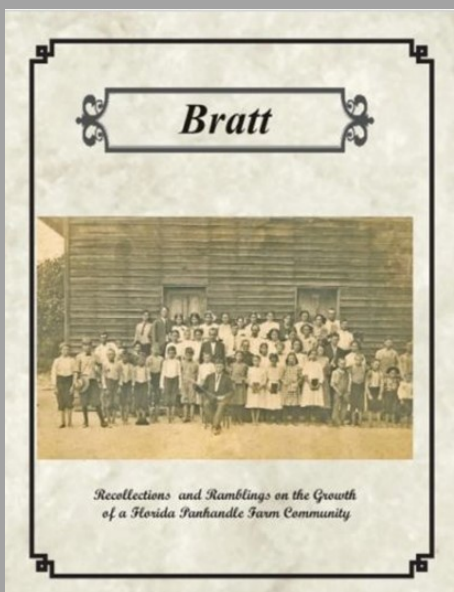




The  
Escambia  
County  
Historical  
Society,  
Founded  
1971

## The October Meeting Tuesday, October 25, 2016 3:00 p. m. The McMillan Museum



### The Program

Guest Speaker Russell G. Brown will present a program on Logging and Railroads in the area.

Russell Brown is the author of the book Bratt: Recollections and Ramblings on the Growth of a Florida Panhandle Farm Community, the cover of this book shown at the left.

The Amazon advertisement for the book gives this brief biography of the author: "Russell Brown grew up as a country boy, raised in a rural area near the community of Bratt and often visited his grandparents and attended church there. Retiring after more than 30 years in the telecommunication business, he became interested in researching the history of his grandparent's parents who

came to the community of Bratt in 1920.

"The information gathered resulted in the printing of a family genealogy book titled Traces of John M. and Fanny M. Brown. Research information found of local families and not used for this book became the seed of the book titled Bratt."

### Contents

News and Announcements	2
This Month in Alabama History	4
Historic Marker at Traveler's Well in Damascus	8
Snapshots of September Meeting	9
Our Business Members	11
Biggs Boarding House in Atmore	12
My Experience with Spanking	13

Plan to participate in the  
November Field Trip to  
Alabama Frontier Days  
at Fort Toulouse/Fort Jackson  
Saturday, November 5, 2016

- Transportation: Chartered Bus
- Place to Meet: McMillan Museum on College Campus in Brewton
- Time to Meet: 8:00 a.m., leave by 8:30 a.m.
- Cost: \$8:00 for adults, \$7.00 for students

Experience one of the largest and most authentic living history events in Alabama! See the south as it transitioned from Creek Indian lands to military forts and civilian homesteads during the period 1700 to 1820.

**Remember!  
ECHS Does Not Meet in  
November.**



Logging Railroad

Volume 43 Number 10

October 2016

## News and Announcements

### Panhandle Historic Preservation Alliance (PHPA) Met at the McMillan Museum



The PHPA fall meeting was held Monday, October 17, 2016. Don Sales, President of PHPA, is also the Museum-Coordinator for the McMillan Museum. Don, shown in the photograph speaking to the group, shared with the group sherds thought to be pottery left by the de Luna expedition as the expedition traveled north of the Pensacola site.

\*\*\*\*\*



**Jan Redditt is shown on the right. Second from the left is Ann Biggs-Williams and to the right of Ann is Mark Reynolds. Both Ann and Mark were colleagues of Jan at Jefferson Davis Community College.**

### Founding Member of ECHS, Janel (Jan) Redditt Honored on Her 90th Birthday

Former colleagues of Jan honored her with lunch at the Grand Marlin Restaurant at Pensacola Beach, Florida on her 90th birthday.

Jan started the ball rolling to organize the Escambia County Historical Society in her early days as Head Librarian of Jefferson Davis Community College, then Jefferson Davis Jr. College.

One of the original founding members of the society, she has been enjoying her retirement in Gulf Breeze, Florida but keeps up with the Society by reading ECHOES.

\*\*\*\*\*



### 46th Annual Thanksgiving Pow Wow November 24, 2016 to November 25, 2016 in Atmore, AL

Celebrate a cultural tradition during Thanksgiving this year, with the Poarch Creek Indians. Each Year, tribal members gather on this original Creek land for their annual Pow Wow. You're invited to join the festivities.

