

March Meeting

Tuesday, March 25, 2008, 3:15 p. m.

Thomas T. McMillan Museum

The March Program

Stephanie Salter will present readings from the play Crossties: Tales from the Junction, which she has written as a part of Flomaton's centennial celebrations.

With her experience as assistant director for the To Kill A Mockingbird production in Monroeville and as a player in the cast, as well as her writing credentials (She taught creative writing, speech, and drama and has written several one-act plays.), Stephanie has the background for bringing to life characters and scenes from Flomaton's history,

Since much of the material for the play has come from resources in the Alabama Room, Stephanie and ECHS President Jerry Simmons (who is writing a history of Flomaton which will be a companion piece for the play), are



Playwright, Teacher, Theater Director, Actor, Stephanie Salter, our Guest Speaker/Presenter for the March Program.

grateful to the members of ECHS who have done the research on Flomaton history, preserved it, and provided access to it through the development of the Alabama Room..

Jerry comments that the area newspapers in the Alabama Room have been a big help and that the book and the play about Flomaton and its history work together to bring to life the material they have found..

The play (which Stephanie will be previewing for us in her presentation), will be performed at the Flomaton High School Auditorium in August of this year.

Patricia Hultz, English/Drama teacher at Flomaton High School and Adjunct Instructor at JDCC is assisting Stephanie with the production and direction of the play.

The April Meeting

Escambia County Commissioner Larry White will be the guest speaker. White, 56, has been a county commissioner for over a decade and was Chairman for 9 years. He plans to speak on county government operations. He and his wife, Karen Diane, have 3 children and reside in Flomaton.

Commissioner White is also known as "Whiteshoes" when doing Flomaton High School sports play-by-play over radio station WPFL 105.1 in Flomaton.

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Flomaton Bus station 1951

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March 2008

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Minutes of the February Meeting

President Jerry Simmons welcomed guests Sue Nicholson of Pensacola (guest of Katherine Wilkinson), Carolyn Larrimore of Brewton, Gladystine Parker of Brewton, Susan Blair of Brooklyn., (guest of Ann Biggs-Williams), and guest speaker Dr. John Hall and his wife.

Jacque Stone read the minutes from the January meeting. They were approved as read.

Susan Crawford gave the financial report which was also approved.

In a report from the Historical Plaques Committee (Paul Merritt and Alan Robinson are coordinating this project with Sally Finlay), the society learned that Sally Finlay (the Curtis Finlay Foundation has donated the funds for the project) is working on a list of sites as well as wording for the plaques.

At this point, the decision has been made to use bronze plaques and probably those which will be placed on a stand rather than those mounted on the wall of a building or home.

Jerry Simmons introduced Dr. John Hall, guest speaker, who presented a program on William Bartram in Alabama. Dr. Hall

used photographs and other illustrations to illustrate his point that William Bartram - 8th century artist, naturalist, botanist, and writer- is important to Alabama and its early history.

Dr. Hall reported that although William Bartram and his famous botanist father, John Bartram, were natives of Philadelphia, William Bartram as a result of his travels in the south, on three different occasions, became the first literate and knowledgeable scientist to write about Alabama.

Williams Bartram's writings and drawings from his "Travels" give us images and details of the state which do not appear in any other source. Struck by the beauty and richness of the landscape and the ecosystems which sustained it, Bartram is also the first to give detailed accounts of the life style of Native Americans of the area.

In appreciation for his talk, Jerry presented Dr. Hall a copy of the book A Pictorial History of the Brewton Area and , from Ann Biggs-Williams, a copy of William Bartram's Children's Book, a book that is rare or hard to find.

Jacque Stone and Betty Hoomes provided refreshments.

New Books in the Alabama Room

Darryl Searcy has given a copy of William Bartram's Travels and Other Writings

Kevin McKinley donated a copy of his book Shadows and Dust Vol. II: More Stories from the Confederate South

Through a gift from Barbara Dixon Jerry Simmons was able to purchase a copy of William Bartram's Bartram on the Southeastern Indians.

A Query

Dave Bethea has sent us this query

"I am looking for information on a talent show that was held in Flomaton, I believe at the gym, hosted by Hank Snow.

