



The
Escambia
County
Historical
Society,
Founded
1971

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



Charlie Ware

The Program: “German POW’s In Alabama” Presented by Charlie Ware

We’ve enjoyed two previous programs by ECHS member Charlie Ware. From his mother’s photographs and his own work of interviews and research, he introduced us to the town of Alaflora (ECHOES, Oct. 2014), a once thriving logging town on the Alabama Florida border that disappeared after the trees were gone and the logging ended. He remembered that his mother showed her love of this town by always answering, “Alaflora,” whenever she was asked where she was from, even though the town no longer exists.

He also presented a program on Macedonia (ECHOES, Jan. 2016), a country where he spent time working for NATO. Macedonia, located in the Balkans, is known for its stunning mountain scenery with beautiful lakes as well as its complex history dating back to the Hellenistic period.

In the program for the February meeting, he will review the history of the German POW’s in Alabama which he researched for his article “German POW’s in Alabama

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Eufaula Field Trip Cancelled

The trip has been cancelled because of schedule conflicts with spring break for the local school systems

Refreshments

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

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

Raymond Melvin, known for having the “best collection going” of artifacts from the naval stores industry will present a program on this subject and display parts of his collection. A lifetime resident of Santa Rosa County, his ancestors have a great history of the timber and turpentine industry. His collection includes a replica of a turpentine still and many, many artifacts from a lifetime of collecting.



The Camp Opelika Orchestra



**Bladderwort Horned
Pitcher Plant**

Volume 434 Number 2

February 2017

The Program

(Continued from page 1)

during World War II.” This article first appeared in the *Atmore* magazine and then was reprinted in *ECHOES* for March 2009.

In his article, Charlie mentions that he grew up in the years following the war but never knew of the POW camps although Alabama had one of the largest concentration of the German POW's in the world. He points out that there were camps located not far from his home town, Atmore.

He concludes his article with the idea that the humane treatment that the German prisoners received

in the U. S. camps had a very positive effect on the prisoners and their view of the United States.

“Most POWs took with them back to Germany views and ideas about the United States that, for the most part, were very positive. There were many lessons that were learned from the American people about the American way of life and about how caring and generous Americans can be. I expect that some of the most enduring lessons of all took place in settings similar to those of the farm houses in Baldwin County, where POW workers were sometimes invited in to join an American family for dinner.”

News and Announcements

The Alabama Historical Association Annual Meeting Auburn April 20-22, 2017

Pre-meeting activities on the afternoon of Thursday, April 20, include choices for a tour of the Julie Collins Smith Museum of Fine Arts, a visit to an arboretum, to a book fair, and a reception that evening at the home of the Alabama Historical Association president., Dr. Jeff Jakeman.

Wayne Flynt, author, historian and Auburn Professor Emeritus, will give the address at the opening session on Friday morning. His subject, “Sweet Auburn Loveliest Village of the Plain,” will cover the development of the university over the years.

On Friday afternoon, there will be a tour of several antebellum homes, and walking tours of the places and events related to Auburn's role in the Civil War.

Complete information about the program, activities and speakers are in the Association's Spring 2017 Newsletter which can be found at <<http://www.alabamahistory.net/newsletters.html>>.

Information about the meeting, including access to registration forms as well as hotel reservations can be found at <<http://www.alabamahistory.net/meetings.html>>.



Samford Hall
Those who register early, first come first served, will have a chance to climb the Samford Hall Clock Tower.

Although it is referred to as not an easy climb and not for everyone, the view will be a unique experience.



Above: Bertha Mae Grout and Mary Robbins Sampey were students at Alabama Polytechnic Institute in 1900.

(https://issuu.com/markwilsonauburn/docs/aha_hspring_2017_newsletter).

Left: Inside Toomer's Drugstore in 1907.
(<https://www.facebook.com>).

