



The Methodist Church in
Burnt Corn

Volume 41, Number 7

July 2014

The July Meeting **Tuesday, July 22, 2014, 3:00 p. m.** **The Thomas E. McMillan Museum**

The Program: "Show and Tell"

One of ECHS's most popular programs. It is a great way to learn about our members and their heritage. Plan on bringing an item that is meaningful to you. The stories about these items are always of interest to members.

Sheriffs, Outlaws, and Guns



We had a request that the rifle that was used to kill Railroad Bill be part of the upcoming "Show and Tell." Tom McMillan was gracious enough to pose with the rifle, a Winchester 1873 model. Tom has a personal interest in this

rifle as well as the pistol that his great-grandfather, Sheriff E. S. McMillan, was carrying when he was killed in July 1895 at Bluff Springs by Railroad Bill. The pistol (pictured below) is a .41 caliber, Colt's Model 1877 "Thunderer."



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The August Meeting

Tuesday, August 26, 2014
Thomas E. McMillan Museum
Guest Speaker Eugenia Ellis Brown
of Conecuh County who was
reared in Burnt Corn, will speak on
her memories of the community.

Field Trip Planned to Burnt Corn
and sites close to the community on
September 9, 2014.
Read about the trip in this issue of

Sheriffs, Outlaws, and Guns

(Continued from page 1)

McMillan Museum Coordinator Jerry Simmons comments on the Museum's Facebook page that "the murder sparked a manhunt all over south Alabama and Northwest Florida region which ended when Bill was shot and killed by Leonard McGowan in Atmore's Ward and Tidmore's store" (<https://www.facebook.com/McMillanMuseum>).



E. S. McMillan, sheriff of Brewton in the 1890s, from <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Multimedia.jsp?id=m-3097>.

The Colt "Thunderer" Popular with Outlaws As Well As Lawmen

The man who located Sheriff E. S. McMillan's pistol, Doc Bradbury, says the gun was very popular with sheriffs because of its small size but high caliber. Bradbury also notes that the gun was equally popular with outlaws as well as lawmen and that William Bonney (Billy the Kid), Pat Garrett, and John Wesley Hardin were all known to carry the gun at various times.



This image of Constable J. L. McGowan standing, rifle in hand, over the corpse of "Railroad Bill" strapped to a wooden plank, sold for 50 cents in the days following the notorious outlaw's death in March 1896 <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Multimedia.jsp?id=m-3096>.

Constable J. L. McGowan's Rifle

Doc Bradbury also traced the Winchester Rifle that was Leonard McGowan's. He found that McGowan had lived in several states with interests in a Nevada gold and silver mine as well as a hotel in New Mexico, and eventually was a prosperous rancher and property owner in Nevada.

Bradbury felt the gun's provenance was documented by family papers, letters, etc., connected to Leonard's wife and children.



Another Area Sheriff from the 1800's
Picture of Milton Cass Stokes who was an Escambia County Sheriff Deputy in the Late 1800's. Deputy Stokes is related to ECHS Vice President Carolyn (Stokes) Jennings.

News and Announcements



**Battle of Burnt Corn
Creek Reenactment
July 26, 2014
from 10 am to 2 pm
In Burnt Corn Creek/
Jennings Park
in Brewton, AL**

For the Battle of Burnt Corn Creek event, there will be re-enactment and living history demonstrations ending with skirmish at Jennings Park



Robert Thrower, Poarch Creek Indian Historian, explains the context of the attack, and the chain of events set in motion by the battle by the creek. Photo of Robert and re-enactors is from the 2013 re-enactment in Brewton
<<https://www.facebook.com/burntcornlivinghistory>>.



