

ESCAMBIA ECHOES

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Editor
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NO NOVEMBER MEETING - PILGRIMAGE TO POLLARD TO TAKE THE PLACE OF THE NOVEMBER MEETING.

PILGRIMAGE TO POLLARD, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22nd, 1:00 p.m.

Leave from Courthouse parking lot in Brewton
Bring "covered dish" to spread, your drinks, eating
utensils, chair, and folding table if you have one.

We will leave for Pollard by motorcade at 1:00 p.m. Saturday, November 22nd, from the courthouse parking lot and will visit the remains of the downtown Pollard area facing the L&N Railroad where we will stop for a short while, then proceeding to the two Pollard cemeteries in which are buried the remains of many of our area's early settlers, then on to the Pollard Methodist Church where stands a church rich in history and where hangs the steamboat bell of yesteryear given to the people of Pollard. The pastor Rev. Otis Guy and members of the church promise a warm welcome, and to allow us to use their parsonage for the meal if it is too chilly outside. We will spread our "covered dish" meal "dinner on the ground" style. The Historical Society will furnish two roast turkeys and several members have been designated to bring dressing and giblet gravy. Everyone else can bring whatever they please in the way of vegetables, salads, pies, cakes, etc. Mrs. Doris Bruner will bring a chest of ice for those who need ice for their tea or cokes. Each person in addition to their covered dish, should bring their own drinks, eating utensils (plate, fork, knife, cup), chair, and folding table if you have one. Some of the tables will be used for spreading the food and those left over will be used by those who would prefer to sit at a table. Mrs. Bruner has done a wonderful job in planning this excursion--there is little left for us to do except enjoy; come, bring a friend and tell others to visit this historic place with us. In case of rain the pilgrimage will be held the following Saturday with the same time of departure.

New Members: Mrs. Audrey Ballard and Ray Jackson of Brewton; Gould Beech of Magnolia Springs, Ala.

9-Day Student Tour of Europe - Would you like to join with a local group for a 9-day Student tour of Europe? Adults are allowed to travel at student fare, which is a great savings. The countries to be visited are Holland, Germany, Switzerland, France and Belgium- (Italy optional). This group will leave Birmingham, Al. on March 6, 1976. The price of tour will include air fare on chartered plane, hotels and all meals are included. The price is less than \$600.00. If interested contact Mrs. Jewel Williamson, P.O. Box 212, Brewton, Al. or phone at home 867-5312 (if no answer call 867-4322)

THE FOXPIRE BOOKS, No. 1 (\$3.95), No. 2 (\$4.50), and No. 3 (\$4.95) can be ordered through Mike's Record Shop in downtown Brewton, for delivery within a week.

WE WERE THERE!
POLLARD, Escambia's First County Seat, 1868 to 1883

Until December 10, 1868, Escambia County was a part of Conecuh County with Sparta (a town of which nothing now remains except a depression in the ground for the hangman's pit) as the county seat. Pollard, located on the Conecuh River and the railroad, had enough inhabitants to swing the vote to make it the county seat for the newly-created Escambia County.

Pollard was a railroad junction and a turn table was located on the South end of town, but during the War the rails were taken up by Confederate forces and used to make the well-known war vessel "Old Ironsides." Steamboats ran regular routes in that day, witnessed today only by the bell from a steamer located in the Pollard Methodist Church given to the people of the town in gratitude for their kindnesses to the captain and crew at the time it was wrecked.

Pollard has been visited by the famous and infamous--Mark Twain, once stranded in Pollard because of a train wreck stated that he'd "rather die in vain than live in Pollard, Alabama." John Wesley Hardin, Rube Burrows and Railroad Bill all had Pollard escapades against their records.

Vol. 1, page 125, Memorial Record of Alabama, 1893, states that the 61st Alabama Infantry Regiment was organized at Pollard in 1863, and was sent to Virginia in January, 1864. According to Owens' History of Alabama, Vol. 1, page 424, in 1865 General J. H. Clanton had an engagement with Federal raiders at Pollard.

