

## July Meeting

### Topic for July Meeting is Burnt Corn Revisited

The topic for the July 25 ECHS meeting is "The Legends of Burnt Corn: Revisiting the First Battle of the Creek War, 27 July, 1813."

Robert P. Collins, our July ECHS speaker, is a Georgia native with a degree in German literature from Emory University. From 1988 to 1992 he worked as a journalist in Georgia and north Florida.

Since 1992 he has lived in Birmingham, where his wife, Dr. Jane Hiles, teaches English literature at Samford University.

Rob has been a writer, computer support technician, and a policy analyst for Arise Citizens Policy Project in Montgomery.

Rob has also taught a class in journalism



Photo from  
<http://www.burntcorn.com/htmlfiles/battle.htm>

for the University of Montevallo and a course in web design for the continuing education program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB).

Rob was editor of the 2005 Vulcan Historical Review, published at UAB, and is now working toward a Ph.D. in history at Auburn University, under the guidance of Dr. Kathryn H. Braund.

His major research project is a study of the German and French papers of Lukas Vischer (pronounced "Fisher"), a Swiss traveler in North America from 1823 to 1838.

This summer, Rob is writing a manuscript on the history of Brewton. !

### Minutes for June Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting, Tuesday, June 27, 2006:

President Ann Biggs-Williams called the meeting to order by introducing nine visitors. Twenty-seven attended the meeting. Members recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved with two corrections. The Treasurer's Report was approved.

Announcements:

(1) Darryl Searcy has made a gift to the Escambia County Historical Society and to the Alger-Sullivan Historical Society of moneys from any future sales of

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Pineapple Rail Station 1924

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#### August ECHS Meeting

Dr. Gregory A. Waselkov, Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Center for Archaeological Studies at the University of South Alabama will present our August program entitled "Fort Mims: History and Archaeology Collide in the Tensaw."

Volume 33, Number 7

July 2006

# 1900s Style Backwoods Alabama Justice

By Jerry Simmons

I occasionally reread letters from Mr. Hauss, the president of the ASLC from its inception in 1900. The letters were found in a ledger I providentially discovered while helping Mr. Charlie Lowrey take down the old office and post office building, way back in '67 (that's 'nineteen' 67).

The letters were to various stockholders and upper management of The Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company (by the way, Hauss insisted that "The" be capitalized when used as part of the company name). Most of the letters were to General Russell Alger himself and were marked as from the post office at Hammac. The earliest letters we have are from 1900, and date from when the company's headquarters was in Hammac and the sawmill was in Foshee.

From what I gather, the two settlements were hardly distinguishable



*Chandler School, Wallace; early 1900s*

from one another, somewhat like Century and Flomaton or Brewton and East Brewton. They were both primarily mill towns and maybe as much as a mile apart. Of course, the residents probably knew exactly where the boundary line was.

Martin and Daniel Sullivan, Pensacola brothers, had been speculating in timber and lumber for nearly two decades when Martin and Alger collaborated to form the ASLC. One of the brothers had operated a sawmill at Wallace some time prior to this.

They were increasing holdings in Escambia and other counties in south Alabama. The Foshee sawmill was started in the 1880s by J.H. Fuller and in later years was sold to the Sullivans.

A man's life in the small towns of this area was rough and often dangerous. If you weren't maimed or killed doing your work in a sawmill or logging, then it might be possible you'd be killed by some rowdy ne'er-do-well. Or, for that matter, an upstanding citizen might own the bullet that did you in.

Martin Sullivan himself killed a man in Pensacola while a member of a posse that laid in wait to kidnap John Wesley Hardin. When they stormed the rail-road car Hardin was in, probably with guns drawn, one frightened young man got up and jumped out of a window. Sullivan, thinking it was Hardin trying to es-

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## Minutes

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his CD-ROM, Wildflowers of Escambia County, the funds to be divided equally between the two groups.

(2) The book, Logging Railroads of Alabama, is now available for research in the Alabama Room.

(3) On Tuesday, August 15 at 6:00 pm, there will be a one-man-show on the life of railroad tycoon, Henry Plant, portrayed by Kelly Reynolds, credited with establishing Florida as a tourist destination. Performance will be in the James H. Jones Historical Park in Century. Call Jerry Simmons (850-256-2661) or Margaret Collier (850-256-2029) for information or directions. There is no admission (however, donations are accepted).