Enjoy a brilliant display of authentic dress and exhibition dancing by Tribes from throughout the country. Watch the crowning of the Poarch Creek Indian Princesses and shop from numerous booths for crafts, quilts, and other keepsakes.

\*\*\*\*\*



First Christian Church

### West Florida Genealogical Society Annual Fall Seminar November 5, 2016

**First Christian Church,  
6031 Goodrich Drive, Pensacola, FL  
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM**

The speaker for the seminar is Marguerite Scully, a professional genealogical researcher and lecturer. She is a member of the Board of the Louisiana Genealogical and Historical Society and serves as Vice President of the St. Tammany Genealogical Society in Louisiana.

She will present three (3) sessions during the day-long seminar: Fundamentals of Genealogical Research, Mining the U.S. Census and Finding the Genealogical Gems, and Proving Your Ancestry: "Is My Husband Really Related to George Washington?"

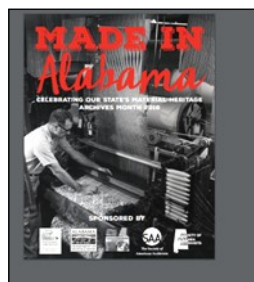
For registration forms and more details, see the WFGS website: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~flwfgs/flyers/2016novseminar.pdf>

For more information on the seminar, contact: Virginia Shelby — [vshelbycpa@yahoo.com](mailto:vshelbycpa@yahoo.com) Charlotte Schipman 850-477-7166 [cschipman@mac.com](mailto:cschipman@mac.com).

(continued on page 3)

## News and Announcements

(Continued from page 2)



### **At the Alabama Department of Archives and History October is Archives Month!**

Every October, archives around the world celebrate Archives Month. This annual event highlights the work of archives and archivists who collect, preserve, and share our past. We are excited to debut Alabama's 2016 Archives Month poster. This year's theme celebrates Alabama makers and our material heritage that state and local archives document and preserve.

\*\*\*\*\*



### **Genealogy Workshops at the Alabama Archives**

#### **First Workshop, Untangling the Web: Monday, October 31, 9:00 to 12:00**

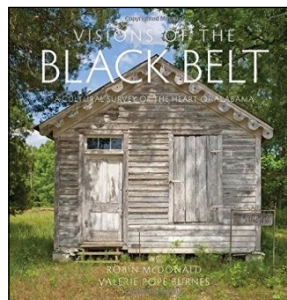
ADAH issues the invitation to join them on Halloween to gain valuable knowledge of the best websites, online resources and most effective genealogical search strategies to take your family history research to the next level. The workshop will provide instruction about how to use online resources including Ancestry.com and Fold3. This workshop is suited for all levels of research experience.

#### **Second Workshop Monday, December 5, 9:00 to 12:00 Land of the Free and Home of the Brave: Military and Land Records**

This workshop will include the history of land records in America, where to find them, and how to use them to enhance your genealogical research. The second half of the workshop will focus on the vari-

ous types of military records, where to find them, and what information can be found in them.

\*\*\*\*\*



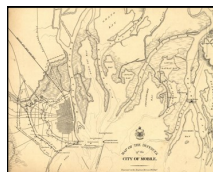
### **Food for Thought Thurs, November 17 at 12:00, The Black Belt: A Cultural Survey of the Heart of Dixie Presenter: Valerie Burnes**

Valerie Burnes is an assistant professor of history and former director of the Center for the Study of the Black Belt at the University of West Alabama. Along with her coauthor, writer and photographer Robin McDonald, she recently published Visions of the Black Belt, cover shown above.

\*\*\*\*\*



### **Special Events in November at Historic Blakeley State Park**



### **The Civil War in the Delta Veteran's Day, Friday, Nov. 11, 2016 9:30-11:30**

*From the Blakely website:*

Join us on a historic voyage of discovery as we explore the Civil War's "Mobile Campaign" from the rivers on which its major actions took place. This narrated cruise will take guests alongside the Confederate strongholds which guarded approaches to Mobile and witnessed some of the fiercest fighting during the war in Alabama. We will also discuss the role of the Confederate and Union navies in the campaign. Cost: \$25 adults

**To reserve for any of the events at Blakely Park, call 251-626-5581!**

(Continued on page 4)



## News and Announcements

(Continued from page 3)



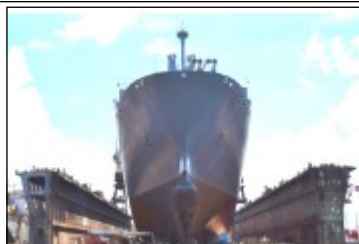
**Dr. Steven Trout**

### **Fri., Nov. 11th, Noon Lunchtime Lecture**

At noon on Nov. 11th, following the cruise, Dr. Steven Trout, Director of the Center for the Study of War and Memory at the University of South Alabama, will help us commemorate Veteran's Day by explaining some of the intriguing connections between

the fighting at Blakeley and that unleashed a generation later during World War I.

