



The October Newsletter

The Meeting will be
Tuesday, October 22, 2024, 3:00 pm
 in the Meeting Room of the McMillan Museum
 on the Brewton College Campus.



Larry Manning

The Program: Painter, Potter, Teacher Larry Manning Will Present the Program.

Larry, who presented a program last year to ECHS on the history of art, will again talk about art and have examples of his paintings and pottery on exhibit in the meeting room. These will be for sale. The exhibit will remain in the Museum until the

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Refreshments after the Meetings

Thank you to those who brought refreshments to the September Meeting. Plan on again bringing your favorite finger foods for refreshments after the program at the October Meeting. The Society will provide drinks.

November and December Meetings

There will be no November or December meetings.



In 1832, Horace King and John Godwin built the first Dillingham Street Covered Bridge, spanning the Chattahoochee River between Columbus, Georgia, and Girard (now Phenix City). The bridge was destroyed by flooding and fire during the Battle of Girard in 1865 and was rebuilt or repaired several times by King.

The bridge was a key early connection between Georgia and Alabama.



Tea Bowl with Florida Landscape by Larry Manning.

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The Program

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Thursday before Christmas. The pottery and paintings would make excellent Christmas presents.

In an article from the Pensacola News Journal in 2020, Randy New, owner of an art gallery in Pensacola, said of Larry's pottery and his studio, "It's like a big barn. It's hard not to walk out of there without a box full of pots. His work is primarily

functional and not sculpture but he treats every piece with the dignity of a sculptor" ("*Eighty-Year-Old Pace Potter Churning Out New Works at His Ceramic Oasis*," Mike Roberts, Pensacola News Journal <[<https://www.pnj.com/story/entertainment/2020/>](https://www.pnj.com/story/entertainment/2020/)>).

Larry and his wife Diane live in Pace, Florida where he continues his craft at his business, Magic Kiln Pottery.

Pottery and Paintings by Larry



**Mug, Vase,
Hand Thrown,
Local Clay.**



**Teapot, Hand
Thrown, Ala.
Clay**



A Fat Owl



**Above, Objects
on a Table.
Below, Larry with Bowl
and Painting.**



**Plate, Platter or
Tray with Southwest
Style.
Turtle, Reptile
Design**



**Yarn bowls; the Cut-outs on
Each Side Are to Feed Your
Yarn Through to Keep the
Strands from Tangling.**



**Sake Carafe
and Cups.**



**Pottery Bowl with
Touch of Blue.**



A Tribute to the American Soldier

By Robert Smiley

The following is the second part the article on the collection on American Military History in the Alabama Room. The first part appeared in the January issue of ECHOES for 2023. The author of the article and owner of the collection, Robert Smiley, wrote this as “a tribute to past and present military service members.”

The main purpose of this collection is to honor the American soldier. The ink on these pages was written with their blood near and far. These young men, some still in their teens, greeted the morning light with the smiles and laughter of youth, and before the day was ended, some stood before the Judgement Seat of God.

A great value of this collection is in genealogical research. Located in the index of each volume is information on where regiments, brigades and divisions were located on battlefields. By knowing the regiment your ancestor served in, this information will give you the position, movements and actions of that regiment. If you go to these battlefields, you can follow the path of your ancestors – walking where they walked and perhaps stand where some paid the ultimate price. To stand where souls passed from this world to another brings a deep impact that is not forgotten. Whether it be in this country or abroad, you can feel their hand on your shoulder and hear in the wind their whisper of “Forget us not.”

General Joshua L. Chamberlain on returning to the Gettysburg Battlefield after the war was so deeply moved that he penned these poignant words:

“In great deeds something abides. On great fields something stays. Forms change and pass away; bodies disappear but spirits linger to consecrate the ground for the vision-place of souls. And reverent men and women from afar, and generations that know us not and that we know not of, heart-drawn to see where and by whom great things were suffered and done for them, shall come to this deathless field to ponder and dream; and lo! the shadow of a mighty presence shall wrap them in its bosom, and the power of the vision pass into their souls.”

