



The
Escambia
County
Historical
Society,
Founded
1971

The July 25, 2017 Meeting McMillan Museum Coastal Alabama Community College, Brewton Campus 3:00 p. m.



Dr. Fritze

The Program

“The Hernando de Soto Expedition: Exploration and Tragedy.”

A Presentation by Dr. Ronald Fritze of Athens State University, a Scholar with the Alabama Humanities Roads Scholar Program

Professor Ronald Fritze was born and raised in Indiana. He earned a Ph.D. in history from Cambridge University. Currently, he serves as the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Athens State University in Athens, Alabama.

He is the author and editor of 11 books, including New Worlds: The Great Voyages of Discovery, 1400-1600 (Sutton/Praeger, 2003) and Invented Knowledge: False History, Fake Science, and Pseudo-Religions (Reaktion Books, 2009). Distinguished Faculty Lecturer at Lamar University, he is currently vice president/president-elect of the Society for the History of Discoveries.

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Don't forget to bring your favorite finger food for refreshments after the program.

Remaining ECHS Meetings for 2017

Tuesday, August 22, 2017

Program: Poet Sean Dietrich, “Who writes of everyday people and olden ways.”

September 26, 2017

Program: Guest Speaker, Alabama Roads Scholar Richard Bailey. Program Topic TBA.

October 24, 2017

Program: Glenn Wills, Author of Forgotten Alabama. His motto for his Photographs:

“Take pictures of everything no matter how mundane. Almost nothing you see now will exist in a hundred years.”

November

No Meeting

December

Christmas Party, Time and Place TBA



De Soto Deluxe Auto
Insignia from 1950's

Volume 44 Number 7

July 2017

The Program

(Continued from page 1)

From the Road Scholar web page, Dr. Fritze gives this introduction to his program:

Hernando de Soto's expedition (1539-1543) was the first to explore extensively the interior of the eastern part of North America. It spent a substantial amount of time in what is now Alabama, where there are many places associated with De Soto's expedition.

The Southeast on the eve of European contact contained the most culturally sophisticated Native American societies in Northern America. During the 16th century, the Spanish called the region La Florida.

Prior to De Soto's expedition, Florida's coast had been explored by various people, most famously Ponce de Leon. In 1528, Panfilo de Narvaez attempted to explore Florida, but his expedition ended in

disaster.

Cabeza de Vaca's epic account of his survival in 1536 rekindled interest in the exploration of North America, including De Soto's expedition.

Hernando de Soto had been a conquistador with Francisco Pizarro in Peru and made a fortune. Although a celebrity in Spain, he thirsted for more adventure. His expedition explored most of the Southeast following a much-debated route.

It experienced problems with the Native Americans, spread devastating diseases, and failed to find treasure. De Soto died in 1542 during the course of the expedition, which Luis de Moscoso brought back to Mexico during 1543.

The preceding introduction to Dr. Fritze and his program from <<http://www.alabamahumanities.org/programs/road/speakers/>>.

Hernando de Soto



Above, Engraving of Hernando de Soto by John Sartain.

To the Right, Library of Congress' engraving. The Spanish caption reads: "HERNANDO DE SOTO: Extremaduran, one of the discoverers and conquerors of Peru: he travelled across all of Florida and defeated its previously invincible natives, he died on his expedition in the year 1543 at the age of 42.

Source for both engravings and texts <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hernando_de_Soto#>.



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Hernando de soto

(Continued from page 2)



***Discovery of the Mississippi* by William H. Powell (1823–1879) is a Romantic depiction of de Soto seeing the Mississippi River for the first time. It hangs in the United States Capitol rotunda.**

William Henry Powell - Architect of the Capitol

William H. Powell was the last artist to be commissioned by the Congress for a painting in the Rotunda. His dramatic and brilliantly colored canvas shows Spanish conqueror and explorer Hernando de Soto, riding a white horse, the first European to view the Mississippi River, in 1541. As de Soto and his troops approach, the Native Americans in front of their teepees watch, and a chief holds out a peace pipe. In the foreground is a jumble of weapons and soldiers, suggesting the attack they had suffered shortly before. To the right, a monk prays as a crucifix is set in the ground. Powell (1823–1879) was born in New York and raised in Ohio. He studied art in Italy and worked on the painting in Paris.

