

ECHOES

October Meeting

Tuesday, October 26, 2010

3:00 p. m.

The Thomas E. McMillan Museum

The Program: Show and Tell

Bring something “old” or simply something meaningful to you. This doesn’t have to be something valuable. It could be any item that has a story connected to it. The story could be about the item itself or about you or your family.

We have enjoyed the stories of and learned from members who have brought pictures, quilts, clothing (hats and dresses), books, tools, maps, newspaper articles, weapons, uniforms, yearbooks, and other mementos from anniversaries, weddings, school events.



Above, A Photograph of a Naval Regiment from 1932

At right, a picture of Moye #1, first significant oil well drilled in Escambia County, Alabama.



Items From Previous “Show and Tell” Programs



At left, pictures of tools, some used for shoeing a horse.

Below, a grain cradle used to capture grain shafts and let chaff fall out.



Show and Tell, Always A Popular Program For ECHS

This excerpt is from the ECHS Newsletter for October 8, 1974.

Could the “big oar-like stick” that Rev. Caldwell brought to the last Show and Tell have been a pounding stick for dirty overalls while they boiled in the wash pot? Does anyone know?

Contents

Minutes for the August Meeting & Elizabeth Shown Mills Seminar	2
Previously Out-of-Print Books for Sale in the Alabama Room	3
Snapshots	4
Our Business Members	5
The Franklin Tree	6
The Brooklyn, Alabama Post Office	12
Greeting from Brooklyn, Alabama	14
Brooklyn History Notes & Fall Pilgrimage	16 17

The Next Meeting

No Meeting in November

December Meeting TBA

Mondays in the Alabama Room

Mondays in the Alabama Room are a time for ECHS members to help with the ongoing work of filing and organizing materials.

Plan on helping to make the materials for research available in the Alabama Room more accessible to the public (one of our primary purposes as an organization), by joining the ECHS members who are volunteering for “Mondays in the Alabama Room.”
Volunteers meet at 10:00 a. m.



Franklin Tree Bloom

See Article in Journal

Volume 37, Number 10

October 2010

Summary from Minutes of the August Meeting

Treasurer's Report: general fund balance of \$1216.63

Field Trips: No field trips planned for the rest of the year. A field trip on the Tensaw Delta suggested as an excursion for the spring of 2011.

Rather than field trips on Mondays, members are encouraged to volunteer some time in the Alabama Room organizing materials.

Volunteer Workdays in the Museum begin every Monday at 10:00 a. m.

The Program:

Dr. Betsy Irwin, from the Moundville Archeological Park, and Kelly Harris, from the Alabama Museum of Natural History at the University of Alabama, were present at the meeting. Dr. Erwin gave a presentation on anthropology, archeology, and artifacts.

Elizabeth Shown Mills Seminar



The West Florida Genealogical Society will present an Elizabeth Shown Mills Seminar to be held at Washington High School Auditorium on November 6, 2010, Pensacola, FL.

Cited in the National Genealogical Society Quarterly and the New England Register as "the genealogist who had the most impact on American genealogy in the post-Roots era," Ms. Mills (shown in picture) will cover these topics:

*Genealogical Problem Solving: Professional Techniques for Everyday Success.

*Finding Origins and Birth Families: Methods that Work

*In a Rut? 7 Ways to Jump-Start Your Research

*The Genealogical Proof Standard: How to Build a Case When No Record States the Answer

Time: Registration/Check in/ Coffee/Donuts, etc. 8:00-8:50 AM; Seminar 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM; Q & A 3:30-4:00 PM; Lunch not included

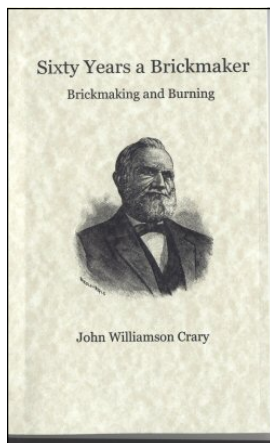
For further information contact Cynthia Dean at

850-432-7072 or <cgdean@bellsouth.net>

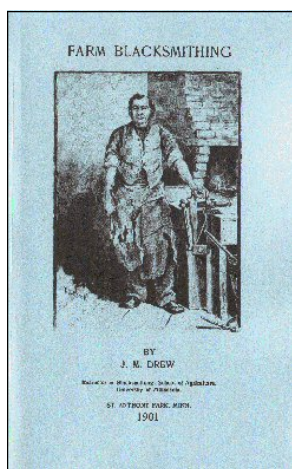


This picture of the Brewton Post Office, circa 1909, is courtesy of Yank Lovelace.

Previously Out of Print Books Now for Sale in the Alabama Room



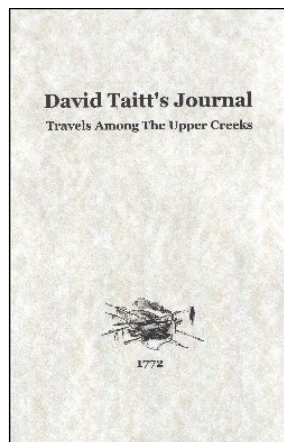
Sixty Years a Brickmaker by John Williamson Crary. Crary was a local hero and I have tried to BUY this book for years. We have the full text and graphics carefully restored! Crary learned about brick making in Ohio and plied his trade down the Mississippi to his adopted home in the South. Crary invented the ironclad warship for the South and a famous brickmaking machine. Many topics relevant to manufacturing today! 1890. Paperback, 134 pages. \$15+ \$3.00 postage & handling.



Farm Blacksmithing by J. M. Drew. Blacksmithing is largely variation on a theme. That is, learn the basics and you can tackle all kinds of jobs with experience. This little book is a great introduction to blacksmithing tools and techniques. Why? Well, on our farm, we have a blacksmith shop and it really comes in handy, especially when we need

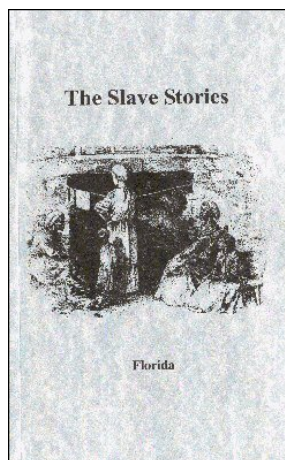
a part for an antique tractor or machine. A good blacksmith can mend anything but the break of day or a broken heart. 1901

Paperback, 99 pages. \$9+ \$3.00 postage & handling.