"I believe this was in the early sixties. I do know that my brother Melton Bethea won the contest and that the prize was a guest appearance on the Jim and Jesse television.

"I do remember his appearance on the show where he sang Johnny Cash's song 'Folsom Prison.' Any information about the contest and date would be appreciated."

Replies can be sent to : P.O. Box 276 Brewton, AL 36427;Phone: 251-867-7332 or at the Society email: [E-mail: escohis@escohis.org](mailto:escohis@escohis.org)



The picture at left is typical of operators at a telephone switch board. It was taken circa 1953 at Flomaton, when the telephone company's switchboard was located on the second floor of the Rexall Drugstore. All long distance calls were routed through switchboards like this.

One can imagine the banks of operators in a city with thousands of people.

The Museum has an example of a switchboard and an operator on duty. Say Hello to her when you visit the Alabama Room.

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Reuterville? Pensacola Junction? Whiting? Which Would It Be? How Flomaton Got Its Name

Flomaton was first named Reuterville by Major Reuter, the contractor who built the railroad line to Pensacola and who drove the last spike connecting the two divisions in 1872.

Also used in these early years was the name Pensacola Junction, which was the popular choice of names. Thus the town was called by both names for some time. Pensacola Junction was contrived because the location of the town was indeed a junction between the Mobile and Montgomery railroad and the railroad to Pensacola.

Eventually, Mr. Whiting, the railroad stationmaster of Reuterville/Pensacola Junction, decided there needed to be a consistent way to refer to the settlement. Just as Major Reuter had done, Mr. Whiting decided to name the settlement after himself.

However, the U. S. Post Office was not satisfied to have so many names for the small community, so William Townsend, then Postmaster, was directed to come up with a definitive name.

Those considering what should be the definitive name could not use "Floral" (the combination for letters in Alabama and Florida), because there was already a Florida. Finally, Dr. James A Wilkinson solved the problem when he suggested that combining the first 3 letters of FLORIDA with the last two of ALABAMA would be a new combination of the two state names. This idea was accepted and the Post Office Department added "TON" for "Town" and thus the town became Flomaton.

When the name "Flomaton" was submitted to the Post Of-

Annual Garden & Front Porch Tour in Evergreen

Sherry Johnston, Society member from Evergreen, has sent us the announcement that the Asulikit Club of Evergreen, a service centered organization which provides funds to various community service projects, is planning its annual Garden & Front Porch Tour. Scheduled for the last Saturday on May 31, the activities will begin around 10:00 a. m. Along with a Plant Sale and Seed Swap, there will be a garden tour, activities for kids, and door prizes.

Tickets are \$5.00. For more information contact Sherry by telephone at her work phone 251.578.2670 (or drop by and see her at the Evergreen Public Library). You can also reach her at her cell phone number 251.227.0500. You can also get in touch with Sherry at this email address <canebrakesociety@yahoo.com>.

Sherry says she would also love to have suggestions and ideas.

Annual State Historical Association Meeting

The Alabama Historical Association will hold its sixty-first annual meeting April 17-19 at the Shoals. Local historical associations are urged to submit nominations for the James Ray Kuykendall Award, which is given to a local historical society in Alabama for outstanding achievements and for significant contributions

to a greater appreciation of community and state history.

For more information, contact Mark Wilson, Ph.D., Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities, Pebble Hill Auburn University, AL 36849.; phone (334) 844-4948; and email www.auburn.edu/cah

ECHS Meetings for 2008

April 22	September 23
May 27	October 38
June 24	November—No Meeting
July 22	December Christmas Party TBA
August 26	

ECHS Officers for 2008—2009

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President—Jerry Simmons • Vice-President—Alan Robinson (Darryl Searcy is serving in this position at present) • Secretary—Jacque Stone • Treasurer—Susan Crawford | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicist—Lydia Grimes • Librarian—Jacque Stone • Historian/Curator—Jerry Simmons • Editor Newsletter/Journal—Ranella Merritt |
|--|--|

School Photographs



(Left) Unknown school
Do you recognize this school?

