

# ECHOES

The Newsletter of the Escambia County  
Historical Society  
March 2005 - Vol. 32, No. 3  
Editor, Ranelia Holley



*"Maybe Joe needs a rest. He's talkin' in his sleep."*

## THE MARCH MEETING

**Tuesday, March 22, 2005 in the Thomas E. McMillan Museum in the Fine Arts Center of Jefferson Davis Community College Campus at 3:00 p. m. The Program:** Local attorney Lee Otts will discuss his World War II diary and experiences that led to the publication of the book, G Company's War: Two Personal Accounts of the Campaigns in Europe, 1944-45.

### **“THE DOORS OF BREWTON” CALENDAR**

Photos previously used for a poster showing “The Doors of Brewton” have now been incorporated into a 2005 calendar. The calendar is now available at the NDI outlet in downtown Brewton for half price (normally sells for \$14.96). Ann Biggs Williams informs us that the calendar is very attractive architecturally and that every month has a photo as well as historic notes. Ann notes that the calendar lists for March 2, 1827 that a post road was authorized from Pensacola to Ft. Crawford. The March 14 spot points out that on that date in 1827, Brewton had floods, as well as on March 17, 1990 and March 8, 1998.

The proceeds from the sales of the calendar go to benefit the Brewton Community Association.

### **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS: JIM F. SMITH AND ED BLAIR**

#### **POST OFFICE MURAL ARTIST, ARTHUR GEITZ**

The Alabama Heritage magazine (Winter 2005) carries an article, “An Unlikely Canvas,” on Arthur Geitz, who painted the New Deal post office mural in Luverne Alabama. The mural, “Cotton Fields,” which shows two men harvesting cotton beside a mule cart is still displayed in the Luverne Post Office.

The newsletter for August 2004 published material on New Deal Art in Alabama Post Offices. In response to an enquiry if there were a picture of the mural created for the Brewton post office, entitled “Logging” and installed in May of 1939, we found that Brewton’s post office mural is the only one of those installed in Alabama post offices during the period that is missing.

The Historical Society would be interested in information concerning a picture of the mural.

### **THE BATTLE OF HORSE SHOE BEND REENACTMENT**



March 19 – 20 there will be a reenactment of the final battle of the Creek War of 1814. This event will mark the 191<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the last battle of the Creek War of 1814. The reenactment will be at the actual site of the battle at Davistan, Alabama.

### **A CALL FOR ARTICLES ON FAMILY HISTORY FOR THE SOCIETY’S JOURNAL**

We are interested in publishing articles on family history of individuals connected to Escambia County. Consider sending a write up of your family

history (having pictures to accompany the information would be great), for consideration for publication in the Historical Society's Journal.

**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](mailto:Ranny1@earthlink.net)**

#### Alabama River Festival

We have this material from Darryl Searcy

The Escambia County Historical Society was represented at a recent celebration of the Alabama River Festival at Claiborne Lock & Dam in Monroe County. Numerous displays were enjoyed by the group, including a stomp dance performed by the Hussoua Tallahassee Ceremonial Stomp Dance Group of Atmore, Alabama (Creek Indians); the fashioning of wooden bowls from the Tupelo Gum tree buttress; basket making using pine and oak strips; the playing of stickball, tomahawk throwing and dart blowing. John Ferguson sang songs and told stories of the bygone riverboat era.

Among the interesting exhibit was Nathan Chessher, an elder of the Muskogee Nation of Florida, who displayed handmade artifacts and adornments worn in olden times. Rising Fawn (Ginger Jones), of the Alabama Creek Indians, displayed a typical Indian hunting camp that featured women's lifestyles in the 1750s. Dr. John Hall and his wife Rosa spoke and demonstrated the art of pounding grain and dried beans into workable flour and meal. John spoke briefly of William Bartram, the naturalist who visited this area area in 1775.

