

The October Meeting Tuesday, October 28, 2014, 3:00 p. m. The McMillan Museum

The Program



Charlie Ware

ECHS Member Charlie Ware of Atmore will present a program about one of the forgotten towns of Escambia County, Alaflora.

Alaflora, one of the lumber and turpentine communities of the Bagdad Land and Lumber Company, was located about twenty miles south of Brewton in the southeast corner of the county.

Through photographs and his own research, using family interviews among other sources, he will be bring us the story of this “forgotten” community. €

More about Our Speaker

Charlie has sent us this biography:

Grew up in Atmore and graduated from Escambia County High School in 1961

Attended University of South Florida in Tampa, graduating in 1965 with a BA degree in marketing/management

Attended Air Force Officer Training School and Air Force Flight Training, graduating in 1967

Flew C-130 transport planes in Southeast Asia for four years accumulating over 2000 hours of combat flight time

Transferred to the Air Force Reserve and flew the AC-130A gunship at Duke Field, Florida until retiring from the Air Force in 1994. Participated in Operation Just Cause (Panama) and Operation Desert Storm

(Continued on page 2)

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ECHS Does not Meet in November

**The December Meeting:
The Christmas Party
Date, Time, and Place TBA**



Sunday
October 26, 2014,
Field Trip
Go Retro Tour of
Civil War
Pensacola

Go Retro is located at 610 N. Spring St. in Pensacola. Look for directions and information on the tour in this issue beginning on page 2.



Cannon at Fort

More about Our Speaker

(Continued from page 1)

Worked for two years at the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base reviewing and declassifying documents from the Viet Nam era

Pilot for Eastern Airlines from 1973 to 1989

Worked as pilot for a company providing oil facility

security in Angola

Pilot for AirTran Airlines from 1995 to 2003

Pilot for a government contract company that conducted surveillance flights in the Balkan area and in Iraq from 2003 to 2012

Retired from commercial flying in 2012 with over 28,000 hours of flight time

Live in Atmore in the same house I grew up in.

ECHS Field Trip on Sunday October 26, 2014 with Go Retro of Pensacola

ECHS's field trip with Go Retro of Pensacola will tour places connected with Civil War Pensacola. Comfortably traveling in the Go Retro Bus, we will be accompanied by a Go Retro guide and will have videos on the bus as well to narrate sites.

The description of the tour from the Go Retro site states:

*Before the war, Pensacola was the largest and most prosperous city in Florida. At the war's end, the town was largely burnt and destroyed. Travel back in time to those dark days. See how its citizens caught onto the secessionist sentiment. Learn how President Lincoln and the nation felt the war would begin in Pensacola. Hear how the town became the most militarized and hotly contested city in Florida. Visit the battle lines. Experience why the Federal enclave became a haven for runaway slaves. See how events unfolded. Narrator, Wesley Odom uses enormous description, maps, and music from the era to bring this story alive with remarkable clarity, action, and strategy. The tour includes a visit to the top of the **Pensacola Lighthouse** and a walk through **Ft. Barrancas**, which was one of the Civil War forts involved in the action.*

Cost: The Tour will cost \$18.00 per person.

Length of Tour: It will last approximately two hours.

Location: The Go Retro Company is located at 610 North Spring Street in Pensacola. Hopefully everyone can arrive at this location, get on the bus



Go Retro Bus

and the bus will be ready to leave around 2:00 p. m.

Directions to Go Retro:

Take HWY 29 south to Pensacola. At the intersection with Interstate 10, you can choose to get onto Interstate 10 and then Interstate 110 into downtown

Pensacola OR, you can stay on HWY 29.

Using the Interstates: On HWY 29, when reaching the intersection with Interstate 10, take the second ramp that goes East towards Tallahassee. A common mistake is to take the first ramp, which is West to Mobile, so be sure to take the second ramp, East to Tallahassee.

