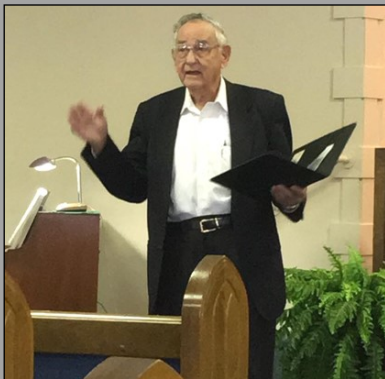




The
Escambia
County
Historical
Society,
Founded
1971

The January Meeting Tuesday, January 24, 2017 McMillan Museum 3:00 p. m.

The Program: The Story of Placing an Historic Marker at the Travelers Well, Damascus, Escambia County, Alabama



Our speaker for January is Thomas White, the force behind listing the Traveler's Well at Damascus on the Landmarks and Heritage Register with the Alabama Historical Commission and placing a state marker at the site. He is shown at the left at the service for the dedication of the marker which was held at the Damascus Baptist Church on January 7, 2017.

A native of Damascus, Mr. White grew up in the community, finished school there and went into the military at the time of the Korean War. He left the Damascus community in 1950, returning in 2004. He says he moved back as many are moving back "to

finish out the remainder of my years enjoying good country living." He has spent most of his life in the ministry, serving churches in Alabama, Mississippi and Florida. The last twelve years he has served as Director of Missions for the Conecuh Baptist Association.

Contents

The Story Behind the Traveler's Well Marker	2
Memories of the Well	3
Dedication of the Marker	4
News and Announcements	5
Snapshots of Christmas Party	6
Our Business Members	13
Thanks to Ann on Retirement from Board	14
The Good Ole Days	15
Goolsby's Store and Drive-In	16
Every time They Met They had a Class Reunion	17

Refreshments

Don't forget to bring snacks for refreshments after the meeting.

The February ECHS Meeting Tuesday, February 28, 2017 McMillan Museum 3:00 p. m.

Program: Presentation by Charlie Ware on
"German POW's in Alabama"

A Thank You to Our President Sally Finlay and the Curtis Finlay Foundation

As we begin a new year and look forward to good programs and exciting field trips, its time for A Big "Thank You," in fact a "Shout Out" to Sally and the Curtis Finlay Foundation for its Support of ECHS.

This support has included an all day chartered bus trip to Selma and Cahaba, (remember the wonderful catered meal in Selma and the visit to St. Luke's); the chartered bus trip to Fort Toulouse/Fort Jackson with delicious sandwiches

(Continued on page 2)



Cake at Dedication of
Traveler's Well

Volume 434 Number 1

January 2017

Thank You to the Curtis Finlay Foundation

(Continued from page 1)

from Bates; and just last month the catered and wonderful Christmas Party.

All this is in addition to the funding of all of the historical markers which we have placed.

This includes expanding this generosity beyond Escambia County with contributions to other preservation groups, such as the gift to the Wilcox County Historical Society and for the renovation of

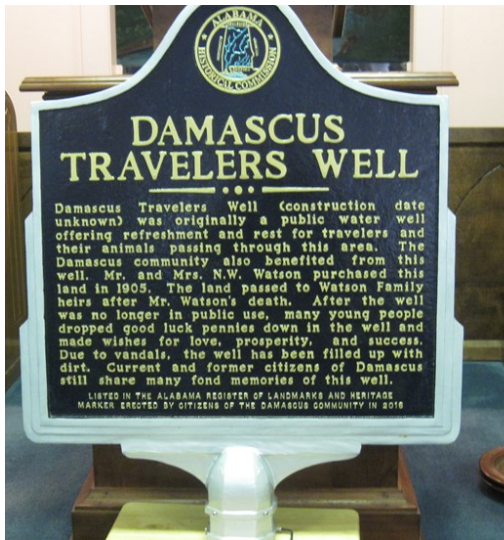
St. Luke's Church at Cahaba.

