

## The December Meeting The Christmas Party Thursday, December 11, 2014, 4:00-6:00 p. m.



**Christmas at L-House**

The ECHS 2014 Christmas Party will be in the event space on the ground floor of L-House Photography and Printing, a business owned by Clay Lisenby, publicity officer for ECHS. Clay's business occupies the upstairs of the building.

L-House is located in downtown Brewton next to the First National Bank. The address is 131 St Joseph Street

but the entrance is actually in the back from the boardwalk.

Plan on bringing your favorite covered dish or finger food with a serving dish and serving utensils. ECHS will furnish drinks.

The Christmas Parade starts at 6:00 so those attending will already have a good parking place and will be all set to watch.

### History of the L-House Building

The L-House building was chosen as the location for the party both for its appeal as an event space as well as its history. In

1910, it was the site of an open air theatre and then in 1911 became the site of Brewton's first movie

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Contents

Snapshots of ECHS October 2014 Meeting	2
ECHS Field Trip: Civil War in Pensacola	4
Pensacola's Time Line in Civil War	5
News and Announcements	6
2015 Florida Chautauqua Assembly in Defuniak Springs	7
John Wesley Hardin Kidnapping Reenacted	8
Our Business Members	9
Alaflora	10

### The January Meeting

January 27, 2014

Program

Darryl Searcy's Trip to the Czech



Troops in Front of Fort  
McRee

Volume 41, Number 11-12

November -December 2014



**Ruin of Fort McRee**

## History of the L-House Building

(Continued from page 1)

theatre. ECHS historian Annie Waters wrote a "History Note" about the opening of the movie theatre for the ECHS newsletter for August 14, 1973.

"The electric motion picture business opened in Brewton on Friday, March 24, 1911. The proprietors had spent a large sum to insure a proper building and expected a good patronage. Miss Clara B. McKee submitted the winning name for the theater and was presented a \$5 gold piece by the manager. She had suggested the name 'Vaudette Theatre.' The theatre was located where Mormon Drug Store now stands; a real live pianist produced the music for the silent movies."

A document describing buildings in Brewton (author and date unknown), titled "A Short History of Each Building," states that the building eventually became the Central Pharmacy and in 1935 Williard Mormon started his drug business there, Mormon



**The L-House Entrance Today  
Showing Upper and Lower Patios  
with  
Outside Staircase**

Drug Store. Hubbard Owens then had the drug store but kept the name Mormon.

In a recent Facebook comment, Kristie Hammac Mcghee remembered Mormon Drug Store and the Fair Store nearby (a building which was the location of a skating rink and has been torn down), "Go to the Fair Store to get

Buster Brown shoes and we'd go across the street to Mormon's Drug store and get a soda fountain Coca-Cola. I also remember skating there too.....wow time does fly!"

The L-House building has been the location of the Book and Bean, a combination bookstore and café which served special coffees, as well as sandwiches and pizza. The Book and Bean occupied the downstairs part of the building which is now the event space.

Another business that was a part of this building's history is Shades of Gray, a women's clothing boutique, which occupied the upper floor before L-House Photography and Printing.

## Snapshots of the ECHS October 2014 Meeting



# Snapshots of the ECHS October 2014 Meeting



## ECHS Field Trip: Civil War Pensacola Tour with Go-Retro

Twenty plus ECCHS members and guests met at the Go-Retro Tour Office on North Spring Street in Pensacola on Sunday afternoon, October 26, to board the company's bus and shuttle to enjoy the tour "Civil War Pensacola."

With the helpful guidance of the driver/guide in each vehicle and the videos shown on large screens, those on the tour were treated to the interesting contrast of seeing pictures of places in Pensacola from the past and seeing those same places as they appear in the city today. The well-researched videos provided pictures of the period with narrative by Wesley Odom, owner of "Go-Retro" Tours.

Much of the action during the war involved efforts to control Forts Barrancas and Pickens and the videos outlined the various attempts to take them. There were also pictures and narrative about the citizens of Pensacola. Many evacuated the city but there were many who remained in the city which was basically occupied by Union forces from 1862 until the end of the war.

The tour spent the most time at the Navy base with stops at the Light house and Fort Barrancas. The Light House was decorated for Halloween so the group enjoyed that feature as well as the history of the lighthouse displayed in the keeper's cottage. Those who climbed to the top to enjoy the spectacular view also received a certificate to verify they had done so.

Leaving the Light House, the tour stopped briefly at the Advanced Redoubt of Fort Barrancas, sometimes called Fort Redoubt, which was built between 1845 and 1870 to defend the land approaches to both Fort Barrancas and the Navy Yard. The Redoubt is



**Sketch showing 1861 harbor defenses at entrance to Pensacola Bay. The town of Warrington (shown east of Fort Barrancas) was relocated north of Bayou Grande in the 1930s to provide land for Naval Air Station Pensacola (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>**

designed to be occupied by a small group of soldiers who could draw up the one entrance over the surrounding moat and defend the redoubt.