**Commemoration of
201st Anniversary of
Battle of Fort Mims
August 30-31, 2014
9:00 a. m. – 3:00 p. m.
Tensaw, AL,
North Baldwin County**

- The weekend includes Living History, Displays & Crafts of early 1800's including Covered Wagons, Arrowheads, Wool Spinning, Blacksmithing, Quilting, Period Music, Basketry, Pottery, Watercolors, Skinning, Flintknapping, Creek Indian Games & Cultural Presentation, Period Weapons & Clothing.
- Speakers Forum • Historical plants & Fort Mims History
- Daily Re-enactments on site:
Burnt Corn 11a. m. • Fort Mims 2:00 p. m
- 'Old Time' Church Service 10 a/ m. Sunday



Reenactment at Fort Mims
< http://photos.al.com/mobile-press-register/2013/08/battle_of_fort_mims_re-enactme_45.html>.

(Continued on page 4)

News and Announcements

(Continued from page 3)

Claudia Campbell Receives 2014 Distinguished Service Award from Alabama Historical Commission



Claudia, shown speaking at the 200th anniversary and commemoration of the Fort Mims Massacre, has presented a program for ECHS. She also participated as a guide for the ECHS field trip to North Baldwin County

In its citation for her award, the Historical Commission noted her "steadfast and unrelenting leadership with the preservation and promotion of Fort Mims," and that she has "dedicated most of her life to restoring the historic site to a condition reflecting the importance of the historic actions that took place in 1813."

An article by in the Atmore News on her achievements states "The commission especially had high praise for Campbell's efforts to reconnect descendants of those who were at the Fort during the Fort Mims Massacre during the Creek Indian Wars. More than 500 descendants gathered last year as a part of the 200-year anniversary of the massacre."

It concludes, "Claudia has taken it upon herself and challenged the Fort Mims Restoration Association, descendants, and volunteers in Baldwin County to tell the story of Fort Mims in an accurate way that both encourages preservation of the site and

serves to educate the public" (<http://www.atmorenews.com/2014/06/04/ft-mims-campbell-honored/#sthash.P966oQzo.dpuf>).



**West Florida
Genealogical Society
Meeting
August 2, 2014
West Florida
Genealogical Library
10:00 a. m.**

Address: 5740 N. 9th Ave, Pensacola, FL

[850-494-7373](tel:850-494-7373),

Topic: FamilySearch.org: "What's New and How to Use It."

Speaker: Elder Balling and Elder Blair, from the LDS (Latter Day Saints) Church.

Presentation will include new records and features of Family Search; how to search, create a pedigree fan chart, share photos, build a family tree, chat with a live person for help, and use Puzilla to "find our cousins." WFGS member Mrs. Lee Scott will also be available to answer any in-depth general questions.

FamilySearch.org is a free website with many genealogy records to access, and WFGS library volunteers have recently been trained to assist visitors in using its resources.

Members and guests are welcome to attend. Refreshments will be available at 9:45. Meeting begins at 10:00.

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News and Announcements

(Continued from page 4)



Honoring Confederate Veterans with Car Tag

Keiron McGowin has notified ECHS that he has purchased his car tag honoring his ancestor Jacob Lewis McGowin.

He writes: "I finally remembered at tag time to get my SCV (Son of confederate Veteran) tag to honor Jacob Lewis McGowin's service. You do not have to be a member to get yours! The \$50 fee goes to the Alabama Division SCV to support its various historical functions."



ECHS Member Don Seales in Leadership Role with Panhandle Historic Preservation Alliance

Don is the current president of the Alliance, which their website states: brings together "community leaders and other interested individuals and organizations who are engaged in the collection, preservation and restoration of historic property and memorabilia from the state of Florida."

Alliance activities include visiting area museums and historic neighborhoods as well engaging with entertainment and educational programs.

For further information about the Alliance, see their website at www.panhandlehistoricalalliance.org.

Who Do You Think You Are

The Popular TV show Who Do You Think You Are? returns to the TLC Channel for another season beginning Wednesday, July 23, 2014. There will be family history exploration for six celebrities.



Alan Miller Film Chosen for 2014 Fairhope Film Festival

Alan is shown at the June 2014 ECHS meeting where he showed his documentary. "When Good People Do Nothing," which is an interview with former Alabama Governor John Patterson concerning the murder of his father Albert Patterson. The murder and resulting investigation led to the clean up of Phenix City.

