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The October Meeting

Tuesday, October 25, 2011 3:00-5:00 p. m.

The Thomas E. McMillan Museum

The Program: The Civil War, Focus on the War in Tennessee **Guest Speaker Sir Francis McGowin**







Our speaker, Sir Francis, has served as derness survival skills). the Commander (President) of the Covington County Rifles Camp of the Sons of the Confederate Veterans.

Retired from the Marines, he is not only a student of the Civil War but also instructs in bush craft (camping and wil-

Contents

Sir Francis is shown above from left to right in Confederate Uniform, in Scottish dress, and at an event honoring the birthdays of Generals Robert E. Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson.



Sir Francis McGowin Volume 38, Number 10

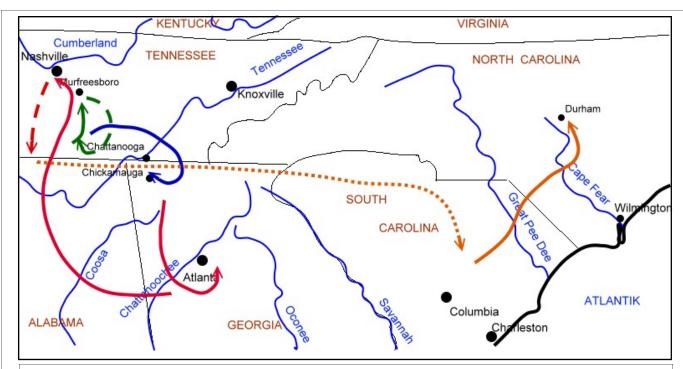
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- No Meeting in November -Christmas Party, Afternoon of **December 15, 2011 Home of Suzanne Kirby** 800 Evergreen Avenue

A Reminder Remember that the beginning of the year is a good time to pay the membership dues to ECHS. Also, dues can be paid before the January meeting.

The Army of Tennessee



Movements of the Army of Tennessee, 1862 until 1865.

The Army of Tennessee was the principal Confederate army operating between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River during the American Civil War. It was formed in late 1862 and fought until the end of the war in 1865, participating in most of the significant battles in the Western Theater. It should not be confused with the Union Army of the Tennessee, named after the Tennessee River

The major battles of the Army with the general in command:

Confederate Heartland Offensive (Bragg)

Battle of Stones River (Bragg)

Chickamauga Campaign (Bragg)

Battle of Chattanooga (Bragg)

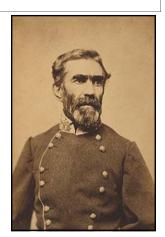
Atlanta Campaign (Johnston, relieved/Hood)

Franklin-Nashville Campaign (Hood)

Carolinas Campaign (Johnston)









Summary of the Minutes for the ECHS September 2011 Meeting

Business and Announcements

The ceramic pottery on display in the meeting room (made by the ceramic art class at JDCC) is on sale for \$5.00.

Lydia Grimes' book <u>Brewton and East Brewton</u> is available from ECHS for \$23.97.

Tom McMillan reported that the cost to reprint 500 copies of Annie Water's book, <u>History of Escambia County</u>, <u>Alabama</u>, would be approximately \$8,000. ECHS has only a few copies of the book left, a book that has consistently sold well and served as a good source of funds for ECHS.

Since elections for officers for ECHS will be held

at the January 2012 meeting, Tom McMillan asked members to be thinking of prospects for officers for 2012-2014.

The Program

Sherry Johnston, ECHS member, genealogist and historian of the Evergreen-Conecuh county Public Library as well as columnist for the Evergreen Current, gave a presentation on the Old Federal Road.

Two of the books she highlighted are Map Guide to American Migration Routes, 1735 to 1815 by William Dollarhide and The Federal road Through Georgia, the Creek Nation, and Alabama 1806-1836 by Henry DeLeon Southerland, Jr. and Jerry Elijah Brown.

Upcoming Events



Old Masonic Lodge at Perdue Hill, Monroe County

Location for Registration for Fall Forestry Tour.

