

ECHOES

The Newsletter of the Escambia County
Historical Society

April 2004 - Vol. 31, No. 4
Editor, Ranelia Holley



Fig. 1: Restored Victorian House in Pollard, Alabama. Photograph courtesy of Paul Merritt.

THE APRIL MEETING

For the **April 27th meeting**, Society members have been invited to **Pollard, Alabama, to tour the Victorian house beautifully restored by Sally Finlay, which is pictured above.** Sally will also speak about the history of Pollard with our group.

Members who wish to travel as a group to Pollard can **meet at the Museum on the Jefferson Davis Campus.** RSVP is providing group transportation. **The RSVP Van will be at the Museum by 2:00, and the**

group can leave by 2:15. Members can, of course, travel on their own to Pollard or join the RSVP van at the college and caravan to the meeting.

A GROUP PICTURE

Ann Biggs-Williams wants to make a **group photograph** of members and guests at the **Historical Marker located on Highway 31 at the intersection to Pollard** (see photograph below). **Plan to meet at the Marker by 2:45** if you are taking your own car.

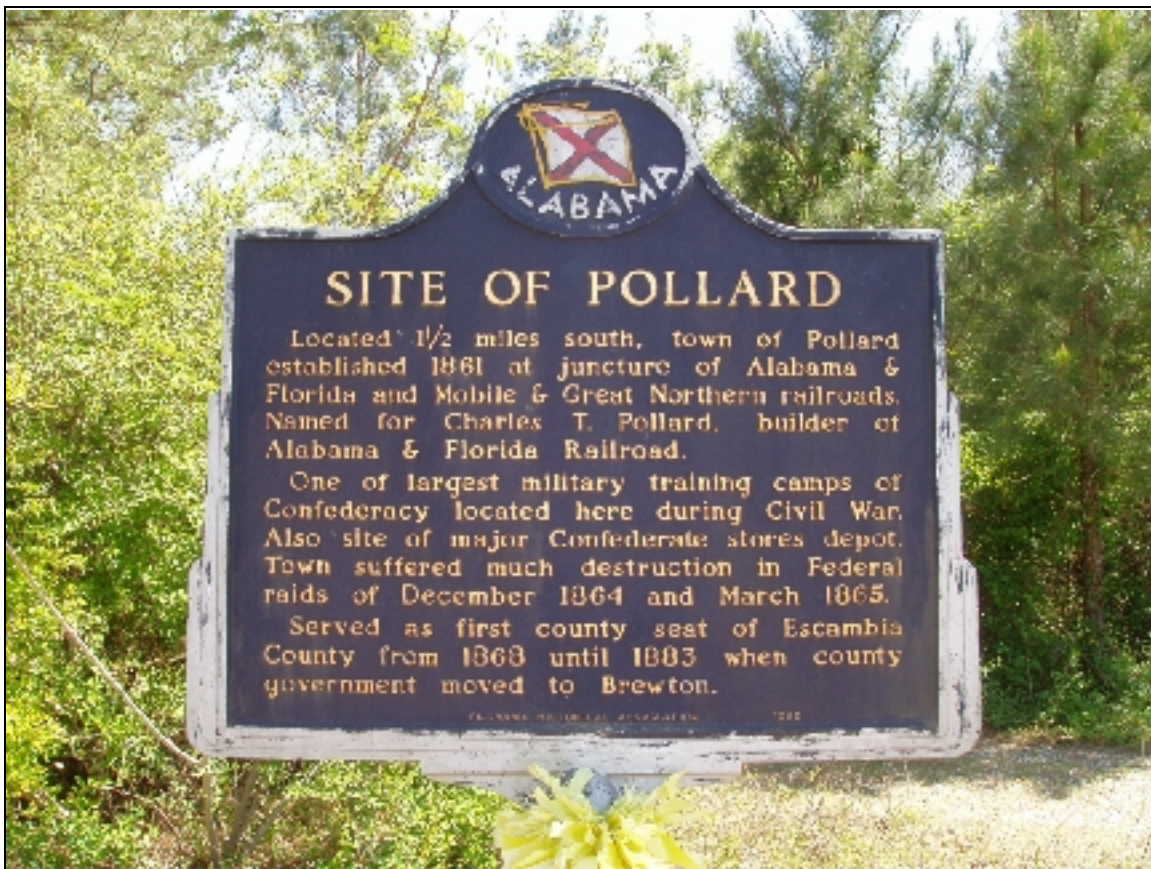


FIG. 2: Historical Marker for Pollard.

