

The July Meeting The Thomas E. McMillan Museum Tuesday, July 24, 2012, 3:00 p. m.

The Program

Guest Speaker Dr. Thomas Lane Butts of Monroeville will speak on the topic "Fifty Years of Social Change in the Escambia, Conecuh, and Monroe County Area."

Focus of the Program

From Dr. Butts, pictured at the right,

"There are several ways of looking at change. You can consider world-wide change or change in a certain geographical area. You may consider all change over a given period of time (social, economic, technological, etc.) or you can take one factor in society and look at it over a given period of time. An even more limited view is to take one factor as experienced by



one person and consider it over a period of time.

"I will take one factor, social change in race relations and civil rights in South Alabama as experienced in my journey as a clergyman. This will be done primarily with vignettes from my life and ministry. I will begin with my childhood years in Conecuh County in the 30's and end with my retirement years in Monroeville."

A Brief Biography of Dr. Butts

Born and raised in Conecuh County, Alabama, he is a graduate of Pensacola Junior college and Troy University. He received his Graduate Degree in Theology at Emory University, has a Graduate Degree in Pastoral Psychology from

Northwestern University and Garrett Biblical Institute in Evanston, Illinois, and a Doctor of Divinity from Huntingdon College In Montgomery, Alabama.

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Ford Model T, Picture courtesy of [Muscle Car Website](#)

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**The August Meeting
Tuesday, August 21, 2012
Program: Guest speaker, Cartledge
W. Blackwell, Architectural Historian**

**A Correction for ECHOES 2012 06
Fort Pierce was located in Baldwin
County, not Clark County**

**Workday in the Alabama Room
Tuesday, August 7, 2012
9:30 a. m.**

A Brief Biography (*continued*)

(Continued from page 1)

He served churches in Alabama and West Florida for forty-eight years, serving four years as a District Superintendent in the United Methodist Church. He retired from the active ministry in June 1998, and is presently Minister Emeritus of First United Methodist Church in Monroeville, Alabama.

Author, teacher, sought after speaker as well as minister, Dr. Butts has published one book, Tigers in

the Dark, and has been a columnist for several newspapers including the Montgomery Advertiser and the Mobile Press. An active member of the civil rights movement since the 1950's, he has received awards for his distinguished service as a community leader.

He is married to Hilda A. Tidwell. They have two married children, Thomas Lane Butts, III, and Rebecca Jane Beck. €

Summary of Minutes for ECHS June 2012 Meeting

ECHS Members and Guests Recognized at the Meeting

Jacob Lowery of Burnt Corn; Bob Rutledge of Pensacola; Neal Collier of Century; Paul Warren of Panama City, Shirley Weaver and her granddaughters, Ryann and Alayson of Baldwin County; Mike Edwards and his parents, Buddy and Elizabeth Edwards, of Brewton.

Reexamination of the 1994 Excavation Materials and Artifacts of Fort Crawford Site

Society members voted to approve a recommendation by the ECHS Board of Trustees that the society sponsor a reexamination of the 1994 excavations and artifacts found at the Fort Crawford site in East Brewton. These excavations were performed by Troy University.

The money for the project will not come from ECHS funds but from outside sources/donations.

This project will be carried out by the Center for Archaeological Studies of the University of South Alabama under the supervision of the director of the center, Dr. Greg Waselkov.

Bonnie Gums, the senior historical archaeologist of the center, will work with Dr. Waselkov.

Microfilm Reader

Museum Coordinator Jerry Simons announced that the Microfilm Reader in the Alabama Room is "kaput." One suggestion for dealing with the problem of reading the microfilm material (copies of back issues of local newspapers) is to have the microfilms converted to CD's at a cost of \$25 each. Neal Collier suggested that the idea of converting to CD's would be a good idea as they could be offered for sale.