Annual Fall Forestry Tour Thursday, October 27, 2011

The Monroe County Soil and Water conservation District's annual Fall Forestry Tour is an event where landowners can "learn about topics important to forestry and meet with and share ideas with fellow landowners and professionals."

For more information call or email Shannon Hall Jones at 251-743-2587, ext.3 or contact at <Lsh0006@auburn.edu>.



Riikard's Mill

The restored grist mill over Flat Creek, near Beatrice , Alabama.

Ghosts at Rikard's Mill

Friday, October 28 & Saturday, October 29 6:30 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. at Rikard's Mill Historical Park just north of Beatrice, AL.

"BEATRICE, AL – Come join us Halloween weekend at Rikard's Mill as we enjoy pumpkin relay races, pumpkin painting, pumpkin toss and other games before gathering around the campfire to make your own S'mores."

(Continued on page 4)

Upcoming Events (continued)

(Continued from page 3)

Admission \$5.00 per person or \$20.00 per car. Food vendors will be available.

Contact Monroe County Heritage Museum at mchm@frontiernet.net or 251-575-7433, or Rikard's Mill at 575-789-2781.

Also At Rikard's Mill
Cane Syrup Makin' Day
November 5, 2011. 9 am – 2 pm

"The cool, crisp weather of Fall signals the arrival of Cane Syrup Makin' Day down by Flat Creek in north Monroe County, Alabama. Travel to Rikard's Mill, a restored 1845 grist mill, for a day filled with family fun."

Open at 9 a.m. and most activities will end around 2 p.m."

For more information, contact the museum at (251) 575-7433 or mchm@frontiernet.net.



Train Depot at Beatrice

Annual Monroe Sausage Festival, Beatrice, Ala. Saturday, November 5 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The Monroe Sausage Company in Beatrice issues this invitation: "Please join us for the 5th Annual Monroe Sausage Festival in the historic community of Beatrice outside Monroeville

"Special guests will be BASS founder Ray Scott, Distinguished Young Woman (Formerly Junior Miss), Casey Blankenship, and talented guitarist and singer Kim Unger who will perform live. You'll have the opportunity to have your picture made with our guests as well as the famous 'Mr. and Mrs. Monroe Sausage.'"

For more information, telephone at 251-789-2242 or use this web address <info@beatricealabama.com>.

West Florida Genealogical Society
2011 Fall Educational Seminar
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5TH. 2011



Speaker, Elizabeth Wells of Samford University

Hagler Auditorium (Bldg 2a), Pensacola State College Campus 9:00 AM-1:30 PM - Registration at 8:15

Three Sessions with Breaks and Refreshments

Session 1. Early Days in the Old Southwest: Territorial Settlement through Antebellum Development

Session 2. Military Records and Genealogy: The people who fought and the records they left behind

Session 3. Finding Grandpa in the Pew: Using Religious Records in Genealogical & Historical Research

Contacts:

- 1. Cynthia Dean, at 850-432-072 < cgdean@bellsouth.net>
- 2. Bruce Rova, 850-934-0139 < flrova@mchsi.com>

Cost:

With registration by October 31, \$20.00; registration after October 31, \$25.00.

The Blacksher House: Brewton's Haunted House

This photograph of the Blacksher House in Brewton is from the website < http:// insaneone.

deviantart.com/art/ Blacksher-House-9793563>.

Since it is the month of Halloween, it seems appropriate to feature Brewton's most famous haunted house.

There are many stories of ghosts heard and seen at this abandoned house. However, it was once the home of a family remem-

bered with admiration and fondness.

Lydia Grimes in an article for the <u>Brewton Standard</u>, April 7, 2004, gives a history of the family that actually built and lived in the house.

Lydia does not detail why the house has become abandoned but does refer to the descendants of the family who now own the property.

"Erasmus Manford Blackshear, the son of James Uriah Blackshear, perhaps had the closest ties to Brewton. He owned many acres of land around May Branch on the outskirts of Alco. He ran a dairy farm and it was he who built the home that has been allowed to run down in Alco. The house sits at the end of a dirt road that turns by Alco Baptist Church and must once have been quite a beauty. It has been used and abused over the last several years until if something isn't done, the place will be gone. It would be such a shame to see that happen as it could be such a beautiful place again with the right amount of care and concern.

