

ECHOES

The Newsletter of the Escambia County
Historical Society

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Editor, Ranelia Holley



Fig. 1. Architect's drawing of the Conecuh County Courthouse as it would look with a new addition on the present historic courthouse, preserved and restored on the right. These plans are the results of the efforts of the Alabama Preservation Alliance, the Alabama Historical Commission, and local residents of Conecuh County to reach a compromise which will allow the preservation of the historic county courthouse in Evergreen and yet provide the county with a new building with adequate facilities for county business. Drawing courtesy of Sherry Johnston.



Fig. 2. Another view of the proposed "new" Conecuh County Courthouse, combining the old and the new. This drawing shows the entrance and passageway which would connect the historic building and the new edition. Drawing Courtesy of Sherry Johnston.

THE OCTOBER MEETING

Tuesday, October 26, 2004 at 3:00 p.m., in the Thomas E. McMillan Museum on the JDCC Campus. The speaker will be Alan Brown, English Instructor and Writing Center Director at the University of West Alabama, and member of the Alabama Humanities Foundation Speakers Bureau. He will present a program entitled “Hoodoo, Haints, and Horror: Alabama’s Historically Haunted Places.”

Ann Biggs-Williams has furnished this information on Alabama’s history of Haunted Places:

Alabama’s reputation as a repository of haunted places was firmly established in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s through the work of Kathryn Tucker Windham. Brown’s presentation not only updates the stories featured in Windham’s books, it also shows that houses are not the only haunted sites in Alabama. The places featured in “Hoodoo, Haints, and Horror” include cemeteries, Bed & Breakfasts, highways, college campuses, schools, bridges, libraries, factories, and government buildings. Many of the stories, such as the haunting of radio station WZPQ in Jasper and Lucas Tavern in Montgomery, are not very well known outside of the communities in which they originated. Dr. Brown’s lecture hopes to illustrate that Alabama’s rich tradition of oral ghost narratives encompasses much more than spooky stories. These tales are an invaluable record of Alabama’s history and folk heritage. This presentation is part of the Alabama Humanities Foundation (AHF) 2003-2004 Speaker in the House program.

MORE ABOUT ALAN BROWN, OUR SPEAKER

This material courtesy of the Alabama Humanities Foundation.

Alan Brown is Professor of English and Director of the Writing Center at the University of West Alabama. He has a D.A. in English from Illinois State University. Despite his rigorous academic schedule, Brown has devoted a great deal of energy to the public sector. He has directed summer teaching seminars funded by the AHF on the history and literature of racism; the gothic writing of Carson McCullers, Flannery O’Connor, and Eudora Welty; and most recently, on Alabama folklore. He also developed an exhibition on African American folklore entitled, “Ruby Pickens Tartt: An Alabama Original.” His publications include *Dim roads and Dark Nights: The Collected Folklore of Ruby Pickens Tartt* (1993), *The Face in the Window and Other Alabama Ghostlore* (1996), and *Shadows and Cypress: Southern Ghost Stories* (2000).

A REMINDER

Don’t forget to check your records this month concerning payment of dues to the Historical Society (\$10.00 per year). We will be purging our membership lists at the end of November. If you need to contact Peggy Bracken, our treasurer, her address is 602 Edgewood Drive, Brewton, AL 35426.

A Booklet for Disaster Damage Recovery for Historical Places

The most recent Preservation Report, a publication of the Alabama Historical Commission announces a booklet which is available to help owners and caretakers of historic buildings in their recovery efforts, entitled "Disaster Damage Recovery Booklet Available for Historic Buildings."

Part of the Wind & Water series available from the Alabama Historical Commission, the Recovery booklet helps plan and implement a recovery project. There are three booklets in the series--prevention, response, and recovery that deal with the effects of wind and water on older and historic buildings. The booklets are available free of charge. Please contact the Alabama Historical Commission for copies: P.O. Box 300900, Montgomery, Al 36130-0900 (334-242-3184 or <ahcreceptionist@state.al.us>).

