

## The September Meeting Tuesday, September 24, 2013, 3:00 p. m.

in  
the Neal Auditorium in the Neal Colonial Center  
(Administration Building)  
Jefferson Davis Community College

The Neal Auditorium is on the Blacksher Street side of the Neal Colonial Center with parking in the back of the building. ECHS has had to change the location of the September meeting because of a special election. The meeting room in the Thomas E. McMillan Museum will be used for voting.

### The Program

#### "United States Operations in Antarctica"

Presenters will be: Billy Blackwelder, a retired Navy helicopter pilot who was active in the US Antarctica Research program in the 1970's and Conrad "Gus" Shinn who became the first person to land a plane at the South Pole in 1956.

#### Meet Our Speakers: Conrad "Gus" Shinn and Billy Blackwelder

Conrad "Gus" Shinn, pictured at the right, is most famous for being the first pilot to land at the South Pole on Oct. 31, 1956, establishing the base that today is the



symbol of U.S. presence in Antarctica.

However, his career goes back to 1946 when he was assigned to test and develop skis for the R4D. These skis made it possible for the aircraft to land in the field and

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### The October ECHS Meeting

The Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2013

The Program: "Show and Tell"

The Place: The Meeting Room in  
the Thomas E. McMillan Museum  
Jefferson Davis Community  
College

Come and Bring a Favorite Item or  
Picture, Anything that Brings Back  
Memories to Share with the Group



Lt. Commander Gus Shinn  
& Que Sera Sera

Volume 40, Number 9

September 2013

## Meet Our Speakers: Conrad “Gus” Shin and Billy Blackwelder

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opened up the Arctic and Antarctic for thorough and efficient scientific investigation and exploration.

In 1947, Gus flew an R4D from the USS Philippine Sea into Little American and from there flew several long range aerial mapping flights, photographing over 200,000 square miles of unexplored territory. He also flew several flights with Admiral Richard E. Byrd, the leader of this expedition.

After a tour flying the Berlin Airlift, Gus was selected as the first pilot for Operation Deep Freeze. He participated in Operation Deep Freeze I, II, and III and essentially "wrote the book" on polar flight operations. He not only made the first landing at the Pole but led the next five flights there, ferrying the men and equipment for building the first South Pole Station in his aircraft Que Sera Sera. He was inducted as an Honorary Member of the American Polar Society in 1999.

Lt. Cmd. Billy Blackwelder, pictured at the right, entered the Navy as a Naval Aviation Cadet in 1958. Following flight training he was commissioned as an ensign and designated a naval aviator in 1959. Following a tour of duty with Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron SEVEN at Norfolk, Virginia, he returned to Pensacola as a flight instructor with Helicopter Training Squadron EIGHT. Following this tour he served for two years Helicopter



Combat Support Squadron TWO located in Lakehurst, New Jersey which included a nine month combat cruise in the Gulf of Tonkin aboard the USS INTREPID. He then served an additional tour as a flight instructor with HT-8, a tour on the staff of Training Air Wing FIVE at the Naval Air Station Whiting Field and two tours with Antarctic Development Squadron SIX. During his tours with VXE-6, operating out of Christchurch, New Zealand, he worked extensively with officials of the National Science Foundation and with many members of the international scientific community.

During his tour at Training Air Wing FIVE, he twice served on additional duty as commander of a Military Assistance Team located in Jakarta, Indonesia where he was responsible for training Indonesian Air Force pilots and maintenance personnel. In appreciation for his work he was awarded the Indonesian Air Force Senior Pilot Wings with Chief of Staff's Star. His awards include the Air Medal, two Meritorious Unit Citations, two Navy Unit Citations, Navy Expeditionary Medal, National Defense, Antarctic Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, and several Vietnam Campaign ribbons. He later worked as Director, Midshipmen Indoctrination School, Naval Aviation Schools Command in March 1977. He retired in June 1981. He is married to Joyce, a school teacher and has one son, John, who is also a school teacher. €

### First Plane Lands At South Pole

*The following article by Maurice Cutler, United Press Staff Correspondent appears online at < [leaksville.com/first\\_plane\\_lands\\_at\\_south\\_pole.htm](http://leaksville.com/first_plane_lands_at_south_pole.htm)>. Leaksville is a community near Spray, North Carolina, which is Gus Shinn's home town.*

One Thousand Feet Above the South Pole, Oct. 31 - (UP) I have just witnessed the historic first landing of an aircraft at the South Pole and the first person setting foot there since Scott's ill-fated 1912 expedition.

tion.

