

# ECHOES



The  
Escambia  
County  
Historical  
Society,  
Founded  
1971

**The February Meeting**  
**Tuesday, February 25, 2020**  
**McMillan Museum**  
**Coastal Alabama Community College**  
**Brewton Campus**  
**3:00 p. m.**



**Earline Crews**

**The Program**  
**Guest Speaker Earline Crews will discuss her book**  
**Life with the Top Down.**

*From the website Lulu, this introduction to Earline's book:*  
Originally published as weekly articles under the "Bygone Times" headline of the Tri-City Ledger in Flomaton, Alabama; Life With the Top Down captures the sweet, sentimental flavor of life in the American South of yester-year. Some of the stories in this book will make you bust a gut laughing; others may touch your tender spot and leave you dewy-eyed. But all the stories will make you feel like you just finished visiting with a life long friend (<http://www.lulu.com/shop/earline-crews/life-with-the-top-down/paperback/product-24222293.html?ppn=1>).

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**The March Meeting**  
**Tuesday, March 24, 2020**  
**McMillan Museum, 3:00 pm**  
**Program: TBA**

**The April Meeting**  
**Tuesday, April 28, 2020**  
**Dr. Deidra Suwanee Dees, Director/**  
**Tribal Archivist of the Office of Archives**  
**and Records Management of the Poarch**  
**Creek Indians will present the program.**



New York City Suffragist  
Parade, May 1912

Volume 47 No. 2  
February 2020

**The ferry SS Trunk B.**  
**Jordan transports a Shay**  
**locomotive engine and**  
**two log cars across the**  
**Tallapoosa River in**  
**Elmore County, ca. 1900.**

From <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/m-6776>.

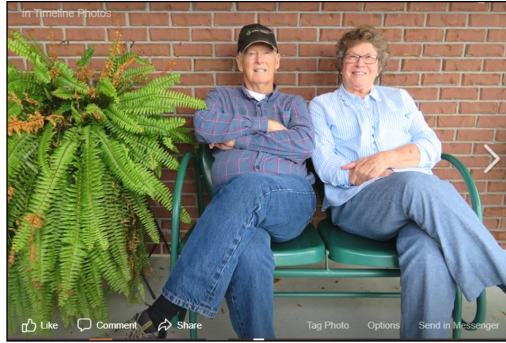


## The Program

(Continued from page 1)

Life with the Top Down is Earline's first book. However, she also has a blog "Earline's Doin's" which includes, along with other commentaries, an interview with ECHS member Darryl Searcy, "Interview with Dobbs." The interview took place at the LaRae Music Festival on 11/2/2020 in Dixonville, AL.

A native of the Barnett Crossroads community, Earline and her husband Lamar (whom she refers to as "the CEO"), live in the community. She comments on her Facebook page that she is "Retired, finished with housework, loves traveling, loves my children and watching my grandchildren win full scholarships to Harvard."

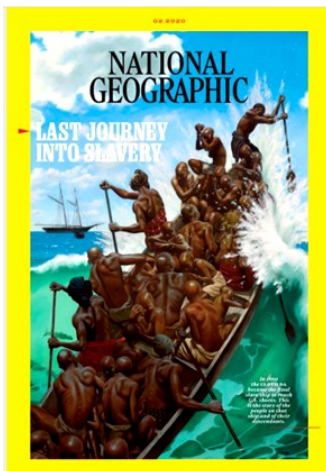


**Lamar and Earline Crews**



**Earline Interviewing Darryl at the LaRae Festival.**

## News and Announcements



### **Story of the Last Slave Ship, the Clotilda Is Cover Story for the Current Issue of National Geographic**

The Clotilda was the last known U.S. slave ship to bring captives from Africa to the United States. Captained by shipbuilder William Foster, the ship

sailed into Mobile Bay with 110 African men, women, and children including young adults between the ages of 5 and 23, according to the Encyclopedia of Alabama. The ship illegally transported 110 people from Benin in Africa to Mobile from February to July 1860.

Since the importation of slaves into the United States had been banned by Congress on March 2,

1807, the captain of the Clotilda burned and scuttled the ship soon after arrival at Mobile Bay in an attempt to destroy the evidence of the illegal activity.

The wreckage of the ship was found in April 2018 near Twelve-Mile Island in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta.



