

## The May Meeting Tuesday, May 24, 2016 3:00 p. m. The McMillan Museum



**Charles  
Simon**

### The Program

**Charles Simon, Covington County Extension Agent, will present a program on Pineywoods Cattle, the free ranging cattle of the longleaf pine forest. The owner of a small herd of these cattle, he will emphasize the importance of our virgin pines and the cattle that grazed among them.**

**In addition to his many other accomplishments, Chuck is also known for his skill with the bagpipes.**

## Twilight of An Era



*The following article is by our speaker, Charles Simon. The Mural pictured above is entitled "Twilight of An Era."*

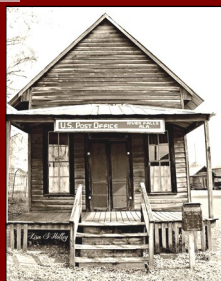
Artist Wes Hardin recently completed painting another mural in downtown Andalusia, bringing the total to eleven

'public' works of art. One of these in particular was created to recall the region's unique forest history. An 80-x-14-foot mural was commissioned to help people remember an era when the Spanish-origin

*(Continued on page 2)*

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River Falls Post Office  
Photo by Lisa S. Holley

Volume 43 Number 5

May 2016

### June Escambia County Historical Society Meeting "To Be Announced"

**Hometown Teams, Brewton**  
This exhibit, part of a traveling Smithsonian exhibit featuring stories of how sports in our communities make history, will open in downtown Brewton on June 10.

**Alabama Blueberry Festival will be  
Saturday, June 18, 2016, at  
Jennings Park in Brewton, AL,  
8:00 am-3:00 pm.**

## Twilight of An Era

(Continued from page 1)

cattle grazed the understory of the vast longleaf pine forest of the Gulf Coast. This old breed of cattle gave meat, hides, and tallow, as well as draft animals to a succession of owners, from the Spanish cattle ranches and missions of Florida, to the Southeastern Native Americans, and finally to settlers of the newly-formed United States.

Entitled “Twilight of an Era,” the new mural depicts the historical period of 1890-1910. During this time span, ‘old growth’ timber, predominately longleaf pine, was rapidly being harvested, opening up the land as a result. The pace of the introduction of new breeds of cattle picked up momentum as the ‘tick barrier’ was gradually eliminated (thanks to federal and state cattle tick eradication programs across the Southern United States), and the use of pastures and fences was being promoted by a new generation of agricultural progressives. The old free-ranging ‘native’ cattle were being cross-bred or eliminated completely from the farm. By the 1960s, only a few of the pure native cattle survived on rangeland owned by families, such as Dewey and Okla Barnes of Covington County, who still saw value in the breed.

The mural portrays a young boy ‘salting’ his family’s free ranging native cattle. The old growth longleaf pine forest has had its understory ‘freshened’ by a recent burn, while the cattle are grazing new-growth native grasses such as wiregrass and bluestem, along with other recovering understory plants. Note that the cattle are ‘marked’ by having their ears cut in specific ways to denote ownership, a practice of the period. Brands were also used, but curiously not as much in Covington County. Carried out when the young calves were caught, ear marking was easier and permanent. The type mark and brand chosen were registered in one’s name at the local courthouse. Today, cattle ear marks are no longer utilized as an indication of ownership. Only hot brands and ear tattoos are now recognized by the



**Detail of the Mural “Twilight of an Era” showing a boy pouring salt into a hollowed out log for the free range cattle. The calf has escaped the frame as calves often escape fences.**

State of Alabama.

The young boy’s horse, carrying a surplus McClellen saddle and old quilt used as a pad, along with the family dog, look on as he pours salt into a ‘lick log.’ Hollowed-out trough cavities in these logs were filled with coarse salt which was essential to the cattle and helped keep them in an area. The family’s dog is an example of an all-

purpose farm ‘cur’ dog that was used for hunt By Charles M. Simon, Covington County Extension Agent “, gathering, and/or catching of cattle. Their canine fierceness intimidated the cattle to bunch together and forced straying cattle back to the group so they might be driven to another location. The dogs could also grab straying cattle by the muzzle or ear for additional control. Examples of these dogs included black mouth curs, Catahoula curs, mountain curs, or any other mixed-breed cur-like dogs that were trained to do this herding-type work.