Lunch: Free with regular park admission or morning cruise tickets. (Guests may bring their own lunch, or purchase a boxed lunch from Chick-Fil-A for \$10 )



### **Ship in Mobile Port for Repairs**

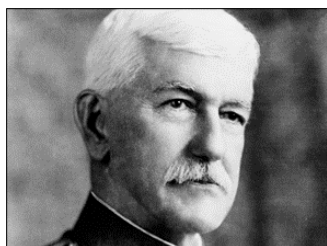
Delta and down the Mobile River past the bustling Port of Mobile--one of the nation's busiest harbors. Come discover one of North America's most diverse ecosystems and get a unique look at the maritime activity of the port city.

**Cost :** \$35.00 adults. \$17.00 children 6-12

**Sat., Nov. 19th  
9:30 a.m. -  
12:30 p.m.**

Take a three-hour excursion through the scenic Mobile-Tensaw

## **This Month in Alabama History**



**October 2, 1854**

William Crawford Gorgas was born on October 3, 1854, in Toulminville, near Mobile, Alabama, at the

home of his grandfather John Gayle, a former governor of Alabama. His parents were Amelia Gayle Gorgas, born in Greensboro, Hale County, and Josiah Gorgas, a U.S. Army lieutenant and commandant of the Mount Vernon Arsenal who was born in Running Pumps, Pennsylvania.

Gorgas served as the chief sanitary officer for the Panama Canal project and later as the US Army surgeon general during World War I. His work in improving sanitary conditions especially to combat yellow fever won him a number of honorary degrees and foreign distinctions, including an honorary knighthood from King George V.



### **Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind**

**October 4, 1858**

Dr. Joseph Henry Johnson founded the Alabama School for the Deaf, now known as the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind (AIDB), in Talladega. With approximately seventy students in 1870, the AIDB now serves thousands through nine regional centers across the state.



**October 5, 1956**

Birmingham native Charles A. Boswell shot an 81 at Highland Park Gold Course in Birmingham--a world record for a blind golfer. Having lost his sight by a tank explosion in World War II, Boswell won sixteen national championships and eleven international championships and is a member of the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame.

(Continued on page 5)

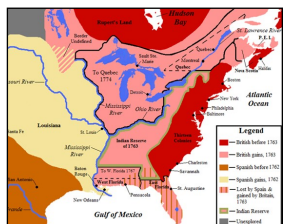
# This Month in Alabama History

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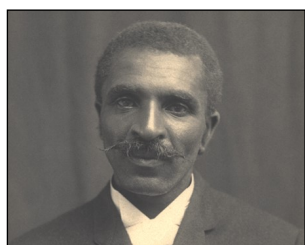
**October 6, 1998**

The singing group, Alabama, was inducted into the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Originally from Fort Payne, the group broke into the national country music scene in 1980 with the hit single "My Home's in Alabama." Over their career, Alabama had 42 singles reach the number one spot on the country music charts, sold more than 73 million albums, won more than 150 industry awards, and were inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame.



**October 7, 1763**

Following the French and Indian War, the British divided their newly-acquired Florida territory into the colonies of East and West Florida through the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The decree set West Florida's northern boundary at the 31st parallel, which continues to define most of Alabama's border with Florida today.



**October 8, 1896**

George Washington Carver arrived in Tuskegee to direct the agricultural school at the Tuskegee Institute. Focusing his work on what he called the "man farthest down," Carver became a world-renowned figure for his innovative uses of peanuts, sweet potatoes, and other southern products.



**October 9, 1908**

James "Big Jim" Folsom, the second governor to serve two full terms, was born in Coffee County. First elected in 1946, Folsom advocated for ra-

cial equality, women's rights, legislative reapportionment, constitutional reform, and other progressive positions; but, his proposals were often blocked by the state legislature



**October 10, 1832**

Joseph Stillwell Cain was born in Mobile, where he is credited with founding the city's modern-day Mardi Gras celebration. In 1866, in an attempt to renew traditions lost during the Civil War, Cain and several others, dressed in exaggerated Indian attire, paraded through downtown Mobile in a decorated charcoal wagon.