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News and Announcements

(Continued from page 2)



The Alabama Historical Association Fall Pilgrimage Saturday, October 28, 2017 Abbeville, Alabama

Abbeville is the county seat of Henry County. It is located in southeastern Alabama in the Wiregrass region and, according to local history, was known as Yatta Abba by the Creek inhabitants. Abbie Creek runs through the town.

ECHS Has Two New Computers

The society very much appreciates the donated computers. They will enable the society to safely store material as well as offer visitors secure access to research material

The “Kitchen/Workshop” in the McMillan Museum Receiving Facelift

With its new look, this space will not only be useful for storage but will be a clean, attractive place for serving refreshments at ECHS monthly meetings.

Request for Photos

Coletta Bailey, who will present a program on “Feed Sack Clothing” for the May Meeting, is asking for photos of family members or friends wearing Feed Sack Clothing. She will need these photos by March or the middle of April to use in a Power Point presentation for the meeting. If you can scan these photos, email them to her at <Colette36530@yahoo.com>.

If you need help with scanning photos, bring them to the Alabama Room and Don Sales can scan them and email them to Coletta. Having the name of the person, the location, and year of the photo on the back of the photo would be helpful. Any pictures of a general store in Escambia County would also be good.



At the ECHS 2017 Christmas Party, David Allen Greeted by Charlie Ware and Darryl Searcy.

David has worked in the Alabama Room with Don Sales and previous ECHS Librarian Barbara McCoy. He replaces Barbara who has had to resign as Librarian because of her expanding responsibilities with the Atmore Historical Society.

New Day and Time for ECHS Board and Centennial Committee Meetings

The two groups will now have combined meetings on the first Tuesday of the month at 11:00 a. m. in the McMillan Museum.

The ECHS Board members are Officers, Trustees, and past presidents. The Centennial Committee is made up of members appointed by ECHS President Sally Finlay to work on material about Escambia County history to be used as part of the Alabama Bicentennial Celebration.

These meetings are open to all ECHS members who wish to come and participate.

Thank You Notes Reveal what 4th Grade Students Remember and Liked about Their Recent Tour of the McMillan Museum

- The Fossils, especially the prehistoric shark teeth;
- The Bugs, “the red saddle back”;
- The Civil War Gear;
- What Teachers Used, “because it’s not what we use now”;
- The cameras, “because they looked like they could stretch”;
- The Bottles, “because all the different sizes”;
- Don Sales’ “G. W. clothes.”
- Ultimate Compliment: “I might bring my family next time I come.”

Snapshots of the ECHS January 2017 Meeting



Carolyn Jennings talks with our speaker, Thomas White. Paul Merritt is in the background taking Pictures.



Charles Stone shown in the foreground, then Jacques Stone to his right.



Carolyn Jennings conducting the Business Session.



Left to Right, Jacques Stone, Barbara McCoy, Carolyn Jennings, and Ann Biggs-Williams.



Above and Bottom Left, members and guests enjoying the program.

Snapshots of the ECHS January 2017 Meeting *(Continued)*



Darryl Searcy and Barbara Page



Ellen Dunson with Thomas White



**Second Row, Al and Carol Jokela;
Third Row Includes Deborah Golden, Ruby
Dalton, Melba Burk, Ann Green, and Ruth
Carden.**



Our Speaker Thomas White



**Front Row, Jacque Stone; Second
Row, Don Dunson, Ellen Dunson,
and Barbara Page; Back Row,
Evelyn Franklin.**



**Foreground, Charles Stone; Second Row,
Left to Right, Don Dunson, Ellen Dunson,
Barbara Page, and June Martin; Back Row,
Charlie Booher.**

Snapshots of the ECHS January 2017 Meeting *(Continued)*



Carol Jokela and Ranella Merritt



Lee and Dawn Merritt



**Left to Right, Charlie Ware,
Charlie Booher, and Darryl Searcy**



The Refreshment Table



**Dr. Searcy's Famous Banana
Pudding on the Refreshment Table.**



Enjoying the Refreshments after the Meeting.