(4) The Alabama Historical Society has approved continuance of the state Cemetery Committee for another year.

(5) Tom McMillan is sponsoring a new History of Brewton and will appreciate any photos, letters, other materials which members might provide to him for the project.

(6) Lynn Wixon has volunteered to handle sending gifts and cards, when appropriate, to members.

(7) Carolyn Emerich has been recognized for her service to ECHS by her name being added to the plaques in the Elvira McMillan Parlor.

(8) Ranella Merritt has been nominated by the Board for the position of Trustee. Following the by-laws, the announcement has been published in the newsletter and members will vote on the nomination at the July meeting.

The program of Show and Tell followed the business session and announcements. Refreshments were provided by Jerry Simmons and Darryl Searcy.

Visitors were: Lazette Wyatt Wiggins, her daughter-in-law, Jewel Wiggins, and her granddaughter, Lee Ann Wiggins, from the Bradley-Roberts community; Sammie and Gilbert McGlothorn from the Damascus Community; Virginia Clark from Pensacola; Verlyn Garrett; Phillis Pettis from East Brewton; and Dianne Simmons.

## Merritts Visit Washington & Lee to Chase Relatives



### SAMUEL LEGRANDE CAMPBELL, MD

Paul and Ranella Merritt visited Washington & Lee University on July 11. Paul was interested in this visit because his ancestor was president of the school from 1797 to 1799. The Merritts report they were treated like royalty on campus once Paul told them about his great, great, great grandfather. They also report the school has a most beautiful campus, about the nicest either of them has ever seen. The campus is adjacent to Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia.

W&L was founded in 1749 and

was first called Augusta Academy. It was renamed Liberty Hall Academy in 1776. However, when George Washington died in 1797, he left the school \$20,000, a fortune in that day. So, the name was changed



Statue of Robert E. Lee



*In the museum adjacent to the crypt, Paul found a portrait and the watch of his ancestor*

to Washington College.

After the War Between the States, Robert E. Lee became president of the school. When General Lee passed on in 1870, the name of the school was changed to Washington & Lee. General Lee and his family are interred in a crypt below the school's chapel.

Paul was able to find quite a bit of information on his ancestor, Dr. Samuel L. Campbell, in the school

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## Meet the Officers

### The Newsletter Folks

Ranella Merritt, Editor, and Jerry Simmons, Assistant, collaborate each month to bring you the best newsletter they can. This month we'll give you a glimpse into their persona and maybe you'll have a better idea of the passion they have for this work.

**Jerry Simmons** was born and raised in Century, Florida, but he has direct connections to South Alabama. His mother was born in Burnt Corn and raised in Evergreen and her family was from Conecuh and Monroe Counties.

His dad was born in Century in 1910, but his grandfather arrived in 1907 in Century from Butler

County. His paternal grandmother was born in what eventually became Century. "I may live in Florida, but I owe my very existence to south Alabama," he says.



Jerry's brother Eddie lives in Gonzalez, FL, north of Pensacola.

Jerry graduated Century High School in 1958, and attended Pensacola Junior College and Northeastern University in Massachusetts.

He worked in radio-TV repair and then as a technician at Monsanto in Pensacola. In 1981 he relocated to Cleveland, Ohio; later to Boston, Massachusetts and Tampa, Florida for an international machine tool

company. He finally came back home to Century in 1992.

In 1992 he was employed once more by Monsanto/Solutia where he retired in 2001.

Jerry presently serves as Vice-President of The Alger-Sullivan Historical Society in Century, Historian, Curator and Assistant Newsletter Editor for the Escambia County Historical Society. Other responsibilities include being the Museum Coordinator of the Thomas E. McMillan Museum at Jefferson Davis Community College in Brewton.

Jerry also writes a column in the Tri-City Ledger for the ASHS every other week, covering more than just Century. The scope of the column

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## Officers (*continued*)

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often includes articles about Escambia County and South Alabama.