**October 11, 1941**

The Southern Research Institute, the first independent scientific research center in the Southeast, officially received its charter. Located in Birmingham, the institute is credited with the development of seven cancer treatment drugs and is currently working with NASA on the Space Launch System, a project that aims to put man on Mars.



**October 12, 1896**

The Alabama Girls' Industrial School, now the University of Montevallo, opened as the first state-supported girls' industrial high school. With an original class of 150, the school taught subjects ranging from kindergarten

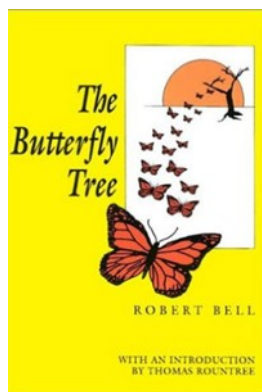
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# This Month in Alabama History

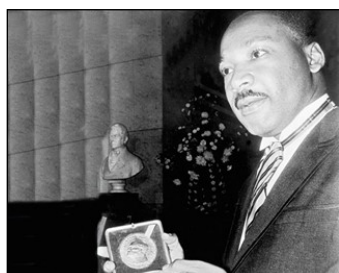
(Continued from page 5)

instruction to carpentry. Today, the university enrolls approximately 3,000 students and is one of only 25 public liberal arts institutions in the country.



**October 13, 1926**

Robert Eugene Bell, famous Alabama author and librarian, was born. Bell is best known for his reference works on classical mythology and his novel, the *Butterfly Tree*, which was set in a fictional town based on Fairhope.



**October 14, 1964**

Martin Luther King Jr. won the Nobel Peace Prize. During the presentation speech, Chairman Gunnar Jahn declared, "He is the first person in the Western world to

have shown us that a struggle can be waged without violence. He is the first to make the message of brotherly love a reality in the course of his struggle, and he has brought this message to all men, to all nations and races."



**October 15, 1900**

The Alabama Penny Savings Bank organized in Birmingham. The bank, founded by Reverend William Reuben

Pettiford, was the state's first black-owned and black-operated financial institution. By 1914, the bank

had reached deposits of more than \$500,000 and was the strongest black-owned bank in the country; however, the institution failed in 1915, less than a year after Pettiford's death.



**October 16, 1985**

The Hart House in Eufaula, Barbour County, is the headquarters of the Historic Chattahoochee Commission. The

Greek Revival home was built around 1950 by merchant and planter John Hart; it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places



**Mural by Roderick D. Mackenzie depicting the meeting of Hernando DeSoto and Chief Tuscaloosa. The mural is in the dome of the state capital, Montgomery, AL.**

**October 18, 1540**

The largest Indian battle in North America occurs at the village of Mabila (or Mauvila) between Hernando de Soto's Spaniards and Chief Tuscaloosa's (or Tascaluza's) warriors. Accounts vary, but most agree that the Indian village and most of its more than 2,000 inhabitants were destroyed.

The exact location of this battle has eluded researchers for centuries.

(Continued on page 7)

# This Month in Alabama History

(Continued from page 6)

## October 18, 1916

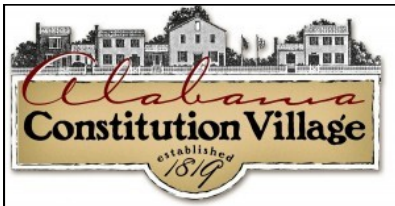
A strong earthquake occurs around 4 p.m. in an unnamed fault east of Birmingham, with the epicenter near Easonville in St. Clair County. The earthquake caused buildings to sway in downtown Birmingham and tied up all phone lines in the city with 25,000 calls recorded at the main exchange in the hour following the quake. Two additional weaker tremors were reported that evening.



**A sketch of a Chickasaw by Bernard Romans, 1775.**

## October 20, 1832

Representatives of the Chickasaw Indians sign the Treaty of Pontotoc, thereby ceding "all the land which they own on the east side of the Mississippi river" to the United States. That land included a portion of north-west Alabama.



