

ECHOES



The
Escambia
County
Historical
Society,
Founded
1971

The November/December Meeting
Tuesday, December 10, 2019
McMillan Museum
Coastal Alabama Community College
Brewton Campus
3:00 p. m.



The Christmas Party

Date: Tuesday, December 10, 2019

Time: 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Location: McMillan Museum, Coastal Alabama
Community College, Brewton Campus

Program: Tony Sanks, the County Administrator, will
commemorate the County's 151st anniversary.
*(Escambia County was created by an act of the
Alabama State Legislature on December 10, 1868,
from portions of Baldwin and Conceh Counties.)*

**Come and enjoy the food and fellowship. The Society will provide a ham and
drinks. Plan on bringing your favorite Christmas dish.**

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The January Meeting

Tuesday, January 28, 2020, McMillan Museum,
3:00 pm

The Program: Election of Officers and
Tim McGehee, the Director of the Bellingrath
Museum and Home will present a program on
the Bellingrath Garden as well as the subject of
Steamboats on the Alabama River.

Escambia County's Courthouses



**On the left, first courthouse, built in 1885. Now Leigh Place,
used as office space. In the middle, second courthouse, built in 1901,
torn down. On the right, present courthouse, built in 1960.**



Constitution Village
Huntsville, AL

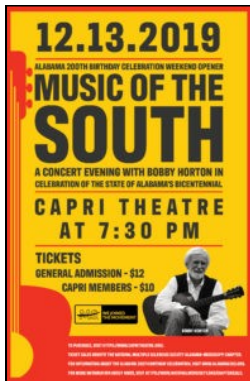
Volume 46 No 11/12
Nov./ Dec. 2019

News and Announcements

Alabama Birthday Celebration Finale Schedule



Friday, December 13, 2019



Bobby Horton's "Celebration of Alabama" Opens Bicentennial Weekend

Montgomery, Ala. – The Alabama 200th Birthday Celebration weekend will open with a special benefit concert with renowned musician and music historian Bobby Horton on Friday, December 13th, at 7:30 pm at Montgomery's

historic Capri Theatre.

Horton, widely recognized as one of the country's leading authorities of music from the Civil War period, will paint a musical portrait of life in Alabama from the earliest days of our statehood through the 1850s.

"Music connects us through the centuries. It is how generations tell us who they were, how they lived, and what they believed in, especially in cultures and time periods when many didn't read or write," says Horton. "Any time you share stories and songs, you break bread with those who came before. Sharing our history in this way offers a unique connection."

Tickets are \$12 for general seating and \$10 for Capri members. The concert proceeds from this event will support the National Multiple Sclerosis Society Alabama-Mississippi Chapter.

Saturday, December 14, 2019



Alabama Bicentennial Parade 10 a.m. Saturday- Dexter Avenue

The Saturday celebration begins at 10:00 am with a parade of Alabama people, places and history. From Court Square Fountain, a cavalcade of marching bands, city floats, living history on wheels—such as the USS Alabama Battleship Park and US Space and Rocket Center—elected officials, cute kids, beauty queens and special Alabama Notables will travel Dexter Avenue toward the State Capitol.

More than 70 entries from around the state showcase our Alabama communities.

The parade will conclude with the more than 150 member Bicentennial All Star Band performing an original composition: "Something in the Water" by Anthony Krizan, Cheryl DaVeiga, Jerry Foster and Robert W. Smith



Alabama Bicentennial Park Dedication 12:00 pm Saturday State Capital Steps

Mid-day ceremonies led by Governor Kay Ivey will include the official dedication of Alabama Bicentennial Park. Located at the foot of the Alabama State Capitol on Dexter Avenue, the park will tell the story of Alabama in 16 bronze plaques mounted on Alabama granite bases.

(Continued on page 3)

News and Announcements

(Continued from page 2)



ALABAMA BICENTENNIAL FESTIVAL 1 p.m. Saturday State Capitol Complex, Department of Archives & History and Downtown Montgomery

The afternoon will offer exhibitions, performances and open houses in the Capitol Complex, up and down Dexter Avenue and throughout downtown Montgomery.