These suggestions will be discussed at the next Trustees Meeting. €

Dedication of Marker for Cistern, a Part of Brewton's First Water System

The Cistern, which was a part of the city of Brewton's Electric Lights and Water Works Fire Protection System, was dedicated on Thursday, July 12, 2012. The remains of the brick cistern or water tank are located in Burnt Corn Creek Park.

After Brewton city-crews



Brewton Mayor Ted Jennings at the Dedication

uncovered the remains of the brick cistern in 2011, Mayor Jennings asked ECHS to research the history of the cistern. ECHS archivist David Allen researched and wrote the history which now appears on the marker.

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Dedication of Marker for Cistern *(continued)*

(Continued from page 2)

We learn from that history that the water cistern or tank was built in the early 1890's. It was part of the fire protection system for the lumber mills in the area as well as for the city. Fire was a serious concern for the mills and many had fires that destroyed their facilities.

The lumber companies located on this site were the Blacksher Miller Lumber Company, which became Foshee and McGowin Lumber in 1899 and then was bought by the Lovelace Brothers in 1900.

Other tanks and wells would have been located in

the area as part of the fire protection system. "There were at least three wells dug and were used to constantly feed the water level in this tank. One well is just down the embankment from the back wall of the tank structure and it still flows today out of a vertical cast iron pipe" (from the Cistern Marker).

ECHS Vice-President Sally Finlay represented the society at the dedication.

Source for the photograph and the information about the marker and the dedication is "Piece of City History Dedicated" by Lydia Grimes, [brewtonstandard.com](http://www.brewtonstandard.com) <<http://www.brewtonstandard.com/2012/07/15/piece-of-city-history-dedicated/>>. €

Flea Markets at Rikard's Mill, Beatrice, Alabama

The Flea Markets

Beginning August 18, Rikard's Mill will be the site of a monthly **Flea Market** every 3rd Saturday from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm.

Vendor set up will be 8:00 am - 10:00 am. \$10 booth fee or \$20 with electrical access.

Vendors of fresh produce, canned goods, antiques, collectibles, farm implements & hand-made crafts are encouraged to register.

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



Rikard's Mill

at 251-789-2781 for more information or to register as a vendor.

The Mill's History

The mill was built by Jacob Rikard around 1840 and is still a working grist mill. It is run by the power of the water from Flat Creek that runs under it. The mill has been rebuilt over time and now uses 36 inch stones to grind corn into meal and grits

rather than the original 48 inch stones.

Picture and information from TravBuddy <<http://www.travbuddy.com/Rikards-Mill-v266741>>. €

Montpelier Methodist Church

From the article "Baldwin County Commissioners Hope to Move Historic Montpelier Methodist Church to Bicentennial Park," we learn that the Thomas John Earle family, who own the church, wants to donate it to Baldwin County so it can be included in the 19th Century Village at the Baldwin county Bicentennial Park located at Stockton, Alabama.



The Baldwin County Commissioners are looking for ways to fund the move of the beautiful and historic church since the estimated cost for the move is \$80,000.

The Bicentennial Park, a 367 acre site still in the planning stages for exhibits and activities, is dedicated to "preserving the county's

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Montpelier Methodist Church *(continued)*

(Continued from page 3)

rich culture and leaving a historical legacy for future generations” (from the Baldwin County Website < http://www.co.baldwin.al.us/PageView.asp?edit_id=845>).

Background/History for Montpelier

From the website Gazetteer of Montpeliers and Montpelliers in the United States, this history:

“Historical locale in north Baldwin Co., about 5 miles east of Blacksher. A settlement existed here by 1856, when it appears on John La Tourette’s Map of the State of Alabama and West Florida. The principal building there today is Montpelier Methodist Church. Montpelier and Blacksher refer to the same general area in north Baldwin County, with Blacksher being the current name.

“Its origins lie in the 1812 war with Britain, when the Creek Indians were encouraged to rise in arms, massacring several hundred settlers who had taken refuge in Fort Mims, near the junction of the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers. (At this time the area was in Mississippi territory, Alabama not achieving statehood until 1819.)

