

The July Meeting

Tuesday, July 22, 2008, 3:00 p. m.
Thomas E. McMillan Museum

The July Program



(Left) Our speaker for the July meeting, Jerry Gehman (here shown outside the retired caboose which is his office) loves railroads and knows a great deal about their importance to the development of Escambia County. The accompanying article first appeared in the "Atmore Magazine" and is reprinted by permission.

The History of Local Railroads through Jerry Gehman's Eyes

By Bonnie Bartel Latino

Jerry Gehman loves railroads as if they were his blood relatives. After all, the Gehman family lives only yards from a busy railroad.

They also own a retired caboose that doubles as Jerry's home office. Jerry's wife Faith successfully suggested they name their fourth child Frisco after Jerry's beloved railroad, the St. Louis and San Francisco, affectionately known

as the 'Frisco.

In May, Jerry shared his views on the importance of railroads to the growth of our community with the Atmore Historical Society. He began in 1850 - when the Alabama and Florida Railroad, which connected Pollard to Pensacola, first came to Escambia County. Confederate troops purposely destroyed much of that rail system during the Civil War (1861-1865) to hinder the Union Army's advancement. After the war, the Alabama and Florida was rebuilt as

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Next month: A story of Wells Fargo

The August Program— Show and Tell.

Plan on bringing an interesting item to the meeting to "show" and "tell" its history.

Meeting to be Held in Museum

Note that the Brewton municipal elections are held August 26, the day of our meeting, so the gallery room in the Fine Arts Building will be occupied with voting machines. Therefore, we'll meet in the museum. Be sure to use the back door of the building to enter the museum.

Dues

Remember to check your records to see if you have paid your membership dues.



Brewton's CCC Camp

Volume 35, Number 7

July 2008

Just Briefly...

From Jerry Simmons

This month was uneventful compared to previous months. However, we were pleased that the scholarship fund is growing. In addition to a recent pledge of \$100 per month for 10 months, we've had another donation of \$100. The only way we can make this effort of helping a young person is by your giving to this fund.

We hope to have a scholarship available each fall and spring term, but without your generosity, it could soon fizzle. Just keep that in mind. Send your contribution, large or small, to ECHS Scholarship, P.O. Box 276, Brewton, AL 36427. If you wish, we will keep your donation anonymous.

A book finally arrived that several of us were anxiously awaiting: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Alabama, 1933-1942, A Great and Lasting Good, (includes CD appendix of interviews); The University of Alabama Press; Pasquill, Robert, 2008. The Corps, or CCC, as it's more commonly known, was one of the programs put into place during Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal." Referred to by many names, such as "Roosevelt's Tree Army" and "The forgotten Soldiers," the CCC's work is still visible in many places even after all these years.

The book has an accompanying CD containing many of the interviews Mr. Pasquill did during his research for the book. Two local people were interviewed, Mr. Owen Carroll of Brewton and Willie Carter of Century. See the story on these CCC members later in this newsletter.

Ask to see it when you are visiting the Alabama Room.

We were glad to see Alan Robinson at the last two meetings. Welcome back, Alan.

The work day for the Alabama Room July 8 was a mild success. The following were present and made quite a dent in helping to straighten up: Susan Crawford, Ranella Merritt, Jacqueline Stone, Ann Biggs-Williams, and Jerry Simmons.

Susan Smith, Dement Hays' daughter, informed us that Society member Dement passed away the morning of July 8. She had all of her daughters with her, holding her hand when she passed.

Dement helped countless caregivers of Alzheimer's patients through the Alzheimer's support group and through personal counseling. Many don't recall seeing Dement without a smile on her face, and that is how she'll be remembered.

Services were at First Baptist Church in Brewton. Cards may be sent to:
Susan Smith
96 Caisson Trace
Spanish Fort, AL 36527

In Alabama History

July 13, 1868: The Alabama legislature ratifies the 14th amendment to the U.S. constitution, thereby meeting one of the requirements for readmission to the Union. In part, the amendment guaranteed that states could not abridge citizenship rights of "persons born or naturalized in the United States," which included freedmen.

July 26, 1952: Alabama Senator John Sparkman is named the Democratic vice-presidential running mate with Adlai Stevenson. Sparkman was first elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Alabama in 1936 and served in that body until 1946 when he was elected to the U.S. Senate, where he served until 1979. The Democratic ticket lost the election to Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon.

