



The  
Escambia  
County  
Historical  
Society,  
Founded  
1971

**The January Meeting**  
**Tuesday, January 23, 2018**  
**McMillan Museum**  
**Coastal Alabama Community College**  
**Brewton Campus**  
**2:00-4:00 p. m**

## The Program: Show and Tell

This announcement in the society's newsletter for the ECHS "Show and Tell" of October 8, 1974 shows the basic idea of this popular program has not changed:

**YOU are the program! Come one and all, bring some Item, either one or more, of historic or personal interest, and share it with the group.**

The May 10, 1976 newsletter announced a program combining a brief history of the Liberty Bell and of several bells of local historical significance followed by a member "Bell Show and Tell" with this description:

**Bring your old school bells, plantation bells, cow bells, sheep bells, dinner bells, Chinese bells, camel bells, china bells, souvenir bells, and if it's too large to bring, a picture of it or just tell us about it. This meeting is going to be a real bell-ringer!**

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**Don't forget to Bring Your Favorite Finger Food or Snack for the Refreshment Period after the Meeting. ECHS Will Provide the Drinks.**



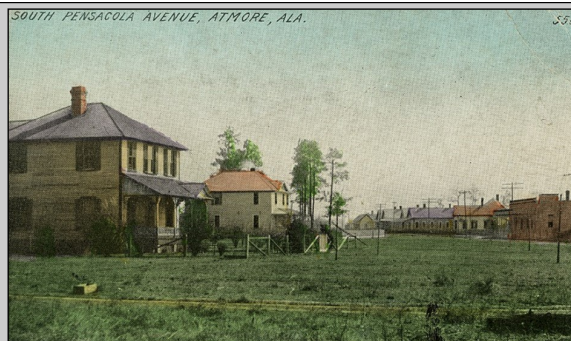
Mooreville, Ala.  
Post Office (1840)

Volume 45 No. 1  
January 2018

**February Meeting**  
**Tuesday, February 27, 2018**  
**3:00 p.m.**

**McMillan Museum**

**Dr. Elizabeth Benchley of the University of West Florida will present a program on the discovery and excavation of the Tristan de Luna y Arellano's 1559 settlement in Pensacola. Dr. Benchley is the Director of the Division of Anthropology and Archaeology of the University of West Florida as well as the Archaeology Institute of the University.**

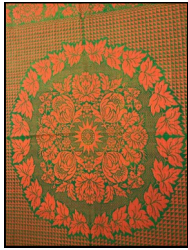


South Pensacola Avenue, Atmore, Post Card

## 2018 “Food for Thought” Lecture Schedule

The Alabama Department of Archives and History has announced Its 2018 Schedule of “Food for Thought,” its Alabama history lunchtime lecture series. “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. The Archives is located in downtown Montgomery directly across the street from the Alabama Capitol building.



### January 18 • Elizabeth Shores “Finding Family History: The Secrets in an Antique Coverlet.”

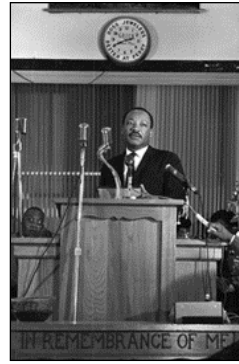
In this presentation, Shores explored both the relics and the rituals of her Grandmother Earline’s life as a small-city matron in the Deep South. Ms. Shores’ book about her Grandmother (who lived in Tuscaloosa), Earline’s Pink Party: The Social Rituals and Domestic Relics of a Southern Woman, explores this theme.



### February 15 • Richard Bailey “Alabama’s First Reconstruction Legislature”

Dr. Bailey, pictured at left, notes that there were 247 influential black men who held public office in Alabama during Reconstruction. He argues that they were not carpet-baggers or scalawags but in fact were part of a period of significant Achievements.

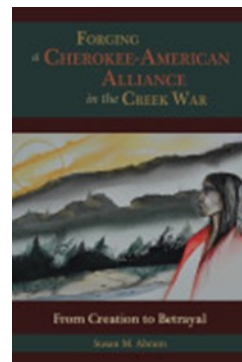
\*Note: Dr. Bailey presented a program on Alabama’s (the state’s) Distinguished Athletes at the September 2017 ECHS meeting..