**The Clotilda was a schooner with two masts, such as the one shown above.**

*Image from nationalgeographic.com>.*

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(Continued on page 3)



## News and Announcements

(Continued from page 2)

**George, “Buddy” Edwards,  
Whose Family Members Have been  
Long-Time Members of ECHS  
Passed Away This February.**



**Elizabeth and Mike “Buddy”  
Edwards in the Elvira Room of the  
McMillan Museum .**

Buddy Edwards’ son, Mike Edwards, is a long time member, and Buddy’s wife, Elizabeth Edwards, now deceased, was also a long time member.

Buddy is shown in the picture above with Elizabeth at the October 2009 meeting of ECHS. The couple that year celebrated their 66th anniversary.



**Mike Edwards, son of Mike “Buddy”  
Edwards, is shown here with Margaret  
Collier at the July 2012 ECHS meeting.  
Margaret, also a long time ECHS  
member is now deceased.**

\*\*\*\*\*

### **The Atmore Strand Theatre and Former Atmore Hardware Store, To Be Restored**



#### **The Strand**

**The Strand Theatre had been operating since at least 1924. It was rebuilt in 1936. It was still in use as a first run, single-screen movie theatre until it closed on November 9, 2013.**

**At the time the Strand Theatre on Main Street closed, the local chamber of commerce said it was the oldest continuously operated theatre in Alabama.**

The theatre will undergo a complete interior and exterior renovation with a new lobby, theater area and marquee. Plans are to use it for community gatherings, live music, short term rentals and movies – second run, independent and classics.

The old Atmore Hardware building next to the Strand will also be renovated into a community space for live music, events and rentals. There will also be a recording studio in a portion of the upstairs area, while the remainder will be used for other arts and cultural programs.

The renovation will cost \$3 million. The Pride of Atmore, the local group working to raise the funds for this project have gathered funds through grants and donations from foundations and businesses, but is still looking for donations. For more information, email [prideofatmore@yahoo.com](mailto:prideofatmore@yahoo.com) or donate using [PayPal](#). Contributions are tax deductible.

Text and picture from <<http://www.northescambia.com/2020/02/atmore-movie-theater-hardware-store-being-restored-as-cultural-center>>.

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(Continued on page 4)

## News and Announcements

(Continued from page 3)



### **Food For Thought 2020 Lunchtime Lecture Series Third Thursdays at 12:00 At Alabama Department of Archives and History**

Food for thought is an hour-long lecture on the history of Alabama held in the Alabama Department of Archives and History on every third Thursday. Admission is free. If attending, you are asked to bring a lunch and enjoy complimentary beverages.

Since 2020 marks the centennial of women's Suffrage, several of the programs are focused on the important roles of women in Alabama history.

March 19 • Paul M. Pruitt Jr. "Julia Tutwiler's Life of Service."

April 16 • Erin Stewart Mauldin "Gone with the Land: the Environmental History of the Civil War in Alabama."

May 21 • Andrew Frank "Food in the Native South and the Curious Case of Coontie."

June 18 • James R. Hansen "Dear Neil Armstrong: Letters from Alabamians to the First Man on the Moon."

July 16 • Emily Blejwas "Lane Cake: Alabama Women and the Progressive Era."

August 20 • Valerie Pope Burnes "Will Alabama Move for Suffrage?"

September 17 • Ryan . No Votes for Women! Alabama's Anti-Suffragists."

October 15 • Lisa Lindquist Dorr "A Thousand Thirsty Beaches: Rum Running to the South."

November 19 • Jim Noles "Alabamians in West Point's Remarkable Class of 1944."

December 17 • Steve Murray "Alabama's Archivist: Thomas M. Owen."

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Alabama Historical Association 73rd Annual Meeting April 2-4, 2020 Florence, Alabama**



**Old Courthouse  
Florence, 1822-1900**



#### **Downtown Florence Historic District**

***Text of the Historic Marker Shown Above:***  
Florence was surveyed for the Cypress Land Company in 1818 by Ferdinand Sannoner and named for the famous capital of Tuscany. The county seat of Lauderdale County, it was first incorporated in 1826. Located at the Foot of Muscle Shoals, it became a thriving Agricultural and commercial center with light Industry and significant religious, educational, And medical institutions. During the Civil War, Florence was occupied by both armies at Various times. The Tennessee Valley Authority With Wilson and Wheeler Dams contributed to Further economic growth.

