

# ECHOES

## Newsletter of the Escambia County Historical Society

February, 2003 -- Vol 30, No. 2

Ranella Holley, Editor

New members were introduced, as well as special guests. Mary Kathrine Luker was thrilled to introduce Margarie Heigler as her special recruit to the Society membership.

The Society President announced that Mary Ann Hawthorne continues to make slow progress, but her return to the Society is doubtful in the short term. Well wishes were extended to Mary Ann and her family.

Our speaker for January was a lady we all know and love - Sue Beasley. Sue is the director of the Escambia County RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program). We heard about the many programs sponsored by the RSVP, as well as getting a brief resume of previous directors -- ECHS member, Helen Hildreth, was the first director of the program and Helen, who was in attendance this day, was introduced to us as a former director -- a fact few, if any, of us are aware. The RSVP has just recently been placed under the Homeland Security umbrella and Ms Beasley was eager to tell us her excitement to be a part of such an important Federal agency. She also related to us how the Society could take advantage of the transport vans operated to RSVP should we need their services for traveling distances which would otherwise be inconvenient for Society members to drive in convoy. The RSVP recently received a \$9,000 grant and Sue outlined her tentative schedule for putting the money to good use. We were also informed that the RSVP will help senior citizens complete minor tax filings for the State of Alabama as well as Federal returns. The RSVP works with the American Cancer Society to give aid and comfort to those in treatment and recovery, and to sponsor three events for senior volunteers, such as a sit-down dinner for all volunteers and to sponsor a Christmas and Thanksgiving dinner. Indeed, Sue Beasley is a busy woman and of Escambia County are fortunate to have her on our side.

In closing the meeting, the President presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Ms Beasley for her fine presentation. She was also given a China plate depicting the 100th anniversary of the City of Brewton, and a dozen pink roses to grace her home or office. Following the ceremony, President Searcy pointed the way to a reception, which was held in the parlor. Our hostesses for this occasion were Lynn Wixon and Louise Stone.

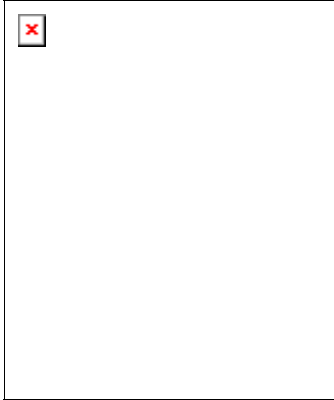
The February speaker will be Chief Lawrence Weaver of the Brewton Fire Department. It is expected that Chief Weaver will speak on topics related to recruitment programs, training new recruits and how they are trained to handle hazardous situations whether a fire or dangerous materials (HAZMAT). The Chief will also speak on how new firemen are trained to deal with trauma and to work with paramedics to aid the injured. We certainly look forward to his presentation.

**The Escambia County Historical Society will meet at 3:00 pm, Tuesday, February 25 at the Thomas E. McMillan Museum Meeting Room.**

---

---

**Dr. William Leroy Broun**



Dr. Broun gave to the cause of education in Alabama nearly 20 of the 75 years of his life. He was born in Virginia, and educated in her academies and in her University, graduating in the class of 1850. He taught first in Mississippi; he was professor of mathematics from 1854 to 1856 in the University of Georgia; then he established Bloomfield Academy, a classical school near the University of Virginia

Dr. Broun entered the Confederate army at the outbreak of the war, and was made lieutenant of artillery. He was a profound mathematician and a skillful civil engineer.

He knew so much about artillery that he was put in command of the arsenal at Richmond with the rank of lieutenant colonel. It was by his orders that the Confederate arsenal was blown up when the Federal troops compelled General Lee's army to leave Richmond.

After the war he again devoted his life to education. During a period of 35 years he filled with distinction positions in the University of Georgia, Georgia Agricultural and Mechanical College, Vanderbilt University, Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical College, and the University of Texas. In 1882, he was elected to the presidency of the Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical College, and, save for the session of 1883-84, he held this position until his death in 1902.

Such is the outline of the life of Dr. Broun, whose great brain powers and whose work as a teacher made him one of the foremost educators of America. His modest life commanded the love of all who knew him, and his death called forth tributes of praise from his old friends of the University of Virginia and from the good and wise of all sections of the country. Virginia, Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, Texas, and Alabama all have had the impress of his wonderful influence and example, but Alabama enjoyed the closing years of his services when all his powers of brain and soul were at their best.