At Fort Barrancas, tour members walked to a lookout point by the side of the fort which allowed them to see across the bay to Fort Pickens and the location of Fort McRhee (nothing remains of this fort) to see how the three forts were designed to protect the Bay, the Navy Yard, and the city.

The tour went through a section of the Barrancas National Cemetery, which is a final resting place for veterans of every major American conflict since the War of 1812. Both Confederate and Union soldiers are buried at the cemetery.

Adjoining the cemetery is the brick-wall-enclosed site of the base hospital built in 1834. The 12-foot-high wall still remains around the compound but the buildings in this compound are not open for tours.

Legend has it that the wall was built to keep out mosquitoes which were feared as a source of infecting patients with malaria or yellow fever. Most scholars point out that this is an interesting story but that the hospital was built outside of the walled navy yard of the time so that the wall around the hospital was probably built to protect the hospital from invasion by sea or land.

The tour paused also to see at a distance the beautiful homes on North Avenue of the Navy Base, some of which were initially built in the 1870's. These houses received extensive damage during Hurricane Ivan and most were restored as conference centers rather than residences. One of these houses is still used by the Commandant of the base;

*(Continued on page 5)*

## ECHS Field Trip: “Civil War Pensacola” Tour with Go-Retro

(Continued from page 4)

of the others, one is used for visitors and the remaining three are used as conference centers. There are, of course, other houses in this area built in later periods that house officers today.

Returning from the base, the tour went through Pensacola Village at Seville square and stopped briefly at Old Christ Church. The Church was used as a barracks (including horses), jail, and hospital during the occupation of the city by Union forces.

When returning to the North Hill area, the tour stopped at the Civil War Monument at Lee Circle and then by the park and marker at Fort George,

built by the British when they occupied the city from 1763-1781.

The fort was a major target during the Battle of Pensacola in 1781. Taken by the Spanish, the Fort was renamed Fort San Miguel. When U. S troops took Pensacola under Andrew Jackson, the name was anglicized to Fort San Michael.

Fort George was abandoned in the 1820's. The site was rediscovered in the 1970's and a part of the fort has been reconstructed with two 18<sup>th</sup> century British canon placed on the ramparts of the reconstruction. The area, now called Fort George Park, is located at the intersection of Palafox and La Rua streets. The tour then ended back at the “Go Retro” Office at North Spring Street.

### Pensacola's Time Line in the Civil War

- In 1861, with a population of approximately 2,876, Pensacola was Florida's largest city. Timber, cotton and brick exports formed the backbone of Pensacola's industry during the mid-1800s.
- Prior to 1861: Union troops occupied Fort Pickens, Fort Barrancas and Fort McRee.
- Jan. 12, 1861: Pensacola Navy Yard surrenders to Confederates; Forts Barrancas and McRee abandoned by Union troops. Confederate soldiers move into Fort Barrancas.
- March 11, 1861: Confederate Brigadier Gen. Braxton Bragg assumes command of Confederate troops in Pensacola.
- April 12, 1861: Gen. Bragg declares that a state of war exists at Pensacola.
- April 19, 1861: Gen. Bragg declares martial law in Pensacola in an unsuccessful attempt to stop traffic across Pensacola Bay.
- May 3, 1861: Alabama & Florida Railroad completed between Pensacola and Montgomery, Ala.
- August, 1861: Union troops burn Pensacola dry dock, off Fort Pickens.
- Sept. 14, 1861: Federal naval officers burn and destroy Confederate schooner *Judah* in Pensacola Bay.
- Oct. 9, 1861: Confederate attack on Fort Pickens thwarted; known as Battle of Santa Rosa Island, this becomes Florida's first major Civil War battle.
- Nov. 22, 1861: Two days of artillery duels damage Fort McRee, village of Warrington and many Navy Yard buildings.
- May 10, 1862: Pensacola surrenders to Union troops. Before evacuating, Confederates damage much of the city. Pensacola conducts its city business in Greenville, Ala., 130 miles north, becoming the only city given permission to do so by the Confederate government.

#### Remainder of Civil War:

Western Gulf Squadron uses Pensacola Navy Yard as an operational base for Union Naval blockade of southern ports.

Fort Barrancas becomes a starting point for raids into Alabama and western Florida.

Skirmishes between Union and Confederate troops occur in areas around Pensacola.

The remaining Confederate troops surrender between April-May 1865 (Timeline from <<http://www.visitpensacola.com/professional/media/news/battle-sites-and-antebellum-buildings-beckon-travelers-pensacola-civil-wars>>).