The Society has also benefited through new equipment for the Alabama Room

Sally's leadership and the support from the Foundation has allowed ECHS to achieve its goals and create some very special memories along the way.

Thank you Sally and Thank you to the Curtis Finlay Foundation.

The Story Behind the Damascus Traveler's Well Marker



The Marker before being placed at the Well.

DAMASCUS TRAVELERS WELL

Damascus Travelers Well (construction date unknown) was originally a public water well offering refreshment and rest for travelers and their animals passing through this area. The Damascus community also benefited from this well. Mr. and Mrs. N. W. Watson purchased this land in 1905. The land passed to Watson Family heirs after Mr. Watson's death. 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 has been filled up with dirt. Current and former citizens of Damascus still share many fond memories of this well.

By Thomas White

The idea of getting the Damascus Well on the Historical Register was just a thought. I was listening to a group of men at Damascus Baptist Church talking one day and they were telling of the county placing a "Stop" sign at the fork of Well Road and Damascus Road. Someone had pulled the sign up saying it was obstructing their view of oncoming traffic.

One said, "Well, I guess the well will be the next to go saying it was obstructing their view." The thought came to me, "Why not put it on the Historical Register and then they can't remove it." So, I asked, "Has anyone ever thought of getting the well put on the Historical Register?" The response was, "No." I said, "I know some people on the Historical Commission and they might help us."

I contacted Mrs. Eugenia Brown, a good friend of

mine who I thought was on the commission. She reminded me that she was on the Alabama Baptist Commission but she and Dalton Campbell, another friend, knew members of the Alabama Historical Commission and she would get them to call me.

Hannah Garmen of the state Historical Commission called and we began the process. Ms. Garmon reviewed that there are two types of historical registers, State and National. The Alabama Register is much easier to achieve and the owner of the site can make changes or destroy as he wishes but when something is placed on the National Register, it can never be altered in any way or destroyed without written permission from the Commission. We chose the Alabama Register.

Perry Watson had told me about the Facebook page

(Continued on page 3)

The Story Behind the Damascus Traveler's Well Marker

(Continued from page 2)

"Damascus, Alabama-As It Was, Is and Perhaps Will Be," so I went to it and announced what I thought and for all to give input. The response was great. I proceeded to find out the cost and do the paper work getting the exact location, history of the well, ownership, pictures, and maps).

I asked Hanna what the cost would be and how to get the marker. She gave me the descriptions, sizes and cost per letter, number of lines that the marker could have, and the name of the company that the state Historical Commission used.

I came up with a size and cost and put it out on Facebook. Within a week I had enough pledges to off set the cost Consulting with Hannah and others, I came up with the name for the well and the wording for the marker. I drafted these up and mailed them in. We were approved and the rest is history.



The Traveler's Well with Marker

We chose the name Damascus Traveler's Well because the well had always been a place for people and animals traveling through and around the community to stop and get a refreshing drink of water. All the older people who might have known the history of the well have passed on and there is no one today who knows when it was built or by whom. Everyone has just

accepted as fact that the well was for travelers and did not question how long it has been a stopping place or who dug the well.

My aunt owned the property where the well is and I spent many hours playing with my cousins and sitting at the well watching Mr. Lucas drive his team of ten oxen pulling a log cart with two logs to the saw mill about one mile away. Many would stop by for a drink from the well and also water their mules or horses.

Memories of the Well

Bob Alcott

I have two memories that I would like to pass on,

The first is when I was in the first or second grade at Damascus school (1951 or 1952), I would watch Mrs. Watson (Perry Watson's Grandmother) walk from Sarah Lamberts house, where she was staying, to the well for a jug of water to drink. I asked Dad why she did not just drink Sarah's water. His answer was that good memories make water taste better. For Mrs. Watson, that was the well's water.

Billy Earl Cook

I remember many great things about the well but one outstanding one was,

Over a week-end, some one took the Damascus School sign down and put it on the top of the well covering. Monday morning, Mr. Homer Lambert, school principle, held kangaroo court with all of us boys, trying to find out who did it.