“After the battle of Fort Mims in 1813, two more forts were built, Fort Montgomery and Fort Montpelier. A huge home with white columns was built at Montpelier, according to resident Tom Bradley, but burned in the early 1880s.

“The home that still stands in which Mrs. Frank Earle lives was constructed in 1884. Bradley’s grandfather and Francis Earle lived in the first Montpelier home. Francis Earle’s sister, Mary, married Bradley’s grandfather and had two sons, Ulmer and J. T.

“When the original Montpelier burned, the Bradleys built a home across the highway from Montpelier. Francis Earle stayed in Montpelier and eventually left it to his son, Frank.

“Before his presidency, Andrew Jackson and his wife, Rachel stayed at Montpelier for five weeks in 1821. It was there he resigned May 31, 1821 as governor of Florida. His troops were stationed at Montpelier.

“In its day, 150 years ago, Montpelier was the social place of its time. *Thanks to Jeanette Bornholm of the Foley Public Library, Foley, AL, for this info*” (<http://www.allthemontpelliers.org/country11.asp>).

Alabama Students Bring Home Bronze Medal

The Alabama Historical Association has announced that two Alabama Students, Katie Kirk of Tuskegee and Heather Connelly of Auburn won a bronze medal in the Senior Group Performance category at the National History Day competition at the University of Maryland.

Their entry in the competition, entitled “Tragedy of Errors: America’s Hypocritical Reaction to Artistic Diplomacy” was a performance based on a script devel-



Katie Kirk and Heather Connelly Performing at the National History Day Competition

oped through research into a “failed” Cold War 1940’s art exhibition entitled Advancing American Art.

From the article “Advancing American Art at the Jule Collins Smith Art Museum” (Auburn University), we find a brief history of the exhibit Advancing American Art and its connection with the art museum on the Auburn campus, the Jule Collins Smith Art Museum:

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Alabama Students Bring Home Bronze Medal *(continued)*

(Continued from page 4)

“In 1946, the Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs of the State Department organized an exhibition of 117 oil paintings and water colors which was designed to demonstrate the ascendancy of American art at the mid-century. Described as a cultural Marshall Plan, the paintings were exhibited at various venues in the United States and Europe. Soon after its initial exhibition, the show was criticized for its ‘modernity’ by conservative politicians, disenfranchised artists and critics.

“The collection became the focus of intense criticism in Congress which condemned the State Department for its purchase of the collection and for presenting the



Subway Exit (1946)

This painting by Louis Guglielmi is one of the paintings from the exhibit *Advancing American Art* acquired by The Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art at Auburn University.

work of ‘left-wing’ artists whose abstract works they felt, inadequately illustrated America's ideals to the rest of the world.

“Within a year the program was suspended. The paintings were recalled, stored in a warehouse, declared war surplus and sold at auction. Alabama Congressmen assisted faculty from the Auburn University Department of Art in becoming eligible for a discount during the bidding process which resulted in the acquisition of 36 of the 117 paintings for \$1,072” ([artdaily.com](http://artdaily.com/index.asp?int_sec=11&int_new=18690&int_mod=1) <http://artdaily.com/index.asp?int_sec=11&int_new=18690&int_mod=1>). €

McCall Students Circa 1830's or Early 1940's



On the front bumper, Tom Odom; on the running board, Ollie Odom, Stella Odom, and Bob Odom; standing, Albert Odom

Picture from Marion “Dinkey” Odom Johnson

1914 Model T Ford Station Wagon And Car Repair Advertisement from 1928

"May 31, 1927 the last Ford Model T rolled off the assembly line. It was the first affordable automobile, due in part to the assembly line process developed by Henry Ford.

"It had a 2.9-liter, 20-horsepower engine and could travel at speeds up to 45 miles per hour. It has a 10-gallon fuel tank and could run on kerosene, patrol, ethanol, but it couldn't drive uphill if the tank was low, because there was no fuel pump; people got around this design flaw by driving up hills in reverse.

