

Escambia County Echoes

July 26, 1981

Mrs. Lillie Ervin Wiggins Coker

Mrs. Lillie Ervin Wiggins Coker was born on January 14, 1885 to John Gilmore and Florence Brewton Wiggins, Sr. in Tunnel Springs, Alabama.

At an early age, Lillie's family moved to Back Bay, Biloxi Mississippi. There, Lillie loved living on the water, enjoying her "Tom Boy" days, fishing, boating and generally enjoying the waterside country. Schooling was lacking, since the teachers taught only about three months out of the year; still, Lillie managed to complete the seventh grade. Her father died when she, the oldest of five children, was but thirteen years old.

Not long after this, the family moved to Brewton for better schools and general working conditions. Support of the family fell on Lillie's shoulders while she was still very young. She became an assistant to Miss Lutie Glaspie, a Brewton dressmaker. After a short time spent at this, she went to work in the Escambia County Courthouse for her uncle, Mr. Jack Holland, and Malcolm McLellan when they held the office of Tax Assessor and Tax Collector. During this time, Lillie married George W. Coker in 1915, (Mr. Coker died in 1940).

During World War 1, while working at the county courthouse, Mrs. Coker worked as a telegraph operator in the Louisville and Nashville Railroad depot at night. This was considered at the time to be very valuable civilian service as a part of the nationally unified war effort. During World War II after 30 years at the County Courthouse, she worked as Matron for Boeing Aircraft in Seattle, Washington for several years.

Mrs. Coker was the first woman to run for public office, the office of Tax Collector in 1930's. Defeated but undaunted, she ran twice more for the office in unsuccessful bids. She believed that "women have as good brains as men and should be allowed to use them." She also believed that women should be paid the same as men if they performed the tasks as well. Some years later, this independent and liberated lady encouraged Martha Kirkland to run for the office of Probate Judge.

Mrs. Coker was a very devout member of the First Methodist Church. She loved children and she believed in helping others, often following these convictions at her own expense. She was proud of the fact that the city in which she lived was named for her great uncle, Ed Brewton.

Lillie loved gardening; she maintained a garden until she broke her hip at the age of 86. She lived a full life in years and deeds; she died on February 7, 1981 at the age of 96 and was buried at Union Cemetery in Brewton, Alabama.

Survivors are her daughter, Mrs. Lily Coker Smith of Pensacola, Florida, and her stepson, Jennings Coker of Alco, Brewton, Alabama. Jennings was very young when he came to her; to him, she was his real mother.

By: Lily Coker Smith

Emma Knott Freeman

Emma Knott Freeman was born April 6, 1910 in Brewton, Alabama, one of three children. She was the daughter of the late W. J. and La Una Talbot Knott. On her maternal side she came from a family of educators and teachers in Pike County, Alabama. Emma grew up in East Brewton, her family moving there when she was a child. She attended East Brewton schools, and in 1927, she graduated from Downing Shofner School with her high school diploma. Later she received a B. S. degree in education from Troy State University and then a M. S. degree from Auburn University. She began a most successful teaching career in Escambia County, Alabama, teaching in Graves School, Huxford, Bradley and W. S. Neal in East Brewton. She also taught in Jay, Florida. At W. S. Neal she was a most beloved and respected teacher of high school English. She was teaching there when she retired. She was married to the late "Red" Freeman. After retirement she went to Tuscaloosa to live with her only son, Thomas K. Freeman. She died in Tuscaloosa, May 27, 1981 and was buried in Ft. Crawford Cemetery in East Brewton. She is survived by one son, Thomas K. Freeman, and one brother, Prentice Knott of Pensacola. During her career, Emma Freeman was active in the Downing Shofner School Alumni Association, active in the East Brewton Methodist Church, teacher of a Sunday School class, member of Escambia County Teachers Association where she was active in Teachers' In-Service programs.