**Martin Luther  
King, Jr.,  
speaking to an  
audience at  
Maggie Street  
Baptist Church  
in Montgomery,  
Alabama**

### March 15 • Scotty Kirkland and Meredith McDonough: The Paper and the Preacher: “The Southern Courier and Martin Luther King Jr.”

From Wikipedia, “The Southern Courier was a weekly newspaper published in Montgomery, Alabama, from 1965 to 1968, during the Civil Rights Movement. As one of a few newspapers to cover the African-American community in the South, it provided its readership with a more comprehensive view of race relations and community, and is considered an important source for historians” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Southern\\_Courier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Southern_Courier)).



### April 19 • Susan Abram: “Forging a Cherokee- American Alliance in the Creek War.”

At left, the Cover of Susan Abram’s book: Forging a Cherokee-American Alliance in the Creek War: From Creation to Betrayal.

The Creek War of 1813-1814 is studied primarily as an event that impacted its two main antagonists, the defending Creeks in what is now the State of Alabama and the expanding young American republic. Scant attention has been paid to

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## 2018 “Food for Thought” Lecture Schedule

(Continued from page 2)

how the United States’ Cherokee allies contributed to the war and how the war transformed their society.

In Forging a Cherokee-American Alliance in the Creek War, Susan M. Abram explains in engrossing detail the pivotal changes within Cherokee Society triggered by the war that ultimately ended with the Cherokees’ forced removal by The United States in 1838 (<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/41968>).



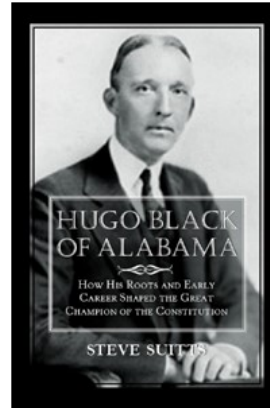
**May 17 • Bill Finch:**  
**“The True Story of Kudzu, the Vine That Never Truly Ate the South.”**

A naturalist cuts through the myths surrounding the invasive plant.

Bill Finch in Smithsonian Magazine commented: “Now that scientists at last are attaching real numbers to the threat of kudzu, it’s becoming clear that most of what people think about kudzu is wrong. Its growth is not ‘sinister,’ as Willie Morris, the influential editor of Harper’s Magazine, described in his many stories and memoirs about life in Yazoo City, Mississippi.

“The more I investigate, the more I recognize that kudzu’s place in the popular imagination reveals as much about the power of American mythmaking, and the distorted way we see the

natural world, as it does about the vine’s threat to the country side” (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/true-story-kudzu-vine-ate-south>)



**June 21 • Steve Suits:**  
**“Hugo Black of Alabama.”**

Three decades after his death, the life and career of Supreme Court Justice Hugo L. Black continues to be studied and discussed.

To the Left, the cover of author Steve Suits’ definitive study of Black’s origins and early influences: Hugo Black of Alabama: How His Roots and Early Career Shaped the Great Champion of the Constitution.

“Black came out of hardscrabble Alabama hill country, and he never forgot his origins. He was further shaped in the early 20th-century politics of Birmingham, where he set up a law practice and began his political career, eventually rising to the U.S. Senate, from which he was selected by FDR for the high court. Black’s nomination was opposed partly on the grounds that he had been a member of the Ku Klux Klan.

“One of the book’s conclusions that is sure to be controversial is that in the context of Birmingham in the early 1920s, Black’s joining of the KKK was a progressive act. This startling assertion is supported by an examination of

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## 2018 “Food for Thought” Lecture Schedule

(Continued from page 3)

the conflict that was then raging in Birmingham between the Big Mule industrialists and the blue-collar labor unions.

“Black of course went on to become a staunch judicial advocate of free speech and civil rights, thus making him one of the Figures most vilified by the KKK and other white supremacists in the 1950s and 1960s” (<http://www.newsouthbooks.com/bkpgs/detailtitle>).



**July 19 • Melissa Blair:  
“Sorry about That,  
Gloria:  
Southern Living  
Encounters the  
Women’s Movement .”**

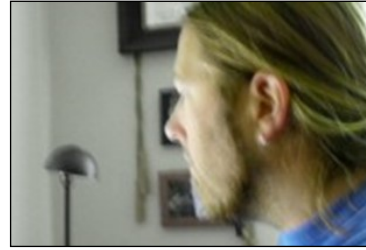
Melissa Blair explores Southern Living magazine's reaction to feminism in the 1970s.