Photograph courtesy of Paul Merritt. **In April 1982**, the Escambia County Historical Society placed its **first historical marker in the county** at the Pollard intersection of Highway 31 to commemorate historic Pollard.

- ② **For more information about Pollard’s history, see the sections on “Pollard, Alabama” and “The Pollard Bridge” in this newsletter.**

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to new members: **Alan Robinson, Timothy Currie, Randolph N. Currie, Charlie Squires, and Virginia Grand.**

THE ALABAMA ROOM HAS A NEW LOCATION, NEW HOURS, AND NEW COORDINATOR

The Alabama Room collection **has been moved to the Thomas E. McMillan Museum** on the JDCC campus. The Historical Society welcomes **Carol Madden, who has recently been named to the newly created position of Museum Coordinator.**

The new hours for the Museum and the Alabama Room collection will be 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM on Tuesdays and Thursdays - other times by appointment.

In a message to the Newsletter, Carol describes her duties as:

- ② To maintain the Museum holdings in an orderly fashion
- ② To add materials to the Museum collection as needed
- ② To arrange for Museum tours and events, and Alabama Room Collection access by appointment as needed.
- ② To coordinate with the Escambia County Historical Society in the display and maintenance of the Museum collection and the Alabama Room Collection.

She adds, “I am honored to have such an opportunity to be a part of what I consider to be a wonderful asset to our community and look forward to working with the Historical Society as well as JDCC.”

THE MARCH MEETING

Society members and guests enjoyed a visit to **Down South**. Hosts **Beverly Howell Clifton and Jim Clifton** gave us a tour of the beautifully restored home and its gardens. Members were happy to **sign a petition** asking the city to **rezone the area** in which the house is located so that Beverly and Jim can continue to offer visitors to Brewton a place to stay while in the city, as well as citizens of Brewton a beautiful setting to have meetings and offer entertainment.

MEETINGS FOR MAY AND JUNE

Look at this great lineup of ECHS meetings for the next two months, which has been arranged by Ann Biggs-Williams. Ann sends this invitation, “Plan to join us in May at 3 p.m. when we return to our regular meeting place, the Thomas E. McMillan Museum at JDCC in Brewton.”

May 25

Duane Quates, a former resident of East Brewton will be our guest speaker. His topic will be "The Significance of Fort Crawford."

Duane is the son of **Larry and Ann Quates** who currently live on the Ridge Road. Duane graduated from W.S. Neal High School in 1991 and quickly joined the U.S. Navy with his twin brother.

After the Navy, **Duane married his wife Rebecca** and moved back home where he **started college at Jefferson Davis Community College**. Duane graduated from JDCC Summa Cum Laude in 1998. Afterwards, Duane attended **the University of West Florida** in Pensacola where he received his **bachelor's degree in anthropology** in 2000, graduating Magna Cum Laude.

Currently, Duane is pursuing his **doctoral degree in anthropology with a concentration in historical archaeology at Michigan State University** in East Lansing, MI. Duane and Rebecca have one son, Ethan, and they reside in Grand Blanc, MI.

June 22

Representatives from the Alabama Historical Commission will discuss the **process of submitting an application for listing a building on the Alabama Historic Register and/or the National Historic Register.**

AN INQUIRY

Meredith Palmer of Moleley, Virginia, is searching for information on her great grandmother's family which lived in Escambia Co. in the 1930's. She would like to find any school pictures, birth, death, or marriage records, and any information on the following people:

- (1.) **William Green Creel**, who was forty-four years old in 1930;
- (2.) **Beulah Sanders Smith Creel**, who was thirty-two in 1930 (She is Meredith Palmer's great grandmother. Meredith believes Beulah passed away @ 1937 and may be buried in Huxford.);
- (3.) **Elma Jean Smith**, who was eleven in 1930 (This is Meredith's grandmother; she was from Beulah's first marriage but was listed as a Creel on the census. She would have been in public school.)
- (4.) **Ercell Inez Smith**, who was seven in 1930;
- (5.) **William G. Creel (JR?)**, who was two and one half in 1930;
- (6.) **Evyline H. Creel**, who was four months in 1930.

Meredith found these members of her family recorded on the census in Jack Springs, Dist.12. **Her address is: 15743 Fire Light Place, Moseley,**

VA 23120; **Phone Number:** [804-639-2330](tel:804-639-2330); and **Email:** [<mmpalmer99@comcast.net>](mailto:mmpalmer99@comcast.net).

POLLARD, ALABAMA – This material on the history of Pollard by Ann Biggs-Williams is based on Annie C. Waters' History of Escambia County, Alabama.