A United States Navy R4D (Dakota DC-3) made a successful landing four miles from the presently known location of the South Pole at 2034 hours New Zealand time (0834 GMT Wednesday). With a long vapor trail stretching miles behind it, I saw the small ski-equipped Dakota, named Que Sera Sera, grind to a halt, throwing a wake of snow in its path.

Overhead, a United States Air Force C-124 Globe-

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# First Plane Lands At South Pole

(Continued from page 2)

master carrying this correspondent circled the area in brilliant sunshine, leaving crisscrossing vapor trails. It carried emergency supplies that would be airdropped should the small plane be unable to take off from the 10,000-foot Polar plateau.

Que Sera Sera--what will be, will be--landed safely in a temperature of around 60 below zero Fahrenheit. The honor of being the first person at the Pole in 44 years went to Operation Deep Freeze commander Rear Admiral George Dufek of Rockford, Ill.

In a message to our plane, Adm. Dufek said he raised the Stars and Stripes for the first time at the South Pole. After 50 minutes on the desolate polar plateau--a flat, white landmass stretching miles to the horizon--the Dakota commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Conrad (Gus) Shinn of Spray, N.C., took off at 2123 hours local time. It was headed for the support base near the Liv Glacier and the Duncan Mountains.

However, shortly after takeoff from the Pole, the Dakota reported engine trouble. Our Globemaster then reduced speed and accompanied it down the Beardmore Glacier to a safe landing at the Liv



**This photo of Que Sera Sera by Lt, John R. Swadener appeared in the 31 December 1956 issue of Time magazine with the caption:**

**"Dufek's Party at the Pole**

**From eleven bottles, a wrench and a stagger..."**

**Quoted from <http://www.southpolestation.com/trivia/igy1/que1.html>**

**A Time magazine article describes the takeoff thus:**

**"Then, with frostbite already showing on [RADM] Dufek's nose, the party stomped back into the airplane, its engines still turning over. But when Pilot Conrad Shinn gunned his engines and fired four JATO (jet assist) bottles for takeoff, the R4D stuck fast, its skis frozen to the icy surface. Only by blasting off his eleven remaining JATO bottles did Shinn wrench the plane loose and stagger into the thin air at well below normal takeoff speed."**

**Also (according to RADM Dufek's book, the R4D carried 15 and Gus fired 4 at a time, then the last 3 before he got off deck.**

**All of the above quoted from the source <<http://www.southpolestation.com/trivia/igy1/que1.html>>.**

Glacier outpost.

After topping off its fuel tanks, the aircraft then made its way back across the Ross Ice Shelf to McMurdo Sound.

Adm. Dufek's participation was appropriate given the fact that he has been a member of all U.S. Antarctic expeditions since he navigated Admiral Richard Byrd's flagship USS Bear in 1939-41.

"It was like going into another world," Dufek told correspondents after his return, referring to the severe temperatures. After three minutes, he

noted that the face of Navy VX-6 Squadron commander, Capt. Douglas L. Cordiner of Washington, D.C., "was white with frostbite." Members of the small group on the Dakota kept looking at each other to detect frostbite.

The Pole landing party said they were heartened to hear the Globemaster commander Major C.J. Ellen of Raleigh, N.C., tell them, "if you can't get off, we'll crash-land beside you, so you'll have a house."

Dufek said that when he and Cordiner attempted to plant the flag, "we really had to dig with our pickaxes." During this activity one of Cordiner's hands became numb in a very few minutes.

