
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. BOX 276

Brewton, Alabama 36426

NEWSLETTER,
January 16, 1975

EDITOR
Mrs. Carolyn Pugh McLendon,
Dues and Renewals - \$6.00

THE JANUARY MEETING will be held on January 21st at 7:00 p.m. in the Jefferson Davis Junior College Student Center. Mr. Harry Weaver, Escambia County Superintendent of Education and former Vice President of this Society, will bring the program. There is one conflict with our meeting this month, so be sure to come out and support your Society with your attendance. For the new members who might want to set up their calendars for the year, our meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00.

RENEWALS - We had good response to our "bargain days." 106 persons have paid their dues for 1975 at this time. Be sure to pay your dues before March 31st.

11 NEW MEMBERS, making a TOTAL of 275, they are: Miss Hazel Claire Riley, Greenville, S.C.; Mrs. Ruby F. Stallworth, ~~W.~~ Birmingham, Ala.; Mrs. Kathleen C. Holland, Castleberry, Ala.; Mrs. Annie Mae Ward, Evergreen, Ala.; Mrs. Moye Windham, Evergreen, Ala.; Mr. Moye Pugh, Evergreen, Ala.; Mr. B. T. Sankey, Brewton, Ala.; Mr. Richard E. Finlay, Brewton, Ala.; Mr. Edward L. Brewton, St. Paul, Minn.; Mr. Arthur Morgan, Brewton, Ala.; and Mrs. W. E. Townsend, Brewton, Ala. WE ARE PROUD OF OUR GROWING MEMBERSHIP!

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY was lovely. A good variety of special "little gifts" were brought--jars, bottles, paper weights, butter molds, books, postcards, chimes, ash trays, etc. Miss Rita Jane Boykin, our Master of Ceremonies, delighted us with her introduction of the speakers in verse. Refreshments were served, prepared by our own gourmet cooks: hot apple cider by Miss Jan Redditt; cheese log and crackers by Miss Helen Robertson; Swedish Wedding Loaves by Mrs. Eva Parker; and Butter Pound Cake by Mrs. Ruth Coale.

RECYCLING - 800 pounds of newspaper and magazines this week netted us a \$4.00 credit. Remember your Society and discard your paper and glass at the Recycling Center for the credit of the Historical Society. Hopefully we will be able to reduce our dues next year by supplementing our income with these contributions.

IT HAS BEEN A VERY GOOD YEAR for your Society. Continue to support it with your interest. Your editor is beginning to run a little low on new material to use in our publications. If you have something you think would be of interest please submit it.

BRADLEY - The following story was written for us by Mr. Jesse F. Elliott, formerly of Bradley, now residing at 2600 Poplar Street, Montgomery. Adding to Mr. Elliott's story, according to Ed Leigh McMillan the first name for Bradley was Macedonia because of the Baptist church located there which was organized by Elder Alexander Travis and named "Macedonia" by him. Macedonia is the Biblical place

from whence the call came to Paul to come over and help them. Alexander Travis spent five days a week working on his farm and two days a week working "in the vineyards of the Lord." He organized many churches in this area and named many of them for Biblical places--Beulah, Damascus, Bethel, to name a few. Travis is buried in the Old Beulah Cemetery in Conecuh County.

BRADLEY

By Jesse F. Elliott

In the years after the Civil War, timber was moved by water from the area around Bradley, Alabama, to Milton or Bagdad, Florida. I always enjoyed listening to the old people at Bradley who were young during those years, tell about how the timber was floated by water to the Blackwater Bay at Milton, Florida.

The Simpson Lumber Company owned several large tracts of timber around Bradley. One particular tract was seven or eight miles north of Bradley on the head of Bear Creek. This tract of virgin timber and how it was moved is the subject of this article. Bear Creek, Panther Creek and Little Blackwater Creek run together at or near Bradley and form what we call "Big" Blackwater. Bear Creek is not large enough to float timber down, and it was too far to haul timber with oxen to "Big" Blackwater, so they came up with the idea of digging a straight ditch from the head of Bear Creek to "Big" Blackwater. It took about a year to dig this ditch and get it ready. The first thing they did was build a pond at the head of Bear Creek; then the ditch was dug from this pond to "Big" Blackwater. Posts were driven in the ground about 4 feet apart on each side of the ditch and walled up with rough boards. These boards were hauled to the site from Milton or Bagdad, Florida, by ox carts and mule wagons.

