

# ECHOES

The Newsletter of the Escambia County  
Historical Society

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Editor, Ranelia Holley



Fig 1. Grant Wood's American Gothic. Courtesy of "American Gothic by Grant Wood, 1930 + Biog," <<http://www.skfriends.com/american-gothic.htm>>.

**The April Meeting** - Tuesday, April 26, 2005 in the  
Thomas E. McMillan Museum in the Fine Arts  
Center on the Jefferson Davis Community College  
Campus at 3:00 p. m.

**The Program:** Mrs. Elizabeth Wells will present "Looking for  
Grandma and Grandpa in the Pew: Using Church Records in  
Your Genealogical Research."

Mrs. Wells has her MLA and MLS and is a researcher as well as coordinator of the Special Collections Unit at Samford University Library. She is coauthor of the book, The History of Judson College and is past president of the Alabama Genealogical Society and Birmingham Genealogical Society.

She is also a founder and past president of the Society of Alabama Archivists. She also serves on the faculty of the Institute of Genealogical and Historical Research held annually at Samford. The dates for this year's institute are June 12--17, 2005. The institute is a week of intensive genealogical study led by nationally prominent genealogical educators. Ten courses are offered ranging from a course for beginners to courses of specialized topics. More information on the institute can be found at [www.samford.edu/schools/ighr/bigr05.htm](http://www.samford.edu/schools/ighr/bigr05.htm)

**The May Program** - Wilellen Elliott, former president of the Escambia County Historical Society, will present the ECHS program on May 24th. Wilellen will discuss a book by Dr. J. M. Shofner entitled The Story of the Downing Industrial School. The book is similar to an autobiography about Dr. Shofner. Wilellen will add other interesting stories about the school and Dr. Shofner. Wilellen attended the first grade that was taught by Mrs. John David Finlay Sr. at the Pauline Taylor Hall on the Downing campus.

**G Company's War** - Mr. Lee Otts who presented a program on his experiences during World War II at the March Meeting of the Historical Society has presented a copy of the book G Company's War, which recounts his experiences, to the Alabama Room Collection. Thanks to Mr. Otts for his gift.

**2005 Spring Canebreakin' Newsletter** - Sherry S. Johnston of Conecuh County's historic and genealogical organizations has published the 2005 Spring Canebreakin' Newsletter. Take a look at this excellent publication which has announcements of many events of historical and genealogical interest. Subscription to the Newsletter and membership in the genealogical society is \$10.00. The newsletter can be found at the following electronic addresses: Email: [EvergreenPublic.Library@mchsi.com](mailto:EvergreenPublic.Library@mchsi.com); Email2: [canebrakesociety@yahoo.com](mailto:canebrakesociety@yahoo.com) Or <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/canebrakesocietygroup>. You can also reach Sherry at this address: Evergreen Public Library, 201 Park Street, Evergreen, AL 37401; phone number (251) 578-2670.

**Society Loses Trustee Carolyn Liles** - Ms. Liles passed away this month. The society will miss Ms. Liles who always supported the society even though she has not been able to attend meetings in the last few years because of ill health. Ann Biggs Williams noted in an email about Ms. Liles that she

did an enormous amount of work for the society at a time when she had to do most of it by herself.

**Society Member Evelyn Weaver Jernigan** - Mrs. Jernigan passed away this year. Although she has not been an active member of the society for quite some time, her society membership must have meant a great deal to her. It was mentioned in her obituary.

**Volunteers Needed for Work in the Alabama Room** - Carol Madden is asking for volunteers to help with the tremendous task of filing, clipping and sorting materials that have been donated to the Alabama collection. Carol has planned a volunteer training session for Wednesday, May 11 from 9am until 11am in the Museum. Ann Biggs Williams will help Carol in training volunteers to file the many documents, clippings, photos, and other items that have been donated so that they will be available for public use. There will be refreshments.

**Exhibits for the Museum for June** – We have this information from Carol Madden: The Museum will present two touring exhibits from The Alabama Humanities Foundation. Recognizing military history in June (D-Day and Flag Day), the Gallery Room will house:

- ② **Trying Times: Alabama Photographs 1917-1945 Exhibition** - The exhibit has this introduction: “Alabama citizens endured particular trials from 1917 to 1945, including the great depression, two world wars, and the collapse of Alabama's agricultural system. The photos displayed in this exhibition reveal how Alabamians coped with an era of "trying times."