August 3, 1936: Lawrence County native Jesse Owens wins his first gold medal at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, Germany. Owens went on to win four gold medals in Berlin, but German leader Adolf Hitler snubbed the star athlete because he was black. Today visitors can learn more about Owens at the Jesse Owens Memorial Park and Museum in Oakville, Alabama

August 8, 1922: Hattie Hooker Wilkins of Selma becomes the first woman to win a seat in the Alabama legislature. One of three Alabama women to run for legislative office that year, Wilkins was the only successful candidate, beating out incumbent J. W. Green for a seat in the House of Representatives. Wilkins served only one term, choosing not to run for re-election in 1926.

August 30, 1813: Creek Indians attack Fort Mims in what is now Baldwin County, killing nearly 250 settlers gathered there for protection. The attack caused fear and hysteria among frontier settlers, who quickly raised militia companies to fight the Indians in the Creek War of 1813-1814.

ECHS SCHOLARSHIP FUND GROWS

We have had some generous donations to the scholarship fund recently. This scholarship, which will be awarded to a Jefferson Davis Community College student who is majoring in history, archeology, or other related subjects, is designated for helping a student purchase books.

However, to be successful, the scholarship fund needs to continue to grow so that it can be an ongoing service provided by ECHS. Consider making a donation, large or small, in one lump sum or a donation each month for a year.

Jan Redditt, a founding member of ECHS, made a generous donation to the fund. She wrote a note beautifully expressing the importance and appropriateness of such a project.

“I’m so delighted to hear that the society has taken on such a project. I’m so very proud of all of you for making the society what it is today!

“To help young people with education means that the society is not just dealing with the past but the future as well—I love that.”

News on Fort Crawford

Tom McMillan has given us an update on the project to find the location of the Fort Crawford.

The University of Alabama Archeological Office previously sent a team to do some preliminary work on location of the actual location of the walled enclosure that was Fort Crawford.

Although there are many theories, the exact location of the Fort has not been determined. The previous visit of the UA team used underground radar to survey the area around the cemetery and church building of East Brewton Baptist church as well as the bluff.

They had planned to come back and do more extensive

searches where they have found areas of interest. This note from Tom on the progress:

“The U of A Archeological Office has estimated that it would take \$4,900 to come back with a professional team to dig trenches across the area of interest next to the bluff and west of the church by the chain link fence that separates the cemetery from the church. This is for 4 days of field work. We do not think it will take that long and they will only charge actual expenses. The plan is to do this later in the year when the weather is cooler.”

Tom promises to give us an update on any findings.

Corrections

There must be gremlins in the computer we use to prepare the newsletter. Nearly every month after we get it printed and ready for mailing, we find an error or a typo that we didn’t catch previously. In the June issue a pretty silly mistake cropped up in the story about the Wallace school.

On one page the caption under the picture of the school’s auditorium stated it was used until 1963.

On the next page, the caption under the picture of the fire which destroyed the school stated it was in January of 1960.

Well, the truth is that the fire occurred in the 1990s and NOT 1960.

Another correction for last month’s newsletter: **Olin Tisdale** never worked at Century’s ASLC commissary. When the syrup buckets were cleaned up, he was working for his dad, **O.O. Tisdale**.

We are always open to being corrected so don’t hesitate to let us know when it’s needed.

ECHS Meetings for 2008

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| • August 26 | • November: No Meeting |
| • September 23 | • December Christmas Party—TBA |
| • October 38 | |

The History of Local Railroads *(continued)*

(Continued from page 1)

the Mobile and Great Northern, later becoming the Mobile and Montgomery.

In 1866 the Mobile & Great Northern made so many stops here to leave supplies for William Larkin Williams, a farmer in the Oak Grove area, that the stop became known as Williams Station. A few homes along the rail route to Mobile were designated as passenger feeding stops. One such "stop" was located in Baldwin County in Carney, a community named for the brother of William Marshall Carney whom most accept as the unofficial Father of Atmore.

The Louisville and Nashville Railroad company purchased the Montgomery and Mobile in 1880 and began construction of a rail bed across the Alabama delta and reached Mobile by 1881. Prior to that, to get across the delta, passengers departed trains at Ten-saw and boarded boats to be ferried for the 22 miles to Mobile.

Although the United States had numerous railways, all tracks were not compatible. Some rails were even made of logs rather than steel. Not until 1886 would America set a standard gauge for rails. A distance of 56 5/8 inches between the outermost tracks of rail beds was mandated, a standard that remains today.

In 1895, 160 souls dwelled in Williams Station. Other than mule and buggy, rail travel was the primary source of transportation.

The Louisville and Nashville (L&N) Railroad also made modern communication possible by bringing the telegraph to town.