"Erasmus Manford Blackshear and his wife Mary Cockrell lived in the home and raised their children there. They were James Uriah Blackshear (20 Sept. 1909-26 Sept. 1927), Erasmus Manford Blackshear Jr. (25 Dec. 1913-16 July 1960), Frank M. Blackshear (30 Nov. 1920-18 Jan. 1955) and Martha Blackshear who was born in 1911.

"Martha Blackshear married a Conner and their



descendants now own the place in Alco. I hope to make contact with them and see about some history on the house.

"I did talk to Mrs.
Henry Hildreth and she
told me that she knew the
family pretty well. In fact
she dated one of the sons,
Bill. Now I have noticed
that I have no listing for a
William Blackshear, so
he must have been overlooked in my material.

"Anyway, Mrs. Hildreth said that the family used to have some of the best parties and dances at their home. Everyone old enough to drive had their own car and they had made their own swimming place down on May Branch.

"Mrs. Hildreth said that she had never seen a family pull together as much as the Blackshears did during the time the bottom fell out of the stock market followed by the depression. Mary Cockrell Blackshear went back to teaching and all the young people got jobs.

"'They pulled together,' said Mrs. Hildreth. 'You would never have known that they had lost so much.'"

A Query

Victoria Thornton has sent this message concerning the Blacksher house:

"My children and I are from Brewton. We were talking about the old Blacksher home the other day and wondered it there are any pictures of it from it's 'heyday.' If so, do you know where we could find them?"

Anyone with a picture of the house can contact ECHS.

Ghosts of Escambia County and the Murder at Murder Creek

By Jerry Simmons

Reprint of an Alger Sullivan Historical Society column for 10/02/2008

Since this is the first week of October, and Halloween's coming up, I thought it appropriate to tell you a little local lore about that mysterious phenomenon: ghosts! An article written by Doris Bruner in the Escambia County Historical Society's quarterly from December 1977 provided much of the background for what you're about to read.

In yesteryear, houses were not nearly so close and bunched up as they are these days. Trick-ortreaters might have miles to travel just to get a fistful of gumballs; it would soon be evident that the distance wouldn't be worth the effort and the custom would fade away.

Panthers, bobcats, bears, and other creatures of the night were more abundant than they are these days, what with today's civilization encroaching upon their homes. A panther's screech coursing through the darkness of the forest would make one think every shadow was some varmint determined to "get" them. My mother told when she was a small girl deep in the woods near Burnt Corn, that more than once, a panther came up on their porch screeching and scratching at the door, wanting to come in. Naturally, this terrified the occupants, particularly when Papa (my grandfather) wasn't home.

In the vicinity of a little clear creek near Jay, the tale of a woman's ghost is talked about. It seems the circumstances of her death were never known. Her mangled body was found on a bank of that stream clad only in a nightgown. Folks speculated as to why she was there on the creek bank and in a nightgown, no less. Maybe she walked in her sleep and some vicious animal had attacked her. At any rate, it's been told that screams of agony are heard from time to time, disturbing the imagination of anyone near that little stream.

East of Brewton, a creek once known as Mill Branch is crossed by a small bridge at the foot of Cedar Hill and near the settlement of "Little Germany." It is at this place that sometimes a horse's hoof beats and the sounds of harness and saddle may be heard, along with low and terrible moans as it comes nearer. Sometimes the apparition is bold enough to allow one to actually see it riding by, stooped over in the saddle, as if wounded and dying.

In the Conecuh/Escambia swamp there are large mounds, one of which is near the Century-Flomaton area, and another is near Brewton. Whether an Indian mound for burial or ceremonial reasons, or simply an anomaly of the earth, there's been no consistent explanation. In each of them it's been said there was a large chain that is seen infrequently.

The "Swamp Mound Ghost" frequents that mound near Brewton and thwarts any attempt to dig for the chain. As one digs, there seems to emanate from the very center of the mound horrific sounds of clanking chains, moans, and even creaks as if a rusty door was being opened (That would thwart any effort to dig by me!).