POLLARD'S SECOND HEYDAY
Mobile Register, February 3, 1952

HARDY POLLARD LOOKS AHEAD - An Oil Shot in the Arm, by C.E. Mathews, Press Register State Editor.

POLLARD, ALA.- Many years ago, Joe Hilburn, a Pollard native who became an acquaintance of the late John D. Rockefeller, Sr., wrote the oil millionaire: "Sir, if you want to find more oil, the place to look for it is at Pollard, Ala." Rockefeller, who remembered Hilburn as the locomotive engineer who had pulled his special train through Florida, replied by letter that he was getting a bit old for exploration, but that perhaps the search would be made at Pollard by younger men.

These younger men found oil in the Pollard community last month--the gushing kind of oil. And it so happened that the discoverers were men of Humble Oil & Refinery Co., affiliate of the Standard Oil Co. which Rockefeller headed.

TOWN REFUSED TO DIE- That's just one of the many stories they're telling around this amazing little town that despite repeated misfortune, has bravely refused to give its last gasp. The Rockefeller story was told by an authority on Pollard--spry and well-dressed Herbert Douglas Finlay, an old-time resident who has made a good living in the fields of merchandising, sawmilling and farming.

Last week, when we rolled into this town for a look back into its history, we were promptly directed to Mr. Finlay. Said our guide: "If you can stand a lot of walking, he'll tell you the whole story. He never stands still."

VISITORS COME FROM APAR- Mr. Finlay was still, however, when we found him. He was having lunch in his home, two-story house, on one of Pollard's well laid off streets. But in front of the residence were parked huge automobiles, from several Western states. One of the Finlay sons explained he had company--some people to talk about leases, etc. "You should have been here a few days ago. There was nothing but Cadillacs and they bore

tags from practically all the Western states." About that time, out came the elder Finlay and we were off on the story of Pollard.

SEES WIDESPREAD BENEFITS- "This oil discovery is a wonderful thing to happen to a little town that's been rakes by flood, fire and depression. We don't know how much oil is hereabouts, but we're hopefully optimistic. It will help Pollard...We're certain to get some development." Then, scratching his head vigorously, our host foresaw benefits to a large area of South Alabama and Northwest Florida. "I hope it will make another Houston out of Mobile," asserted the former merchant, "and that Brewton and Flomaton and other nearby towns benefit. There's enough glory in this development to share with neighbors and we certainly want that to happen." The comfortable chair in which Finlay saw in the living room didn't hold him long. He was up, with his cane, heading out in the street "where we can talk and see the town."

TOWN BUILT BY RAILROAD- Walking back and forth he explained that Pollard was built by the Mobile-Montgomery Railroad, and was named for Charles T. Pollard, an official of the road. During the War Between the States, the town was the depot and headquarters for Confederate troops detailed to watch Pensacola before Florida had seceded from the Union. In January, a sharp conflict occurred between Gen. J.H.Clanton and a body of Federal troops.

One of the biggest things that came Pollard's way in the early days was the decision to make it the county seat. But the seat of county government was doomed to disaster. The courthouse was burned three times and yellow fever broke up at least one session of court, Finlay says. "The gamblers burned the courthouse several times."

ONCE INUNDATED BY FLOOD- Finally, in 1883 the county government was moved to Brewton, 10 miles away, Pollard continued to thrive, however, until the 1929 flood. High waters of the Conecuh-Escambia Rivers swelled when power dams broke at Gantt and River Falls, inundated most of the town. "The water was waist deep in our living room," explained Mrs. Finlay. Merchandise in stores was ruined. Pollard staggered under the blow, for the flood had taken away the river bridge across which had been coming many people from Santa Rosa County, Fla.

