

## September Meeting

### Jimmy and Sierra Stiles Present Fossil Study

**B**irmingham natives, Jimmy and Sierra Stiles, are field biologists who enjoy doing environmental education featuring live animals.

Over the past decade or so, Jimmy & Sierra have dedicated their time as employees and/ or volunteers to many diverse and wonderful organizations in Alabama such as Oak Mountain State



Jimmy and Sierra Stiles

Park, Ruffner Mountain Nature Center, Cahaba River Society, Birmingham Audubon Society, The Boy Scouts of America, The Environmental Education Association of Alabama and Friends of the Locust Fork River.

Currently, the couple works together on reptile and amphibian research related to longleaf pine management in Conecuh National Forest and the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center in lower Alabama.

They also travel to elementary schools teaching kids about our native snakes and other reptiles and introducing them to these beautiful and often misunderstood animals of scale and slime.

In their spare time Jimmy and Sierra like to search for fossils. It is this interest that lead them to discover a 35 million year old Manatee in the Yellow River.

Along with the "Yellow River Manatee" they have also found



Other examples of large mammal fossils found in the Escambia County, Alabama area are on display at the Thomas E.

lots of other fossil deposits throughout the Conecuh and Sepulga rivers.

Come hear them speak about their finds and see some of their more interesting fossils on September 26, 2006. It's at the Thomas E. McMillan Museum, JDCC, Brewton campus, 3:15 p.m.

Remember, the speakers will talk on fossils found in the Conecuh and Sepulga Rivers, including but not limited to the recent find of a manatee fossil in the Conecuh National Forest. o

### Minutes for August Meeting

**P**resident **Ann Biggs-Williams** opened the meeting and welcomed 32 members and guests. Guests included:

- (1) **Ted Urquhart**, President of the Alabama Cemetery Preservation Alliance
- (2) **Charman Burson Ramsey** of Dothan, who is writing a novel about the Fort Mims massacre (for more information see her website <[southernstyle.com](http://southernstyle.com)>); and

(3) **Ashley Grantham**, Director of Christian Education at the First United Methodist Church, Brewton.

#### Announcements:

Although the complete rules for the "oldest grave marker contest" are still being formulated, anyone interested in submitting an entry must remember that, for this contest, the death date is the most important date, not the birth date [see more on

*(Continued on page 2)*



Unloading at the cotton gin

#### Inside this issue:

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#### October ECHS Meeting

The History of Atmore's Williams Station Day will be the timely topic for the October 24th meeting of the Escambia County Historical Society. The meeting will begin at 3:15 p.m. Remember, there will be no meeting in November.

# Minutes (AUGUST—cont'd)

*(Continued from page 1)*

this on page 3].

**The society needs the following positions filled:**

(1) Cemetery Preservation Representatives for Escambia County. Previous volunteers had to resign.

(2) Cards and Flowers Chairman. **(NOTE:** Virginia Clark volunteered at the end of the meeting to be in charge of just the cards, since Susan who is in charge of the Sunshine Fund is the one to buy flowers)

(3) Research on the Rosendwald schools in our area.

(4) Volunteers to work on the bronze plaques to be placed onto buildings and sites in Escambia County that are of historic value (Ranella and Paul Merritt volunteered for this position at the end of the meeting).

**The program for the September 26 meeting** of the Society will be a presentation on fossils found in the Conecuh National forest.

! In old business, the minutes for the July meeting were approved with one correction.

The Treasurer's report for August was also approved.

! In new business, Treasurer Susan Crawford announced that the Curtis Finlay Foundation has given the society \$10,000 to fund a project of placing bronze plaques on buildings and sites in Escambia County judged to be of historic value.

Those sites or structures receiving plaques must be at least 100 years old. Ranella will have an article explaining the details next month.

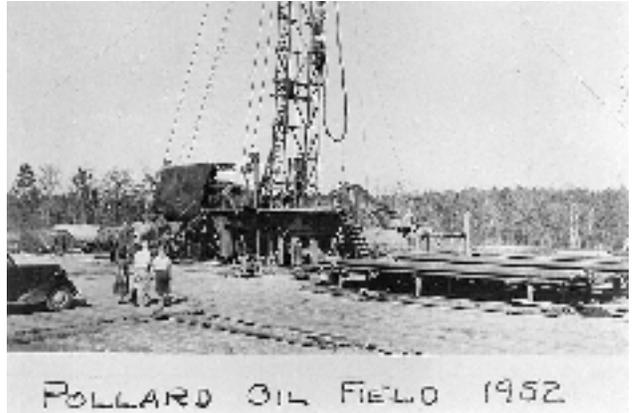
! The August program featured Dr. Gregory A. Waselkov who spoke on the massacre at Fort Mims using a PowerPoint program of photographs and diagrams to accompany his presentation on "History and Archeology Collide in the Tensas."