According to the article, "The report of this mound comes from prominent citizens ... not given to supernatural fears and old wives' tales." Obviously instead of bulldozing the mound to destroy the legend, they prefer to enjoy the mystery surrounding it, "as wide-eyed boys still listen and wonder about the chain that cannot be surfaced and the chilling sounds guarding whatever treasure or bones lying underneath."

Most of you already know the story of why Murder Creek is so named, but bear with me as I give a shortened version here.

In 1788 a Colonel Kirkland of South Carolina and his son, nephew, and several other gentlemen were making their way to Pensacola and then they planned to eventually settle in Louisiana. Another colonel, Colonel McGillivray, who had influence among the Indians of this region, sent a servant with them to guide them to Pensacola. It was dangerous to travel without McGillivray's protection, particularly since the party had quite a sum of silver in their saddlebags.

As they neared a creek that flowed into the Conecuh River, they met a pack-horse party on its way back from a trading expedition in Pensacola. The party was comprised of an Indian who'd killed so many men he was called "Manslayer," and a white

(Continued on page 7)

Ghost of Escambia County and the Murder at Murder Creek (continued)

(Continued from page 6)

man who had murdered at least one man. He was ferocious, and the Indians called him "Cat." Also along was a bloodthirsty black man called Bob.

When Kirkland and his party were out of sight, the ruffians made camp. Kirkland went on across the creek and camped near the trading path. They placed their saddlebags under their heads and their guns were leaned against a tree. At midnight, the Indian led his band of scoundrels to Kirkland's camp and killed every one of them except the servant of McGillivray and a couple of his companions.

After they divided the booty, they went to the Creek nation and when what they had done was related to McGillivray, he sent men to capture them. All but Cat escaped, and he was taken to the spot where the killing took place to be hanged. On the very tree where Kirkland and his party were murdered, Cat was hung from a limb, but did not die immediately. While he was still dangling and kicking in the air, his captor, a Frenchman named Milfort put him out of his misery by shooting him dead.

Such is the origin of the name of Murder Creek.

The Ghost of Sizemore Creek

By Jerry Simmons

It's funny sometimes how you just happen across something that piques your interest. The column today is the result of a recent happenstance.

In cleaning out some file drawers last week, I came across a folder with the name "Sizemore" on it. I'd first heard of Sizemore some years back, when one of the ASHS members told about living in a camp car from the time she was about 4 years old until she was 19. The camp was Alger's Camp 8, and Sizemore was one of its locations before it was finally moved near Flomaton next to Sardine Road.

I opened the folder and discovered a clipping from the Birmingham News dated June, 1997. It contained a story I'd never heard, and I'll venture a guess that many of you haven't either.

To give a little background, I'll take some information from Annie Waters' book, The History of Escambia County, Alabama. She said it isn't known exactly where the Sizemore community is. Sizemore Creek begins somewhere near Holman prison and is probably named for a Sizemore family who lived there when the area was still part of Baldwin County before 1868.

From old accounts from people in the area it's said there was a school house built of logs with what's called a puncheon floor. I didn't know what

"puncheon" meant, so I looked it up. I'll save you the trouble by telling you what I found. The floor's boards were made by hewing instead of sawing. If a family didn't live near a sawmill they used puncheons for floors in their log buildings. The puncheons were split logs, hewn smooth on the split side only.

The picture [that accompanied] this column is a picture of an Escambia County, Alabama log schoolhouse which I suspect is the very same one described above.

In addition to the floor being roughly made, they used split logs as benches with wooden pegs holding the benches together. Mrs. Waters wrote, "The feet of the smaller children dangled all day, as the benches were all of the same height."

Some other facts related by Mrs. Waters included "One remembered teacher was a Mr. Sherril, and the pupils came from the Thigpen, Palmore, Sanders, Blankenship, Walton, Bette, Boggan, and Steen families. There was a Spanish lawsuit over the land from a point above Canoe to Escambia Bay along Sizemore Creek at an estimated value of fifteen to thirty million dollars, but the results of the suit could not be ascertained. Jim Travis, a brother of [Alamo] hero William B. Travis, operated a mill on Sizemore Creek at an early date."