The mural is not only a colorful illustration of the lifestyle and material culture of a people, but also tells a story of a type of forest range management that used fire and cattle grazing to provide income to rural people that were here a century ago. Our history along the Gulf-Coast was not that of the ‘Plantation South’ but rather of the small, independent ‘yeoman’ farmer/ stockman who made his living utilizing the resources that the longleaf pine forest provided. A distinct culture arose and thrived for generations. Hopefully, their contributions to our county and region will not be forgotten.

Today, many see the need to bring longleaf pine back to its rightful prominence in our Southern forestlands, along with the original natural understory described by early travelers through the region as “vast grasslands under forest.” Longleaf forests are being replanted, accompanied by a return of prescribed fire used liberally for promoting timber growth and understory restoration by controlling invasive plants. Also, new groups of enthusiasts are trying to save the old lines of native cattle from dis-

(Continued on page 3)

## Twilight of An Era

(Continued from page 2)

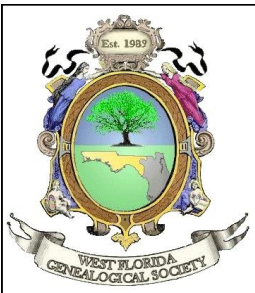
appearing. Today, they are called 'Cracker Cattle' and 'Pineywood Cattle,' depending on the family lineage. It seems to have come full circle!

Some cattle producers still allow limited access to their forestlands for shade, water, and grazing for undergrowth control. Others have even begun using the proven forest/pasture combination called 'silvopasture.' This forest management technique uses

widely-spaced pines that allow a significant amount of sunlight to support a pasture of bahia grass or Bermuda grass to grow beneath the pine canopy. Silvopasture provides a long-term investment in pine tree production and short-term cash flow from cattle.

Finally, a question that is asked by many, "Why is the calf painted outside of the mural?" If you raise cattle, you know! It has to do with calves and fences.

## News and Announcements



**West Florida  
Genealogical Society  
Meeting  
Saturday, June 4, 2016,  
10:00 AM  
West Florida Genealogy  
Library  
5740 N. 9th Ave,  
Pensacola, FL**

Topic: Resources You Might Have Missed at the  
West Florida Genealogical Library

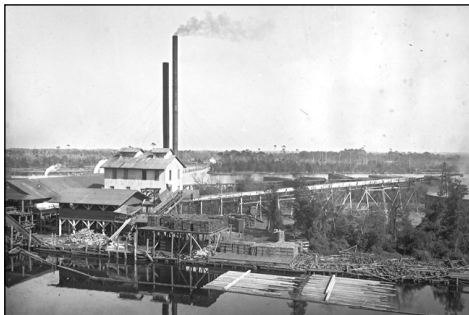
Speaker: Bruce Rova

Genealogical research is never finished! New resources are compiled and added to collections, old resources are rediscovered, indexes are created, and electronic records are brought online every day.

Bruce Rova, WFGS member, has been actively involved in acquiring new resources for the West Florida Genealogy Library and making them available for library patrons. He will give us information about some of those items at the meeting on June 4th.

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

Contact: Charlotte Schipman, [850-477-7166](tel:850-477-7166), [cschipman@mac.com](mailto:cschipman@mac.com)



**Bagdad Riverfront  
Festival  
Sat-Sun, May 21-22,  
2016  
Bagdad Historic  
Mill Site Park  
4636 Forsyth St.  
Bagdad, FL, 32583  
850-380-4484**

The Festival, a weekend-long event, features live music, free boat tours, kayak run, boat building, antique cars and tractors, great food, craft and antique sales, children's activities, railroad exhibits, and much more!



**Pier on the Blackwater  
River at Mill Site Park.**

The Bagdad Historic Mill Site Park opened on May 16, 2016. The Park includes a fishing pier over the Blackwater River, picnic areas, a kayak launch, a trail boardwalk, asphalt parking, bike racks, multi purpose trails and a floating tee boat dock.

**Pictured at the Left,  
The Bagdad Lumber Mill in  
Santa Rosa County, circa 1930s.  
The Bagdad Land and Lumber  
Company operated from 1840  
through 1939.**



## Snapshots of the April 2016 ECHS Meeting



**Before the meeting, Don Sales is shown at the right taking pictures. Jerry Fischer, standing to the right of Don, is talking to our speaker Larry Massey, who can be seen over Don's right shoulder. Ann Biggs-Williams, seated in the front row, seems to be part of the conversation with Jerry and Larry.**

**Also on the front row, next to Ann are Susan Crawford and Carolyn Jennings. Carolyn is looking at some notes. Left to Right, Seated on the second row are Jacque Stone and Sue and Burrell Jerkins.**