David Taitt's Journal. In 1772, British surveyor David Taitt was sent on a secret mission to map the lands of the Upper Creek Indians in Alabama. His cover was handling diplomatic issues and trade disputes. Read carefully and you'll be amazed at

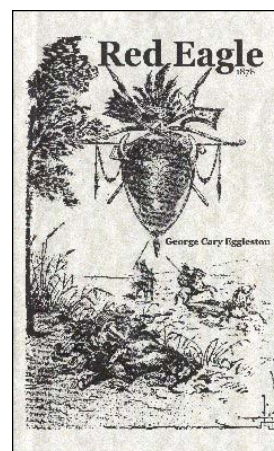
all the little intrigues that went on. Learn about the Indian culture and villages, too, as Taitt travels from Pensacola to modern-day Montgomery and beyond. 1772 Paperback, 72 pages plus index. \$10.00 + \$3.00 postage and handling.



The Slave Stories--Florida by writers of the WPA Writers' Project. During the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration hired writers to interview former slaves and get their story. This was 1936-1938, but there were still a good many former slaves still living. These are stories found in Florida. Prepare to be surprised! 1938. Paperback, 200+ pages. \$15+

\$3.00 postage & handling.

Notes on the Floridian Peninsula, its Literary History, Indian Tribes and Antiquities by Daniel G. Brinton. Whew! Long title! Every Floridian should have a copy of this. The rest of you, too! Brinton makes his own observation of the flora and fauna and history and delves into other written histories which you might not even know exist. Ever hear of the Florida volcano? Is Global Warming real or a hoax? Great book. 1859. Paperback, 202 pages. \$15 + \$3.00 postage & handling.



Red Eagle The story of William Weatherford, leader of the Red Sticks when they attacked the settlers at Ft. Mims. 1878. Paperback, \$20.00 + \$3.00 postage and handling.

(Text and images courtesy of N. Collier, Publisher.)

Snapshots



The September Meeting

On the left, two pictures of speaker Dr. Betsy Irwin with artifacts. In the center, group picture. On the right, above, Sammy McGlothren examines artifact Dr. Irwin brought.



On the right hostesses for refreshments, Jo Brewton (middle) and Susan Blair (far right).



Picture and map with location of the school courtesy of Susan Blair.

Picture of the Brooklyn, Alabama Singing School Circa 1894

On the back of the photo, a note and map give the school's location as "across the road from the intersection of Highways 6 and 43 in Brooklyn."

In his "Brief History of Brooklyn, Alabama" (1949), Ed Leigh McMillan states that the earliest recorded settlement in the Brooklyn community was at the forks of the Ard and Bottle Creeks around 1818 and notes that a school was conducted here.

However, he later says in his "History" that the first schoolhouse in Conecuh County "built of logs and used also as a church" was at Brooklyn. The first school actually conducted in the building was in 1821.

Our Business Members

Please patronize our business members. Be sure to tell them you appreciate their support of the Escambia County Historical Society!

DIXON'S NURSERY
Nursery—Landscaping—Irrigation
323 Dixon Nursery Road
Brewton, Alabama 36426
Phone (251) 867-5847

Herrington's
The FLORIST, Inc.
"Where Flowers Are Special"
719 Douglas Ave.
Brewton, AL 36426
(251) 867-7085
(800) 235-0824
RONNY HERRINGTON

Richard's Oar House
Seafood, Steaks and More
428 Douglas Avenue
Brewton, Alabama 36426
251-809-1090

Open 7 days a week
Owner Denny Hammac


the L house
Printing & Frames

Custom Event Stationery
Business Documents • Custom Framing

131 Saint Joseph Avenue 251-867-9962
Brewton, Alabama Lhouseprinting@gmail.com


CHARLIE GERMAN
OWNER
Woodlands
LAWN CARE
RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL
400 Stallworth Street
Brewton, AL 36426
Home 867-7919 Cell 363-2274

Place your future in our hands...



"The Bank To Believe In"
A Locally Owned Community Bank
Striving to Meet Your Financial Needs

Personal Loans	Real Estate Loans	Local Decisions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rates based on length of time and type of collateral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed rates up to 15 years • Adjustable rates up to 30 years • Home Equity Loans • Construction Loans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast approvals • Local closings • Minimum fees on all loans

 **ESCAMBIA COUNTY BANK**
P.O. Box 601 • Flomaton, Alabama 36441
Telephone (251) 296-5356

The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Franklin Tree — Rarest of the Rare

By Darryl Searcy

In July of 2010, Heather Culpepper of the Pensacola News Journal published an article titled, “Touch of History: Old East Hill Home Unique from the Ground Up.” The main topic of her article was about the home itself because of the construction materials used. Granite columns and the foundation of the house are made of ballast from the old wooden ships that anchored at the Port of Pensacola. The house and tree are pictured at right.



There were Craftsman-style beams, and it was very dark and gloomy. The entire foundation and the columns that support the house were built with this rock that was used to balance the hull of the wooden ships as they came into the port. The contractors would go down to the Port of Pensacola and get these stones for free. In fact, this particular house was not alone, as many of the old houses seen in North Hill and East Hill are built from ballast gathered from the same place, and it was all free.

But Ms. Culpepper hit on something else that was unique at this place. In the front yard stood a gnarled and deeply fissured bark on a tree that was very special. As it was being pointed out to her, the occupants referred to it as the “Franklin,” a tree that has been extinct in the wild since the early 19th century. Amazing, indeed!

The *Franklinia*, commonly called the Franklin tree, was discovered by Philadelphia botanists John and William Bartram, who found the deciduous trees and shrubs growing along the Altamaha River in the British colony of Georgia in 1765. The Bartrams studied the rare tree for several years, after which they assigned it to a new genus called *Franklinia*, in honor of Benjamin Franklin, a good friend of John Bartram, William’s father.