After a long time it was ascertained that no one knew about it.

And I will not make any confessions.

Tim Cook writes,

The well dedication was a great event. Even the almost freezing weather didn't stop many from attending. As I watched the ceremony, I couldn't help but think of my grandfather, William Cook. I'm sure many felt the same and could think of loved ones no longer with us.

I know my grandfather would've been so proud of the dedication. As a child, I can remember going by the well and he would stop to pick up trash, all the while complaining about how folks just didn't used to do this or that.

As I have grown older, I can honestly see exactly how he felt and why. That well meant a lot to a lot of really good people just trying to make a living and

(Continued on page 4)

Personal Memories about the Well

(Continued from page 3)

provide for their families.

It also was a place a traveler could count on to get a drink of water and water his ox, horse, or even later to put some water in his car's radiator.

If you knew the well or where the well was, then you were home or a member of the Damascus community. Every time I give directions to our old family farm I start off with, "Ok, do you know where the well is?" I'm sure many of you do the same.

Dedication of the Marker



Above left, The Damascus Baptist Church where the Dedication Service was held; Above right, cake on the refreshment table at the Dedication; Middle, Thomas White who presided at the Dedication.

Below, left to right: Ranella Merritt playing some hymns as a prelude; Rev. Rick Gandy singing patriotic songs of inspiration; Jacque Stone reading some Memories of the Well; Rev. Steve Yuhasz with a message on the importance of monuments to the past.



The Marker on Display at the Dedication

Attending the Dedication from ECHS

Ranella & Paul Merritt; Jacque & Charles Stone; Barbara Page; June Martin; Lydia Grimes; and Mike Edwards



News and Announcements

Report on Don Sales Who Is Recovering from Surgery

Vice President Carolyn Jennings talked with Don on the phone last week during the ECHS Board meeting on Jan. 11. Don is recovering well from surgery to repair three aneurysms. With plans for out patient surgery for two more, he is expected to make a full recovery and return to work as Museum Coordinator soon.

Charlie Ware is keeping the Alabama Room open with regular hours, 9:00-4:30 Tuesday-Thursday, while Don recuperates.

Former ECHS Member Ed Seward Passes Away



President of ECHS for two terms – 1994-1995 and 1998 – 1999, Ed passed away this January.

ECHS members may best remember him for his pride in bringing the watch of the famous outlaw John

Wesley Hardin to "Show and Tell" programs.

His service to the society included his contributions to the publication of the Heritage of Escambia County.

Ed was a 30 year veteran of the U. S. Air Force and was buried at Weaver Cemetery with full military honors

The Florida Chautauqua Assembly Will Be Held in DeFuniak Springs January 26-29, 2017



The Florida Chautauqua Assembly is described as a "4-day educational program for families featuring famous keynote speakers, educational breakout sessions, performance teas, evening dinner performances and exhibits relating to an annual theme."

The theme of this year's assembly is: "A Journey into Science, Technology, Medicine, and Society."

There are options for attending one day or all four. A complete booklet of information about the event is available at <http://www.floridachautauquaassembly.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/2017_draft_program.14115729.pdf>.

The Florida Chautauqua Association is located at 1290 Circle Drive, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435 ph: 850-892-7613.



Sewn Together: Two Centuries Of Alabama Quilts: A Joint Exhibition with the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts

The exhibit of nineteenth and twentieth century quilts opens at the Alabama Department of Archives and History with a reception at 5:30 p. m. on Jan, 26 and runs through April 16, 2017.

Food For Thought Lectures for 2017 Announced



Food For Thought. Lectures are held on the third Thursday of every month at 12:00 pm in the ADAH's Joseph M. Farley Alabama Power Auditorium.

The public is invited to bring a brown bag lunch. Complimentary beverages are provided. Admission is always free. Food For Thought 2017 is co-sponsored by the Friends of the Alabama Archives and the Alabama Humanities Foundation.