## October 25, 1819

In anticipation of achieving statehood, Alabama's first state legislature assembles at Huntsville, the temporary capital. The General Assembly, as it was called, was composed of nineteen senators and forty-seven representatives from Alabama's nineteen counties. Thomas Bibb of Limestone County was elected President of the Senate, while James Dellet of Monroe County was elected Speaker of the House.



**Red Stone Arsenal Headquarters**

## October 25, 1941

Groundbreaking ceremonies are held in Huntsville for the U.S. Army's Redstone Ordnance Plant.

Renamed Redstone Arsenal in 1943, the installation produced

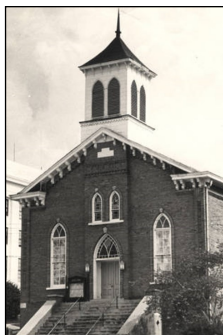
conventional artillery ordnance during World War II, but in 1949 became the Army's missile and rocket development center. Led by German scientist Werner von Braun, Redstone developed the rocket system that propelled the first U.S. satellite into space.

## October 28, 1819

The Alabama legislature elects William Rufus King and John W. Walker as Alabama's first United States senators. King served several terms in the Senate and in 1852 was elected U.S. Vice President. Walker, who had been president of the Alabama constitutional convention of 1819, served in the Senate until 1822, when he resigned. The terms of both senators officially began December 14, 1819, the day Alabama became the 22nd state.

## October 30, 1979

In a run-off, Richard Arrington is elected as the first black mayor of Birmingham, Alabama's largest city. Arrington served in that post for nearly twenty years, until his resignation in July 1999.



**Dexter Avenue Baptist Church**

## October 31, 1954

Martin Luther King Jr. of Atlanta is installed as minister of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery. A little more than a year later on the first day of the Montgomery Bus boycott, he was named president of the Montgomery Improvement Association a role which made him a national civil rights figure.



## Plans for Historic Marker at Traveler's Well in Escambia County Community of Damascus



**The Traveler's Well**



**Drawing of the Well and its Background by Mike Black.**

*The Traveler's Well was listed on the Alabama Landmarks and Heritage by the Alabama Historical Commission in 2006. The following brief history of the well comes from the Brewton Standard as well as the Damascus facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/376834535781863/>).*

Jacquelyn Kirkland with the Alabama Historical Commission described the well in the article from the Brewton Standard:

The Damascus Travelers Well, located at the intersection of County Roads 71 and 69 in the Damascus Community, stands 42-inches high, and has a simply-pitched wood covering. Although the wood covering was added within the last ten years, this type of gabled shelter has always been present at the well.

A well-known landmark used for tourists through the area, it served as a watering place for travelers and animals for at least 90 years before being filled with dirt. Travelers would draw water by pulling a rope attached to a two-gallon bucket. The well itself was about five-foot deep. There were always several long handled gourd dippers for drinking, but most

would turn the bucket up and pour the water into their mouths.

It was understood that any unused water would be poured into a cistern or trough beside the well which would then be used for watering animals.

Damascus High School was located about 200

yards from the well, and when the water pump at the school would break, the principal would send high school boys to the well to get water for the lunch room cooks for meal preparation and clean-up.

Thomas White, who has been a leader in the effort to place the historic marker notes that the well was dug sometime in the 1800's.

Eventually, the well

was no longer used by travelers. By the 1970's it was being vandalized with debris being thrown into it and it was filled with sand by the Escambia County Road Department.

On the Facebook page for Damascus, Mr. White writes that the text for the marker has been mailed and the marker is being prepared. No date has been set for the installation.

### **Proposed Text For Marker**

**DAMASCUS TRAVELERS WELL (date implemented unknown) - dedicated to the refreshment and rest for Travelers. Members of Damascus community, including the Damascus High School were also beneficiaries of this well. Mr. and Mrs. N. W. Watson purchased this property in 1905. and was passed on to Mr. Perry Neal Watson, their grandson. After the well was no longer in public use, many young people dropped good luck pennies down in the well and made wishes for Love, Prosperity and Success. Due to vandals the well was filled up with dirt. The citizens of Damascus have now extended to all points of America yet they can share many memories of this WELL.**



## Snapshots of the September 2016 ECHS Meeting





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





## Our Business Members

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# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Biggs Boarding House in Atmore

By E. Ann Biggs-Williams

Do you remember the Biggs' Boarding House on Trammell Street in Atmore?"