HIT HARD BY DEPRESSION- Then the almost fatal blow came in the form of the depression that rocked America's economic system. Lindsey Lumber Co., one of the town's main industries closed down, and Pollard lapsed into a virtual sleep. Its bank and several large stores, housed in fine brick buildings closed. One still gets the idea of how desolate the town was at that time, when he walks down Pollard's street facing the railroad today. Those brick buildings are still closed. Weeds grow up to their doors. A number of one-time elegant homes stand deserted. Among these are some of the homes in which lived such families as the Leighs, the McMillans, the Lindseys and the Lyons, members of which moved away to Mobile, Brewton, and other places to take prominent roles in professional, business, industrial and social life.

FRIEND OF JUDGE LEIGH- Sure, Mr. Finlay remembers those folks. He and the late Judge Norvelle R. Leigh, Jr., former Mobile County probate judge, were friends and playmates in Pollard. He recalls also helping the family of Judge Norvelle R. Leigh, Sr., to move to Brewton after the county seat of government was shifted to that town. Judge Leigh was then probate judge of Escambia.

And he remembers that the first Mark Lyons, the father of Mark Lyons, Sr., head of a Mobile hardware concern, ran a store here. The original Mark Lyons, who at one time was a partner in the Hammel's store at Mobile, was the father of Joseph H. Lyons, a U.S.collector of customs; Albert

Sidney Lyons; L. LeBarton Lyons, former president of Mobile's First National Bank; the late Herbert Lyons, Mobile insurance man; Mrs. Lillie Lyons Hill, mother of U.S. Sen. Lister Hill; Miss Rosa Lyons, now a resident of Europe and Mark Lyons, head of McGowin-Lyons Hardware Co.

SOLD PEANUTS TO JURORS- Finlay sold peanuts to the jurors when Pollard was the scene of the annual court sessions. Then there was the time "Railroad Bill," a colored outlaw, show and killed the sheriff--Edward S. McMillan, father of Ed Leigh McMillan, Brewton attorney and landowner, who for years now has been active in promoting oil exploration. Railroad Bill became quite a fellow after getting into trouble with the law. He was a much-hunted man and came to the point where he'd shoot anyone meddling with him. According to Mr. Finlay, Bill sent word to Sheriff McMillan not to try to catch him, that he didn't want to kill the sheriff, but he surely would if the officer attempted to make an arrest. McMillan was determined, though to enforce the law and rid the country of the wave of box-car robberies by Railroad Bill. The two finally met and Sheriff McMillan was killed. The fugitive Bill was shot to death later near Atmore.

THE OLD CHURCH BELL- Mr. Finlay pointed to the Methodist Church down the street. "See that bell in the tower?" he asked. "That was given the church more than 70 years ago by an old river boat man. It not only calls worshippers to services, but it also becomes our fire alarm in emergencies, and is sounded to lead lost squirrel hunters from the swamp." There's no rush of a fire truck when the church bell sounds the fire alarm. In fact, there's no such thing in Pollard as an "organized" volunteer fire department. But the bucket brigade falls out swiftly. Aided greatly by a plentiful supply of water from artesian wells in many yards, the men and women wielding buckets have established an enviable fire-fighting record.

TOWN IS INCORPORATED- Pollard has been an incorporated municipality through most of its trouble. C.R. Dixon is its mayor, and perhaps will be calling the town governing body together rather frequently now that an oil field is developing.

Competent observers don't expect a boom in Pollard, but they do look forward to an improved economy. Land leasing has become so active that even lots in the town are under lease. Don't be surprised if derricks rise over the tattered old buildings of yesteryear.

The little village reached its peak population in the 1920s. At that time, it had 631 residents, but by 1950 the figure had dwindled to slightly more than 300. Many of the town's former residents are buried in Hillcrest Cemetery, atop the hill from Pollard. Near the spot where the oil well came in on Allen Moye's property is the burial place of old Confederate soldiers.

Folks traveling Highway 31 between Mobile and Montgomery, are hardly conscious of quiet little Pollard, for most of it sits back off the highway and along the L&N Railroad. But if oil wells keep coming in thereabouts, Pollard may become quite a conspicuous place on the map."

SEE YOU IN POLLARD - November 22nd!