As William M. Carney's business interests (grist and timber mills, hotels and commissary) grew, so did the town. In 1897, Williams Station became Atmore, named for Mr. Carney's friend C.P. Atmore, General Passenger

Agent for the L&N Railroad in Louisville, Kentucky. Contrary to information sometimes printed around Williams Station Day in other local publications, Mr. Atmore never lived or worked here. Born in Devonshire, England in 1832, Mr. Atmore came to America at the age of four. He worked for the L&N for decades - but never in Atmore or even Alabama. He died in 1900 of a heart attack. It is doubtful that Mr. Atmore ever even visited our town.

In 1914, a second railroad traveled through Atmore - The Muscle Shoals, Birmingham and Pensacola (the MSB&P). In 1926, after the 'Frisco purchased that rail line, 'Frisco offered to buy dirt from local farmers for \$1.00 per boxcar to build an earthen berm upon which a trestle and new north-south tracks would be laid.



Around 1926, D.H. Wise sold 30,000 boxcars of dirt to 'Frisco! Jerry said the late Ulay Wise, D.H.'s son, used to say the dirt his daddy sold to the railroad helped put some of the Wise children through college. D.H. was also the father of Atmore residents Ruth Vickery and Leo Atkieson. In a recent phone conversation, Mrs. Vickery recalled that her parents rented rooms to some of the railroad workers. When asked about dirt having paid college tuition, Ruth laughed and said, "That may be, but as the youngest of 16 children, I'm really not sure."



The W.M. Carney mill was located next to the L&N railroad. The railroad in this picture runs between the mill and what's now present-day U.S. 31. The L&N depot is at left center.

According to Jerry, D.H. Wise probably used a steam shovel to extract the dirt. The berm, which Mr. Wise helped make possible, is most visible along with the trestle, to the west of Bondurant Hardware, which stands on the corner of West Nashville Avenue and South Carney Street.

Atmore can also thank the Frisco line for much of the drainage of the "seven ponds" that existed here during that time.

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History of Local Railroads *(continued)*

(Continued from page 4)

Railroads were also instrumental in exporting locally-grown satsumas, strawberries and potatoes, just as they transported lumber produced by the early sawmills (Ray's, Swift-Hunter, Carney and a mill in McCoyville). Ice was necessary to keep the produce fresh, so we can also thank the rail industry for bringing ice production to early Atmore. People's Ice Company also provided icy water for the swimming and wading pools at the old city park. The railroads touched Atmoreans' lives in unexpected and perhaps unappreciated ways.

Over the years, Atmore has had numerous freight and/or passenger trains passing through. Some of our more August citizens might recall paying a nickel in Nokomis or Canoe to ride *The Short* to school in Atmore.

Later trains became more sophisticated. Those included *The Hummingbird*, *The Pan American*, and *The Sunnyland Express*.

Sadly, according to Mr. Gehman, the St. Louis and San Francisco ended Atmore passenger service in 1963; the Louisville and Nashville in 1967.

Passenger service on the *Gulf Breeze* began in October of 1989 on Amtrak's Mobile to Birmingham route. That service ended in 1992 due to lack of state and federal funding. However, Atmore received tri-weekly passenger service from the *Sunset Limited* via Amtrak's Los Angeles-Miami route until Hurricane Katrina destroyed rail tracks from the Gulf Coast to New Orleans on August 27, 2005.

Have you ever waited at a local crossing for a freight train to go by and wondered why so many boxcars bore the name J.B. Hunt? Jerry explained that Mr. Hunt was once moving his product across country by truck when they stalled in a traffic jam. As Hunt waited, freight trains continued to roar by. That's why Hunt primarily uses rails to move product. Now we sit and wait while his boxcars pass through town.

Jerry concluded his remarks to the [Atmore] Historical Society by detailing ways contemporary rail lines use new technology and computerization to operate. *END*

(Atmore native Bonnie Bartel Latino is a freelance writer and former columnist for Stars and Stripes newspaper in Europe)



June Meeting Snapshots




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The ECHS *Journal* Section

Mack, the Key Man

by SHERRY DIGMAN

(Reprinted from the Atmore Magazine with permission)

You may have seen him around town if you lived here in the '40s, '50s and '60 or '61.

Most folks knew him as Mack - Mack, the Key Man. His name was John Francis McKay.

If you saw him, you probably didn't forget him. Both Mack's legs had been amputated and he got around on a little cart mounted on casters. He put himself on the cart, strapped his stumps of legs to it, and, with something like stirrups on his hands, with his arms providing the power, he was mobile.

