

ECHOES



The
Escambia
County
Historical
Society,
Founded
1971

The May 2021 Newsletter

There Will Not Be A May Meeting. The Museum and Alabama Room Are Still Closed. The College Students Are Currently Registering for the Summer Term.

News from the Museum and the Alabama Room

There is still no definite date for reopening the Museum and Alabama Room or a date for an ECHS meeting, Don still needs wigs for the mannequins that have been donated to the museum. A family from Georgia, the Blackmon family, have made an appointment for June 10 to do family research. They are particularly interested in the Pitman School if anyone has any information on that.

A correction to the reference in the April ECHOES to former scholarship student Kelsi Chandler. Her name was incorrectly spelled as Kelsey. Our apologies to Kelsi.

The museum and Alabama Room are still open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. Anyone who wishes to visit the museum or do research can still contact Don for an appointment. Address: P.O. Box 276, Brewton, AL 36427; Phone: 251-809-1528; E-mail: <escambiachistoricalociety@gmail.com>.

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Memorial Highway Signs Have Been Placed

Signs are up on US 31 and US 29 for Escambia County Medal of Honor Winners, Sgt. Billy Wayne Seay of Brewton and Cpl. Sidney Manning of Flomaton.



A Bustling Spring Hill College Mobile, 1892.

The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama.



**Jamison Van de Graff
House, 1859
Tuscaloosa**

**Volume 48 No. 5
May 2021**

News and Announcements

ECHS Member Eva Karen McInnis Passes Away in April



Eva in the middle shown with Jacque Stone and Beverly Stark at the 2016 ECHS Christmas Party.

We will miss Eva who participated in many of the society's activities. She and her mother, Sammie McGlotheran, often prepared refreshments for the society's meetings.

Eva also served on a society committee to produce material on the history of the county as a part of the celebrations for the Alabama Bicentennial.



Eva is shown at the August 2016 ECHS meeting in the back row with Beverly Stark on her right. Pictured in the first row are Robin Brewton, Jo Brewton, and Marie Heaton.

the city gave the property to the school system. The property, adjacent to T. R. Miller High School, became more valuable than the house, as the property would allow the high school, landlocked by the surrounding neighborhood, to expand.

In an article from the Brewton Standard, Mayor Yank Lovelace said the property would allow some expansions should T. R. Miller High School need additional space. "The school is landlocked right now," Lovelace said. "This would give them property to expand if they choose to " (*"Property Finds New Home,"* by Lisa Tindall, September 2, 2020).

Concerning plans for the expansion, in the same article, Superintendent of Brewton City Schools, Dr. Kenneth Varner, said, "We don't have any formal plans or anything concrete just yet. . . . "There have been a number of things discussed including some type of athletic facility or maybe a parking area for our track facility has also been thrown out for consideration. One of our greatest needs is a girl's soft-ball field. But, for now, we are not sure what we will end up doing there."



Remains of House, May 14, 2021.

Bob McMillan House Demolished for T. R. Miller High School Expansion

Built in 1948, the house, located at 1600 Belleville Avenue, stood on a city block of almost six acres. Before being given to the city school system, the home and property had previously been donated to the city of Brewton by the McMillan family.

Renovation estimates on the house (which had been vacant for several years) of \$400,000 proved to be too expensive for the city to undertake, so in 2020



House Before Demolition

Holley House in Brewton Has a Rich History

In an article from the Brewton Standard in 2009, "Holley House Changing Hands," Lydia Grimes wrote of significance of the house saying that the large building on the corner of Douglas Avenue and Rankin Street has been a landmark for Brewton for more than fifty years.

Built as a private residence, it soon became a hospital, then was remodeled into apartments that later served as an independent living facility for retirees. The house has now been reinvented as a bed and breakfast, opening recently after a four year remodel.

The phrase, "Changing Hands," in the title of the article, Refers to the retirement of Lenis Holley. Lydia wrote, "A constant at Holley House for decades has been Lenis Holley, who once rented the apartments to the executives who moved to Brewton to open the new container mill. She later served mainly seniors interested in independent living."