February 16 • Sharony Green

Family Ties: Hidden Black-White Relationships in Antebellum Alabama

March 16 • Sarah Bliss Wright

The Mount Ida Quilt Project: One Community, Two Quilts, Three Centuries

April 20 • Mary Stanton

African American Masonry in Alabama: Birmingham's Prince Hall Temple Grand Lodge

(Continued on page 6)

News and Announcements

(Continued from page 5)

May 18 • Tom Kanon

Alabama Fever in the Wake of the Treaty of Fort Jackson

June 15 • Sebastian Lukasik

The Draft in Alabama during World War I

July 20 • Peggy Walls

Alabama Gold: A History of the South's Last Mother Lode

August 17 • Brent Aucoin Thomas

Goode Jones & the Quest for Racial Justice in the New South

September 21 • Clay Williams

Before Alabama: The Mississippi Territory

October 19 • Christopher Haveman

Creek Indian Removal from Alabama

November 16 • Anne Gibbons

Anne Mae Beddow, Pioneering World War I Nurse Anesthetist

December 21 • George Shorter

Where Alabama Began: Archaeology at Old St. Stephens

Snapshots of the 2016 ECHS Christmas Party

Thanks to our President for arranging the delicious catered dinner of Cornish hen with all the trimmings. Society members provided wonderful desserts.

Eva McInnis and Darryl Searcy must be thanked for providing and placing the decorations. The candles, natural greenery, icicles, and garland of lights made for a beautiful setting.

Clay Lisenby strung the garlands and provided the tree. He also helped serve the dinner.

The Bingo was a hit especially for those who won prizes.

The rain storm didn't keep members away and they were rewarded for braving the wet night with a great dinner and party.



Carolyn Jennings, Don Smith, and Ann Biggs-Williams enjoying good food and good company.



Above, Clay Lisenby grabs a bite. He was busy either decorating or helping to serve. At the left, Doug Finlay, Amanda Bell, and Florence Rowser enjoy the dinner.

The Christmas Party (Continued)



A Beautiful Cake for Dessert



A Table with Desserts and Some of the Beautiful Decorations



In the center, facing the camera is Langham Parr; his mother is to his right. Susan Crawford and her grandson both have their backs to the Camera.



**Above, Ann Biggs-Williams talks with Don Smith.
Left, Darryl Searcy and Barbara McCoy seem to be enjoying themselves.**

The Christmas Party *(continued)*



Barbara Page, in the center with her sister (visiting her from Main) to the left, Ronnie Tucker standing, and Beverly Stark on the right.



Jacque Stone visits with Dawn Merritt while Lee Merritt looks on.



Enjoying the Party and each other, left to right, Jacque Stone, Eva McInnis and Beverly Stark.



Charlie Ware and Darryl Searcy



Paul and Ranella Merritt

The Christmas Party *(continued)*



Charles Stone with a big Christmas smile.



David Allen in the middle being greeted by Charlie Ware and Darryl Searcy.



Carolyn Jennings and Don Smith.



Barbara McCoy in the center making a point for Maureen Edwards on the left and Darryl Searcy.



Doug Finlay is seated on the left. Florence Rowser, in the center, is enjoying a visit with Sally Finlay.

The Christmas Party *(continued)*



An Over view

June Martin



Above, Ranella Merritt at the keyboard; to the right, Barbara McCoy and David Allen.



The Christmas Party *(continued)*



Mike Edwards on the left talking to Darryl Searcy (back is to the camera). Maureen Edwards is visiting with someone.



Mirrors reflecting the room.



An array of beautiful and tasty desserts.



Our Chef and Caterer.



Left to right, Charles Stone, Jacque Stone, Lydia Grimes, and Charlie Ware



Left to right, Al Jokela, Robin Brewton, and Carol Jokela with her back to the camera.

The Christmas Party *(continued)*

Overview.



At the left, Robin Brewton with his back to the camera, then Jo Brewton with a white top, next to Jo, Carol Jokela, and the at the right Al Jokela.