While Ms. Culpepper was writing her article, the home owners kept giving her tidbits of information about the house, as well as the tree, telling her that passersby were attracted to the brilliant flowers that

unfold throughout the summer and autumn. “People occasionally tell us of its rarity,” the occupants said, “and botanists and horticulturists have approached us asking for cuttings in order to propagate their own tree.”

This writer was no exception, as he also wanted them to know that possibly a rare tree was growing in their yard and it had been recognized. Permission to take pictures and cuttings was begged, and all requests were granted. Fortunately, the writer always travels with a homemade

plant press in his truck, so he was ready to harvest and preserve on the spot.

In a hurried conversation with Dr. Al Diamond at Troy University, as well as some quick reading from the Anatomy of Eastern Trees, and Grimm’s Illustrated Book of Trees, the writer quickly determined that the tree was indeed *Franklinia*. Dr. Diamond commented that what makes the tree so interesting is that it is thought to be closer in relation to the Asian genus, *Schima*, a genus of evergreen trees that belong to the tea family, *Theaceae*.

“This tree,” he said, “could well be the oldest of its kind in existence today. “The tree was standing in its present place when the house was built in 1912. When the current owners bought the old place and began restoration, they thought it was a pretty tree and that it looked similar to a Japanese tea tree. It was left alone to keep its place in the yard, and they worked around it.

Franklinia altamaha -- sounds exotic doesn’t it, and it truly deserves to be. Also known as the Lost Camellia, or the Lost *Gordonia*, it has perhaps the most romantic, mysterious past of any native American plant species. John Bartram and his son William discovered a modest grove of this unusually beautiful small tree in Georgia in 1765. By 1803, and perhaps a decade earlier, it had disappeared completely from the wild. *Franklinia* only survived due to the Bartram’s collect-

(Continued on page 7)

The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Franklin Tree — Rarest of the Rare *(continued)*

(Continued from page 6)

ing of plants and seeds and propagating them in their Philadelphia garden during the last quarter of the 18th century. All cultivated plants today descend from one or more of their collected specimens.

John Bartram (1699-1777), a Pennsylvania Quaker farmer, earned fame in America and abroad as a botanist and horticulturist during the 18th century, when interest in colonial native flora and fauna was at its peak. He was educated at Darby Meeting School and taught himself Latin to learn the plant classification system. He purchased land on the Schuylkill River near Philadelphia in 1728 and established what became America's first botanical garden. The garden is still in existence today along with a museum house.

John Bartram had many well regarded European friends and correspondents in the natural sciences, and in 1765 King George III appointed him Royal Botanist for North America. The appointment allowed him to travel widely throughout the colonies to collect and preserve specimens, seeds, and living examples, both to transplant at home and send to collectors in Europe. Dr. Benjamin Franklin was his close friend and together, along with other scholars, established the American Philosophical Society in 1743 "to cultivate the finer arts, and improve the common stock of knowledge."

William Bartram (1739-1823) was John's third son. William would eventually become known as America's first native born natural history artist. He recorded nature, not as an observer, but as someone with strong affection and admiration for his subject, seeing it as "sublime and noble" rather than savage and uncivilized. He held similar feelings towards native Americans, consistent with his Quaker roots. While he enjoyed an educated childhood in Pennsylvania, by the time he was 18, he had moved south to the Cape Fear River near an uncle's home in North Carolina, and operated a trading post until 1765.



Blooms on the Franklin Tree located in Pensacola

When King George selected John Bartram to serve as colonial botanist, it was not merely an honor, but the position brought a substantial fifty pound annual stipend, and in 1765, Bartram traveled to North Carolina and joined his son for a botanical expedition through Georgia and eastern Florida. On October 1, 1765, after crossing the Altamaha River near Fort Barrington, upriver from Darien, the Bartrams rode through a bottomland between

two sand hills where they came across a group of small trees they had never seen before.

In his journal John described them: "This day we found several very curious shrubs, one bearing beautiful good fruit [seedpod]." This would be the beginning of a story where the ending remains a mystery, now more than 200 years later.

Today, the Altamaha (Al-ta-ma-HA) River is formed by the confluence of the Oconee and Ocmulgee Rivers at Lumber City, and downstream joins the Ohoopsee River. The third largest watershed on the Atlantic coast - covering about 14,000 square miles, it winds through the coastal plain of Georgia for nearly 140 miles to Darien, and is considered to be one of the best preserved and most unspoiled rivers in the Southeastern United States.

The Altamaha has no dams or impoundments, and in its considerable length is only crossed seven times, by five highways and two railroad lines. In 1991, The Nature Conservancy established the Altamaha River Bioserve, encompassing 1.2 million acres, and the Conservancy has documented more than 120 rare or endangered species in the various habitats, which include longleaf pine, hardwood bottom, cypress swamp, freshwater marsh, and Spartina salt marsh (see inset) on the coast.

An economically important resource since colonial times, freshwater swamps extend from the Altamaha's banks that were cleared in the late 18th century to grow

(Continued on page 8)

The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Franklin Tree — Rarest of the Rare *(continued)*

(Continued from page 7)

rice, cotton, and sugarcane. In the 19th century, the river was a natural artery to float cypress, pine, and oak logs to lumber mills in Darien.

Spartina salt marshes are broad meadows dominated by several species of grasses that are tolerant of salt and anoxic sediment. Broad meadows are interspersed with creeks that are biologically rich, owing to the rich supply of organic matter and the provision of protected habitats for numerous species.)

From his second natural history excursion in 1773, William Bartram described the mighty Altamaha in his book: “But, before I leave the Alatomaha [an alternative spelling], we will proceed to give a further and more particular account of it. It has its source in the Cherokee mountains, near the head of the Tugilo, the great west branch of the Savanna, and, before it leaves them, is joined and augmented by innumerable rivulets; thence it descends through the hilly country, with all its collateral branches, and winds rapidly amongst the hills two hundred and fifty miles, and then enters the flat plain country, by the name Okmulgee [Ocmulgee]; thence meandering an hundred and fifty miles, it is joined on the east side by the Ocone [Oconee], which likewise heads in the lower ridges of the mountains.

“After this confluence, having now gained a vast acquisition of waters, it assumes the name Alatomaha, which it becomes a large majestic river, flowing with gentle windings through a vast plain forest, near an hundred miles, and enters the Atlantic by several mouths.”