There are differing accounts of the date the house was given as a wedding present. According to Lydia, it was built sometime before Jan. 4, 1915 when Edwin Marshall Lovelace and Frances McKinzie Lovelace deeded it to their daughter Kate Bell Lovelace and her husband Alto V. Lovelace. Another source states the house was originally built in 1906 as a wedding gift to Kate from her parents (<https://www.theholleyhouse.com/about-us.html>).

Kate and Alto raised a family in the home. They had seven children. Their son, Johnathan Bell Lovelace, founder of American funds and a noted leader in investment funds, spent his childhood in this house.

The house became a hospital when Kate and Alto sold the home to Dr.



Holley House

Russell A. Smith and Dr. Middleton H. Hagood in 1922. Dr. Smith and Dr. Hagood were soon joined by Dr. Frank H. Mason. The building was known as Memorial then Escambia Hospital. It was the first hospital in the county.

The house changed

owners in the 20's but remained a hospital. It was sold to Roxye Neese in 1925, and then to Della Cox. It was bought by Dr. A. F. Holley in 1943 and became widely known as Dr. Holley's Hospital. Dr. Holley had begun working in the private resident turned hospital in the 30's according to Lenis Holley, Dr. Holley's second wife.

Dr. Holley ran the hospital for many years and then rented the facility out to the other doctors in town, moving himself to another office on Evergreen Avenue. Once the hospital closed in the 1950's, Holley House was repurposed as an apartment building for nearly 30 years. After an extensive remodel in 1988, Lenis Holley opened Holley House as a retirement home which she ran until her retirement in 2010.

Currently owned and operated by Deborah George, daughter of Lenis and Dr. Holley, the once private resident, hospital, apartment building, and retirement home has recently opened in its new identity, Holley House Bed and Breakfast.



Fannie McKenzie Lovelace and Edwin Marshall Lovelace Who Gave House as a Wedding Gift to Daughter Kate Bell Lovelace.



Kate Belle Lovelace



Dr. A. F. Holley



Lenis Holley, Wife of Dr. Holley, with grand-daughter Holly Shirley.

(Continued on page 4)

Holley House in Brewton Has a Rich History

(Continued from page 3)

Deborah comments on her family's history with the house on the Facebook site for the bed and breakfast: "Seven generations of the Holley and Henley families (the Henleys are descendants of Lenis Holley) have played in this yard, walked these halls, lived in these rooms, and cooked in this kitchen."

She also notes, "Every baby during WWII that wasn't delivered at home in the surrounding area, was delivered here- the post-war boom kept the nursery full" (<https://www.theholleyhouse.com/about-us.html>).

Deborah says that the house has undergone a four year renovation involving blood, sweat, and tears. From floor joists to roof, the entire house has been remodeled. . . . We are proud to welcome you to our home and hope you will come back again and again"

(<https://www.theholleyhouse.com/about-us.html>).

Alabama Travel says of the renovation, "A labor of love and restoration has returned this home to its glory" (<https://alabama.travel/places-to-go/the-holley-house-bed-and-breakfast-2>)



Betty and Julian Henley with Great-Granddaughter Holly Shirley in 1975. Holly often writes on her blog, Holly Shirley's Deep South Ramblings, of her childhood in Brewton. She recounts memories of Holley House, her Grandmother Lenis Holley, Grandfather, Dr. Holley, and her Great-Grandparents, Betty and Julian Henley.



Deborah George, Daughter of Dr. Holley and Lenis, Current Owner of Holley House.



**The Latest Reincarnation of Holley House
Holley House
Bed and Breakfast**

This Week in Alabama History

May 17 - 23

From Alabama Department of Archives and History

May 21, 1861

The Confederate Congress Meets for the Last Time in Montgomery



Montgomery served as the capital for just three months, from February to May 1861. After Virginia joined the Confederacy in April 1861, leaders urged the move to the larger city of Richmond, which was closer to the military action.