- ② **Images of Our Times: Alabama Photographs Since 1945 Exhibition**- The following is the introduction to the exhibit: “Since the end of World War II, the promise of prosperity that was so powerful in 1945 has eluded many of Alabama's citizens. Photos record this recent history, and this exhibit displays some of the best. The collection includes photos of Alabama's recreation, education, farming and heavy industry, as well as the Civil Rights era and the decline and rebirth of several of the state's cities.”

**A New Park Ranger at the Wright Brothers Museum** - Society Secretary Jacque Stone's son, John Hoomes, has a new job as a park ranger at the Wright Brothers Museum.

**A Query** - We have a query from Erik Douglas, who lives in Brewton and is current president of the Alabama Hiking Trail Association. Believing that historic sites and their significance should be a part of trail route descriptions, "My idea of a hiking trail is [that it should be] more than a hole through the woods. It should also bring the cultural, historical, and environmental aspects to the person seeking time with nature," Erik, in his exploration of potential trail routes in the Conecuh National Forest, has sent our Vice President, Ann Biggs Williams questions concerning two sites (1) Sandstone Hill and (2) "Whitey Stockade."

He knows this about Sandstone Hill:

- ② It is a rock outcropping just North of Bradley, Alabama that appears on all the major maps of the area. It is listed as Sandstone Hill, Alabama. Some of the residents of nearby Bradley are unaware of its existence. In writing of the site, Erik relates that he has recently been told one story about the Hill involving a person hiding on the Hill to avoid serving during the Civil War.

Erik notes this information about the Whitey Stockade:

- ② It was a prison stockade referred to as the "Whitey Stockade" which housed/leased prisoners for work in the turpentine industry during the first half of the last century. Erik relates that his father, Homer Douglas, remembers when both barracks burned.

Ann Biggs Williams has found the following information about the two sites. She notes that she cannot locate anything on Sandstone Hill; however, there is a notation in History of Escambia County Alabama by Annie C. Waters on pages 206—207 on the "Whitey Stockade":

- ✍ "A thriving community grew up a few miles north of Bradley around a naval stores operation on Miller Creek and was named for the operator of the still. A legend relates that Mr. Whitey purchased a new copper still, and before using it for turpentine

distilling, he ran off some liquor. To age the product called 'white lightning,' he collected peach seed with which to color and flavor it.

- ✍ "The Bagdad Land and Lumber Company built a railroad in 1916 that ran through Bradley and Whitey. This company owned many acres of timberland and leased prisoners from the State of Alabama to work in the turpentine industry, housing them in a large stockade at Whitey. There was also a large hotel, a commissary, and other businesses.
- ✍ "After the gum from the virgin pines in the area had been tapped, the trees were cut for lumber. When the timber supply gave out, the railroad was taken up and the community became an agricultural area with part of it being reserved in the National Forest."

- Ann also notes that in The Historical Atlas of Alabama Vol. I, a Whitley Post Office (Whitey could be spelled as Whitley), is listed between Roberts and Bradley.

Anyone with information concerning these sites can contact the Historical Society at **Escambia County Historical Society, P. O. Box 276, Brewton, AL 36427; Phone: 251-809-1612; Email: [Ranny1@earthlink.net](mailto:Ranny1@earthlink.net)**

**The Circuit Writer's Book** - The following entry from The Heritage of Escambia County, Alabama shows the unique material that can be found in church records. The article is reprinted by permission of the author.



**Fig. 2. Gonzalez Methodist Church.** Photo courtesy of Alabama West Florida Conference Web Site <[http:// www.awfumc.org](http://www.awfumc.org)>.

### **Canoe Station and Pollard Methodist Churches**

This story is not about the history of the Canoe-Station and Pollard Methodist Churches, but rather, it just gives you a list of the members of those two churches in 1875. My father, Paul B. Merritt, discovered this information in searching for our Finney, Merritt, Price and Barrow roots, when in 1997 he reviewed the records of the old Shepard's Methodist Church at Powelton (Gonzales), Florida. Included in these records was a little leather book, the record book used by the circuit riders of the Pollard (later called Powelton) Circuit in the 1875 to 1883 period. The book contains, for each of the fourteen churches in the circuit (including Canoe and Pollard), the membership roster, and a record of Baptisms (both adult and infant), marriages, deaths, expulsions, dismissals and transfers, as well as the names of local preachers. In 1875, there were nine members of the Canoe Church, thirty-five members of the Pollard Church and 263 members of the entire circuit.