An ECHS Project: Ironing Newspapers for Preservation

ECHS has a valuable collection of newspapers which are excellent sources of genealogical information. ECHS Librarian Barbara McCoy has inventoried, obtained the appropriate storage boxes, and begun the process of properly storing the papers.

However, the papers must be ironed so as to remove creases and prepare them to fit in the boxes. We need volunteers to help with this project. If you can donate some time, plan to come from 9:30 a. m. to noon any Tuesday or Thursday.

ECHS Field Trip to Burnt Corn and Other Sites in the Area on Tuesday, September 9, 2014

The Sites

Our field trip will include visits to these places:

- (1.) Burnt Corn
- (2.) The Home of Judy Purnell and the Purnell Methodist Church, which is across the road from the home. Home and Church approximately two miles from Burn Corn.
- (3.) Bookers Mill, which is approximately 6 miles from the home of Judy Purnell.
- (4.) General Store at Cook's Dairy Farm, which is about five miles from Booker's Mill.

Traveling Plans

For those interested in carpooling to Burnt Corn, the group will meet at the Museum in Brewton at noon on Tuesday, Sept. 9. Plan on bringing a brown bag lunch and/or snacks for later in the afternoon.

We will plan to leave the Museum no later than 12:30 p. m. The trip to Burnt Corn from Brewton should take about forty-five minutes.

Those who will not join the group that is carpooling should plan to be at the General Store in Burnt Corn by 1:15 p. m.

Directions to Burnt Corn

First Set of Directions:

Judy Purnell, one of our hosts, has suggested that easy directions to Burnt Corn are to travel on Interstate 65 to Evergreen to the Midway Exit and turn onto Hwy 83 North. Two Landmarks to look for to know that you have the correct highway are a bar-beque restaurant on the right side of the highway (closed but building still marked) and a Pizza Hut on the left.

On HWY 83, travel about eight miles until you come to Lyeffion Jr. High School. Turn left then on County Road 30. After about eleven miles on this road, you will reach a dead end. Turn left and you will be about two hundred yards from the General Store in Burnt Corn, our meeting place and first stop.

Second Set of Directions:

Darryl Searcy has written the following set of directions for reaching Burnt Corn from Brewton as well

as directions from Burnt Corn to other locations for our trip. He has also noted places of interest along the way.

1. Follow Hwy-41 from Brewton to Repton – 27 miles. At Hwy-84 junction turn R and at next Intersection, turn onto CR-5 (Carter Hospital).
2. Stay on CR-5 thru Bermuda to Burnt Corn (Old Federal Road and County Line Conecuh/Monroe) – 12.3 miles.
3. Leaving Burnt Corn Turn R onto CR-30 – 3.5 miles to Purnell Church and Residence.
4. Stay on CR-30 from Purnell to Fairnelson - 3.0 miles
5. At Fairnelson turn R onto CR-22 to Booker's Mill – 3.0 miles (landmarks are beautiful home of Dr. Stanley Barnes and the estate of Dr. Salem Saloom). Bookers Mill is now Stinson Springs.

First Stop: Burnt Corn



Meeting us at the General Store, shown above, will be Judy Purnell of Brewton, but with a family home and roots in Burnt Corn. Joining Judy will be Eugenia Brown, a long-time resident of Burnt Corn who is knowledgeable about its history with many personal memories of the community. Eugenia will be our speaker for the August ECHS Meeting. Judy and Eugenia will give us background and details on the community and the places of interest.

Those who wish to can walk the main street to see

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ECHS Field Trip to Burnt Corn and Other Sites in the Area on Tuesday, September 9, 2014

(Continued from page 6)

the buildings that have been preserved, or it would be easy to drive by and see the buildings and homes.

The visit to Burnt Corn will probably take thirty to forty-five minutes.