Pictured is Melissa Blair. An Associate Professor in History at Auburn University, her research focuses on women and politics in the United States in the twentieth century.



**August 16 •  
Ken Gaddy:  
“Paul ‘Bear’  
Bryant:  
An American  
Story.”**

Mr. Gaddy is the Director at the Paul W. Bryant Museum, pictured Above.



**September 20 -  
Erik Peterson:  
“Nott, Our  
Doctor: How  
Medicine, Race,  
Religion, and  
Evolution  
Collide.”**

Dr. Erik Peterson, pictured above, is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Alabama.

He studies the history of biology, philosophy of biology, and history of science. He comments, “I live in the intersection between biology, anthropology, history, and philosophy.”



**October 18 • Martin T.  
Olliff:  
“The Girl the Wildcats left  
Behind:  
Irene Pierce and  
Tallassee’s Soldiers in  
World War I.”**

Pictured, Ms. Nellie Irene Pierce of Tallassee, Alabama (1895- 1971), who corresponded with a number of soldiers in various units during World War I.

Most of those soldiers were from Tallassee, including her brother William S. Pierce and her future husband, John R. Godwin (1892-1960).

Martin Olliff says, “By early 1918, many of Tallassee’s young men had volunteered or were drafted into the US army, and a number served

(Continued on page 5)

## 2018 “Food for Thought” Lecture Schedule

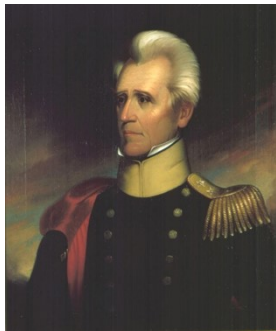
(Continued from page 4)

in the American Expeditionary Force in France until mid-1919.”

Dr. Olliff also notes that Irene Pierce was seventeen years old when America entered World War I. She had worked in the Tallassee, Alabama, cotton mill –a good job at the time-, since she was twelve.

*Irene and J. R. Godwin Collection, G 090, The Wiregrass Archives, Troy University Dothan Campus, Dothan, AL.*

Dr. Olliff is the Director of the Wiregrass Archives.



**November 15 •  
Rachel Stephens:  
“The Portrait that  
Created a President:  
Ralph E. W. Earl’s  
Andrew Jackson.”**

To the left is a Portrait of Andrew Jackson from 1837.

The American portrait painter Ralph E. W. Earl, worked as Andrew Jackson's personal artist from 1817 until Earl's death in 1838. During this Period, Jackson held Earl in close council, even providing him residence at the Hermitage, Jackson's home in Tennessee, and at the White House during his presidency.

Rachel Stephens in her book on Earl, *Selling Andrew Jackson: Ralph E. W. Earl and the Politics of Portraiture*, argues that understanding the role Earl played within Jackson's coterie is critical to understanding the trajectory of Jackson's career.

Earl, she concludes, should be credited with playing the propagandistic role of image-shaper--before such a position --long before such a position existed within

American presidential politics.

Earl's portraits became fine art icons that changed in character and context as Jackson matured from the hero of the Battle of New Orleans to the first common-man president to the leader of the Democratic party, and finally to the rustic sage of the Hermitage (<https://www.amazon.com>).



**December 20 •  
Diane Barnard:  
“Dressing for Statehood:  
Textiles of Early  
Alabama.”**

Diane Barnard, pictured to the left, is a Graduate Teaching Assistant and Apparel Design Instructor at Auburn University.

In an earlier paper, a collaboration with Virginia Wimberly, Ms. Barnard notes that the settlers that came into Alabama in the 19<sup>th</sup> century “sought to bring civilization as they knew it on the eastern seaboard to the frontier,” to the new territory. . . the successive stages of development of the state were accompanied by the increased importation of textiles, ready-made apparel, and accessories from New York and Europe as well as advertisements for men’s and women’s magazines illustrating the newest trends in apparel” (*Frontier Alabama: Access to 19th Century Textiles, 1818 to 1850* <http://cdm16001.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16001coll5/id/17983>). €

# Alabama Department of Archives and History Debuts New Temporary Exhibit - “Sweet Communion: The Jonathon Kelso Alabama Sacred Harp Collection.”