**Reverse of a \$500
Federal Reserve Note
based on William H.
Powell's painting
*Discovery of the
Mississippi*,
shown above.
Engraving by Frederick
Girsch**

**Source for Pictures and
Texts on this Page**

**<[https://
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
Hernando_de_Soto#](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hernando_de_Soto#)>.**



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Hernando de Soto

(Continued from page 3)



Burial of de Soto

De Soto had encouraged the local natives to believe that he was a deity sun god (as a ploy to gain their submission without conflict). Some of the natives had already become skeptical of de Soto's deity claims. But his men were anxious to conceal his death. The actual site of his burial is not known. According to one source, de Soto's men hid his corpse in blankets weighted with sand and sank it in the middle of the Mississippi River during the night.

Illustration and text from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hernando_de_Soto>.



The de Soto Trail is marked in Red.

The Green Dot marks a route through Texas taken by the expedition looking for a way to reach Mexico. The expedition was now lead by Luis de Moscoso Alvarado whom de Soto had named to succeed him. The expedition turned back after reaching an area in Texas where they could not find adequate food and water.

The Black dashes mark the route then taken by the expedition, when they returned to the Mississippi River and built boats to take them down the river to the Gulf and eventually Mexico.

Of the seven hundred in the expedition at the beginning, only three hundred to three hundred fifty survived to reach Mexico.

From <<http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/2014/06/14/geography-in-the-news-hernando-de-sotos-famous-battle/>>.

Hernando de Soto in Alabama

From the Encyclopedia of Alabama article "European Exploration and Colonial Period" by Robert S. Weddle.

In 1540, Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto and his forces first set foot in what is now Alabama. His arrival marked the beginning of a dramatic cultural shift in the Southeast. From the mid-sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century, Spain, France, and England vied for control of the region. Native American groups used trade and warfare to play one group against the other, with varying degrees of success. By 1820, Spain, the last of the three contenders, had yielded to the United States. Native American groups, by and large, were in the process of being forced off their lands by the federal government at the urging of white settlers.

Spanish Exploration

Though not the first Europeans to view present-day Alabama—a distinction due to the expeditions of either Alonso Álvarez de Pineda (1519) or Pánfilo de Narváez (1528)—Soto and his men were the first to explore the interior.

The Soto expedition landed on the west coast of the Florida Peninsula on May 30, 1539, with 513 soldiers, their servants, and 237 horses. The force proceeded to terrorize and enslave the region's Native American inhabitants throughout its march northward toward Apalache (present-day Tallahassee) in quest of gold.

After spending the winter at Apalache, the expedition turned northeastward and traveled through present-day Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Tennessee. The Spaniards entered Alabama along

the Coosa River and followed it to Talisi, which is most likely to have been located near present-day Childersburg, according to historian Charles Hudson's widely accepted reconstruction of De Soto's route. They then headed west along the Alabama River.

In a province of the Mabila Indians controlled by Chief Tascaluza, an elaborately plumed chieftain refused Soto's request for bearers and was kept hostage during Soto's stay. Capture of a town leader would become Soto's standard method of ensuring cooperation from the town's inhabitants while he and his men traveled through tribal territories.

Understandably, such a tactic aroused great resentment; at one point two Spaniards were slain in an ambush while building rafts to cross the river. Soto held Chief Tascaluza responsible.

On the morning of October 18, 1540, Soto's troops reached the Mabila tribal capital, a palisaded town, presided over by Chief Tascaluza. An encounter between a Spanish officer and a Mabila inhabitant turned violent when the officer perceived that the Indian did not offer him due respect, ending with the Indian's arm being severed.

In the melee that followed, Soto's men set fire to the town and burned both the town and many of its occupants. Fernández de Biedma, King Carlos I's agent for the expedition, recorded in his journal, "We killed them all either with fire or the sword." Soto then continued on to new conflicts in Mississippi, pursuing the legendary gold-filled town of El Dorado until his death on the Mississippi River on March 21, 1542.



Hernando de Soto and his men burn Mabila.

Illustration from Wikipedia Commons

Exact location of Mabila unknown but many call the battle in 1540 a turning point in southeastern history preventing the Spanish from colonizing the southeast.

The article, "Bloody Alabama Battle in 1540 changed the South" notes that the Spaniards lost only 20 men in the battle but "many were wounded, their supplies and bounty were destroyed in the fire and their expedition was derailed. Plans to head south to the Gulf of Mexico to meet up with the Spanish fleet were dropped, and the expedition north and then west in a not-all-that-successful search for food and supplies.