The Alabama State Capitol and Alabama Department of Archives and History will host performances and presentations in their buildings and children's games, traditional arts/crafts demonstrations and historic re-enactors on their grounds.

Museums, galleries, restaurants, and stores will host tours, exhibitions, and activities.

The Alabama State Council on the Arts Gallery, in partnership with Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center from Camden, will feature exhibits and sales of works by contemporary Alabama artists.

- Free family-friendly event
- Historical re-enactors, craft/art demonstrations, performers
- Games and family activities
- Performances, talks, readings, dance
- Tours/open houses
- Special exhibits
- Multiple Performance stages

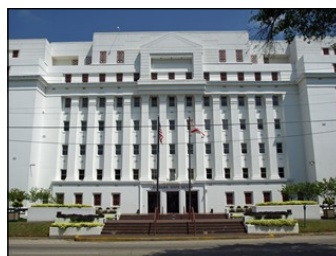
For a detailed schedule of these events see <http://al200finale.org/bicentennial-festival/>.



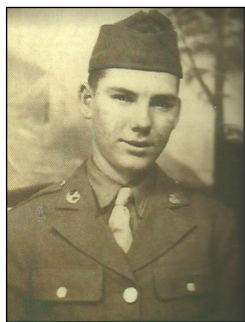
Bicentennial Concert & Final Presentation 4 p.m. Saturday State Capitol Steps

The day will conclude with a surprise! Sponsored by the Alabama Tourism Department and the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, it will include concert entertainment with popular musicians from Alabama and the history of Alabama presented in a never-before-seen way.

Sunday, Dec. 15, 2019



Encore of Finale Presentation, Alabama Attorney General Building (Alabama State House) Time TBA.



**O. J. Blount in
Army Uniform
in WWII.**

**Veteran from Escambia
and Covington Counties,
Honored in Ceremony for
Vets in Andalusia.
Mr. Blount lives on
Covington/Escambia line
in Dixie.**

Drafted into the Army in 1944 when he was 18, O. J. Blount was trained as a cook and shipped to France. His unit marched through France into Germany and was near Nuremburg when the war ended.

One of his strongest memories is of watching U. S. soldiers interrogate former German guards. O. J. was at this time stationed with a military police unit. He remembers the American soldiers were very rough with the guards they interrogated probably because

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News and Announcements

(Continued from page 3)

the soldiers had seen evidence of the way the prisoners had been treated in the camps. He noted that he saw hooks on the walls of the interrogation rooms where the guards had hung prisoners.

On his next assignment while serving with the Vienna Honor Guard of Gen. Mark Clark, he met Liliana Kostova whom he married in 1952 when he met her again in Canada after his discharge.

He reenlisted in 1952 and served in Korea. O. J. was discharged from the army in 1954. He enlisted in the Air Force Reserve the next year, remaining with the Reserve until 1961.

After his discharge from the Reserve, he and Liliana moved to Louisiana briefly before settling in

Knoxville Tennessee. Their daughter, Neranza, was born in Knoxville in 1955.

Also in 1955, he rejoined the Air Force at McGhee-Tyson AFB and was a part of the the 110th Tactical Control Unit of the Tennessee Air National Guard from 1970 until he was discharged in 1986.

O. J. and Liliana then moved to Dixie, Alabama. Liliana died in 2008. O. J. later married Lucy Conklin, whose first husband, a Brewton native, had also been a WWII veteran.

In his nineties but very active, at the present time, O. J. and Lucy operate Queen's Castle Beekeepers Association, producers of honey.

Snapshots of the ECHS October 2019 Meeting



Upper Left, John Angel in the foreground. Jacque Stone is shown in the background visiting with guests.

Upper Right, Charlie Ware and Darryl Searcy.

Bottom Left, our speaker, Dr. John Bratten.

Snapshots of the ECHS October 2019 Meeting *(Continued)*



Guests and members enjoying Dr. Bratten's presentation.



Dr. Bratten visiting with members and guests.

Our Business Members



Monroe's Huntsville Visit

The information on Monroe's visit to Huntsville is taken from an article published in the Alabama Republican June 5th, 1819 <<https://alabama200.org/media/bicentennial-blog>>.