At left, Susan Crawford with her grandson (back to camera); next to Susan, Mrs. Parr, and at the right Langham Parr.



From the left, Darryl Searcy, Robin Brewton and Jo Brewton



Sally Finlay, at left, visiting with members and guests.

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

Thanks to Ann Biggs-Williams Stepping Down after 17 Years of Service on the Board

By Howard Chabner

The following article honoring Ann for her service is reprinted from FSH Watch, Issue 3 for December 17, 2016, which is the news magazine for the Facioscapulohumeral Muscular Dystrophy Society.

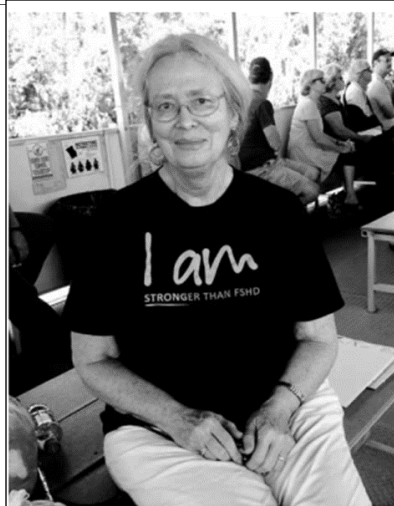
Society Board of Directors member Ann Biggs-Williams, one of the longest-serving Board members in the history of the FSH Society, retired from the Board of Directors in September. Ann and her husband Mike **attended** the organizational meeting of the Society in San Diego, and she began serving on the Board in 1999.

A resident of Brewton, Alabama, Ann led the Gulf FSHD Support Group for many years. Covering Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi, the group connected many people with FSHD who had never met anyone else with the condition, giving them hope, enabling them to discover strength they hadn't known they possessed, and generating enthusiasm for the Society. The group met in all of the states for many years.

Beginning with the first conference in San Diego, Ann attended all of the Society's biennial patient conferences except Iowa in 2008 and Boston in 2014. Over the years, she led sessions on women's issues and FSHD, caregiving, and practical tips for dealing with FSHD. She's remembered, among other things, for trying to give all first-time attendees a welcoming Southern hug. (Some repeat attendees were also fortunate to receive hugs from Ann!)

For many years, Ann volunteered in the Society's peer-to-peer counseling program, giving newly diagnosed FSHD patients practical advice and letting them know they would never be alone.

She and Mike sponsored two boat trips on the Mobile Tensaw River Delta to raise money for the FSH Society. She represented the Society in many events over the years, most recently in 2016 in Pensacola, Florida, by greeting Diane Lea on behalf of the Society at the Grand Finale Party at the culmination of



Ann Wearing the FSH "I am STRONGER THAN FSHD" T-shirt.

Ms. Lea's 50-day bicycle ride from San Diego to Pensacola that raised money and awareness for 50 causes, including FSHD.

As the Society grew in fundraising and size, Ann never let her fellow board members lose sight of the fact that, as important as the scientific research is, and as necessary as dollars are in making that research possible, the Society is about people first and foremost: about connecting, educating, supporting, and giving hope to people of all ages, all backgrounds, and all places who have FSHD or whose family members or friends do.

Ann was head librarian at Jefferson Davis Community College in

Brewton, Alabama, where she worked for 24 years. After retirement, she volunteered with the Escambia County Historical Society in Alabama, which maintains a local history archive at the museum at the same college. She served as president of the Historical Society and is now a trustee. Since retirement, she has also been renovating the family home, which was built in 1896 and is listed on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage, and has led several local history projects.

The Society's unofficial historian, Ann put her professional skills to use by documenting the patient conferences and the history of the Society through photos, documents, and other memorabilia. A labor of love, this work began before it was made easier by digital images, email, social media, and other technologies that we take for granted today. Ann educates new members and others about the history and achievements of the Society.

The Society and her fellow board members thank Ann for everything she has done, and hope that she will continue to spread the word about FSHD and the Society. Known by all for her charm, her warmth, her graciousness, her welcoming spirit, and her optimism, Ann truly will be missed.