(Continued on page 8)

The Ghost of Sizemore Creek (continued)

(Continued from page 7)

Back to the Birmingham News article: it was noted that a bridge on County Road 27 (Robinsonville Road) across Sizemore Creek was renamed in 1997, and the locals wanted to keep the name "Sizemore Creek Bridge." Some 345 citizens signed a petition and presented it to the Escambia County Commission, according to the article. I suppose the name change was halted – I don't know. If someone can tell me, please do.

One of the reasons put forth for the uproar was the bridge name's historical significance. There was also somewhat of a supernatural significance as well. You see, the bridge was haunted by a headless woman! Over the years, and from generation to generation, the story's been passed down about a female apparition climbing into wagons as they crossed the creek at the bridge, and one instance was related about her jumping onto a motorcycle passing by. There's no word as to whether the motorcycle rider survived the scare or not.

One of the local residents named a participant in this scary scene: "J.B. Graham came across the bridge at night. A headless woman got in the buggy and rode with him until he got to his home at Little Rock, near a church."

I think that I would have let the lady have the buggy and go on by herself. I think I would rather walk – or run – home.

Let me know if you ever see this lady.

A Wish List of Books for the Alabama Room

The Alabama Room's collection could use these books. Perhaps you would be interested in purchasing one and donating it to the collection.

 The Collected works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796 - 1810. Ed. By H Thomas Foster II. The University of Alabama Press www.uapress.ua.edu>.

"Benjamin Hawkins, a U.S. senator and advisor to George Washington, was a government agent for southeastern Indians during one of the longest eras of peace in the historic period. His journals and correspondence provide an invaluable record of the natural and cultural environment of the Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and especially the Creek Indians prior to the removal."

Creek Paths and Federal Roads. Indians,
 Settler, and Slaves and the Making of the
 American South. By Angela Pulley Hudson.

"In Creek Paths and Federal Roods, Angela Pulley Hudson offers a new understanding of the development of the American South by examining travel

within and between southeastern Indian nations and the southern states, from the founding of the United States until the forced removal of the southeastern Indians in the 1830's." The University of North Carolina Press < www.uncpress.unc.edu>.

3. <u>Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Fron</u> <u>tier, 1795-1817</u>. by Robert V. Haynes. The University Press of Kentucky.

"Rarely do we encounter an author who has so thoroughly mastered the sources, who so clearly understands the complex issues, and who shows such total familiarity with the major players. In addition Hayne's prose is a genuine pleasure to read."

John. D. W. Guice, coauthor of <u>The Old Southwest,</u> 1795-1893: Frontiers in Cocflict.

For more information check with Jerry Simmons, Museum Coordinator.

Snapshots

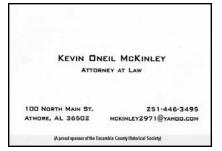


Our Business Members

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

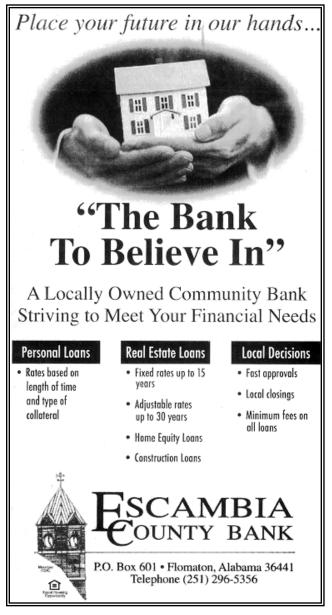












Reconstruction

In this second installment, the article on reconstruction, the discussion of southern prisoners in northern prisons continues.

Although this is not the end of this article, a list of sources have been placed at the end of this article.