The Bartram’s encounter with the curious shrubs that were located near Fort Barrington did not include any record that they collected plants or seeds at the time, but the foliage turned striking orange, red, and purple in the fall, which likely caught their attention and laid the path for William’s return a few years later.



Drawing of the Franklin by Bartram.

The drawing was done in 1782, at his home in Philadelphia.

(insert Bartram drawing of Franklin Tree)

Young William showed much early artistic talent, and his drawings of North American flora and fauna were highly regarded and collected by a host of clients in England, thanks to his father’s connections in Europe. The most influential was Dr. John Fothergill, a physician in London who was also owner of the largest botanical garden in England. Recognizing William’s knowledge and talent, Fothergill also became his client and patron in 1772, funding his research for at least two years to travel in the southern colonies to collect and send botanical specimens and drawings of flora and fauna to him in London. With promise of financial support, William struck out for Georgia in 1773 and did not return to Philadelphia until 1777.

Franklinia alatamaha was not the first name assigned to the plant colony described by the Bartrams. Unable to classify it during the autumn sighting in 1765, they left it unnamed for several years. When William returned to the same location in 1773, he referred to it as *Gordonia pubescens* (wild camellia with fruit covered with tiny hairs), as it closely resembled the native evergreen loblolly bay *Gordonia lasianthus*, which also has large, showy flowers and a similar range, but is evergreen.

William later learned from Dr. Daniel Solander, a botanist associated with his patron Dr. Fothergill, that in fact the specimen William had sent to England was a unique genus. In 1785, in honor of the Bartrams’ great family friend Benjamin Franklin, they named the genus *Franklinia* with alatamaha, in honor of the majestic river, the sole species. Humphry Marshall, who was a Philadelphia botanist and William’s cousin, recorded the change in *Arbustum Americanum* (The American Grove), and it became official. In England, however, botanists followed convention and continued to refer to it by the original name.

(Continued on page 9)

The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Franklin Tree — Rarest of the Rare *(continued)*

(Continued from page 8)

Franklinia and Gordonia are members of the tea family (Theaceae), which also includes the camellias, most often seen in cultivation in the United States as *Camellia japonica* and *Camellia sasanqua*, although there are about 80 species, including *Camellia sinensis*, which is the source of tea leaves. Camellias are native to Japan, Korea, and China.

In 1773, William Bartram wrote in his book, Travels of William Bartram: “On drawing near the fort I was greatly delighted at the appearance of two beautiful shrubs in all their blooming graces. One of them appeared to be a species of Gordonia, but the flowers are larger, and more fragrant than those of the Gordonia lasianthus.” Later, he noted that he had first seen the trees, in the same location on the previous trip with his father, and “we never saw it grow in any other place, nor have I ever seen it growing wild in all my travels.”

William Bartram spent many years documenting flora and fauna as he later wrote in his Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida (the named colonies), eventually working his way to the Gulf Coast and westward to Louisiana. Apparently William recognized the significance that, as perplexing as it seemed, Franklinia only grew in a two-to-three-acre bottomland along the Altamaha River, and that no one else he encountered had ever located another grove or individual specimen in the wild.

Moses Marshall, son of the botanist Humphry Marshall, again located the grove near Fort Barrington in 1790 while on a collecting expedition. That was the last confirmed sighting of Franklinia in the wild.

John Lyon, an English nurseryman, claimed to have found six to eight specimens in 1803, but there is some doubt as to the validity of his report and findings. Still, Lyon was a knowledgeable horticulturist and his commentary indicated that the species was likely in severe decline by then. Many searches thereafter turned up empty, and Franklinia, the beautiful and elusive tree from the Altamaha River, was likely extinct in the wild not long after 1803.

William returned to Philadelphia in 1777 and successfully planted Franklinia, cultivating it in his father’s botanical gardens where it grew and blossomed within a matter of a few years. He settled on the farm and remained there the rest of his life. He did not continue his scientific or artistic endeavors to any great degree, although he published his travel notes in 1791 (republished in London in 1792) and it quickly became popular and was used as an educational guide for decades (Inman, the Civil War deserter and protagonist in Charles Frazier’s recent Civil War novel Cold Mountain, carried and referred to it).

Scientifically, Franklinia produces large, white, fragrant flowers that are symmetrical in outline, bisexual in nature (referred to as perfect), bearing a flurry of bright, and egg-yellow stamens. Flowers occur in late summer, contrasting with the bright green foliage, and continues to flower until first frost, while the foliage turns red to purple, creating a stunning color combination.

It grows either as a shrub or a small tree, usually less than 20 feet tall, rarely living longer than 50 years, and often much less. It has attractive striated (marked with fine, longitudinal lines or ridges) bark and frequently grows multiple trunks, although single (monopodial) trunk trees do occur.

Franklinia has a notorious reputation for being finicky to establish once transplanted, even though it can readily be propagated by woody or soft cuttings, or from prepared seed. It is sensitive to root rot and, due to its limited gene pool -- all plants descend from one or a few that were planted in Bartram’s gardens- it is not a particularly vigorous plant, and it requires enriched, well-drained, acidic soil with ample watering during dry periods. It is at best moderately drought and heat tolerant, yet amazingly it tolerates cold and sub-zero temperatures fairly well.

Franklinia actually appears to be better adapted to northern climates than to the location where it was found by the Bartrams in Georgia. While it disappeared more or less by the late 18th century from its native

(Continued on page 10)

The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Franklin Tree — Rarest of the Rare *(continued)*

(Continued from page 9)

habitat, it was successfully propagated in Philadelphia, and the oldest documented specimens today are at Arnold Arboretum in Boston.

These two plants were propagated in 1905 from cuttings from a tree received by the Arboretum in 1884. The larger plant is 21 feet tall and 53 feet wide with eight vertical trunks greater than five inches diameter. The smaller is 21 feet by 30 feet with six stalks greater than five inches, undoubtedly two of the largest, and likely the oldest, *Franklinia* trees in the world.