**Shots fired in Pensacola in January 1861 actually preceded those at Fort Sumter that triggered the Civil War. Also, Pensacola hosted Florida's first major Civil War battle, the Battle of Santa Rosa Island.**

## News and Announcements

### Escambia County Resident Named Bee-Keeper of the Year



O. J. Blount of Escambia County, Alabama has been named the 2014 Bee-Keeper of the Year by the Alabama Bee-Keepers Association. O. J. is noted for the innovations he has made for the boxes bees are kept in. He calls his designs for the bee hives or boxes “the Queen’s Castle.”

In the photograph, O. J. is in the center with his wife, Lucy. The award was presented by David Ellis (behind Lucy). To O. J. 's left is Damon Wallace, President of the Association.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Folk Artist Bernice Sims Has Died

Bernice, who recently published her autobiography, The Struggle, My Life, My Legacy, died on October 23, 2014. She was buried in Brewton at Piney Grove Cemetery. The obituary in the Brewton Standard calls her “A true visual historian,” commenting that her paintings are displayed nationwide –: in homes, galleries, the Alabama State capitol and in Washington D.C.” (<http://www.brewtonstandard.com/2014/10/28/famed-folk-artist-dies/#respond>).

\*\*\*\*\*

### West Florida Genealogical Society December Meeting

The Society will meet on Saturday, Dec. 6, 2014 at 10:00 a. m. at the West Florida Genealogy Library. 5740 N. 9th Ave, Pensacola (850-494-7373).

The Speaker will be Jacquelyn Wilson, Archivist for the University of West Florida Historic Trust. She

will present an illustrated talk about recent renovations to the UWF Historic Trust building in downtown Pensacola and inform the group about the holdings in the Trust. For more information, contact Charlotte Schipman [850-477-7166](tel:850-477-7166) <[cschipman@mac.com](mailto:cschipman@mac.com)>.

\*\*\*\*\*

### The Redesigned Brennan’s of New Orleans and Its Brewton Connection



#### The New Queen’s Room in

The redesigned restaurant, which will reopen on November 25, 2014, has a Brewton connection. The redesign is the work of Keith Langham, Brewton native and son of Ray and Carolyn Langham.

In an article about the redesign and reopening (posted on the NOLA.com website), Keith speaks of going to Brennan’s as a child, “When I was a kid, we used to go. That was the supreme treat -- to go for those white-glove breakfasts” (“Brennan’s Restaurant Reveals Opening Date as It Readies for New Orleans Diners,” by Todd A. Price).

Keith says he wanted to keep the design old-fashioned and romantic, “I wanted to make it unmistakably Brennan’s.” Seemingly Keith has achieved his goal. According to Todd Price, when he visited the restaurant the renovation was not complete, but in spite of the clutter, he comments, “Brennan’s already looked radiant. Langham is responsible for that transformation” (Brennan’s Restaurant Reveals Opening”).

## 2015 Florida Chautauqua Assembly

The assembly will meet in Defuniak Springs on Thursday, January 22 through Sunday, January 25, 2015. The theme is “A Journey into the World of Transportation: from the River to the Rocket.” The keynote speaker will be Apollo 13 Astronaut Fred Haise.

Fred Haise is famous for his message in 1970 back to the control center, “Houston, we’ve had a problem.” There had been an explosion with damage to the spaceship and without power, the men were stranded close to the moon.

Events include educational breakout sessions, performance teas, evening dinner performances and

exhibits relating to the theme.

Cost: \$150.00 for a ticket to all the events called a Passport. Tickets to individual events can be purchased for from \$8.00 to \$25.00.

Contact information:

Florida Chautauqua Center, Inc.  
1290 Circle Drive  
DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435  
ph.: 850-892-7613

Web address < [http://www.florida-chautauqua-center.org/assembly\\_2015](http://www.florida-chautauqua-center.org/assembly_2015)>.



**To the left, a photo from around 1885-1886 of Chautauquans in Defuniak for the Florida Chautauqua. The building in the background is unknown.**

**In the early years, there were many small boarding type houses built to meet the needs of the growing Chautauqua. Some were also built to be classrooms.**

**Photos and explanations are taken from <<https://www.facebook.com/floridachautauquaassembly/photos>>.**

**To the right, photo circa 1886 of the backside of the original Pensacola and Atlantic Rail Road Depot that was built next to the Florida Chautauqua Gate house.**

**In the back ground on the left you can see G. Willard Shear's photography studio here in DeFuniak. G. Willard Smith was the first photographer to teach photography during the Florida Chautauqua Assemblies.**

**The three photos in this section are by Mr. Smith.**



**To the left, Smith's Mill, located within walking distance of the grounds of the Florida Chautauqua.**

**Visitors to the Florida Chautauqua would walk to the mill to see a demonstration of how it worked and to purchase meal from Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith was known to have an ox he would transport goods with; the ox did not have horns, so Mr. Smith would tie a set of horns to the ox before taking him to town.**



## John Wesley Hardin Kidnapping At Pensacola Train Depot Reenacted

On October 25, 2014, the University of West Florida Historic Trust hosted a re-enactment of the capture of the notorious gunman/outlaw John Wesley Hardin and the dedication of an historic marker relating to Hardin and his capture. The marker was placed at the northeast corner of Tarragona and Zaragoza streets, where the train depot was formerly located.