**Left to Right, on the back row are Mike Edwards, Lydia Grimes, and Evelyn Franklin.**



**Carolyn Jennings and Sally Finlay.**



**Don Sales with copies of Larry Massey's book.**

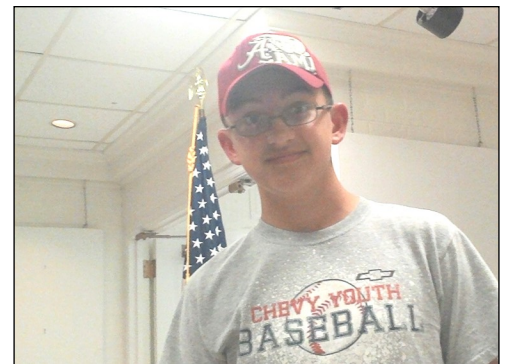


**Pictured at the Left, Left to Right on the Front Row: Barbara McCoy and Ranella Merritt.**

**Second Row: Charlie Ware is talking to Dorothy Diamond and Rachel Hendricks of the Jay, Florida Historical Society.**

**Back Row: Charlie Booher talks with Sally Finlay.**

**Pictured, at the Right. Langham Parr.**





## Snapshots of the April 2016 ECHS Meeting *(Continued)*



**Evelyn Franklin is seated in the back row. Jerry Fisher, back to photographer, is visiting with Sue and Burrell Jenkins,**



**Judy Purnell and Lydia Grimes are waiting to get their copies of Larry Massey's book about Railroad Bill signed by the author.**



**Left to Right, back row, Mike Edwards, Lydia Grimes, and Judy Purnell. In the foreground, Jacque Stone.**



**Left to right, in front, Dot Diamond and Rachel Hendricks; in back, Dan McMillan and Charlie Booher**



**Lydia Grimes is standing in the doorway talking to Don Sales, not shown in the picture. Seated are Barbara McCoy with her back to the camera, Darryl Searcy in the pink shirt, and Lee Bain in the blue shirt.**



**At the Left, Guest Speaker Larry Massey, Author of The Life and Crimes of Railroad Bill:**



## Snapshots of the April 2016 ECHS Meeting *(Continued)*



**The Audience: Members and Guests**



**Larry Massey and Ranella Merritt**



**At the Left,  
ECHS  
President Sally  
Finlay Presid-  
ing over the  
Meeting.**



**First Row: Jerry Fisher, Sue and  
Burrell Jerkins.  
Second Row: Judy Purnell and  
Duke Purnell.**

**Pictured at the  
Right, Left to Right:  
Jerry Fisher (Back  
to Camera), Larry  
Massey, and Don  
Sales.**



**Tom  
McMillan**



## Snapshots of the April 2016 ECHS Meeting *(Continued)*



**Left to Right, Back Row, Tom McMillan and Dan McMillan. Front Row, Charlie Ware and Dot Diamond**



**Above, Ann Biggs-Williams listens to a comment by Larry Massey. Susan Crawford is to the right of Larry Massey.**



**Left to Right, Front Row, Jerry Fisher, Sue and Burrell Jerkins. Back Row, Duke Purnell (with hand on chin) and Evelyn Franklin.**

## Field Trip to Andalusia in Photographs: April 28, 2016

### At Three Notch Museum



**Outside the Three Notch Museum**  
Our hostess for the visit to the Museum is on the steps. ECHS members, from left to right, Burrell Jerkins, Marie Heaton, Susan Crawford, and Sally Finlay are gathered around and looking at the marker for the Museum/Depot.

**The Museum is located in the old Central Of Georgia Railway Depot building in downtown Andalusia. The building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places .**

### At Three Notch Museum (Continued)



#### Reading the Historic Marker in Front of the Depot

Left to right, Barbara McCoy, Carolyn Jennings, Sue Jerkins, Ranella Merritt, and Sally Finlay are in a semicircle in front. Behind them are Burrell Jerkins and Marie Heaton (who has her back to the camera).



#### The Marker, Side One

The first county seat on the banks south of the falls of the Conecuh River was "Covington Courthouse," sited soon after the county was created in 1821.