"Ford believed that 'the man who will use his skill and constructive imagination to see how much he can



give for a dollar, instead of how little he can give for a dollar, is bound to succeed.'

"The Model T cost \$850 in 1909, and as efficiency in production increased, the price dropped. By 1927, you could get a Model T for \$290. 'I will build a car for the great multitude,' said Ford.

"It will be constructed of the best materials, by the best men to be hired, after the simplest designs that modern engineering can devise. But it will be low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one – and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in 'god's great open spaces.'" €

Dear Sir:—

We're writing this letter to you today because we want to help you get your money out of your Model T.

It's still as good a car as it was the day the new Model A Ford was announced and there's no need to sacrifice it.

The Model T Ford is still used by more people than any other automobile. Eight million are in active service right now and many of them can be driven one, two, three and five years and even longer.

Bring your car to us and let us look it over. You'll be surprised to see how little it costs to put it in tip-top shape.

New fenders, for instance, cost from \$3.50 to \$5.00 each, with a labor charge of \$1.00 to \$2.50. Tuning up the motor and replacing commutator case, brush and vibrator points costs only \$1.00, with a small charge for material. Brake shoes can be installed and emergency brakes equalized for a labor charge of only \$1.25. A labor charge of \$4.00 to \$5.00 will cover the overhauling of the front axle, rebushing springs and spring perches, and straightening, aligning and adjusting wheels.

The labor charge for overhauling the average rear axle runs from \$5.75 to \$7.00. Grinding valves and cleaning carbon can be done for \$3.00 to \$4.00.

A set of four new pistons and rings cost only \$7.00. For a labor charge of \$20 to \$25.00 you can have your motor and transmission completely overhauled. Parts are extra.

Very truly yours,
Bottineau, N. Dak. C. R. GLEASON CO.

Both the article on the Model T Ford and the post card advertisement are from the website [Smokstak](http://www.smokstak.com/forum/showthread.php?t=96252), Comment by Dave L M <<http://www.smokstak.com/forum/showthread.php?t=96252>>.

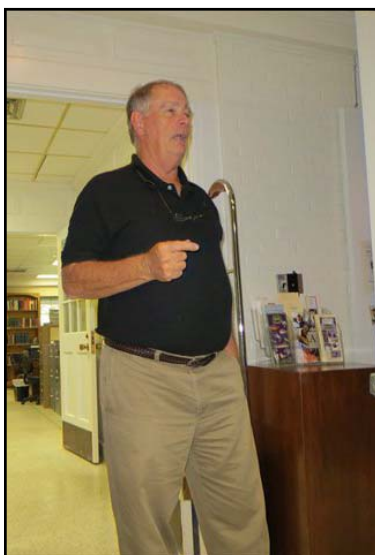
The front of the Penny Post Card is shown to the right with the advertisement on the back of the card shown above.



Snapshots of the ECHS June 2012 Meeting



Snapshots of the ECHS June 2012 Meeting *(continued)*



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The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Sweet Shop Building

By Nancy Karrick

ECHS Librarian Barbara McCoy worked with Nancy on the research for this article.

As many readers of Atmore Magazine may have noticed, I like history - especially the history of Atmore. Because of this, I began a project in 1997 which has been continuing ever since. I've taken pictures of the buildings in downtown Atmore and have asked some of our older residents to tell me their memories of the Main Street area.

I've used this information in several articles and will do the same again in this one. This is why information is often credited to people who are no longer alive. If any of you would like to look at my pictures and share your memories, please contact me through Atmore News.

When I heard that Khaki McCoy was interested in the history of the old Sweet Shop building, I decided to finish as much of the research as I could and use it for my September article. Khaki's mother, Barbara, did some background work on dates of owners and graciously allowed me to add it to my data base.