De Soto fell ill and died in 1542 in what is now Arkansas or Louisiana, and the bedraggled remnant of his army finally made its way to the Spanish colony in Mexico a year after that (<http://www.alabamane.wscenter.com/2016/11/08/bloody-alabama-battle-1540-changed-south/>).

News and Announcements



**Robert Thrower
Tribal Historic
Preservation
Officer**

Robert Thrower's Death a Loss for ECHS

ECHS has lost a good friend with the death of Robert Thrower, for he benefited the Society as a guide on trips to the reservation as well as programs at Society meetings.

One memorable visit to the Poarch Indian Reservation in April 2010 included a bus trip over the entire reservation and a special visit to the new Cultural Museum with Robert as our guide.

He showed us artifacts on display in the new museum as well as items in the museum vaults.

The pictures to the right are from that visit. They show him standing in front of the collection of pictures used to tell the story of the history of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians and holding a beautiful cape made by his sister using turkey feathers.

Robert began working for the Poarch Creek Indian Tribe as Tribal Historian in 1991, taking the position first occupied by his mother Gail Thrower.

Gail was also a great friend to ECHS, serving as President of the Society and giving memorable pro-



grams, especially those using her knowledge of medicines based on native

"I felt like an entire library had burned down," ECHS trustee Darryl Searcy reflecting on the loss of the knowledge of Creek culture and heritage with the death of Robert.

plants. Gail always gave credit to ECHS's historical research collection in the Alabama Room for the material she found in the collection of newspapers which helped her document tribal history.

The Tribute for Robert from the Alabama Historical Commission summarizes Robert's contributions to local communities and the state as a whole, calling him a "beloved preservationist, educator, public historian, and passionate advocate for the Creek people."

Battle of Burnt Corn Creek Reenactment Saturday, July 29, 2017 9:00-12:00



The reenactment of the battle which is said to have started the Creek Indian War will be in Jennings Park in Brewton, Alabama.



ECHS Looking for Record Player

ECHS is looking for a working record player to be donated to the Museum/Alabama Room. ECHS has received a donation of records (albums) but

does not have a record player. This would not have to be a vintage player but simply a working record player that can play the 33 1/3 rpm long-playing (LP) format.

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News and Announcements

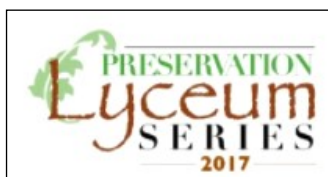
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“From the Vault: Why and What We Collect,” an exhibit at the T.T. Wentworth Jr. Florida State Museum Through Nov. 26, 2017



Some Items from the Exhibit
From the upper left, clockwise, An Egg Topper, A Soapbox Derby Racer, and Gulf Breeze UFO model. Pictures from <http://www.pnj.com/story/life/2017/07/08/tt-wentworth-exhibit-collectibles/103458450/>.

Examining the many reasons we collect including sentiment, enjoyment, and heritage, the exhibit presents more than 123 artifacts from the T.T. Wentworth collection and the Pensacola Historic Society.



First Preservation Lyceum Series for 2017 in Atmore/ Stockton on September 22-24.

The Lyceum Series is a three year project of “rambles through Alabama History in celebration of the state Bicentennial.”

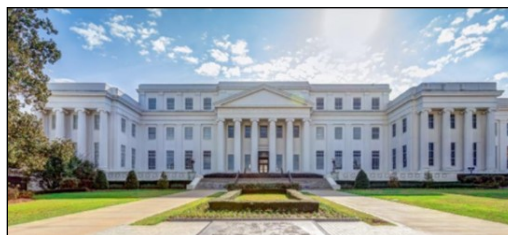
The first Alabama Bicentennial Ramble weekend begins with the history of the Creek Indians and the early settlers in the Stockton area. It will include a

visit to Fort Mims, the site of the Massacre that started the Creek Wars. Those participating will hear oral histories from descendants of these settlers.

In Atmore, those attending will visit the Poarch Creek Indian Museum which explains the culture and history of the people. At Baldwin County’s Bicentennial Park, structures of Creek Indian culture continue the story.

There will be more details on this event from the co-sponsors of this Lyceum Series, the Centennial Committee and the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation.