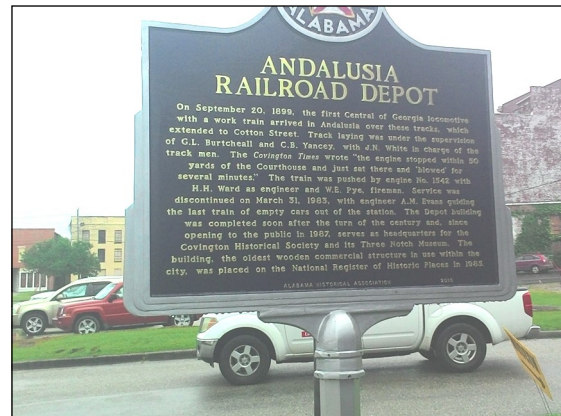
In 1826, when John Devereux was postmaster, the name was changed to Montezuma.

Early citizens of the area included John Devereux, John Barrow, Dave Bullock, Captain Tatum, Henry Jones, John H. Stone, Samuel Bracken, Samuel Jones, Seaborn Jones, William Spurlin, Samuel Gates, Charles Stanley, and William Carter.

After this small community was repeatedly flooded, a new site on top of Devereux Hill was chosen for the county seat in July 1844, and called Andalusia.

The choice of name probably reflected the importance of the region's principal trading center, Pensacola, which was so long ruled by Spain.

[2013: Andalusia]



#### The Marker, Side Two

On September 20, 1899, the first Central of Georgia locomotive with a work train arrived in Andalusia over these tracks, which extended to Cotton Street.

Track laying was under the supervision of G.L. Burtcheall and C.B. Yancey, with J.N. White in charge of the track men.

The Covington Times wrote "the engine stopped within 50 yards of the Courthouse and just sat there and 'blowed' for several minutes."

The train was pushed by engine No. 1542 with H.H. Ward as engineer and W.E. Pye, fireman. Service was discontinued on March 31, 1983, with engineer A.M. Evans guiding the last train of empty cars out of the station.

The Depot building was completed soon after the turn of the century and, since opening to the public in 1987, serves as headquarters for the Covington Historical Society and its Three Notch Museum.

The building, the oldest wooden commercial structure in use within the city, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.



**At Three Notch Museum (Continued)**



**Historic Marker on Three Notch Museum in Andalusia, AL.**

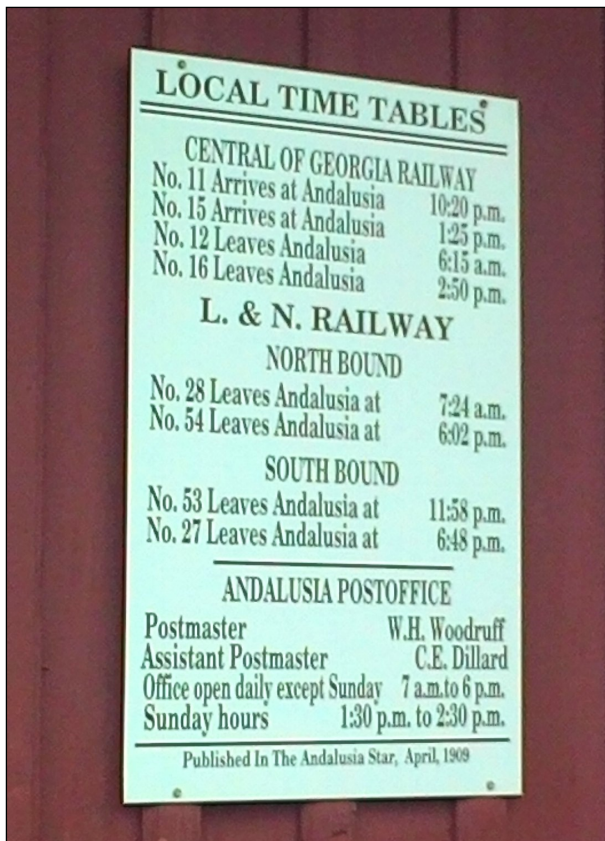
**The Museum is located in the old Central of Georgia Depot in downtown Andalusia.**

**The Marker states: "This Property Has Been Placed on the National Register of Historic Places By the United States Department of the Interior."**



**Looking at Exhibits in the Museum  
In the Foreground, Sue and  
Burrell Jerkins.**

**In the Background, Left to Right, Marie Heaton, Sally Finlay, and Carolyn Jen-**



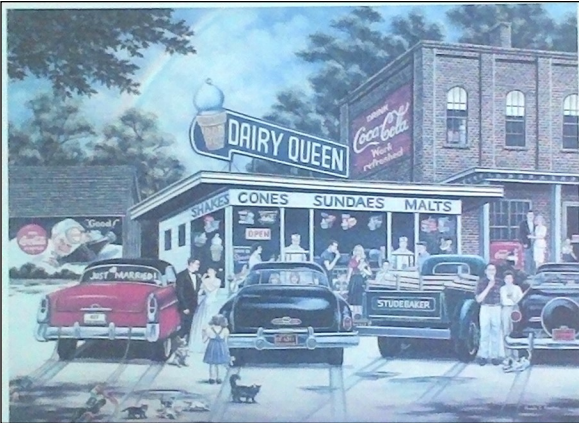
**From the local Newspaper,  
the Andalusia Star News  
for April 1909**