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

Carnivorous Plants: Escambia

By Darryl Searcy

As part of the material being prepared for celebrating Alabama's Bicentennial, one area that ECHS wishes to acknowledge is its rich natural resources. This article describes one of the unique plants in our area. It will be continued in coming issues of ECHOES.

Introduction

All pitcher plants, regardless of location, are on the threatened species list even though they would appear plentiful in the coastal area. As one travels throughout the Escambia and the Conecuh River Basin, one sees many roadside bogs and sinks that will likely contain some form of pitcher plant or fly catcher, if you will.

The fact that we in Escambia have an abundance is misleading when one considers that not long ago these plants were known from Nova Scotia to Florida and westward to eastern Texas. This is no longer the case, but the plants are making a valiant stand here in the southeast - especially on the coastal plain.

Some years ago Senator George Aiken (Vermont) referred to pitcher plants as "ogres of the bog" but this simple essay hopes to be less critical as they are favored above all other bog plants. While we may agree with the good senator that their methods are grotesque, we nevertheless find them fascinating because of their cunning and enterprise.

Many bog plants literally live on raw meat by trapping live flies, bugs and spiders and then killing them slowly as the plant releases an enzyme that dissolves its catch, leaving nothing behind but skeletal remains. The trapped insect is liquefied and ingested through plant pores.

This area of Alabama has seven common species of pitcher plants. All catch and contain water in the pitcher (the long narrow leaves that have fused to form a tube or trumpet). The tiny insects that are unfortunate enough to fall into the pool of water are doomed because a sticky and downy hair inside the tube prevents it climbing out. Thus, the plant now has both water and a food supply. While the liquid in the tube is deadly to the insect, it is harmless for humans, and professional trekkers to the bog are known to drink the water if no other source is available.

All pitcher plants begin their growth cycle in early April and by the end of May will have begun to develop an inflorescence (the complete flower head of a plant including stems, stalks, bracts, and flowers). I recall that as a youngster the flower head was called "frog house." Even today, we often hear folks refer to the trumpet as the bloom, but the trumpet is just a bundle of modified leaves that have fused together to form the trumpet.

The flap over the trumpet provides shelter for numerous insects that occasionally venture inside and are themselves captured to become the next meal. The flap also serves to limit the amount of water taken into the tube.

This amazing plant creates its own ecosystem; i.e., raises its cattle and cures the meat for food. Small insects residing under the flap attract larger insects and that's what the plant is hoping for -- the big fat ones.

The White Top and the Crimson

The most abundant pitcher plants in the bogs are the White Top and the Crimson (*Sarracenia leucophylla*) pitcher plants, photos of the plants on the next page. The two plants are closely related and are identified by the same scientific description; however, while most authorities treat them as one and same, there are significant differences.

The Crimson generally prefers direct sun while the White Top prefers a more shaded area. The scientific (Latin) description means simply that they have a powdery residue on the trumpet giving the impression of being anemic.

In Louisiana and Mississippi the Crimson is often referred to as "Drummond Plant," suggestive of the scientist who originally identified and described it. Further, in some circles it is felt that the White Top should have a scientific name of its own because there are differences aside from color and the powdery residue.

In this area the White Top is found in marshes of Big Escambia Creek and Robinson Ford. South of that area the heavier population is Crimson. Where the brackish areas become more common along the Conecuh River the White Top is far more prevalent.

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Carnivorous Plants: Escambia



**White Top
Pitcher Plant**



**Crimson Pitcher
Plant**



**Parrot Pitcher
Plant Prostrate**



**Parrot Pitcher
Plant Upright**

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The Parrot Pitcher Plant

There are two variations of the Parrot Pitcher Plant, *Sarracenia psittacina*, residing on the Coastal Plain. While the Alabama Wildflower Society recognizes both variations, there are some authorities who fail to recognize that the coastal parrot has a sub-species bearing prostrate pitchers. Until the sub-species is recognized, all will continue to carry the same scientific description.