Once on Interstate 10, take the first exit which will be labeled to "Pensacola Beaches." This is the ramp that takes you onto Interstate 110. Stay on Interstate 110 until you reach the exit to Cervantes Street. Take this exit and turn right onto Cervantes. At the third red light on Cervantes Street, turn left onto Spring Street.

Stay on Spring Street to reach Go Retro at 610 N Spring St, which is in the second block from the turn and on your left.

Staying on HWY 29: Highway 29, after passing under I-10, becomes Pensacola Blvd. and then becomes Palafox Street which will take you to Cervantes Street in Pensacola. Turn right on Cervantes and then take a left turn onto Spring Street at the second red light on Cervantes. Go Retro at 610 N Spring will be in the next bloc on your left.

(Continued on page 3)

ECHS Field Trip on Sunday October 26, 2014 with “Go Retro” of Pensacola

(Continued from page 2)

Finding Go Retro on Spring Street: After turning left onto N. Spring St., you will see a white picket fence in the next block on the left. This is the Go Retro Office. The office is a yellow building with the white fence in front. There will probably be the Go-Retro Green Bus parked in the space in front of the fence.

Parking: There is a small parking lot on the south side of the Go Retro Building. However, there are also well marked parking spaces on Spring Street and the side streets which on a Sunday will be available.

Tour of Fort Barrancas: For the tour of Fort Barrancas, you will certainly need comfortable walking shoes. However, if you do not wish to tour the entire facility, there is a museum to view instead.

The Tour of the Lighthouse: The tour includes a museum and a tour of the lighthouse-keeper's house in addition to the lighthouse itself.

For those who wish to climb to the top of the lighthouse, which does offer a spectacular view, a caution. There are some one hundred seventy-seven steps on the tightly turning iron staircase with an open design in the steps. You must wear enclosed shoes to climb the stairs, no sandals.

Phone Number for Go Retro: 850-466-5220 €

News and Announcements



Bernice Sims

Artist Bernice Sims Publishes Book about Her Life and Her Art

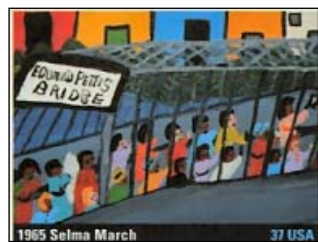
Folk artist, Bernice Sims, with the help of her co-author, LaVender Shedrick Williams, has

published her autobiography, entitled The Struggle.

In The Struggle, she tells of the hardships of being a child of the depression who discovered a love of color and art but was not able to pursue that love until later in life. The pursuit of art was delayed because, as she says, “Life interfered.” That delay included raising six children by herself.

She returned to school (she had left school in the tenth grade) and got her GED when she was in her fifties. She was living in Brewton at this time.

She eventually resumed painting and has received national recognition. In 2005, her painting “Selma Bridge March,” at left, was included in the U. S. Postal Service series “To Form a More Perfect Union.”



Selma Bridge

Now living in a nursing home in Pensacola, Bernice still welcomes visitors. She says she likes to meet people who “get her paintings.” She says she still paints but not as much as she used to.

Kayla Hoomes is ECHS Scholarship Recipient



Left to Right: Penny Hoomes, Carolyn Jennings, and Kayla

Carolyn Jennings (Center), Vice-President of ECHS, congratulates Kayla Hoomes as the recipient of a scholarship from ECHS.

Kayla is a graduate of W. S. Neal High School who is majoring in Science at JDCC. She is the daughter of Shannon and Penny Hoomes.

Fire Destroys Parish Grill in Atmore in Building That Traces Atmore History



Picture of the Fire from the Atmore News

The Article “Major Fire Destroys Atmore Business, Threatens Entire Block,” relates that the Parish Grill was damaged by a fire in the early morning hours of Sunday, October 12, 2014. The building had also been the location of the popular restaurants the Sweet Shop, Gerlach’s and Pintoli’s, among others. The Parish Grill was the most recent restaurant at the location.

Although the fire threatened to engulf the entire block and damage or destroy other buildings nearby, such as the Strand Theatre next door, the fire departments who responded to the fire were able to contain it and the buildings adjacent received mainly water damage.