Six Months before Alabama was admitted to the union as the 22nd state, President Monroe made an unexpected visit to Huntsville. A public dinner to honor the president was organized.

In his response to the written invitation, the President explained that he had been visiting various parts of the country "examining the situation of the fortifications and of selecting suitable sites to be put in a state of defense against foreign aggression."



President James Monroe

He stated he would appreciate a dinner to honor him but would need to be back in Washington by July 15 for the Spanish treaty "ceding the Floridas to the United States."

One hundred citizens of Madison County attended the dinner. Twenty-one toasts were offered, the first stating, "Our Country--She has proved that man is not incapable of self-government; may her example have its influence throughout the world," the last, "Our fair Country's women--They feel the glow of patriotism, in common with those who defend them."

The next day after the dinner, the President left for Nashville, escorted on his way by a number of citizens.

The ECHS *journal* Section

Ever Wonder How Appleton Got Its Name?

The following article by Kevin McKinnley was published in the Brewton Standard for Wednesday, February 15, 2017 <<https://www.brewtonstandard.com/2017/02/15/ever-wonder-how-Appleton-got-its-name/>>.

Following the War Between the States, or as some people call it, the American Civil War, many veterans settled in our area determined to start a new life.

In our local area, one Confederate veteran helped found the community of Appleton and managed to have an apple named for himself.

Mr. Green Shell had enlisted in Company D, 16th Alabama Infantry Regiment in July 1861. He was wounded at Murphreesboro, Tenn. Later, he was injured again on Dec. 2, 1864, when a troop train he was travelling in wrecked between Atlanta and Macon. Shell had both legs and one arm broken.

Later in life, Shell received a Confederate pension from the state of Alabama. Mr. J.E. McGowan and Alex McGowan Sr. witnessed the application and attested to his service in the war.

According to a Brewton Standard article from

Thurs., Nov. 28, 1974, Appleton had its roots in apple orchards and in the vision of Green Shell.

By 1880, Green Shell, originally from Dasen, in Randolph County, Ga., had recovered from his war wounds and moved to the area near what is now Appleton. A tiny post office was located in the corner of the intersection of Wallace and Belleville Roads. Edmund Steele, also a Confederate veteran, was the first postmaster. Steele could be seen on Tuesday and Friday of each week, rain or shine, with his horse and buggy, working the mail route. Steele enjoyed the fact that, at one point in time, he was the oldest mail rider in the US.

Shell gave the town the name of his father's apple orchard, which he remembered from being a child in Georgia.

He soon set up a remarkable agricultural enterprise in the community. According to Anne Waters' book, The History of Escambia County, the business had a large grading shed, complete with shipping barrels and a cider press. In the harvest season,

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Fruit packing sheds, like this one at Canoe, AL, would have been common in Appleton during the peak of the Shell Apple season <<https://www.brewtonstandard.com/2017/02/15/ever-wonder-how-appleton-got-its-name/>>.

The ECHS *journal* Section

Ever Wonder How Appleton Got Its Name?

(Continued from page 6)

Shell's son, Andrew, made two trips a day by wagon to deliver the apples to the freight office at Brewton.

The apples being shipped north were known as "Shell apples." The culls were used for making jelly or were made into cider and sold. Shell also grew young trees, which sold readily and in a few years nearly every farm had several of the trees for family use. The Shell apple tree can still be purchased today.

By 1912 or 1913, rural mail delivery had been expanded from other places so the little post office closed. John O'Bannon from Brewton moved to the area and bought the Roberson house and their business. One of the first things O'Bannon did was to dig a storm pit. Everyone in the community laughed at the new comer for his seemingly awkward ideas on the subject, much as an earlier generation laughed at a man named Noah for building an ark on dry land.

In February 1916, O'Bannon was sitting in his store reading the newspaper and watching his barometer, which hung on the wall. Suddenly, the barometer fell, indicating a tornado was near. O'Bannon rushed outside to find the darkening clouds and harsh winds swirling about his yard. O'Bannon managed to gather

as many people as he could and they all rushed into the storm pit which was by now completed and improved.