When the pond and ditch were completed, the loggers began to cut the virgin timber and dump it into the pond. When the pond was full of timber, it was piled on the banks. If the loggers cut a tree that had fat or rich wood at the big end, they cut off eight or ten feet of the log and called that a "jump butt." This was done in order for the log to float. Even today you can find some of these logs buried in the sands of Blackwater. They were called "deadheads" and are as sound today as they were the day they were put in the water. Some of them have been in the water over 100 years.

After a big rain, and "Big" Blackwater was full of water, they opened the flood gates at the pond and ran the logs end-to-end down the ditch into Blackwater. As long as the creek stayed full of water the logs continued on down the river. Sometimes the logs would form a log jam, and the rivermen with their peavys and spike poles would break this jam to keep the logs moving.

Since many timber owners had logs moving down the stream at the same time, to keep account of each person's timber, each owner had his own brand. This brand was stamped in the end of each log. When the timber finally reached the tide water, each owner claimed his timber by his brand.

One of the oft-told tales concerned a man they called "Wash." Wash and his wife, Callie, lived a short distance from Blackwater. Wash was working to break a log jam near where he lived, and was using his peavy with a sharp spike in the end to dislodge the log causing the

trouble. In some way, Wash stuck the spike through his foot. Since he was alone, he began to crawl toward his house. He called, "Callie, come quick, honey, I've ruined my foot. I stuck my peavy spike all the way through my foot and ruined my brogans." Callie pulled his brogans off and said, "Wash, honey, your foot ain't hurt much, the spike went right between your toes." Wash got up, put on another pair of brogans and went back and broke the log jam.

In those days, grist mills were few and far between. People had to travel some distance to get the corn ground into meal. A meeting was held and the men decided that they would all pitch in and build an earthen dam across Panther Creek and put in a water-driven grist mill. Everybody worked as much as they could, some using wheel barrows, some wagons, scoops, or anything to move a bucket of dirt. It took around a year to build this dam. When it was finished, from that time on for a long time Bradley went by the name of "Bradley Dam." Once the government put a post office there, the name Bradley Dam fell into disuse.

Around 1915, small sawmills called "Armstrong" or "popper" mills sprang up all along the hauling distance of Blackwater. These mills would square the timber and dump it into Blackwater and form it into rafts. There would be 50 to 100 sticks of timber in a raft. These rafts were formed with a "V" shaped nose on the front end. On this "V" they placed what they called an oar blade. This was on a pivot, so that a man standing on the nose of the raft could use that oar blade to keep the raft in the middle of the stream.

Jim Hobbs had six rafts of timber ready to go. He used a mule wagon to go ahead and meet the rafts at a designated place with supplies. On one particular trip, the wagon was to meet the rafts at an old abandoned turpentine camp. We had to tie the rafts up an hour before sun set so that we could get to camp before dark. All the rafts had one-inch grass ropes to tie them up with except the one that Jim Hobbs used. He had a strong wire cable. When he was near the camp site with his raft, he jumped to the bank and tied the wire to a Juniper tree. He discovered that he had a kink in his wire, and in trying to get the kink out with his thumb, the wire rightened and mashed his thumb off even with his hand. His son took him in the mule wagon to Baker, Florida, that night to the doctor. Three days later we met him in Milton with the timber.

TAKE TIME

Take time to think--It is the source of power;
Take time to play--It is the secret of perpetual youth;
Take time to read--It is the fountain of wisdom;
Take time to pray--It is the greatest power on earth;
Take time to love and be loved--It is a God-given privilege;
Take time to be friendly--It is the road to happiness;
Take time to laugh--It is the music of the soul;
Take time to give--It is too short a day to be selfish;
Take time to work--It is the price of success;
Take time to do charity--It is the key to Heaven.

--Author Unknown