What the two of us have come up with is a relatively complete history of the building and its owners. Now, if we only had some of Collie's peach pudding or Jack Dew's Italian Fried Chicken, life would indeed be fine.

Back in 1885, W. M. Carney owned the property where the Sweet Shop was eventually located. In 1889, and WW Lowery built a brick building and a house there. By the 1910 census, a two-story building, which was part commercial, was noted. The post office became a tenant in 1913 and remained



Collie Lorraine Roan Sharpless



Mirtis Anderson and the Clock

there until 1923.

In 1930, the building was sold to Rankin Lowery who later sold it to C.B. Crawford. The Crawfords lived on the second floor and ran Crawford's Cafe on the first. Records indicate that Crawford's Cafe was begun in 1924 while the Lowerys owned the building.

A man by the name of Oscar Harper operated a dry goods store on the north side of the building while the cafe was on the south side. Several residents remembered Crawford's Cafe, Jack Lufkin and Robert Maxwell being two of them.

Charles Lowrey said, "It was a small little restaurant, a tiny one. We went many times when we were teenagers. They had slot machines which paid off in dollars."

Mirtis Anderson won a clock for eating so much soup. She

still has that clock

In 1938, C.B. Crawford sold the building to Carey Powell from Walnut Hill. It's at this point that the records become a little clouded because of the overlap of owners and renters.

Will and Collie Sharpless bought the restaurant and named it the Sweet Shop. Before she died, I spoke with Annie Ruth Whitten, and she said that Mrs. Sharpless was a teacher at Evergreen High School. She met and married Will and moved to Atmore. Mrs. Whitten was hired to take her place in Evergreen.

I received some correspondence from Martha and Johnny Sharpless regarding the restaurant and would

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Sweet Shop Building *continued*)

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like to quote what was written by Martha:

"This restaurant (Sweet Shop) was started by Johnny's first cousin in the mid 1930s. William Jones Sharpless and his wife, Collie Roan Sharpless, owned and operated this restaurant for many years."

Knowing that Johnny's brother Roy had worked at the Sweet Shop, we were able to obtain lots of information from him. He said that the original location was only in the area where the small dining area is on the south side of the main dining room.

Roy worked there from 1937 until he graduated from high school at ECHS in 1941. He said that there was a long counter with stools along the south side, with 2 booths in the back of the serving areas. Interestingly, he recalled that one of the most popular items on the menu was a delicious stew, with a cost of 25 cents for a full bowl and 15 cents for a half bowl. Also, on the menu were hamburgers, sandwiches and \$1.00 plate lunches.

"Saturday was their busiest day, with the out-of-town folks coming into town to do their shopping. Sundays were for the local families coming in after church services."

He said on the weekends, he would open up at 6 a.m. and stay for 10-12 hours. Their cook was a colored lady who really knew how to cook good food. "I'm not sure when Will and Collie sold the restaurant, but I recall a cousin of mine working there in 1954-1955, and I know that the Sweet Shop was in the large dining room, as it is today." Will passed away in 1954 at the age of 62 and Collie lived to be 101 years old.

"I'm not certain when Will's niece, Louie Finch Sharpless, owned and operated the Sweet Shop, but I



**William James
Sharpless**

recall being at a wedding party at the Country Club about 1966 and Louie Finch catered the affair.

Louie Finch passed away Feb. 1, 1969, and was the daughter of Guy and Louie Sharpless, who lived on East Homer Street. Their home site is now part of the First Presbyterian Church parking lot. Will and Collie lived directly behind the Episcopal Church.

"When Louie Finch took over ownership, she made major changes in the restaurant. She was responsible for adding the handsome tin ceiling and

making other major updating changes."

I've gotten some interesting tidbits from some Atmore residents. Elise Crook remembered the Sharpless family living upstairs above the restaurant before they built their house. Mrs. Herman Earle worked at Elmore's many years ago. She rode to town with a teacher and rode home on the bus. On Saturday mornings she came on the bus from Walnut Hill and sat at the Sweet Shop until Elmore's opened.

