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THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 276  
Brewton, Alabama 36426

ESCAMBIA ECHOES  
August 12, 1975

Editor,  
Mrs. Carolyn Pugh McLendon

Annual dues -  
\$6.00

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NOTICE OF MEETING - Date: Tuesday, August 19  
Time: 7:30 p.m.  
Place: Jefferson Davis Junior College Student Center  
Speaker: H. EUGENE PETTIS, Brewton Native,  
Flomaton Researcher  
Topic: Oral History and Its Application Regarding  
Flomaton, Escambia County, Alabama--  
Make Your Own Kind of History, Do Your Own  
Kind of Thing

Mrs. Georgia Hart discovered Eugene Pettis for us. Eugene is the son of Leonard and Louise Pettis of Brewton, resides in Flomaton and teaches school in Century. In his spare time Eugene's "thing" has been gathering Flomaton area history by tape-recording conversations with old-timers and history buffs. Eugene is active in civic affairs in Flomaton and spear-headed the tremendously successful July 4th celebration in Flomaton this year. We are not going to let Eugene get away now that we have him--everybody come out to hear him and help convince him that we need his youth and enthusiasm working with us.

FORT CRAWFORD DOCUMENTARY - COMING UP. The September issue of the Quarterly will contain a documentation on Fort Crawford, complete with bibliography, as researched by Mrs. M.G.(Annie Croak) Waters. It has been Mrs. Waters dream for years to once and for all dispel all doubts about Port Crawford, its existence and its history. She has done this, and also includes the military records of many of the men who served at Fort Crawford; proving that General Andrew Jackson did order the building of Fort Crawford as a part of a chain of forts to sustain against the Indians, the British and the Spanish, and that the fort was named for Lt. Joel Crawford who was killed by Indians in line of duty.

NEW MEMBERS - Mrs. Nellie Travis, Rt.3, Box 50, Brewton; Barnes F. Parker, 705 Evergreen Avenue, Brewton.

ANNUAL FALL PILGRIMAGE - Mrs. Jack (Doris) Bruner has been appointed to plan a Fall Pilgrimage for our group the latter part of October or first part of November. She will appoint her own planning committee and would like to hear any suggestions of places to go that any of you might wish to give.

ALABAMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION - PILGRIMAGE TO BREWTON AND TOUR OF HOMES - October 4th. Plans are well underway for this exciting day for Brewton with people from all over the state coming for a brief morning program at



SHEEP COUNTRY, BRADLEY, ALABAMA

By: J. F. Elliott

The sheep country I knew was in the early nineteen hundreds in the forest around Bradley, Alabama. Tobe Elliott in the Bradley community, John Wiggins south of Bradley near the Florida line, and Dallas Pedon to the south all owned herds of sheep that ran into the thousands. In those days all the land in the area was open range which simply meant that anyone with stock simply turned them loose to graze.

The forest was principally longleaf yellow pine. It is doubtful that the generation of today will ever see timber of that quality. Each winter the forest was burned off in order to remove the thick undergrowth. Scattered through the forest were dogwood groves of an acre or two. It was beneath these dogwood groves that the herds of sheep would bed down for the night or seek shelter from the hot sun during the summer days. Each herd consisted of approximately fifty sheep and their grazing habits were predictable within a mile radius of the home dogwood grove. Each herd had an old ram who was boss of the herd. In time, a young ram would mature and run the old ram from the herd. The displaced leader would then spend the rest of his life alone in the forest. There were terrific fights between the rams and it was not unusual for one of the participants to die of a broken neck. Their method of fighting was to back away ten to fifteen paces then run together, head-on, at full speed. If one happened to be in the forest at the time, their fighting could be heard from a long distance.

If you happened upon one of the dogwood home groves in the early spring you would see a sight you would not soon forget. Each of the yews would have a lamb - sometimes two. The sight of dozens of these little white snow balls bouncing around against a backdrop of dogwood in full bloom made a memorable impression.

The open range was good for the farmer in one way and difficult for him in another. While he could simply turn his stock loose to graze he was forced to build good fences around his farm in order to keep stock out. Most of the farmers in those days used rails to fence their fields. Fence rails were made by cutting an eight foot cut from longleaf pine and splitting it into rails. To split these rails either an iron wedge or one made from the blackgum tree was used, usually the wedges were driven by a mawl also made from the wood of a blackgum tree. Usually a rail fence was six to eight rails high.

Each sheep herd owner conducted a late spring drive each year, when all of his sheep were rounded up and driven to the home base. The reason for delaying the drive until late spring was in order that the lambs be old enough to follow their mothers. The purpose of the drive was to get all the owners sheep to the home base for shearing, culling and branding. The drive usually lasted two to three weeks. As the time for the drive neared, neighbors with good horses were recruited to assist in the drive. Several pens were built at the home base in order that the sheep could be sorted, i.e. one group to be sheared, one not old enough, lambs to be branded. Those rams not needed to service the herd were castrated.

The shearers placed the sheep on tables made for the purpose and used hand clippers to take the wool from the sheep. In those days he was paid 5¢ for each sheep sheared. The wool was then placed into large burlap sacks and was ready to be carried to market.

Sheep have a unique sense of direction. After a herd was serviced the drivers would drive the herd out and get them started in the right direction toward the grazing area from which they had been taken. They unwaveringly returned to their own grazing area even though it be miles away.

When I was a teenager, a friend and I were rabbit hunting in sheep count one morning. The old hound that was with us was trailing near a branch-head. (A branchhead is a spring with bamboo vines and gallberry bushes growing up all around). The hound was near these bushes when something began to shake them violently. The hound took off up the hill and my friend and I were about to do likewise when, by peering through the bushes, we saw what was shaking them. An old ram had his wool hopelessly tangled in the bamboo vines and could not get loose. Closer examination however, revealed that he had a greater problem. His horns had grown in such a way that the point of each horn was buried in his head just beneath each eye. My friend and I, using two old and dull pocket knives, spent three hours whittling off two inches of each horn in order to prevent blindness. The last we saw the old ram he was galloping over the hill.

--J.F.Elliott

Note: Ed Leigh McMillan adds to this story that Robbins & McGowin Company in Brewton bought wool and would store it until they had a railroad car load, then would sell the carload.

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MORE ABOUT BREWTON'S FIRST AIRPLANE

By: J.F.Elliott

Regarding the story of the airship that was supposed to land in Brewton in 1912, at that time a Mr. Hauss was the Superintendent of the Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company at Century, Florida. Mr. Hauss gave this aviator \$50.00 to fly over Century. He circled over Century and was forced down somewhere between Flomaton and Pollard. The next day so many of the employees of this huge saw mill were absent that the mill couldn't operate. They had gone to see the "airship."

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"THE CENTENNIAL ODE"  
(1876)

By: Sidney Lanier

DEAR LAND OF ALL MY LOVE

Long as thine art shall love true love,  
Long as thy science truth shall know,  
Long as thine eagle harms no dove,  
Long as thy law by law shall grow,  
Long as thy God is God above,  
Thy brother every man below,  
So long, dear land of all my love,  
Thy name shall shine, thy fame shall glow.