

ECHOES

The Newsletter of the Escambia County
Historical Society

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Editor, Ranella Holley



Old Fort Harrod in Kentucky.

The subject of our next meeting is “The Significance of Fort Crawford.” This picture gives an idea of what forts of the period of Fort Crawford would have looked like. An article by Lydia Grimes, which appears at the end of this newsletter, is an excellent introduction to Fort Crawford and its significance.

May 25, 2004

The Historical Society returns to the Thomas E. McMillan Museum on the JDCC campus for its next meeting on Tuesday, May 25 at 3:00 p. m. Join us to see the Alabama Room in its new setting and hear guest speaker Duane Quates, whose topic is “The Significance of Fort Crawford.”

The June Meeting

Tuesday, June 22

Representatives from the Alabama Historical Commission will discuss the process of submitting an application for listing a building on the Alabama Historic Register and/or the National Historic Register.

THE TRIP TO POLLARD

On arriving in Pollard, society members and guests visited the beautiful Methodist Church, where Sally Finlay entertained and informed us with reminiscences about Pollard’s past. Then we toured the beautifully restored Victorian house and enjoyed refreshments.

During our tour of the house, President Lynn Wixon presented Sally with a certificate of appreciation and a custom-framed picture of the house. Also, members of the Searcy family - Darryl Searcy, Quida Searcy-Grissett, and Ted Searcy and his lovely wife - presented a family heirloom, a beautiful bonnet, to the Society.



Society Members and Guests in front of the Restored Victorian Home



President Lynn Wixon presents Sally Finlay with a photograph of her Victorian House while Vice-President Ann Biggs-Williams waves her magic wand over the proceedings.

AN INVITATION

You are invited to a **Birthday Party**. **Paul Merritt's Mother, Julia Pape**, will be **ninety years old** next month. Paul is hosting a birthday party for her in Pensacola on **Saturday, June 5, from 2:00 – 5:00 p. m.** at the **Knights of Columbus Hall** on Lee Square, which is located on the top of Palafox Hill, the corner of Palafox and Gadsden Streets, Pensacola.

There will be ice cream and cake and a wonderful band. Paul says the hall is large, there will be room for all, **so please stop by if you possibly can.**

THE ALABAMA ROOM

The Alabama Room collection **has been moved to the Thomas E. McMillan Museum** on the JDCC campus.

The new hours for the Museum and the Alabama Room collection will be 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM on Tuesdays and Thursdays - other times by appointment.



Carol Madden, Museum Coordinator, pictured in the Museum.

FORT CRAWFORD

The following article on the history of Fort Crawford, which was originally printed in The Heritage of Escambia County, Alabama, is reprinted with permission of the author.

Fort Crawford By Lydia Grimes

Fort Crawford was once a vital part of what was to become Escambia County, Alabama. It was situated on a bluff above Murder Creek near the present day East Brewton Baptist Church.

General Andrew Jackson ordered, through General Edmund P. Gaines, the establishment of a fort to be located on the Escambia River in 1816. After much exploration, it was decided that the Conecuh River afforded the best navigable waters and the high bluff located on Murder

Creek would be the best place to build the fort. It would be high enough to be healthy in the long hot, summers and to use for observation. An earthen fort was first constructed, but plans were made to proceed with a better permanent fort. This fort was constructed as a square with two block houses in operation by the middle of 1817.

Supplies were brought into Pensacola and shipped up the river to Fort Crawford by small barges. It is said that Thomas Mendenhal, who owned a small sawmill in the area, was responsible for cutting timber that was used to build the barges. It was soon decided that Fort Crawford would play a role in providing better roads for settlers and military to move into the area that, at that time, was still the Mississippi territory. Major David Twiggs of Georgia was given the job of laying out a road to reach from Fort Crawford to Brooklyn, to Montezuma (forerunner of Andalusia), to Wellbome (in what became Coffee County), to Newton (in what would become Dale County), to Abbeville (in what became Henry County), to Fort Gaines on the Chattahoochee River which divides Alabama and Georgia. Later maps would show that this road did indeed stretch across the state.

All through the year of 1817, there were rumors of Indian uprisings, leaving the citizens in fear. There were indeed several incidents of raids on some farms, causing some problems. In November of 1817, there was a battle between the “Red Sticks” and soldiers at Fort Scott, and the First Seminole War had begun. Re-enforcements were sent to the southern forts. It was after this time that the U. S. 8th Infantry was ordered to supply troops to Fort Crawford. This was done in the early months of 1818. With the 8th Infantry came Major White Youngs, and he would figure greatly in the history of the fort. It was during one of the many Indian uprisings that Michael Baggett (7 April 1818), was born at Fort Crawford.

General Jackson was not too pleased with the government (Spanish) at Pensacola and sent the warning that any interference with supplies for Fort Crawford would be considered hostile. Indians were in the habit of “hitting and running” in their attacks on the settlers. They would attack and then run the short distance to Florida, as Florida was not a part of the U. S. Supplies were allowed to come from Pensacola into this area, but not done cheerfully. A group of Indians sheltered in Pensacola were given the opportunity to give themselves up to Major Youngs, and an expedition was sent forth to protect the Indians from a group of hostile Choctaws. There was a confrontation between Major Youngs and the hostiles resulting in the deaths of several of the Indians. This small battle gave Major Youngs the reputation of being a defender of the local settlers and he became a hero to many.

After numerous hostile actions, General Jackson took Pensacola on May 24, 1818, and negotiations were in progress with Spain to purchase Florida by the United States. It was thought that there was no longer any need for a garrison located at Fort Crawford, and it was closed. Major Youngs was arrested for conduct unbecoming an officer, and on March 1819 faced a court martial. He was found guilty of some of the charges. He wrote his letter of resignation stating that he was going to pursue a career in business. Thus the end of fort Crawford and the military career of one of its heroes came about the same time.

The land that Fort Crawford was located on later belonged to the Brewton family and the family of W. W. Weaver, Sr. The old fort logs are said to have been used in various buildings and could be seen for many years.

A word could be said here about the naming of Fort Crawford. Some believe that it was named after William H. Crawford, who was Secretary of War and then Secretary of the Treasury. Judge Norville R. Leigh left traditional evidence that it was named for a Lt. Crawford, who, while being trapped by high water, learned that Indians were going to attack. He ordered his men to construct dummies of themselves to lay on the ground. They then secreted themselves in the woods to await the attack. When it came, Lt. Crawford and his men were ready and were able to defend themselves. A descendant of Benjamin Jernigan related that same story and added that Lt. Crawford was killed in the battle and his men were so angered that they threw the bodies of the Indians into the swollen stream. One other source, the National Archives in Washington, D. C, states that the fort was named for 2nd Lieut. Joel Crawford, a son of Captain Charles Crawford, an officer in the 8th Infantry.

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;

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

Membership Renewal/Application Form				
Name	<hr/>			
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