Please note: Some of the following descriptions of conditions and situations are quite graphic.—editor

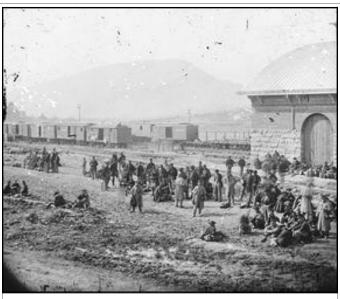
"If a prisoner happened to violate even one of the

simplest regulations, he was sure to be shot at, and should he be so unfortunate as to turn over in his sleep, groan, or make any noise, which some were apt to do while sleeping, the tent in which he lay would be fired into.

"For instance, one night in Company G, Fourth Division, someone happened to groan in his sleep. The Negro patrol was near, heard it, and fired into the tent, killing two and wounding several others. These were killed while sleeping and were unconscious of having committed any offence whatever. None of these patrols were punished, but were praised for vigilance.

"Scores of incidents, similar in character and result, might be given...Suffice it to say that a man's life was in more danger than upon a picket line, for he was completely at the mercy of the cruel and malignant Negro soldiery. Shooting into the tents of prisoners became so common that the officers of the white regiments protested against their (the colored troops) being allowed in camp, and accordingly they were withdrawn at night, and white patrols substituted."

In the Southern Historical Society Papers, James T. Wells reported on a prison experience at Point



Confederate Prisoners

Lookout, Tennessee, stating that he was permitted to publish the following extracts from an archived letter. Serg't J. H. Neibling of Marshall's Battery, dated Altoona, May 22d. "I think I have rested enough, and will attempt to let you know how and what we are doing. We are about a mile from Altoona, in camp, where we arrived yesterday.

"Everything seems quiet again, but I cannot

tell how long it will last. Jackson's Brigade is on picket. They report that they have not heard or seen a Yankee for the last three days. I think they have taken the hint, and gone back. I am of the opinion that as soon as we get rested we will start after them.

"We have lost all the best part of the State for raising crops. I never saw such a beautiful country in all my life. The corn and wheat growing in abundance everywhere, and now all is in the hands of the enemy; and if we should succeed in driving them off again, they will surely destroy everything as they go.

"We witnessed many pitiable sights in our retrograde movements. Woman [sic], children and old men were tottering along the roads in advance of our army, all having left their homes and every thing they possessed in the hands of the enemy. Every town or village we would come to we would form a line of battle to hold the enemy in check, until the people who wished to leave could do so.

"One night while on the march we overtook a beautiful young lady with a small child of only a

(Continued on page 12)

Reconstruction (continued)

(Continued from page 11)

few months of age on her arm. She had been carrying the baby for some time, and was nearly exhausted from fatigue. I took the child before me on my horse and took care of it all that night and next day, while the mother rode upon the guns; and all along the road could be seen soldiers carrying the babes and childrens [sic] of the poor unfortunate and distressed people.

"Who could wish or want to be out of the

army, after witnessing such scenes? I am as tired of the war as any one in the world, but willingly will I remain where I am, and stake my life for freedom and independence. I have often thought that I was not gaining anything by being in the army; but I never will think so again, for I am now satisfied that her. This atrocious crime can be verified by a numit is my duty to be where I am.

"Our troops are in the greatest spirits I ever saw a body of men in my life. We have been greatly outnumbered by the enemy, but we have whipped and repulsed every charge they have made on our lines. We have had thirteen killed and wounded in my company. Our first Lieutenant had his horse shot from under him. I will probably write again tomorrow."

From the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion - .R.-Series I. Confederate Correspondence, Orders and Returns Relating to Operations in Southeastern Virginia and North Carolina, July 5, 1864 to July 31, 1864:

"I have the honor to report that about the 13th of



Rebel Prisoners

June last a regiment of negroes, commanded by Colonel Draper, of Massachusetts, arrived at Pope's Creek, in Westmoreland County, Va., accompanied by about fifty regular U.S. Cavalry. They marched to Union Wharf Richmond County, in divided commands, taking negroes, horses, cattle, bacon, wagons, farming utensils, &c., all of which were either carried away or burned.