The next stop, the Purnell Home and Methodist Church, will be about two and one half miles away.

Second Stop:

The Burnt Corn Home of Judy Purnell and the Purnell Methodist Church

Judy Purnell will be remembered as the hostess of an ECHS Christmas Party at this home a few years back, a most successful event attended by over sixty guests and members.

Judy has invited us to have our brown bag lunch or snacks at her home. The Society will furnish drinks.

The house is over one hundred years old. Recently, it was the scene of a very special event. One of Judy's sons was married in the Purnell Methodist Church with a reception in the home. The marriage took place exactly one hundred years to the day that his ancestor married his bride in that same church and brought her to their new home across from the church.

We will probably spend an hour or so at this stop. Our next stop at Booker's Mill is six miles away.

Third Stop: Booker's Mill

Now Known as Stinson Springs

Booker's Mill, which is a lovely spot with a lake. The Mill is no longer there but there is an old chapel which is now available for weddings, cabins, and a store which has been turned into a museum.

Probably thirty to forty-five minutes here.

Our next stop, Cook's Store, is about five miles from Booker's Mill.



**The Store, now a museum, at Booker's
Mill/Stinson Springs**

Fourth Stop:

The General Store at Cook's Dairy Farm



This store has been reopened as a combination of the old and the new. Mr. Cook took great pride in his store and the interesting items that have been preserved items such as his very large cash register which he would clean and polish. Since his death, Ann Cook has supervised the store. She has invited ECHS to stop by and visit this well example of the disappearing rural community store.

The store is located on HWY 83 at what is called Cook's Crossroads.

Next stop, home.

The Elim Baptist Church Historic Plaque Dedication

A Letter from Your President: the Dedication of the Elim Baptist Church Plaque

What a wonderful field trip some of us from your Escambia County Historical Society made Sunday, June 22, 2014 to the Roberts community and the Elim Baptist Church Homecoming celebrating 189 years. Founded in 1825 by four brothers, Noah Samuel, Peter, and John Parker, with the help of Circuit Rider, Father Alexander Travis The first Church was a small log cabin along Silas Creek. Today's well maintained building was erected in 1920.

We were invited to the eleven o'clock service. Rev. Ron Headly and wife Rita, familiar names to the Brewton folks, serve as Pastor. The service, with wonderful musical selections by Maxine Bondurant with our own Ronnie Herrington at the piano, and an inspiring guest speaker, ended with the familiar hymn "Revive Us Again."

I've known Ronnie since he was a teenager working at Mr. Ralph Garrett's and for a while he played piano for us at Pollard Methodist Church. He has been such a blessing to our family through the years, a talented Christian who loves history. It was he, along with Dot Cole and Janet Wilson, who brought the Elim Church to the attention of our Historical Plaque Committee.

While visiting this day, we talked with old friends who had ancestors buried in the cemetery. The names of this county's pioneer families included Parker, Brackin, Herrington, Peebles, Ball, Findley, Fuqua, Koon, Jones, Graham, Mancil, Wilson, and others.

A delicious meal “dinner on the grounds” style was most comfortably served inside the air-conditioned



**The Historic Plaque for
Elim Baptist Church
Placed by ECHS, June 22, 3014.**

fellowship hall and outside under the covered eating area, shaded by old oak trees complete with breeze. Believe me, the casseroles homemade dishes, fresh cantaloupe, and section of delicious deserts was plentiful and tasty enough to tempt any palate.

At the plaque dedication, Rev. Headly introduced your President and after a few remarks, the historical marker was uncovered by Dot Cole and Janet Wilson. The inscription was read by Ronnie Herrington. Our public relations officer, Clay Lisenby, captured the day's events on camera.

Later, several of us took an excursion through the woods, forded a creek and visited the oldest cemetery, Noah's Hill. Just as the name implies, it is on a high hill overlooking the pine forest. It contains a grove of trees and a

dozen or so graves marked simply with iron stone along with a modern identifying granite marker. The local history on the marker relates that an educated Cherokee Indian, Winnie Hunt Parker, was the first Native American to teach school in Conecuh (now Escambia) County.