There is much that could be added to argue for specie separation, but this work is not the forum for it. Suffice it to say that both have taken habit in Escambia County and the sub-specie is the most prevalent. The upright variation seen above stands about 12 inches tall while the prostrate specie sprawls to about the same in diameter.

The prostrate has a rather rough row to hoe in order to capture food, as being prostrate it cannot hold large quantities of water due to evaporation. It also puts down a deeper root system for taking nourishment from the soft peat and bog moss around it.

The plant is not parasitic and therefore takes nothing from the soil, but rather filters whatever micro-organisms are floating around in its environment. Overall, however, its root system is merely intended for support to prevent it drifting with floods and water surface motion.

Both plants are found in cypress swamps along the lower Conecuh River. In the picture above, it is clearly seen that the reclining Parrot Pitcher Plant is in flower.

The Sweet Red Pitcher Plant

The Sweet Red Pitcher Plant (also known as Sweet Pitcher plant) (*Sarracenia rubra*) is clump-forming and one of the most brilliant of the pitcher plants in this region, reaching a height of about 24 inches. It also has the largest pitcher opening that measures upward to 6 inches while tapering to pencil size at root level. It defies all laws of gravity considering its size and shape and the vast amount of liquid it holds. Upon tipping the specimen shown here, more than a half pint of water was stored in its tube.

The reddish-brown flowers of the Sweet Red are borne singly on a stem that stands about 12 inches tall. Flowers occur from May to June. Like other members of the genus, the Sweet Pitcher Plant traps insects using a rolled leaf, which is generally smaller and narrower than most species. The uppermost part of the leaf is flared into a lid (the operculum), which prevents excess rain from entering the pitcher and diluting the digestive secretions within.

The upper regions of the pitcher are covered in short, stiff, downwards-pointing hairs, which serve to guide insects alighting on the upper portions of the leaf towards the opening of the pitcher tube. The

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Carnivorous Plants: Escambia



**Sweet Red
Pitcher Plant**



Hooded Pitcher Plant



**Yellow Pitcher
Plant**



**Green Spotted
Pitcher Plant**

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opening of the pitcher tube is retroflexed into a 'nectar roll' or peristome, whose surface is studded with nectar-secreting glands.

Prey entering the tube find that their footing is made extremely uncertain by the smooth, waxy secretions found on the surfaces, therefore losing their footing and plummeting to the bottom of the tube, where a combination of digestive fluid, wetting agents and inward-pointing hairs prevent their escape. Some large insects are known to chew their way out through the wall of the tube, thus avoiding certain death.

In spring, the plant produces small, bright red flowers with 5-fold symmetry. The red petals are long and strap-like, and dangle over the umbrella-like style of the flower, which is held upside down at the end of a long stem. The stigmata of the flower are found at the tips of the 'spokes' of this umbrella.

Pollinating insects generally enter the flower from above, forcing their way into the cavity between the petals and umbrella, and depositing any pollen they are carrying on the stigmata as they enter. The pollinators generally exit the flower by lifting the petal after having been dusted with the plant's own pollen. This one-way system helps to ensure cross pollination.

The Sweet Red Pitcher Plant flowers are generally sweet-scented, hence the common name. Like all pitcher plants, this rare "ogre" is threatened

and caution should be taken by collectors not to disturb this rare and endangered plant. Further, to transplant any pitcher plant is near impossible as they require an almost exact duplication of their contemporary surroundings or transplantation will be a failure.

The Hooded Pitcher Plant

The Hooded Pitcher Plant, *Sarracenia minor*, is a relatively small plant with pitchers about 10 to 12 inches in height. An especially large form, with pitchers up to 3 or 4 feet in height grows in the Okefenokee marshes at the border between Georgia and Florida, but the individuals in our region of south Alabama are virtual miniatures.

The tubes are mostly green throughout, but can also be reddish in the upper part. Flowering occurs late March to mid-May; yellow in color and odorless. Over a hundred seeds are produced by a single capsule.