Dr. Waselkov is a Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Center for Archeological Studies at the University of South Alabama.

! Sherry Johnston served refreshments. o

## YOUNGSTER REMEMBERS DAD'S PICTURES

As a child, Bob McGoun, Pensacola, traveled all over the South Alabama area, from town to town, with his dad. Bob, Sr., was a Navy pilot instructor, based at Whiting Field near Milton.



*(Picture from The Alger-Sullivan Historical Society Collection)*

As he flew, the elder McGoun noticed little winding dirt roads leading into the Escambia/Conecuh River swamps and noted his observations on his navigational maps.

He'd also make note of certain landmarks and unusual topographical characteristics that piqued his curiosity. Then every weekend, he'd load up his family in the Packard and trek off over the countryside to locate these sights he found from the air.

The accompanying photograph is an example of one of their trips, to the Pollard oil field in 1952. o



*[Picture courtesy Terry Watson—names by Watson and Arrington]*

**THE TOWN OF FLOMATON HAD OPEN HOUSE** for its new Fire House on September 11, 2006. Coupled with a memorial to the victims of the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers, the event brought a large crowd.

Mayor Dewey Bondurant gave a history of the Flomaton Fire Department, much of which came from his research in The Escambia County Historical Society's Alabama Room. Bondurant pored over issues of The Flomaton Journal from about 1948 back to the mid 1930s, both in the hard copies and microfilm.

The experience was indeed a learning one for the mayor, since he said he didn't even know such a fine facility (the Museum and Alabama Room) existed here.

At left, (1947) Flomaton's first fire truck, flanked by city officials: L-R, Mayor D.D. Arrington (Flomaton Bus Station Café); Mrs. R.F. (Hortense) Dixon (Town Clerk); E.L. Brantley (School principal); A.W. Watson (Grocer); J.E. Jackson (Five and ten store); W.D. McKay (L & N RR); Houston McNider (Carpenter); not shown, L.D. Weaver (Sand and gravel products) o

# Bits and Pieces

## From the President

We welcome on board Virginia Clark from Pensacola who has agreed to take the vacancy for the chair to send greeting cards. Virginia has an interest in journalism and writing and has been attending the ECHS meetings with her friend Kathryn Wilkinson.

We are glad to have Virginia on board as a member and a committee chair. If you know of a death or illness that impacts an ECHS member, please contact Virginia at ginlee@cox.net and kindly supply the mailing address from the phone book if you know it.

If you do not have an address, contact me or Jerry Simmons, the membership chair, and assist Virginia by providing an address when you notify her of the need to send the card.

**Paul & Ranella Merritt** have agreed to chair the committee for the Historical Plaques. We are indebted to the **Curtis Finlay Foundation** for a donation of \$10,000 to initiate this process but it will take all of us working together to make it come to fruition.

**ECHS has been contacted by the City of Brewton** about the wording for a historical sign marker for Union Cemetery. The Solon Dixon Center also requested input on wording for a historical sign marker for the Dixon Homeplace.

**ECHS member Alan Robinson** was the featured Brewton Standard profile recently and a Sunday front page article featured former ECHS member John Hoomes, son of ECHS secretary Jacqueline Stone. John, an avid fossil collector, has donated part of his collection to Turtle Point Environmental Science Center and John's collection includes some state records in fossil finds.

John has completed his job at the Wright Brothers Museum and will be relocating to Texas to be a park ranger.

*"ECHS is offering a one year gift membership and a copy of the book, Headstones and Heritages, to the person who discovers the oldest marked grave in Escambia County."*

**Nelda Stephenson has donated her research on Absalom Fuqua, the father of Southeast Alabama Fugas. See this link:**

<http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?db=neldastephenon>

You can go there and check out any name in Nelda Stephenson's research and print it off for individual register reports, pedigree, ancestors reports, etc. It should be a big help to you. Keep the link handy near your computer.