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## First Plane Lands At South Pole



**“THE LUCKY SEVEN, the first Americans to ever set foot on the South Pole to plant the Stars and Stripes beside the cross of Norway and the Union Jack. Left to right, John P. Strider, AD2, crew chief; RADM George J. Dufek. C.O. Task Force 43; LCDR Conrad (Gus) Shinn, pilot; Lieutenant John R. Swadener, navigator; William A. Cumbie, Jr., AT2, radioman; Captain William Hawkes, copilot; and Captain Douglas Cordinor, observer; an all-Navy team for the occasion.”**

**Photo and Caption courtesy of Don Leger at <http://www.southpolestation.com/trivia/igy1/que1.html>.**

*(Continued from page 3)*

Dakota pilot Shinn said the flight was "operationally quite simple," but he was concerned when he started the take-off run at the Pole.

"I pushed the throttle fully forward and nothing happened. I then fired four jet-assist bottles and still nothing. I fire another four and got slight movement, then four more, followed by another three and we more or less staggered into the air," Shinn said.

During the takeoff, Shinn and his co-pilot could not see through their windshield and had to use instruments.

Crewman John P. Strider of Kearneysville, W Va., said his only difficulty was "my coffee wouldn't percolate at 12,000 feet."

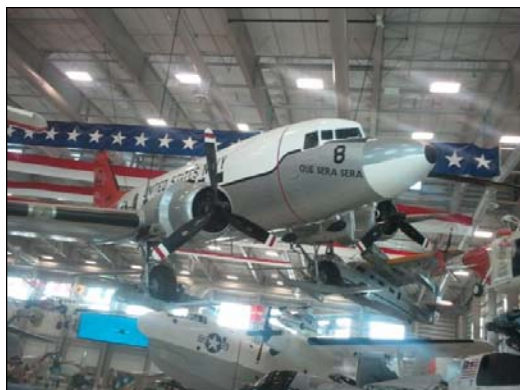
Youngest expedition member Civil Air Patrol cadet Robert Barger of Peoria, Ill., was aboard the Globemaster, his third polar flight within six days.

"I made my first flight when I was 17, the other two when I was 18," Barger said. He explained that he celebrated his 18th birthday on Oct. 29, two days before the historic Polar landing.

The severe temperatures at the Pole prompted Adm. Dufek to postpone further landings and the air-drop of construction equipment for the proposed South Pole station.

"I had hoped conditions at the Pole would have been less harsh. Under the circumstances we experienced yesterday, we are going to have to wait. It is humanly impossible to do outside construction work under such conditions. I'm not going to put anyone in there until temperatures improve." €

## It Was a Magnificent Airplane



**At left, Photo of Que Sera Sera taken in July, 2012 by Greg Mattix at the Pensacola US Navy Museum.**



**"The R4D-5 'Charlene' sits with engines running on the Liv Glacier. Eddie Frankiewicz and Jim Waldron spent hours waiting there, prepared to help Gus Shinn if he ran into any trouble on his historic flight to the Pole." Photo courtesy of Jim Waldron.**



**"An aircraft commander at Little America Five digs the "Que Sera Sera" out from under a winter's worth of snow in August, 1957. The previous summer Gus Shinn landed the plane at the South Pole." Photo courtesy of Jim Waldron**

The following material as well as the pictures and captions above are quoted from the website <http://www.douglasdc3.com/quesera/quesera.htm>.

"Que Sera Sera" (What will be will be) made History by becoming the first aircraft to land on the South Pole on October 31st 1956. The extended Nose and extra Antenna were used for Radar. The Jato (jet assisted-take off) bottles under the fuselage were used for taking off in deeper snow.

For every milestone like this there are people behind the scenes who play a large part, too. Pilots Eddie Frankiewicz and Jim Waldron were the rescue crew who waited in the wings that day, and they too relied upon the same model.

They landed their R4D "Charlene" on the Liv Glacier as Shinn and Dufek flew overhead. "Charlene's" engines were kept running for the better part of a day, to be ready at a moment's notice.