Gibbs' Boarding House was widely known for home cooked, family-style served meals in the late 1950s to the 1980s. Many Vanity Fair workers ate lunch there. On Tuesdays, which was sale day at Atmore Livestock Auction, the farmers and sale workers headed to Biggs' Boarding House for lunch.

The building that housed the well-known business has been unoccupied for years, but I noticed recently in passing that the grounds have been cleared. The building brings a flood of memories.

However, the main memory is of the lady who operated Biggs' Boarding House—Neoma (Green) Biggs.

"Aunt Neoma," as she was known to me, had the heartiest laugh that still rings in my memory when I think of her with that happy mischievous smile. She and her husband, the late Ernest Biggs, had raised a large family together.

Ernest Biggs died in January of 1956. It was the first funeral I remember attending. I remember asking my Daddy, Henry Biggs, a brother to Ernest, "Why is everyone crying?" After being told that Uncle Ernest had gone to heaven, I just thought that going to heaven was what we all wanted, but Daddy explained that people were sad because they wouldn't get to see Uncle Ernest for a long time. That made sense and answered my question but I also remember thinking at that young age that in going to heaven, Uncle Ernest had become a cloud!

Aunt Neoma was an example of a strong southern woman. Although her husband of 37 years fell ill and died when she was 63, she did not consider herself a victim. She just did what she knew how to do best. She cooked. When her husband became ill, she started cooking noon meals at their home, the



Neoma Biggs

middle house on Horner Street between Main Street and Trammell Street.

This house is across the street from the side door of First Baptist Church in Atmore. After Uncle Ernest's death, Aunt Neoma rented out two unused bedrooms in the house on Horner Street. Ray Biggs, the current surviving son from Ernest and Neoma's large family, tells me that a Mr. Earl Goldsmith approached Aunt Neoma with the idea of the boarding house. About 1958, Mr. Goldsmith owned the building on Trammell Street and started remodeling.

In fact, my brother, Benny Biggs, claims the title of very

first boarder. Benny was working as the night manager of Jimmy Bell's Gulf Station on the corner of Highway 31 and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He slept in the day as the Trammell Street building was being renovated. As the carpenters worked on the house, room by room, Benny moved room by room and slept in every room in the house! Aunt Neoma was living there then and she cooked for Benny even while the remodeling was going on.

Eventually the building was purchased by the late Lloyd Biggs, one of Ernest and Neoma's sons, when he returned to Atmore from the service. Lloyd bought the building and Aunt Neoma continued to operate the boarding house as she had.

My brother, Charles Biggs, who lives in Warrington, Florida, boarded there when he got out of the service. He worked as a guard at the Atmore Prison Farm and took classes at an Atmore business school in the evening as did a number of veterans.

Many of the boarders called Aunt Neoma, "Mama Biggs," and she in turn treated the boarders like extended family. Ray Biggs shared with me that Aunt Neoma said in all those years she never had anything stolen from her and no one ever cheated her.

(Continued on page 13)



# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Biggs Boarding House in Atmore

(Continued from page 12)

She said that only once a boarder left owing her a monthly rent and he later mailed it to her.

Aunt Neoma bought a car but to my memory never learned to drive. She had others drive her. She also bought a boat and motor as she liked to go fishing at Boatyard Lake in Baldwin County. She had a lady who knew how to operate the boat motor to go with her. To me, that goes to show where there is a will there is a way!

My Daddy would take vegetables and eggs from the farm to the boarding house and my job was to

open the back screen door at the boarding house for him to go in.

I wish I remembered more but I am hoping reader's collective memories will help preserve this part of Atmore's rich history. If readers have thoughts to share please call 251-867-2445 or email me at [annbw@bellsouth.net](mailto:annbw@bellsouth.net).

I would particularly like to find a photo of the house and a picture of Neoma Biggs with her apron on cooking away.

## My Experience with Spanking

"You better behave if you know what's good for you."

"If you don't mind me I'm going to wear you out."

"If you talk back to me one more time I'm going to blister your behind"

"You keep that up and I'll give you something to cry about."

"I'm going to tan your hide."