Now a museum, the First White House of the Confederacy was the Montgomery home of Jefferson Davis, first president of the Confederate States of America. Davis and his wife lived in the house from February to May 1861, when the capital of the Confederacy was moved to Richmond, Virginia.

Jefferson Davis's wife, Varina, redecorated the First White House of the Confederacy and served as official hostess for state functions. Her bed and several other furnishings from her rooms at New York's Majestic Hotel, where she lived during the last years of her life, were donated to the museum after her death in 1906.



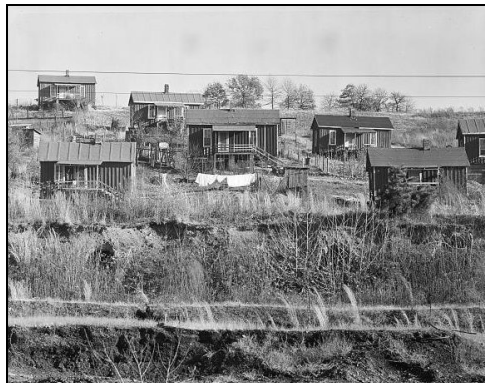
May 20, 1894

The First Bloodshed of the 1894 Miners' Strike Occurs When a Strike Breaker Is killed by Striking Miners near Birmingham.



In their first show of industrial strength and discontent, 8,000 Alabama miners left the job in April 1894. The strike was over by August, as the powerful coal companies prevailed with the help of the State Militia and leased convicts.

During the coal strike of 1894, the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad company employed private enforcement officers, known as the Erskine Ramsay Guards (named for the company's innovative chief engineer), to police its Pratt Mines and threaten striking miners. (From *Encyclopedia of Alabama*)



Alabama Miners' Houses Near Birmingham, December 1935. (Photograph by Walker Evans, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Divisions)

This Week in Alabama History

May 17 - 23

From Alabama Department of Archives and History

May 21, 1901

The Constitutional Convention of 1901 Assembles in Montgomery to write Alabama's Sixth Constitution.



**John B. Knox
President
of the
Convention.**

Convention president John B. Knox of Anniston, pointing to ongoing "race conflict" in state politics, explained that the foremost objective of the convention was "to establish white supremacy in this State." The delegates accomplished that by producing a document that effectively disfranchised blacks, along with poor whites. Voters ratified the Constitution of 1901 in November of that year.



**At the Right
The 155 delegates to the
Alabama Constitutional Convention of 1901
Codified Black Disfranchisement and
Increased the Political Power
of the State Legislature
at the Expense of local Government.**

Text and Photo from Encyclopedia of Alabama

May 18, 1933

Congress Establishes the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).

The New Deal program would have a lasting impact on Alabama, especially the northern third of the state. As its focus, TVA constructed hydroelectric dams on the Tennessee River, which, among other benefits, brought electricity to rural areas and attracted industry.

In Alabama, TVA operates three hydroelectric dams (Guntersville, Wheeler and Wilson), one nuclear power plant (Browns Ferry) and one natural gas-fueled combustion turbine site (Colbert), with a combined generating capacity of more than 4,870 megawatts.

Wilson Dam, shown at the right, spans the Tennessee River between Florence and Muscle Shoals.



**Wilson Dam, Completed in 1924, was the
first dam under the authority of TVA,
created in 1933.**

This Week in Alabama History

May 17 - 23

From Alabama Department of Archives and History

May 18, 1933

The Ave Maria Grotto Park is dedicated at the

St. Bernard Benedictine Abbey in Cullman

Known by visitors from around the world as "Jerusalem in Miniature," the park is filled with miniature re-creations of historic buildings by monk Joseph Zoettl.



The Ave Maria Grotto was begun in 1932 in a four-acre abandoned quarry on the Abbey grounds. Brother Joseph, despite his acknowledged age and fatigue, would eventually fill it with tons of decorative rock and around 150 elaborate structures. The Grotto is not some holy shrine that got out of control. From the start, it was conceived as an over-the-top public attraction.