Waldron remembers the aircraft fondly: "It was a very reliable airplane. We put it through a lot of terrible weather and cold but it was always stable and had very few failures. It was terrific for what it could do,"

he said.

"It was a magnificent airplane," Frankiewicz said. "It could carry a great load of ice on its wings. And with a great big barn door for a rudder it made for easy cross-wind landings," he said.

Another pilot, E.D. "Buz" Dryfoose, explained the reasons it's as good as a mid-weight aircraft in Antarctica.

"For open snow landings at the reduced weight of the R4Ds, they could land where there were possible snow bridges over crevasses that could not be seen," Dryfoose said. "The 130s would not fare as well under those circumstances with 100,000 pounds more weight."

The R4D proved its worth time and again. On the other side of the Ross Ice Shelf at an encampment called Little America the planes would be left to winter on their own. Upon returning, the aircrew would dig the machines out of the snow, fire them up and fly away. €

# Little America



Map of Antarctica showing Little America

The following information on Little America is from Wikipedia as is the map above

<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Antarctic\\_expeditions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Antarctic_expeditions)>.

Little America was a series of [Antarctic](#) exploration bases, located on the [Ross Ice Shelf](#), south of the [Bay of Whales](#).

## Little America I

The first base in the series was established in January 1929 by [Richard Byrd](#), and was abandoned in 1930. This was where the film [With Byrd at the South Pole](#) (1930) was filmed, about Byrd's trip to the South Pole.

## Little America II

Little America II was established in 1934, some 30 feet above the site of the original base, with some of

the original base accessed via tunnel. This base was briefly set adrift in 1934, but the iceberg fused to the main glacier.

During the 1934–1935 expedition, many souvenir letters were sent from Little America, using a commemorative [postage stamp](#) issued by the U.S. government.

Little America established the first successful radio broadcasting from Antarctica, making regular broadcasts that could be picked up by household radio sets in the United States, more than 11,000 miles away around the Earth's curvature.

In a later expedition to Antarctica, Byrd's expedition spotted Little America's towers still standing, including the [Jacobs Wind](#) plant installed in 1933.

## Little America III

Little America III was established for the 1940–

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# Little America

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1941 season some 6 miles to the north.

In 1940 a huge, extraordinary, exploration vehicle, the Antarctic Snow Cruiser, was brought to Little America III. Unfortunately the vehicle was found to have a number of design and technical weaknesses and was little used. Abandoned, it became buried in the snow. It was last rediscovered in 1958, but has subsequently been lost once again: either under the snow; or under the waters of the Southern Ocean.

The site of Little America III was carried to sea in 1963.

## Little America IV

Little America V was established on January 3, 1956, at Kainan Bay, some 30 miles to the east of Little America IV, as part of Operation Deep Freeze. Little America V served as the American base in the South Polar program in the International Geophysical Year.

## Little America V

Little America V was constructed by US Navy Seabees in the three month window before the Antarctic winter makes construction next to impossible. All of Little American V was constructed below the snow line in the ice, with individual living quarters, generator room, cafeteria, and with ramps leading out at one end for tracked vehicles. This type of construction meant that none of those staying in Little America V had to go out of door in the harsh winter when going from one section to another of the Antarctic town.

The site of Little America V went to sea on Iceberg B-9 in 1987.



## Antarctica - Some statistics

- ♦ There are no permanent residents in Antarctica.
- ♦ There has never been a native population.
- ♦ Antarctica is 1.4 times as large as the United States.
- ♦ Receives about 30,000 summer tourists per year.
- ♦ 58 times bigger than the United Kingdom.
- ♦ Antarctica has 90% of the world's ice.
- ♦ Lowest recorded temperature at Vostok Station - 128.6 F.
- ♦ Antarctica is the best place to find meteorites.
- ♦ If Antarctica's ice sheets melted, all the world's oceans would rise over 200 feet

*These Statistics area taken from*  
<<http://suziecat7.hubpages.com/hub/Little-America-Antarctica>>.