The ECHS *Journal* Section

The Good Ole Days: Growing up in Damascus

Thomas White, shown in the photograph, sent ECHS this biography.

I was born in 1931 on the end of the depression and in the house I am now living in. It is over 100 years old. We had no glass-pane windows, indoor plumbing, electricity, motor driven transportation or refrigerators.

I wore shoes with holes in the soles and with cardboard inside the shoes to keep rocks and stickers from hurting my feet. I wore home-made clothes, even our “dress” clothes were made from fertilizer and flour sacks. My mother would look at a picture in the Sears Roebuck Catalogue, draw and cut out the pattern and make the garment.

We had weekly clothes washings by placing the dirty clothes in a wash pot of boiling, lye-soap water. We used a battering stick to punch the clothes as they boiled to get the dirt out. We would also use that battering stick as a ball bat when we had a ball game. We would have four tubs of wash water, one to wash and scrub the rest of the dirt out and three for rinsing. The last rinse tub of water was saved for our weekly “all over” bathing.

We made our own fun and games. We had many games like softball for which my blind grandmother made the softball. She would make them by unraveling socks and wrapping the string around a rock or marble until the ball was a good-size, a hand-full. She always had them perfectly round.

We had see saws, flying jennies, marbles, activities for playing in the woods like riding young pine trees to the ground. Another of our games was riding bulls. Sometimes my mother would make me play paper dolls with my sister with models cut from the Sears Roebuck Catalogue.

Sometimes I could turn a chore into a game. The wheels to the wagon had to be kept swelled so they would fit to the rim. We would usually kept the wheels tight to the rim by letting the wagon sit in the creek. I would turn this chore into a game by digging a hole and putting the wheel in it, block it so it would turn, and pretend the wheel was my truck. I would turn the wheel in the water until it swelled out to make the rims tight.



For the first time, in the early 1940's, we received electricity from a government grant called the Rural Electric Association (REA). We had yellow and green wires hanging from the ceiling with a 40 watt bulb attached. I thought, when it first came out, that the sun was shining, the light was so bright.

However, I learned to read “Spot, See Spot, See Spot run,” by the open fire, with my dad by my side helping me, or by a dim kerosene lamp.

We were not rich in possessions and modern conveniences but rich in love and plenty of home grown food.

However, the great home-grown food required work. I banked sweet potatoes, stored Irish potatoes in the sand under the house, wrung chicken necks, scrapped the hair off scalded hogs, and kept the smoke going in the smoke house to cure the sausage, bacon, and hams. I also got up at 3:00 a. m. and hooked up the mule to the sugar cane grinder. I fed the cane through to have enough juice ready at daylight for the pan to start cooking the juice into syrup.

One of those great foods was home-made ice cream. We made it in a syrup bucket placed in a larger bucket of “bought ice.” We twisted our version of a dasher in the syrup bucket back and forth to keep the cream moving. Every once in a while we would open the lid and scrape the frozen cream off the sides until it was all frozen.

When the ice cream was made, we washed the salt from the ice and saved the ice in the smoke house in the ground to use it in iced tea.

If we ever got to go to town, we could see the movie for 10 cents and stay in the movie house all day, if we wanted, for that one dime. We could buy a big bag of popcorn and a drink for 5 cents.

I finished school in Damascus, left in 1950, went into the military service at the time of the Korean War, and eventually went into the ministry. I returned to Damascus in 2004.

The ECHS *Journal* Section

Goolsby's Store and Drive-in



Picture of Goolsby Store From an article in an REA publication in the 1950's.



Behind the store was the screen for the movies.

From the article,

One of the few 16mm open air motion picture theaters in the United States is being operated 17 miles east of Brewton on the Andalusia highway. The theatre, owned and operated by Mr. J. B. Goolsby, shows two shows each night from Thursday through Sunday night.