"About the 14th ultimo, at a place called Hutt's Store, near the center of Westmoreland

County, some of the negro troops went to the house of Private George, of Ninth Virginia Cavalry, and committed a rape upon his wife, who had just been confined with a babe only six weeks old. She is now almost a maniac, and begs that some one will kill ber of witnesses who are personally cognizant of the fact. In Warsaw, Richmond County, the negro troops attempted to ravish white ladies, but were foiled by the assistance of the female slaves of the households."

In the Archives of Louisiana, the book, The Conduct of Federal Troops in Louisiana During the Invasion of 1863 and 1864, Acadiana Press, 1988, comes this account by David C. Edmonds of firsthand reports of the Yankee army trying to poison innocent men, women, and children. The report was compiled from sworn testimony given under the direction of Gov. Henry W. Allen, April 1865. The following is a letter written by Dr. Sabatier for a

(Continued on page 13)

Reconstruction (continued)

(Continued from page 12)

report of Yankee conduct (Pg. 91-92).

"... when the small-pox broke out among the Federal troops, then occupying New Iberia, it was impossible in our vicinity to procure the smallest portion of vaccine matter... I used my best exertions to procure some vaccine from the Federal physicians in New Iberia, and through one of my confreres succeeded in getting a few points loaded with vaccine, which I immediately inoculated to my own children."

Dr. Sabatier goes on to write how his children suffered more form the vaccine than from small pox. "In fact," he states, "A few days after the operation, one of my poor little baby's arms was horribly swollen and inflamed, and on the second day appeared a pustule which had nothing of the appearance of vaccine..."

Unfortunately for Dr. Sabatier many children died including his own. He sent a copy of his report to several doctors at hospitals in New Orleans, and their reports back to him was that the "vaccine" was made to kill. The governor's report stated that over "two thousand perished in six weeks." They died because of a poison passed off as a vaccine.

In the summer of 1863 another civilian doctor by the name of George Hill witnessed the Union army occupy the port of Brasher (today called Morgan City). In this writer's opinion the event that took place was one likened to those not seen again until Hitler and the Nazis issued their "final solution." Dr. Hill was reported as being "a distinguished physician and surgeon of Opelousas." He wrote that all his years as a physician did not prepare him for what he saw.

"Also in the summer of 1863, Berwick's Bay and a portion of the Lafourche country were taken possession of by the Confederate army. I, with many others who had lost property by the raid which the Federal army made between the 20th of April and the 20th of May of this year, visited the Bay for the

purpose of recovering our property.

"I was among the first to cross the bay; and having been informed on the night of my arrival by a gentleman named March that several of my lost Negroes were at the sugar house of Dr. Sanders (Henry Sanders), and that others were there in a dying condition, I [left] in the morning [for the] sugar house of Dr. S. and entered it by a door in the west end. [Original sentence says: "I in the morning as soon as sugar house of Dr. S. and entered it by a door in the west end."] -edited

"The scene which then and there presented itself can never be effaced from my memory. On the right hand, female corpses in a state of nudity, and also in a far advanced stage of decomposition. Many others were lying all over the floor, many speechless and in a dying condition.

"All appeared to have died of the same disease - bloody flux. The floor was slippery with blood, mucus and other body fluids. The dying, and all those unable to help themselves, were lying with their scanty garments rolled around their upper body - the lower part of the body naked - and every time an involuntary discharge of fluids, combined with air, would pass, making a slight noise, clouds of flies, such as I never saw before, would immediately rise and settle down again on all the exposed parts of the dying. In passing through the house a cold chill shook my frame, from which I did not recover for several months, and, indeed, it came near costing my life.

"As I passed from the house, I met with a Negro man of my own, who informed me that he had lost his wife and two children. I asked him if his friends - the Yankees - had not furnished him with medicine. He said, 'No, and if they had, I would not have given it to my family because all who took their medicine died within twelve hours from the time of its being given."

(Continued on page 14)

Reconstruction (continued)

(Continued from page 13)

This "deposition" ends with the remark that it was shown to Dr. Sanders, who was then a member of the Louisiana House of Representatives. Dr. Sanders knew of the incident and was recorded as saying, "Before the arrival of Dr. Hill, he had caused many decomposed bodies that filled the coolers to be removed and interred... A hundred others would, if necessary, add their testimony to that of these gentlemen."