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*The following material is quoted from "Research Stations in Antarctica" Wikipedia:*

A number of governments maintain permanent research stations in Antarctica and these bases are widely distributed. Unlike the bases set up in the Arctic (see Drifting ice station), the research stations of the Antarctic are constructed either on rock or on ice that is (for practical purposes) fixed in place.

Many of the stations are staffed around the year. A total of 30 countries (as of October 2006), all signatories to the Antarctic Treaty, operate seasonal (summer) and year-round research stations on the continent. The population of people doing and supporting science on the continent and nearby islands varies from approximately 4,000 during the summer season to 1,000 during winter . . .

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Research\\_stations\\_in\\_Antarctica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Research_stations_in_Antarctica)). €

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## News and Announcements

### Old Sullivan Community Cemetery Dedication

The Dedication of the Cemetery as an Historical Cemetery will take place on **Saturday, October 19, 2013 at 3:00 p. m.** This Recognition comes from the Alabama Historical Commission.

The Cemetery is located at Nokomis, Alabama. To reach the cemetery, from Atmore, drive 6 miles West on HWY 31. At HWY Marker #35, turn right onto James Road and drive 1/4 mile to the cemetery.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Bushy Creek Methodist Church

The Bushy Creek Homecoming will be **Saturday, October 5, 2013 at 11:00 a. m.** The Church and cemetery were established in 1850.

Two ways to reach the church are

- ♦ Take the Appleton Road north out of Brewton until it dead ends at County Road Six. Go left on CR 6, cross over the Interstate and keep going towards Lenox. About 4 miles past the Interstate, turn left onto Brushy Creek Road. Go about a mile and turn in left into the church and cemetery.
- ♦ Go north on Highway 41 out of Brewton. About three miles after crossing over the Interstate, turn right onto Brushy Creek Road. After four miles, look for the church on the right side of Brushy Creek Road. If you come to County Road 6, you have gone too far. Turn around and go back down Brushy Creek Road a mile on look on your left.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Fall Pilgrimage of Alabama Historical Association

The annual fall pilgrimage will be held Friday–Saturday, October 18–19, 2013. [Horseshoe Bend National Military Park](#) will be our host.

For more information see the newsletter for the association at <http://www.archives.alabama.gov/aha/fall2013newsletter.pdf>.

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### West Florida Genealogical Society Meeting

Date: October 5, 2013 - Saturday

Place: West Florida Genealogy Library. 5740 N. 9th Ave, Pensacola, FL. [850-494-7373](tel:850-494-7373)

Time: 10:00 AM

Speaker: Margo Stringfield

Topic: St. Michael's Cemetery: Crossroads of Pensacola's Past from Spanish Times to Today

Mrs. Stringfield is a research archaeologist at UWF with a special interest in the history and archaeology of Colonial West Florida. She is the principal archaeologist for historic St. Michael's Cemetery and the author of [Historic Pensacola](#) published in 2009.

Contact Cynthia Dean [850-432-7072](tel:850-432-7072)  
[cgdean@bellsouth.net](mailto:cgdean@bellsouth.net)

\*\*\*\*\*

### Flomaton Railroad Junction Day All Day, Sep 28, 2013

Make plans to attend and celebrate the railroad's contribution to Flomaton and Escambia County, Alabama. There will be vendors, entertainment and more for you to enjoy.

Arts and crafts, antique car show, motorcycle show, historical information, health fair, non-profit food vendors. Will be located in various places in downtown Flomaton. Railroad Museum and Welcome Center will be open. Model train display will be at the Flomaton Community Center.

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### Live Bird of Prey Shows at Turtle Point!!

Turtle Point will be celebrating Flomaton's Railroad Junction Day on Saturday, September 28th with live bird of prey shows. The [Mobile Environmental Studies Center](#) will be at Turtle Point with several species of hawks, owls, and other birds of prey.

Come join the fun - shows will be at 10:30 and 1:00.