August Events at the Alabama Department of Archives and History



BOOK TALK: Thursday, August 10 at 12:00
Exploring Wild Alabama

Presented by Kenneth Wills and Larry Davenport

GENEALOGY WORKSHOP: Saturday, August 12 from 9:00 to 12:00

African American Genealogy: The Basics and Beyond Led by Nancy Dupree

BOOK TALK: Tuesday, August 15 at 12:00
Keep Your Airspeed Up: The Story of a Tuskegee Airman Presented by Harold Brown



Alabama Asks for Public's Help in Honoring 'Bicentennial Farms'

From the article by Anna Claire Vollers:

The Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries wants to recognize family farms that have been in the same family for at least 200 years, as part of the state's upcoming bicentennial

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celebration.

To apply, families can complete a form that includes tracing the lineage of property ownership and describes the farm's agricultural activities. The department is also asking for photos of any structures

on the property that are at least 40 years old.

Applications are available at www.agi.alabama.gov under the "Forms" tab. Deadline to apply for the Bicentennial Farm Program is Aug. 25, 2017.

From <http://www.al.com/news/index.ssf/2017/07/alabama_asks_for_public_help.htm>.

Snapshots of the ECHS June Meeting



Charles Ware and Darryl Searcy in the Alabama Room



Tom McMillan, at left, and Robin Brewton visiting with Lee and Dawn Merritt (backs to camera).



Lee Merritt and Joe Ross Exhibiting an Ox Yoke as Part of Their Presentation on the Training and Use of Oxen.



An Unusual Donation to the Museum, an Imitation Giraffe's Head.



At Left, Lee Merritt and Joe Ross.

At Right, Langham Parr and Robin Brewton



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Snapshots of the ECHS June Meeting

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Enjoying the Program, Barbara McCoy, Ranella Merritt, and on the Second Row, June Martin.



Barbara McCoy and Tom McMillan



The Refreshment Table



Barbara McCoy and Barbara Page Enjoying the Program.



Serious Attention from Lee Merritt and Sammie McGlotheren with Dawn Merritt in the Background



Don Sales and Hayden Hammond with Don pointing out something in the Museum

ECHS Scholarship Recipients

At Right, Kelsi Chandler with Sally Finlay

Kelsi was awarded an ECHS Scholarship for the 2016-2017 Academic Year and attended Coastal Alabama Community College, Brewton Campus (Formerly JDCC), where she maintained a 4.0 GPO.

Don Sales, McMillan Museum Coordinator, is justifiably proud of his granddaughter. On her application for the scholarship for the coming year, Kelsi expressed her gratitude to ECHS for the scholarship which she says enabled her to achieve academic excellence this past year.



ECHS Scholarship Recipients, Kelsi Chandler and Hayden Hammond with ECHS President Sally Finlay in front of the stained glass windows saved from an early Escambia County Courthouse. These glass panel are in the Elvira Room of the McMillan Museum



At Left, Hayden Hammond with ECHS President Sally Finlay.

A recent graduate of Flomaton High School, Hayden has achieved a combination of athletic and academic excellence. He was a quarterback for the football program and on the baseball and cross country teams.

Hayden served as Vice-President of the Student Council, was a member of the Beta Club and represented Flomaton High School at Alabama Boys State.

He maintained a 4.0 GPA while enrolled in the high school Honors Program.

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

Diamonds of the World and Precious Gemstones Discovered in North America

By Darryl Searcy

My folks always told me, if you read you'll learn something. Believe me, I have poured over technical journals, I scan photographs, and have written letters in which I asked questions about a tiny rock that is so precious it actually drives the economy of some areas. I not only wanted to know about the little stone, I needed to know about it if I intended to put together an article that would better explain what the little brilliant was all about. I am not a geologist, mineralogist, or a specialist in any scientific study of chemistry, crystal structure, or physical properties of minerals and mineralized artifacts. All I know is that many years ago a tiny rock was found on family property in White County, Arkansas. The little stone is known today as The Searcy Diamond. While there is some ancestral attachment, I wanted to know all there was to know about it, and to do that I had to research hundreds of papers and articles. I read and tried to understand in order to develop a reasonable essay on the precious stones of North America and the world -- Diamonds.

For the most part I will refer to diamond and not to diamonds. What I learned is that diamond is composed of carbon and is the hardest natural substance in the world. Each carbon atom is surrounded by four neighboring carbon atoms in a coordination that is the result of a bond and a face-centered arrangement. The color is usually pale yellow to colorless, but the rarest of all can be brown, blue, green, orange, red, or black.