An article from the website [Pensacola Today](#) summarizes the kidnapping, “Hardin, a Texas fugitive, was captured in Pensacola on Aug. 23, 1877 by Texas Rangers Lt. John B. Armstrong and Jack R. Duncan, along with Escambia County (Florida) Sheriff William H. Hutchinson and nine Escambia County deputies. He (Hardin) and his associates were boarding a train at the L&N Freight Depot at the time of their arrest, which became national news (Shannon Nickinson, “Historic Trust Re-enacts Outlaw’s Capture”).

At the time, Hardin and his wife, Jane Bowen Hardin, had been living in Pollard and then Whiting (Flomaton). Hardin was using the assumed name, James W. Swain. Texas Rangers discovered Hardin’s whereabouts when Jane’s brother, Joshua Robert “Brown” Bowen, wrote to their father in



**Re-enactors in front of the Historic Marker**



**Re-enactors on the depot stage portraying the capture of Hardin. Hardin’s companion was killed in the kidnapping/capture. The railroad car being used as a stage is labeled “T. R. Miller Mill.”**



**Jane Ann Bowen Hardin and daughter Mary Elizabeth "Mollie" Hardin.**



**John Wesley Hardin**

Texas sending Jane’s greetings and explaining where Hardin and Jane were living.

Both Brown Bowen and John Hardin were wanted for murder in Texas and Texas Rangers Jack Duncan and John Armstrong were determined to find them. Duncan was working undercover on the father, Neil Bowen’s ranch, and discovered the evidence of Hardin’s location.

The two Texas Rangers set out to capture Hardin and did so in Pensacola. Brown Bowen was later captured and returned to Texas where he was hanged. Hardin served a prison sentence but later became a lawyer and was eventually killed when shot in the back of the head while playing poker.

J. Earle Bowden in a [Pensacola News Journal](#) article notes Hardin and his wife, Jane’s connection to Escambia County, Alabama. Bowden writes, “And Malcolm McMillan, sheriff of Escambia County, Ala., whose wife was Jane Hardin’s cousin, organized a posse to free the Texas pistol man from custody of the Texas Rangers who – lacking an arrest warrant in Alabama – were illegally holding Hardin” (“Outlaw’s Legend is Pensacola’s,” Nov. 2, 2014). None of those in the kidnap party went to jail.

Tom McMillan attended the re-enactment and provided pictures.

Sheriff Malcom McMillan and his wife Mary Jane McCaskill McMillan are his great-grandparents.



## Our Business Members

**Remember to support  
our Business Members**

*Herrington's*  
**The FLORIST, Inc.**

*"Where Flowers Are Special"*

719 Douglas Ave.  
Brewton, AL 36426  
(251) 867-7085  
(800) 235-0824

RONNY HERRINGTON

**the L house**  
Printing & Frames

Custom Event Stationery  
Business Documents • Custom Framing

131 Saint Joseph Avenue      251-867-9962  
Brewton, Alabama      Lhouseprinting@gmail.com

William Smith      251.238.3966

**Quality**  
*Lawn Services*

PO Box 823      Brewton, AL 36427  
QualityLawnsBrewton@yahoo.com

*Place your future in our hands...*



## “The Bank To Believe In”

A Locally Owned Community Bank  
Striving to Meet Your Financial Needs

### Personal Loans

- Rates based on length of time and type of collateral

### Real Estate Loans

- Fixed rates up to 15 years
- Adjustable rates up to 30 years
- Home Equity Loans
- Construction Loans

### Local Decisions

- Fast approvals
- Local closings
- Minimum fees on all loans



**ESCAMBIA  
COUNTY BANK**

P.O. Box 601 • Flomaton, Alabama 36441  
Telephone (251) 296-5356

# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Alaflora

By Charlie Ware

Alaflora still appears as a tiny dot on some maps of Escambia County. But if you go to that location, which is in the southeast corner of the county, you'll find nothing but an intersection of two dirt roads surrounded by thick pine forests. There is not a structure or paved road within a five mile radius. It's hard to believe this was once the location of an active, self-contained community that around seven hundred folks called home.

Alaflora was located about twenty miles southeast of Brewton and about two miles north of the Florida state line. There had been a few settlers in this area as early as 1913. Beginning in 1930, all the logging operations of the Bagdad Land and Lumber Company along with all the workers, support personnel, and their families were moved to the area and the community of Alaflora was created.

