

ESCAMBIA ECHOES

The Newsletter of the Escambia County Historical Society

August 2002 - Vol. 29, No. 8

Editor, Ranella Holley

The Next Meeting

Date: Tuesday, August 27, 2002; **Time:** 3:00 p.m.; **Location:** The Meeting Room in the **Thomas E. McMillan Museum** on the JDCC Campus; **Program:** Guest Speaker, Al Schotz; **Refreshments:** Willellen Elliott and Mary Catherine Luker.

Our Speaker for the August Meeting

Al Schotz is an ecologist/botanist for the **Alabama Natural Heritage Program** based in **Montgomery**. His interest in biology began when he worked on the family farm in **upstate New York** and found that he wanted to learn more about the farm's forest and fields. Al says that this early experience developed into a **fulfilling career** and a **life-long love of the outdoors**.

He has worked for the staff of the **New York Natural Heritage Program** as a botanist. He left **New York** to work in **Florida** and then came to **Alabama**. His present job takes him throughout the Southeast to conduct **surveys for rare plants and animals**. He states that the **Nature Conservancy** and **other agencies and organizations** for various aspects of **conservation** and **regional planning** use the information.

In his **program** for the **Historical Society**, he plans to touch on **how the Natural Heritage Program procures and documents data** on the state's **rare plants, animals, and natural communities**, and **why it procures and documents this data**. He will use a series of **slides** that feature some of what he calls "**Alabama's most cherished and treasured plants and animals**."

According to the Website (<http://www.natureserve.org/nhp/us/al/>) for the **Alabama Natural Heritage Program**, this program is part of **The Natural Heritage Network** and the **Nature Conservancy of Alabama**. It works to "produce an **inventory** and **develop a databank** of Alabama's **natural heritage resources**, **develop a Natural Heritage Plan for the state**, and to **identify the highest quality natural areas** to be purchased by concerned groups." The **Alabama Natural Heritage Program** was begun in **January of 1989** with the **computer-assisted ecological inventory** located on the campus of **Huntingdon College** in **Montgomery**.

Future Programs

- **The September Meeting** – a visit to **NDI (Natural Decorations, Inc.)**. The society has been invited to meet for a **brown bag lunch** and a **tour of the facility**.

NDI or Natural Decorations Inc. was founded in **1964** in **Evergreen, Alabama** to display the products of the founding company (the **Knud Nielsen Company**). All of these products were made from **natural elements**, dried flowers, natural pods, and preserved grass. In **1964**, the company **changed management and philosophy**. According to the "Company History and Philosophy," NDI's new goal was to "**provide the finest fabric botanical and floral reproductions** of exceptional quality and workmanship dedicated to utilizing only **those flowers and colors found in nature**." The new management was under the direction of **Carol Gordy**, now **Chairman and CEO of NDI**.

In **1999** the company moved to **Brewton, Alabama**. In **2001**, it expanded its facility in the **industrial park of Brewton** to one hundred thirty thousand square feet to provide for the **growing business**. The company **exports** its products **all over the world**, providing **floral and botanical reproductions** for display and sales in **catalog companies** and department stores such as **Neiman Marcus, Gumps and Nordstrums**.

NDI has been recognized for the excellence of its products and service. In **2001**, it was appointed by the **Royal National Rose Society in St. Albans, England** to replicate roses from the **Royal National Rose Collection**. Also, the company has won the home furnishings industries **ARTS Award** for excellence in product and service **five times** and will be inducted into the **ARTS Hall of Fame in January of 2003**.

The husband and wife team of **Carol Gordy**, NDI owner and CEO, and **Joe Gordy**, President and Director of Product Development, live in Brewton.

- **The October Meeting** – "**A Walk in Burnt Corn Creek Park**." The weather should be nice and the society can enjoy refreshments at the Creek side.

The July Meeting

President **Darryl Searcy** called the meeting to order and welcomed members and guests. After the **Pledge of Allegiance**, **Brooke Walker** read the minutes from the last meeting. The Treasurer's report showed that the **balance for July** was **\$3, 653.83** with **receipts of \$295.00** and **expenditures of \$145.40** for the printing and mailing of the Newsletter for June and July.

President Searcy asked for and received the society's approval for working with the city of Brewton in planning a ceremony to honor **Tamara Thurman**. At this ceremony to be held in **Burnt Corn Creek Park**, the city will **dedicate a plaque** in her honor, which will be placed in the **Park**. The **Society** can use the occasion to announce the **donation** of **Alma Hall's** book to the **Brewton Public Library** in memory of Tamara.

Lydia Grimes reported that a representative of a company called **University Graphics** is planning to publish what could be called a "**bird's eye**" view of **Brewton and East Brewton**, using figures, illustrations and other markers for **businesses** and **civic buildings** as well as **historic locations**. The **Historical Society** was asked to **recommend places that should be placed** on the map. Members at the meeting listed **places of historic interest** they felt should be marked.

Lynn Wixon introduced the speaker, **Gail Thrower**, Cultural Archives Director of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. **Gail**, a **former president of the Society**, gave an entertaining and informative program on **herbs and plants** which can be used as food and for home remedies. She passed around samples of the various plants explaining that she had learned about plants and herbs from her **mother and grandmother**.

Unfortunately, **Gail** is very ill at the present time. She is in the intensive care unit of **Sacred Heart Hospital** in Pensacola suffering from a **staff infection**. We hope for a speedy and complete recovery for her.

Doris Bruner and her daughter, **Amy Manzer**, served delicious refreshments.