Brewton's Hurricane Heroes

The Mobile Press Register for Wednesday, September 29, carried a front- page story on Brewton's Hurricane Heroes. Connie Baggett's article "Voices in the Wilderness: Brewton Radio Station Was a Lifeline in the Days after Ivan" is a great tribute to the service which Candy Cashman Smith, station owner and operator, and Dennis Dunaway, WEBJ "Radio Personality," performed for the Brewton area. Candy is the daughter of Gene Cashman, original owner of the radio station and former member of the Escambia County Historical Society.

Connie Baggett's article reports that in the days immediately following Hurricane Ivan, Candy and Dennis became the county's source for information, answering questions from call-ins and directing help to needy people. Candy Smith is quoted as saying "We had people calling saying they were desperate. . . . people with no food or water or money. We helped direct them to the right resources or directed resources to them. All we had working was a fan, a CD player and a microphone."

The two spent twelve hour days relaying information and receiving calls from Covington and Baldwin as well as Escambia County, essentially being a communicator for the entire area. According to the article, both the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the local sheriff department commended the two for their work.

Places in Peril

Both Alabama Heritage Magazine and the Alabama Historical Commission's Preservation Report have published the 2004 list of Alabama's top nine endangered sites. The Preservation Report calls *Places in Peril* a joint effort of the Alabama Historical Commission and the Alabama Preservation Alliance, an alliance begun in 1994, "a program designed to highlight some of Alabama's most endangered historic sites" (Alabama's Top 9 Endangered Sites Announced," Preservation Report, Aug. 2004).

Alabama Heritage in its article "Places in Peril: Alabama's Endangered Historic Landmarks for 2004" notes these common threats to historic places: (1) Lack of preservation planning by municipalities and counties, planning which would identify sites and buildings that should be preserved and then give them protection; (2) Inappropriate development connected with "urban sprawl," when the rapid rise in land values mean the land is more valuable for redevelopment than for preserving present structures; (3) A lack of awareness where buildings are lost because people

do not know they are significant; (4) Lack of funding; and (5) Destruction by neglect.

The nine Endangered Places for Alabama 2004, as described in the Preservation Report are:

- 1. The Allen-Weathers House, Oxford, Calhoun County**, a rare example of a Federal period ‘T’ house, built in the mid 1830’s.
- 2. Locust Hill, Tuscumbia, Colbert County**, one of the oldest surviving brick houses in the state, built in 1823.
- 3. The Otto Marx Mansion, Birmingham, Jefferson County**, one of the best examples of Mission Revival domestic architecture in the state.
- 4. The Johnston-Curtright House, Tuskegee, Macon County**, a fine example of Greek Revival architecture, built around 1850.
- 5. The Old Rock House, Harpersville vicinity, Shelby County** dating before 1842, may be the state’s surviving example of an early stone dwelling.
- 6. The YMCA, Selma, Dallas County**, perhaps the oldest surviving YMCA in Alabama, dates from 1887, represents second Empire style.
- 7. Winter Place, Montgomery, Montgomery County**, built in the mid-10th century, reflects the “Italian Villa” style.
- 8. Harris-Hill Plantation, Huntsville, Madison County**, one of Huntsville oldest surviving working farms, with the land purchased in 1813.
- 9. 1856 Memphis and Charleston Railroad Freight Depot, Huntsville, Madison County**, the Freight Depot dates from 1856 and the Passenger Depot from 1860.

A Local, Endangered Site: The Conecuh County Courthouse, Evergreen

This newsletter opens with a picture of the plans which have been developed to reach a compromise between those who say the building is too old and deteriorated to be worth the cost of restoration and those who wish to preserve the historic structure. The Romanesque style building, circa 1899, was designed by architect Frank Lockwood, who designed the wings on Alabama’s State Capitol as well as other buildings and homes in Alabama.

Two recent articles from the Mobile Register, summarize the current lawsuit and Alabama Supreme Court Ruling concerning the courthouse:

(1.) Connie Baggett’s article, “Ruling Delights both Sides in Courthouse Fight,” Mobile Register, 11 Oct. 2004; and (2.) “Compromise in Conecuh,” Mobile Register, 13 Oct. 2004. Both of these articles can be found at the web address <al.com>.

<u>Books for Sale</u>	Mailed	Regular Price
<u>A History of Escambia County</u>	\$55.00	\$50.00
<u>Headstones and Heritage</u>	\$40.00	\$35.00
<u>Escambia Historical Society Cookbook</u>	\$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 _____