Just as the last person entered the pit, and the door pulled closed, the tornado struck. The roar was deafening as the storm pelted the area. After the storm, the survivors emerged to find every house, except for three badly damaged structures, was completely gone.

A man traveling through the area with a load of raw turpentine saw the tornado coming, loosed his mules and lay on the ground and held onto a persimmon bush for protection. He was left with shredded, torn clothes but at least he was alive. The mules were found a mile or so away, alive and well. An elderly lady named Melissa Griffin died in the storm. Many people in Appleton owed their lives to the storm pit of John O'Bannon.

Green Shell died in 1930, a man of vision and a reminder of an earlier age when honor and hard work meant something. Edmund Steele, the postmaster and Confederate veteran, died in 1906.

Notes on Greenberry Henry Shell

From SHADOWS AND DUST III: LEGACIES
By Kevin McKinley <<https://books.google.com/>>

Greenberry Henry Shell. First entered the service [Confederate Army] as a private on July 1861 at Evergreen, Ala. In the Co. D 16th Ala. Reg. and continued until 2nd Dec., 1864 - was in a railroad collision between Atlanta and Macon Georgia and had both legs and one arm broken and was at home on furlough.

From "On This Day" by Lea Peacock <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/223394524364985/permalink/1786091144761974/>>.

On this day, Aug. 15, 1930, Confederate veteran Greenberry "Green" Henry Shell died at the age of 88 in Brewton and was buried in the Cooper Cemetery at Appleton. Born in Georgia on Oct. 17, 1841, he later moved to Escambia County, and the community of Appleton was named for his apple orchard. The name, a combination of "apple" and "-ton, which means "town," was suggested by Shell's son, Andrew (April 5, 1886-Feb.25, 1945). The Appleton post office was established in 1901. Greenberry Shell was also a Civil War veteran, having served in Co D, 16th Regt. Ala. Inf. CSA.

The ECHS *journal* Section

Family of Shell Apple Cultivator Reunites at Clear Creek Farm



These 19 direct and indirect descendants of Civil War veteran and Shell apple cultivator Greenberry Henry Shell gathered at Clear Creek Farm, owned by Ray Davis (far right), September 5, 2019. Kneeling is Blake Arant, great, great grandson of Shell, and Arant's son, Aiden Arant. Between them is Sherry Grachis, great, great niece to Shell who organized this reunion through Facebook. Billy Reeves, fourth from the left, his own family research led him to Shell and to Davis through the Santa Rosa County Extension office. They're all standing before the largest Shell Apple Tree on Davis' farm. Clear Creek Farm is in Milton, Florida.

The Shell Family Reunion at Clear Creek Farm, owned by Ray Davis, is a milestone on a journey connecting a Civil War veteran in Alabama to an apple nursery in Africa. Roughly 20 direct and indirect descendants of Greenberry Henry Shell gathered at Clear Creek Farm to share stories and pictures of their family, and see the farm growing apples first cultivated by their ancestor born in 1841.

Sherry Grachis said she first started researching her family history through ancestry.com and discovered the connection to Shell. She said she only learned a year ago her ancestor had developed the Shell apple tree. Using Facebook, she created the Shell Family History page, which led to finding more relatives. She said the page grew from four followers to 60 in two weeks.

Grachis said the Santa Rosa County Extension office connected her to Ray Davis. Davis said another Shell descendent, Billy Reeves, only a year before had contacted him as well and made a trip to his farm. "It's important to keep history," Grachis said. "You

need to remember the people before you." She said she plans on more family reunions in the future and is considering some kind of monument to Greenberry Shell in Appleton, Alabama, the town named for the man.

Billy Reeves said he learned about Greenberry Shell through an old article from the Brewton Standard written by his great grandmother Mary Jane Richburg about the history of Appleton. "Green is my great great great grandfather," he said. "I started doing research and got in touch with Daniel Mullins, now retired. He was the horticulturalist for the county. I learned Ray grafted the tree." He said he met Davis and his wife, Wanda, last year when his family visited the farm. Reeves said he found research on southern apples having a Native American connection and knew Shell's mother had Native American heritage. "I don't think anybody knows where the apple is from," he said. Reeves said he is working on the research for his daughter.