One of his projects at the Alger-Sullivan Historical Society has been to return the old switch engine 100 to Century. It is a steam locomotive once used at The Alger Sullivan Lumber Company but it's been in disuse for several years. It has been declared "of historical significance" by the State of Florida Historical Preservation Commission. A grant has been approved for getting the engine back to Century and then the job will be to get it rebuilt and put on display.

"I think this has been the most important thing in my life, next to my children and my wife," he said. "I am glad to be a part of getting the engine rescued for the people of this area. It will be an education for the children to see the engine and all the changes that have been made in transportation.

Jerry is married to Dianne Gladwell,

formerly of Greenville, and they reside in Century, Florida.

**Ranella Holley Merritt** was born in Andalusia, the only child of a bookkeeper/accountant for Southern Cotton Oil Company and a first grade school teacher in the Andalusia city school system. She graduated from Andalusia High School in 1961, attended Huntingdon College in Montgomery, graduating with a BA in 1965, then entered graduate school at the University of Alabama and earned an MA in English in 1967. She accepted a position as a teacher at what was then Jefferson Davis Junior College, moved to Brewton, began working in June of 1967, and has been at Jefferson Davis since, retiring this June.

When the Escambia County Historical Society was formed, she joined as a charter member but did not become really interested in the society until she went to the college library one day and was introduced to a visitor to the Ala-



bama Room who was doing ge-

nealogical research on his family.

He asked her a question about English grammar, which they are still debating, and thus began a friendship and romance which continues to this day. The visitor, Paul Merritt, had an interest in history and his involvement in ECHS reawakened Ranella's. She eventually became editor of the newsletter/journal and has been nominated for the position of trustee.

## Bits and Pieces

### "Crossroads" by Kathy McCoy.

10 a.m. Book signing, Monroe County Public Library. A 5-7 p.m. Reception for Kathy McCoy, Old Courthouse Museum, Monroeville. A new book on Monroe County history, Crossroads by Kathy McCoy from her 16 years of research will be available for purchase..

### About those queries....

Research services are available through the Alabama Department of Archives & History (ADAH) reference room. The fee is non-refundable and covers the cost of research, staff time, equipment, copying and postage. Credit cards are accepted. For more information, visit the website:

[www.archives.state.al.us](http://www.archives.state.al.us).

Reference room hours at ADAH in Montgomery are Tues-Friday 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and the 1st Saturday of each month from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

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**Learn more** about your civil war ancestor at the fall Seminar sponsored by the Alabama Genealogical Society at the Alabama Department of Archives and History in Montgomery on Saturday, October 7. Seminar title is "Research and Records to find Alabama's "Johnny Reb" and "Billy Yank". Dr. Leah Rawls Atkins, well known Alabama historian and writer will be the featured speaker. Tentative session topics: *My Great Grandfathers' Civil War*, *Genealogy and History Working Together* and *Sources for Researching the Civil War*. For more info, check out

[www.archives.state.al.us/ags](http://www.archives.state.al.us/ags)

**August 8, 2006**, ECHS Officers and Committee Chairs Board Meeting, 11:30 a.m. Elvira McMillan Parlor, Thomas E. McMillan Museum, JDCC, Brewton

**August 22, 2006**, ECHS, Dr. Gregory Waselkov presents, "Fort Mims: History and Archaeology Collide in the Tensaw," Thomas E. McMillan Museum, JDCC, Brewton

**August 26-27**, Ft. Mims Reenactment and Battle of Burnt Corn Creek Reenactment at Tensaw near Stockton, AL. Entry fee \$3 for adults with minor children admitted free. For more info, [www.fortmims.att.net](http://www.fortmims.att.net) or phone Fort Mims Restoration Association President, Davis Smith at 251-937-4254 or E-mail [wildwood-kid@juno.com](mailto:wildwood-kid@juno.com)

## Merritts *(continued)*

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library's special collections. The collection had papers written in Doctor Campbell's own handwriting as well as copies of portraits.

Ranella and Paul found that Samuel Campbell had studied medicine with the famous Dr. Benjamin Rush in Philadelphia. (Dr. Rush gave medical advice and, most crucial being quinine for attacks of malaria, to Lewis and Clark before their expedition.) After resigning the presidency of the college, Dr. Campbell practiced medicine in Lexington, but remained on the College Board until his death in 1841.