Brother Joseph died in 1961, although he remains in the Grotto as a life-size bronze statue dedicated in 2009 (He stands next to one of his miniature buildings to show how tiny he was).

Despite a lifetime of labor and frail health, Brother Joseph worked on Ave Maria Grotto until he was 80. As he says in the official guidebook, in what sounds like weary amazement, "I never dreamed I would get so old."

Text and Pictures from
Ave Maria Grotto
<<https://www.roadsideamerica.com/story/2015>>.



Above, St. Peters Church in Rome, Ave Maria Grotto.

Brother Joseph is reported to have explained that when his superiors noticed his miniature replicas of the Holy Land and had bigger ideas for him, "I told Abbot Bernard I was getting old and could hardly do much any more," "But he would not listen. So I started work and had plenty to do."



Brother Joseph Statue

This Week in Alabama History

May 17 - 23

From Alabama Department of Archives and History

May 20, 1961

The Freedom Riders Arrive at the Greyhound Bus Terminal in Montgomery Where They Are Attacked by An Angry Mob.

. The Freedom Ride, an integrated bus trip from Washington D.C., through the Deep South, was formed to test the 1960 Supreme Court decision prohibiting segregation in bus and train terminal facilities. Before reaching Montgomery, the participants had already suffered violent reprisals in Anniston and Birmingham. The Freedom Ride eventually resulted in a campaign that caused the Interstate Commerce Commission to rule against segregated facilities in interstate travel.

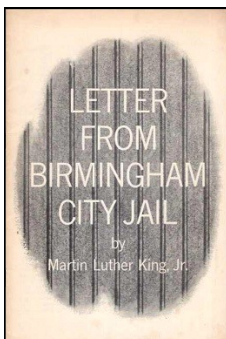
The Freedom Rides Museum is located in the former Greyhound bus station in Montgomery where Freedom Riders were attacked by a mob of angry white men in May 1961. The building was used as a bus station until 1995 and was abandoned and gradually fell into a state of disrepair. It has since been renovated and in 2011 the building opened as a museum and was added to the National Register of Historic Places.
Text and Photo from Encyclopedia of Alabama.



May 19, 1963

Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" Is Issued to the Public in a Press Release

Begun April 16 from the Birmingham City Jail, where King was under arrest for participation in civil rights demonstrations, the letter was addressed to eight local clergymen who had recently urged civil rights leaders to use the courts and local negotiations instead of mass demonstrations to promote their cause in Birmingham. King's letter, which soon became a classic text of the civil rights movement, rejected the clergymen's plea.'



**First edition (1963)
publ. American
Friends Service
Committee**



Martin Luther King Jr., with the Rev. Ralph Abernathy (center) and the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, defied an injunction against protesting on Good Friday in 1963. They were arrested and held in solitary confinement in the Birmingham jail where King wrote his famous "Letter From Birmingham Jail."

*Courtesy of Birmingham Public Library Archives
<<https://www.npr.org/2013/04/16/177355381/50-years-later-kings-birmingham-letter-still-resonates>>.*

This Week in Alabama History

May 24-30

From Alabama Department of Archives and History

May 28, 1828

A United States Arsenal Is Established at Mt. Vernon, Near the Juncture of the Tombigbee and Alabama Rivers.

It had previously been the headquarters for General Claiborne in the Creek War of 1813-1814. In 1873 the Arsenal was converted into a barracks, which from 1887 to 1894 housed Apache Indian prisoners, including Geronimo. In 1895 the land was conveyed to the State of Alabama and became the site of the Mt. Vernon Hospital.

Authorized by President Andrew Jackson in 1828, the Mt. Vernon Arsenal & Barracks have a long and colorful history. The complex served as a home for Geronimo (Goyathlay) and 395 other Apache prisoners of war from 1887 to 1894. Thirteen who died there far from their homeland are buried at Mobile National Cemetery.