**Time Tables For Arrivals and  
Departures of the Central of Georgia  
and L. & N. Railways.**

**Also, Post office Information:  
Postmaster,  
Assistant, and Hours.**



**Lunch at the Dairy Queen**



**Painting of the Andalusia Dairy Queen in the 1950's  
Today this Building is the Kitchen.  
Orders are made from the outside.  
The Building to the Right is now the  
Dining Room.**



**Wall Decorations in Interior of  
Dining Room Today**



**“Early School Days Of Covington County” Mural on Side of the Dairy Queen Dining Room**



**Lunch**



**Murals on East Three Notch Street**



**The Legend of Andalusia Mural**

This mural is based on the legend told in a book written by James M. Prestwood, as related to him by his grandfather, James Austin Prestwood, who was generally known as "Uncle Aus". "Uncle Aus" is depicted sitting underneath a tree in the first scene of the mural.

According to the legend Aus Prestwood, came to Andalusia at the age of seventeen and had paused to rest underneath a tree. While there he met an elderly man who introduced himself as John McIntosh, part Creek Indian and related to Chief William McIntosh. McIntosh told Aus a story about the tree under which he was resting.

The story began in November 1813 when a small party of Creek warriors captured a Spanish soldier who apparently had strayed from this group. The young Creeks were fascinated with the soldier's white stallion. They wanted to know the name and origin of the horse. The soldier carved the name of the horse "Destinado" and "Andalusia," a province in Spain where the horse was born, on the tree. The soldier, thinking he might be killed, told the Creeks he was taking the horse as a gift to their chief, Red Eagle. This pleased the Creeks and by dawn, they were in route to present the horse to their chief.

It was decided that Red Eagle would ride Destinado, acknowledged to be their fastest horse, in the battle at Horseshoe Bend. If the battle did not go well, he would escape on Destinado to rally help for the battle. He is shown riding Destinado and leaping into the Alabama River to go for help.

Text from <http://www.cityofandalusia.com/community/the-legend-of-andalusia-mural.html>



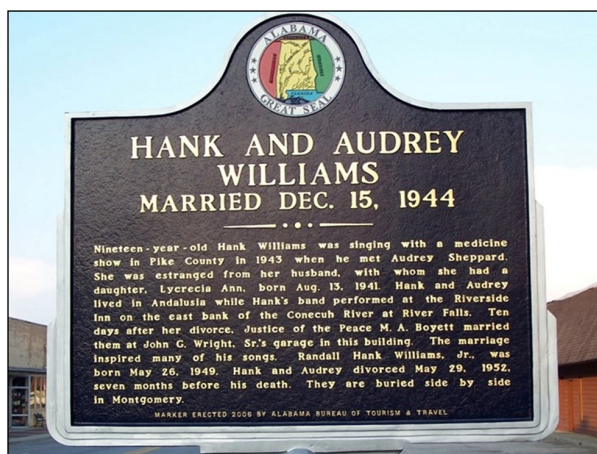
**"Twilight of An Era," shown at the left, "The Legend of Andalusia," and "Early School Days of Covington County" are on East Three Notch Street.**

East Three Notch Road and Hank William Historic Marker



Historic Marker for Three Notch Road and Hank and Audrey Williams

Photograph to the left shows the Marker located east of Court Square on East Three Notch. This marker commemorates both the history of East Three Notch Road and the marriage of Hank and Audrey Williams. It is placed in front of the building where George G. Wright, Sr.'s Garage was once located and where Hank and Audrey were married.