In 1998, Bartram's Garden undertook a census where botanical gardens and individuals voluntarily reported living examples. In this nonscientific census, the top five states were Pennsylvania (559), North Carolina (181), New Jersey (157), Virginia (120), and New York (116). Georgia, where *Franklinia* has been assumed to be a native, reported at only 58 locations.

While it is unlikely that botanists will ever know why the small grove of *Franklinia alatamaha* disappeared in Georgia, there have been several theories put forward. One is that the plant declined due to climate change, possibly after "moving" south during a previous ice age, and then suffered from a hotter climate as the ice sheet receded.

Another is that man destroyed the trees or their habitat. It is possible that the grove the Bartrams discovered was no longer genetically diverse enough to withstand pathogens or changing conditions.

A fourth theory is that there was a local disaster such as a tidal flood or fire, but this theory seems unlikely given the documentation of the site for the period 1765 to 1803. None of these theories, however, explains why in their extensive travels neither the Bartrams nor their fellow botanists ever saw another Franklin tree elsewhere.

In addition to its cold tolerance and sensitivity to drought (certainly a common event in Georgia), *Franklinia* has other characteristics that are incompatible. For



example, the plant's flower occurs far later in the year than most trees in the eastern deciduous forest, with the flowers being pollinated in September and later, yet the seed pod does not mature for 13-15 months, requiring a second season.

This would be more consistent if the plant were native to a northern or generally colder climate.

Franklinia is a member of the tea family (Theaceae), and during colonial times, tea was a highly prized commodity in England as well as the colonies. In 1977, Dr. Gayther Plummer, now retired botanist and the state climatologist of Georgia, proposed in a research paper published in the Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society that *Franklinia* was not a native plant at all, but was introduced to America, perhaps in the mid 1700s when the British were importing plants to England and America from all over the globe.

He concluded that by evaluating circumstantial evidence and through a process of elimination, that *Franklinia* most likely originated in Asia. Soil, water, and climate conditions that seem to be best suited for *Franklinia* exist at high altitudes in tropical and subtropical climates, with long mild days, strong sunlight from October through March, and cool nights, and Dr. Plummer opined that *Franklinia* behaves more like an Asiatic camellia than a native plant.

On the other hand, Michael Dirr, author of multiple horticulture books and an acknowledged expert on woody trees and shrubs, believes that *Franklinia* is indeed a native American plant and not one introduced from Asia or Europe. He supports the theory that the rise of cotton farming in the South was the ultimate cause for the decline of the species. Several botanists have identified an unknown cotton pathogen found in soil that is fatal to *Franklinia* and would have spread widely as it was carried downstream through erosion.

If the grove found by the Bartrams was indeed the last to have evaded the pathogen, a small local disaster or event would have led to its eradication from the wild. Dirr pointed out that this is presently the case with the newly

(Continued on page 11)

The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Franklin Tree — Rarest of the Rare *(continued)*

(Continued from page 10)

discovered Wollemi pine population in Australia, where fewer than 100 individuals are known to exist. Even though the location was carefully guarded from all but a few scientists, outsiders have since been allowed to walk among them, introducing a potentially deadly pathogenic fungus. Without modern scientific preventive measures, the Wollemi pine could go the way of the American Franklinia.

Hybridization between Franklinia and other genera have been successful, and may yield one or more cultivars that perform better and are longer lived than Franklinia alataamaha. Hybridization also introduces new genes and increases diversity and vigor, including resistance to pathogens. The time may come when attractive, easily grown hybrids will be commercially available, although the Franklinia will likely never go out of favor with discerning horticulturists who relish the challenge of growing it.

In spite of the difficulty in propagating and maintaining Franklinia as a cultivar, its sheer beauty and mysterious origins makes it a highly sought after and desirable landscape addition. This year, the 310th anniversary of Benja-



min Franklin's death, would be a good time to plant one.

Sources

Direct Gardening Magazine, Bloomington, IL, June 2009

"Franklinia Autumn Leaves," Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia., 2006

"America's First Rare Plant," Terrain, A Journal of Natural Environments, Issue #6, 2004

"Franklin Tree, the Lost Camellia," New Georgia Encyclopedia Anatomy of Eastern Trees, National Audubon Society, Chanticleer Press 1980, Page 604

Grimm's Illustrated Book of Trees, Stackpole Books, 1957, Page 364

Pensacola News Journal, July 2010

Tennessee Garden Forum, the Franklin Tree, April 16, 2005

Travels of William Bartram, the Bartram Trail Conference at Paynes Prairie Stables, 2009

Dr. Alvin Diamond, Troy State University Herbarium

Mike and Claire Carter, Pensacola, Florida

Mike and Susan Burleson, Pensacola, Florida.



**Photo may be of T R Miller
Mill Company around
1950.**

**Picture courtesy of Randy
Covan**

The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Brooklyn, Alabama Post Office

Thanks to Sherry Johnston, who scanned a copy of the article and emailed it to us, we have this story of the night the Brooklyn Post Office burned.

This article reprinted from the Evergreen Courant, for Thursday, September 30, 2010.

**By Lee Peacock,
Courant Staff
Writer**



“It was one of the hottest fires I’ve ever been to,” Paul Fire Chief Scott Matthews said. When we turned the corner we could see it blazing with flames probably 30 to 40 feet in the air. I’m telling you it was hot, hot.”

Johnsonville fire-fighter Richard Holmes echoed Matthew’s remarks saying that despite firefighters’ best

“Conecuh County lost one of its oldest post offices during the past week when fire totally destroyed an historic building Sunday night in downtown Brooklyn.

“Firefighters from Brooklyn, Pau, Johnsonville and Boykin-Damascus responded to the fire at Janice’s Fill-A-Sack and spent several hours bringing the fire under control.

“Firefighters were called to the scene between 8:30 p.m. and 9 p.m. and some Brooklyn firefighters remained on the scene until around 2:15 p.m. the following day.

“No one was injured in the incident, and firefighters described the building as a “total loss.”

“‘It’s just sad,’ Brooklyn Fire Chief John Culliver said. ‘This was a historic site, and the store also housed the community’s post office.’

Firefighters were called to the scene after the store’s alarm system alerted neighbors living next door to the store, Culliver said. The neighbors looked out their window and saw what they believed were electrical wires arcing, he said. The neighbors went down the street to tell a member of the local fire department, who in turn called 911, Culliver said.