*From the Archives’  
announcement:*

The exhibit of 29 images is on display in the Archives Milo B. Howard auditorium and first floor lobby through March 2018.

Sacred Harp singing is among Alabama’s most distinctive musical traditions. Also called shape-note singing or fasola, the style dates back to an eighteenth-century New England simplification of the standard eight-note vocal system. Shape note singing employs only four syllables, fa, so, la, and mi, which correspond with shapes in written music, collected in hymn books.

Singers position themselves in a hollow square, facing inward, divided by the four voice parts: tenor (melody), treble, alto, and bass. A rotating leader directs songs with the rhythmic, vertical strokes of his or her arm.

Shape-note singing reached the Deep South in the mid-nineteenth century. An 1844 song-book titled The Sacred Harp lent its name to the singing style as it became increasingly popular among both white and black congregants.

In 2010, Atlanta-based professional photographer Johnathon Kelso began documenting the people, events, and customs of the Sacred Harp tradition in



**Liberty Hill Church, Barnesville, Georgia  
Photo by Jonathan Kelso.**



**Judy Hauff, Minnesota State Sacred  
Harp Convention 2011.**

**Ms. Haiff is Shown Conducting “in the  
Square.”**

**From Johnathon Kelso Project : “I Want to  
Die A-Shouting.”**

Alabama and Georgia.

“From the moment I stepped foot in the hollow square at my first Sacred Harp singing, I knew I wanted to photograph what I was seeing,” Kelso said. “As a photographer, I felt a strong sense of duty to share its rich cultural and spiritual beauty.”

The photographs featured in this exhibit were taken between 2010 and 2015. €

“I first came to know about Sacred Harp music through a girl I was dating. She was given a recording of a singing... We listened half bewildered, half intrigued, but eventually we threw the tape out of the car window.

“A year or so later, a friend of mine tricked me into going to a singing by telling me he was taking me out for dinner. After that I was hooked!”

Jonathan Kelso



## Snapshots of the 2018 ECHS Christmas Party





## Snapshots of the 2018 ECHS Christmas Party (Continued)





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# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## A Backward Glance – A Forward Look: History of the Escambia County Historical Society

**By Carolyn Pugh McLendon**

*This history is taken from ECHOES for February 8, 1977. At this time the society was five years old.*

### **-1971-**

#### **The Beginning**

During the summer of 1971, a small group of people, including Mrs. Henry (Eunice) Nadrchal, J. W. Caldwell, Harry Weaver, Janel Redditt, John David Finlay, W. E. Brooks, and Gene Cashman, met to consider the feasibility of forming a historical society for the area. With Mrs. Nadrchal, Mrs. Worth Smith, and Mrs. Eva Parker making numerous phone calls, a meeting was arranged for the group and a committee set up for the nominating of officers to serve two-year terms.

It was determined that the group should be called the Escambia County Historical Society and that it should be a non-profit educational group with dues of \$5.00 per year, and would hold its meetings at the Jefferson Davis Junior College.

#### **Officers**

Officers elected were J. W. Caldwell, President; Harry Weaver, Vice President; Mrs. Eunice Nadrchal, Secretary; Dr. E. D. Rosemore, Treasurer; Janel Redditt, Librarian; Gene Cashman, Publicity Chairman; John David Finlay, Curator; W Emmett Brooks, Woodfin Patterson and Thomas E. McMillan, Trustees.

A bus trip into Conecuh County to Jay Villa Plantation owned by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas McMillan was planned. On this trip Mrs. Nadrchal announced that her husband was being transferred and she would be leaving Brewton within a few weeks. Because of her efforts on behalf of the Society, a silver bowl was given her as an appreciation gift.

#### **Programs**

In 1971 Interesting programs were presented to the Society by Mrs. Gertrude Johnson Stephens, President of the Mobile Genealogical Society; Mrs. Marion Viccars, Associate Librarian, John C. Pace

Library, University of West Florida; Floyd Currie, Brewton; Mrs. C. B. (Rochelle) Garrett, Brewton; Robert H. Jones, Jr., President, Conecuh County Historical Society, Evergreen; Buddy Smith, State News Editor of the Mobile Register; Mrs. Bernice McMillan, Stockton, Alabama; and Buddy Mitchell, Brewton.