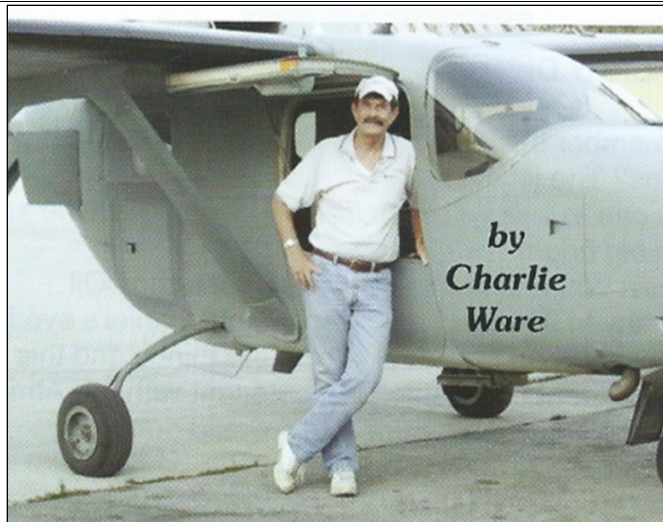
"Don't make me have to go and get a switch"

Those phrases, and many others like them, were something that I, and most other kids of my day, heard regularly when we were growing up. They all meant one thing, that we were close to getting a spanking and that we had better watch our step.

Spanking was an accepted form of punishment both in the home and at school and I don't know of many kids back then who were not subject to being spanked.

"Spare the rod and spoil the child," was the motto of the day.

Spanking is defined as a type of corporal punishment involving the act of striking the buttocks of another person to cause temporary pain. Most people my age don't need to be reminded of what



spanking is; we remember it all too well.

Spanking is a very controversial subject and I don't intend to jump in on one side or the other. I don't know if kids today even get spankings. A parent would not dare spank a child in public today for fear of being reported for child abuse. Some studies report that spanking is psychologically damaging to both the child and parent. Most

states have now banned spanking in school and forty-five countries have outlawed any type of corporal punishment, even in the home. But in my childhood it was a way of life. It was just taken for granted that if you misbehaved, you were going to get a spanking.

There is a difference in a spanking and a beating. I never felt that I had been beaten as a child. I never bled nor had bruises as the result of a spanking though I did have red cheeks sometime. With my parents, spankings were not done in anger and there was no yelling or discussion. I always knew the reason for the spanking I was getting.

Even though I may have been angry for a little

(Continued on page 14)

# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## My Experience with Spanking

*(Continued from page 13)*

while I never hated nor resented my parents for spanking; in fact, I don't even remember thinking about it. Even as a little kid, I just felt they were doing their duty. The stage was reset after a spanking and family life soon returned to normal.

When I learned that I was going to get a spanking, I would beg and plead for mercy but that never worked. Once the decision was made it was cast in stone. When the spanking started, I would pretend I was in great pain and try to make myself cry as much as possible so my parents would think the spanking was doing some good and maybe let up a little bit. I think I also wanted to make them feel sorry for me, though I don't believe that was ever the case. My parents never apologized or said anything like, "This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you."

I wasn't taken "out behind the woodshed" for a spanking. For me it usually took place right at the spot of the offense. A really bad situation was to be away from home and he told, "You are going to get a spanking when we get home." That meant I would have to go through the rest of the day anticipating the pain. I always hoped my parents would forget about it before we got home, but they never did.

I seldom got a spanking that came as a total surprise. We kids knew the limits and we knew the actions or remarks that were likely to lead to a spanking. But being kids, we sometimes just had to test our parents or we would just go ahead and do things we knew were wrong with the hope of not getting caught. Spanking was as much a deterrent as a punishment. I know I would have done many more bad and dangerous things if not for the fear of being caught and getting a spanking.

In my home there was no other form of punishment. My sister and I never were put on restriction made to sit in the corner, made to go to our rooms, had a favorite toy or television withheld, nor put into time-out. We may occasionally have gotten a stern talking to, but if punishment was warranted, we got a spanking, period.

My mother had a certain evil stare that said "You are going to get a spanking!" It communicated volumes and when I saw it I knew I was in trouble. I saw this stare a number times when I would be

caught doing things like whispering during church service or misbehaving at someone else's house. My mother was usually the one to administer spankings at our house. Her weapon of choice was a switch plucked from a Ligustrum bush that grew outside our back door, but she has also used a spatula, a yard stick (which broke), bedroom slippers, a pancake turner, a hair brush, an old windshield wiper blade, a rolled up newspaper, and on occasion, just her open hand.