In addition to all the workshops and housing for the families, there was a company commissary, restaurant, gas station, school, post office, drug store, three-chair barber shop, and doctor's office located there. There were also several churches in the community.

Alaflora was strictly a logging town, but it was far from being just a logging camp. It had everything that was needed to support the families who lived there. Then in 1939, the Bagdad Land and Lumber Company was forced to shut down, and just as quickly as it had come into being, the community of Alaflora disappeared.

My grandfather, Herman S. Lowery, worked for the Bagdad Land and Lumber Company and was the first to arrive and last to leave Alaflora. My mother, Hermione Lowery Ware, and her brother, Herman V. Lowery (Uncle Buddy) spent their teenage years living in Alaflora. Over the

years, I heard many stories of what it was like living there, the things they did, and the people they knew.

I have been with them to Alaflora reunions where hundreds of former residents would gather to renew old friendships and swap stories. I wish I had paid more attention and asked more questions back then because that was an important part of our history and the connection is slipping away from us.

Most of the people who lived there or who had anything to do with Alaflora back in the 1930's have passed away. Recently, I have been talking with my Uncle Buddy and taking notes as he recalls that era. He is 95 years old now, but his memory of life in Alaflora is still quite clear. Most of the information that I have here comes from Uncle Buddy's recollections.

Much of the Southeast United States was originally covered with vast stands of virgin longleaf heart pine and by the mid 1800's, sawmills were popping up all over the area to take advantage of what was called "organic gold." There had been a sawmill in operation at Bagdad, Florida since before the Civil War and by 1900 the company had grown to become the largest economic concern in the state of Florida. The company, originally called Forsyth & Simpson, changed hands several times, and in 1912, became known as the Bagdad Land and Lumber Company. At one time, the company employed over 1,200 people.

Bagdad Land and Lumber acquired over 200,000 acres of timber land, mostly in Santa Rosa County, Florida. At first, logs were floated down streams to get them to the mill in Bagdad. It was necessary to build dams and dig many miles of canals to float logs out of areas that didn't have easy access to streams. Unfortunately,

*(Continued on page 11)*

# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Alaflora

*(Continued from page 10)*

Bagdad Land and Lumber, along with most other lumber companies of that time, used what was called the “cut-out, get-out” policy. They cut the timber and then moved on. There was little reforestation done back then.

As the logging operation moved farther from Bagdad, railroads began replacing water as the means of transporting logs to the mill. The first railroad out of Bagdad was started in 1903. As the logging operation was moved further north, the railroad would be extended. Spur lines were laid off the main lines into areas where trees were being cut. After that area was harvested, the spur lines would be removed.

The main line eventually extended as far north as the Conecuh River in Alabama, with many east-west branches running out up to 12 miles. The main line was known as the Florida and Alabama Railroad. In addition to being used for hauling logs, the Florida and Alabama Railroad operated a scheduled service for transporting passengers, mail, and supplies.

Around 1915, most of Bagdad Land and Lumber’s logging activities became centralized in Munson, Florida. The logging operation was managed from Munson and that was where the timber workers lived. The workers would commute out to the work area by train. Sometimes it was necessary to set up temporary camps in the far-out areas and the workers may only get home on weekends.

By 1930, Munson had become a thriving little town of around a thousand people, but by that time most of the timber in the area had been cut and it was time to move on. In 1930, Bagdad Land and Lumber acquired 23,000 acres of additional land, part of what was called the Atkinson Tract. This land was located in Escambia and

Conecuh County, Alabama and was the largest stand of virgin yellow pine remaining in the southeast. To be closer to this tract of land, it was decided that the logging operation and all the personnel would be moved from Munson, north to a new location at Alaflora (a straight line distance of 12 miles).

Alaflora could as easily have been called North Munson, for most of the town of Munson was literally transported intact to Alaflora and set up along basically the same street patterns that had existed at Munson. Planners had cleared the area of Alaflora and laid out the streets and marked the location where each building was to go. The rail line had been extended through the Alaflora area a few years before, so the buildings could be moved from Munson to Alaflora by rail.

To get the houses on the train, the porches, chimneys, and utility rooms were removed. Then all the houses along one side of a street were jacked up until the floors were about five feet off the ground. The houses were supported by heavy 10x10 timbers that rested on stacks of railroad ties. A rail line was then laid under all the houses in that row so a locomotive could back a string of flat cars under them.

Each house was then lowered and secured to a flat car. After about a dozen houses had been loaded, the train would then proceed with them to Alaflora. After a row of houses had been removed, the rail spur would be taken up and moved over under the next row of houses.