**The Escambia County Historical Society wants your help in located the oldest "marked" grave in Escambia County.**

Lee Peacock, a staff writer with the Monroe Journal, has been looking for the oldest grave in Monroe County and learned of a marker dating back to 1818 in Old Texas' Middleton cemetery. The grave marker is for Elizabeth Stroud and the marker says she was slain by Indians at the Ogly massacre in 1818.

(As an update, Mr. Peacock has received information on a grave dating to 1810 in the Eliska Community but that has not been verified.)

ECHS is offering a one year gift membership and a copy of the book, Headstones and Heritages, to the person who discovers the oldest marked grave in Escambia County.

The marker date should be a death date, not a birthdate. Deadline for entries is October 31, 2006. Entries should be E-mailed to: [escohis@escohis.org](mailto:escohis@escohis.org) or mailed to The Escambia County Historical Society, P. O. Box 276, Brewton, AL 36427.

A photo of the grave must be submitted with legible info on the gravestone. Unmarked graves are excluded from the contest and only photos of easily accessible graves marked with legible tombstones can be submitted for the contest. Submitted photo

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Volunteers also needed in Alabama Room

If you've been mulling over nothing to do after you've mopped floors, taken out the trash, trimmed the hedges, weeded the flower beds, washed dishes, and cooked supper, then the Alabama Room has a spot for you!

There are lots of things to do there to keep your interest. Now you won't have to settle down in front of the TV, watching

that "vast wasteland" any more.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, anyway. Between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., there are articles to clip and file, inventories to verify, old Journals to catalog, and computer data to enter. You might even find yourself interested enough to do research for folks who call, email, write, or walk in.

Whoa! There could even be something so intriguing that you'd find yourself wanting to put together an article for the newsletter or the journal!

So do not fret, dear readers. There will always be room for you at the Alabama Room to volunteer your time. It's not like it's wasted, because what you do there today will be around for generations. o

# Announcements

(Continued from page 3)

tos will be verified.

! "Hurricanes, Wars, Commerce, and Opportunity Along the Gulf Coast" is the topic of the 25th Annual Gulf South History and Humanities Conference which will be held October 5--7, 2006 at Pensacola Beach, Florida.

The conference is an annual event sponsored by the Gulf South Historical Association, a consortium of Gulf South colleges and universities from the states of Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. This year the conference is hosted by Pensacola Junior College.

The registration fee of \$35 includes a Thursday evening reception at the Hilton Garden Inn on Pensacola Beach, access to all conference session and a free one-year membership in the Association. Tickets for the banquet, annual meeting, keynote address and a courtesy cocktail reception are all included in the additional banquet fee of another \$35. For more info, contact Dr. Brian Rucker, brucker@pjc.edu

! The Escambia County Historical Society was honored to have Dr. Rucker from Pensacola Junior College attend our July ECHS meeting.

! Willellen Elliott has donated a beautiful coffee urn to the society to replace one which has disappeared.

! The Alabama Room now has a copy of the **Historical Atlas of Alabama, Vol. 2**. It is accompanied by a smaller volume with information just on Escambia County.

! The Alabama Archives will resume Saturday services October 7. Check the website at [www.archives.alabama.gov/intro/hours.html](http://www.archives.alabama.gov/intro/hours.html) for more info.

! Kay Ross has the refreshments for September.

! We had a productive board meeting in September. Five officers, two committee chairs, and two trustees were present. Thanks to all.

Tuesday, Oct. 10 is the next ECHS Board meeting. Officers, chairs, trustees, are invited and it's open to members. Bring your brown bag lunch at 11:30 in the Elvira McMillan Parlor, Thomas E. McMillan Museum

! The Alabama Preservation Conference is October 12--14, Tutwiler Hotel, Birmingham. Phone 334--834-2727 for information. There will be a cemetery preservation mini-workshop on Oct. 13th. See [www.alabama-cemetery-preservation.com](http://www.alabama-cemetery-preservation.com)

! Alabama Historical Association will have its fall meeting on October 14th at Marion in Perry County. You may call Burt Rieff at 256-740-0278 or E-mail [brief@aol.com](mailto:brief@aol.com) for more info. AHA

meeting is Oct. 14, 2006.

! The Alabama Historical Commission has voted to offer its vacant executive director's job to retired Air Force Col. John A. Neubauer of Montgomery. Interim directors have served since Lee Warner resigned in 2004.