So, what is a diamond? Simply put, a diamond is a precious stone consisting of a clear and typically colorless crystalline form of pure carbon -- a mineral. Diamond is the hardest naturally occurring mineral, topping the scale of hardness with a relative value of 10. Diamond is a polymorph, or inorganic object or material that takes various forms of the element carbon. Graphite is another such inorganic object. However, at surface temperatures and pressures, graphite is the stable form of carbon.

Diamond may be up to 3 billion years old, which is much older than the host material surrounding it. Diamond crystallization originates some 300 miles beneath the surface and the dislodged crystals are merely transported to the surface via other minerals known

as kimberlite and lamproite pipes. These host rock formations are roughly cylindrical in shape and act as a conduit from the Earth's mantle to the crust.

Diamonds are differentiated between various types, Ia, Ib, IIa, and IIb. Although this information is important to the diamond cutter, it is of no value to the person merely interested in a beautiful gemstone. The diamond's superior optical properties and hardness has earned this mineral the highest respect in both industry and jewelry. It has a long tradition of invincibility; hence the Greek name, *adamas*.

Individuals and societies have ascribed diamond's important status with both symbolism and curiosity. Therefore, scientist and laity find diamonds fascinating because of the dual nature of both scientific and romantic reality created through traditions and advertising. The origin of diamond may have been uncovered in the 20th century, but appreciation for diamond has been known since its discovery in India in 400 BC. Historically, diamond has been referred to as the essence of purity and invincibility, a symbol of royalty, and a token of everlasting love.

Today, 75 to 80% of the world's natural diamonds are used for industrial purposes and 20 to 25% for gemstones. It is the chemical and physical properties of this mineral that give it the superior cutting ability for industrial use. Diamond coatings have improved on industrial applications in cutting and in aiding the performance of semiconductors. It is the optical properties of this mineral that give it the superior beauty and durability to be used as a gemstone.

Diamond is an important economic resource, responsible for developing nations and creating war. Faceting of a diamond is performed in order to maximize its optical properties. Diamond is the perfect mineral to focus on considering its notoriety and the fact that diamond studies cross the rules or code of behavior, such as mineralogy, geology, astronomy, material science, mathematics, anthropology, art, history, and economics.

Although the actual stone may vary from colorless to black, most are tinged with yellow. Diamonds are often set in yellow gold to mask the yellow body color. Nitrogen is believed to be responsible for the yellow color and blue diamonds are colored by

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boron. Carbon is adjacent to nitrogen and boron in the periodic table and substitution is possible because of size similarity of the elements.

Extensive mining of diamonds began in India and shifted from there to Brazil in the 17th century and to the African continent in the 19th century. Finally, the emphasis shifted to Australia and Canada in the 20th century. Today diamonds are mined in some 25 countries on every continent but Europe and Antarctica. The top seven producing countries, that account for 80% of the world's rough diamond supply, are Australia, Botswana, Zaire, South Africa, Russia, Angola, and Namibia.

In some of these countries (especially Africa) there are diamonds classified as "Conflict Diamonds." Such classification is actually fiction as Africa is rampant with political, social, and economic corruption, which is behind most wars in that continent. Some have blamed the diamond industry for fueling these struggles because the sale of diamond is one way in which madmen and terrorists raise the money to buy weapons. On other continents, illegal drug trafficking and oil monies finance conflicts. Placing the blame for war on the diamond industry is unfair for African diamond producers as well as the diamond industry in non-war areas.

The diamond industry faces a most difficult challenge to continue legitimate business in African mining and cutting plants, while ensuring that monies do not fund rebel armies. In an effort to police the international diamond industry, UN resolutions to US legislation have been much debated, but there is never an easy solution to war or greed. Illiteracy and a lack of a broader communication network inhibit human rights progress for the peoples of third world countries. Poverty and over population stress humanity worldwide. It will take a greater global effort than any one industry or government could shoulder to dictate and regulate morality in all cultures and therefore alleviate ignorance and war. Diamonds have nothing to do with it. The diamond industry is not to blame for war in Africa.

Gem diamonds are a luxury item and ironically, the industry has been working for years to promote these

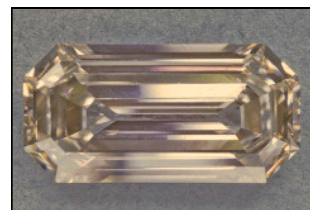
diamonds as a symbol for love. All diamonds are of great economic importance for industrial applications, so one has to wonder if this smear campaign against the diamond industry originated for political, social, or economic motivations.