Several Atmore residents responded to the article at the northescabia.com site. One said of the Sweet Shop, “I remember when I was a boy on Horner street, what a treat it was to have lunch at the Sweetshop restaurant. Hopefully this property is not a total loss.”

Many Atmore residents responded with comments that the new restaurant, the Parish Grill, had great food and hoped it could be reopened

Others were very concerned that The Strand Theatre building next door would be damaged. There were also many comments praising the work of the fire departments which prevented the fire from spreading.

ECHOES has carried articles on both the Strand and Theatre and the Sweet Shop, articles which originally appeared in the Atmore Magazine. €

History of the Parish Grill Building

From “Parish Grill Burns,” by the Atmore News Staff

The building that housed The Parish Grill has a long history in Atmore. Longtime Atmore residents no doubt feel a sense of loss with the destruction of the building.

According to research by Nancy Karrick, the property was purchased in 1885 by W.M. Carney, known as the Father of Atmore. In 1889, W.W. Lowery built a brick building and a house there.

Atmore’s first post office became a tenant in 1913 and remained there until 1923.

In 1930, the building began a long history of serving as restaurants with the opening of Crawford’s Café. A dry good store was in one side of the building.

The restaurant later became The Sweet Shop and kept that name for many years.

In the early 1950s, Atmore’s radio station, WATM, was located upstairs.

Since 1998, the building has housed Gerlach’s Main Street Grill, McElhaney’s Restaurant and Grill, Pintoli’s Italian Eatery, Nan’s Main Street Café, Logie’s Bakery and Café, and most



**Main Street in Atmore the Morning after the Fire
(Picture from the Atmore News)**

Snapshots from the ECHS September 2014 Meeting



AlaFlora and the Florida and Alabama Railroad

Robert Temple in his book Edge Effects: The Border-Name Places states that while Alaflora was located in Escambia County, Alabama, its history was tied to Santa Rosa County, Florida. Mr. Temple sees Alaflora as a place at the heart of the story of the exploitation of the Long Leaf Pines forests which reduced the 80 million acres of these forest in the southeast to less than three million.

Alaflora developed as a logging and turpentine camp, a part of the Bagdad Land and Lumber Company. The company, which had originated as a water powered mill at Arcadia at Milton in 1828 (called Simpson and Company at that time), in 1840 moved to its shipping site on the coast, a site which developed into the community of Bagdad. The company became Bagdad Land and Lumber Company in 1932.

In the 1900's, the company had extended its logging operations by building a steam railroad called the Florida and Alabama. The logging railroad probably crossed the state line in 1916. Alaflora as a community already existed when the railroad line was extended into Alabama. Robert Temple in his book mentions an article in the Milton Gazette in 1914 referring to a funeral at the Alaflora church.

One source states that the Florida Alabama Railroad eventually had seventy-five miles of railroad in Alabama (from Green Gold: Alabama's Forests and Forest Industries by James E. Fickle). The railroad line to Alaflora went north through Parker Springs and then to the community of Whittey. Parker Springs is still shown on current maps but Whittey is not. However, Whittey was a community that had a Post Offices from 1916-1919.

Alaflora had stores and a school in 1914 although it did not have a post office until 1932. Its post office existed from 1932 until 1939. Since the temporary logging camps simply existed to take turpentine from the trees and then cut them down, a



Picture of Engine and Cars of the Alabama Florida Railroad.

Picture courtesy of the Florida Memory website at < <http://floridamemory.com/items/show/34417>>.

process which usually lasted about ten years, Alaflora had a long enough history to show it was a fully functioning town.

Temple's book describes a major event which used the railroad line into Alabama, a party held every Fourth of July. Excursion trains took employees from the main plant at Bagdad through all the dependent turpentine and logging towns into Alabama including Alaflora and up to Parker Springs. There

were picnics, baseball games, dancing and a company sponsored barbecue dinner.

Eventually, despite the lumber company's attempts to use innovations to stay in business, the trees were gone and the mill closed all its operations in 1939. The turpentine and logging communities also closed down.

