

July 20, 1977

ALABAMA



ESCAMBIA ECHOES

THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 276

BREWTON, ALABAMA 36426

Carolyn Pugh McLendon, Editor

Annual dues - \$6.00

NOTICE OF MEETING: July 26, 1977 - 7:30 p.m.

BREWTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Speaker: J. Vernon Brantley

Topic: Gallimaufry of people,  
places and events relating  
to Escambia and Conecuh  
Counties, Alabama.

Special Event: Presentation of  
Alabama Historical Comm.  
Awards of Merit

We are honored to have as our speaker for the July meeting J. Vernon Brantley who has recently moved back to his homeplace at Brantley Switch (Route E, Repton) Conecuh County, Alabama, after his retirement as Systems Accountant with the United States Department of Labor in Washington, D.C. where he served for 29 years. In showing his interest in historical preservation for his home county Mr. Brantley has reprinted B.F. Riley's 1881 "History of Conecuh County, Alabama" and is presently in its third edition. He has placed these reprints for sale at a price that will just narrowly cover his costs-\$6.00. Mr. Brantley has done considerable research for his presentation of "Gallimaufry of People, Places and Events relating to Escambia and Conecuh Counties, Alabama," for our meeting and should be enjoyable as well as informative.

PRESENTATION OF ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION 1977 AWARDS OF MERIT -  
Hon. Martha Kirkland, Judge of Probate of Escambia County, Alabama, will present 1977 Awards of Merit from the Alabama Historical Commission, W. Warner Floyd, Executive Director, to young Robbie Kirkland Maddox of the Ridge Road community, who has built replicas of several Civil War ships and will have them on display at our meeting, and to The Escambia County Historical Society for its efforts in preserving the history of this area.

FROM AMONG US -

THOMAS EDWARD McMILLAN, June 27, 1977

W. EMMETT BROOKS, July 15, 1977

Both Charter Members and Trustees of this Society.

Tribute is being made to Thomas Edward McMillan in this newsletter. A tribute for W. Emmett Brooks will be made in the August newsletter. We mourn the loss of these fine citizens to whom we can no more look for advice and help.

MUSEUM FUND PROJECT: Present balance \$19,823.61, with additional firm commitments for \$1,100.00. Donations and Memorials received since the June newsletter are as follows:

REGULAR DONATIONS: Keego Clay Products, Brewton

MEMORIALS:

THOMAS E. McMILLAN

By: Mrs. Emily W. Finlay  
Mr. and Mrs. Bob Finlay  
Dr. and Mrs. Robert R. Smith  
Mrs. David M. Cochran, Tuscaloosa  
Mrs. LeRoy Neth, Tuscaloosa  
Mrs. Charles Davis, Jr., Tuscaloosa  
Louisiana Land & Exploration Co.,  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
Miss Marjorie Davison  
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Mrs. S.E. Gifford, Jr., Pensacola  
Miss Mabel Byrd, Pensacola  
Col. and Mrs. J. Fred Mitchell  
Mr. and Mrs. John G. Phillips, New Orleans  
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Mrs. V.G. Phillips, Tallahassee  
Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Ellis  
Mrs. Agnes J. Watson  
Mr. and Mrs. Gid Boykin, Knoxville, Tenn.  
Miss Rita Jane Boykin  
Miss Lula Pearl Neal

JOHN DAVID FINLAY

By: Mr. and Mrs. W.W. Ruhlen

AARON LAZARUS

By: Dr. and Mrs. Robert R. Smith

LEE ARMSTRONG

By: Mrs. Lottie M. Armstrong

B.F. STOKES, JR.

By: Dr. and Mrs. Robert R. Smith  
Mrs. Lottie M. Armstrong  
Mr. and Mrs. Woodfin Patterson

NOAH EVERETTE ELLIOTT

By: Mrs. Lennis E. Shelton, Montgomery

CLARENCE KOON

By: Claude McCall Post #79, American Legion

MRS. ELOISE HASSELL

By: Claude McCall Post #79, American Legion

MRS. ELIZABETH FRANKLIN

By: Claude McCall Post #79, American Legion

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A TRIBUTE - THOMAS E. McMILLAN  
Historian, Preservationist, Benefactor

Most everyone who knew Mr. Thomas E. McMillan intimately knew him as a very vivacious person, so full of life that the news of his death was met with shock and disbelief. He lived life to its fullest. He loved people and was loved by many. His untimely passing took one we will sorely miss and will always remember for his interest and generosity in all of this Society's endeavors. He served on the committee

to draw up the by-laws of this Society, and although he disapproved of our "Sowell House Project" paid the cost to move the house to the college campus and met with state restoration experts on several occasions regarding the restoration of the house. When our first garden party was held at The Leigh Place in 1973 Mr. McMillan was most generous in furnishing smoked turkey, several tubs of boiled shrimp and several kegs of draft beer in addition to the expense of putting up an outdoor shelter for the occasion. In 1975 he opened his home and The Leigh Place for the Alabama Historical Association Pilgrimage to Brewton. Then in June 1976 he and Mrs. McMillan hosted our Bi-centennial Martha and George Washington Party. Two of our fall Pilgrimages have been to historic Jay Villa Plantation in Conecuh County. The McMillan's have always been genial hosts and happy to have our group as their guests. Mr. McMillan received a 1976 Award of Merit from the Alabama Historical Commission and for two years was nominated by this Society for Alabama Historical Commission Distinguished Service Award but, much to our regret did not receive the award. The following is a citation prepared December 1, 1975 in connection with the 1976 Award of Merit:

"Thomas Edward McMillan has had an interest in history almost from the time of his birth when his diaper was pinned with his father's jeweled DKE pin and a gold coin was placed in his hand by a close relative, although he has not been content with hearing and reading about things past; he has wanted to "go and see" and felt disappointment on being told that there was nothing left, that all evidence had been destroyed.

"Thomas E. McMillan was born July 10, 1912, into a family whose roots are firmly embedded in Escambia County, Alabama soil. His mother, Iva Lee Miller McMillan, was daughter of T.R. Miller founder of the T.R. Miller Mill Company and for whom the local T.R. Miller High School was named, and his father, Ed Leigh McMillan, was son of Sheriff E.S. McMillan who was killed in the line of duty by the notorious outlaw, Railroad Bill. His wife, the former Elvira Minge Cochrane of Tuscaloosa, has shared his interest in historical preservation.

"When Mr. and Mrs. Thomas McMillan built their present home they attempted to build it around the old Blacksher home that stood on the site, but were confronted with so many building problems that they had to remove the old home.

"As a young man in the late 1930s he seized the opportunity to acquire several adjoining plantations near old Sparta in Conecuh County, all of which were rich in the annals of Conecuh County history --the Warren Plantation where Hinchie Warren, the first white man to cross Murder Creek made his home, where William Barret Travis of Alamo fame lived in his boyhood, and where in 1861 the Conecuh County Volunteers assembled; the Rube Millsap Plantation where Rev. Andrew Jay, one of the first sawmill operators and one of the first large planters of the area held the original land grant; also the Walter Lee, Lawrence, Crosby and Yarborough Plantations were acquired, making up an area of 6,000 acres. The old Warren plantation house and barn and Jay Villa post office building have been preserved for posterity by Thomas E. McMillan.

"After the death of his great aunt, Mrs. John D. Leigh, in 1967, her home which was formerly Brewton's first courthouse building,

was offered for sale and Mr. McMillan who had long admired its beautiful architecture and history, became the purchaser, naming it The Leigh Place because of his Leigh family connections. Mr. McMillan's pride in the history of the building is evidence by the great care he took in restoring the building to a place of beauty and importance. He always gives a warm welcome to visitors to The Leigh Place, as well as graciously hosting the Escambia County Historical Society's 1973 Garden Party at The Leigh Place, and opening it for the 1975 Pilgrimage to Brewton of the Alabama Historical Association where the reception for the visitors was also held. Mr. McMillan's great-grandfather, Norvelle R. Leigh, former Confederate Captain and Probate Judge of Escambia County, Alabama, and his grandfather, E.S. McMillan, former Sheriff of Escambia County, Alabama, both had offices in The Leigh Place during its "courthouse period."

"Mr. McMillan is a charter member and Trustee of The Escambia County Historical Society, and has distinguished himself in many fields of endeavor, being simultaneously director of T.R. Miller Mill Company and First National Bank of Brewton, and Neal Land & Timber Company of Blountstown, Florida, owner of McMillan Mill Company, partner of AlaFlora Forest Products, President of Southern Title & Abstract Company. Since graduating from the University of Alabama law school he has associated himself with his father in the practice of law and served as Secretary and General Counsel of the T.R. Miller Mill Company since 1950. He has been active in the Gulf Coast Council, Boy Scouts of America for many years, serving as a Vice President, and receiving the coveted "beaver" award for his contributions to the field of scouting. Through his cattle operations at Jay Villa Plantation he has served as Vice President and Director for Alabama Polled Hereford Association, director of Southeastern Polled Hereford Association, and is a member of the National, State and county Cattlemen's Associations.

"Mr. McMillan's efforts in the field of historical preservation are outstanding and are greatly appreciated by the people of this area, as well as by The Escambia County Historical Society.

"Both Jay Villa Plantation and The Leigh Place have been listed on the Bi-Centennial Trail."

"Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Pugh McLendon,

"For The Escambia County Historical  
Society."

Rocked in the cradle of the deep  
I lay me down in peace to sleep;  
Secure I rest upon the wave,  
For thou, O Lord! hast power to save.  
I know thou wilt not slight my call,  
For thou dost mark the sparrow's fall;  
And calm and peaceful shall I sleep,  
Rocked in the cradle of the deep. . .

Emma Hart Willard, 1787-1870