Barracks at Mt. Vernon.



Apache Chief Geronimo at Mount Vernon Barracks.

Mount Vernon Arsenal was abandoned in December 1894 and deeded to the State of Alabama in 1895 to be used for public purposes. On 11 Dec 1900, the property was set aside by the Alabama Legislature for public use as Mt. Vernon Hospital for the mental care of Black Citizens.

It became Searcy Hospital in 1919, which operated at the site for more than 100 years. Treatment for all citizens started in 1969. The hospital closed in 2012.

For an extensive discussion of the Mt. Vernon Arsenal and Searcy Hospital, see articles by Darryl Seacrey in ECHOES for May 2010.



Mt. Vernon Arsenal in 1935. The arsenal was just over 100 years old when this image was taken in 1935. It was then a state hospital.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2019 named Mt. Vernon Arsenal, which became Searcy Hospital, as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places.

May 25, 1865

During the Early Weeks of Federal Occupation of Mobile, the City Suffers One of Its Worst Disasters as Twenty Tons of Captured Confederate Gunpowder Explodes in a Warehouse Being Used as an Arsenal.

Property loss was put at \$5,000,000 and the number of casualties was never determined, although it has been estimated at possibly 300.

The entire northern part of the city was laid in ruins by the explosion.



An artist's Rendering of the 1865 Blast that Killed 300 People in Mobile.

(Contributed photo/ Joseph Williams, Archives and Special Collections, Dickinson College)

(Continued on page 10)

This Week in Alabama History

May 24-30

From Alabama Department of Archives and History

(Continued from page 9)

The first sign of trouble at the depot was on the afternoon of May 25 when black smoke was seen rising above the warehouse. Soon, the ground began to shake and suddenly, flames shot up in the sky and massive explosions were heard as the shells succumbed to the heat and flames.

Accounts at the time reported flying timbers, bales of cotton, horses, men, women and children. Rescue workers and local citizens rushed to the rescue, trying to find survivors amid the rubble.

The detonation was heard as far distant as Fort Morgan, where soldiers, frightened by the sound, rushed to their parapets, thinking a monitor had set off its magazine. And after a thorough study of rec-

ords, army officials estimated that 200 tons of munitions had gone up in the explosion (*GenDisasters.com*).

The blast was so huge it sank two steamers, the Col. Cowles and the Kate Dale, in the Mobile River and leveled several houses.

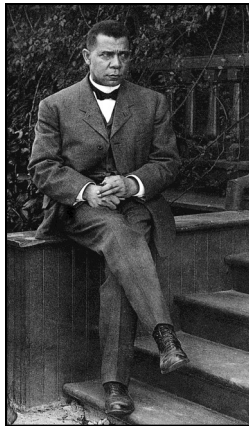
The cause of the explosion was never determined, though Northern newspapers blamed the tragedy on a gang of former Confederate officers. Others said the blast was the result of carelessness on the part of workers who were removing the ammunition from the warehouse at the time of the blast.

For years, the blast site - and its resulting crater - served as a memorial to the dead and injured. The day remains one of the single-deadliest in Alabama history.

May 29, 1901

Seven Days into the Constitutional Convention of 1901 a Petition Submitted by Booker T. Washington and Twenty-Three Other African-American Leaders is Read to Convention Delegates, All of Whom Are White.

The petition asked that the black Alabamian be given "some humble share in choosing those who shall rule over him." Nevertheless, with the ratification of the Constitution of 1901 in November, blacks--along with poor whites--were effectively disfranchised.



**Booker T. Washington,
First President and Principal
Developer of
Tuskegee Normal and
Industrial Institute
(now Tuskegee University), and
the Most Influential Spokesman
for Black Americans
between 1895 and 1915**
(<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Booker-T-Washington>).