By: Rita Jane Boykin

Reverend Noah Parker

Rev. Noah Parker, Sr. was born April 10, 1804 in Green County, Georgia and died at Oakey Streak near Red Level, Ala., on October 3, 1867. He was the son of Mary Polly Parker and Samuel Parker; the grandson of Sarah Gordy and John Parker, who served in the Army of Delaware during the Revolution. Brothers were John, Noah, Peter, and Samuel Parker. They settled in the Roberts Community in 1817. After living here for five years, they moved back to Georgia for two years and then returned to Roberts Community accompanied by two sisters and their husbands, Martha Nancy Parker (Mrs. James Stewart Foshee) and Sarah Parker (Mrs. Miles J. Herrington).

The Parker family helped to organize Elim Baptist Church and school in 1825. Father Alexander Travis was its first minister and Winnie Hunt Parker, wife of John Parker was the school's first teacher. She was teaching school in Dalton, Georgia when she married John Parker, October 25, 1814.

From the early minutes of the annual meetings of the Bethlehem Baptist Association (copies of which are in possession of Escambia Historical Society) Noah Parker served as one of the 1st domestic missionaries and in this capacity served numerous churches in the association. He preached at Elim in 1836-37-44-46-47-49-50 and 1851 when he died in 1867. He was officially licensed to preach the gospel in 1840 and became Elder in 1846. In 1851, he moved to Oakey Streak in Butler County and was pastor at Oakey Street until he died.

Rev. Noah Parker served in Company E, Fifth Confederate Calvary along with many of his Parker kinsmen. This Company was mastered in 9/17/1861 at Pensacola, Florida.

Noah Parker married Katherine Eddins, daughter of William and Hannah Eddins, January 12, 1825. She was born in South Caroling on August 23, 1809. Their children were:

Nancy-----	married	Richard J. Odom (C. S. A. casualty)	Luther Searcy
John Travis-----	married	Amanda Jane Savell	
Noah Jr.-----	married	Isabelle Bennett	
Elisha-----	married	Thomas Henretta Searcy	
Mary Catherine-----	married	Hohn Dennis Kennedy	
Elizabeth Abigail--	married	Jeremiah Morton Savell	
William Hawthorne--	married	Mary Ann Amanda Spears	
Martha Jane-----	married	John Wesley Leflore	John Dennis Kennedy
Eliza-----	married	Andrew Jackson Searcy	
Sarah Ann Matilda--	married	John William Henson	
Samuel-----	married	Martha Ann (Alice) Bush	
Benjamin Wilson----	married	Martha Jane Hammond	
Andrew Jackson----	died in	infancy	

Katherine Eddins Parker died at Oakey Streak on December 28, 1863. Noah Parker married Frances Dickens November 13, 1864. Their only child, a daughter, Frances Parker was born October 10, 1865. Rev. Noah Parker is buried in a Parker plot at Fairmount Cemetery at Red Level, Alabama, along with his first wife, Katherine Eddins, His brother Samuel and his mother Mary Polly Parker. His mother, Mary Polly Parker was living with her sons Noah and Samuel on Oakey Streak when she died Dec. 12, 1861. She was the mother of all the Parkers who came to Escambia County in 1817.

By: Dr. Odis Little

Museum News

The museum, in cooperation with the University of South Alabama, will be participating in an archaeological investigation of the site of the massacre at Fort Mims in Baldwin County, Alabama in the month of August. Students and volunteers from the museum and Jefferson Davis College will participate in these excavations as a part of an interinstitutional cooperation program devoted to the study of South Alabama's military history.

The museum is also working with the college to establish a major in Cultural Resources Management for an earned Associate's Degree. This would include instruction in such classes as Archaeology, Museum Science, and other courses and training offered at the college through the museum. This would be the only such curriculum available in the state's post-secondary Educational System if approved.

All memorials sent in please write them as complete and accurate as you can as this copy will go in the memorial book we will publish later on.

Anybody may send in a memorial of his forbearer. We are anxious to have all of the Escambia County Natives that is possible to obtain. So please help us out and send in any of your loved ones that have gone on.

A HISTORY OF WHAT IS GENERALLY  
KNOWN AS THE EVERGREEN BEAT

A series of articles written by Young Madison Rabb in 1879 to be reprinted, edited, and indexed by David Sanders and Alex Luttrell. These articles contain many heretofore published.