The Powelton Church was the home of the circuit rider who served as pastor of the fourteen churches. Originally called Shepard's Church after the founding Shepard family, the Powelton Church today is the Gonzalez Methodist Church.

The fourteen churches in the Powelton Circuit in 1875 were Bluff Springs (later Byrneville) (2) Clear Springs (3) Canoe Station (4) Marvin (later Muscogee) (5) Harmony (later merged into Pine Grove) (6) Hendrix (later Rehoboth) (7) Lathram's Chapel (8) Oak Grove (9) Pollard (10) Pine

Grove (later Myrtle Grove) (11) Shepard (later Powelton and today Gonzalez) (12) Walnut Hill (13) Ferry Pass and (14) Crabtree (later Pleasant Grove).

The members of the Canoe Station Church in 1875 were (1) Evan Presley, Sr. (2) James H. Presley (3) Anthony S. Presley (4) J. W. Davis (5) J. W. Bowan (6) O. Ritchie (7) Margaret B. Hall (note spelling of Margaret) (8) R. A. Davis and (9) Sarah F. Bowman.

The members of the Pollard Church in 1875 were (1) John Thomas (2) John T. Kelly (3) J. J. Jernigan (4) John Milton (5) A. Marino (6) N. G. Croom (7) Louisa Thomas (8) Rebecca Kelly (9) M. E. Stilly (10) Harriett Bird (11) Latina Drury (12) L. N. Beck (13) Kate Leigh (14) Martha A. Moore (15) Sarah A. F. Jernigan (16) Francis A. R. Jernigan (17) Martha Hackett (18) Sarah E. Ragan (19) Elizabeth Hilburn (20) Harriett Roberts (21) Sarah Bird (22) Elizabeth Bird Kelly (23) S. C. McCall (24) Sarah J. Harrison (25) Nancy Milton (26) C. Parton (27) Mary E. McMilan (28) M. E. McMilan (29) Mary J. McMilan (30) Catherine Barrow (31) Sarah E. Millstead (32) Eliza A. Milstead (33) Fannie Millstead (34) Sarah E. Gavin and (35) Maggie Barrow.

According to the circuit riders' book, at the annual conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, held at Montgomery, December 12 to 17, 1877, the name of the circuit was changed from Pollard Circuit to Powelton Circuit. At the same conference, the Pollard Church was transferred from the Powelton Circuit to the "former Blackwater Mission," which the writer assumes is another circuit. Also, it seems the Williams Station (Atmore) Methodist Church was formed about 1879 as that is the first year that church's membership role shows up in the circuit riders' book, with several of the initial members coming from the Canoe Station Church.

The circuit book includes yearly membership rolls up through 1880 for most of the churches in the circuit as well as the names of 365 Methodist pioneers of the area. In 1875, the circuit rider (pastor) was W. Hargrave Morris. He was replaced in 1876 by Walter P. Dickinson.

The writer has made every effort to read and report the above names correctly. They are handwritten in the circuit riders' book and some are very difficult to read. The writer does not know who recorded the information, but it is obvious from the script that several different people wrote in the book through the years. Source: Research, Church records. Canoe Station and Pollard Methodist Churches, 1875, Circuit Riders' Book.

Powelton/Pollard Methodist Circuit 1875 to 1883, Official Records. Written by Paul Merritt, Submitted by: Stephen C. Merritt, 7360 Beta Lane, Pensacola, Florida 32504.

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<b><u>Books for Sale</u></b>	<b>Mailed</b>	<b>Regular Price</b>
<b><u>A History of Escambia County</u></b>	<b>\$55.00</b>	<b>\$50.00</b>
<b><u>Headstones and Heritage</u></b>	<b>\$40.00</b>	<b>\$35.00</b>
<b><u>Escambia Historical Society Cookbook</u></b>	<b>\$10.00</b>	<b>\$ 5.00</b>

**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** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>First</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Last</b>
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**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Street</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Zip</b>
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**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

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