At Alaflora, a rail spur had been laid up the street where the houses were to go. The train would then back down the spur until a house was in its proper location where it would be jacked and supported as before. When all the houses were positioned, the train would pull out and the rail spur would be taken up and repositioned for

*(Continued on page 12)*

# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Alaflora

*(Continued from page 11)*

the next run. The houses were lowered onto waiting pillars and carpenters immediately went to work to rebuild the porches and chimneys. The train then returned to Munson to continue the process.

The houses were transported with all the furnishings in place so families were ready to resume normal housekeeping as soon as the house was in its new location. The families were usually not out of their houses for more than two days. Most people still had their same neighbors when they arrived at Alaflora.

Uncle Buddy estimated that at least a hundred and twenty houses were transported in this manner. Other buildings, including the Baptist church, were also moved to Alaflora. The church was too large for one flat car. It had to be divided into three sections, moved on three separate cars, and then reassembled upon arrival. The company constructed some additional houses at Alaflora, along with some larger buildings such as the commissary and elementary school. The high school, Masonic hall, and other churches remained in Munson.

Alaflora was laid out in a grid pattern of about sixteen blocks with the railroads running north and south through the center of the community. The main street was Parker Springs Road which ran parallel to the railroad. The central community was about three-quarters of a mile square with some houses and shops along the roads leading in and out.

The offices, shops, commissary, and post office were located along the railroad. Management and professional people lived on or near the main road with laborers living further back. Lots were planned to be large enough to accommodate a garden and a chicken yard. Of course, back then,

the community was segregated, with African-Americans all living to the west of the rail tracks.

The commissary was a large store operated by the company. It stocked anything that might be needed, including food, clothing, and hardware. Uncle Buddy remembers it as having a well stocked meat market with a full-time butcher. The commissary was supplied on a regular basis by train from Milton. In the early days, the company paid workers in company script which could only be used at the commissary, but by the time of the move to Alaflora, real money was being used.

Most of the large logging companies had company commissaries, and since they were usually a monopoly in the community, they were notorious for charging exorbitant prices. The Alaflora commissary was noted for keeping prices reasonable. Most purchases were charged and the amount deducted from the workers pay at the end of the month.

The company supplied its own utilities. It had a steam operated electric power plant at Munson and power lines were run from there to Alaflora. At first, only the houses near the main road had electricity, but later other houses were wired. There were some houses that never got electricity and continued to depend on kerosene for light. The company constructed a central water system with several large pumps and a water tower. All houses had running water. Only about half the houses had in-door toilets. There was also a volunteer fire department with a couple of old fire trucks.

The company provided a doctor and several nurses to take care of the medical needs of the community. Each worker was charged a small fee each month, amounting to from one to two dollars (depending on the size of the family) to

*(Continued on page 13)*

# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Alaflora

*(Continued from page 12)*

cover medical expenses. The medical fee was deducted from workers' pay each month. This allowed a worker and his family unlimited access to medical care.

Patients with serious problems and those needing surgery were usually transported, by train, to Milton. The company doctor, during the entire existence of Alaflora, was Doctor Mayhew Dotson. After leaving Alaflora, he established a practice in Pensacola and continued to be my mother's family doctor for many years. He delivered me in 1943 and my sister in 1947.

A three room elementary school was built and several school teachers were brought in to teach the first through the sixth grades. The teachers were recruited from other areas and usually boarded with local residents during the school year. High school students, who had been enrolled at Munson before the move to Alaflora, were allowed to continue attending high school at Munson, even though it was across the state line. Other students attended school at Lockhart or at Brewton. The company renovated several old truck frames and constructed their own school busses.

Uncle Buddy, at age 14, was appointed as the school bus driver for the Alaflora to Munson route. A driver's license was, apparently, not a requirement to be a school bus driver. He claims that he was chosen because he was the best driver in town. He remembers that the old dirt road between Alaflora and Munson was so rutted that he could go for miles and not have to steer. The ruts were so deep that the wheels were locked into the ruts and he said that sometimes, as the bus was bumping along, he would let go of the steering wheel and stand up or even jump outside and run

along beside the bus, just to scare the other kids.

The superintendent of livestock was still an important position in the logging operation. Horses and oxen were heavily used for moving logs right up until 1939. There were hundreds of these animals that had to be fed and cared for on a daily basis. There was a whole department of employees whose job was to insure that the work animals were fit and available where needed. There were several corrals around Alaflora where these work animals were kept and bred.

The animals were transported out to the logging areas by train. There were people out in the remote areas to care for the animals after all the other workers had departed for the night. These people lived in box-cars that had been converted to sleeping cabins. That must to have been a pretty lonely existence.

Law enforcement at Alaflora was primarily the responsibility of my grandfather. He was appointed by the company to maintain law and order and was a deputy sheriff for both Santa Rosa County, Florida and Escambia County, Alabama. He could call on volunteer deputies to assist him when needed. There was very little serious crime but there were occasional fights and domestic disputes to take care of.