*Lee Chapel at W & L—tombs of Robert E. Lee and his family in basement*

So, how did this family get to our area? Well, one of Dr. Campbell's sons, a Presbyterian minister, was assigned to the existing Presbyterian community in Euchee Valley, Florida. Later Rev. Campbell was sent to found another Presbyterian community which he named after John Calvin's hometown of Geneva Switzerland. The community is now called Geneva, Alabama.

After Rev. Campbell's death from yellow fever, his widow owned and operated a ferry across the Choc-tahatchee and Pea Rivers at Geneva, thereby supporting her family.

## Justice *(cOntinued)*

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cape, shot and killed him by mistake.

Edward Hauss wrote in a couple of his letters of "trouble" in the town of Foshee, meaning shootings. I've often wondered what that stoic businessman from the big city thought in dealing with some of the lawlessness that may have existed in the backwoods of the South. His remarks in the letters gave the impression, however, not of frustration on his part, but of sadness for the gravity of the situations where men couldn't get along peacefully.

In 1907, James R. Stewart worked at the Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company mill as superintendent, which meant part of his job was to keep the men straight and the mill running smoothly. These were not easy tasks I to do, both at the same time. It seems his judgment leaned toward making sure the mill ran smoothly: Two black men, both employees, had apparently murdered a woman named Jane Starr. One of the men, John Shaw, was a good worker while the other, George Gainer, wouldn't work for love nor money. Mind you, they

both seemed to be equally culpable in the slaying of Starr.

They were brought before a court and tried. Gainer was convicted and went to a chain gang but Shaw was set free and went back to work the next day. So goes Stewart's justice.

Stewart himself engaged in a shooting. There were at least two reports of the shooting, supposedly by eyewitnesses. Stewart had an argument with a fella named Pierce Travis. Travis, related to the Alamo fighter William B. Travis, incidentally, was well-liked by most folks. He was, however, fearless, and according to all accounts was obnoxious and wild when he started drinking.

With the hard work and rough living conditions, many of the sawmillers and loggers would sow wild oats Saturday nights and Travis was no exception. Since Stewart was from the north and Travis a true Southern rebel, there was bound to be conflict sooner or later.

One story goes that the two men, after threatening one another, met and each tried to face down the other. After arguing to a draw, Stewart purportedly ambushed

Travis later and shot him in the back. The other version was they met face-to-face and in the ensuing shootout, Stewart killed Travis in a fair fight (by gunslinger standards). Later investigation showed that Travis' gun had not even been fired and Stewart's bullets went into Travis' body from the back.

Stewart turned himself in and in a hearing later the shooting was ruled a justifiable homicide. Stewart was set free. So much for South Alabama backwoods frontier justice.

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Some of the above material is adapted from the book, "History of Escambia County Alabama," by Annie C. Waters. It's available for sale at the ASHS and at the Escambia County Historical Society. We quote Mrs. Waters' book here: [In fairness to the little hamlet of Foshee, it] "produced some notable men, as well as those of lesser character. The famous Walter Edward Morris of baseball fame, who played as a pitcher for Chicago in 1922 and for Boston from 1928-1931, was born in Foshee in 1899. He died in 1940 and had served in the United States Marine Corps Reserve."

## *ECHOES*

THE NEWSLETTER FOR  
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

The Escambia County Historical Society  
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We're on the web!

[www.escohis.org](http://www.escohis.org)

### **Books for Sale   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
<u>Wildflowers of The Escambia CD</u>	\$17.50	\$15.00

**Membership: \$15.00.**

**Clip the following form and send to Treasurer, ECHS, P.O. Box 276, Brewton, AL**

**Name(s)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Dues (\$15.00/person)** \_\_\_\_\_ **(or \$100.00/person Lifetime)**

**Donation** \_\_\_\_\_

**Amount enclosed** \_\_\_\_\_

- ❖ **Please double check your records to see if you have paid your Society Dues for 2006. Dues are to be paid at the beginning of the year.**

*ECHOES, The newsletter for the Escambia County Historical Society is published monthly except November. Editor, Ranella Merritt; Assistant, Jerry Simmons*

*Comments are welcome. You may email the Society at [escohis@escohis.org](mailto:escohis@escohis.org) or call 251-867-7332.*

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**ECHOES**

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