Pat McArthur watched and listened intently as a Native American woman demonstrated the art of tanning animal skins used for shelter and clothing. The woman is wearing skins that have been cured and died with plant extracts, each piece was exquisitely adorned with designs drawn in the finished material. The leather had the feel and texture of the finest suede. The articles of clothing were designed to provide warmth in the winter and cooling shade in the summer -- not unlike the robes worn by the Bedouin desert dwellers of the Middle East.

The woman describes in detail how the brain matter of an animal is used to cure and break down the skin fibers. Each animal has a brain mass exactly large enough to coat its own skin. No brain matter from one animal is used to cure the skin of another.

At the end of the day, the Cherokee Rose Paddleboat was brought through the locks by owner and captain, Roy Lynch of Mobile. The beautifully crafted boat was moored on the Claiborne lake for all to see and tour.

Connie Baggett published an article in the Mobile Register for February on the town of Jack Spring, Ann Biggs-Williams called the article to our attention. We are publishing this article and an article by Paul Merritt on Jack Springs which appeared in The Heritage of Escambia County, Alabama in 2002.

"In Jack Springs, Flowing Fountain Proves Elusive"

By CONNIE BAGGETT

Staff Reporter

JACK SPRINGS -- Sometimes, the thing you are looking for just can't be found.

Peering through the thick tangle of catchaw briars and wild grape vines clinging to ancient trees, it was hard to imagine this place was the center of a bustling frontier settlement.

Here in the northwest corner of Escambia County some 60 miles northeast of Mobile, I had hoped to find the spring that gave this place its name.

I imagined listening hard for the warning blast of a cowhorn and the telltale rattle and jingle of a stagecoach's approach over rough dirt roads -- sounds that surely put the innkeeper to work preparing for visitors, rounding up fresh horses.

Historical accounts call Jack Springs the oldest settlement in Escambia County and note that it served as an Indian campground for centuries before that.

According to Annie Waters "History of Escambia County," Jack Springs mostly got its name from Jack Keller, the first stagecoach driver for the line set up in 1821 by Major Johnson, Patrick Byrne and Ward Taylor.

Later, William Kitchen joined in the venture that carried passengers and mail from Montgomery to Blakeley in 23-hour journeys. The trip was part of a weekly mail route that connected New York to New Orleans.

After Gen. Andrew Jackson stopped by to drink from the spring, folks started crediting him as the namesake, too.

The stagecoach routes followed the Old Federal Road through Indian country, and many of the "houses of entertainment" along the way were run by Native Americans under contract with the U.S. government.

Although the Indian Removal Act of 1830 led to the mass relocation of native Americans in the Southeast, many Indians who cooperated with the government were allowed to stay. Some descendants of those eventually became the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, according to historical accounts.

By 1850, a group of Primitive Baptists arrived in Jack Springs and built a church, Waters wrote. The stage line died off in 1860 when the railroads took over as the main mode of transportation.

The Baptists built a new church in 1875, and another in the 1940s. Waters said they bricked in the spring to use as their baptistery.

A photographer and I traveled to Jack Springs Road last week looking for signs of that old spring.

A woman at a store there pointed me to Eubie Coon, a well-spoken gentleman who grew up farming the land here and came back after serving in the military. He said he would be 86 in April, then he spelled his name for me.

"As I tell people," he said, "there's not much difference between me and the wild ones."

Coon knows just about any thing worth remembering about Jack Springs.

"The stage stop used to be down by the chapel," he said. "The people used the spring as their baptismal font."

Coon said he watched the community go from unkept dirt roads connecting family farms every 20 acres or so to a place where only a few large-scale farmers are left working the land. The roads are paved now, if a little bumpy in places.

So many people have moved into the area, Coon said, he can't begin to know them all anymore.

He guided us down by Corinth Primitive Baptist Church to the edge of the woods, where he remembered the fountain flowing. We looked and climbed over logs, but we never found it. But the spring was just the start of the place, anyway.

Coon said he loves this corner of the county. His eyes said it, too.