(Continued on page 5)



## News and Announcements

(Continued from page 4)

Details of the meeting in Florence can be found in the Alabama History Association Newsletter for Spring 2020 online at <[https://dca4b7d6-dad0-4969-85a2-594a935587a4.filesusr.com/ugd/3aaf16\\_507edb31f9854a799025734e1881ac92.pdf](https://dca4b7d6-dad0-4969-85a2-594a935587a4.filesusr.com/ugd/3aaf16_507edb31f9854a799025734e1881ac92.pdf)>.

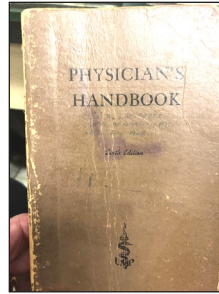
Registration online and by mail, as well as booking hotel rooms can be found at <<https://www.alabamahistory.net/meetings>>.



**The Association  
Fall  
Pilgrimage  
October 2-3, 2020  
At Historic  
Blakeley  
State Park**

For More Information see  
<<https://www.alabamahistory.net/meetings>>.

\*\*\*\*\*



**McMillan Museum Has  
Copy of Physician's Hand-  
book of Dr. Bob Hayes  
Used During His  
Military Service**

Dr. Hayes served during the Korean War. In a phone conversation, he said he started off in Roswell, New Mexico but then

was sent to Bitburg Germany from 1952-1954.

Asked about the photo of Marilyn Monroe, which was found stuck in the book, he said he never saw Marilyn Monroe perform for the troops so he didn't know anything about the photo.

Dr. Hayes, formerly a resident of Brewton, now lives in Pennsylvania.



**Edge of Book  
Showing Signature  
of Dr. Hayes**



**Picture of Marilyn  
from Book**

## Photos from the January 2020 ECHS Meeting



**Left to Right, ECHS  
President Don Sales with  
Guest Speaker Tom  
McGehee, Museum Director  
of the Bellingrath Gardens  
and House, and ECHS  
Trustee Tom McMillan.**



**Barbara McCoy Visits with  
ECHS Vice-President  
Charlie Ware**

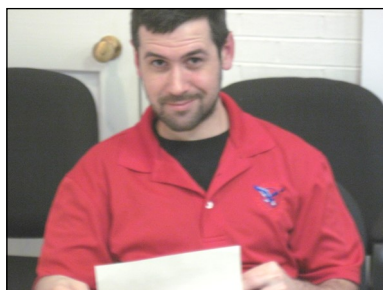


**ECHS Members Barbara  
Page and Kitty Reynolds**

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## Photos from the January 2020 ECHS Meeting

(Continued from page 5)



**ECHS  
Publicity  
Co-  
Chairman  
Stephen  
Salter**



**To the Left, Chad Parker (Digital Archivist for the Poarch Band of Creek Indians), and ECHS Member Marie Heaton.  
Above, ECHS Members Carol and Al Jokela (backs to camera) Visit with Jo and Robin Brewton.**



**From the left foreground is Kitty Reynolds, then Chad Parker. Tom McMillan (standing) is speaking to Dennis Fuqua (seated, the new Campus Director for the Brewton Campus of Alabama Coastal Community College).**

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# The ECHS *journal* Section

## Last Passenger Train through Wallace, Ala.

*The following is a chapter from Earline Crews' book Life with the Top Down from <[https://books.google.com/books/about/Life\\_With\\_the\\_Top\\_Down.html?id=YiarDwAAQBAJ](https://books.google.com/books/about/Life_With_the_Top_Down.html?id=YiarDwAAQBAJ)>.*

Late winter/early spring of 1950 the last passenger train to stop in Wallace, Alabama took me on my first train ride.

Destination: Flomaton.

In fourth grade with probably thirty five other little country kids on a field trip to experience this trip of a lifetime together, we planned and waited and discussed. Some disagreements broke out about what the trip should include, but were settled amongst ourselves. We were learning diplomacy while studying transportation. Our unit on transportation covered trains, planes, ships and automobiles. I enjoyed the trains part best.

Thanks to my second most favorite teacher, Mrs. Rupert Green, who made this trip possible. Mrs. Marble Currie, my first grade teacher was my all-time favorite teacher. She opened my world to books and reading about things beyond Barnett Crossroads. Mrs. Rupert Green showed me I was special without ever telling me so. I just knew from the way she smiled and tugged my hair she held me in high esteem.

I wrote a poem about trains and won first place in that contest. Mrs. Green held up my poster with my poem to show the class while Miss. Margaret Hoomes, an important Escambia County Board of Education official, was at our school for a visit. My poster was clean of smears and misspelled words, had a picture of a Burlington-Rock Island passenger train centered just so.

