

THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P. O. Box 276  
Brewton, Alabama 36426  
NEWS LETTER  
March 13, 1973

NOTICE OF MEETING

The regular meeting of The Escambia County Historical Society will be held on Tuesday, March 20, 1973, at 7:00 p.m. in the Student Center of the Jefferson Davis Junior College. Mrs. Marion Viccars, Associate Librarian, John C. Pace Library, University of West Florida, Pensacola, will be our guest speaker. She has been in our area on several occasions gathering historical facts. She will choose her own topic for the program.

The program committee is doing a great job in planning interesting and informative programs for our meetings. We hope that each of you will be present to hear Mrs. Viccars.

Bring a friend.

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Our first Historical Quarterly will be published as planned by March 31st and a copy mailed to each of the members of the society. Additional copies will be available to the members for 50 cents each. Copies will be sold to outside persons for \$1. 00. The Society will donate copies of the Quarterly to the county schools and libraries.

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There are still a few of our charter members who have not paid their dues for 1973. Their names will be removed from the mailing list after March 31st. Next month's newsletter will contain a current list of the membership.

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FORT MIMS EXCAVATION TO BEGIN MARCH 17, 1973

For those of you who might be interested in seeing Fort Crawford restored I am reprinting the following news item from the Alabama Archaeological Society "Stones & Bones Newsletter" for March, 1973.

"The University of South Alabama has received a grant of \$12, 000. 00 from the Alabama Historical Commission to conduct archaeological investigations at Fort Mims in northern Baldwin County. Mr. Noel R. Stowe, archaeologist at the University of South Alabama, will direct the project and Mr. Rod Gillespie will be Field Supervisor.

In 1797, Samuel Mims built a small settlement on an Indian trail that crossed the Alabama River north of Mobile, In 1805, the U. S. Government began construction of the Federal Military Road connecting Mims Ferry on the Alabama and Oculgee in Georgia. During the early 1800's, Mims constructed a stockade around his home and approximately 15 other buildings. On July 27, 1813, the Battle of Burnt Corn between the Creek Indians and white settlers led by Col. James Caller was fought approximately 50 miles north of the Mims settlement. This battle ended in a defeat for the Americans and many of the settlers in the area sought refuge in the stockade at the Mims settlement.

On August 30, 1813, Fort Mims was attacked and burned by approximately 1, 000 Creek Indians led by William Weatherford and Peter McQueen. During the battle approximately 500 settlers were killed. The dead were buried in an unmarked grave somewhere near the Fort by soldiers from neighboring settlements. The Fort Mims massacre and the rallying point "Remember Fort Mims" played a major role in opening the interior of Alabama for development.

In the last 60 years there has been a considerable interest shown in Fort Mims by historians and historical societies. In 1912, a historical marker was placed near the site; however, the exact location of the fort was not discovered until 1954 when the Alabama Department of Conservation conducted test excavations in the area. In January 1955, Mrs. Georgia D. Till deeded to the State of Alabama the 5 acres which includes the site of Fort Mims, with the proviso that it be developed for use as a historical park. Exploratory excavations were conducted in 1964 inside the Fort by the Alabama Department of Conservation to locate Mims' house and the fort stockade. Portions of the stockade, several of the interior structures and 2 of the wells were excavated during this period. In 1971, the site of Fort Mims was transferred to the Alabama Historical Commission.

The main objective of this project is the location and excavation of the stockade and interior structures at Fort Mims. An attempt will be made to locate structures adjacent to the fort and the mass burial made after the massacre of August 30, 1813. The excavation will consist of the removal of the fort deposit in 8-foot by 8-foot squares following the grid system established by the Alabama Department of Conservation in 1964. During excavation, all features will be plotted on a master plan of the site and structural interpretations will be made.

All materials of archaeological significance will be recovered and preserved. Laboratory work and the descriptive study and analysis of materials recovered is to run concurrently with the excavation program.

The conclusion of the investigations will be the compilation of a written documented report of the findings. This report should contribute to the overall knowledge concerning the early history of Alabama.

Noel R. Stowe, University of South Alabama)"

We welcome into the Society the following new members:

Brewton: Mrs. Katie Moon, Dan Robertson, Mrs. Bertha Barron, Jack W. Hines, Mrs. Paulla Jay, J. M. Mashburn, Charles W. Northcutt, Clifford Smedley, Mrs.

Lodell Smedley, Miss Ethel Davison, Miss Marjorie Davison, R. J. Murphy, A.- H Elliott, J. P. Hayes, Mrs. Sam W. Coale, Sr., Mrs. Margaret S. McMillan, Ben Kelley Strain, Mrs. Iris Rosemore, Mrs. Emily F. Smith; and Dr. R. E. Low.

Out-of-Town Mrs. Elvira M. Tate, Atlanta; Reginald McFarland, Atmore; Mrs. Lennis Elliott Shelton, Montgomery; and Mrs. Amber Lollie, Hosford, Florida.

Many books and stories have been written about the notorious outlaw, John Wesley Hardin, but none giving the complete story of his stay at Pollard. The following story which I will call "The People of Pollard and The Outlaw" was among Mr. Ed Leigh McMillan's history files.

"Early in 1874 a man, who went by the name of J. H. Swain, and his wife showed up in Pollard. His wife was a Bowen. She was kin 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 there a little while he went down to Santa Rosa County, Florida, where his wife's people lived, and went to logging, 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 was his brother-in-law, and he was a different kind of man; he was a bluffer and was supposed 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 lots of people were afraid of him; among them was the Superintendent and General Manager of the Railroad that ran from Flomaton to River Junction---Col.

Chipley, who lived at Pensacola. He 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. 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 \$4, 000 for his arrest. The way they found out that he was at Pollard was, 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 by 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 to gamble with some of the gamblers there 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 the officers and deputized a number of people. When the man supposed to be Swain, but who was in fact 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 at Pensacola, and when they started back to Texas with him, his friends in Pollard thinking that 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. They officials got word of what was about to take place and they ordered the train not to stop either at Pollard or Brewton. Harden's friends in Pollard then got word to Montgomery and had some kind of legal papers gotten out there 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 this 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 had served out his term, or was pardoned, 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 he was 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. "

If you have a friend or know of someone who would like to join the Escambia. County Historical Society and receive the monthly newsletter and quarterly publications, we would be pleased for you to extend an invitation to them by presenting the following application to them. They need only to return the application with their check for \$5. 00 to P. O. Box 276, Brewton, Alabama.

Invitation extended by-- \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (please include zip code)  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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