

ESCAMBIA ECHOES

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BREWTON, ALABAMA

APRIL, 1981

NOTICE OF MEETING

The monthly meeting of the Escambia County Historical Society will be held at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, April 28, in the Thomas E. McMillan Museum on the campus of Jefferson Davis State Junior College in Brewton, Alabama.

This month's program will be entitled, "A Beginner's Guide to Genealogical Research" by Mr. Edward Chase Earle, Jr. Mr. Earle is a native of Escambia County and presently resides in Reedville, Virginia. An accomplished historian and genealogist, Mr. Earle has done an immense amount of research pertaining to family and regional historical interpretation. The program which he plans to present will be designed to impart information about the methods and means of conducting genealogy for the novice and experienced student alike.

PILGRIMAGE?

As many of you may have heard on television, May 3-10 will mark the dates of Pensacola's bicentennial Galvez Celebration, commemorating the capture of that city by Spain from England in 1781. ECHS members are encouraged to think about whether you would like to participate in a pilgrimage to Pensacola on Saturday, May 9 to share in the festivities. If the Society wishes to go on such a venture in sufficient numbers, Jefferson Davis College is willing to provide the use of its activities bus. Since a specially licensed driver is required for this vehicle, the Society would only be requested to reimburse the driver for his trip to and from Florida that day. The bus has a capacity of approximately 50 persons. This matter will be more fully discussed at this month's meeting, and those of you who would like to go are encouraged to attend the meeting so that arrangements can be made.

MUSEUM NEWS

A silver filagree hinged card carrying case made by Nathaniel Mills ca. 1820 and belonging to the original Downing family has been donated to the museum collections by Edward Chase Earle, Jr. of Reedville, Virginia.

The museum's ongoing archaeological field project is nearing the completion of its field phase. Many important artifacts have been recovered from the military site studied, and the information gleaned as a result of the project will contribute significantly to our knowledge about the area's military and early settlement history. As the field season passes, laboratory work--preservation, identification, cataloguing, and interpreting recovered artifacts--will next be completed. The final results of this work, both in and out of the field, will be a final archaeological report for the State and Federal governments as well as many fine objects for exhibit in the museum. Many local citizens and students at the college have contributed generously of their time and efforts to this project; without their help, the success of the effort would have been seriously limited. The Museum and Jefferson Davis State Junior College wish to especially thank the following persons for outstanding assistance in the project: Mrs. John David Finlay; Mr. John David Finlay, Jr.; Mrs. Rosalie DeRieux; Mr. Yancey Odom; M. Keith Allen; Ian Haigler; Loretta Waggy; Donna O'Brian; Dr. David Gunn; J. Pete Davis; Lana Ward; Rus Drew; Brett McWilliams;

Museum News, cont.

Robert Hubbard; Glenn, Gail, and Lori Thrower; Martha Earle; Jack Warren; Davida M. Hastie; and Colleen Swanson. Thanks to you all!

MEMORIALS

GIVEN in loving memory of Bob Seale, by Mrs. A. L. Davis, Repton, Alabama; and

Given in loving memory of Mrs. Percy (Agnes Johnson) Watson, by Mrs. Frank Alex Luttrell.

The following books and documents were donated to the Historical Society collections by Mrs. Barry L. Emerich in memory of Worth P. Smith: *Alabama the Beautiful* (1980); *Alabama the Beautiful, 52 Weeks a Year*; *Living History in Alabama: Alabama Statehood, and Official Sesquicentennial Guide*; *Alabama State Emblems* (1963); *Alabama's Covered Bridges* (1975); *Historical Highway Markers in Alabama, Placed by the Alabama Historical Association* (1965); *Greek Revival Architecture in Alabama* (1968); *Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation, Newsletters, Oct. 1979 and June, 1980*; *Inauguration Program of Fob James, January 15, 1979*; *A New Beginning: 1979 Gubernatorial Inauguration*.

MRS. LILLIE ERWIN WIGGINS COKER

Mrs. Lillie Erwin Wiggins Coker was born on January 14, 1885 to John Gilmore and Florence Brewton Wiggins, Sr. in Tunnel Springs, Alabama.

At an early age, Lillie's family moved to Back Bay, Biloxi, Mississippi. There, Lillie loved living on the water, enjoying her "Tom Boy" days, fishing, boating, and generally enjoying the waterside country. Schooling was lacking, since the teachers taught only about three months out of the year; still, Lillie managed to complete the seventh grade. Her father died when she, the oldest of five children, was but thirteen years old.

Not long after this, the family moved to Brewton for better schools and general working conditions. Support of the family fell on Lillie's shoulders while she was still very young. She became an assistant to Miss Lutie Glaspie, a Brewton dressmaker. After a short time spent at this, she went to work in the Escambia County Courthouse for her uncle, Mr. Jack Holland, and Malcolm McLellan when they held the offices of Tax Assessor and Tax Collector. During this time, Lillie married George W. Coker in 1915 (Mr. Coker died in 1940).

During World War II, after thirty years of work in the county courthouse, Mrs. Coker worked as a telegraph operator in the Louisville and Nashville Railroad depot at night. This was considered at the time to be very valuable civilian service as a part of the nationally unified war effort.