In the Confederate service Dr. Broun discovered the general ignorance of men upon scientific subjects. His Bloomfield Academy had not neglected the teaching of chemistry and physics and practical civil engineering. He had thus early in life shown his regards for scientific courses of instruction. This great master also loved the culture and power of Latin, Greek, and other languages. Experience had

taught him that instruction in literature should be combined with courses in science. His education was so broad and liberal that he could have successfully filled any chair in the College. He was a good judge of men. In the selection of his faculty he was guided by what he thought of the fitness of the professors, and not by what the professors thought of him. It was fortunate for Alabama that one so well fitted for the broad work of education should have been placed at the head of its school of science.

As president Dr. Broun took charge of the College with a firm hand, and under his careful management it was soon recognized as one of the leading scientific schools of America. Soon after entering upon his duties he formed the departments of manual training, electrical engineering, and biology; subjects which never before had been courses in a Southern college. He came into direct personal relations with thousands of young men and women who were among the most helpful citizens of the country. Many of his students went into professional work in all countries of the world, and carried with them habits of accuracy in business, the love of truth, and the manliest principles in conduct and thought.

His long connection with the Polytechnic Institute (Alabama Polytechnic Institute now Auburn University) and his knowledge of the needs of the times combined to shape educational work not only in Alabama but throughout the country. Taking charge when money and equipment were wholly insufficient, he planned so wisely and so well that every year showed marked improvement in the great school over which he presided. The legislature acknowledged his abilities and wisdom by giving large appropriations to its support. The people of the State showed their confidence in him by sending an ever increasing number of young men to be trained under his guidance.

As a speaker Dr. Broun charmed his listeners by the vigor of thought rather than by the eloquence of words. He was always interesting, but he seemed to be a little embarrassed when rising to address an audience. This embarrassment lasted only for a moment, for his mind acted directly upon the subject before him, and he made it bright with the order of truth. The listener soon became lost in the great thoughts of the speaker, and he never forgot the impressions of the hour.

The discipline that was maintained by Dr. Broun appealed to the manliness of young men. With a strong love for human kind, he brought his lofty spirit down to the plane of the students under his control, and through sympathy led them into noble habits of mind and conduct. "Fear God, and work! Take it home to your bosoms, write it on your hearts, make it the rule of your life. Fear God and work," is said to be the motto with which he closed his last public address.

Ever kind and courteous, refined and modest, gentle and strong, Dr. Broun was beloved and honored by all who came into his presence. His memory will not perish among men, and his influence for the good of his age will bear fruit in all coming time. Guided to success by his masterly mind, the Auburn University is a monument to his greatness.

=====

To our Members -- January was the month for renewing dues. Annual dues are \$10.00 per person. Membership dues are used entirely for publishing newsletters, journals, maintaining facilities at the Alabama Room, and to sponsor our annual Christmas dinner. Please send your dues to Peggy G Bracken, 602 Edgewood Dr, Brewton, Alabama 36426

Anyone wishing to add a loved one to our memorial plaque should send your request and a donation of \$25.00 or more to the treasurer. A notice of the memorial will be placed in the newsletter at the time the name is added to the plaque. Those members wishing to make a tax-exempt gift to the Society may send the gift to the treasurer.

If you know of any person or business who would like to sponsor the publication of a newsletter or journal please contact Ranella Holley at the telephone or e-mail address noted below.

Books now available and on sale:

History of Escambia County, \$50.00 - 55.00 (mailed)  
Headstones & Heritage, \$35.00 - 40.00 (mailed)  
Escambia County Historical Society Cook Book -- \$7.50 - \$10.00 (mailed)  
Heritage of Escambia County, \$64.80 - \$70.00 (mailed)  
2003 Escambia County Historical Society Journal, Iss. 1 - \$5.00 - \$7.00 (mailed)

Get in Touch with Us

Escambia County Historical Society, P. O. Box 276, Brewton, AL 36427; Phone: 251-809-1612; Email: [Ranny1@earthlink.net](mailto:Ranny1@earthlink.net)