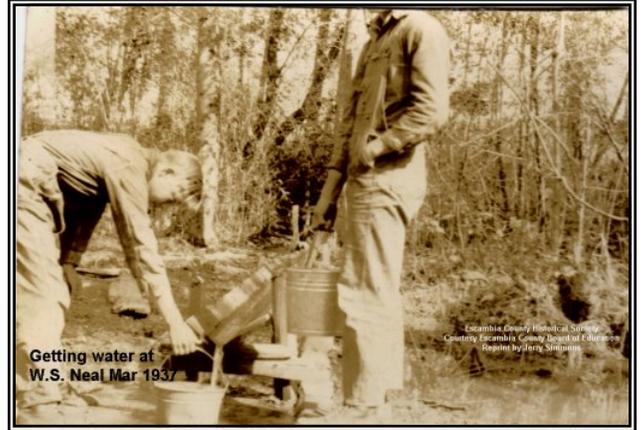
(Below) Getting water at
W.S. Neal in 1937



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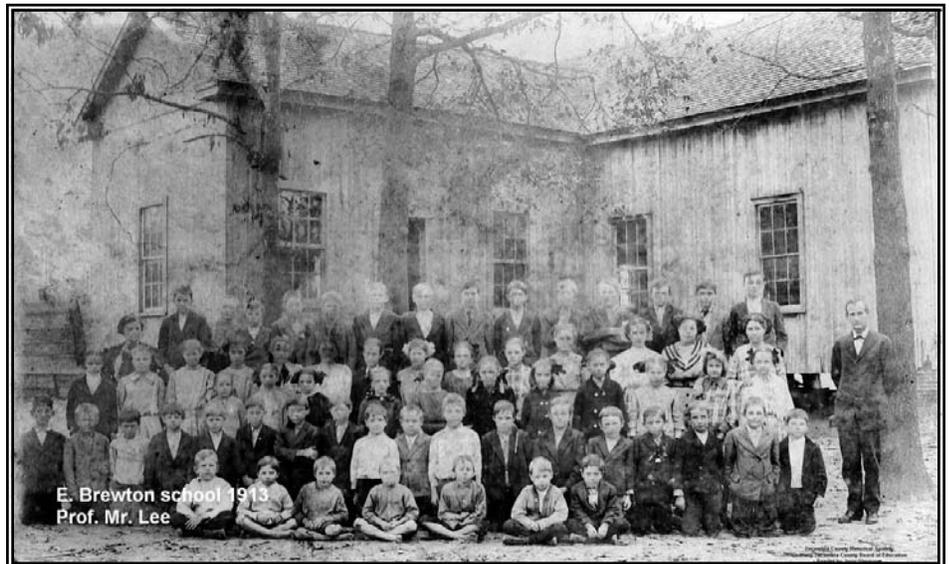


Getting water at
W.S. Neal Mar 1937

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East Brewton School 1913

Snapshots

The February Meeting

At the Left is Guest Speaker Dr. John Hall who gave a program on William Bartram in Alabama



Hostesses for the February Meeting: Betty Hoomes and Jacqueline Stone



Pictured from the left are Martha Corbin, ECHS Secretary/Librarian Jacqueline Stone, ECHS President and Museum Coordinator Jerry Simmons and Ken Corbin.

Martha and Ken Corbin visited the Museum this week to help sort and file data. They also brought newspaper articles and many pictures to add to the Alabama Room collection.



Shown in the Pictures above and to the right are students from local high schools visiting the Museum Tuesday, March 18.



The ECHS *Journal* Section

Miss Mabel is 100

By Ann Biggs-Williams

This is a story about a 100 year old lady who lives in a 90 year old house. Mabel Frances Jones Blair, "Miss Mabel" as she is affectionately called, turned 100 years old on March 4, 2008. If you lived to be 100 years old, where would you like to be living? For most of us, our preference would be "at home." Home is exactly where you will find Miss. Mabel with her daughter, Susan Blair. Miss Mabel's other children live out of town but often return to visit and help.