Some of Escambia County's earliest settlers lived in the Pollard area which became a town with the coming of the Alabama and Florida Railroad in 1854-61. Pollard was chosen as the seat of government when Escambia County was formed in 1868 because it was centrally located and was at that time the most progressive town in the county due to the business created by the railroad junctions of three lines--Alabama and Florida (Montgomery to Pollard), the Florida and Alabama (Pensacola to Pollard), and the Great Northern (Tensaw to Pollard). Pollard was named for Charles T. Pollard, an official of the A & F Railroad. Pollard is located in Sections twenty-one and twenty-eight, a short distance from the Conecuh River.

According to Mrs. Waters, Pollard has been associated with the famous and the infamous. Mark Twain was once stranded in Pollard during a flood. Rube Burrows, Railroad Bill and John Wesley Hardin all left their mark. Hardin once lived in Pollard. The movie, "The Lawless Breed," was made about Hardin and partly filmed in Pollard.

The Pollard Bridge

The story of "The Bridge at Pollard" first appeared in The Heritage Book of Escambia County, Alabama, and is reprinted with permission of the author.

The Bridge at Pollard

By Paul Merritt

This is a story about an almost forgotten bridge that used to connect Escambia County to an almost forgotten little sliver of that county and of Alabama. The north/south border between Alabama and Florida is defined by a river, the Perdido. But, the southern border of Alabama and Escambia County is defined by a line of latitude, the 31st Parallel. These borders were defined at treaty tables in Paris in the 17th and 18th Centuries and remained in dispute until the US Congress settled a dispute in the 1820's, wherein Alabama attempted unsuccessfully to claim all of Northwest Florida lying south of Alabama, down to the Gulf of Mexico.

The Conecuh River, however, forms a natural border as it runs more or less east and west across the southern edge of Escambia County and for many years those south of the river in this sliver of Alabama that lies atop Santa Rosa County Florida, felt more a part of Florida than of Alabama. They were cutoff from the commercial centers north of the river and from the all important railroad. But, very late in the 19th century, some modern steel bridges replaced the ferries, foot bridges and rickety wooden structures which spanned the river south of Brewton and at Pollard. And, today, a most modern bridge spans the river at Brewton, but the bridge at Pollard is gone and almost forgotten. Why?

According to Annie Waters in her *History of Escambia County* the steel bridge at Pollard was built in 1901 at a cost of \$15,000. And, the first two people across it were Capt. H. D. Finlay and Miss Cora Mayo, Pollard residents. And, according to Harold Hudson, the barber at Jay, Florida, the last person across the bridge was in about 1937 when Don Fails drove a Harrison Mercantile Truck off the south side of the bridge, just as the never-to-be-rebuilt bridge collapsed behind him. But, if one looks carefully, you can still see the concrete piling in the river where the bridge once stood, and the road from the bridge into Jay and Mount Carmel is still faintly visible from an airplane.

The Pollard Bridge was important to the Alabamians who lived in the “sliver” and to Floridians who lived in northern Santa Rosa, some thirty-five long miles from the commercial center at Milton. Instead of making the long trip to Milton or Pensacola, these folk could easily slip over the bridge to Pollard where they had access to commerce and to the railroad. So, the Pollard Bridge was a busy route, so busy that Boyd Adams, an Afro-American entrepreneur (should I mention AA?), established a thriving ice cream stand selling home made ice cream on the road leading to the Pollard side of the bridge. However, with the gradual decline of Pollard as a commercial center, with better roads and better motor vehicles to get to Milton, and with the coming of the bridge between Jay and Century Florida, the need for the Pollard Bridge declined and the maintenance suffered to the point that people today, who still remember crossing the poorly maintained bridge in the 1930’s, enjoy telling how scary a crossing it was as the old structure would creak and groan as the car slowly crept across the wooden floor of the bridge.

The steel span of the bridge was set up high on concrete piling so as to be above the ravages of floods. And, the steel truss work stuck up high over the bridge floor. The floor itself was made of boards running crosswise with a single lane for traffic, defined by lengthwise boards that formed the two

tracks for the wheels. On each end of the bridge, there was a wooden ramp set at quite a steep angle so as to get you back down to the river bank. And, there was a protective railing and hand banisters on each side of the bridge, running up the ramps and all the way across. It was the ramp on the "Florida side" that collapsed as Don Fails drove his truck off the bridge around 1937. And, for several years, you could still get up on the bridge from the "Pollard side", but you couldn't go across unless you wanted to jump for it.