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**JACK SPRINGS**  
By Paul Merritt

March 17, 2001

No book about Escambia County would be complete without a story about the county's earliest community, Jack Springs. The town was located about two miles west of where McCollough is today. It was on the old federal road and grew up around a stagecoach and freight wagon stop for the Montgomery to Mobile line, the stop being established about 1820. Eventually, the stop had a stable, inn, saloon and dance hall, and was near some springs where cool, fresh water was available for the people and horses.

Alma Chason of Huxford told the writer that her great grandfather, Sidney Lomax, was a stagecoach driver on this line, and he said the drivers were first attracted to the springs when they noticed Indians camping around them. The Indians reportedly believed the waters had healing properties.

In addition to Sidney Lomax, a man named Jack Keller (a.k.a. Hank or Henry Keller) used to drive the stage that went through Jack Springs. In fact, some say the town was named for Jack Keller. Others say it was named for Andrew Jackson, who is said to have camped nearby. Still others say the town was named for a bandit named Jackson, who was shot by a lawman and buried at Jack Springs. Legend has it the gravedigger removed a rose pinned to the bandit's bosom and stuck it in the ground, resulting in a beautiful rose bush.

When the railroad was completed between Montgomery and Mobile in the 1860's, the stagecoaches and freight wagons that plied the federal road quit running, and the town of Jack Springs nearly died. But, the timber and cotton businesses were starting to boom, so the town became a timber and cotton town and lived on.

In the late 1880's, the lumber company at Wilson Station (Nokomis) built a narrow gauge railroad up to Jack Springs. Mr. Johnny Presley of Atmore, age ninety-three, remembers this narrow gauge railroad and so does Mrs. Opal Drew of Jack Springs/McCullough. Mr. Presley says the little steam engine had a nice whistle and the engine was called the "Peter C." It pulled about three long, thin cars of logs, going about as fast as a little boy could run.

Mr. Presley also told the writer that his grandfather used to operate one of the "pole" railroads that were set up on temporary wooden tracks. They were used to bring logs to the narrow gauge line that took them on to the mill. Mrs. Drew remembers how as a girl she and her sister used to run across the train trestle crossing Wasdin Branch, running to make sure the train didn't catch them on the trestle.

As Jack Springs is mentioned so prominently in 19th century newspaper articles, official documents, election results, maps and letters, the writer became interested in trying to locate the exact site of the old town. Fortunately, he met a lady who had grown up in the western part of Escambia County and was able to eventually lead him to the site of the spring and of the old town.

On an Escambia County Historical Society outing in 1999, Mrs. "Sissy" (Kathryn Louise) Dukes Horton of Brewton took the writer on a visit to the spring which some consider to be "The Jack Springs." Sissy's father, Dr. James Ellis Dukes, was for many years a veterinarian in western Escambia County. Because he had to visit most of the farms to treat the livestock, Dr. Dukes knew all of the back roads and most of the people of the area.

Sissy, who grew up in Atmore, knew about one of the springs because of her fond memories of her father taking her and her siblings (James Ellis, Frank Coleman and Martha Virginia) swimming at Moniac (many spellings) Bridge where County Road 1 crosses Little River. Sissy remembers how they would sometimes stop to visit what her father called Jack Springs, out behind the Corinth Primitive Baptist Church. (Bufford Coon, who is a native of the McCullough/JackSprings area but who now lives in Atmore now, says his father, Jonah Coon, also referred to this particular spring as Jack Springs.)

On our outing, Mrs. Horton parked beside the Corinth Church, and the writer and she walked through the brush behind the church and down the hill to find a ravine filled with rubbish, but with evidence that there was still a spring flowing underneath. Sissy remembered there had once been a well-defined path from the edge of the church grounds down to the spring.

This particular spring bubbles up and flows down the hill, creating a small branch, which flows into Wasdin Branch, then into Long Hollow Creek, and eventually into Little River. Years ago, there was a large pool where this spring surfaced and the Corinth Church built some steps and partially bricked the sides of the pool to provide a nice baptismal pool. Today, there is not enough water flowing to support a pool, and the remains of the baptismal are collapsed into the ravine. As there are other springs in the area, we cannot be sure if this particular spring was Jack Springs or if the name was perhaps intended for the several springs in the area.