Home for century old Miss Mabel is the Blair Home, located in downtown Brooklyn, Alabama in Conecuh County, not far from the Escambia County line. The Blair house with the big front porch, flanked by columns and four chimneys was built approximately 1917, and is a landmark at the intersection of County Road 6 and County Road 42 in Brooklyn, Alabama. The first owner was a Dr. Haggard. We don't have detailed information on Dr. Haggard, but we do know the house was next owned by Dr. Wesley Alexander Blair, Sr. In fact, three generations of the Blair Family have since lived under that roof. The Blair Family speculates that the house plan came from Sears and Roebuck.

Miss Mabel came to the Blair Home as the wife of



Blair Sr.'s son, Mr. W. A. Blair Jr. The elder Dr. Blair had died and the young couple moved in with the groom's Mother several years into their marriage. Mabel's husband was a teacher/principal at the Brooklyn School. Mabel and W.A. both had an appreciation for local history and created The Brooklyn Annual from 1949–1950

and another Brooklyn Annual from 1950–51 which preserves a pictorial history of deceased and then current residents, as well as many buildings in the Brooklyn community and surrounding areas. The Blair Family has acquired a photocopy of these annuals. While doing research at the McMillan Trust archives in Brewton, I encountered another example of Miss Mabel's well known historical expertise. I located correspondence from Mrs. Alene Robinson, a teacher in Brooklyn, who recommended Miss Mabel to Ed Leigh McMillan as one of the best resources on the local history of Brooklyn.

Mabel's father, Dr. Urban Louis Jones moved his family to Brooklyn in 1913 from Darlington, Florida and became the local town physician. Dr. Jones had an office next to the present day Brooklyn Post Office. Mabel first attended the Brooklyn Academy and then attended the Lillie Strange Cultural Academy of Brooklyn. She next

(Continued on page 8)



The McMillan Museum and ECHS now offer free access to the online service, Ancestry.com, one of the best sources for tracing family history. However, access to this web service is available only from the Museum.

The ECHS *Journal* Section

Miss Mabel is 100 *(continued)*

(Continued from page 7)

attended the high school curriculum at Downing Industrial Institute in East Brewton, where she graduated in 1926. Mabel later attended The Women's College of Alabama (now known as Huntingdon College in Montgomery) and then Troy Normal School (now Troy University). She entered the Nursing School of the Baptist Hospital in New Orleans for her medical training.

Mabel and Dr. W. A. Blair Jr had four children. The oldest is Marita Blair Snyder who lives in St. Louis, but winters in Naples, Florida. Marita has two daughters, Donna Schmitz (Claus), and Blair McWay (Mike). Mr. Dale Blair, second born, lives in Brewton and is retired from Container Corporation in Brewton. Dale and his wife Martha have one son, John Blair who lives in Birmingham. Dale and John are often seen making repairs on the old home place. Daughter Susan Blair, who is Miss Mabel's primary care giver took early retirement as an instructor of communications at Jeff State Community College in Birmingham to come home to Brooklyn and "take care of Mama." The youngest daughter, Julia Blair, who was actually born in the Blair House, lives in Enterprise and oversees medical records at Ft. Rucker. Julia has two children, Wesley Meeks (Marsha) and Jacqueline Dix and currently is a foster parent for Maurice Hobdy.

Great grandchildren of Mabel Blair include: Taylor and Corey McGraw, Drew and Pace McWay, Victoria

and Halee Dix and Colton and Kristin Meeks.

Fran Fine, a niece of Miss Mabel's who also lives in Brooklyn, Al recorded a detailed history of her aunt that was published in The Star News, April 7, 2007, Page 3A in Curtis Thomasson's weekly genealogy column, entitled "Brooklyn Woman Celebrates 99th Birthday." Fran reports about her aunt's talents of singing and painting. Miss Mabel was active in The Brooklyn Baptist Church where she regularly taught Sunday School Classes and sang until her later years. Miss Mabel is also a lifetime member of the Brooklyn Order of the Eastern Star.



Miss Mabel's Home, The Blair House, in Brooklyn.

Fran also reports on Miss Mabel's paintings. Two important paintings of local history include the Brooklyn Bridge over the Sepulga River, as well as the Brooklyn Baptist Church painting.