He was, if nothing else, an independent man. He didn't want help unless he asked for it. He didn't ask for pity, nor did he tolerate it.

John and Myrtle Shiver were friends of Mack's. He was sometimes a guest in their home for meals. Perhaps their friendship lasted because the Shivers never asked him any questions about his legs.

"Mack was a very private man," John said. "I met him in 1946 or '47. I never asked him anything about his life. I was a friend of his and felt I should help him if I could. He accepted me as a friend, maybe because I didn't ask him anything."

He didn't ask, but sometimes Mack would open up a little about his life.

Mack was born into a wealthy, prominent family in St. Louis, Missouri, but was a free spirit - maybe rebellious is a better word. The family labeled him the black sheep of the family. He took the label... and left town. He changed his name and, as far as John knows, never returned to his family.

He took the name John Francis McKay. John thinks the first two names may be right, but Mack took a different last name. One time he told John his last name, but that



Mack in his mobile key office

was decades ago, and John doesn't remember what it was.

Mack had legs when he left St. Louis and started riding the rails. He came through Atmore a long time before he came here to live. He told John that he first came through Atmore in 1920.

John remembers still the first time he ever met Mack. "I met him on the street toward the corner at the end of Peanut Street [now East Nashville Avenue]," John said. "It appeared that he was coming from the depot. I was walking and I met him face to face. I stopped and had a few words with him. I felt for him and asked him if I could help him. He said, yes, I could, and he asked me if I could put some tar on the top of his Model A Ford. "

The car had a cloth top and had to have tar put on it to keep it from leaking.

Mack lived in his car. The front bench seat had been removed and a single seat was behind the steering wheel. He drove using hand controls.

John had just started working with Dick Rabon at Atmore Motor Company. He told Mack they'd fix up the top of the car, and they tried to, but there had been so much tar put on it, it had cracked open.

John told Mack he had to have a new top on it, so he and a few fellows in the shop put a new top on the car for Mack. That was the beginning of their friendship. It lasted until Mack died in 1961.

Mack had had three amputations - all three times to both legs. The first time, his legs were cut off just above the ankles. He walked on the stumps.

The second time, they were cut off just below the knees, and the last time above the knees.

Although Mack never said why or how his legs were amputated, the Shivers had a theory. Since Mack used to ride the rails, they figured he had been in an accident

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

Key Man *(continued)*

(Continued from page 7)

when he was trying to jump on a rail car or was doing something around the rail yard or a train, and lost both feet then. But no one will ever know.

Although he seldom talked about himself, Mack did tell John about life in the hobo camps when he was riding the rails. Anybody who stayed in a camp for any

length of time was supposed to bring something to contribute to the pot of stew in the camp. In Kansas, it was understood that the two rows of corn closest to the road were for the taking and the hobos could glean corn. Somebody was always bringing in corn during season.

Every hobo camp had rules, and if a hobo stepped out of line, someone would tend to him. In talking about the camps, Mack would laugh and say, "There is honor among thieves."

When Mack did talk about himself, sometimes the stories were bizarre, almost unbelievable.

When he was in his late 20s, he was staying in Kansas City, Missouri. One night, he had just come out of a diner after eating dinner. He stopped under a streetlight and propped up against a building. A big car came up and stopped. Suddenly machine gun fire rang out. It appeared to be a mob hit. Mack hurried back into the diner. He told John he was scared to death, knowing the people in the car had seen him under the streetlight. Any minute, he expected someone to come in and kill him. But no one came in ... for a while.

About 30 minutes later, two men in business suits came in. They told Mack to come with them. They got into a car and rode to a large warehouse. The doors opened and the car was driven into the building. The doors closed behind them. Mack was certain he had been taken there to be killed. The inside of the building housed offices and sleeping quarters. He was taken to a room and told to stay



The Key Man is shown on the running board his Model A

there.

The next morning, someone brought his breakfast. Later a man came in and told Mack he was going to work for them as a courier. They asked him if he had a car. He said he did. They got his car and brought it to the location.

A few days later, they sent him on an errand to deliver a package to a judge at a county seat. They told him

not to go anywhere else or to talk with anyone else, but to go straight there, deliver the package, and come straight back. It was the first of many such errands Mack was assigned. He said the packages were always the same - a box (about the size of a shoebox) wrapped securely and tied with string. Mack said he felt sure the boxes contained money - probably payoff money. Often, he was instructed to take the package directly to the judge. And sometimes, he was told that a package or envelope would be given to him to bring back.