May 25, 1910

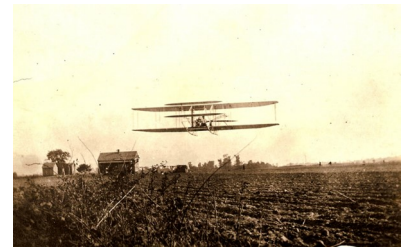
The First-Ever Nighttime Airplane Flight Is Made at Orville Wright's Flying School Near Montgomery.

Walter Brookins and Archibald Hoxsey piloted the plane, which the Montgomery Advertiser described as "glinting now and then in the moonlight" during flight.

The flying school closed shortly after the historic event, but the site eventually became home to Maxwell Air Force Base.



**Plane brought
to Montgomery
in 1910 by the
Wright
Brothers, who
are shown at
the left.**



This Week in Alabama History

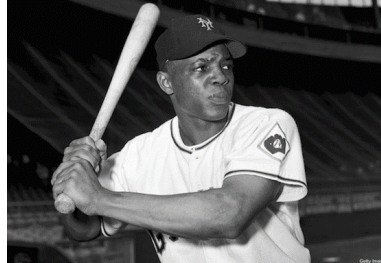
May 24-30

From Alabama Department of Archives and History

May 28, 1951

Batting for the New York Giants Against the Boston Braves, Alabama Native Willie Mays Gets His First Hit in the Major Leagues--a Home Run.

After a 0-for-12 start to his MLB career, Willie Mays gets his first hit, and it's a home run off Warren Spahn. Born near Birmingham, the "Say Hey Kid" went on to be named National League Rookie of the Year and hit 660 homers in a legendary Hall of Fame career.



Regarded as One of the Greatest Baseball Players of All time, He Was Elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1979. As of his birthday in 2021, He Is the Oldest Living Baseball Hall of Famer.

May 25, 1971

President Richard Nixon Visits Mobile to Mark the Start of Construction of the Tennessee Tombigbee Waterway.

The waterway, when completed in 1985, ran from Pickwick Lake to Demopolis, Alabama, to connect the Tennessee River to the Tombigbee River. A link between the two rivers had long been desired, having been first proposed by the French in the eighteenth century.

In an article in the Encyclopedia Of Alabama, the writer notes that the two primary commodities shipped today via the Tenn-Tom are coal and timber products, together comprising about 70% of total commercial shipping on the waterway.

He writes that prior to its construction, the Corps of Engineers predicted that the waterway would float 27 million tons in its first year of operation. As the result of a variety of fluctuating economic conditions including low demand for coal and loss of overseas markets for grain, the Tenn-Tom has peaked at only about 8 million tons per year thus far ("Thomas V. Ress, "Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway").

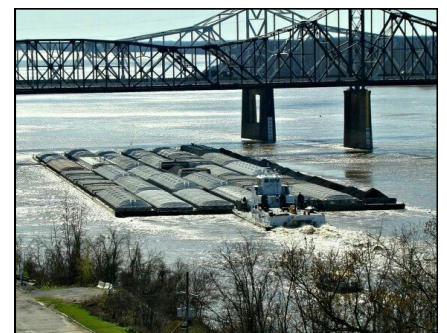
It should also be noted that another major reason for the waterway not achieving expectations in commercial tonnage is that the cut is too narrow to carry the typical shipping standard of today with multiple barges tied together and requiring a very wide waterway..



A railroad bridge of the then Illinois Central Gulf Railroad over the Divide Cut on the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway in Tishomingo County, Mississippi,

The cut carries the waterway between the Tennessee River watershed, which eventually empties into the Ohio River, and the Tombigbee River Watershed eventually empties into the Gulf of Mexico at Mobile.

A Wide Load on the Mississippi. The Tenn-Tom Waterway is too narrow to carry a load this wide, so tugs with these large no. of barges go up the Ohio River from the Tennessee and come down the Mississippi to the coast.



ECHOES
THE NEWSLETTER FOR
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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| Escambia Historical Society Cookbook | \$10.00 | \$15.00 |
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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 or call 251-809-1528.

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