Uncle Buddy sometimes had to drive the car when my grandfather transported prisoners to Milton or to Brewton. For really serious matters, the sheriff would be called to come down from Brewton. My uncle said he would be surprised if my grandfather ever received any extra pay for this additional duty.

Parker Springs, located about three miles north of Alaflora, was a popular recreation area and the scene for many family outings and company events. It had a swimming area with a bath

*(Continued on page 14)*

# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Alaflora

*(Continued from page 13)*

house, a ball field, and a large picnic area. Every Fourth of July, the company sponsored a company-wide barbeque at Parker Springs and excursion trains would bring the families from Bagdad up for the event. Along with plenty of good food, families would enjoy swimming, fishing, games, music and dance. There would be baseball games and other competitions between the mill workers and the loggers.

Several times during the year, whenever the logging operation would get ahead of schedule, a day off would be declared and workers would organize fishing trips or bird hunts followed by a community wide cook-out. On Saturday, a passenger train would operate from Alaflora to Milton and take folks down for the day. They could go shopping, attend a movie or ball game, or just enjoy the experience of coming to town.

My father, who lived in Milton at the time, used to joke that when the Alaflora train would arrive, the word would spread quickly that the "hillbillies" were in town. My father may have joked about the hillbillies from Alaflora, but he met my mom for the first time one Saturday when she got off the Alaflora train in Milton.

My grandfather's position with the Bagdad Land and Lumber Company was that of superintendent of timber production. His job was to plan and supervise the logging operations in the field. This included selecting the area to be cut, assigning the logging crews, insuring equipment was in place, and scheduling the trains to Bagdad. In other words, his responsibility was getting logs to the mill.

His direction from the company was to do whatever was necessary to insure the saw-mill never had to shut down due to a lack of logs to be sawed. Weather, accidents, or illness were not

excuses, the logs had to be delivered. This sometimes involved working well into the night and working for several weeks without a day off but, during the entire existence of Alaflora, the mill never shut down because of a lack of logs.

The closest the mill came to running out of logs occurred in 1937. The rail trestle over Juniper Creek, south of Munson, somehow caught fire and burned during the night. Next morning, the engineer of the train to Bagdad didn't spot the burned trestle until it was too late to stop the train. Engine number 19 and a couple of cars loaded with logs plunged into the creek. The engineer and fireman jumped from the train at the last minute and were not badly injured but another rider was killed. The company informed my grandfather that they had only enough logs on hand to run the mill for four more days. They had to have logs moving within four days or the mill would have to shut down.

My grandfather organized work crews that worked around the clock. They brought in skidders, which were large, steam operated cranes mounted on rail cars, to drag the locomotive and cars out of the creek. The locomotive was positioned on a newly constructed rail siding and maintenance crews went to work to have it reconditioned. A temporary derrick was constructed over the creek from which workers began to rebuild the bridge. On day four, the bridge was completed, and logs were once again on their way to the mill. The company gave my grandfather a new Stetson hat for this accomplishment.

Logging was hard work. Workers were in the woods by sunrise and didn't depart until sunset. They often had to work week-ends for no extra pay. There were no chain saws. Trees were cut by axes and two-man crosscut saws. Though the

*(Continued on page 15)*

# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Alaflora

*(Continued from page 14)*

hours were long and the pay was low, the men worked enthusiastically to do whatever needed to be done to get the job done. This era was through the height of the Great Depression and everyone knew they were fortunate to have jobs. At least they weren't starving and roaming the country looking for work. Many families had friends or relatives boarding with them, people who had lost their jobs elsewhere and had come to Alaflora to get work.

When Bagdad Land and Lumber began operations, some people had estimated there would be enough logs to last at least a hundred years, but by 1939, company officials realized they were running out of timber land. The operation had run up against the areas of other major logging companies such as T.R. Miller, Alger-Sullivan, and Jackson Lumber Company and there was nowhere else to go.

It was decided that Bagdad Land and Lumber would have to be shut down in April of 1939. The last tree was felled on April 4 and the last lumber was sawed at the mill on April 18. Each member of the seventeen man crew that cut the last tree was given the opportunity to pull on the saw so he could say he had helped cut the last tree for the Bagdad Land and Lumber Company. Most of the men wore ties for this occasion.

Some of the workers had already found jobs by the time the mill shut down. Others worked temporarily for the WPA or at CCC camps which were engaged in reforestation of the logged area. With the build-up for World War II, few had problems finding jobs. About a quarter of the Alaflora workers for Bagdad Land and Lumber eventually went to work for the Newport Turpentine and Rosin Company which was harvesting the millions of stumps left behind by the logging

operations. These stumps had become almost as valuable as the logs had been because of their heavy turpentine content. My Grandfather went to work for Newport and continued to work in the Alaflora area until he retired in 1958.