Mattie Lou Crook said that Mr. Sharpless was in competition with the City Cafe. He would count the number of customers coming in the door. Mr. Crook did the same thing.

Robert Maxwell would buy one cent worth of bubble gum before going to the show. Mr. Sharpless was the cashier.

James Forte remarked that the current private dining room used to be the Sweet Shop. A dry goods store was in the north side of the building until it was eventually bought for the Sweet Shop. WATM radio was located upstairs at one time.

Willena Godwin went there to eat when she

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Sweet Shop Building *(continued)*

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wanted something special. She had been in town one week when she went to eat there for the first time. She met the Ernest Ward principal and his wife who invited her in to dine with them.

It was a memorable experience because the wife smoked in public which was unusual at the time. H.C. Williams easily remembered the building when it was Crawford's Cafe with the counter and stools, hamburgers, and hotdogs.

Charles Lowrey fondly remembered a date dessert that Will Sharpless had. He asked for the recipe and Collie said, "I don't give out recipes."

Haskew Middleton worked at the Sweet Shop in 1938 when Will owned the restaurant. He worked at Steel's Cash and Carry grocery store after school until 7 p.m.; then he moved on to work at the Sweet Shop until closing. When I asked what time that was, Haskew replied, "I worked the curb until we closed which was when the last customer came, about 10 or 11 p.m."

Coca Colas were 5 cents and cheese sandwiches were a dime. For lunch and dinner, 15-cent stew was a popular choice. Many people would "drive up" and order a sandwich. Haskew was the car hop. Customers would drive up, toot their horn, and get curb service. He also gave curb service for ladies who wanted groceries, especially on Saturday mornings when they were still in their housecoats!

Haskew related that there were traffic jams on Saturday afternoons and you couldn't find a parking place. His father would park the car in the morning, walk home, and come back and sit in the car so he could watch people going between the Sweet Shop and the Drug Store. People would spend the afternoon and evening visiting and watching people.

He also remembered that before he bought the City Cafe, Wheeler Crook worked for Will Sharpless and kept the restaurant open at night, working as the manager. There is a circulating rumor that there is an

olive tree behind the Sweet Shop building. I spoke to Carl Anderson, owner of the Tot Shop, and he said that his Uncle George Bowab planted the tree in question. It is a Jujube tree which he got from Enterprise. Sorry, but there are no olives growing in Atmore, at least not behind the restaurant.

Lucille King Swift has fond memories of the banana pudding which Guy Sharpless made, using peaches instead of bananas. She and Becky McDonald used to meet for lunch at the Sweet Shop and sit at the table and work on their cross-stitching.

Ever wonder where the name "Sweet Shop" came from? I heard the same answer from Mrs. Whitten and Jack Dew, a former owner, so I think it must be the truth. Collie Sharpless was from Evergreen and there was a good place to eat there named the Sweet Shop. People from everywhere knew about it and the good food it had. Collie figured the name would be a good one for the restaurant in Atmore and suggested it. As we all know, the name stuck and had a similar reputation here in town.

Ernestine Miniard worked above the Sweet Shop for 18 months from 1951-1953 while WATM radio station was located there. She and her husband Tom bought the station from Cyril Reddock who put it on the air about 1949. Mrs. Miniard said the Sharplesses did not use the upstairs at that time.

"They served the best lemon ice box pie in this world. The avocado salad was good too," she said. The restaurant stayed in the Sharpless family, passing from Will and Collie to Guy and Louie, and then to Louie Finch Sharpless Downey. At her death in 1969, James and Zema Pipkin became interested.

The Pipkins sold the Pepsi Cola bottling company which they owned, and wanted the Sweet Shop. Louie Finch Downey had died and the family put the restaurant up for sale. The Pipkins thought it would be a fun job for their retirement. They soon found out that it was not fun, but loads of work.