The company sold much of the land as farm land and what was left to the government. In Florida, the company land became the Blackwater River State Forest and in Alabama, the Conecuh National Forest.

The Blackwater Heritage State Trail
This westernmost rail trail in Florida extends from one mile south of HWY 90 to seven miles north of Milton. It joins the one and one half military trail which ends at the entrance gates to Whiting Field.

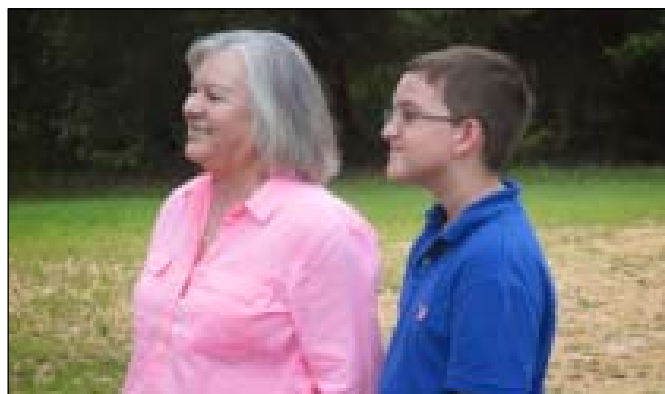
The paved trail follows the path of the former Florida and Alabama Railroad.

The F&ARR supported the timber and lumber business in Bagdad from 1912 to 1939, at which time the line was closed.

The southernmost 5.5 miles of F&ARR track was resurrected in 1943 by the U.S. Navy, adding 4 miles northward from Roseville in order to build and operate the flight training facilities which became Naval Air Station Whiting Field (<http://www.floridastateparks.org>).

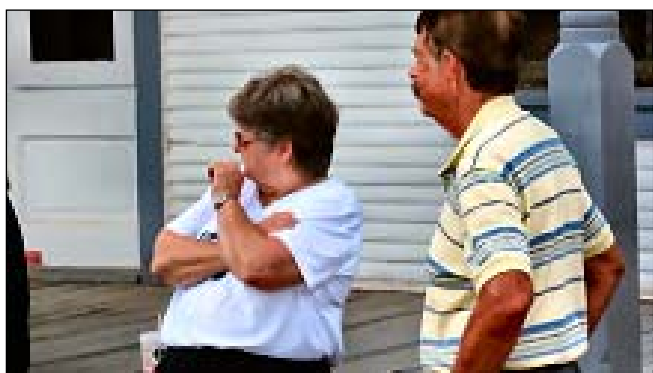
Snapshots from the Field Trip to Burnt Corn, The Wayne Purnell Church and Home, Booker's Mill, and Cook's Store