Whether or not the foregoing is enlightening, or contains any significant information insofar as the gemstone is concerned, I felt the need to pass on a little history of diamond before I show the reader a few of the world's most significant and color variants - especially those gemstones discovered purely by accident in our own backyards.

Uncle Sam Diamond



Rough State



Faceted

Uncle Sam Diamond is the nickname for the largest diamond ever discovered in the United States. It was found in 1924 at the Prairie Creek Pipe Mine, which later became known as the Crater of Diamonds State Park. The diamond was named "Uncle Sam" after the nickname of its finder, Wesley Oley Basham, a worker at the Arkansas Diamond Corporation.

The rough diamond as originally discovered weighed 40.23 carats. It was faceted twice by Schenck & Van Haelen of New York. The company described the diamond as being so hard that it could only be cut using powder of other Arkansas diamonds. The final result was a 12.42-carat emerald-cut gem. It was characterized on the diamond color scale as corresponding to a faint yellow, but the visual impression of Uncle Sam has been variously described as white, or slight pink.

The diamond was owned by the Peikin Jewelers of Fifth Avenue, New York. It was lent by Peikin to the American Museum of Natural History for temporary display and storage. In 1971 it was acquired by a Boston dealer and sold for \$150,000 to an anonymous private collector.

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The Alluvial Diamond



The Alluvial Diamond was discovered by William P. "Punch" Jones and his father, Grover C. Jones, Sr. while pitching horseshoes in April 1928, near Peterstown, West Virginia. The diamond is also known as the "Jones Diamond," the "Punch Jones Diamond," the "Grover Jones Diamond," and the "Horseshoe Diamond." Believed to be simply a piece of shiny quartz common to the area, the stone was kept in a wooden cigar box inside a tool shed for fourteen years throughout the Great Depression. The stone was rediscovered in 1942.

Punch took the stone to a geology professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute in nearby Blacksburg, Virginia. A Prof. Holden, shocked at Punch's discovery, authenticated the diamond and it was sent to the Smithsonian Institute where it remained for many years for display and safekeeping.

The stone was a 34.48 carat alluvial diamond found in Peterstown, West Virginia. It remains the largest alluvial diamond ever discovered in North America. Of interest, Alluvial diamond is the term used to describe a diamond that has been removed from its primary source by natural erosive action over millions of years, and eventually deposited in a new environment such as a river bed, an ocean floor or a shoreline.

In February 1964, the Jones family brought the diamond back and placed it in a safe deposit box in the First Valley National Bank in Rich Creek, Virginia. In 1984, the uncut stone was auctioned through Sotheby's auction house in New York for \$67,500.00, to an agent representing a lawyer in an undisclosed east Asian country.

The Star of Murfreesboro



The Star of Murfreesboro, a 34.25 carat blue diamond, was found by John Pollock on March 1, 1964 at the Arkansas Diamond Mine near Murfreesboro, Arkansas. It is the largest diamond ever found by a tourist in the Arkansas area.

The Star has not been cut, and was valued at a mere \$15,000.00 in 1964. However, using the Consumer Price Index to adjust for inflation, the Star is valued today at \$501,452.47.

The Star of Murfreesboro was featured in the September, 1966, edition of the Lapidary Journal article "60th Anniversary - Discovery of Diamonds in Arkansas".

The Pollock family still owns the diamond. It is occasionally loaned out for display at museums and gem shows. The Arkansas Diamond Mine area is now contained in the Crater of Diamonds State Park.

The Searcy Diamond



The Searcy Diamond weighed 33.4 carats. It was discovered in 1929 on a family farm near Holly Springs, Arkansas. The farm was on land owned by the Searcy family, and is still owned by them today. The diamond is among the largest ever

found in North America and the United States.

In 1950 the Tiffany Company offered to purchase the uncut gem. Today it is currently on display in the Fifth Avenue store of Tiffany & Company in New York City. On several occasions the diamond has been on loan and displayed with the precious gem collection at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

The area of Holly Springs is not known for its diamonds, but a big one was found in White County, Arkansas. The lucky finder was 11-year-old Alice

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Taylor, who was chopping cotton on the Searcy estate. She was hoeing near a big oak stump when she spotted what appeared to be a pretty rock. She didn't know what she had found, but thought it might be a stone that you could mark with, like a seamstress chalk. In a child's world the stone was compared to a quail egg, simply describing it as being round on the big end and becoming smaller on the other end. She further said the stone was smoky white. In fact, it was pale yellow.