He went to practically every county seat in the region. On one of his "errands," he was instructed to give the package directly to the judge, which he did. The judge was Harry Truman, who was judge of the Jackson County Court from 1922 until he became a senator in 1934.

Mack told John the man's name he worked for was Tom Pendergast.

Thomas J. Pendergast was a notorious political boss in Kansas City, Missouri. He and his family created and operated a powerful political machine, influencing government on every level from local city politics to national politics. It has been documented that Tom Pendergast started Truman on the road to the presidency.

Pendergast's organization was involved in gambling, prostitution, and narcotics, among other things: And

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

Key Man *(continued)*

(Continued from page 8)

Mack McKay was working for the organization.

"Mack said this was a trying time for him," John said. "He was not free to come and go. He said they paid him well and provided him with a place to sleep, but it was not what he wanted. Mack felt like he was held captive."

John doesn't know how long Mack was in this situation.

Mack really wanted to get away. He asked them to let him leave because he needed another operation on his legs. They always replied that they would tend to that. Finally, they told him they would take him to a hospital. They actually took him to a secluded sanitarium in the Montana mountains. They brought in a surgeon who amputated more of his legs. This was the second surgery - below the knees. (It's unknown when or where the third surgery was done - the one that was above his knees.)

When he recovered, Mack repeatedly told them he was ready to leave and they kept telling him to stay put. John doesn't know how Mack managed or who helped him, but he left.

Why or how he ended up in Alabama is a mystery.

Mack lived in Mobile for a while. The state of Alabama got him a position to train in a key shop in Mobile and provided him with a key machine so he could be in business for himself.

Then Mack came to Atmore. John said Robert Maxwell remembers that during the day, Mack usually parked his Model A at the railroad tracks because it was easy for people to find him to have keys, dogtags, ID plates, key IDs, and so forth, made.

At night, he usually parked near Shiver's garage. John and his father had a shop at 8th Avenue (now Medical Park Drive) and Highway 31. They gave Mack a key to the men's room outside the shop, and they ran an extension cord from the shop to his car.

Mack made friends with then-Mayor H.H. Dees. Wherever he went, he usually made acquaintance with the mayor and law enforcement officers, probably so that he could ply his trade without any trouble. He also sought out service station owners and railroad freight agents who

would let him use their facilities.

He got his mail at the post office, which might seem to present a problem, but it didn't.

"Mack was very strong in his arms," John said. "He could go up and down the post office steps on his cart. At eating places, he'd unstrap himself and pull himself up on a stool."

He worked a good bit in Baldwin County. In the fall, Mack would leave Atmore and work his way up to north-west Alabama. Word would get out that the key man was in town. He'd stay in a place until the work ran out, then he'd move on, working his way up and down the west side of the state.

He would tell John when he was leaving and about when he would be back.

At some point, John's father gave Mack a four-door Packard sedan. There was so much more room for him, since he was still living and working in his car. A few years later, Mack spotted an old hearse in Robertsedale and told the Shivers he really wanted to get it. Albert Dean, Myrtle's brother, helped John's dad get the hearse to Atmore. They rebuilt the engine, fixed the transmission, rebuilt the front end, fixed the brakes, and did other repairs.

In 1955, Mack had a coronary thrombosis (heart attack) and asked for and received financial assistance from the state. When he recovered, he wrote to the State Department of Pensions and Security to thank them for the help, and to ask them to remove his name from the assistance rolls since he was able to work again.

His letter was included in a Department of Pensions and Security newsletter. The following paragraph is from Mack's letter:

"As a legless man, I have had the privilege to earn my way and to try to show the public at large that the world does not owe anybody a living, but it does give them the privilege of earning their way if they will."

So much about the man remained a mystery. One time

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

Key Man *(continued)*

(Continued from page 9)

Mack showed John a picture of his wife, although he didn't give any details about their life together. He was well educated and read everything he could get his hands on. The Atmore Public Library was one of his favorite places.

Mack died at the old Greenlawn Hospital in 1961.

John returned Mack's key machine and his inventory to the state. Since Mack had no family, Mayor Dees, John, and Johnson Quimby Funeral Home saw that he had a funeral and a proper burial... and a unique headstone.

After Mack's expenses were paid, Mayor Dees told John there was a little money left and asked him what they

should do with it. John said he didn't know. Mayor Dees said the library, then located on Trammell Street, needed a new electric drinking fountain. Since Mack loved the library and loved books, both men decided this was a fitting way to use Mack's money. A small plaque was engraved and placed above the drinking fountain at the library. The fountain and plaque were removed years ago.

