

THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 276  
Brewton, Alabama 36426

NEWSLETTER,  
November 2, 1974

Editor,  
Mrs. Carolyn Pugh McLendon

Annual dues January-December-\$5.00

FALL PILGRIMAGE - BROOKLYN, ALABAMA - The Pilgrimage will take the place of the November meeting. On November 9th, a Saturday afternoon, at 1:00 p.m., bring your picnic supper, a flashlight if you plan to go inside the cave, and a folding chair to be used during the afternoon and for the picnic. Our schedule is as follows:

- 1:00 p.m. Leave Escambia County Courthouse parking lot, by Motorcade, with Sheriff's car leading the group, proceed out Highway 29, turning left just before reaching McGowin's Bridge (about 20 miles)
- 1:45 Arrive Teddy, Ala., to see the Reuben Hart home built in 1867, smoke house, dairy, lime rock chimney. Dr. and Mrs. Andrew J. McCreary will be our hosts here and plan to serve soft drinks for those who wish refreshments.
- 2:45 Arrive Brooklyn Baptist Church, and cemetery, now 153 years old. Guides will be furnished by the church to show us through the building and cemetery.
- 3:15 Group going to Sanders (or Turk's) Cave will leave first, lead by Ed Leigh McMillan II.
- 3:25 Balance of group will leave to proceed down the "downtown" section of Brooklyn, still very much as it was 50 years ago, and on to Dozier Camp. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. McMillan, Ed Leigh McMillan, and Ed Leigh McMillan II will be our hosts here. You are welcome to roam about the campgrounds and inside the camp as you please. The McMillans are furnishing soft drinks and coffee for our picnic meals.
- 4:30 Or later if the Sanders Cave group have not rejoined the group, we will enjoy our picnic suppers, individually or in groups, as you wish or have planned to do.

Departure- At your own discretion.

As a group we have been fortunate to have always been graciously received wherever we plan to go. Dr. Andrew McCreary has given to the Society some small booklets containing the History of the McCreary and Hart families and the community at Teddy, to be distributed on the Pilgrimage. Other mimeographed history of Brooklyn will be given as hand-out material as a gift of the Historical Society.

The public is being invited to join us for this occasion. There will be publicity in the Brewton Standard and the Evergreen Courant.

We regret that this trip will have to be CANCELLED IN CASE OF BAD WEATHER, or weather that is unsuitable for the excursion. If you are unsure, meet at the courthouse parking lot at 1:00 p.m. and there will be some one there to let you know.

We feel that this will be one of our best undertakings and hope to have a real good turn out.

Regarding the December Meeting - We will have this on the regular meeting night, the third Tuesday night, and will have a program as usual, with a Christmas Party afterwards. Each member is to bring a small historical memento suitable for a man or woman. They will be numbered and redistributed as surprise gifts. We request that the memento be under \$2.00 value.

MORE HISTORY OF BROOKLYN, ALABAMA

Civil War Heroine and The Sills Hotel - Amanda Floyd, (born August 29, 1840, died November 11, 1912) who married Alexander Travis Henderson at Brooklyn in the early days of the Civil War conflict, was notified shortly after her husband's death on December 17, 1863, that he had been killed in action near Claiborne, Alabama. She immediately set out for Claiborne with her infant daughter, Mary, with her trusted slaves by wagon drawn by two mules and taking with her several shovels. Upon arriving in Claiborne she inquired of the burial place of the soldiers who were killed in the battle. It is said that "she dug until she discovered his body," then brought his body back to Brooklyn for burial. Later Mrs. Amanda Floyd Henderson married William T. Sills and ran a boarding house at Brooklyn which was famous for its good meals. All the drummers and traveling men would endeavor to get to Brooklyn late in the afternoon so that they could have supper and breakfast at The Sills Hotel. After Mrs. Sills' death her daughter, Mrs. Tom (Mary) Liles operated the hotel, and after her Mrs. Bessie Cary, all of whom were always careful to maintain the reputation established by Mrs. Sills.

TURK'S CAVE, BETTER KNOWN AS SANDERS' CAVE - GANGSTER'S LAIR, CAVE IN CONECUH AREA CLAIMED TREASURE SITE, The Mobile Press Register, August 3, 1947 - Immense Cavern in Limestone Region Brief Ride from Mobile offers Air-Conditioned Exploring Thrill - "A new hobby is sweeping the nation and would-be followers of "spelunking" in this area can go right along with the popular trend if they care to make a three-hour journey in the family car. What may be Alabama's largest natural cave--it hasn't been completely explored so far as is known--is located in the southern part of Conecuh County.