In inquiring about other remains of the old town, the writer learned from Scott Brooks of Jack Springs where the railroad trestle remains are still located, about 350 yards downstream from County Road 1 where what's left of the trestle crosses Wasdin Branch. Kenneth Wasdin of McCullough related that the grinding stones for the old gristmill have never been recovered and are still lying somewhere under the ground, out where the millpond was once located.

Johnny Presley (who remembered the narrow gage railroad) told the writer that the remains of the stagecoach inn and stable were still visible when he was a boy. He said they were out in the field to the south of Taylor Circle Road, out in front of where Opal Drew and Scott Brooks live today. On one visit to the area, Scott Brooks took the writer to another spring out behind his house, which would have been closer to the old stage stop than is the spring behind the Corinth Church. Perhaps that spring is the one that supplied the inn.

Johnny Presley also told the writer that the road from Atmore to Jack Springs used to leave the existing road (County Road 1), just north of the Indian Reservation and come catty cornered across the fields from the

southeast, running right into where the stage stop was located. Mr. Presley also said the old stage road coming from Lottie ran just south of where the Stedham Cemetery and Chapel are today, then on east to the stagecoach inn. It then continued east for a short ways before turning north towards Jumping Gully and Huxford, crossing what is today the Boonville Road, not too far east of the existing Corinth Church.

Another indicator of the existence of the old community is a well-hidden small cemetery across the county road from the Corinth Church, so overgrown that any visitor would have difficulty finding the remaining graves. The family names on the only remaining markers are Boon and Godwin. Locals say the cemetery was much larger years ago, extending under where the county road is today. Both Audrey Weaver, who lives up towards Booneville on County Road 1 and Bufford Coon related that the old Jack Springs school was located near this cemetery, on the south side of the county road.

The town of Jack Springs peaked in the late nineteenth century, when it had a grist mill, a cotton gin, stores, a school with nearly a hundred students, and several churches, including the existing Primitive Baptist Church and the Mars Hill Baptist Church. (Mars Hill Church was served in the 1880's by a circuit rider from Wilson Station, the Rev. Sam W. Jones, about whom there is a story in this heritage book.)

Jack Springs was dealt a blow when the virgin timber was completely cut out by 1925. The town struggled on as a cotton town for a few years, but eventually even the gin was moved to McCollough to be closer to the Frisco Railroad. Thus, Jack Springs as a community passed into the history books. The town is gone, but the cool spring behind the Corinth Church still flows, if it is just a trickle. And, they say if you listen carefully on a quiet, foggy morning, you can still hear a team of stagecoach horses galloping, and the faint sound of the driver's cow-horn bugle sounding the arrival of the next stage.

The February 2005 Newsletter carried an article from an Escambia county paper which outlined plans, and asked for donations to help with expenses, to move Magilbra and Dolly Findley from their original burial at Loango in Coventon County to a burial site in Red Level. .

News staff writer, Connie Baggett, in an article for the Mobile Register for March 11, 2005, "Pioneer Couple's Reburial Planned," reported that plans for moving the remains of the couple had been finalized and services were planed for 2:00 on Saturday, March 12, 2005. The ceremony would include members of the Covington County Historical Society and the Alabama Sons of Confederate Veterans as well as 1814 military re-enactors taking part in the services.

Further details from the article are that the couple's remains were to be carried by a mule-wagon from the site of the couple's farm in Loango to the new bural site in Red Level, and that Magilbra Findley's musket (he was a veteran of the 1814 Battle of New

Orleans, which is displayed in the Alabama Department of Archives and History Museum will be exhibited.

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<u>Books for Sale</u>	<u>Mailed</u>	<u>Regular Price</u>
<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](mailto:Ranny1@earthlink.net)

Membership: \$15.00. Clip the following form and send to Treasurer: Peggy Bracken, 602 Edgewood Drive, Brewton, AL 36426.

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Membership Renewal/Application Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Street	City	State	Zip

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Email \_\_\_\_\_

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