"Mack was a very private man," John said. "He was independent. He didn't want pity. He didn't want help unless he asked for it. Mack was not a bitter man at all. He said he'd had a good life."

John Francis McKay is buried at Oak Hill Cemetery in Atmore. *END*

Civilian Conservation Corps: A Great and Lasting Good

By Jerry Simmons

Much is said about government involvement in everyday lives of Americans, but little discussion is heard about a government program that was once touted as making a "Great and Lasting Good" for the American people.

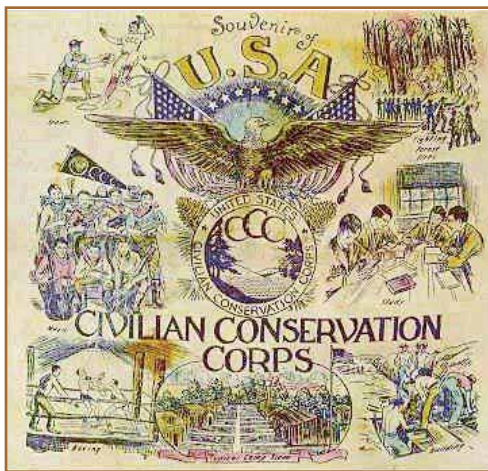
In the early 1930s there were nearly 14 million people out of work and many of them (some estimate nearly a quarter million) were wandering around the country trying to find jobs. The causes of the horrific economic downturn known as the Great Depression have been debated and argued with little agreement on either side. Many political pundits blame President Herbert Hoover and the Republicans for it, while others blame an overzealous Wall Street. Still others fault the Democrats for beginning a welfare mentality.

Whatever the reasons and results, the Depression's immediate effects were immeasurable in human suffering. One good that came from it was perhaps the most successful and best known of the New Deal programs pushed by President Franklin Roosevelt: the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Roosevelt proposed to put 500,000 unemployed men from cities and towns into the woods to plant trees, reduce fire hazards, clear streams, check erosion, and improve the parks system all across America. The speed was remarkable at which legislation was written, passed, and funded creating an alphabet soup of projects in hopes of generating useful work and necessary paychecks.

The book, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Alabama, 1933-1942," states that "CCC projects in

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This pillow cover is one of the many Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) artifacts on display at the Michigan CCC Museum. (Picture in public domain)

The ECHS *Journal* Section

CCC (continued)

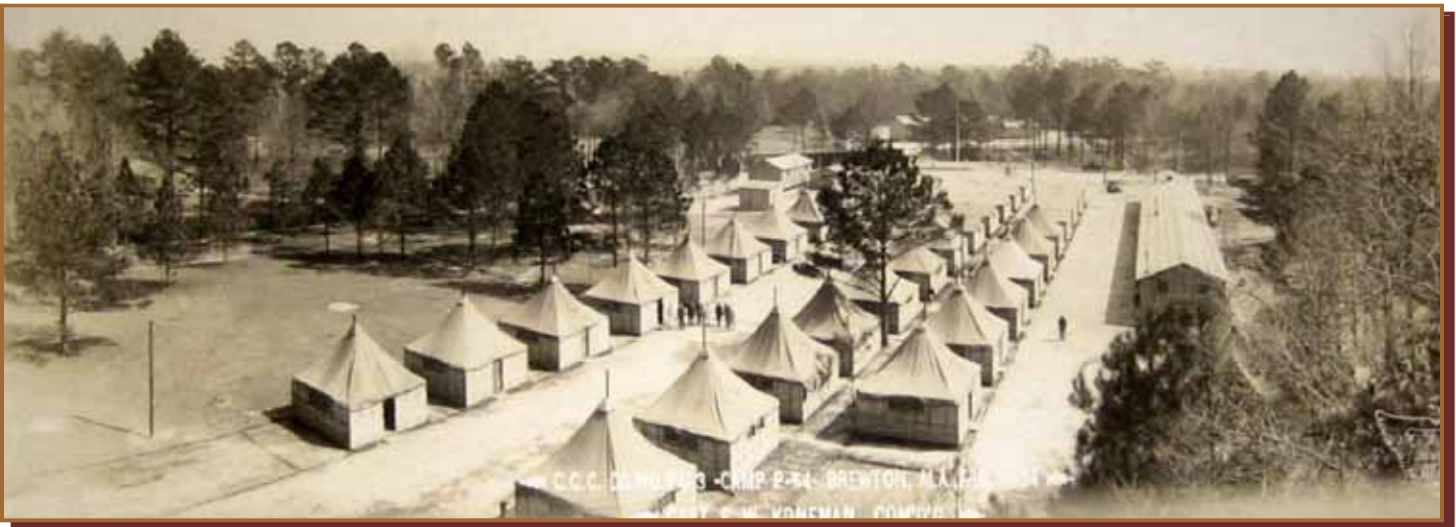
(Continued from page 10)