“On Tuesday afternoon, no one could say for sure how old the building was, but most agreed that it had been constructed sometime in the late 1920’s or early 1930’s and was built largely of heart lumber and lighter woods.

efforts, they could do little to diminish the fire.

“We put a lot of water on that fire and didn’t hardly turn it none,” he said. ‘We also put a lot of water on an above-ground fuel tank that fed the store’s gas pumps. It was a 1,000-gallon tank and we’d been told that it had recently been filled, so we didn’t want it to get too hot and explode.’

“Brooklyn is one of the oldest communities in Conecuh County and according to the Web site www.postalhistory.com, there has been a post office in the community since 1827.

“Due to the presence of a post office inside the building, state fire marshals and federal postal inspectors also investigated the cause of the fire, Culliver said.

“‘That was one of the reasons we spent so much time at the scene,’ Culliver said. ‘To allow them to conduct their investigation. They said the exact cause of the fire was undetermined but said that they believe it was an accidental fire and were leaning toward faulty electrical wiring as the cause.’

“Brooklyn Postmaster Helen Pate told the Courant on Tuesday afternoon that she still did not know what postal officials planned to do in regard to the community’s mail, which was being handled earlier this week out of the post office in Evergreen.”

The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Brooklyn, Alabama Post Office *(continued)*



The Brooklyn Post Office around 1901

Photograph Courtesy of Jimmy Emerson

The information on the robbery in 1983 and the list of postmasters courtesy of ECHS member and resident of Brooklyn, Alabama, Susan Blair.

The Brooklyn Post Office is famous for a robbery which ended in the arrest of the two men involved and showed the quick thinking and courage of the post mistress at the time, Loree Hamiter.

On July 18, 1983 at about 1:30 p. m. Mrs. Hamiter found herself facing a young man who walked in, demanded money, pointed a gun at her, and pulled the trigger several times (it misfired), then came over the counter and struck her with his pistol, "the robber struck Mrs. Hamiter after a pistol he was pointing at her misfired several times. . . Mrs. Hamiter pulled a .38 caliber pistol from behind the postal counter and fired after handing the man cash [She gave him \$400.]" (*Andalusia Star-News*, July 19, 1983).

The robber, now wounded in the face and neck, left, and Loree Hamiter also left the post office, ran to a store nearby, and called the Conecuh County Sheriff's Department. The two men involved, the one inside the post office and the one waiting outside in a car, were captured soon after the robbery. They were apprehended on the Brooklyn Road just inside the Andalusia city limits.

Brooklyn, Conecuh County, Alabama
Established February 27, 1827
Discontinued on January 7, 1867
Reestablished on February 11, 1867

Postmasters

Appointment Dates Through September 30, 1971

James N. Hart	February 27, 1827
Benjamin H. Halsted	March 25, 1833
John D. Leigh	March 13, 1839
George Dean	January 11, 1842
Julius G. Robinson	June 16, 1843
Alexander T. Howard	February 28, 1857
Young S. Hirschfelder	October 12, 1858
James H. Pearson	February 11, 1867
Lawrence N. Amos	September 13, 1872
Edward N. Amos	April 8, 1885
Alice Amos	May 19, 1914
Sidney Russell Amos	August 14, 1952 (acting)
	December 5, 1952 (confirmed)
Mrs. Loree R. Hamiter	July 13, 1954 (acting)
	September 14, 1954 (confirmed)
Mrs. Helen T. Pate	1987-September 26, 2010

The ECHS *Journal* Section

New York Observed: Greetings from Brooklyn, Ala.

By Roy Hoffman, Published in the *New York Times* for September 15, 2002

YOU might think it's in the middle of nowhere -- down a two-lane Alabama highway lined with pine trees, farmhouses and mobile homes -- but to Janice Matthews and a hundred or so other residents of this crossroads with one general store and a gas pump, it's Brooklyn. "Our Brooklyn," says Janice, petite, fair-haired and chatty, who runs Janice's Fill-A-Sack store with her husband, Dale, lean and philosophical in a black cowboy hat.

Ice cream, pickled eggs, stuffed olives, garden hoses, cap pistols, cat food: as I go down the rows I'm put in mind of a back roads bodega, a Southern version of a general store in the Brooklyn, N.Y., neighborhood where I used to live. But here you can buy chicken feed or catfish-skinning pliers.

"Brooklyn's the meeting point," I'm told by Charlie Philyaw, who's driven five miles from Johnsonville to buy supplies for a party. He chats with me while he pumps gas in front of the store, the "gallons" and "amount" columns slowly spinning. He tells me his buddy Anthony Williams has a special barbecue sauce that he'll be preparing and invites me to the party. I decline but inquire about the recipe. "It's a secret," Charlie says.

I reach for my cellphone to call my daughter, who spent her first years in Cobble Hill before we moved to the South. I'm eager to announce, "Hey, I'm in Brooklyn!" But the phone is useless.

"We're in a dead-cell area," Janice says.

Television reception's not much better, which is why



The Brooklyn Post Office Building after the Fire

Mr. Hoffman's article highlighted this description of Brooklyn," a place where cell-phones don't work, you need a satellite dish for TV and the post office and the Fill-A-Sack, run by Janice Matthews . . . share a building."

Unfortunately, the building he referred to is now gone.

The picture courtesy of Chuck Johns and Franklin D. Smith.

a radio plays in Janice's store. "Fifty percent of the people around here have a satellite," she tells me. "Satellite's a must. It goes up there with a pack of cigarettes, a gallon of gas and a six-pack of beer."

Dale, who left his hometown to work in shipbuilding but returned, seems like a worldly man. The Brooklyn up north seems daunting, though. "I'd like to go visit so I can see the town and meet the people," he says, "but I think it would be confusing."

But Janice knows what she would do upon arriving. "I'd say: 'I'm Janice. I run a convenience store in Brooklyn, Ala.'"

There is Rome, Ga.; Carthage, Tenn; Toronto, Ohio; Manhattan, Kan. America is full of place names that merge the great and the small. The director Wim Wenders made a movie, "Paris, Texas," whose bleak lyricism seemed to play off the name of that locale.