This event became known as the Sugar House Incident (or the Sugar House Murders) and the house in which it occurred remains standing today. In 1988 the State of Louisiana ordered the area scanned by infrared imaging in an effort to locate the mass graves. (Note: No further records were discovered that might show that the imaging technique was successful.)

Following is a letter copied verbatim and provided by Claire Carter of Pensacola, Florida. Mrs. Carter is a descendent fourth removed. The content will provide colorful insight as to how one family prepared itself to cope with Northern occupation in Mississippi. The letter describes an incident that occurred regarding a visit to the gate by Gen. Hugh T. Reid and it also mentions some of the hardships that the family were having to endure.

Oxford, Miss. March the 15th 1863

Dear Cousin Susan:

It has been a long, long time since I received a letter from you. Why have you not written? Since the blessed (cussed) Yanks deserted us, it seems that all our friends and the rest of mankind followed their example.

We have mail. We will realize a change either for the better or worse, soon I think. Two thousand cavalry Yankees passed Lamar yesterday coming in this direction. They will either open been living a very isolated life of late - cut off from everybody and everything, get nothing to eat and nothing to wear, see

no one but ourselves - and precious seldom get the way I suppose for the better or for worse. I don't care much which, so we are finally whipped.

The vile wretches cannot serve me much worse than they have. Five of my negroes went off with them - Susan, George, Anna, Edy, Susa, and Ben. Wash died a short time before the Yankees came, so you see I am broken up almost entirely.

We managed to get along very peaceably (sic) with the "Blue retches" - Cornellia Lobdele stayed with us and Willie was at home. We slept in our dresses three weeks, not knowing at what time my house would be broken open or burned. Florence took down their vile Flag which was hoisted on Alec Barr's gate, and they made threats about what they were going to do. They did not like to see Willie either, in his gray suit, with brass buttons - one went so far as to tell him he had a great mind to take it off him. Willie told him he had better come and try it

Your cousin, Hugh Reid, from Iowa was talking to Willie at the time. He rode up to my gate and asked for Alec B. and told Willie to tell his grandma that his father was still living, and to tell em if he could be of any service at all, he would render it with a deal of pleasure. But the next day they retreated - he was only in town one day. Willie said he was the image of Cousin Hugh. He is a Brigadier-General. How would you like to see him? Alec says he is an out and out abolitionist and he did not want to see him.

Alec has gone to Panole - is in Chalmer's staff, I believe. Emily is coming home in April with William, if he goes to S.C. Their lot and house was very much damaged by the Yankees - It seemed that the whole of Grant's Army camped in this end of Town - My yard and kitchen were filled with them all the time. I tell you it was a perfect reign of Terror!! We are expecting them again, but have made up our minds to stand like Southern woman should do,

(Continued on page 15)

Reconstruction (continued)

(Continued from page 14)

firmly at our post, and let them see what we are willing to suffer and endure, and what our sentiments are towards them. But I know you are tired of this, but I have very little else to write you.

Willie will not return to Va. till August. He is a grown man and very good looking. Florence is taking music lessons, with a view to teach, when the war is over.

Lizzie Belcher married a gentleman from Memphis - Miss Stockard has come to Memphis with Mrs. Taggart to try and get some of her surplus negroes. They haven't one. The Taggarts are doing nothing here, barely living! Their father sends them money occasionally. He is in Cousin Hugh's regiment.

Dr. Isom is in Jackson - in the hospital. He lost 3 negroes by the Yankees, and had 4 young negro girls to die when they were here - It is thought they were poisoned. A good many negroes died on two farms thought to be poisoned. We have not heard anything from Margaret Cater lately. She was doing her own work when I heard from her last. Are you ever coming to see us again – We would like to go to Pontotoc while Willie is here, but that is entirely out of the question, it is with difficulty we can get a horse to plough or go to Milen.

Give my love to Clementine, to Cousin Bob and his wife. Write by Jeny (?), send your letter to Mrs. John H. Miller in town.

Affectionately yours, M. T. Barr

To be continued

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