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ESCAMBIA ECHOES

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The Escambia County Historical Society

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Editor/Secretary - Carolyn Pugh McLendon

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NOTICE OF MEETING - Tuesday, July 24, 1979, at 7:00 p.m.

Please note change of time to 7:00 p.m.

Place: Thomas E. McMillan Museum in Fine Arts  
Building on campus of Jefferson Davis  
State Junior College, Brewton, Al.

Speaker: Mrs. J.F. (Sybil) Mitchell, Jr.

Topic: History of the Brewton Civic League

Mrs. Sybil Mitchell, one of the Brewton Civic League's most enthusiastic members, will give a program on the interesting projects and history of the Civic League. The Civic League is one of Brewton's oldest organizations and has done many outstanding things to benefit the community it serves. Annually it awards nursing scholarships to students whom they select as being most worthy of assistance. We have all in one way or another taken part in some of their fund-raising activities over the past few years--The Follies, The Bi-Centennial Fashion Show, The Taster's Fair, to name a few. Mrs. Joe Larkin is the oldest member of this organization. Come and bring a friend. Visitors are always welcom.

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NEW MEMBERS: Mrs. Rochelle T. Farris, 105 Shell Field Road,  
Enterprise, Al. 36330  
Mr. Clinton P. King, Certified Genealogical Record Researcher,  
4075 Moffat Road, Mobile, Al. 36618.

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MEMORIALS PAID FOR THE MUSEUM FUND:

OSCAR M. GORDON

By: Mrs. Bessie Luttrell

PAULL F. JERNIGAN

By: Mrs. Bessie Luttrell

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DEATH OF BARNES F. PARKER - One of our faithful members until his health failed him, passed away on May 14, 1979 at the age of 70. Mr. Parker had lived in this area all his life and was the son of Allen Parker and Nancy McGowin Parker. Mr. Parker was at Pearl Harbor at the outbreak of the war and retired from the United States Navy. He is sadly missed by his many friends, the members of this Society and his widow, Mrs. Edna K. Parker of Brewton. Mr. Parker had taken a keen interest in the establishment of the museum, but was in Thomas Hospital at Fairhope on the day it was dedicated.



MUSEUM NEWS -

A Burglar Alarm System has been installed at the museum, and according to college officials, even a mouse could set it off. Expansion plans are underway to give a larger study and research area and more room for reference materials. John T. Powell, Curator, reports that some good sturdy bookshelves are badly needed for the research area. If you have or know of any that are available, please contact the Curator at 867-4832, Extension 69.

Items recently contributed to the museum are as follows:

Miss Rita Jane Boykin - collection of personal household and pharmaceutical materials, many of which came from E.C. Boykin Drug Company, formerly of Brewton.

Frank B. Carter - collection of prehistoric Indian artifacts found in Brewton area and collection of documents including letters and journals from Mexican and Civil War dating 1830 to 1860's.

Brett McWilliams of Mobile, small group of materials recovered recently in this area, Jacksonian period.

Earl M. McGowin of Chapman and Nicholas S. McGowin of Mobile - Book entitled "James Greeley McGowin, South Alabama Lumberman--The recollections of his family."

Carolyn P. McLendon - Two DeKalb County histories, also, Word From Camp Pollard, C.S.A. by Wm. Davidson.

These items are very much appreciated. We need more reference books, family genealogies, area memorabilia, artifacts, uniforms, wedding gowns, etc. Scrap around your house and see what you can come up with to make this museum a finer institution.

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12TH ANNUAL PRESERVATION CONFERENCE, ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION - will be held in Tuscaloosa, July 27-28, headquarters at The Stafford Inn, 2209 Ninth Street. Registration begins at 9:00a.m. on Friday, General Session at 9:30, 11:00 Barbeque lunch on University of Alabama quadrangle with tour of ante-bellum campus buildings to follow: The President's Mansion, Gorgas Home, Woods Hall and others; 2:00 to 4:00 concurrent workshops on folklore, archaeology, Period Kitchens, Bartram Trail, and How and Why to Use an Architect. Board of Advisors will meet at 4:00. At 6:00 buses will be boarded for North River Yacht Club and a tour of the North River restorations, at 7:00 a reception and dinner to follow at the Yacht Club. This Yacht Club alone is worth the trip to see--many fine works of art and the entire building glitters with beveled glass. Saturday, breakfast at 8:00 a.m. and registration begins at 9:00 followed by the General Session with a speaker, Commission Report, and Distinguished Service Awards presentation. At 11:00 lunch and a tour of downtown Tuscaloosa landmark homes and a tavern. At 2:00 concurrent workshops on Landscaping, Tax breaks for Preservation, and the Old Home Do-It-Yourselfer; 3:15 meeting of Live-in-a-Landmark Council, at 6:00 a reception at University Club and dinner. Registration for 2 days is \$30.00, \$3.50 for the breakfast, and \$5.00 for the Saturday reception and dinner. Payment should be sent to Marie S. Ball, Tuscaloosa County Historical Preservation Authority, P.O. Box 1776, Tuscaloosa, Al. 35403, phone 725-2575, check payable to "TCHPA-Preservation Conference."



MEMORANDUM REGARDING THE MCGOWIN, BLOW & HART  
LUMBER COMPANY, AND RELATED FAMILIES

March 15, 1979

By: Earl M. McGowin, Chapman, Al.