For really bad offenses, I would be made to go outside and pick the switch myself. I can still hear her saying, "Go out and get me a switch." As I prepared the switch, I would try to let a few leaves remain on the end thinking the leaves would somehow slow the speed of the switch through the air.

Spanking by my dad didn't happen often, but when it did he used his belt. When I had crossed the line, he would suddenly jump up, snatch the belt from his pants and bend me over for a good tanning. The time from crime to punishment was just a matter of seconds. I didn't have to fake crying after a spanking by my dad. I can still remember that terrible flapping sound his belt would make as it left his pants.

Spanking wasn't limited to just one's own home. Kids were subject to being spanked anywhere they were caught misbehaving. Parents didn't have to ask permission to spank other parents' children. It was just assumed that if they got it, they deserved it. In my case, if my parents found out I had gotten a spanking outside of our home, I got another one from them when I got back home. I remember my mom spanking me and several other boys who were playing at our house one Saturday afternoon. All we had done was set the yard on fire. I once got a spanking from my Bible School teacher.

Girls weren't immune from spanking. My sister probably got as many as I did, though none from my dad. It was rare, but I do remember girls being spanked at school right up through the twelfth grade.

Every teacher I had in grammar school was a spanker. Most used a twelve-inch Coca-Cola ruler (Coke gave those to kids at the beginning of a school year) or a bolo paddle (remember those little paddles with a rubber band and a ball attached). Though they may have been embarrassing, those spankings were

*(Continued on page 15)*



# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## My Experience with Spanking

*(Continued from page 14)*

not something to be feared.

Things changed significantly when I got to high school. Spanking there was something to be feared. On opening day I saw the principal, Mr. R. E. Hodnette, for the first time. Mr. Hodnette was an imposing man who stood well over six feet and always had a stern, no-nonsense look on his face. In his hand was a baseball bat that had the barrel end planed flat so it could be used as a paddle. I knew that could hurt quite a bit more than those little twelve-inch rulers did. I never saw him use that bat. He didn't have to because just the image of him patrolling the halls with a bat in his hand was enough to keep us in line.

One of the first things boys learned in shop class was how to make spanking paddles. They had to cut out a batch every now and then to make sure all the male teachers had an ample supply. The paddles were half an inch thick and about two feet long. They had a hole in the handle where a string could be attached so they could be hung on the wall or on a desk. Some had the handles taped for a better grip.

All the male teachers used the paddles frequently and they didn't pull any punches. They often swung as hard as they could, usually with both hands. I have seen paddles shatter and chips fly all over the classroom. You could hear a paddling taking place from one end of the hall to the other. Paddling at football practice usually took place in the locker room and on a bare behind. I can still feel the pain! No doubt, some of these actions would bring charges of assault today.

Offenses that warranted a paddling varied and could include being disruptive in class, not turning in homework, a disrespectful remark, cheating, or missing football practice (even with an excuse). Sometimes though, the reasons would be frivolous. I remember one boy being paddled for buttoning his shirt in an unusual way and another for putting taps on the heels of his shoes. Sometimes boys would even be paddled by teachers for something that occurred away from the school.

I was probably one of the best behaved kids in school, but I still got my share of spankings. The last one I ever got was only about a week before

graduation.

Most of the spankings I got were probably well-deserved. There was only one that I was sure I didn't deserve. This occurred when I was about four years old. I was with my parents as they were visiting some of their friends and walking with them through their back yard. I went wandering off to explore the yard on my own and discovered this garden ornament, a shiny glass ball on a pedestal, in the center of the yard. I went over to check it out and when I looked into the ball, I saw my reflection, which was all distorted because of the curvature of the ball. I thought it was some kind of monster in the ball and it scared me to death. My first reaction was to push it away which caused the pedestal to fall over and the ball to break.

Of course, my parents had no idea why I had done what I did. Besides, they would never believe I thought I had seen a monster in the ball. All they could think was that I was just a destructive little kid, breaking other people's property and causing a lot of embarrassment. Before I could begin to explain, I got what was the worst spanking of my life to that point. I don't think I had earned that one.

I don't know when the concept of time-out came along, but I've always been a little skeptical of its effectiveness. I can't recall seeing a kid change his behavior to any degree when threatened with being sent to time-out. I'm certainly not advocating spanking though. Who knows, psychologists may be right about all the terrible mental damage it can do. I'm just saying it sure seemed to have gotten the job done way back when I was a kid.

**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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