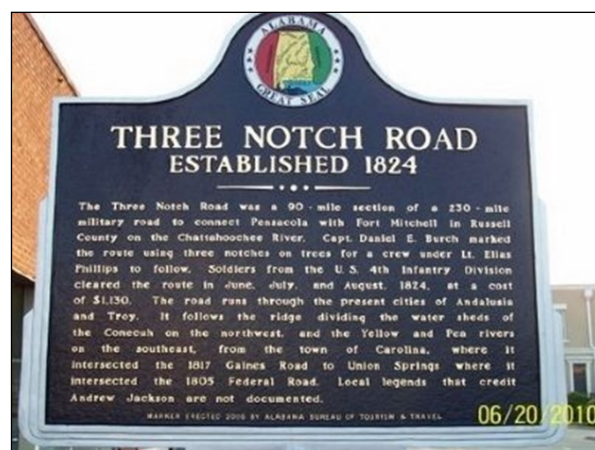
Side B of Marker: Hand and Audrey Williams

Nineteen-year-old Hank Williams was singing with a medicine show in Pike County in 1943 when he met Audrey Sheppard. She was estranged from her husband, with whom she had a daughter, Lycrecia Ann, born Aug. 13, 1941.

Hank and Audrey lived in Andalusia while Hank's band performed at the Riverside Inn on the east bank of the Conecuh River at River Falls. Ten days after her divorce, Justice of the Peace M. A. Bovett married them at John G. Wright, Sr's garage in this building (*building shown above*).

The marriage inspired many of his songs. Randall Hank Williams, Jr, was born May 26, 1949. Hank and Audrey divorced May 29, 1952, seven months before his death. They are buried side by side in Montgomery.

*Erected 2006 by Alabama Bureau of Tourism & Travel.*



Side A of Marker: Three Notch Road

The Three Notch Road was a 90-mile section of a 230-mile military road to connect Pensacola with Fort Mitchell in Russell County on the Chattahoochee River.

Capt. Daniel E. Burch marked the route using three notches on trees for a crew under Lt. Elias Phillips to follow. Soldiers from the U. S. 4th Infantry Division cleared the route in June, July, and August, 1824, at a cost of \$1,130. The road runs through the present cities of Andalusia and Troy.

It follows the ridge dividing the water sheds of the Conecuh on the northwest, and the Yellow and Pea rivers on the southeast, from the town of Carolina, where it intersected the 1817 Gaines Road to Union Springs where it intersected the 1805 Federal Road. Local legends that credit Andrew Jackson are not documented.



### Visit to the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center



**Historic Marker at the Dixon Home  
Side One:**

The Dixon home built in the 1850's and moved to this site in the 1870's is framed with locally milled pine and was originally constructed as a two-room "dogtrot" with an open porch in front and rear. The home features hand-planed boards on the wall and ceilings and pegged window sashes in the two main rooms.

The rear porch and center breezeway were enclosed to create interior rooms sometime after 1800. Also, a separate two-room kitchen structure was built at the rear perpendicular to the main house and connected via a covered porch. The home features two riverbank limestone chimneys built with bricks cut from the banks of the nearby Conecuh River.

Originally surrounded by outbuildings related to the Dixon's forestry operations, the Dixon home is now the center of the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center.

The house was added to the Alabama Register of Landmark and Heritage in 2005.



**Historic Marker at the Dixon Home  
Side Two:**

Four generations of Dixons, each promoting the management of trees as a renewable resource, made their living in forestry on this ground, thereby contributing significantly to Alabama's economy and forest industry.

Jeremiah Dixon II, the son of Revolutionary War Private Jeremiah Dixon, was the first Dixon family member to settle here sometime between 1815 and 1830. This land was passed down through four successive generations. Jeremiah to his son, Wiley Dixon, Wiley to his son, Napoleon Bonaparte Dixon, and Napoleon Bonaparte's son, Solon Dixon, eventually inherited the property.

Napoleon's sons, Solon and Charles Dixon, both raised in this home, became successful forest products industrialists and recognized conservationists.

In 1978, Solon and his wife, Martha, donated the land and a gift to Auburn University to build the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center. Solon Dixon stated at the Dedication in 1979: "Standing on the very ground which our ancestors homesteaded many years ago, we see the beginning of a learning and research center which will last far beyond our lifetimes."

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# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Spring

**By Darryl Searcy**

Note in this photograph that nature's spring has painted its best picture. The scene is thousands of Calliopsis plants blooming on a meadow off Mason Mill Pond Road near Appleton. Surely this is the kind of scene that inspired Van Gogh and others - the joy of spring. Though it lives for a short duration, spring bewitches people in such a way that they sing songs, paint pictures and render drawings in its praise throughout the year.

In this season there is neither too cold nor too hot. That's why nature wears a kinder and gentler look. It's at its best with greenery everywhere, and especially on open meadows that are laden with flowers in brilliant splashes of color. All the trees are in bloom as well, and somehow we choose to tolerate their abundance of pollen in exchange for a brief glance of changing seasons. The soil prepares itself for tilling and ripening its harvest on fields of gold.