#### **The Sowell House– 1971-1973– Attempt at Preservation**

As a young Society we made our first mistake during this first year, one that still haunts us on occasion - - the Sowell house project. When several of the townsmen learned that the old Sowell house on Belleville Avenue was to be torn down to make way for an apartment house, complex, Rev. George Stritikus appealed to several of the clubs of the Brewton area, the Historical Society included, to make an effort to “Save the Sowell House” and the Historical Society jumped in with much enthusiasm and “got its feet wet” so to speak.

Jack Hines, who had bought the Sowell House and lot was prevailed upon and he agreed to give the house to the Historical Society with the understanding that it was to be moved from its original location. With all the determination of a youthful society, we set out to find a place to put the house and have it moved.

Since we planned to use it for an initial museum edifice, it was decided that the college campus would be the appropriate place for the house and the college officials agreed to allow the house to be moved to the campus. In an effort to help the Society in its project (although he questioned the feasibility of the project), Mr. Thomas McMillan paid the cost of moving the original part of the house to the campus.

For some time the restoration of the house was considered, and being a young society and with only a small treasury, the task seemed to grow into an impossibility. Many professionals were called in to advise the Society regarding the Sowell house (including W. Warner Floyd and Milo Howard of the state organizations), and it was with sad hearts that this young Society in March, 1973, admitted defeat.

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# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## A Backward Glance – A Forward Look: History of the Escambia County Historical Society

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On the recommendation of Mrs. Carolyn McLendon, the project was abandoned, and at the same time, Mrs. McLendon proposed that the group take a step forward and begin the publication of a Historical Quarterly.

### -1972-

#### A Newsletter

December 1972 saw the beginning of our first publication, a letter notifying members of the meeting with “DID YOU KNOW” notes at the bottom. This letter was really born of necessity because Mrs. Nadrchal was no longer available to call our members to remind them of the meetings and the new secretary, Mrs. McLendon, found it necessary to get work to the members in some other way than by radio. The December letter was so enthusiastically received and republished in newspapers and via radio that Mrs. McLendon felt encouraged to do the same for the January 1973 meeting.

By February 1973, the newsletter had grown to 8 1/2 x 14 in size, and the idea of a quarterly historical publication was born. The newsletter has continued monthly since December, 1972, and has grown into a three-page letter with news of the society, queries, notices of books available, and a page of history. This newsletter has been proclaimed to be the best newsletter in the State of Alabama.

### -1973-

#### The Quarterly

The quarterly begun in March, 1973, has continued and has added about 225 members to our rolls. Free copies are sent to colleges, libraries and schools, giving a total mailing for the quarterly of 350. The quarterly has been well received state-wide and caused this Society to receive an Award of Merit in December, 1975 for its publication efforts.

#### Programs

During 1973, many interesting programs were brought before the Society by W. Emmett Brooks, John David Finlay, Mrs. M. G. Waters, Milo Howard of the Department of Archives and History in Montgomery, W. Warner Floyd of the Alabama Historical Commission, J. W. Caldwell, and, at a meeting held in Atmore, Floyd Currie .

#### Events

Our first Garden Party was held in 1973 at The Leigh Place (Brewton’s first courthouse) as guests of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas McMillan. We were all “heady” that night from the staggering success of our first quarterly publication.

In October, we made a pilgrimage to Fort Mims as guests of the Baldwin County Historical Society and in December we held an old-fashioned costume Christmas Party.

The Society nominated Thomas E. McMillan for the Alabama Historical Commission Distinguished Service Award.

Our members grew in 1973 from 78 to 221. Assisting our staff with mailing were Ben Kelly Strain and his secretaries, Miss Helen Robertson, Dan S. Robertson (age 94, stuffing envelopes), and Mrs. and Mrs. John David Finlay. Mrs. Wilbur P. (Eva) Parker was our great lady in charge of our parties in 1973.

