! Come one and all, bring some item, either one or more, of historic or personal interest, and share it with the group. Be sure to tell your friends and stress to everyone that our meetings are OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. Many people have the impression that they have to be members to attend our meetings.

Could the "big oar-like stick" that Rev. Caldwell brought to the last Show and Tell have been a pounding stick for dirty overalls while the boiled in the washpot? Does anyone know?

As a result of our recent appeals for help, we have now received a story of "The Birth and Death of a Village--Appleton" by Mrs. A. B. Richburg, age 75, and a brief item entitled "Recollections of Bradley Alabama, and Surrounding Communities" by Jesse F. Elliott. The Appleton story will appear in The Brewton Standard soon, the Bradley story in the December newsletter. I also hear rumblings that someone is working on the Roberts history. But we still need more, what about Steadham, Stewart, Wallace, Booneville, Kirkland, Mason, Dixonville?????

FALL PILGRIMAGE -BROOKLYN, ALABAMA

Plans for the Pilgrimage on Saturday, November 9th are shaping up to FANTABULOUS! In addition to seeing the church, now 153 years old, the cemetery, Sanders Cave, downtown Brooklyn, and Ed Leigh McMillan's Dozier Camp, we have been invited to stop by the old community of TEDDY, ALABAMA, as guests of Dr. and Mrs. A. J. McCreary to see the Reuben Hart home built by Reuben Hart 1867 shortly after coming home from the Civil War and taking as his bride, Miss Sarah Jane McGowin; also an old dairy, smoke house, a li rock chimney and a lane of pecan trees planted in 1892. Plans are to leave Brewton from the courthouse parking lot, escorted by a member the Escambia County Sheriff's Department, at 1:00 p.m., arriving at (on the road between McGowin's ~~Dwelling~~ and Brooklyn) about 1:30 or 1:45 after a short stay at Teddy we will proceed to the Brooklyn Baptist Church with its adjoining cemetery. From the church Ed Leigh McMillan will lead the group wanting to see Sanders Cave to the cave, the balance of the group will proceed through downtown Brooklyn and on to Dozier Camp, to be joined by the group from the cave, then to enjoy a picnic there. Soft drinks and coffee will be furnished, but each person will be expected to bring his own food or "sack lunch." Several ladies offered to make cakes to be enjoyed by the group "til the last slice is gone." OUR HATS ARE OFF to Mrs. Dumas May Jennings and Mr. and Thomas McMillan for all their efforts in planning and preparing the outing for us. With Sanders Cave as an attraction for the young people and plenty of country soil to stretch their legs on, this should be another Red Letter Day for the Society, attended and enjoyed by people of all ages!

Some history of Brooklyn is contained in this newsletter, more will follow in the November newsletter, and more will be given as "hand c information at Dozier Camp.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BROOKLYN, ALABAMA

By Ed Leigh McMillan

1949

The territory comprising the community of Brooklyn has been under the governments of Spain, France, England, the United States, and the Confederate States of America; it has been a part of the States of Florida, Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama; it has been in the Counties of Washington, in the State of Mississippi, and Washington, Monroe and Conecuh--and partly in Escambia--in the State of Alabama.

While the whites had theretofore established roads and traveled through the Brooklyn territory, this section was under the control and domination of the Indians until around 1818, when they were driven out and the white people began to populate the area. However, prior to this time and around the year 1806, a white man, Joseph T. Hara--a robber and highwayman--occupied as a hide-out Turk or Sanders Cave, near Brooklyn. His practice was to rob travelers and traders passing through the territory but never within a distance of twenty-five or thirty miles from his hide-out.

The earliest record of any settlement in the Brooklyn community was a settlement in the forks of the Ard and Bottle Creeks, established about 1818; at this time there were two trading places at this point--one operated by a Mr. McConnell, the other by George Peagan; and a blacksmith shop operated by one John Brantley. A school, also, was conducted here by a Mr. Graham from Georgia.

Brooklyn was named for the home town of one of its first settlers--Edwin Robinson, who came from Brooklyn, Connecticut, in 1821 and purchased from one Cameron, its first permanent white settler, the ferry operated by Cameron across Sepulga River; this place being selected by Robinson as a site for a settlement on account of its accessibility by river navigation to the Port of Pensacola, Florida. Robinson brought with him his father-in-law, Benjamin Hart of Bellville, Alabama, and later in the year brought his wife and son. He established a store or trading post and a boat landing on Sepulga River, and from that time until after the Civil War Brooklyn was the leading trading point in the area. The soil in the surrounding territory was rich and apparently well adapted to the growing of cotton, of which from 3,000 to 10,000 bales annually, with other products, were shipped from Brooklyn down the Sepulga River in keel boats to Pensacola, beginning with the year 1823--two years after the establishment of the boat landing. These boats carrying cotton and other products to Pensacola brought supplies back to Brooklyn. In the year 1845, a steam boat, "The Shaw," owned by the citizens of Brooklyn, being overloaded with cotton, sank at Steamboat Point, three and a half miles south of Brooklyn, and from then river navigation to and from Brooklyn declined, and after the railroad from Montgomery to the Tensaw River was completed in the late 1850's, traffic began to be diverted from the river to the railroad. Brooklyn's importance as a trading center waned, but beginning in 1869 the timber industry in the area brought prosperity again and the community thrived for several years and until all the virgin long-leaf near the streams had been cut. From then until 1911, when the T. R. Miller Mill Company of Brewton extended its logging railroad into the territory, Brooklyn saw bad times, but with the coming of the logging railroad came good times again and this lasted until 1926 when the logging operation by railroad through the territory was abandoned.