We see new and tender leaves coming out on the branches of trees laden with the scent of fresh bark. The birds having remained silent throughout the winter season, now sing the sweetest of songs while busily pruning themselves of old feathers and flashing brilliant plumage to attract a mate. As soon as the spring comes, they break their silence and start singing songs of joy. They look so gay that it seems as if they are giving thanks to God with their thousands of notes.

People wait for this season of outing as the climate becomes mild. They enjoy picnics during this season, dotting the landscape with quilts and blankets tossed on green grasses that harbor Violets, Sweet Williams, Verbena, and Plantains. Nature gives a grand feast to our hungry eyes as buds of flowers peep to see its beautiful sight. Flowers bloom and spread their sweet fragrance all around in hopes of attracting early pollinators that will surely increase the chance of reproducing their own kind.



**Detail of flowers in picture shown above.**

They make us feel healthy and active, as we do cleaning work during this season seeming never to tire of the freshness of the season. We feel fresh and renewed at all times as we soak up the main attraction of spring.

Our cities, villages and small townships present even more beautiful sights as they decorate in nature's bounty; flowers in full bloom. The

green and yellow fields fill our hearts with hope and the farmers look happy because their crops are set and they will soon reap the rewards of several months of long labor.

We breathe deeply of the clean and bountiful air, as spring revels reach a climax during the festivals of March and the gentle rains of April. There is nothing but color everywhere. Colors denoting energy and the vivid, passion-

ate pulse of life. Color signifies the vitality that makes the human race unique in the universal scheme. Thus, the festival of colors is a beautiful gift of spring for which we have waited through a hot summer and cold winter.

People turn to be creative during the spring season as nature paints her best picture. The poets set to writing of its praise. They also express gratitude to God through their poems. Spring is also a season of marriages and feasts. People enjoy these occasions their absolute zeal.

It is this season when the earth is honored for giving us its beautiful best. Spring is the symbol of life, bringing richness and rashness everywhere. The air and the earth is filled with new life, giving us new hopes and aspirations. The sight of distant mountains or nearby oceans are no less beautiful. In those majestic places we see nature in its truest form.

There is no one who does not praise the beauty of the spring. In summer we have intense heat, in winter we have too much cold, and in the rainy season we face suffering related to excesses. It is only the

*(Continued on page 16)*

# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Spring

(Continued from page 15)

spring season when we have no complaining at all. We have only pleasure all around and we never get tired of it. It is therefore said that spring is the queen of all seasons. It is really true. It is a matchless season and therefore we all welcome it with full heart.



**Bartram's  
Rose Gentian  
also known  
as Petal  
Marsh Pink**

## *Memory of the Good Ole Days: Free Range Cattle*

**By Harriet Outlaw, Fairhope, Alabama**

*This article submitted to the Baldwin County Cattle Fair Association in 2005 seems a perfect accompaniment to Chuck Simon's article on "Twilight of An Era."*

Imagine riding through forests of long leaf pine so thick that the canopy overhead shaded the ground over which your pony was running at full speed, not hesitating for anything, and when stumbling, getting right back and forging forward. You can see the scars of the annual burning to inhibit insects and encourage the growth of the timber. You see traces of wild hogs, but very few deer. Visibility was a mile or more because the undergrowth had been kept down by cattle roaming freely in the woods.

You come upon your herd of woods cattle grazing – and at a glance you can tell that most of them are yours by the marks in their ears, or maybe a branding. You and your pony herd them, and begin to drive them back to your home place to corral them, mark their ears and separate the ones for sale and the ones who will be turned loose once again to roam freely in the woods.

This was the life of a cattle farmer in Baldwin County in the first half of the twentieth century. Back in the early days of Baldwin County, all cattle were "free-range" – the fences were to keep the cattle out of yards or gardens. Even crop fields were fenced to keep cows from grazing on your cucumbers, turnips, corn, and any other truck farm crops. A house always had a woven wire or a picket fence around the immediate yard, which was kept hoed and swept clean of all sprigs of grass with a gallberry brush broom – homemade of course!

The story of cattle farming before the Livestock Laws were passed is told by Jack Morris, who lived it! The Morris family has lived in Eastern Baldwin

County since Jack's grandfather came to Baldwin County near Clear Springs in 1881. He came to Pensacola on a merchant ship from France and left the sea forever. He caught a logging train north to Smith Siding Saw Mill on Styx River, approximately 5 miles north of Hwy. 90 at the Florida line, where he got a job, met his future wife, and homesteaded 160 acres.