Mrs. Coker was one of the first women to run for the office of Tax Collector. Defeated but undaunted, she ran twice more for the office in unsuccessful bids. She believed that "women have as good brains as men and should be allowed to use them". She also believed that women should be paid the same as men if they performed the tasks as well. Some years later, this independent and liberated lady encouraged Martha Kirkland to run for the office of Probate Judge.

Mrs. Coker was a very devout member of the First Methodist Church. She loved children and she believed in helping others, often following these convictions at her own expense. She was proud of the fact that the city in which she lived was named for her great uncle, Ed Brewton.

Lillie loved gardening; she maintained a garden until she broke her hip at the age of 86. She lived a full life in years and deeds; she died on February 7, 1961 at the age of 96 and was buried at Union Cemetery in Brewton, Alabama.

Survivors are her daughter, Mrs. Lily Coker Smith of Pensacola, Florida, and her stepson, Jennings Coker of Alco, Brewton, Alabama. Jennings was very young when he came to her; to him, she was his real mother.

WORTH SMITH

Escambia County lost one of its happiest, friendliest, and most respected retired citizens on March 1, 1961 at Brewton's D. W. McMillan Memorial Hospital.

Worth P. Smith was born in Escambia County, Kirkland area, on April 3, 1898 to Callie Ogletree Smith and Lewis R. Smith. His family moved to Escambia County from Tallassee, Tallapoosa County, Alabama, prior to Worth's birth. He attended the Escambia County Schools along with his brothers, Alton, Clarence, Elijah, and Emmett, and his sister Clyde Smith Milligan.

Worth married Doris Jernigan on June 10, 1922. They lived for a short time in Birmingham but returned to Brewton in 1926. Two sons, Lloyd Kenneth (June 22, 1924) and David Wayne (December 21, 1932) were born to this union.

Worth was employed with the United States Post Office for 42 years. He retired in 1962, and enjoyed 19 years of retirement. He was a member of the First Baptist Church. Smith was active in many city and county organizations; he was a charter member of the Escambia County Historical Society, organizer and first president of Chapter 1152 of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees, an active member of the Woodmen of the World, organizer of and instrumental in raising funds for the perpetual care of the old Pilgrim Rest Cemetery on Alco Drive, and he was an active volunteer for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program and devoted many hours helping other people. Smith was one of the leading domino players in the county. He and Doris made many trips across and through the United States and Canada. The couple united, they were avid and successful vegetable and flower gardeners. Their many friends will attest to the variety and excellence of their vegetables.

Mr. Worth P. Smith's funeral service was held at 2:00 PM on March 2, 1961 at Craver's Chapel. He was buried in Green Acres Memorial Park. Smith is survived by his wife, Doris Jernigan Smith of Brewton, his son, Lloyd Kenneth Smith of Atlanta, Georgia, his grandson, Kenneth Wayne Smith, of Atlanta, his brothers, Alton and Clarence Smith, and his sister, Clyde Smith Milligan, and many nieces and nephews.

IVA LEE MILLER

Iva Lee Miller was born on July 15, 1891 in Brewton, Alabama, the daughter of Alice Collins and Thomas R. Miller.

She had governesses to teach her until she was about 15 years of age, when she entered the public school system. The next year she went to Madam Lefebvres Select School for Girls in Baltimore, Maryland. This was a school to teach girls the cultural arts of being a lady. It was while she was attending this school that she went with a student group to Europe.

Iva Lee married Ed Leigh McMillan on April 20, 1911 in Brewton. One child was born to this union: Thomas Edward McMillan.

She was a very active member of the Universalist Church, contributing much time and financial aid to the Brewton Church, as well as to the National organization.

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Mrs. McMillan was very civic minded and interested in all school and community projects. She donated the lot on Belleville Avenue upon which the Brewton City Library now stands.

Iva Lee was a member of a number of clubs in Brewton, among them being the Civic League. While she belonged to this club they sponsored several flower shows in Brewton. She liked flowers and helped landscape a number of yards.

Mrs. McMillan was for many years intensely interested in the history of Brewton, Escambia County and the State of Alabama. She was especially interested in the history of the various families that settled in the area and of her own immediate family and she prepared extant genealogical records relating to these families.

In 1953, Iva Lee was chosen as one of "Alabama's Gracious Ladies" by the Birmingham News. She was also listed in the "List of Society", representing one of the society's select people of the United States and Europe.

Iva Lee Miller McMillan died on June 25, 1965.

There is a current balance of \$2,034.70 in the ECNS Memorial Fund. Mrs. John David Finlay, Memorials Chairperson, requests that the families of those being memorialized provide life histories of the memorialized loved ones (vitas) to Mrs. Finlay to be published in this newsletter. Again, we remind our readers that these will be compiled in the future to form a memorial book for the public. Suggestions for the compilation of memorial statements may be found in the January edition of the Echoes.

HISTORICAL MARKERS

The ECNS will soon be sponsoring the preparation and erection of Historical Markers in Escambia County designating locally and regionally significant historic sites, landmarks, and events. The cost of these markers will be partially borne through monies in the society's Memorial Fund, and the signs themselves will be placed at strategic locations for maximum viewing by visitors and members of the community. This is a most worthwhile activity, since there are many very significant sites in this immediate area that deserve recognition and, once recognized, that will contribute to the education and cultural appreciation of our fellow environs.

We welcome suggestions from the Society's general membership as well as from the general public regarding what sites to recognize, any data pertaining to those sites, and where such places are located.