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## Snapshots of ECHS August 2013 Meeting



## Snapshots of ECHS August 2013 Meeting *(continued)*

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## Snapshots of Fort Mims Commemoration



**Snapshots from the Fort Mims Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Attack on the Fort**  
On display are artifacts from the Fort such as the item above. To the right, the pistol suggests the Battle of Burnt Corn Creek which precipitated the assault on FT. Mims.

## Our Business Members

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# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Railroad Junction Day



**Flomaton Passenger Station**  
**April 8, 1968**  
**J. D. Lachaussee Photograph**

*The following article is by Jerry Simmons. It was written in conjunction with the second annual Flomaton Railroad Junction Day, which will be September 28, 2013.*

It's been asked, "**Why should we have a Flomaton Railroad Junction Day celebration?**" It's quite simple, really. If it were not for the railroad, Flomaton as we know it would not exist. It started with the first railroad talk in Pensacola in the 1830s.

In the 1850s the city of Pensacola had grown about as much as it could. It was an isolated community with little opportunity to have any significant growth. "Growth" in the minds of Pensacola businessmen actually meant "more business, more money."

The remote location of Pensacola was the cause of the stifling of growth. The only outlet for the exporting of importing of goods that the city had was the ocean. Sister city Mobile had rivers nearby that were navigable for ships for miles inland, while Pensacola's Escambia River was too small to support similar river traffic. Forests and wilderness and a sparse population surrounded the city on three sides, so the only op-

tion was a railroad into the interior of the country.

Several routes were suggested, some were planned, and some went so far as to have surveys and right-of-way cleared. Construction was even begun on one route toward Columbus, GA through the Escambia River swamp into Santa Rosa County. One prospective company had materials and rolling stock purchased and shipped to the port.

However, finances, more often than not, fell through and little was accomplished until the charter for the Alabama-Florida Railroad was approved in about 1856. A few years later, in 1861, the Mobile and Great Northern Railroad was almost completed from Montgomery to Pollard before the Ala-Fla line was finished from Pensacola to there. A short stretch between Pollard and Tensaw had to have a special appropriation from the State of Alabama for the M&GN to be completed in late 1861.

In 1859 the first railroad to run into Pensacola, Florida was finally ready for construction from that city to Pollard, Alabama, and was to intersect the Mobile and Great Northern Railroad from Montgomery. Chartered as the Alabama & Florida railroad, the line was com-

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## Railroad Junction Day

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pleted to Pollard in early 1861, just in time for the War Between the States.

Because Pensacola was soon occupied by Union forces, the railroad was hardly used so the Confederacy had it dismantled, mostly to keep the Union from using it, much to the chagrin of Florida officials. The ties and rails were shipped to other parts of the region to be used there, some say to Canoe to build sidings.

In 1869, Colonel R. Reuter contracted to rebuild the A&F road (which by then was called the Pensacola & Louisville RR) over the same rail bed to Pollard. It was restored to within about two miles south of the state line when funds and material became nearly exhausted, and there was still a 2,000-foot long trestle that had yet to be built over the Escambia River (as Big Escambia Creek was then called). Reuter, seeing that the railroad to Pollard would not be possible, turned the road a bit to the west. This formed the junction with the M&GN (which became the L&N in 1880) at the site of what's now Flomaton, then called "Pensacola Junction."

The place at that time was hardly anything but a wilderness. The junction was almost directly in the middle of a "bottom" with a hill on either side. In the Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook, a writer in 1938, R. W. Brooks, was quoted as saying, when talking about the nice looking depot at Flomaton, "... if the people that is [sic] in Flomaton could see the car load after car load of sand and gravel and cinders, anything that [would] fill up, they certainly would be astonished at the amount of stuff that is under that nice looking station."

One might today drive from Palafox Street onto Railroad Street a few hundred yards toward the creek and



**Train at the Flomaton Station**  
**The top of the station can be seen above the train to the left.**

look to the left and imagine that as how the countryside was in the late 1800s: nothing but marsh and thick vegetation. The first building near the junction was a rough upright plank affair Reuter built to serve as a depot. A person wanting to purchase a ticket or transact freight business had to slish through mud and slush to get to the depot to do so.