Brooklyns are plentiful. One only need punch a weather request for Brooklyn into an Internet search engine to be met with these choices: AL, CT, IA, IN, KY, MD, MI, MS, NY, and West Brooklyn, IL. But I find in the name Brooklyn, Ala., the charm of opposites. Stickball vs. pond fishing. Mean streets, red clay roads. Klezmer music, banjo. Coney Island hot dogs, pit barbecue. Youse guys, y'all. These legends of place may not be wholly real -- I have listened to banjo music on the Brighton Beach boardwalk, and eaten Nathan's Famous at a fast-food franchise in Alabama -- but the mythologies endure.

My interest in this particular Brooklyn -- in south-

(Continued on page 15)

The ECHS *Journal* Section

New York Observed: Greetings from Brooklyn Ala. (continued)

(Continued from page 14)

central Alabama some 20 miles north of the Florida line -- may also spring from that I grew up in Mobile, about an hour and a half southwest of tiny Brooklyn, and lived for 20 years in New York City, 8 in big Brooklyn, before returning to my hometown. When I watch the movie "My Cousin Vinny," whose comedy turns on Joe Pesci's deeply Brooklyn Vincent Gambino finding himself deep in Alabama, I wonder how the story would have played out had Vinny left one Brooklyn to arrive in yet another.

My grandparents Morris and Mary, Romanian Jews, met as new Americans in Flatbush at the outset of the 20th century, and Morris proposed to Mary in Prospect Park, repeating the pun for generations to come that "she thought I was a good prospect." In 1907, when they made their way to Alabama's Gulf Coast, they might have noticed Alabama's Brooklyn on the map. In those days, the town hummed with activity.

They might have even thought to linger here.

I learn that I'm not the first person to set foot in the two Brooklyns.

In the summer of 2001, a couple from Brooklyn, N.Y., rolled into town and announced they were visiting Brooklyns around the country. Janice spent an afternoon talking with them. Then there was the throng of long-distance bicyclists who took a rest stop at the store. "One of the cycle riders said he was from Brooklyn, N.Y.," Dale recalls. "He sat out here on the bench and told me of his Brooklyn."

Dale thinks about making up a postcard for visitors. In the meantime, since the store also houses the post office -- a stray letter addressed Brooklyn, N.Y., has been known to find its way here -- Janice concedes that a postmark will have to do.

Although much of Brooklyn has vanished, its history is close at hand. Betty Jo Alexander, a store customer hearing of my interest, offers to drive home and pick up her copy of a short history of Brooklyn. It is a two-page essay written by Ed Leigh McMillan for the

Brooklyn Year Book, 1949-50, a publication of a long-gone school.

Brooklyn, Ala., McMillan wrote, was named by Edwin Robinson, who came south in 1821 from Brooklyn, Conn. The town had a landing on the Sepulga River, where keelboats in the 1800's stopped to load cotton, then headed south to the port of Pensacola, Fla. When cotton fell into decline, Brooklyn did too, until timber brought the village back to life.

When river traffic was replaced by freight trains, Brooklyn was eclipsed yet again, until a company from nearby Brewton, Ala., extended its logging railroad into the area. This prosperity, Mr. McMillan stated, "lasted until 1926, when the logging operation by railroad through the territory was abandoned."

I realize that the somnolent crossroads has been a capsule of much rural Southern history: cotton and riverboats, timber and trains, boom followed by a slow dwindling. Had Brooklyn been closer to the central artery of the state -- Interstate 65, half an hour to the west -- it might have continued to thrive.

What sustains the locals at all? Most people have to drive a long way to make a dollar. Janice nods. "If they want education, they have to leave Brooklyn. If they want jobs, they have to leave Brooklyn. If you're not a logger or a farmer and don't want to work from can to cain't 15 hours a day, you have to leave Brooklyn."

"Can to cain't" suggests from when you can see to when you can't; or, for Janice, dawn to dark. "Nights I walk out of here," Janice says, "I'm almost squalling. But if somebody offered me a million dollars, I wouldn't trade."

Outside Janice's Fill-A-Sack I meet a friend of Dale's, Jack Feagin, who's watched changes come and go. Talking to me while idling in his truck, he gestures down the empty road and tells me of a blacksmith shop, a cotton gin, a flowing well long dried up, even a hotel.

Dale adds there was also a casino.

(Continued on page 16)

The ECHS *Journal* Section

New York Observed: Greetings from Brooklyn Ala. (continued)

(Continued from page 15)

A casino?

"It was back of an old barbershop," he says, "where the men used to play cards."

I leave the men and amble down the road, in one direction finding an abandoned tin-roofed building with the words "Brooklyn Volunteer Fire Department" scrolling across a wall webbed with brittle vines. A new volunteer fire department is nearby.

In the other I come to the Brooklyn Baptist Church,

as picturesque as a calendar picture with its white plank walls, deep green shutters and wreath on the door. I step into the cemetery alongside the church, by weathered tombstones from as early as the 1840's.

I head back to the store. When I arrive Janice and Dale are outside, closing up for the day.

I tell them their tiny town is lovely, and that I wonder what folks in the real Brooklyn would think about this one.

Brooklyn History Notes Collected By Mrs. Annie Crook Waters

These notes taken from the November 2, 1974 ECHS Newsletter.

A paper published at Brooklyn in 1886 was called The Plantation News. Another newspaper named The Brooklyn Eagle was being published at Brooklyn in 1888,

In 1886, \$12,000 was appropriated for cleaning out Conecuh River for increasing boat traffic,

January, 1913, surveyors arrived in Brooklyn to survey the Conecuh River for locks. The plans for increased river traffic included passenger boats from River Falls to Brewton and Pensacola. At that time there was a bill in Congress for \$9,000 to improve the Conecuh and Escambia rivers.

In March of 1897 a steamboat was being built at Brooklyn to be used on the Sepulga and Conecuh Rivers as Brooklyn controlled about 1,000 bales of cotton a year and was in need of a line of barges.

In 1896, Mr. Key Hodges, for many years a resident of the Brewton area, taught at a school near Brooklyn named "Searcy."