"It may be too hot for you to fish during this summer's sweltering weather but Turk's Cave offers sport in an air-conditioned atmosphere. And for those who want the added attraction of treasure seeking, this limestone cave located near the little community of Brooklyn--no relation to the Dodgers' environs--has its lore of buried gold.

"The car which took us from Mobile was parked about a hundred yards from the cave's entrance. The gray gleam of limestone outcroppings was followed to the yawning entrance of Turk's Cave. Just three feet from the interior, nature's air conditioning cooled our party with 70-degree air.

"Light came from the entrance and from a hole in the ceiling 50 feet overhead illuminated the grotto. Large as a medium-sized auditorium, the grotto was festooned with stalactites reaching in places to the floor. At the opposite side of this large room was the low space leading into the former channel of an underground stream. After crouching through the narrow entrance, we found ourselves in the ancient stream's passageway.

"Ten feet wide and as high, the cave led deep into the ground for several hundred yards. With the aid of flashlights and torches, we picked our way along the winding passage whose floor was slippery with aged accumulations of bat guano. Then came an abrupt lowering of the ceiling and a gradual shrinking of the walls. Movement slowed as we proceeded with our backs bowed. Half a mile into the earth's bowels we walked.

"Then came the spot where the timid halt. We halted. The cave's passage slanted to an opening less than two feet high. Its width was sufficient to allow passage, but once the "spelunker" advanced, he must back out or continue. Several hundred feet of stomach-crawling, we are told brings the daring to a roomier region of the cave. This eventually leads to a forked passage and into the depths where little is known of what lies around the next bend.

"More than a century ago, Joseph Hare, and his band of highwaymen used Turk's Cave as their rendezvous. Using the entrance through which we passed last week, the robber band disappeared from sight and reputedly reappeared

at one of the cave's exits at the Sepulga River, four miles away. Legends throughout this area today have it that Hare and his men cached a fortune in gold in Turk's Cave a few days before they were massacred by Indians." (Editor's Note: Joseph T. Hare was hung in Baltimore, September 10, 1818)

"Scores of treasurer seekers have honeycombed the floor of the grotto looking for this ancient loot without success. "It's deep inside," insists one of Brooklyn's residents when he reported that no one has yet located the buried gold.

"So, the next time you feel adventure's call must be answered, follow the winding cavern that is Turk's into the Stygian darkness and advance along the route used by Hare to treasure trove."

- The Mobile Press Register,  
August 3, 1947.

BLACKSMITH SHOP IN THE "BEND" - According to the late Lena Nearor Faulk, a colored woman who resided at Brooklyn all her life, a blacksmith shop owned by Laurel "Lol" Rabun, a white man who was reputed to be one of the best blacksmiths and mechanics in that part of the country was located near the forks of the Sepulga River and Bottle Creek in the "Bend." Henry Cathright, a colored man, was Mr. Rabun's assistant.

BROOKLYN HISTORY NOTES COLLECTED BY MRS. ANNIE CROOK WATERS - A paper published at Brooklyn in 1886 was called "The Plantation News." Another newspaper named "The Brooklyn Eagle" was being published at Brooklyn in 1888.

In 1886, \$12,000 was appropriated for cleaning out Conecuh River for increasing boat traffic.

January, 1913, surveyors arrived in Brooklyn to survey the Conecuh River for locks. The plans for increased river traffic included passenger boats from River Falls to Brewton and Pensacola. At that time there was a bill in Congress for \$9,000 to improve the Conecuh and Escambia rivers.

In March of 1897 a steamboat was being built at Brooklyn to be used on the Sepulga and Conecuh Rivers as Brooklyn controlled about 1,000 bales of cotton a year and was in need of a line of barges.

In 1896, Mr. Key Hodges, for many years a resident of the Brewton area taught at a school near Brooklyn named "Searcy."

Standard Gauge, March 5, 1891 - "This little village, is situated in the Southeast corner of Conecuh County, on the Sepulga River, and is one of the oldest towns in the county. There has been little improvement made since the war; now and then a dwelling; hence, most of them present quite a dilapidated appearance. Whether this is for want of energy or enterprise is not for me to say.

"There is a great deal of business done here, it being about half way between Evergreen and Andalusia. The people are forced to trade here, or go about twenty miles to either of the above mentioned places.

"There are now three (have been four) business houses, one millinery shop, livery stable, blacksmith shop, one church, and one academy. The most of these are actively engaged in their respective businesses.. ...

"We get a daily mail from Evergreen and Andalusia, Mr. W.N. Brawner has charge of the route, and prompt attention is given to it. We have a good school taught by Prof. J.E. Cheatham, a man who is awake to the cause of education, fully abreast with the times, and one of Conecuh's best instructors.

"Dr. Feagin is now and has been for five or six weeks confined to his room, but we learn that he is improving."