### -1974-

#### Officers

New officers elected in January 1974 included Foyd Currie, President; Bert M Campbell, Jr., Vice President; Miss Helen Robertson, Secretary; Mrs. Harriett Miller, Recording Secretary; Miss Janel Redditt, Librarian; John David Finlay, Curator; E. D. Rosemore, Treasurer; Mrs. Carolyn McLendon, Publication

#### Programs

The year 1974 gave us such interesting programs as Mrs. Annie Crook Waters’ program on the

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## A Backward Glance – A Forward Look: History of the Escambia County Historical Society

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“History of Escambia county Schools”; N. R. Stowe of the University of South Alabama with a program on “Archaeology in South Alabama”; J. W. Caldwell with his artifact collection; Carolyn McLendon on “Railroad Bill”; Mrs. Jack (Doris) Bruner with her stories of ghosts, superstitions and folklore; Miss Rita Jane Boykin’s “Nostalgic Reminiscences and Contrasts”; and Robert H. Jones, Jr. of Evergreen with “History of the Brooklyn Area and Its Families, Legends and Traditions.”

### Events

In 1974 we had Our second Garden Party at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John David Finlay in Alco, and our first “Show and Tell” program in June which was enjoyed so much that it was repeated in October.

We made our fall pilgrimage to Brooklyn, Alabama, stopping at Dr. A. J. McCreary’s Teddy, Alabama home on the way and picnicking at Dozier Camp as guests of Ed Leigh McMillan and family.

We finished the year with a Christmas Party at which Miss Rita Jane Boykin, Dan S. Robertson, Mrs. Doris Bruner and Mrs. Jewel Williamson entertained.

We ended the year with a total membership of 264.

Making their advents as our super party ladies this year were Mrs. Harriett Miller, Mrs. Betty Campbell, and Mrs. Paula Jay.

By mid-year we had exhausted our membership secretary. Miss Helen Robertson and Mrs. Don (Gladys) Byrd took up the voluminous task.

Three new writers sent in stories, Mr. W. T. Rice of Flomaton, “Pollard Notes”; Mr. Jesse F. Elliott, “Recollections of the Bradley Area”; and Mrs. Mary Jane Richburg, “Appleton History.”

It was a very good year.

### -1975-

### The Programs

In 1975 we had such programs as Harry Weaver’s “Biography of an Unknown Man,”

Mrs. McLendon’s “Brewton, A Special Place to Live,” Mrs. Annie Waters’ “Escambia’s Kill Kenny Cat Fight,” C. R. Floyd of Monroeville’s “Pictures and Slides of Old Historic Places in Monroe County,” Mr. Woodfin Patterson’s discussion of museum plans, James F. Pettis’ “Oral History: Do Your Own Kind of Thing,” Harry Weaver’s “Early Days in Brewton,” and Gould Beach of Magnolia Springs, Ala., with “Researching Pollard History.”

### Naming the Newsletter

During 1975 we had a contest to name our newsletter which was won by Miss Helen Robertson who submitted “Escambia Echoes” with Miss Mary Brantley running a close second with “Esco Echoes.”

*Note: Other names suggested included: "Our Heritage," "Escambia Heritage," "Spirit of '76," "The Early Escambian," "Creeks-End," "The EscAla," "Pine Paths," "Old News and New Notes."*

### The Fall Pilgrimage of the Alabama Historical Association

It was our honor to host the Alabama Historical Association’s 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Pilgrimage to Brewton in October with the homes of Ed. Leigh McMillan, Mrs. John R. Miller, Sr., Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. McMillan, Mr. and Mrs. Jack W. Hines, and the Robbins and McGowin store open for the tour by the Alabama Historic Association members.

The society also enjoyed its own fall Pilgrimage to Pollard, Alabama,

### Publications

New writers submitting material were Ronald A. Stratton, “Peter Lazarus Johnson—His song”; Miss Elizabeth Riley, “Hampden Ridge”; and Mrs. C. B. Garrett, “A Tribute to Jefferson Davis—Lest We Forget.”

In January, the RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) assumed the responsibility for assembling and mailing our publications, making it possible for

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## A Backward Glance – A Forward Look: History of the Escambia County Historical Society

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us to continue after the task became too voluminous for the members to do individually.

In February, 1975 an appreciation presentation was made to the Editor of the quarterly and newsletter dubbing her as the groups' Sweetheart. She was given an orchid corsage, a box of candy, an engraved medallion, an antique floral arrangement and valentines with a special poem by Mrs. Doris Bruner: "Carolyn, We like your view, we like the news/ And no one else can fill your shoes,/ Our group keeps growing in size and style,/ Because you walk that second mile."