[just] Alabama would initially employ 20,000 men with projects in all 13 state forests and seven state parks.” The volume, recently published by The University of Alabama Press and written by Robert Pasquill, traces in detail the projects, the living conditions, the daily lives of the enrollees, the administration and management challenges, and the lasting effects of this New Deal program in Alabama.

lina eighteen, and Tennessee thirty-three. The area employed nearly 40,000 men.

There were two local men who were interviewed for the book, Owen Carroll of Brewton and Willie Carter of Century.

Reverend Carter was born in 1921 in Greenville, Alabama, with a younger brother and sister. When he was about 12, the family moved to Florida to find better edu-



Camp P-54 of the Civilian Conservation Corps, located on the west bank of Burnt Corn Creek at Brewton, about where Arby's is today.

Referred to by many names (“Roosevelt's Tree Army” and the “Forgotten Soldiers”) the work of the CCC is still visible - if you know where to look - be it a terraced field, a stone structure in a state park, or a majestic fire tower standing tall over the pines.

It was a truly monumental win-win situation emerging from a national and international economic tragedy.

The Corps comprised several divisions of men throughout the nation. In the Fourth Corps Area, with a total of 198 camps, Alabama had seventeen, Florida twenty-two, Georgia thirty-nine, Louisiana twenty-three, Mississippi sixteen, North Carolina thirty, South Caro-

ational opportunities for blacks.

In October 1940, Reverend Carter enlisted in the CCC in Lynn Haven, Florida. He was sent to Company 4454-C at Camp P-80 in Panama City. He worked at cutting fire lines and ditches and building roads in a privately-owned forest. He recalls filling dump trucks with shovels, since there were no front-end loaders in that day.

He had completed high school and was assigned to work with the Camp Educational Advisor. Earning \$30 each month, he taught algebra and helped other enrollees write their letters. He was given \$8 and \$22 was sent home to his family. Meals and uniforms were provided

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

CCC (continued)

(Continued from page 11)

at no charge.

After his first six months and working as a canteen clerk, he reached his maximum of two years enlistment. Willie then was given the job of running the Company Canteen. As canteen clerk, Reverend Carter also received a commission. Many months he made over \$15 in commission, giving him a total of \$45 in a month, more money than a company Leader. For a period of time, he worked at Camp Stewart, Georgia, an Army post, and even the \$30 monthly was more than the \$21 monthly the soldiers were receiving. He says the soldiers weren't too happy about that.

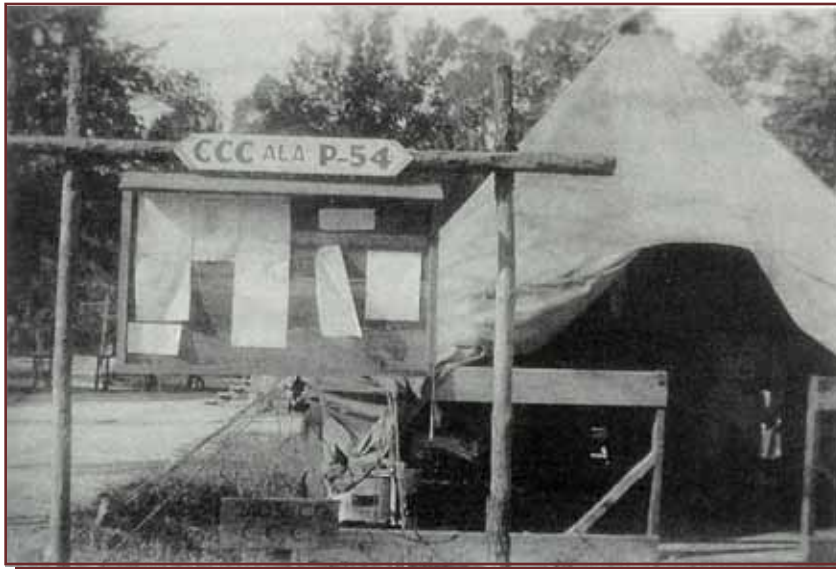
The post exchange was open from 5 to 10 pm each day. During the day, he would do paperwork, and after 5 pm the field workers bought candy, gum, soft drinks, toiletries, stationary and ice cream, among other items.