When the junction was first connected

at Pollard in 1861, that town had about six saloons in it, since every store in those days sold whiskey. So a Mrs. Wisner, who lived there, decided she would move to a new place and put up her own store. She chose right at the intersection of what are now Palafox and Railroad Streets, with the workers wading around in the mud till they got her a small shack built and she opened up a store. The problem was there was nobody yet there to buy because she was actually the lone inhabitant of the town! But business got much better since logs were being floated down the creek and the loggers gave her business.

According to R. W. Brooks, those "men got good wages and they liked their liker [sic] and spent it freely and soon the lady was taking in shekels enough to build her a good store and she kept it up for years and later other people came and other stores located there and see what it is today."

The logs and timbers floating down the creek to the Escambia River (and eventually Pensacola) provided employment to a great many people and there were more that were directly or indirectly involved in this sort of business. Farming was unknown and unthought of – not many folks in the town even having as much as a garden spot under cultivation. In a short time, however,

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# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Railroad Junction Day

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other small store buildings were erected and business picked up, although given any two stores, the total value of the goods probably would not have exceeded \$500.

In 1872, the settlement had grown to such proportions as to warrant a post office. Up until this time, mail was received at Pollard, five miles up the track. In about 1870 Col. Reuter had given the place his name to go by, "Reuterville," but most still referred to it as "Whiting," "Junction" or "Pensacola Junction," until October 1875.

The first post office was established that month, under the name of "Whiting." Old habits are hard to break, though, and the post office department still had to deal with mail addressed to all those other names. The department requested another name be used, unlike any of the previous ones given to the town and in 1884, the name of Flomaton was settled upon. They used the first three letters of FLORida, the

last two letters of AlabaMA and the post office added the "ton." So it has been known since.

As time went on, more and more business took place by way of the railroad. People came from all over the country traveling through, and some stayed in the quaint little town to make their home. There were passenger and freight trains headed east and west as well as north and south. The Pensacola and Atlantic Railroad was chartered in 1881 to connect Pensacola with the parts of Florida east of the Apalachicola River, straight across the also sparsely-populated Panhandle. The railroad company began construction on June 1, 1881. Since the L&N was expanding its services into eastern Florida all the way to

Jacksonville, that was surely to bring even more traffic (hence "growth") through Flomaton. The Louisville and Nashville Railroad was operating the original Alabama and Florida Railroad and subsequent Pensacola Railroad route into Pensacola from Flomaton, Alabama, forty-four miles to the north.

The traffic from so many trains made it difficult sometimes to cross the tracks, even in relatively modern times. A newspaper account in the 1920s made much to do with trains blocking the crossings for so long, and another newspaper article in the 1960s announced the impending construction of an UNDERpass to relieve the congestion. Alas, it took until the 1970s for an OVERpass to be built which may have spelled the demise of the downtown area of Flomaton, since the overpass diverted and sped up vehicle traffic away from the downtown business district!

Attention to the growing importance of the railroad's effect on the town of Flomaton, the L&N, under the auspices of Col. W. D. Chipley, general manager of the Pensacola Division, had a new depot built in 1876. This one was neat, though small, but was destroyed by fire in 1901. In 1902



that depot was replaced by another more handsome and commodious building. That one burned in 1906, an explosion of gasoline causing the conflagration. The third one was built in 1907 and burned in 1911, being struck by lightning.

The fourth and last one, the most handsome and commodious of all and the one most today remember was finished and opened to the public August 8, 1912, with imposing ceremonies. There were an estimated 600-700 people present, with G. W. Sally, Flomaton's mayor introducing the principal speaker, a Rev. R. M. Hunter. Words were also spoken by

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# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Railroad Junction Day

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R. C. Gorey, assistant master mechanic of the L&N, who said, among other things, "the L&N officials were proud of the new depot at Flomaton, and of the road's great interests in Alabama," and he asked all present to "say a good word for Flomaton, Escambia County and Alabama, whenever an opportunity is offered."