Strange as it might seem, it was the 18th Century border issue mentioned above that spelled the death of the Pollard Bridge because whenever the bridge needed maintenance or replacement, Alabama thought Florida should participate in the funding but since the "Florida side" of the bridge was actually north of the 31st Parallel, and thereby in Alabama, Florida felt that Alabama should pay the whole cost. This controversy went on for several years as Richard Finlay, who lived on the Florida side, was a Santa Rosa County Commissioner and was related to the Finlay's of Pollard, led the cause for Florida to participate in rebuilding the Pollard Bridge. But, in 1943, with the need for steel for the war effort at a peak and with little hope of Florida or Alabama ever rebuilding the bridge, the steel structure was removed and donated to the war effort.

And, that was the end of the Pollard Bridge. But, old folk on the "Florida side" still to this day get excited and get a few tears in their eyes when they tell about driving past Mr. Joe Jernigan's log cabin, across the rickety bridge and stopping at Boyd Adam's stand for ice cream before arriving in downtown Pollard. But, nowadays it is a long ways to Pollard, so nobody goes there much anymore. Bye Pollard Bridge, you served us well. .

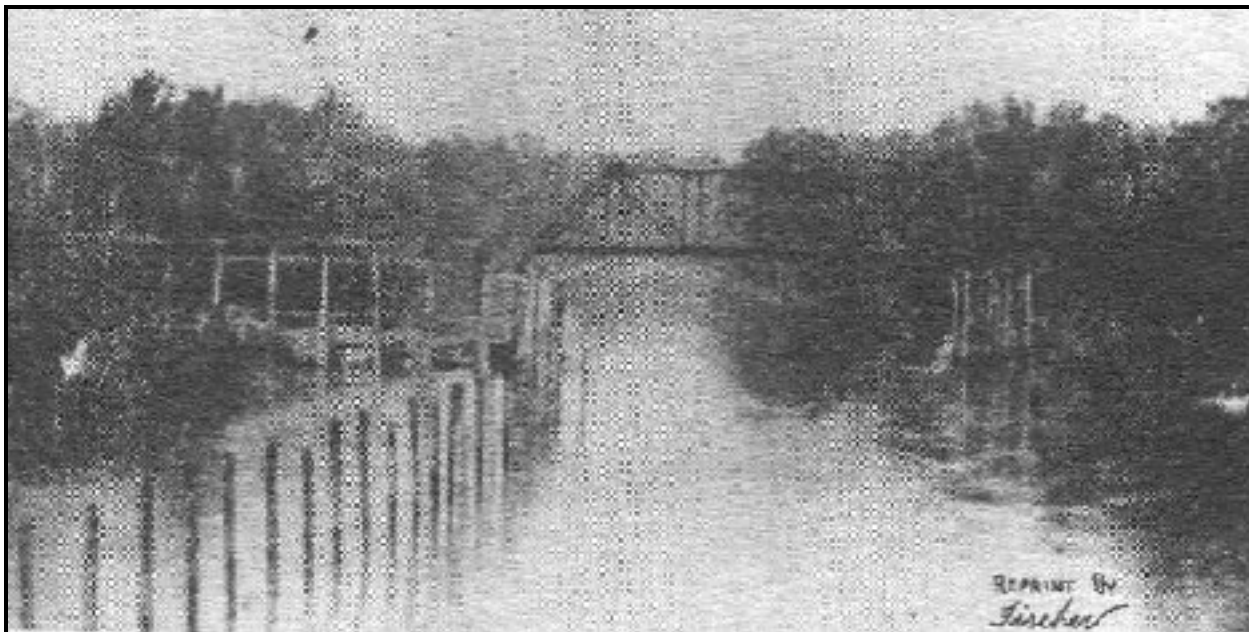


Fig. 3. The Bridge at Pollard. Photograph from The Heritage Book of Escambia County, Alabama.

<u>Books for Sale</u>	Mailed	Regular Price
<u>A History of Escambia County</u>	\$55.00	\$50.00
<u>Headstones and Heritage</u>	\$40.00	\$35.00
<u>Escambia Historical Society Cookbook</u>	\$10.00	\$ 5.00

Get in Touch with Us

Address: Escambia County Historical Society, P. O. Box 276, Brewton, AL 36427;

Phone: 251-809-1612; **Email:** Ranny1@earthlink.net

Membership: \$10.00. Clip the following form and send to Treasurer: Peggy Bracken, 602 Edgewood Drive, Brewton, AL 36426.

Membership Renewal/Application Form

Name _____

First	Middle	Last
--------------	---------------	-------------

Address _____

Street	City	State	Zip
---------------	-------------	--------------	------------

Phone _____

Email _____