### **Merit Awards from the Alabama Historical Commission**

December, 1975 saw Ed Leigh McMillan, Thomas E. McMillan and the Escambia County Historical Society receiving Alabama Historical Commission Merit Awards for significant efforts in preserving area history. The awards were presented at our Christmas Party by our State Representative Brooks Hines.

The society ended the year with a membership of 278.

### **-1976-**

#### **Officers**

Our bicentennial year came in with new officers: Mrs. Carolyn Pugh McLendon, President; H. Eugene Pettis, Vice President; Mrs. Evelyn Weaver Jernigan, General Secretary; Mrs. Gladys Byrd, Membership Secretary; Bert M. Campbell, Jr., Treasurer; Miss Jane Redditt, Librarian; John David Finlay, Curator; and Miss Rita Jane Boykin, Program Chairman.

We changed our place of meeting to the Brewton Public Library because of the heavy student load at the college and lack of parking space.

#### **Programs**

Miss Rita Jane Boykin our Program Chairman, was able to bring us such programs as Mrs. Harriett Miller's slides of the "Bicentennial Fashion Show"; Rev. Roderick MacDonald, born in Scotland, Pastor

of Evergreen Presbyterian Church with "Why I love America"; Miss Lynn Hastie of Stockton with her specialty collections from Live Oaks Country Crafts; W. Warner Floyd of the Alabama Historical Commission; Hon Hugh Rozelle with "History of the Creek Indians"; Mrs. Jack (Doris) Bruner and Mrs. Jack (Mary Rose) Peevy "Gala Bicentennial Events Remembered"; and Miss Mary E. Brantley "A Tribute to the Early Settlers of Alabama."

#### **Events**

In June 1976 we held a Martha and George Washington Party with a special program by Miss Rita Jane Boykin and Mrs. Jack Bruner assisted by soloists Mrs. Robert T. Maxwell and Mrs. Bob Hamill, with Mrs. Bert Campbell, pianist.

In July three more of our members received Alabama Historical Commission Awards of Merit: J. Floyd Currie of Atmore, Mrs. M G. Waters, and Tom Gardner publisher of the Brewton Standard. The awards were presented by W. Warner Floyd of the Alabama Historical Commission.

In September, we made our fall pilgrimage to Belleville, Conecuh County, Alabama, and were well received there.

October 1<sup>st</sup> found us saying our goodbyes to our departed Curator, John David Finlay, whose death triggered a museum fund drive because of memorials donated in his name. By the end of the year a total of \$12,000 was in the fund from various donations and numerous memorials to many departed loved ones.

During the year, our benefactor, Duncan Meriwether of Chester springs, Pennsylvania, donated sundry books, records, microfilm, and a microfilm reader to the Society. Our new writers in 1976 were John R Jones, Jr. of Camden, New Jersey with Jones and Brooks family histories, and Miss Rita Jane Boykin with "The James M. Davison Home."

We ended the year with 275 members. It was a good year and a busy bicentennial year.

### **The Society Has Fulfilled Its Goals**

Through our unified efforts we have become one of the outstanding Historical Societies in the State of

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# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## A Backward Glance – A Forward Look: History of the Escambia County Historical Society

(Continued from page 13)

Alabama and have become known state wide for our various efforts. We are fulfilling our responsibilities as a Historical society within the Escambia County area and are assisting students and historians over the

United States through our publications and correspondence.

We have good reason to be proud and can face the new year challenged to do even greater things- to see a museum rising on the face of Alco Hill. €

## U.S. MAIL IN ALABAMA 1815 - 1820

**By Annie Waters**

*This article first appeared in ECHOES for June 9, 1975.*

Communication has always been necessary to man's progress and well-being and the post rider in America's history was a brave and daring man, facing hostile Indians, flooded streams, boggy marshes, snakes and wild animals, unmarked trails, storms, a horse gone lame, cold and heat, robbers and many other hardships. Many are the tales and legends told and written about this hardy breed of pioneers.

In 1815, Alabama, then a part of the Mississippi Territory, had a goodly number of forts occupied by military men and squatters' homes were scattered over the territory making it necessary for the U. S. government to finance a postal system.

At this time letters were folded and sealed with sealing waxes; there were no envelopes and no postage stamps. The words "paid" or "collect" would be written on the corner of the letter. The amount of postage was charged by weight, just as it is today, but the distance they were sent was taken into consideration which made postage very high, a letter frequently costing twenty- five cents. Postage stamps did not come into use until 1847.