To write a eulogy for the American soldier always falls short of the mark. As General Douglas MacArthur said, “He needs no eulogy from me, or from any other man. He has written his own history and written it in red on his enemy’s breast by the invincible determination which has carved his statue on the hearts of his people.”

It is the duty of each and everyone of us to give honor to those that are no more, but we also have a duty to honor the living citizens in our armed forces who form the front line between us and a turbulent world. On their shoulders we have placed all our tomorrows and dreams. In their hands are the futures of our children and their children’s children.

Lest we forget, never let it be said we did.



Post Office Mural in Ozark

Section of Fine Arts Mural Entitled “Early Industry of Dale County.” depicting a mill. Painted in 1938 by Kelly J. Fitzpatrick, it still hangs in the old postmaster office building, now used as the County Board of Education.

The ECHS *Journal* Section

A Brief History of Escambia County, Alabama

By Henderson A. Potter.

Mr. Potter was an Afro-American from Brewton. His Brief History, which was published first in 1941, also was published in the ECHS Quarterly for 1974. The announcement that it would appear in the quarterly was prefaced by "You don't want to miss this"

I was born of parents who were former slaves. My father, Wade L. Potter, was a slave fireman on an elaborate steamboat that churned the waters of the Chattahoochee, River transporting Southern aristocrats and cotton to and from Columbus, Georgia and Apalachicola, Florida. His last voyage as a slave fireman was made when the decks of the boat broke out in flames while enroute to Apalachicola. Futile attempts were made to quell the inferno, yet it continued to grow savagely. The skipper, seeing that the flames were beyond control, gave the signal to "Abandon Ship," and the slave crew dashed for their freedom by jumping overboard.

Instead of fleeing the scene with the other slaves, Wade Potter launched a raft, jumped overboard, placed the skipper's family aboard and towed them to safety. For his loyalty and bravery, he was given a reward of six thousand dollars in gold, of which he used one thousand and twenty dollars to buy himself from slavery and then set out afoot to Milton, Florida and bought his sweetheart, Rebecca Mathews, from the market for one thousand and twenty dollars. They went to Pollard and remained there until the Yankee soldiers raided his establishment, thinking it was a slave bearing institution.

According to the records, I was born at Pollard, Alabama in 1866, and seven years later my family moved to Brewton where I have remained for the past 73 years. In my youth I played and hunted in the sections which are now inhabited by dwelling houses, as well as business establishments.

At that time, the M&M Railroad Station was located where the Robbins and McGowin Store building is at present. Squirrels, wild turkeys and even bears could be seen from a distance of not more than two hundred yards from the Station. I recall the time when Jeff Still, John O'Bannon and myself went into the woods and killed many squirrels with sticks.

I attended school in a log cabin near the present T. R. Miller Mill Company's box factory site. The schoolmaster was an Irishman who owned a poodle dog who followed him to the classroom each day. Having a dog with him was an asset to the schoolmaster, for when the students were punished, the dog would prevent them from fleeing into the woods. The school term was only three months each year because it was necessary to spend the remaining nine months in planting and harvesting the crops. During the school holidays, I worked on the farm with my father and occasionally he would consent for me to go along with my brothers to Pollard and play. We walked this distance ; therefore, we had to leave early on our return because it was our parental law that we report home before the sun went down.

When I became of age, I was hired for twenty-five cents a day as an assistant carpenter by the first contractor of Brewton, Mr. Allen Pittman. He used wooden pegs instead of nails because nails had not been introduced in the market at that time. From this experience I learned the trade well enough to begin working as an independent carpenter as time passed.

My father opened the first barber shop in the city and I spent most of my spare time from carpentering working as his apprentice. In due time I mastered the trade and was able to make a living and rear a family. During these years I have had the advantage of seeing the city of Brewton grow from a tiny, woody, animal infested village to the prosperous town it is today.