Lord, I felt gifted. Mrs. Green announced the day of departure for our train ride while Miss Hoomes stood smiling and encouraging us to study and work hard for the things we wanted. I wanted to ride that train.

Time moved like cold syrup. We talked; we planned who would sit with who. Seating choices changed daily, sometimes hourly. We planned what we would wear, how much spending money we would have for this all day round trip of approximately fifteen miles each way. It was exhausting. Maxine announced her mama gave her permission to use Mum under her armpits that day. Fourth grade girls started smelling like deodorant the very next day. Mercy! I talked about our field trip at home ad nause-

am. My mama, the saint of patience, eventually told me to hush.

Finally, the day arrived. Mrs. Green had advised us to wear our Sunday best, polish our shoes, brush our teeth extra special, have our hair shiny clean and use our best manners. We would be representing the best Wallace had to offer. I felt like I needed to pledge allegiance to something or wave the flag or whistle Dixie. I planned to shine on that train trip.

Day of departure.....

As soon as roll call was over, everyone used the restroom, turned in our 25 cent cost of the ticket; we walked the quarter mile to the Wallace Train Depot. A herd of goats in the road should give readers a mental picture here. We skipped and galloped and kicked rocks; we picked early spring flowers from the ditches. We pushed and slapped and tried to outdo each other for Mrs. Green's attention. She smiled and walked with such graceful dignity. I could smell her Desert Flower perfume. Mrs. Green was high class. I tried and failed not to clomp.

I thought perhaps I could go to finishing school one day. Aunt Bama told me what finishing school was for. She referred to her daughter Betty, but I got the drift.....

Betty wasn't all that finished yet.

I had a feeling of always being unfinished when Aunt Bama showed up. I can still hear Daddy say, "Earline's rough on shoes." I still remember Aunt Bama's smirk as she looked down at my big feet.

We walked past the Wallace Methodist Church to have several of the boys cut behind the church to look in the cemetery at the headstone of a prominent Wallace family member, Mr. Douglas Sowell, CSA soldier. Mrs. Green told us about the Sowell Family and their connection to the first bank in Alabama, the Bank of Brewton, and the famous Sowell brothers' cattle drives of many years before.

I knew only Mr. Charlie Sowell (a son or grandson of the first Charles), and his gristmill from grinding corn for my daddy so we could have cornbread and grits. I had never heard the word prominent. I wanted to use that word when I found the chance. I thought at the time it was for folks with dead CS soldiers and bank presidents.

We made the walk into beautiful downtown

*(Continued on page 8)*

# The ECHS *journal* Section

## Last Passenger Train through Wallace, Ala.

*(Continued from page 7)*

Wallace in record time. Tickets were purchased, restroom break again. Pushing and shoving to lineup, we craned our necks to see if perhaps that train would appear on demand. Mr. Currie the station master, announced the expected time of arrival. We all heard the whistle. We all froze. I had to exhale

“Hey, I hear the whistle.”

“Prolly up at Repton.”

“Nuh uh. It stops. It stops in Repton, already blowed there.”

“If you hear it blowing all the way here in Wallace, it was blowing at the crossing in Deer Range.”

“Nuh-uh, if you hear it blowing here in Wallace, it’s already crossing Dean Creek blowing for us.”

Bryant Tew lived in Wallace and knew all that. Bryant’s mama was a teacher at Wallace and his daddy was our principal, so he had smarts by proxy. That whistle was for us. Line lengthening, shortening, undulating by shoving, wiggling and jumping up and down. Nerves were jittery. Train whistle blowing at the crossing of County Road 40 in Wallace for the last stop for the last passengers to ride the last passenger train to stop in Wallace, Alabama.

HISTORY WAS MADE THAT DAY.

Breeze trailing the train caused hair to rearrange, cinders to settle and speck. Mrs. Green kept busy resetting hair-bows, tucking in shirttails, tying shoe-laces, wiping snotty noses and shushing us. The conductor stepped down to set a little foot stool for us to step into another world of wonderful. Shuttering moved through us en masse.

Climbing up, shoving to the seats, swapping, shoving back down the aisle for choosing and re-changing to return to our first choice. Varnished woodwork darkened to amber with age, red velvet seats slicked at the edges and frayed from years of passenger use. Moss green carpet, walked down to black backing, covered the aisle.