Alice's mother kept the stone for a while until Alice grew up and married, at which time her mother gave it to her. Alice kept the stone in a soft leather bag that was about the size of a roll-your-own tobacco sack. She cautioned her children not to play with it, but they found it fascinating and disobeyed her. One day the stone was dropped through a knothole in the floor, where it stayed for almost a year. It might well have stayed there forever if the oldest child had not crawled under the house to look for hen eggs and the stone was rediscovered.

It was not until 1942 that Alice took the stone to a drugstore owner. She asked if he knew what it was. The druggist didn't know, but he sent it to the geology department at the University of Arkansas. The geology professors thought it was a precious stone and recommended that it be sent to the jewelers at Tiffany's in New York for evaluation. Famous for its jewelry, silver, china and crystal, Tiffany wanted to buy the stone and sent Alice a written offer. She thought the offer was for \$85, which was a lot of money in those days. However, when the check arrived it was for \$8,500. Alice was beside herself with excitement. She used her new wealth to pay off all their debts and to buy a home in Pontiac, Michigan where her husband was living and working for General Motors. Alice and the children moved to Michigan to be with her husband and the children's father.

As of this day the stone remains uncut. After a period of two decades the stone was returned to the estate as being the rightful owner with the understanding that it could remain with the Tiffany company for the purpose of show. Tiffany created a sil-

ver mounting for displaying the rough diamond, and assessed a value of \$1,400.00 per carat and set a value of \$51,940.00. Adjusting for inflation using the consumer price index over 65 years, the stone today is valued at \$828,640.00.



The Foxfire Diamond

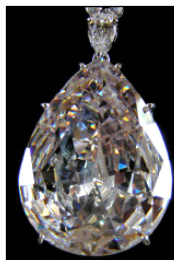
The 187.63 carat Foxfire diamond was almost discarded when it was unearthed in August 2015 at the Diavik Diamond Mine, above the Arctic Circle in Canada's Northwest Territories. The mine was not

known for large diamonds like the Foxfire, but rather much smaller stones. The chances of a large diamond coming through the sorting system were believed to be so slim that all large stones were assumed to be kimberlite, thus filtered and crushed. The Foxfire diamond could have been crushed, but because of its somewhat elongated shape, it slipped through the sifting screen.

The name Foxfire pays homage to the aboriginal name for the Aurora Borealis, which looks like "foxtails swishing away in the sky."

In June 2016, Deepak Sheth of Amadena Investments, who trades in historic or unique stones, purchased the uncut diamond at auction (the exact price has not been publicly disclosed) and he then did an unusual thing. He allowed the Smithsonian's scientists to borrow it and to this day has not asked for its return. Its future, however, is bright as the Foxfire is in the "rare and freak" category and would have fetched a much higher price per carat than a bog standard stone

Burton-Taylor Diamond



Weighing in at 241 carats, the original rough diamond was found in 1966 in the Premier Mine in South Africa. Harry Winston cut the stone into the shape of a pear and the finished product was 69.42 carats.

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Diamonds of the World and Precious Gemstones Discovered in North America

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At the time of sale in 1969, the diamond had been set in a platinum ring with two smaller diamonds on either side. After its purchase by Taylor and Burton, Taylor found the diamond too heavy to wear as a ring and commissioned an \$80,000 diamond necklace which included a custom setting for the diamond. The necklace was designed to fit Taylor's neck allowing the diamond to cover a tracheotomy scar resulting from her bout with near fatal pneumonia in 1961.

The diamond was originally bought by Harriet Annenberg Ames, the sister of the billionaire publisher Walter Annenberg. Mrs. Ames felt unable to wear the diamond in her native New York City, and decided to sell the stone. She later said that "I found myself positively cringing and keeping my gloves on for fear it would be seen. The stone sat in a bank vault for years. It seemed foolish to keep it if one could not use it. As things are in New York one could not possibly wear it publicly".

When it was announced that an auction would take place on 23 October 1969, the diamond was listed as lot 133, at Parke-Bernet in New York City. It was flown to Switzerland so that the actress Elizabeth Taylor could see it, and flown back to the United States for the auction. Taylor's husband, Richard Burton, had set a maximum bid of \$1 million for the diamond, with his lawyer, Aaron Frosch, bidding on the telephone from London, and Al Yugler of the jewelers Frank Pollock and Sons, bidding in the room for Burton.