On a drive with Jack McGowin today, he showed me the site of the sawmill operated by my grandfather (Alex McGowin) and two of his brothers-in-law, Elbert J. Blow and Reuben Sylvester Hart. The mill was known as McGowin, Blow & Hart Lumber Company and was located less than half a mile from the Samuel Lewis McGowin homeplace. It was operated during the 1880's and 1890's and was sold around 1900 to Joe and Frank Douglas of Brewton. It must have continued several years as Mason Douglas was born there in 1905. The mill site and surrounding area today are owned by John Douglas of Brewton.

Jack said our Uncle Alex McGowin had tried to get the sons of the original operators - Jack McGowin, Dennis Hart and Elbert Blow, Jr. - to take over the mill but since the older people thought most of the timber had been cut, they would not buy it.

They obviously bought and cut timber from the surrounding area and Jack said they owned in fee about 4,000 acres at the time the property was sold. Jack remembers the turpentine rights on his father's place (the old Samuel Lewis McGowin place) being sold for \$30,000.00 on a five-year lease and after the lease was up, renewed for an additional \$15,000.00.

The mill was located on Smith Creek and a pond large enough to hold some 1,500 round logs was created nearby. A timber ditch was dug by hand from the mill site to a river cut-off, known as McGowin Lake, about a mile away, and as water was released from the mill pond, square timbers were floated through the ditch to the lake, where they were assembled into rafts and when the river was high, they were floated to Pensacola and to market.

Jack said Grandpa looked after the store and the books, while Mr. Hart ran the mill and Mr. Blow did the logging. The store was located about half a mile from the mill and the area in between served as lots for oxen and storage for the logging equipment. No trace of the mill remains today but parts of the "timber ditch" can still be seen.

I had picked up Jack in Andalusia and we met Mason and Susan at McGowin Cemetery near the old homeplace and only a short distance from McGowin Bridge across the Conecuh River.

The cemetery is in fair shape but Jack has recently cleared title to the area and he and others, including the McCreary brother, Caroline Blow, Miles Hart, and Barnes Parker have all contributed to a fund to renovate the area properly. Floyd and I are making a contribution

The cemetery was right back of the original Samuel Lewis McGowin homesite, which Uncle Jack took over. The house was maintained until it burned around 1935 and the only thing left is an old Myers pump, which still stands where the back porch was. Jack says the property contained about 1,500 acres at the time of his father's death in 1925. It was here that James McGowin walked home from the Confederate Army and one of the old slaves said, "Lord, I think I see the ghost but it could be Mr. James."

Later we drove across the river to Uncle Sam's old place - only about three miles on an airline from the cemetery. Jack said that place contained about 3,000 acres during Uncle Sam's lifetime and I remember the large two story house that stood there. The home is gone but there remains a concrete water tank which stood about three feet above the back porch. Water was pumped to it by a ram from a spring below the house. The cemetery where Uncle Sam and



various members of his family are buried remains, but not in too good repair. I understand the estate still owns some 100 acres and a grandson, Sam Carmack, owns some 40 acres covering the homesite and cemetery, and they are hopeful of getting the area cleared.

Recrossing the river at McGowin's Bridge, we turned north at Buddy McGowin's store toward Brooklyn, passing along the way the site of the small school house which Jack attended as a boy and the old home sites of the Harts and McCrearys.

Leaving Brooklyn, we drove to Grandpa's old homesite about four miles from McGowin Cemetery. Nothing remains except some honeysuckle vines where Jack said the porch stood. He also said the graves of Bruce and Everett McGowin were nearby but we did not try to locate them. Jack is going to try to find them soon.

I remember so well as a boy going with Papa to Brewton on No. 5 and after lunch at Aunt Emma's, Papa would rent a pair of horses and a buggy from a local livery stable for the sixteen mile drive to Grandpa's house. It would take over two hours and we would count every mile post and scream with delight when we reached the clear stream near the house. There was a blacksmith shop on the left. The bellows from it are preserved today near the Larson barn. I remember sleeping on a pallet on the floor when we visited there.

We drove on to Brewton and had lunch at Willie's Restaurant, owned by Bob McMillan, located where Mason Drug Store stood for years.

Driving home with Jack through Dixie, we visited the project that Solon Dixon is creating for the Auburn University Forestry School. He has made a gift of 4,000 acres of land and \$500,000.00 in cash with which to build dormitories, laboratories, conference rooms and all the facilities for a summer camp. The Dean of the Extension Service was there with Solon and he told us they expected to be able to accommodate something over one hundred forestry students for several weeks at a time when it is finished. Solon is the grandson of James McGowin who is mentioned earlier in these notes.

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### I HAVE KNOWN GREEN MOUNTAIN MEADOWS

John C. Frohlicher

Yes, I have known green mountain meadows,  
And swamps where blackbirds call,  
And pools where stones and water glisten  
In the birhgt hot rays of noontime sun;  
And I have travelled newer, longer trails,  
Feeling the tug of packstraps on my back,  
Hearing the soft slow tread of mountain men--  
(My ancestors who knew the Oberland)  
Re-echoed on Montana's scarce-known hills.  
And I have camped at night by ice-walled lakes  
Above the clouds....

I wonder by the pavements hurt my feet.

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PROGRESS IS THE LAW OF LIFE, MAN IS NOT MAN AS YET.

--Paracelsus V, Robert Browning