Mama and Daddy had seen fit to give me 25 cents for spending. Twenty-five cents would allow me two ‘cocolars’ and three candy bars; or one cocolar, two candy bars and a bag of popcorn; or I could just wait to see what was offered. I checked several times to see if my quarter was still knotted in the corner of my handkerchief.

Known as the Selma to Pensacola run, our trip originated in Selma very early that morning, and would connect by way of Flomaton Junction to terminate in Pensacola very late that evening. Our ride was an historical run, but we were oblivious to that fact. We had been told but that information didn’t compute until many years later.

“ALL.....ABOARD!”

Release of smoke and steam. Breath holding! Necks craning to see Pete Thompson’s Store with Linda’s mama, Miz Neene Belle waving, looking back to see if Mr. Ollie was watching from Gilmore’s General Merchandise. Joyce blushed as her mama and daddy wave from Grissett’s Store on the other side of the tracks.

I feel light headed.

I see gnats behind my eyelids.

I have to breathe really deep.

Now then.

Chuff, chuff, chuff, moving and increasing speed. Now we are cooking.

That little train swayed and rocked and jerked as it poured on the coal to get us to Flomaton Junction on time. At Hammock it slowed and the whistle blew to warn at the Foshee Road. The curve heading south caused metal on metal screeching and grinding. We sat in the last car which had a water fountain We used it. Little cone shaped paper cups filled with about two ounces of water were taken from the dispenser. Aisle carpet was soggy with fountain water and squishy to walk on. We all needed water.

Mrs. Green looked put upon.

We all looked out to see the pine trees, gall berry bushes and thickets of growth along the rail bed. Some of the boys tried to lower the windows to try grabbing the limbs that seemed in reach for us. The brow-furrowed old conductor wore a pair of black pants that were age-slick shined and the leg crease showed fray. His yellowed shirt held his sleeves rolled to the elbow. His cap had tarnished gold braiding across the plastic bill. He looked tired and in need of living off his pension. Just outside Osaka we saw a farmer plowing a field to ready for spring planting.

We crossed Blue Star Highway 31. I remembered Uncle Rudy Smith telling me if I started walking on Highway 31 at Flomaton, I could walk all the way to Chicago and wouldn’t get lost. I planned to walk to Chicago if I ever ran away from home. I told anyone

*(Continued on page 9)*



# The ECHS *journal* Section

## Last Passenger Train through Wallace, Ala.

(Continued from page 8)

listening in my class that fact.

“Earline you so crazy. You don’t know how to run away.”

Mrs. Green made us get back into our seats just at the edge of what I think must have been near Fannie. Craning to see, seeing tracks both sides of our train. We saw downtown Flomaton from an angle.

People were everywhere. Things were busy around the depot. We off loaded the train to walk into a big old cavernous dome-like waiting room filled with big light catching windows; forest green benches sat on marble tiled floors that allowed scuffing sounds as we milled about to look interested in things that we really weren’t. Restrooms smelled like pine tar and creosote. Sounds of trains switching, bells clanging, men signaling and whistling, people talking and laughing, staccato clattering sounds of some kind of office machine; the depot was a world of sights and sounds of wonder to

me.

I experienced sensory overload. I may have hallucinated.....without knowing what that meant Never heard that word until the 1960’s. Wallace and Flomaton, Alabama were far away from San Francisco’s Haight Ashbury Street with those hallucinogens.

Out back of the depot was the most beautiful little park with a fountain centered in a lily pond filled with goldfish. Some of our class threw pennies into the pond. Not me; I had only a quarter. A big magnolia tree gave beauty and shade to a place of rest for wayfaring strangers to enjoy their time until the next trains going to destinations “that-away.” We explored places and fondled things that we shouldn’t have, but nobody told us we couldn’t. I believe the adults and Mrs. Green knew this was a special time for her little charges to enjoy something that many would never again be privileged to. There at Flomaton Railroad Junction Depot in 1950, we shared a special blessing.

**Top, Right, L & N Depot, Flomaton, Alabama, 1914.**

**Bottom, Right, Garden Back of L & N Depot, Flomaton.**



**Louisville and Nashville Railroad trains near a passing point at Hurricane, Baldwin County, on the route between Mobile and Montgomery, ca. 1950s.**

**From <<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/m-6768>>.**



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

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Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook	\$30.00	\$25.00
Addendum to Headstones and Heritage	\$20.00	\$25.00
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**Many members give a membership as a gift!**

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

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