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Sweet Shop Building *(continued)*

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Enter Jack and Claytie Dew. (I had a most interesting and enjoyable conversation with Jack Dew. We were neighbors when he lived in Atmore and he went out of his way to help me when I brought a group of Girl Scouts from Atlanta to Atmore before we moved back home. It was nice to catch up on news with him as well as find out about his time at the Sweet Shop.)

The Pipkins were ready to sell after only a few months and Jack pounced. They actually financed Jack and he paid it off, a little every month. There was a small dining room on the left side of the restaurant which Louie Finch called the "Duck Room." It contained a bar and was still there when the Pipkin brothers bought the restaurant. Jack told them to get rid of it when he bought it.

There was actually little restaurant business and many undesirables because of the bar. Jack said he turned it into a good business and was able to put two boys through school from working there.

Jack said the walls had acoustic fiber in them to keep the noise from the radio station down. He built the stairway from the back and fixed up the upstairs. I asked Jack if he would share his Italian Fried Chicken recipe, but he politely declined. He did say that it accounted for 40 percent of his business. Coconut, chocolate, and lemon ice box pies were his top three dessert sellers.

In 1995 he sold the restaurant to a woman from northwest Florida whose husband worked at Monsanto. She had it about 11 months. My "cloudy" records show a woman by the name of Connie Ard as a manager in 1996 and Judy Lambert in 1997. Who the owner was at that time is unclear.



Sweet Shop as Gerlach's

I went to Pensacola to speak with Helen Rollo. She and her son Tom were the owners of the Wrangler Steak House which was open only for a short period of time. Helen said she was going through Atmore to visit her parents in Jackson and saw a house for sale. When she checked, she learned it was already spoken for.

A neighbor saw and recognized her from Oscar's Restaurant in Pensacola and said there was a restaurant for sale and why not look at it? Helen saw a

place with a New Orleans look and thought she could make it into a beautiful place. She went to First National Bank and asked them to handle things.

She said, "People in Atmore were so glad to have a new restaurant in town."

When she went home and told her husband and son that she had bought another restaurant, the son said she shouldn't have bought a restaurant without asking them. Her husband said, "She bought Oscar's without asking."

The building needed a handicap bathroom and new wiring. Repairs were made and the restaurant opened. However, problems with the cooks' personal lives developed. Helen said she thought she would retire there but things just didn't work out.

"Tommy Gerlach kept asking me to sell and was very persistent. Finally I agreed to sell," she said. Changes made included different tables and chairs, making it a homey atmosphere, yet elegant. "I really regret selling," Helen said. "After working at Oscar's for over 30 years, I would like to be back in Atmore."

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Sweet Shop Building *(continued)*

(Continued from page 13)

Tommy Gerlach opened Gerlach's Main Street Grill in 1998. He totally remodeled, adding black and white hanging lights and going to fine dining "as much as Atmore knows fine dining," according to Tommy. This included white tablecloths. Sometime between 1996 and 1998, the plaster was removed from the bricks. Tommy sealed and cleaned it.

He also completely redid the cashier's stand. Upstairs, he added murals of Italian scenes on the walls, added carpet, new lights, and a minibar. This area was used just for parties. He was also responsible for the mahogany front door. Many a bride-to-be remembers luncheons given for her or receptions catered by Gerlach's.

Tommy Gerlach sold his restaurant to Chris McElhaney in 2005. We all remember the horror called Ivan which invaded Atmore that year. Three weeks after the purchase of Gerlachs, McElhaney was having to deal with Ivan's destruction. Major repairs were done to the roof, front window, and the awning. The signage and lean-to roof on the side were blown away. Water was 6 inches deep inside. It was 6 or 7 months before McElhaney's was able to open.

On my way home from Mobile one evening, I stopped in Satsuma and ate at a restaurant advertised on the interstate, Pintoli's. The food was spectacular and the charming restaurant was crammed to capacity. When I came home, I told Shirley West what a wonderful place it was. She made a trip there and was as impressed as I was. To make a long story short, Shirley talked to Jose Pinto and invited him to Atmore to come and look at a closed restaurant building.