Standard Gauge, March 5, 1891 - "This little village, is situated in the Southeast corner of Conecuh County, on the Sepulga River, and is one of the oldest towns in the county. There has been little im-

provement made since the war; now and then a dwelling; hence, most of them present quite a dilapidated appearance. Whether this is for want of energy or enterprise is not for me to say.

"There is a great deal of business done here, it being about half way between Evergreen and Andalusia. The people are forced to trade here, or go about twenty miles to either of the above mentioned places.

"There are now three (have been four) business houses, one millinery shop, livery stable, blacksmith shop, one church, and one academy. The most of these are actively engaged in their respective businesses

"We get a daily mail from Evergreen and Andalusia, Mr. W.N. Brawner has charge of the route, and prompt attention is given to it. We have a good school taught by Prof. J.E. Cheatham, a man who is awake to the cause of education, fully abreast with the times, and one of Conecuh's best instructors.

"Dr. Feagin is now and has been for five or six weeks confined to his room, but we learn that he is improving."

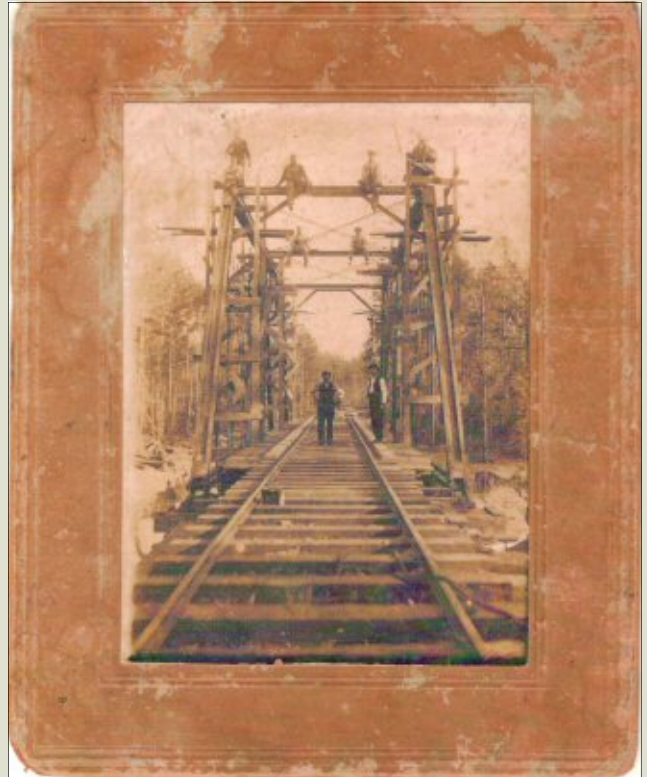
The ECHS *Journal* Section

Train Trestle Across the Sepulga River at Brooklyn, Alabama

The note accompanying this picture states:

“Building of trestle across Sepulga River within town limits of Brooklyn, built around the turn of the century, kept sawmill going another 25 years.”

Picture and text accompanying it courtesy of Susan Blair.



ECHS Fall Pilgrimage to Brooklyn, Alabama

From the ECHS Newsletter for November 2, 1974

On November 9, 1974, ECHS made what was called a “Fall Pilgrimage” to Brooklyn, Alabama. The instructions in the newsletter read:

“The Pilgrimage will take the place of the November meeting. On November 9th, a Saturday afternoon, at 1:00 p. m ‘bring your picnic supper, a flashlight if you plan to go inside the cave, and a folding chair to be used during the afternoon and for the Picnic.’”

The motorcade of ECHS members and guests participating in the Pilgrimage left from the Escambia County Courthouse parking lot in a motorcade led by a Sheriff’s car.

They visited Teddy, Ala. to see the Reuben Hart home (1867), the Brooklyn Baptist Church and cemetery (153

years old in 1974), Turk’s or Sander’s Cave, “downtown” Brooklyn which was said to look “much as it had fifty years ago,” and the last stop was for refreshments at the McMillan, Dozier Camp.

The ECHS newsletter for November 9, 1974 states that the Pilgrimage was very successful with 150 to 160 people participating.

Note: Turk’s or Sander’s Cave is a large limestone cave near Brooklyn which legend claims holds the treasure of a band of nineteenth century highway men led by Joseph Hare.

ECHOES
THE NEWSLETTER FOR
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 276
 Brewton, AL 36427
 Phone: 251-809-1528

E-mail: escohis@escohis.org

We're on the web!

www.escohis.org

FIRST CLASS MAIL
DATED MATERIAL

**Address correction
 requested**

<u>Books for Sale</u>	<u>Mailed</u>	<u>Regular</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
<u>Wildflowers of The Escambia CD</u>	\$12.50	\$10.00
<u>History of Brewton and E. Brewton (sc)</u>	\$51.00	\$45.00
<u>History of Brewton and E. Brewton (hc)</u>	\$66.00	\$60.00
<u>Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook</u>	\$46.00	\$40.00

**Clip the following form and send to ECHS
 Treasurer, P.O. Box 276, Brewton, AL 36427.**

Membership Renewal/Application Form

Date ____/____/____

Names) _____

Mailing Address _____

Do you prefer to get your newsletter by
 U.S. Mail ____ or email? ____

Phone _____

Email _____

Dues _____

(\$25.00/person, \$35.00/two family members - Lifetime,
 \$250.00/person; \$50.00/year business)

Donation _____

(Business members get a business-card sized advertisement in 11 issues of the
 newsletter. Larger sized ads are available)

Amount enclosed _____

Your interests _____

You will help with _____

❖ Dues are to be paid at the beginning of the
 year. Give a membership as a gift!

ECHOES, The newsletter for the Escambia County Historical Society, a 501 (c) (3) corporation, is published monthly except November. Comments are welcome. You may email the Society at escohis@escohis.org or call 251-809-1528.

OFFICERS

President, Tom McMillan
 Vice-President, Robin Brewton
 Secretary, Jo Brewton
 Treasurer, Susan Crawford
 Echoes Editor, Ranella Merritt
 Librarian, Jacque Stone
 Publicity, Lydia Grimes
 Historian/Curator, Barbara Page

TRUSTEES

Wilellen Elliot
 Doris Bruner
 Ranella Merritt
 Tom McMillan
 Ann Biggs-Williams, Alternate