Carter recalled that the camp food was wonderful. It was cooked and served "home style." This was his first time away from home, quite a change for that young man.

Reverend Carter noted that back in those days, teenagers followed orders. He recalled that the linen on their cots was changed twice each week, and the cots were taken out into the sunshine once each week.

He was discharged from the CCC in July 1942. He

stayed in camp for several weeks after the CCC was officially ended to complete the inventories of the canteen. He was drafted into the Army in 1943 and assigned to an amphibious unit working with the Ducks [a six-wheel GMC truck with a watertight hull enclosure designated model number DUKW by General Motors]. He was among the thousands who landed at Normandy Beach on D-Day plus 6 (June 12, 1944) and fought in France and Belgium.



**- Bulletin board at Camp P-54 at Brewton -
Located in vicinity of present day site of Arby's, on the banks of
Burnt Corn Creek**

The CCC helped Reverend Carter achieve his goal of being a teacher, plus the money he sent home helped his family survive the Great Depression.

Willie has good memories of the CCC and says that hard work never did any harm to him or to Henry Bright of Century, who was also a member of his camp. Another friend Willie made in the CCC was a somewhat local boy, Willie Bailey, of Milton.

Interviewed on June 2, 2001 and on January 24, 2002, Mr. Carroll was 87 years old at the time of the interview, living in Brewton, Alabama.

Mr. Carroll, from Brewton, Alabama, was born on May 17, 1914. He was just shy of his 19th birthday when he enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps on May 2, 1933. He went to Fort Benning, Georgia for his conditioning period, and was assigned to Company 1403, which established Camp F-3 at Kinlock Springs. As an enrollee, he earned \$30 per month.

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CCC (cOntinued)

(Continued from page 12)

Soon after arriving at Camp F-3, he came down with mumps and nearly died. There were several deaths in camp. He had some experience working with a doctor in Brewton before joining the CCC, and Captain Brackinridge, the commanding officer, decided Mr. Carroll would make a good medic. Mr. Carroll took care of several other enrollees that were sick with measles and mumps. He received additional training at Fort McClellan, and after completion of his training, was sent to several other camps as needed, including brief stays at camps at Fort Payne, Company 472, and at Townley, Company 467.

Eventually, he was assigned to Camp P-54 at Brewton. He continued to work at the camp as a medic, until his enlistment ran out. While at the camp at Brewton, took courses each night in history, math and other subjects. He was discharged from Camp P-54 on June 30, 1934, and returned home.

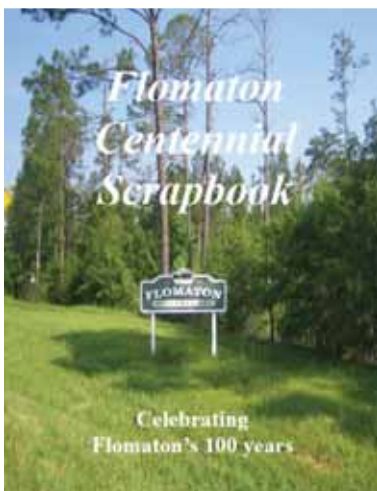


A CCC bridge-building project near Chuncila, Alabama

He immediately re-enlisted for another six-month period. He was sent to Camp SP-7 at Oxford with Company 468. This company was working on Cheaha State Park. From July through December of 1934 he was stationed at Camp SP-7 at Oxford. The CCC taught Mr. Carroll lessons about living that he carried throughout his life.

Most young men, after WW II, while understandably proud of their military service, preferred to talk about their CCC experiences. Those who lived and worked in the camps learned useful trades and habits, especially self-reliance.

In addition, the Army reported that ex-CCC boys were in much better shape than those who had not been in the Corps. They were generally brighter and learned new jobs more quickly. Willie Carter stated he learned how to get along with people and developed social skills he might not have otherwise - perhaps that is part of the "Great and Lasting Good." *END*



“Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook” on Sale

The long-anticipated book, the “Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook,” compiled by Jerry Simmons, is available for sale. The price of the 346-plus page book is \$40.00 and it’s available at the Escambia County Historical Society. A portion of the price of the books the Society sells will go toward the Scholarship Fund.

ECHOES

THE NEWSLETTER FOR
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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<u>Wildflowers of The Escambia CD</u>	\$17.50	\$15.00
<u>Pictorial History of Brewton</u>	\$40.00	\$35.00

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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