! Next regular society meeting, Tuesday, September 26 at 3:15 p.m. in the museum gallery room.

! There are some community classes going on at Reid State Technical College this Fall. Harriet Hyde is going to be teaching classes on Conecuh County History. Sherry Johnston is going to be teaching a class on "Organizing your Family History--putting your ancestors in their place" on Tuesday nights beginning Oct 3rd thru Nov 7th from 6 pm to 8 pm.

Cost is \$30 with lots of handouts and wonderful research tools!

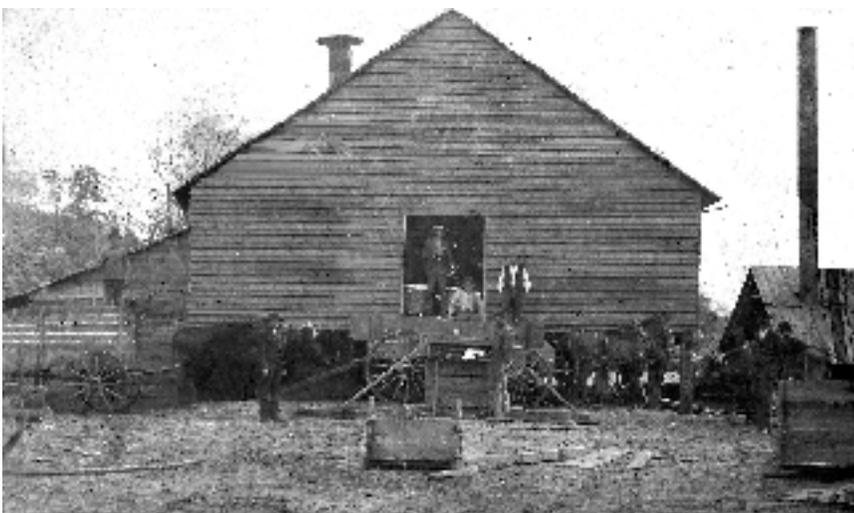
! The Center for the Arts & Humanities of Auburn University is sponsoring an interdisciplinary symposium on 18th century naturalist, William Bartram on Friday, October 27th at Auburn University. For more info or a registration form, visit [www.auburn.edu/cah](http://www.auburn.edu/cah) on the web or call 334-844-4948.

**CORRECTION:** In the article on the "History of the Pollard Methodist Church" that was in the August 2006 ECHOES, the date should be the 1830's, rather than 1890's that Methodists were in the area and missionaries held "camp meetings" in the area. We apologize for this error.

## Unloading Cotton

*Do you know where in South Alabama and when the photograph (left) was taken?*

*(Picture courtesy of Joiner family)*



# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## World War II Ships Had Familiar Names

### SEPULGA AND CONECUH

Two ships with inauspicious beginnings find themselves with names common to us, but uncommon to the world at large.

#### The Sepulga

The first vessel was an oil tanker built in 1920 under U.S. naval supervision by the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Co., Newport News, Va., for the United States Shipping Board.

Launched on April 21, 1920, it was named the "Fleetco" and briefly used by Columbia Steamship Company. The navy decided it had use for the ship in late 1921 when the ship was transferred to the Navy by Executive Order, but not before it was renamed USS Sepulga (AO-20) in November 1921.

The proud new ship was delivered to the Navy at Mare Island, Calif., on December 13, 1921; and commissioned on January 13, 1922, Lt. Arthur G. Somers, USNRF, in temporary command.

The ship was in the process of being converted for Navy use when it was surprisingly placed out of commission in the Pacific Reserve Fleet at Mare Island. Decommissioned on April 15, 1922, Sepulga was laid up at Mare Island for the next 18 years. Then she was brought out and reconditioned with modern equipment and



**Originally called the "Fleetco," this oiler/tanker was re-named USS Sepulga (AO-20) on 2 November 1921**

altered to meet new specifications. She was re-commissioned on February 5, 1940, Comdr. Arthur R. Ponto in command; and in March, after sea trials and tests, she commenced operations for the Naval Transportation Service.

***"Two ships with inauspicious beginnings find themselves with names common to us, but uncommon to the world at large."***

Based at San Pedro, she carried fuel, general cargo, and passengers from the west coast to Guam, the Philippines, Wake, Midway, and Hawaii during the remaining months of peace in the Pacific. On 7 December, she was en route from San Pedro to

Pearl Harbor. At mid-month, she arrived in Hawaii, where she delivered fuel to carriers Lexington, Saratoga, and Enterprise. On 3 January 1942, she sailed for California to take on cargo and fuel for the Society Islands.