Burnt Corn **On the Steps of the General Store with our Guide Eugenia Brown**



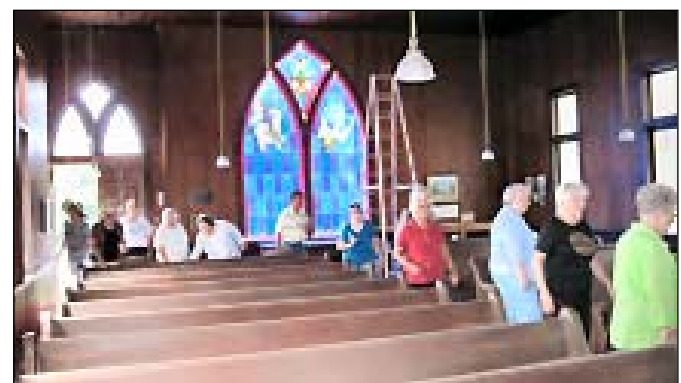
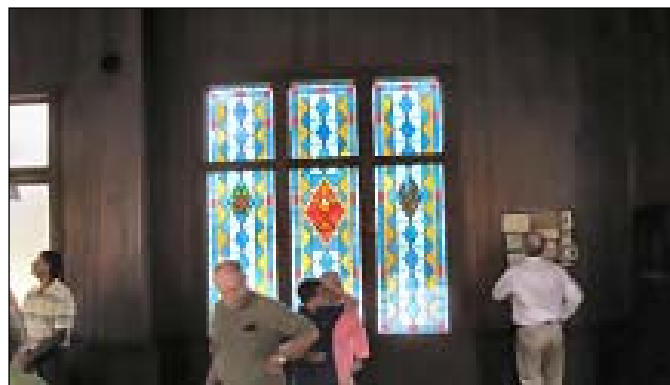
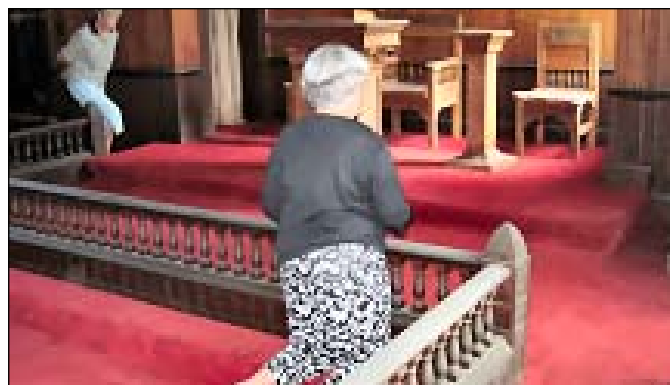
Snapshots from the Field Trip to Burnt Corn, The Wayne Purnell Church and Home, Booker's Mill, and Cook's Store *(Continued)*

Burnt Corn At the General



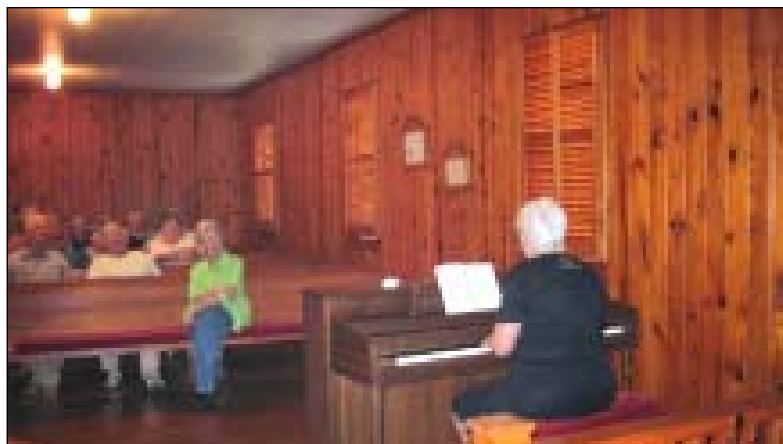
Snapshots from the Field Trip to Burnt Corn, The Wayne Purnell Church and Home, Booker's Mill, and Cook's Store *(Continued)*

Burnt Corn The Methodist Church



Snapshots from the Field Trip to Burnt Corn, The Wayne Purnell Church and Home, Booker's Mill, and Cook's Store *(Continued)*

Purnell Church



Snapshots from the Field Trip to Burnt Corn, The Wayne Purnell Church and Home, Booker's Mill, and Cook's Store *(Continued)*

The Wayne Purnell Home for Lunch



Lined up at the Purnell Home Ready for the Next Stop at Booker's Mill



The Joe McCarter House Home in Burnt Corn built by Joe McCarter, farmer and rancher famous for sending one of his turkeys to Washington to President Franklin Roosevelt.

The President and Mrs. Roosevelt expressed appreciation in a letter from the President's private Secretary.

Also sent "birds" to Eisenhower and Kennedy. Eisenhower's private secretary acknowledged the pheasants sent as delicious and much enjoyed.