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The ECHS *journal* Section

Family of Shell Apple Cultivator Reunites at Clear Creek Farm

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Nelson Cain was the oldest relative at the reunion, born in Appleton, “right above where the Shell apple orchard was,” and is the great grandson of Shell. He said he traces back from his mother, Ellabelle Shell-Cain, to her father, John Madison Shell, to his father, Greenberry Shell.

Ellabelle’s father died when she was seven years old and her mother died in childbirth, and so she went to live with her grandfather, Shell, according to Cain. He said she went on to marry her 23-year-old husband when she was just 12. “Back then people were more grown than they are today,” he said. He said her husband worked for Shell and talked about how Shell used a cider press to turn apples with scars into cider he would haul to Brewton to deliver by the train, a history he says he learned from his mother.

Blake Arant, a great great grandson of Shell at the reunion said, “Without Facebook, this would not have

happened.” He said there have been family reunions before this one and credited social media with bringing so many descendants together. Arant said Shell is “the Johnny Appleseed of our family.”

Reeves said in his discussion with Davis, he learned how the Shell apple is making its way across the Atlantic to Uganda, Africa. Soon after Reeves’ initial visit, according to the Clear Creek Farm website, Davis writes, “I was contacted by Blake Thaxton, the present Santa Rosa County extension agent and good friend who told me that Kevin Hauser of Kuffel Apple Nursery in Riverside, California was looking for scion wood from this heritage tree to send to their sister nursery in Uganda, Africa since the climates and the chill hour requirements are similar in Appleton and Uganda. And that friends and dear readers, is how Mr. Green Shell’s Alabama apple tree will make the journey half way around the world when I harvest and send scion pieces to Africa this winter.”

An Unusual Wedding

The following story from Alabama Pioneers was written by Rev. R. W. Brooks in 1939
<<https://www.alabamapioneers.com/-goat-flew-about-the-telegraph-line-and-an-unusual-wedding-on-a-train/>> .

Being justice of the peace, I had to perform many peculiar ceremonies One day a boy and girl, the boy about twenty, and the girl sixteen, came down from Georgiana, and with them were two men. They were as drunk as drunk could be and carry it.

The men went on to Pensacola for the license, and asked me to be at the midnight train and marry the couple on the platform if we could get the train to stop that long.

When the men arrived in Pensacola, they went to the judge’s office and just as they came in he was reading a telegram from the girl’s father, telling him



L & N. Railroad at Flomaton, Alabama ca. 1939
Rev. Brooks commented,
“When the train arrived at Bluff Springs, the conductor said he did not have a minute to lose as he had to make a connection at Flomaton.”

not to issue the license. The men went on to Milton, got the license and came back on the same train.

So I got on the train with them. He gave me the license, and as I got about half through the ceremony, I discovered that the license had been issued at Milton, but I went right on with the ceremony and married them.

When the passengers saw what was going on they all rose up and the conductor pulled off his cap, and the crowd cheered; so I married them with the train running forty miles an hour. At

Flomaton the boy told me he didn’t have a cent but would pay me well for the night’s work, and in two weeks he sent me a two dollar bill.

ECHOES
THE NEWSLETTER FOR
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Books Available by Contribution

	Regular	Mailed
Headstones and Heritage	\$20.00	\$25.00
Escambia Historical Society Cookbook	\$10.00	\$15.00
Wildflowers of The Conecuh/Escambia River Basin CD	\$10.00	\$15.00
History of Brewton and E. Brewton (sc)	\$35.00	\$40.00
Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook	\$30.00	\$25.00
Addendum to Headstones and Heritage	\$20.00	\$25.00
Headstones & Addendum Together	\$40.00	\$50.00

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Treasurer, P.O. Box 276, Brewton, AL 36427**

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Address _____

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**Do you prefer to get your newsletter by
U.S. Mail ____ or email? ____**

Dues

(\$25.00/person; \$35.00/ family at same address; Lifetime, \$500.00/person; \$100.00/year business)

Dues _____
Donation _____
Total Enclosed _____

Your Interests _____

You Will Help With _____

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 escambiahistoricalociety@gmail.com or call 251-809-1528.

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