Upon arriving at Bora Bora on 18 February, she fu-

eled merchant and Allied naval ships through March; then sailed for San Pedro. By mid-May, she resumed fueling duties at Bora Bora and continued them until 16 July when she again sailed for the west coast.

After reaching San Pedro on 5 August, she again departed her California base on the 24th and headed north to Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians where she dispensed petroleum products into the fall, interrupting those duties only for runs to the Seattle area to refill her tanks.

In January 1944, Sepulga returned to the Central Pacific. Temporarily assigned to ServRon 4, she arrived at Funafuti on the 15th; took on Navy and Marine passengers; and, on the 23d, got underway for Kwajalein. Arriving on 4 March, she provided fuel and water to fleet units at that atoll. Later reassigned to ServRon 10, she remained at Kwajalein into June; then moved to Eniwetok to provide similar services, to serve as receiving

# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## World War II Ships (cont'd)

(Continued from page 5)

ship for passengers in transit, and to act as headquarters for the fuel section of her squadron. In October 1944, she proceeded to Ulithi where she served as station ship and headquarters ship through the end of the war.

On 4 November 1945, the World War I-designed oiler got underway for the United States and inactivation. Arriving at San Francisco on 29 November, she was decommissioned on 1 March 1946; struck from the Navy list on 20 March; transferred to the Maritime Commission on 1 July; and sold, for scrapping, to the National Metal and Steel Co., on 10 December.

### *Conecuh*

[N. A river in Alabama.]

The construction of Conecuh (AO-108) was canceled 18 August 1945.

Dithmarschen, a combination oiler and supply vessel was built by F. Sehicau, Danzig, in 1938, for the German Navy. Taken over by British authorities at Bremerhaven when World War II ended, Dithmarschen was allocated to the United States Navy January 1946 by the Inter-Allied Reparations Commission.

She was placed in service May 1946 as Dithmarschen (IX-301), with Captain A. W. Maddox, USNR, in charge. Departing Bremerhaven May 8, she arrived at Philadelphia Naval Shipyard May 19 for conversion to a naval vessel.

The need for a one-stop oiler-



*The U.S. Naval Tanker USS Conecuh (AO-100) at sea (wikipedia.com)*

replenishment type ship had been illustrated by the war in the Pacific, and Danzig was used for experimental work in this field since she had been developed specifically for this type of duty.

On October 1st, her name was changed to Conecuh and she was re-

*“The experience gained during her operations led to the development of the fast combat support ship (AOE) in the United States Navy.”*

designated AO-110, but lack of funds delayed her conversion and she was placed out of service October 24.

Her classification was changed to AOR-110 in September 1952 and she was converted to a replenishment fleet tanker. Conecuh was

commissioned in February 1953, Commander M. B. Freeman in command. Following her shakedown in the Virginia Capes, she steamed to Greenock, Scotland to take part in NATO Operation "Mariner" (16 September-20 October).

She sailed for a tour of duty with the 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean (5 March - 28 May 1954), then underwent an extensive overhaul at Norfolk (30 June 1954 - 4 January 1955).

She remained at Norfolk except for refueling units at sea, operations in the Caribbean, and off the Florida Keys (25 October-7 November 1955), until decommissioned and transferred to the Maritime Commission for retention in the Maritime Reserve Fleet 3 April 1956. She was stricken from the Navy List on 1 June 1960.

Conecuh proved the feasibility of the combination oiler-replenishment ship. The experience gained during her operations led to the development of the fast combat support ship (AOE) in the United States Navy. O

*(info from Wikipedia.com)*

# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Handwritten Document Raises Questions

A handwritten document was found at the Conecuh County Courthouse which says:

*Board of Health, Conecuh County  
Evergreen, Ala.. July 23rd 1888*

*I, A.A. McKittrick, a licensed practicing physician of Conecuh County, Alabama, do hereby certify that George S. McGraw is physically and constitutionally disabled to perform manual labor in consequence of a ??? of leg and hand received when a child of six months [sic]. The extensor tenders of left foot and muscles of same leg are contracted. The extensor tenders of left hand are somewhat contracted. The same hand is also atrophied. I consider him maimed and he is therefore exempt from public manual labor.*

*A.A. McKittrick  
Filed in office Sept. 10th 1888 and duly recorded  
??? Walker, Judge*

Luther Golden, researcher, made the following note:

**NOTE:**

"The Rev. McGraw farmed, taught school and walked to some distant locations while establishing churches in South Alabama. The reason for this statement found in the courthouse is not known."