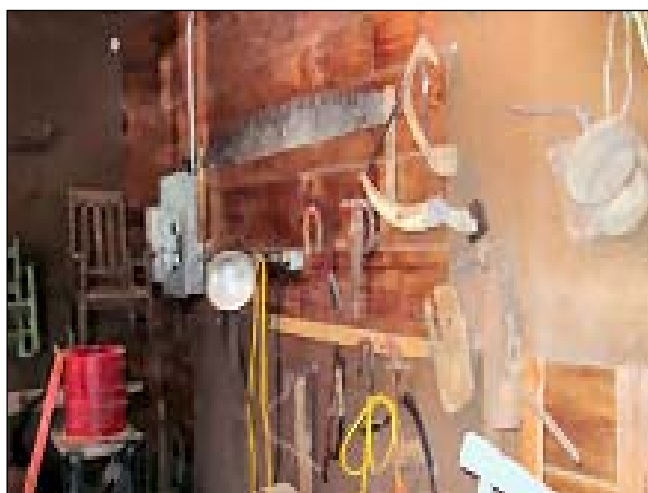
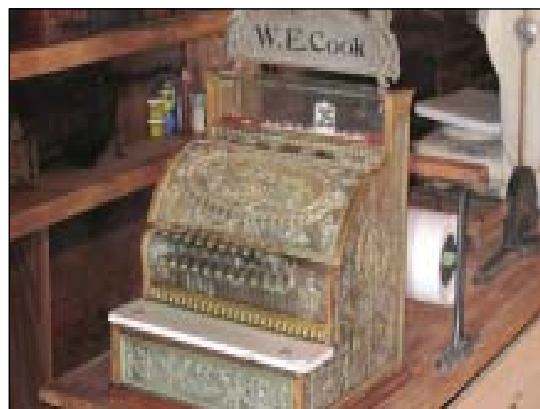
Snapshots from the Field Trip to Burnt Corn, The Wayne Purnell Church and Home, Booker's Mill, and Cook's Store *(Continued)*

Booker's Mill



Snapshots from the Field Trip to Burnt Corn, The Wayne Purnell Church and Home, Booker's Mill, and Cook's Store *(Continued)*

Cook's Store Our Hostess: Ann Cook



Snapshots from the Field Trip to Burnt Corn, The Wayne Purnell Church and Home, Booker's Mill, and Cook's Store *(Continued)*

Cook's Store Our Hostess: Ann Cook



Ann Cook, who has preserved her husband's collection of tools and other items from the past in Cook's Store, is in the back row on the right

Cook's Store is on the site of a dairy farm. The hay and machinery below are on the left of the store shown above.



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The ECHS *Journal* Section

Remembering the Yard Broom

By Darryl Searcy

This essay will take you way, way back to turn of the century and beyond - to some folks it could also be as late as the 60s. In those years, sooner or later, every southern homestead had need for something that was more than a broom but not quite a rake. The brooms weren't made for sweeping floors, or grass clippings, but twig brooms were used to sweep the grounds around a dwelling -- to clear away leaf litter and other debris that found its way onto the yard.

There was grass, for sure, but adjacent to the house, and especially at the front entrance, it was customary to cut all the grass away, no grass, just naked ground, so one could see where to step when treading after dark. That's right, no grass. In olden times most southern folks took off their shoes in the evenings when strolling around the yard to take the fresh evening air. On clean shaven earth one would be able to see snakes, spiders, toads, and other wild things that normally live in tall grasses. Too, good grass around the house required more than occasional rainwater, such as fertilizer, mowing, and general upkeep at a time when the entire household was working the fields and had scant little time to groom a lawn.

Obviously, households always needed a "traditional" broom for inside sweeping, but the ancient twig broom was an outside "broom-rake" used for rough sweeping to round up everything into a burn pile.

The thought of yard brooms came to me when I was using a regular straw broom to brush up the carpets rather than pull out the vacuum sweeper. My mind wondered backward and I imagined what it was like to use an old-time homemade straw broom or yard broom for this work. I remember my mom using one to sweep the graveled path that ran from the front steps to the gate.