Sarracenia minor and *S. psittacina* are the only species in the genus to employ domed pitchers with translucent white patches that allow light to enter. It has been suggested that the light shining through these patches attracts flying insects further into the pitcher and away from the pitcher's mouth in a similar manner to *Darlingtonia californica*.

The pitcher is filled with water and enzymes produced by the plant are helpful in the digestion of

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Carnivorous Plants: Escambia

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prey. In the wild, *Sarracenia minor* seems very attractive to ants, although it also attracts and eats a wide range of flying insects.

This plant can be found in a bog near Flomaton that runs parallel to Old Fanny Road near the confluence of Little Escambia and the Conecuh River. Other locations where the plant is quite prolific is the coastal regions of northern Florida and in Georgia up to the southern part of North Carolina. The species exhibits the southernmost range of any member of the *Sarracenia* genus extending to fragmented populations surrounding Lake Okeechobee in south-central Florida.

The Yellow Pitcher Plant

The Yellow Pitcher Plant, *Sarracenia alata*, illustration previous page, is described by its scientific name as “having wings.” This implies that a small fused ridge on each side of the tube might resemble wings. *Alata* is a strictly marshland plant and is found from Flomaton to Escambia and Santa Rosa counties of Florida in cypress and peat bogs.

The Yellow is rare in this area in that its preferred habitat is restricted and confined. Overall, its most preferred habitat is the Mississippi Delta and like the Sweet Red and the White Top its height defies all laws of nature as the base is exceptionally small. It does, however, hold a tremendous amount of water while maintaining a balance of weight distribution somewhat like a ship’s ballast.

It cannot be stressed enough that all pitcher plants, regardless of location, are on the threatened species list even though they would appear plentiful in coastal bogs.

Yellow Pitcher Plant is also known as Yellow Trumpets, Pale Pitcher Plant, or Pale Trumpet. It is native to North America, growing in permanently wet and open wetlands typically classified as longleaf pine savannas. The plant’s habitat is split into two geographically separate areas: an eastern range from Louisiana across southern Mississippi and into western Alabama and a western range from eastern Texas into western Louisiana. In Mississippi, stands of *Sarracenia alata* rival in size those of any other

Sarracenia species, but in Alabama the species is confined mostly to the western edge of the state’s counties; Mobile, Baldwin, Escambia, and Covington.

Among members of *Sarracenia* the floral coloring of *alata* is remarkably varied. Flowers may be cream to white, greenish, yellow or reddish. As the floral color variations exist within populations hundreds of miles from any other species, these variations cannot be attributed to hybridization.

Other than the range of floral colors, *Sarracenia alata* differs little from *Sarracenia rubra*. The veining of the *rubra* pitchers tends to be more reticulated whereas that of *alata* often exhibits more of a pin-stripe pattern and grows taller pitchers.

The Green Spotted Pitcher Plant

The Green Spotted Pitcher Plant, *Sarracenia flava*, illustration on previous page, also known as the Trumpet-leaf Pitcher plant, is native to the New World. Its range extends from southern Alabama, through Florida and Georgia, to the coastal plains of southern Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. Populations also exist in the Piedmont and mountains of North Carolina.

Its pitcher traps insects using a rolled leaf, which in this species is a vibrant yellow in color, and occasionally up to 36 inches in height, although 28 to 30 inches is more typical. The uppermost part of the leaf is flared into a lid, which prevents excess rain water from entering the pitcher and diluting the digestive secretions within.

The upper regions of the pitcher are covered in short, stiff hairs that serve to guide insects towards the opening of the pitcher tube. The upper regions are also brightly patterned with flower-like markings. These markings serve to attract prey.

The opening of the pitcher tube is retroflexed into a ‘nectar roll’, whose surface is studded with nectar-secreting glands. The nectar contains not only sugars, but also the alkaloid coniine (a toxin found in hemlock), which intoxicates the prey. Prey entering the tube find that their footing is made extremely uncertain by the smooth, waxy secretions found on the surfaces of the upper portion of the tube. Insects losing their footing on this surface plummet to the bottom of

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the tube, where a combination of digestive fluid, wetting agents and inward-pointing hairs prevent their escape.