Among those from your Escambia Society officers and members attending the event were Barbara Page, Susan Blair Jacque Stone, Jo and Robin Brewton, Carolyn Jennings, Sammy McGlouthren, Don Seales, Susan Crawford, Lydia Grimes, Clay Lisenby, Ronnie Herrington, Tom McMillan, and me, your President, Sally Finlay.

Thank you to Rev. Headly and Rita, to Ronnie, Dot, and Janet, Bill and everyone at the Elim Baptist Church. May God continue to richly bless you and your wonderful church.

The Elim Baptist Church Historic Plaque Dedication



ECHS Members at the Elim Baptist Church Marker Dedication

Left to Right Front Row: Robin Brewton, Jo Brewton, Carolyn Jennings, and Sally Finlay.

Left to Right Back Row: Barbara Page, Sammy McGlouthren, Susan Crawford, and Don Seales.



Ronnie Herrington, Sally Finlay, and Rev. Headly in front of the display of the churches in the former Elim Baptist Association.



**Dot Cole and Janice Wilson
uncovered the Plaque.**

**Picture courtesy of Brewton Standard
<<http://www.brewtonstandard.com/2014/06/24/in-the-history-book-historical-society-honors-elim-baptist-church/>>.**

Snapshots of the ECHS June 2014 Meeting



Snapshots of the ECHS June 2014 Meeting *(Continued)*



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The ECHS *Journal* Section

SYLVESTER LEAVINS: MOTHER'S LOST UNCLE

By Evelyn Ann Biggs-Williams

I grew up in the Lottie community in north Baldwin County, Alabama, hearing my Mother, Mary Evelyn (Smith) Biggs refer to Sylvester Leavins as her "lost uncle." Mother even had a photo of Uncle Sylvester, on which she had written, "My lost Uncle." Mother was 15 years of age when her Uncle Sylvester's letters home from out west stopped coming. The family never heard from Sylvester again after a letter received in 1923 contained promises of coming home soon.

The family mystery surrounding Sylvester remains unsolved. Sylvester left home in Perdido Station, Alabama in Baldwin County to serve in World War I. Sylvester Levins (Leavins, Levens) was one of nine children born to William Isaiah Levins and Mary Evelyn (Shelby) Levins.

Sylvester was the seventh child whose birthdate is most often listed as Aug. 16, 1900. He was inducted in the U.S. Army in 1917 and the registration for the draft was dated September 12, 1918. Birthdates of Isaiah and Mary's children are as follows (1) Clara Evelyn "Evie" Levins born April 24, 1886, (2) Laura Annie Levins was born January 22, 1890, (3) Henry Ellis Levens was born February 8*, 1891, (4) Wilbur Leavins was born and died in 1893 (5) James Thomas Levens born January 18, 1896, (6) Harry Edward Leavins born May 21, 1899, (7) Sylvester was born next August 16, 1900 (1901), (8) Ora A Levens was born June 5, 1905, and (9) Isaiah Levins Jr. "Son" was born May 7, 1908.



Sylvester Levins is standing on the left.

Private Sylvester Levins served with the American Expeditionary Force in World War I in 1919 in Brest, France with the 22nd Co. Unit 5, Camp Mead Replacement. Brest, France was a port town that served as a staging area on the northwest of France where ships unloaded the soldiers headed for the trenches.

While Sylvester was in World War I, his father, Isaiah Levins died during the flu epidemic in December 1918. According to Isaiah's headstone in the Lottie Methodist Cemetery, Isaiah was 75 years old at the time of his death.

In the 1920 census, a Mr. Needham McDonald Huggins was listed as a boarder. He was a widower with

four children. Between the 1920 census and the 1930 census, Mary Evelyn Levins married Mr. Huggins. Sylvester's Mother, Mary Evelyn Huggins died Oct. 4, 1930 at the age of 63. In the 1940 census, 67-year old Needham Huggins was listed as a night watchman for the community of Perdido, Alabama. He was living with his son, Jack Huggins who married Sylvester's sister Ora Levins.