The soil in the Brooklyn community is well adapted to agriculture--especially is it adapted to cultivated pasturage and feed crops. Perhaps with the advent of electricity, telephones and paved roads into the section and the advancement of the cattle industry in the area, Brooklyn will come into its own and see better times than it has ever had in the past.

Brooklyn (continued)

In the early days of the white man's occupancy of this area game was plentiful. A letter from Julius Robinson to his father, Edwin Robinson, dated as late as December 30, 1840, states that two thousand deer annually were killed within fifteen miles of Brooklyn.

Mention has already been made of the school established in the settlement in the forks of Ard and Bottle Creeks about the year 1818. But the first schoolhouse in Conecuh County--built of logs and used also as a church--was at Brooklyn, and the first school conducted in this school building was taught by a Mr. Scruggs in the year 1821. In 1839 the Brooklyn Academy was established and at this institution, besides the elementary subjects, Advanced Mathematics, Greek, Latin and Rhetoric were included in the curriculum. Messrs. Loud and Brown, Mrs. Brown and Misses Earl and Dunkin composed the first faculty in this school; later Mr. Coulter was principal and a Mrs. McLean was music teacher; then came the Reverend Hanson Lee, who had charge of the Academy for two years. Among others who later had charge of the Academy were Dr. McIver, Mrs. J. A. Robinson, Mrs. Charles Robinson, a Mr. Cillier and a Miss Strange.

A partial list of the early settlers in the area of Brooklyn who acquired land from the government through the year 1836 is as follows:

William B. Adams, Erasmus Amos, William Ashley, Eli Alkinson, West Allen, Stephen Anderson, Usary Allen, George W. Bonds, Amos Burson, Francis Boykin, John Bell, John Brantley, James Catalin, Richard Catalin, William Campbell, Allen H. Curry, Levi Curry, George Dean, Wiley C. Downing, William Drummond, Ayelette Dean, Reuben Dean, William R. Eddins.

Arthur J. Faust, Allen Floyd, Magilby Finley, James H. Felts, Thomas Floyd, Henry Fountain, Aaron Peagan, John Gully, Benjamin Halstead, David S. Henderson, Elias Hodges, Thomas Hall, William Horton, Benjamin Hunt, Benjamin Hart, Stark Hunter, Pulaski Hodges, Churchill Jones, Sanford Jones, Asa Johnston, Caleb Johnston, Isa Johnson, Abram Jones, James Jones, Thomas Kendall, Baldy Kennedy, John D. Leigh, Thomas Floyd, William B. Long, William Lee, James Lippet, John Mason, Mertit Meeks, Jackson McCoy, Peter Mason, Jeremiah Matthews, Adam McCreary, Mack Manning, John M. Matthews, Joseph G. Murphy, David May, Littleberry Mock, Elijah McCraary, Jacob Mock, John Manning, Micajah Matthews, Abner McCreary, Benjamin Mitchell, Joseph Pruett, Peter Quarles, Samuel Quarles.

Edwin Robinson, Thomas Rives, William Rabun, George Stoneham, Addison Scarborough, Jesse Snowden, Charles W. Snowden, Daniel Slaughter, Thomas Solomond, John Smith, Robert Smilie, Timothy Tynes, Labon Turk, James Thompson, John Welch, Jackson Williams, James Wade, David Wood, William B. Whitaker, Needham Williamson, Joseph Walls, and James W. Wilson.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT _____ BY RIPLEY
(About 4 days before Mr. Ripley's death,
he presented this cartoon to Ed Leigh
McMillan.)

"THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A BROOKLYN!"

"Brooklyn ALA.	Brooklyn MISS.	Brooklyn TENN.
Brooklyn CONN.	Brooklyn MO.	Brooklyn WASH.
Brooklyn GA.	Brooklyn N.Y.	Brooklyn W.VA.
Brooklyn ILL.	Brooklyn OHIO	Brooklyn WISC.
Brooklyn IND.	Brooklyn PA.	Brooklyn Center MINN.
Brooklyn IOWA	*****	Brooklyn Heights OHIO
Brooklyn KY.		Brooklyn Junction ... W.VA."