The Rev. George Sherman McGraw and Levinah (Lizzie) Dantzer McGraw with their first child, Rubie, born in 1894

*"Board of Health, Conecuh County"*  
*Evergreen, Ala July 23rd 1888*  
*I, A.A. McKittrick, a licensed practicing physician of Conecuh County, Alabama, do hereby certify that George S. McGraw is physically and constitutionally disabled to perform manual labor in consequence of a ??? of leg and hand received when a child of six months. The extensor tenders of left foot and muscles of same leg are contracted. The extensor tenders of left hand are somewhat contracted. The same hand is also atrophied. I consider him maimed and he is therefore exempt from public manual labor.*  
*A.A. McKittrick, M.D.*  
*Filed in office Sept 10th 1888 and duly recorded*  
*P. B. Walker, Judge*

# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Brewton Red Hats Tour Museum

*By Jerry Simmons*

Ohhhh, the pleasure that comes when a group of beautiful ladies come to tour the museum.

Way back in November 2005, the Brewton Red Hats came a-calling, and if I'd had a red hat I would have put it on and joined them!

What a crew! There was fun and laughter all the while they were here, and I am not sure who enjoyed the frolicking more, the ladies or me.

Any time you have a group, or even just your family, that wants a tour you can call the museum's number, 251-809-1528.

Regular hours for the museum and the Historical Society's Alabama Room are Tuesday and Thursday from 9-3. Of course, other days and hours are available by request. Just call a couple of days ahead of time to make arrangements. O



*L-R: Dorothy S. Roe, Susie Adkisson, Jane Turner, Linda Fendley, Hollie Williamson, Jeanette Stoshak, Lois Normand, Delores Finklea, Voncile Fountain*



Doris Bruner, on the right, is pictured talking to the August ECHS speaker, Dr. Gregory Waselkov from the University of South Alabama. Mrs. Bruner, longtime ECHS member and a current trustee, was at the August meeting after a long absence due to health issues. The entire membership was delighted to see Doris out again.

Welcome back, Doris...

# ECHOES

THE NEWSLETTER FOR  
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Escambia County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 276  
Brewton, AL 36427

Phone: 251-867-7332

E-mail: [escohis@escohis.org](mailto:escohis@escohis.org)

We're on the web!

[www.escohis.org](http://www.escohis.org)

## Books for Sale Price

|   | Mailed  | Regular |
|---|---------|---------|
| <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 |
| <u>Wildflowers of The Escambia CD</u>       | \$17.50 | \$15.00 |
| <u>A Picture Story of Century DVD</u>       | \$17.50 | \$15.00 |
| <u>Old 100 in Indiana DVD</u>               | \$17.50 | \$15.00 |

Clip the following form and send to Treasurer,  
ECHS, P.O. Box 276, Brewton, AL 36427.

Notice that pages 5 through 8 are "Journal" pages. On these pages are longer and often more in-depth stories of interest usually found in the Society's *Journal*. You may expect at least 2 journal pages in each newsletter (this month, there are 4 pages).

Due to rising costs and to keep membership rates the same, the membership voted to include journal-type pages in the newsletter instead of making a separate publication. We hope you enjoy this new format.

If you have a suggestion for a topic, or will help in research, please let us know!

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

First Middle Last

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Street/P.O. Box City State Zip

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Dues (\$15.00/person) \_\_\_\_\_ (or \$100.00/person Lifetime)

Donation \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Your interests \_\_\_\_\_

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You will help with \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- ❖ Please double check your records to see if you have paid your Society Dues for 2006. Dues are to be paid at the beginning of the year.

*ECHOES, The newsletter for the Escambia County Historical Society is published monthly except November. Editor, Ranella Merritt; Assistant, Jerry Simmons*

*Comments are welcome. You may email the Society at [escohis@escohis.org](mailto:escohis@escohis.org) or call 251-867-7332.*

Mailing address:

**ECHOES**

*Escambia County Historical Society  
PO Box 276  
Brewton, AL 36427.*