On April 21, 1815, the Postmaster General ordered deerskin bags dressed in oil and linen

bags dressed in oil be tried out to determine which best preserved the mail to suffer the least friction from the movement of the horse. The deerskin bags proved most successful and these were called "portmanteaus."

Documents, such as records of government officials and land surveyors' plats and field books were wrapped in paper, then put in a cover of leather or skin with the fur outside before being paced in the mail bag. This was a precaution against dampness when the rider would be forced to swim his horse across a swollen stream. Several months later the Postmaster General ordered the bags painted red to distinguish them from the portmanteaus that were being used for luggage.

The post rider purchased the speediest horses available and blew a trumpet on his approach and arrival at his stopping points. His schedule did not allow him to tarry and there were many complaints by the settlers that they did not have enough time to get their letters to the stopping point after they heard the trumpet.

In 1817, Israel Pickens, register of the land office at St. Stephens wrote to Postmaster General, Josiah Meigs, Jr. saying:

"Indeed the irregularity in our receipts of newspapers prevents all opportunity of intelligence (on important happenings) in any

(Continued on page 15)



# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## U.S. MAIL IN ALABAMA 1815 - 1820

(Continued from page 14)

connected manner. Letters are generally preserved and brought at some time but when the mails become cumbrous newspapers are thrown out or left as lumber at different places on the way."

The mail deliveries in south Alabama in this year failed several times in succession because of renewed depredations by the Creeks who were in sympathy with the first Seminole War being waged at that time. The Georgia mail route crossed the state from Ft. Mitchell to St. Stevens and a second route called the "Tennessee Mail" traversed the state, north to south from Huntsville to St. Stephens and on to Baton Rouge.

It ran but once each month, arrived at night and left early the next morning. At this the area was the Alabama Territory. The pay for the Georgia mail route was increased from \$12 per mile to \$16 because of the bad conditions existing in 1817.

The Postmaster General, in 1818 appointed one town in each of the 21 counties to have a post office. In January of this year the post route from Claiborne to Blakeley began, however the act establishing this route was not passed by Congress until April 20th.

The Postal Department on June 20, 1818 advertised for riders for nine routes in the

Alabama Territory, contracts to begin on January 1, 1819 for a term of four years unless terminated by the head of the department. If the time prescribed was not reached the contractor lost one dollar, if he missed the connecting mail he lost double the amount allowed for one trip (unavoidable actions accepted).

The Georgia mail to St. Stephens arrived twice a week in 1819. This route is believed to have been from Ft. Mitchell by Ft. Bainbridge, Ft. Jackson, Burnt Corn Springs, Ft. Claiborne and the town of Jackson to St. Stephens. This route was approved by an act of Congress on April 20, 1818.

The 1819 post route advertisements contained No. 60—From Burnt Corn to Blakeley one round trip every two weeks, No. 61—Burnt Corn to Conecuh Courthouse (Sparta) once a week, a distance of twelve miles, one round trip on Wednesday. This route also connected Sparta with Ft. Crawford. The contracts were to begin January 1, 1820 and end December 31, 1822.

Before postal service was inaugurated by the Federal government in this area the mail was transported at very irregular intervals by special messengers employed by a government official or post commander, and civilian letters were included in the deliveries; however these were few in the early days of settlement. €



### **Portmanteau Mailbag Identified with the US Postmaster General, Return J. Meigs, Jr.**

**Portmanteaux were used to carry letters and newspapers on stagecoaches during the nineteenth century. The letters and newspapers would be divided in separate linen or canvas bags inside the portmanteau.**

**The bag is marked from the Post Office Department "Return Jonathan Meigs, Jr. (1764-1824)."**

**ECHOES**  
THE NEWSLETTER FOR  
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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**Books for Sale**

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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
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**Dues are to be paid at the beginning of the year**

**Many members give a membership as a gift!**

**Business members get a large scale**  
**advertisement 11 months of the year.**

*ECHOES, The newsletter for the Escambia County Historical Society, a 501 (c) (3) corporation, is published monthly except November. Comments are welcome. You may email the Society at [escohis@escohis.org](mailto:escohis@escohis.org) or call 251-809-1528.*

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