The city of Brewton was named for Benjamin Brewton, who has the distinction of constructing the first building and settling here. His residence was located in the present "Barney Thompson Pasture," and he tilled the soil along the banks of Murder Creek, raising huge crops of corn despite the fact that he was forced to spend all of his spare time in preventing the bears from devouring his produce.

As more people settled in the vicinity, chasing bears became a great sport. The settlers formed hunting parties which resulted in many exciting adventures. The most daring occurrence in one of such expeditions relates to a huge black bear that ranged along Burnt Corn Creek, destroying all live stock within his range. Ned Baggett and Walker Snowden formed a hunting

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The ECHS Journal Section

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party, accompanied by a colored man (Alex)Brew, to capture the bruin or chase him away. Alex was a great bulk of a man who was some six feet three inches tall and wore number thirteen shoes; therefore, the party armed him with a musket and placed him on a stand alone near the trestle. The dogs lost no precious time in striking the bear's trail and a merry chase ensued. As Alex sat beside the path, the bear came so near that he could not swing the lengthy musket on his target and as he struggled in the effort, the animal launched upon him. Alex, having no other alternative, grabbed the bear and engaged in battle for his life. During the engagement, the musket was damaged beyond all possibilities of firing, leaving poor Alex unarmed. The two battled there unceasingly until the bear instinctively became aware that it was impossible to conquer his prey; consequently, he scurried off into the bushes at the first opportunity. He was later killed as he attempted to raid a local farmer's barn.

The annals of Brewton as county seat dates back to the critical sixties (1860's), before Escambia County was originated. This territory was covered by portions of Conecuh and Baldwin Counties. In that era the nearest courthouse was at Old Sparta, five miles south of Evergreen; consequently, the people in these parts had to go there to meet court sessions. Later, Escambia County was formed and Pollard was selected as the site for the county seat. The first probate judge was Judge Howard, who held the office for only six months because his salary was too meager for him to live comfortably; therefore, he resigned.

The citizens of Pollard were a very industrious lot. One man of German descent (Pruschea) owned a bakery shop and gained a renowned reputation for his production of delicious pastries and tasty bread. He kneaded the dough in a large wooden basin and when his arms became tired, he pulled his shoes off and kneaded with his feet. He was also a very thrifty sort of person because he refused to throw anything away, not even the rotten eggs he found while making pastries. Instead of disposing of them, he emptied them into the basin and stirred away.

Mr. Billy Jernigan owned a combination grist and saw mill and planted his corn crop not more than fifty yards from the mills, thus enabling him to tend his crop, saw logs and grind corn at the same time.

The most notable cattle dealers in these parts were Messrs. Don Pringle and Nap Jernigan. Their herds were of the ordinary stock but they kept them fat by grazing them west of Pollard near the Big Escambia Creek.

Mr. W. A. Finley owned one of the most exclusive grocery stores in this section and his success as a merchant was attributed to his loyalty toward pleasing his customers and avoid losing their trade. Kit Smith, a colored man, who was a barber and whose home was a quarter of a mile from the Finley store, went there to buy a half barrel of flour, and requested that it be delivered to his home. At first, Mr. Finley hesitated, because he didn't have any means by which to deliver the flour, but seeing that Kit would refuse to make the purchase if it couldn't be delivered, he agreed to deliver it. Mr. Finley shouldered the barrel and walked to the home of his customer and delivered the flour, thus completing the transaction and keeping his customer for future business.

Early in 1874 a man who went by the name of J. H. Swain and his wife came to Pollard. His wife was a Bowen. She was related to Mrs. Malcolm McMillan, wife of the sheriff and the mother of the Probate Judge of Escambia County. They stayed at the sheriff's home. Everybody liked Mr. Swain. He was what they called a "jolly good fellow." After he had been in Pollard awhile, he went down in Santa Rosa County, Florida, where his wife's people lived and went into the logging business, but he would come back to Pollard for weekends. He had the reputation of being a successful gambler. Nobody could bluff him. Mr. Brown Bowen, his brother-in-law, was a different kind of a man. He was a bluffer and was said to have shot more than one man in the back.