From a smattering of people in the 1870s, in 1911 the population had grown to about 800 people, with eight or ten merchandise establishments carrying a general line of merchandise and other stores such as a first class hardware store, an up-to-date bank, with ample capital, three livery stables, one saw mill, two jewelers, one ice plant, one bakery, one bottling works, an extensive gravel plant, one cotton gin and grist mill, a barber shop, one meat market, one first class hotel, several boarding houses and restaurants, and two churches (Methodist and Baptist). The Atmore Spectrum article said nothing about saloons or liquor stores.

The progress in farming was illustrated over the same period by the example that even a bale of cotton was a curiosity a few years before, but in 1911 over 600 bales of cotton were shipped by way of Flomaton's railroad.

Growth in the town's businesses and population continued until the 1970s when the magnificent depot was demolished, and signs of depression such as long-established businesses closing became ubiquitous. Today, many buildings are vacant and there are empty lots where others thrived.

There are no more passenger trains but freight hauling has continued to be a sign of life in the railroad, even as motor vehicle traffic has increased on the highways. Railroad passenger service peaked in the 1920's with several trains a day calling at Flomaton. With the coming of the automobile and airplanes that were heavily

subsidized by the government, passenger service started going into the red. Four trains survived until 1967 when the Louisville and Nashville along with other railroads lost the mail contracts.

The remnant of the streamliner "Gulf Wind," inaugurated in 1949 to replace steam-powered heavy-weight cars, survived until Amtrak's formation. Its last run was on April 30, 1971. The Gulf Wind's final years saw just token service consisting of one engine, one baggage car, one coach, and one sleeper with a diner, between Jacksonville and Chattahoochee only. The service had been reduced to three times a week in an attempt by the Louisville and Nashville and the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad to cut costs and to help support the discontinuance petition filed with the ICC.

Beginning on April 4, 1993 Amtrak's "Sunset Limited" provided through service across South Alabama from Los Angeles, California to Miami, Florida via New Orleans, Louisiana, and Jacksonville, Florida with stops at Atmore, Pensacola and Crestview. The "Sunset Limited" ended a twenty-two year hiatus in passenger service across through Flomaton.

In August 2005 Hurricane Katrina destroyed the main line along the Louisiana and Mississippi Gulf Coast thus ending Amtrak's "Sunset Limited" and

passenger service in South Alabama and Northwest Florida.

The Pensacola and Atlantic Railroad from Pensacola toward the east coast of Florida received financial backing from the L&N during its construction in the 1800s but ceased operating as an independent line on July 1, 1885 when it was incorporated into the Louisville and Nashville system. Ninety seven years later in 1982, the Louisville and Nashville Railroad merged with the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad, Atlanta and West Point Railroad, Georgia Railroad, West-

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**This may have been one of the last northbound runs of the Hummingbird**

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**Heading into Century from Flomaton**

*(Continued from page 16)*

ern Railway of Alabama, and Clinchfield Railroad to form the Seaboard System Railroad.

In 1985, the Seaboard system and the Chessie system merged to form CSXT Rail System. Today the railroad is still an important part of the lives of many folks who are residents of the town, although it isn't the influence it once was.

In the Atmore Spectrum of September 12, 1912 the article was closed by this: "In the early days the place contained a rough element, and the Police Gazette, a sporting paper said that Pensacola Junction, Alabama, was a favorite resort for thieves, cut throats and murderers. Now it is considered one of the most law abiding and orderly towns in the entire state."

Flomaton may have been created as a result of the railroad, but it is what it is today, a stable, peaceful, noble community with folks who love their town.

*Text compiled from the September 12, 1912 issue of the Atmore Spectrum; information from the West Florida Railroad Museum web site; the books "Railroads of the Confederacy," "Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook" and*

*"Iron Horses in the Pinelands;" and the June 2009 issue of L&N Magazine. Picture credits are Jerome Lachaussee, L&N Magazine, and Grady W. Roberts Jr. €*



**Flomaton Dispatcher's Desk  
Around 1973**

**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](mailto:escohis@escohis.org)

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