She also had Bermuda grass growing around the entire house and we had an old iron push mower that took forever to mow the grass. Having lived that good life is probably the reason I hate the job of mowing grass to-



An Old-Fashioned Push Mower

day. My younger brother and I worked the old mower as a team, one kid on each side of the handlebar, or sometimes we rigged up a rope harness and while one pushed the other pulled

Now comes the obvious question of why dig and chop out all the grass? The answer is quite simple as mowing and grooming a lawn as we do today was not a practical country practice in those times. Often livestock was allowed to graze in the yard to keep the grass down, but for

those fortunate enough to have a dandy push mower - well, that was uptown for sure. Lacking such a modern convenience, it was best to keep the grounds naked of grass.

Thus, the homemade twig broom which was used in portions of the yard that might need more specialized attention was absolutely the ticket as it was efficient to do the job and the cost was zero. To fashion a yard broom, all one needed to do was visit the gall berry patch and cut a bundle of tall stems, strip away the lower twig growth, spread the stalks out a few days to dry, thrash the leafy heads against a wire fence to remove the dead leaves and you had the best possible modern convenience.

I was just a kid at the time when we had an old red-rustic house near Barnett Cross Roads, but I remember well the awful task of hoeing up the grass and keeping the yard tidy, which it seemed was usually in constant need of cleaning. In those pre-plumbing days, dishwater and mop water were thrown outdoors, which practice was at least partly responsible for some areas being without grass anyway.

Cleaning soaps usually contained lye, which often killed the grass and was pretty rough on the soles of one's feet as the lye-tainted water burned whether wet or dry. The kitchen door was the most often used and the walkway leading to the kitchen naturally got an accumulation of trash, so it was necessary to clean and sweep the "path" daily.

In rural Alabama where I grew up, material for the

(Continued on page 17)

The ECHS *Journal* Section

Remembering the Yard Broom

(Continued from page 16)

yard brooms varied. While the best twigs for broom making was gall berry, there also grew a cow pasture shrub known as privy bush. Privy bush got its name from the hedge-like shrub that grew around outdoor toilets and the idea was to hide the privy from view.

The privy also required a clean path and the occasional use of lye or lime to break down privy contents. While I am calling it privy bush, the shrub should not be confused with the privet shrub used in cultivated landscapes, but might also be called sweet gall berry or ink bush. The stuff can be a nuisance to the farmer as it invades pastures and roadsides and waste places, so the redeeming value here is that if the household used it to make a durable yard broom, a good purpose was served to contain the shrub in places where it belonged - around the homestead comfort station, which place was always stocked with the latest Sears-Roebuck mail order "wish book."

To construct a twig broom is simplicity itself. The stems (stalks) are cut at ground level and one uses about one-fourth more material than the planned thickness and width of the broom. This is to compensate for shrinkage after the material dries. Place the bundle of twigs in the open air for about 10 days, although the materials can be made into a broom at any time after gathering but if the twigs are not dry strings or wires



A Twig Broom

used in construction will loosen a great deal and your efforts will be a little messy for those who required a tight broom for Halloween transportation.

Once the materials have dried and shrunk, arrange the twigs in the desired shape, beginning with a few twigs and add to the bundle as needed so that the broom will look balanced and arranged. A rounded broom was best because it was capable of sweeping on all sides. A flat design was also efficient, but by far the rounded design was

choice.

Once you have the bundle that will be your "broom for all seasons" secure it tightly by wrapping the bunched handle numerous times with stout string to hold it firmly together until you secure it permanently with wire.

Forget about the finished product being attractive because it's the utility of this masterpiece that counts. Any southern woman worth her salt knows how to make a twig broom, which was a definite part of her upbringing, just as knowing how to carry a baby on her hip, nurse it during church services with a clean diaper draped over her shoulder, dress a mustard plaster or hang an asphidity bag to ward off colds, coughs, flu and chest congestion.

The yard broom was priceless. €

Photo by Elin Smith Crews of the Old Jonas Hendricks House. Located on Hendricks/Emmons Rd. off Stanley Rd. near Stanley Crossroads Community in Escambia County, Alabama. From <<https://www.facebook.com/ForgottenAlabama>>.



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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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