Sweet Shop as Pinoli's

In November 2007, Jose and Stephanie Pinto purchased the old Sweet Shop building and opened in February 2008.

There was much work to be done before opening. The wood in the roof over the kitchen was rotten and a new roof had to be installed in the rear. The staircase was torn out and an open staircase was installed. On the second floor, due to termites, rotten wood had to be replaced. The front was redone with stone to make a more durable and rustic look.

Jose has also made the building more energy efficient - making the roof white, installing better

insulation and a kitchen hood. Twinkling lights outside added to the festive look that is only a teaser for the outstanding food which is found inside.

I've spoken with members of the Lions Club, Rotary Club, and the now defunct Pilots Club and all of them remember their respective clubs having meetings at one time or another in the Sweet Shop.

I've saved my memories for last because the Sweet Shop was certainly a big part of my life. I walked down the west side of Main Street almost every day during the summer on the way to my granddaddy's store. Without fail, Mr. Sharpless was standing at the front counter and would either smile or wave at me as I passed by. When we moved to Atmore in 1961, we ate supper out from Monday through Friday while our house was being built.

We rotated from the Sweet Shop, City Cafe, and Alberts. All three of these restaurant owners and waitresses adopted us as their own and would fix us anything we wanted, even if it was not on the menu.

In May 1965, Mrs. J.H. Kizer, Mrs. Travis Black,

(Continued on page 15)

The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Sweet Shop Building *(continued)*

(Continued from page 14)

and Mrs. Bruce Turberville hosted a breakfast at the Sweet Shop for me as a bride-to-be. Time almost stood still as my own daughter was given a luncheon in that very same building. This time, however, it was run by Tommy Gerlach.

Over the years between 1924 and today, a restaurant has been in the building which is called, by most, the Sweet Shop building. While the owners may have changed, the menu and decor redone, the one thing that has maintained a constant is the good food produced in the kitchen. We are lucky indeed to have such a restaurant heritage on Main Street.

**This article is now three years old so that a footnote to it seems appropriate: Sherry Digmon, editor of the atmore Magazine, sent this post script: "Pintoli's sold to a local family who opened Nan's Main Street Café. They have since closed that restaurant and the building is empty now."*

More About the Sweet Shop

The atmore magazine published a short article "More about the Sweet Shop" in the November 2009 issue (page 9). The magazine had heard from one of the great nieces of Collie Sharpless, Jeannie Price. Will and Collie Sharpless had owned the restaurant, the Sweet Shop, in the 1930's.

Ms. Price writes, "I am one of collie's many great nieces, and was with her from 1997 until her death in 2006. We had many discussions about the "old days" including the "Sweet Shop." In the very beginning of their ownership, I think it was more like a soda fountain. Maybe they cooked hamburgers, I don't know, but they weren't what you would consider a restaurant.

'She would have wanted you to know who was the REAL driving force behind the formation of that restaurant, as she told me many times.

"It was a well-known cook named Dumpsey.' (Sorry, that's all I know.) Dumpsey hinted to Collie every chance she got that she thought with her fried chicken, they could make a go of it.

"So, according to Collie, she went to the hardware store and bought a full service for 4. They set up a little table in the restaurant and served 4 people at the time! People actually stood in line waiting their turn. As soon as someone finished, their plate and silverware were collected, sent to the back, washed, and filled again. The next person in line sat down. It didn't take long for Collie and Will to realize that Dumpsey had something. That's when they expanded into a full pledge restaurant.

"I have vague memories of Dumpsey from the times I visited the 'Sweet Shop' as a child. She was a very sweet black woman with freckles like mine. what you will remember!" €



**This Post Card is a Picture of
East Railroad Street. in
Atmore, Circa 1900**

ECHOES
THE NEWSLETTER FOR
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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