Queries

Kathy Lyttle of **Craigville, Indiana** is trying to complete a family history. She is interested in information (**obituaries** if possible) on the following people:

- **J. T. McCall**, who died on **July 12, 1918**,
- **Annie McCall**, who died **October 26, 1950**,
- **G. Westly Blackmon**, who died **February 17, 1969**,
- **Ida Blackmon**, who died **December 21, 1979**,
- **Bart J. McCall**, who died **December 23, 1984**, and
- **Gladys Blackmon**, who died in October of 1935.

If you have information, her address is **Kathy Lyttle, 4671 East 400 North, Craigville, Indiana 46731**.

Robert Blount of **Plano, Texas** is interested in information on members of his family, some of whom are buried in the **Hollywood**

Cemetery, located off HWY 31 between Flomaton and Pollard. On a recent visit, he believes that he discovered the headstone of his **grandmother, Constance G. Blount** (he found a headstone labeled “**C. G. Blount**”). He also found the grave of an **infant “H. M. Blount,”** who he believes to be the first child of her **son, H. L. Blount,** who is buried at the **Flomaton Cemetery**. Robert Blount’s “other” **great-grandfather** is **John A. Thompson, 1845-1895,** who he believes is buried in the **Hollywood Cemetery** next to **C. G. Blount**. **Robert Blount** needs help in solving the puzzle of the **death/burial** of the **husband of Constance Blount** as well as the **wife of J. A. Thompson,**

Mr. Blount is also interested in information on the **Brooklyn Male and Female Academy** where **one of his ancestors** taught in the late **19th century**. He has found a **list of teachers and principles** for the school, but would like **more information on the school and its history**. **Mr. Blount** can be reached at the email address **<rwblount@aol.com>.**

New Web Address for Historical Society Web Page
<<http://www.jdcc.edu/echs/echs.htm>>.

Fall Semester Hours for the Alabama Room

The **JDCC Library and Alabama Room** will be **closed**

- **September 2** for **Labor Day**
- **November 11** for **Veteran’s Day**
- **November 25-29** for **Professional Development Days** and **Thanksgiving Holidays**
- **December 16-January 7** for **Christmas** and **New Year Holidays**.
- **The library will reopen on January 8, 2003.**
- **Contact the library to check on hours open by phone at 251-809-1584 or email <library@jdcc.edu>.**

Regular hours for the library and Alabama Room for the **Fall Semester** are **Mon-Thurs: 7:30 AM–8:30 PM; Friday: 7:30 AM– 2:00 PM.**

News from the Past

- The **Pine Belt News** for **March 6, 1894** had a comment on **Atmore** (called **Williams** at the time), “We haven’t a carriage or canning factory, but it is like a visitor remarked, ‘**Williams is getting more like New York every day.**’”
- From the same edition, there was a notice that “**Leonard McGowan** was in **DeFuniak**” (**DeFuniak Springs, Florida**), “attending the

Chautauqua" (the **Florida Chatauqua Assembly**, which ran from **1885 to 1920**). According to the Website for the **Chautauqua Assembly** held in Defuniak Springs today, the **Florida Chautauqua** "provided an **opportunity for education** through **classes and workshops, craft activities, lectures by prominent speakers** of the day, and a **chance for solitude** amidst life's busy days.

- The **Pine Best News** for **April 11, 1894** noted that the **county commissioners** were locating a site for the **erection** of a "substantial **iron bridge** across **Murder Creek** near town."
- From the same paper for **July 10, 1894**, the "**Personal and Pertinent**" column noted that the **farmers** were **laying by their crops**, **Stapleton** had received a **car of ice**, there were **fewer mosquitoes** than last summer, "**Handsome Robbie Proctor** spent the **4th** in **Brewton**," **George Trammell** was now **agent of the L. & N. at Williams (Atmore)**, and that **Jack Parker** "took in" the picnic and "speaking" at **Bradley Dam**.
- The "**Personal and Pertinent**" column for **July 31, 1894** announced that **Miss Willie McLendon** was conducting a **music class** at **Muscogee, Florida**, that **Tom Purvis** had contracted to **carry mail** from **Brewton** to **Mason**, "via **Roberts**, and that the **Sanford Lumber Company** at **Caryville** had received **six new steel boilers** and the **foundations** were being laid for them (which would furnish enough **steam** to **cut 1,000,000 feet of lumber per day**.)
- The same **July 31** issue reported the contents of a **shopping list** which had supposedly been picked up in the streets of **Brewton**: **Deck of cards – Poker chips, 3 whiskey bottles, 6 whiskey or wine glasses, 1 large bell, 1 cradle and bed clothing, 3 butcher knives, 1 large clothes basket, 2 shot guns loaded, 10 sure fire pistols loaded, and 1 feather duster.**

Books for Sale

A History of Escambia County

Mailed

\$55.00

Regular Price

\$50.00

Headstones and Heritage

\$40.00

\$35.00

Escambia Historical Society Cookbook

\$10.00

\$ 5.00

Get in Touch with Us

Address: Escambia County Historical Society, P. O. Box 276, Brewton, AL 36427; **Phone:** 251-809-1612; **Email:** Ranny1@earthlink.net

Membership: \$10.00. Clip the following form and send to Treasurer: Peggy Bracken, 602 Edgewood Drive, Brewton, AL 36426.

Membership Renewal/Application Form				
Name	First	Middle	Last	
Address	Street	City	State	Zip
Phone				
Email				