Throughout 1939, families said their goodbyes and moved out of Alaflora. My grandfather was appointed to stay behind and dispose of the houses and other property. Many of the houses were sold intact and were moved by truck to other areas. Others were torn down and the lumber sold for scrap. When the commissary was torn down, my grandfather bought the lumber and used it to build a house in Canoe. That house still stands.

He left Alaflora in late 1940, the last employee of Bagdad Land and Lumber Company to depart. Alaflora had faded into history. Bagdad Land and Lumber had been selling its logged-over land for years, much of it being developed into farm land. The last parcels were sold in 1939, most of this to the U.S. government. Much of the land in Alabama became part of the Conecuh National Forest and that in Florida became part of the Blackwater River State Forest. The forest services initially planted the areas with loblolly or slash pines, but today they are trying to reintroduce the original longleaf pine back into the forests.

The railroad tracks were removed and most of the rail equipment was sold to other logging companies. Most of the locomotives continued in operation into the 1950's. Engine number 18 somehow ended up in Montana where it ran on the Montana Central Railroad until 1985. It is currently owned by the Fremont and Elkhorn Valley Railroad in Fremont, Nebraska and is undergoing restoration to be used as a tourist train.

The former residents of Alaflora held periodic reunions for many years and I attended several of

*(Continued on page 16)*

# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Alaflora

*(Continued from page 15)*

these with my mother. The last I remember was in the 1980's. It was obvious from the number of people attending and the interaction among the participants that they were a close-knit group and that many lifelong friendships developed during their years at Alaflora. Throughout her life,

when someone would ask my mother where she was from, she would always say "Alaflora, Alabama."



**Train Moving Houses from Munson to Alaflora**



**Logs Loaded for Transport to Bagdad**



**House at Munson Before Move to Alaflora (Charlie Ware's Mother in foreground)**



# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Alaflora



**Alaflora Commissary**



**Commissary Staff**



**Skidder for Dragging Logs to the Rail Line  
to be Loaded**



**Elementary School at Alaflora**



**Baptist Church Being Disassembled  
for Move to Alaflora**

# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Alaflora



**Baptist Church at Alaflora**



**Logging Crew that Cut the Last Log in April 1939**



**Main Street Alaflora**



**Skidder Pulling Logs**



**Felling the Last Tree**



**Workhorses**

# The ECHS *Journal* Section

## Alaflora



**Livestock Manager with Oxen**



**Rail Lines Behind Commissary  
(Charlie's Grandfather Circled)**



**All Dressed Up for the Occasion of  
Cutting the Last Log**



**My (Charlie's) Grandfather Takes His  
Turn at Pulling on the Saw**



**Sunday Dinner at Parker Springs**



**Charlie Ware's Mother and Friends at  
Parker Springs (Pavilion in  
Background)**

**ECHOES**  
 THE NEWSLETTER FOR  
 THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY  
 HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 276  
 Brewton, AL 36427  
 Phone: 251-809-1528

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

We're on the web!  
[www.escohis.org](http://www.escohis.org)

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**  
**DATED MATERIAL**  
 Address correction  
 requested

<u>Books for Sale</u>	Regular	Mailed
<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>	\$12.50	\$10.00
<u>History of Brewton and E. Brewton (sc)</u>	\$51.00	\$45.00
<u>Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook</u>	\$30.00	\$25.00

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Names) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you prefer to get your newsletter by**

**U.S. Mail \_\_\_ or email? \_\_\_**

Dues \_\_\_\_\_ (\$25.00/person,  
 \$35.00/two family members at same address; Lifetime, \$250.00/person;  
 \$50.00/year business)

**Donation**

*(Business members get a business-card sized advertisement in 11 issues of the newsletter. Larger sized ads are available)*

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

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

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

❖ **Dues are to be paid at the beginning of the  
 year—give a membership as a gift!**

*ECHOES, The newsletter for the Escambia County Historical Society, a 501 (c) (3) corporation, is published monthly except November. Comments are welcome. You may email the Society at [escohis@escohis.org](mailto:escohis@escohis.org) or call 251-809-1528.*

**OFFICERS**

President, *Sally Finlay*  
 Vice-President, *Carolyn Jennings*  
 Secretary, *Jacque Stone*  
 Treasurer, *Susan Crawford*  
 Echoes Editor, *Ranella Merritt*  
 Librarian, *Barbara McCoy*  
 Publicity, *Ann Biggs-Williams and  
 Clay Lisenby*  
 Historian/Curator, *Tom McMillan*

**TRUSTEES**

*Ann Biggs-Williams*  
*Ranella Merritt*  
*Tom McMillan*  
*Sallie Finlay*  
*Darryl Searcy, Alternate*