In spring, the plant produces large flowers with 5-fold symmetry. The yellow petals are long and strap-like, and dangle over the umbrella-like style of the flower, which is held upside down at the end of a 50 cm long scape.

The stigma of the flower are found at the tips of the 'spokes' of this umbrella. Pollinating insects generally enter the flower from above, forcing their way into the cavity between the petals and umbrella, and depositing any pollen they are carrying on the stigmata as they enter. The pollinators generally exit the flower, having been dusted with the plant's own pollen, by lifting a petal. This one-way system helps to ensure cross pollination.

In late summer and autumn, the plant stops produc-

ing carnivorous leaves, but instead produces flat, non-carnivorous phyllodia. This is probably an adaptation to low light levels and insect scarcity during the winter months, and shows clearly the cost of carnivory.

The yellow pitcher plant is easy to cultivate, and is one of the most popular carnivorous plants in horticulture. The plant readily hybridizes with other members of the genus and is therefore the most popular among collectors.

To be continued. . . .

German POW's Worked Here During World War II

By Michelle Gerlach

The Following article appeared in the Andalusia Star News August 8, 2016. Author Michelle Gerlach has previously been the editor of the Brewton Standard and on the staff of JDCC (<http://www.andalusiastarnews.com/2016/08/26/german-pows-worked-here-during-wwii/>).

When German prisoners of war came to Covington County to work on local farms, farmers were more scared of the guards than the prisoners, John Clark recalled.

"In 1943 we got the first ones down here with Japanese American guards," Clark recalled. "They were just as American as you and I are, but folks around here had never seen Japanese Americans before. All they knew was about the war with the Japanese in the Pacific.

Clark, who was 12 at the time, said the prisoners had been captured in North Africa. Clark said American supply ships serving troops in Africa first



John Clark was 12 when the prisoners came to Covington County.

housed the POWs, then brought them to the states.

"There were only old men and young 'uns here," he said. "Everybody else was fighting the war. I happened to be one of the young 'uns."

Many of the soldiers were well educated, Clark said, adding that most of them spoke English well. The prisoners worked here for two or three years, he said, and eventually, guards weren't used. He recalled one incident when the guard was napping in the shade.

"We were in a peanut field across a pretty good branch," he said. "They brought their dinner, which was two sandwiches.

"The guard was under one of the haystacks and went to sleep. I wasn't going to wake him up, so this 12-year-old kid brought 10 German prisoners across the branch where their lunch was."

Clark said he got in trouble with his daddy, because his father thought the prisoners could have used the chance to escape.

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“Where were they going,” he said. “They couldn’t swim the Atlantic Ocean.”

Mr. C.E. Spicer also used POWs on his farm. His granddaughters, Kay Johnson and Ernestine Cosby, live on the farm today, and also shared some memories, including farm photographs and letters the POWs wrote to their family after they returned home.

Their aunt, Sara Martha Gantt, previously had shared information about the POWs with Jan White.

“She said the prisoners lived at the camp, and would bring a sack lunch to eat. Her mother would cook black-eyed peas, turnip



C.E. Spicer, who used POW labor, was Kay Johnson’s and Ernestine Cosby’s grandfather.

greens and other things for them to eat because she wanted them to have a hearty meal to do work in the fields.”

Wiley Ward recalled seeing the POWs working near Pleasant Home when he was about 10.

“They were down there on a farm. We would see them every day when we went by on the school bus. But they kept it quiet. They were afraid people down there if they got a chance, would get after them.”



These German prisoners of war are shown with a hay baler on the Spicer farm, circa 1943. Clark recalled that they did fine with hay and peanuts, but had trouble picking cotton.

Photo courtesy of Spicer family archives

(<http://www.andalusiastarnews.com/2016/08/26/german-pows-worked-here-during-wwii/>).

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

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