The auction began at \$200,000 with everyone in the room shouting "Yes!" when the amount was announced, but by \$500,000 only nine people remained in the auction. The sale proceeded in increments of \$10,000 after \$500,000, and only two people remained at \$650,000. At \$1 million, Yugler, who was bidding for Taylor and Burton, dropped out of the auction, which ended shortly after. It was unsure in the crowded room as to who the winner was, but it was later revealed to be Robert Kenmore, from the Kenmore Corporation, the parent company of the jewelers Cartier.

Under bidders in the sale included the jeweler

Harry Winston, the Sultan of Brunei Hassanal Bolkiah, and the Greek shipping magnate Aristole Onassis, who had dropped out of the auction at \$700,000. The final price was \$1,050,000, which was a new record for a public auction of a jewel. The previous record price for a diamond was \$305,000, which had been set in 1957.

A proviso of the sale stipulated that the diamond could be named by the buyer, and it was subsequently named the "Cartier Diamond".

Burton and Taylor had been in England at the time of the auction as guest of Burton's brother. Burton's lawyer, Jim Benton, called him after the auction to tell him that he had been outbid. It was rumored that Burton turned into a raving maniac and insisted that he would get that diamond if it cost him his life, or 2 million dollars, whichever was the greater. In the meantime Elizabeth protested that it didn't matter, that she didn't mind not having it, that there was much more in life than baubles - she would make do without it.

After 24 hours of agony Burton learned that he had won. "I got the bloody thing for \$1.1 million. I wanted that diamond because it is incomparably lovely -- and it should be on the loveliest woman in the world. I would have had a fit if it went to Jackie Kennedy or Sophia Loren or Mrs. Misfit Huntingdon of Dallas, Texas."

The diamond was subsequently named the "Taylor Burton Diamond". Burton had previously bought Taylor the 33.19-carat Krupp Diamond in May 1968 at a cost of \$307,000. The jewels and other investments bought by the couple were officially assets of a tax shelter established by the pair, called the Atlantic Corporation.

In 1980, the diamond was sold to Robert Mouawad, who had it re-cut to 68.0 carats.

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

Diamonds of the World and Precious Gemstones Discovered in North America

(Continued from page 16)

Other Notable Diamonds of the World:



Daria-I-Noor Diamond, 182 carats, found in India. The largest pink diamond in the world. Now a part of the Iranian Crown Jewels



Excelsior Diamond, 970 carats, South Africa. The largest known diamond prior to the Cullinan find.

It was eventually cut into 10 separate stones ranging from 13 to 68 carats. One of the stones shown as part of a bracelet.



Florentine Diamond, 137.27 carats, yellow, India. A photo of the Florentine's last known setting - a hat Ornament. This photo was probably taken between 1870 and 1900.



Golden Jubilee Diamond, 755.5 Carats, yellow-brown, south Africa. The largest faceted diamond ever cut to 545.67 carats. It outweighs the Cullinan by 15.27 carats.



Koh-I-Noor, 793 carats. Colorless, India. Gifted to Queen Victoria (some claim forcefully) by Maharaja Duleep Singh during the British Raj, and is now part of the Crown of Queen Elizabeth II.



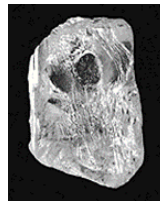
Millennium Star, 777 carats, colorless, Democratic Republic of Congo.



Nizam Diamond, 340 carats, colorless, India - whereabouts Unknown.



Oppenheimer Diamond, 253.7, yellow, South Africa. One of the largest uncut diamonds in the world.



Star of Sierra Leone, 968.9 carats, colorless, Republic of Sierra Leone.

26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, a yellow diamond said to be 342.57 carats is held by the Russian Diamond Fund at the Kremlin. No photograph available.



Akbar Shah Diamond, 116 carats, an irregular, pear-shaped diamond with a light green hue, India. After cutting the diamond weighed 73.60 carats. Its whereabouts is unknown.



Alexander Pushkin - 320.65 carats, colorless, Russian Diamond Fund, The Kremlin.



Allmat Diamond, 101.29 carats, yellow, African Republic, Cullinan I. The Allnatt diamond set as the centerpiece of a platinum flower brooch setting.

ECHOES
THE NEWSLETTER FOR
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 276
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<u>Wildflowers of The Escambia CD</u>	\$10.50	\$15.00
<u>History of Brewton and E. Brewton (sc)</u>	\$35.00	\$40.00
<u>Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook</u>	\$30.00	\$25.00
<u>Addendum to Headstones and Heritage</u>	\$20.00	\$25.00
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