He soon got into the cattle business, and the family has maintained one of the most successful operations in Baldwin County. Today Jack tells a saga of family values of hard work and dedication. Jack's grandfather, Peter Morris, raised 10 children in a log house, living from the bounty of the forests – hunting deer and turkeys. Purchases of staples were made from the "Rolling Store": sugar, flour, salt, and Jack remembers his mother trading eggs and homemade butter for staples, and buying the children a tri-colored coconut candy bar with any leftover change.

But the family business was raising cattle - "Piney Woods Cattle" of all colors – brown, red, white, pied, sometimes called the firecracker breed. Their horns were let grow, as dehorning may lead to infestation of the screw worm, a deadly disease carried by flies. The cows were fairly territorial, and at market time, the farmer always retained some of the older ones who knew the land. If you corralled one that belonged to someone else, it was either returned to the woods, or the money from the sale was given to the rightful owner. There was very little theft in Baldwin County, as people honored their neighbors.

Cows were rounded up in April or May and the bulls were castrated or sold. The Morris family never sold a female woods cow. "If you saw a female cow for sale with their brand, it had been stolen," accord-

(Continued on page 17)



# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## ***Memory of the Good Ole Days: Free Range Cattle***

*(Continued from page 16)*

ing to Sonny Hankins. Men who drove the cattle were called crackers which came from the crack of whips used to help herd the cattle. Cattle were sold to an agent who came by the farm place, and then they were driven to the Bay Minette train yard. The drive was fine until the cows arrived at courthouse square, and all the confusion of the “city” life made them crazy. It took skilled drovers to keep them in the herd.

Jack remembers the first time that the Federal Government required cattle to be dipped for diseases, primarily Texas Fever carried by ticks. Dipping vats were located throughout the county and all cows had to be run through the vat of creosote. Once a cow had gone through, it was extremely difficult to drive it through again, so the government agents would actually help pen and drive the cattle. A county site on Highway 55 in Robertsedale is the location of one of the preserved vats, and the story of the dipping process is described there. Local farmers who felt this was an act of government interference, sometimes used dynamite to destroy the local dipping vat.

Another family who had free range cattle was the Hubert Pittman family in the Wilcox community. He and Jack Waters had large herds of cattle which had been begun by their grandfather well before the turn of the century. Herbert has been in the cattle business since he was six years old, when his dad gave him a heifer as his own. Jack grew to take over the family business, running most of his cattle in the Hollinger Creek area. He recollects the times that men in the woods on horseback would stop for lunch at a creek, make coffee in a syrup can from water in the creek, and rest awhile before returning to rounding up cattle. Sometimes cattle were sold to Hinote Packing Co. in Rosinton for slaughter, but most were sold to buyers and shipped by train, later trucks, to northern slaughterhouses.



**Free Range Cattle in Baldwin County Roundup**

When the livestock Laws were enacted for Baldwin County in the 1940s, many farmers were not in a hurry to put up fences, as there were very few neighbors or roads to be bothered by the roaming woods cattle. The necessity for the end of open range herding was evident as with the growth of roadways cattle on the roads could be dangerous. The increase in crop farming due to mechanized equipment also meant that much of the woods land

was being converted to farmland. So the days of fencing in the crops gave way to days of fencing in the livestock.

The Morris family does not recall any difficulties during the transformation years. He says, “Well, we had to pay for a turnip patch or two, but that was about all.” The range war stories of the west are not to be told here, except that Andy Bertolla remembers that a stack of fence posts to be used for cattle fencing were burned. Open range cattle raising ended for the Morris family in the early 1960s. At that time, the business moved over to English breed cattle, which had to be fed because they were so much larger, making that industry more profitable. A bred cow may weigh 800 pounds whereas two woods cattle, about 400 pounds each, could be hauled in a pickup truck.

Cattle sales were centered around the auction house in Robertsedale beginning about 1949, where auctions are still held every Monday. A walk through the forests of Baldwin County today are different from 100 years ago, as the trees are mostly fast growing pine, the undergrowth must be controlled by man, and the woods are full of deer. You can still imagine, though, a clear view through the woods for a mile, and hear the cattle lowing.

*Article and picture from Baldwin County Cattle Fair Association website at*  
*<<http://baldwincofair.com/Product/14>>. €*

**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](mailto:escohis@escohis.org) or call 251-809-1528.*

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