Sylvester was still in the Army on the 1920 census and was listed at Camp Dix, Burlington, New Jersey at age 19 which would have him born in 1901 rather than 1900. Sylvester was also counted at home with

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

SYLVESTER LEAVINS: MOTHER'S LOST UNCLE

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his parents in the same 1920 census. (Camp Dix was near Hoboken, New Jersey which was a deportation station during the war, sometimes shipping 10,000 men a day to France.) On June 18, 1919, Sylvester wrote he thinks he will be home in 1921 when he is due to get out of service.

In a letter dated November 6, 1920, Sylvester was in San Antonio, Texas with the 2nd Division, Company A1@23rd Infantry at Camp Travis, Texas.

In my Mother's trunk, which had belonged to her Grandmother, Mary Evelyn (Shelby) Levins, I found Sylvester's letter to Mother written in 1923. It was mailed from Mare Island, California on U.S. Navy Club stationery with a Vallejo, California postmark. Mare Island Naval Shipyard was located 25 miles northeast of San Francisco. It was the first United States Navy base established on the Pacific Ocean.

Coletta Stejskal Bailey, a Levins' cousin who is also researching genealogy, discovered a letter to Della Leavins, who was married to Sylvester's brother Henry dated October 5, 1922 and mailed from Big Creek, California where he was making 50 cents a day working with a logging crew with Carlson Lumber Company. Big Creek is in northern California and Vallejo is in the southern part near San Francisco. This letter was to Colletta's grandmother, Della Levins who was married to Sylvester's brother, Henry. Since the family back in



Sylvester Levins is seated at the right;

Alabama worked in logging, Sylvester would be familiar with this line of work.

What happened to Sylvester once he got out of service? Did he die in a logging accident? Was he employed at Mare Naval Island Shipyard? Did he die working in the ship yard? Did he die on the trip home? All I know for sure is that he never came home. I have been unable to find a death notice for Sylvester Levins to date. Sylvester's sister Ora, who married Jack Huggins, (son of Needham Huggins) named a son Sylvester in honor of her lost Uncle. Sylvester Huggins was born in 1941. By then the family must have accepted the reality that Sylvester Levins had died.

So the unsolved mystery remains. Sylvester Levins is still "lost." If any reader can assist

with this quest, please contact the writer at escohis@escohis.org

*February 9, 1891 is date on Henry Levins' headstone

The ECHS *Journal* Section

Pictures from the ECHS Collection

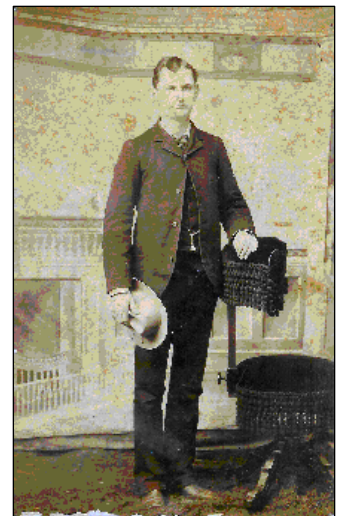
Picture of Jerry Simmons' Grandfather's Family



A Picture in Front of a Farm House Near Burnt Corn Community

William Isaac Riley (Jerry Simmons' grandfather in center in rear) family, Burnt Corn, AL circa 1920. Jerry's grandmother, Dixie Riley at far left. Jerry's mother, Magnolia, is little girl front row, far left, holding a little doll. The little girl at center front row and the black dog came with the traveling photographer and were not part of the family!

Pictures from Burnt Corn



On the left, James Kyzer of Belleville and store owner of the store pictured in the center, located in Burnt Corn. On the right, Dr. Henry Green of Burnt Corn and Dothan.

ECHOES
THE NEWSLETTER FOR
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

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