Mr. Swain would sometimes go to Pensacola and get in games there with the big gamblers; he soon gained the reputation of being fearless and many people were afraid of him. Among them was the Superintendent and General Manager of the railroad that ran from Flomaton to Pensacola. Col. Chipley, who lived in Pensacola, came in contact with this man, Swain, at Flomaton. It was said that Swain threatened the life of Col. Chipley at Flomaton and every time Col. Chipley went to Flomaton, he had people to watch Mr. Swain.

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Nobody knew who Mr. Swain was, not even the McMillans, where he was staying. The truth was that he was a notorious outlaw, John Wesley Harden from Texas. He had killed forty-two men and there was a reward of four thousand dollars for his arrest. The way they found out that he was at Pollard was that a Texas Ranger went to the home of the Harden family and got a job as a cowboy and farm hand and he found out that they (the Harden family) were writing to a man the name of J. H. Swain and addressing the letters in care of Mr. Neil McMillan, Deputy Sheriff, Pollard, Alabama.

Two Texas Rangers came to Pollard and Flomaton to see if J. H. Swain was John Wesley Harden. They learned from Col. Chipley, the Railroad Superintendent, that Mr. Swain had gone to Pensacola and had an engagement with some of the gamblers that night. When the Rangers identified themselves to the railroad official, he gave them a special train. They went to Pensacola, saw the man Swain and notified the officials that he was John Wesley Harden, the notorious outlaw from Texas. They called together all of the officers and deputized a number of people, and when the man, supposed to be Swain, but who in fact was Harden, got on the train at Pensacola to return to Pollard, they caught him. One man who was with Harden—a young fellow from Santa Rosa County, Florida—who didn't know what it was all about (his name was "Mann"), jumped out of the window of the train and was killed.

They took Harden to jail in Pensacola, and when they started back to Texas with him, his friends in Pollard, thinking he was innocent and knowing when the train was going to pass through, organized a group and were going to take him off the train at Pollard, but the train didn't stop. The officials got word of what was about to happen and ordered the train not to stop either at Pollard or Brewton. Harden's friends then got word to Montgomery and had obtained some kind of legal papers and the officers took Harden off the train at Montgomery, but the Judge in Montgomery decided that the Texas officers had a right to carry the man back to Texas to stand trial for murder and he was carried back.

He was sent to the penitentiary in Texas for several years, and after he served out his term, or was par-

doned, he became a famous criminal lawyer in Texas, but he always had in him the same spirit that he showed around Pollard and lots of people were afraid of him. He had studied law while serving his prison sentence. One night, one of the men who was afraid of him, was drinking with him in a saloon in San Antonio, Texas and when Harden's back was turned, this man shot him in the back and he died before being removed from the saloon floor.

Early in 1880, Col. Stallworth owned a bar room which was located on the lot which is now the May Candy Company lot and where their brick building is located.

Early in 1882, Dr. H. H. Malone owned a cypress mill where the present City Park is, and he had cut many stacks of stacks of lumber before he found that there was no market for it. The lumber remained stacked there until the Yellow Fever epidemic broke out in early 1883. The fever began killing so many people that caskets could not be made fast enough for them; therefore Dr. Malone gave his stacks of lumber to John Brundrum to build caskets, and when the epidemic was subsiding the stacks were exhausted and only two of these crude caskets were left.

A few weeks later, Brundrum and his surviving daughter were stricken with the plague, died in a short time and were buried in the last two caskets. After these two deaths, nobody else was stricken with the fever.

During the epidemic I served as night watchman in the business section, ringing the bell every hour at the old Brewton Academy which was located where the present Mr. Craver has his funeral home. During the length of my service nobody was arrested for breaking the curfew.

The transition period of Pollard to Brewton began in 1882 when Brewton became the new location for the County Seat. It was then when most of the prominent merchants began considering doing business in Brewton.

Mr. Ned Finlay, Pollard's local journalist, moved to Brewton, taking his press with him. He printed his first paper in 1887, which was the predecessor of Brewton's local newspaper, The Brewton Standard.