The theatre, located in rear of Mr. Goolsby's store, shows many of the most popular western and comedy motion pictures to a good audience almost every night it operates. Many people drive from Brewton to view

the films shown here, but most of the audience comes from Brooklyn and the surrounding area.

The theatre started by Mr. Goolsby more or less as a hobby, has been very successful to date, partly due to the fact that the audience likes it and partly due to his showmanship.

The projectors are operated from current supplied by the Sothern Pine Electric Cooperative. It is only another example of the convenience and pleasures of the city that have been brought to the rural areas by the high lines.

From the Facebook page for Damascus, this comment by Janis Goolsby Baker

A news paper article was written in the 1950's about my family's General Merchandise Store, Drive in theater and Rolling Store. My daddy ran the film projector room. I sold the tickets and mama sold the snacks from the store during intermission time.

We closed the store, drive in theater and rolling store in the late 1950's and daddy became a principal of Adult Education in Brewton, Alabama. Mama returned to teaching English.

I recently had the blessing of someone who bought the 16mm camera my daddy used to film adds to run at intermission time, giving the camera back to me for free. I treasure it !

I repost this article for those of Damascus heritage who are too young to remember when Damascus had a drive -in theater, J.B. Goolsby general merchandise store (the name was in a red neon sign atop the building) and rolling store on U.S.Highway 2.

A W. S. Neal classmate told me recently he rode his bike 15 miles from East Brewton to view the films and rode back 15 miles. On Western night (Saturday Night) we would have around 150 cars in the theater.

The cost was \$0.60 per car load no matter how many in the car. It cost \$0.25 to walk in and sit on the benches provided for them.

I have always loved people and selling tickets and talking to everyone was a great pleasure to me. If you look closely at the front of the store building you will

(Continued on page 17)

The ECHS *Journal* Section

Goolsby's Store and Drive-in

(Continued from page 16)

see the posters advertising upcoming films. Daddy paid me as he would have anyone who worked for

him. I learned that work had its rewards.

I took that money and bought, shoes, jewelry, clothes, make up and Bama red lipstick, thus started my love of all things sparkly and red.

ECHS Secretary Jacque Stone wrote the first article about the Goolsby Drive-in in Damascus published in ECHOES. It appeared in the January 2015 issue.

Inadvertently, the last two lines of her article were not included. Here is the last paragraph including those missing lines:

“Sammie Hoomes McGlothren and best friend Margaret Ann Goolsby would take up money at the entrance to the drive-in. If the girls had dates, they

would sit with the boys during the movie. There was some kissing and hugging going on but Mr. Goolsby was not allowing that. During the movie, he would walk around and shine a flashlight in the vehicles to make sure that the occupants were behaving.”

Every Time They Met They Had a Class Reunion



This picture of the Damascus High School has a note in the bottom right hand corner stating the picture is from the collection of the Escambia County Historical Society, Courtesy of the County Board of Education.

Below are comments about the history of the school and the year it had only two graduates.

James Barnett of Semmes, Alabama wrote:

My father graduated from high school in the Damascus community about 1930. There were only two graduates the year he graduated. He (Veston.J. Barnett) and one other. He told me he was on the basketball team. I remember him speaking of a Prof. Goolsby.

Bobby Lanier wrote:

My father was the other graduate with your father. His name was Donald Lanier. I have heard him speak about him, and your father being the only graduates.

He said every time they saw each other they had a class reunion.

The school was Damascus High School. It was

closed, and became part of W.S. NEAL HIGH SCHOOL in East Brewton, Al..

The Damascus High School only went to the 9th grade until our fathers graduated; then there was a 10th grade, then the 11th, and finally the 12th.

Several years ago, my father was in the Neal homecoming parade as the oldest Neal graduate since Damascus had become part of Neal. He was considered a Neal graduate.

The school has been torn down for a lot of years.

Note: The school was torn down in the 1960's.

ECHOES
THE NEWSLETTER FOR
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY
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Addendum to Headstones and Heritage	\$20.00	\$25.00
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