In addition to raising four children, Miss Mabel was active as a nurse at Evergreen Hospital (now Vaughn Hospital) and McMillan Hospital in Brewton.. She retired from McMillan Hospital but then

worked there as a volunteer. Miss Mabel did some private nursing as well after her husband died in 1973. I first met Miss Mabel in the late 1970's when we both rented apartments in Brewton on North Street from Mr. & Mrs. Charlie Smith. (The apartments are gone now and the land is owned by T. R. Miller High School). We walked together in the afternoons and Miss Mabel talked about the old days in Brooklyn, Alabama. I particularly recall that she said folks always went downtown daily and sat on "the loafers bench" at the old Thomasson

(Continued on page 9)

The ECHS *Journal* Section

Miss Mabel is 100 (continued)

(Continued from page 8)

store, which is now the Brooklyn Masonic Lodge building. Miss Mabel had a garden in town at the Smiths as she did in Brooklyn and loved all things about nature. Her daughter Susan, a master gardener, has inherited that talent and the Blair Home in Brooklyn still is flanked by a flower and vegetable garden.

At age 100, Miss Mabel doesn't talk much these days except to those closest to her. However, most sunny days, Miss Mabel still goes to downtown Brooklyn via a scooter with the assistance of her daughter or a neighbor like Marge Finlay or other helpers. Miss Mabel's bedroom windows face an outside patio where she often sits in the summer, surrounded by tall, willowy bamboo, producing a natural habitat that attracts a variety of birds and other animals.

Above Miss Mabel's bed are three of her paintings, including the painting of the Brooklyn Baptist Church. She is surrounded in that room by photos of those she loves. Pets have also been part of that.

One of Miss Mabel's current sitters, Debra Kay Wilson, so wanted for Miss Mabel to be included in her recent wedding, that an outdoor wedding was held at the Blair Home last fall that was enjoyed by all.

This wedding has given the family of Miss Mabel the idea to celebrate Miss Mabel's 100th birthday a month later with an outside party to be held at the Blair Home in Brooklyn in the shade of the old pecan trees. The centennial celebration event of Miss Mabel's life is planned for Saturday, April 12 at a "drop in" time between 2 and 4 p.m. Susan invites friends and neighbors to come and help celebrate. If you have relatives from the Brooklyn area, I think the Blair Family might even let you see the Brooklyn annuals that may very well have a photo included of your relative who lived near Brooklyn, Alabama.. (In

fact, maybe someone out there has one of the original Brooklyn annuals?) The Society's thanks go to Miss Mabel and the Blair family for their preservation of Brooklyn, Al

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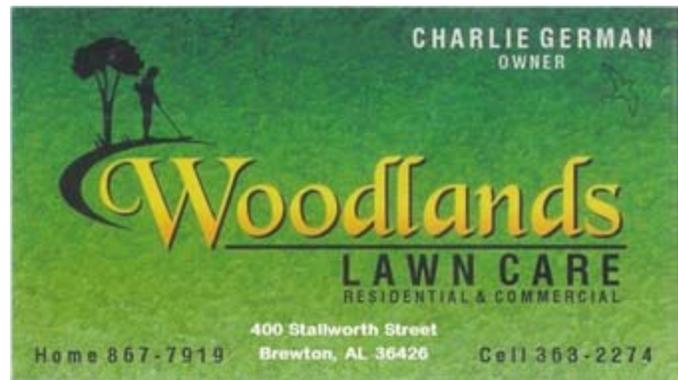
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<u>Books for Sale</u> Price	Mailed	Regular
<u>A History of Escambia County</u>	\$55.00	\$50.00
<u>Headstones and Heritage</u>	\$40.00	\$35.00
<u>Escambia Historical Society Cookbook</u>	\$10.00	\$ 5.00
<u>Wildflowers of The Escambia CD</u>	\$17.50	\$15.00
<u>Pictorial History of Brewton</u>	\$40.00	\$35.00



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ECHOES, The newsletter for the Escambia County Historical Society is published monthly except November. Comments are welcome. You may email the Society at escohis@escohis.org or call 251-867-7332, or 251-809-1528.

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