The Post Office was located where the T. R. Miller Box Factory is at present and the first postmaster was a Mr. Aarons. The first mayor was Mr. Titcomb and

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Mr. Dave Nicholson was the City Policeman. During that time an Afro-American paid his fine in groceries when he was arrested for a misdemeanor. The first beef market was opened by two Afro-American men (Green & Scott). Mr. John Downing, Sr. was the first successful timber dealer in the city. He specialized in hewing timber. Mr. C F. Rankin introduced the City Water Works in the city.

Note: Hewing timber is the process of using an axe or other sharp tool to convert a log into lumber with flat surfaces. It's an ancient technique that was commonly used before the invention of sawmills.

John Mantle built the first buggy to be used on the streets of Brewton. He constructed it for Clark Weaver and when Mr. Weaver drove down the streets, the citizens were amazed at such a masterpiece because the horse and buggy were very rare; many of the people had not seen one before.

The lumber industry has given Brewton the title as the "Richest Little Town in the South," and credit is given to the following gentlemen for their contribution to the local industry — T. R. Miller, Ed M. Lovelace, Yancey Lovelace, Pad Foshee, George Harold, Sr., Captain Fuller, Dave and Uriah Blacksher and the Harold Brothers. The first sawmill in this vicinity was owned by O'Bannon and Stallworth and it cut only 12 sticks of timber per day, The second sawmill was owned by Ebe Riley who later sold to Harold Brothers.

Bill Coleman built a hotel where the Citizens Bank is now located and a Mr. Granberry built a house where the C. C. Everage Dry Goods Store is today. This was a very crude edifice. It was covered with barrel staves.

The railroad system was operated by the M&M Railroad Company, running one train per day from Montgomery to Pensacola, the end of the line. Later the line was extended to Pensacola and back to and through Flomaton Junction, Ala., to the Tensaw River where it unloaded the cargo and passengers on boats to be taken to Mobile.

The policy of the railroad was to mourn the death of its employees by draping black cloth on the engine and cars,

In the beginning, the tracks were laid wide apart (wide gauge), then later the company changed types of trains which required a narrow gauge; therefore, it was necessary to change the tracks to accommodate the trains. Mr. Dock Welch, great uncle of Mr. Lowe Byrd, and a Mr. Rogers surveyed the tracks from Montgomery to Pollard and in a few days the tracks were properly gauged and the trains resumed their daily trips through this section,

As the railroad system became adjusted to the extent that more trains were put on the road the operation became harassed by the notorious outlaw and train robber, "Railroad Bill." He was a shrewd "hombre"; in fact, his skill in eluding capture was so perfect that the superstitious people around here credited him with being able to disappear or change to an animal upon his desire to do so when he became cornered by the law. The railroad company as well as local merchants and citizens offered great rewards for his capture, "Dead or Alive," but these didn't stop these daring raids on the railroads.

Sheriffs James McMillan and Ed McMillan succeeded their father in the county offices and they advocated a fair and impartial trial for every one. While they were in office, an Afro-American man (Tom Marshall) killed his sister in a brawl and buried her remains in a gopher hole. After he was arrested and taken to jail, Walter Dacus cooked up a mob of other Afro-Americans and went to Sheriff James McMillan's home and demanded the jail key so they could seize Tom and lynch him. I was in that crowd.

The Sheriff stalled them by telling them to wait a moment and he would fetch the keys from his study. He went back into the house and returned, not with the keys, but with a double barrel shot gun and chased the entire mob away in hysterics, thus saving his prisoner to stand a fair trial for his life.

TO Be Continued.

ECHOES
THE NEWSLETTER FOR
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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www.escohis.org

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	Regular	Mailed
History of Escambia County, Alabama	\$90.00	\$96.00
Headstones and Heritage	\$20.00	\$26.00
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)	\$40.00	\$46.00
Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook	\$30.00	\$36.00
Addendum to Headstones and Heritage	\$20.00	\$26.00
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