



**The June Newsletter:
The June Meeting will be
Tuesday, June 25, 2024, 3:00 pm
in the Meeting Room of the McMillan Museum
on the Brewton College Campus.**



**Frank
"Trippy"
McGuire**

The Program: Our Speaker, Frank "Trippy" McGuire, Will Present a Program on the Famous Shepard Mansion, the Shepard Family and the Ghost Town of Poley, Covington County, Alabama.

Retired judge, attorney, author, and historian, Frank McGuire, III, or for those who know him, "Trippy," began serving as a district judge in 1993 and retired in 2014 after two decades of service to the community.

McGuire graduated from W.A. Berry High School in

(Continued on page 2)

Table of Contents

The Shepard Mansion and the Sawmill Town of Poley	2
Books by "Trippy" McGuire	3
D-Day Is Taken in Stride Here But Runs Deep Just Beneath the Surface.	5
That Time that America Air-Dropped Pianos for Troops in Battlefields	5



**Fishermen from the Past
Standing by a Model T and proving that the fishing was good on the Choctawhatchee River. Approximately 1925 or 1926. From the Opp Historical Society Facebook Page.**

Refreshments after the Meetings

Thank you to those who brought refreshments to the May Meeting. Plan on again bringing your favorite finger foods for refreshments after the program at the June Meeting. The Society will provide drinks.

Program for the July Meeting

The speaker will be Millie Murpree, Auburn Extension Coordinator for Escambia Co.



Two Men in An Automobile in Rural Covington County, Circa 1915.

**Volume 51 No. 6
June 2024**

Brewton Paws Crossed

Dog Rescue, Inc
501(c)3
Visit Us On Facebook

Our Business Members Remember to Support Our Business Members

Royal Oaks Bed & Breakfast

5415 Highway 21
Atmore, AL 36502
(251) 583-6009

THE L HOUSE PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY INVITATIONS, PRINTING & CUSTOM FRAMING

Clay Lisenby
Owner
(251) 867-9962
716 Douglas Avenue
Brewton, Alabama 36426
Lhousephotography@gmail.com
www.theLhousephoto.com



(800) 522-2627



**Blackburn's
Lawn Care, LLC**
P. O. Box 841
Brewton, AL 36427
jcblakburn12@gmail.com

Joseph Blackburn 251-363-9375

The Program

(Continued from page 1)

Birmingham, then attended Auburn University, graduating in 1975. He graduated from Cumberland School of Law in Birmingham in 1978.

From 1979 to 1993, he had a private law office in Opp. During that time, he became the Assistant District Attorney and served until 1992.

In 1986, he was appointed as the Opp Municipal Court Judge, serving until 1993. McGuire was selected to serve as Covington County District Judge in 1993. He continued to serve until his retirement in 2014.

He has held many judicial and civic positions. He served as president of both the Alabama District Judges' Association and the Alabama Juvenile Judges' Association. McGuire also serves as a director of the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation, a director of Mizell Memorial Hospital and the Mizell Memorial Hospital Foundation.

He is a past president of the Opp Rotary Club, where he was named a Paul Harris Fellow and received the district governor's service award for his many years as adviser to the Interact Club.

Judge McGuire writes of his presentation: "The talk is about the famous



Frank "Trippy" McGuire and Margaret Trippy started visiting friends in Opp, Alabama in 1973. While attending a wedding in 1977, he met Margaret Moore and they later married in Opp in 1979. Since marrying Margaret, Trippy has called Opp home. Trippy and Margaret have two daughters, Natalie Davis and Jan Miles.

Shepard Mansion, the Shepard family and the ghost town of Poley, Alabama.

"The town was originally owned by T.R. Miller and F.C. Brent. It was a sawmill town and had the second largest sawmill in the state. Miller and Brent formed the Miller-Brent Lumber Company, which acquired 50,000 acres of land in several southeast Alabama counties.

"In 1908, they sold the Miller-Brent Lumber company, including the sawmill and the 50,000 acres, to Miller's son, Mark Miller, as well as William Throver Shepard, for \$50,000. The sale made statewide news and was one of the largest transactions in Alabama that year.

"Mark Miller later sold his interest to his partner, Shepard, and Shepard's father in law, J.J. Fitzgerald. Shepard became a well known timber tycoon, his wife became a famous poet and humanitarian and his sons-in-law became naval heroes during WWII.

"My book, [Splendors From Our Past: The Shepard Mansion, the Shepard Family and the Ghost Town of Poley, Alabama](#), covers all the information about this fascinating family and the mark they made in the timber industry, the literary world and the World War."

The Shepard Mansion and the Sawmill Town of Poley, Alabama

From the [National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination: William T. Shepard House, National Park Service by W. Warner Floyd, 1973](#) (<https://npgallery.nps.gov/>).

In 1972, the Shepard House was the only remaining structure of Poley, Alabama, a sawmill community thought to have been one of the larger in the United States in the early 1900's (*Poley was located west of Opp, a current city in Covington County.*). The house,



The Shepard House

which was unusually elaborate for this area of the state, was built for entertaining and was an important social center for South Central Alabama in the early 1900s.

Poley was a town of some 1,000 to 1,500 people, complete with hotel, two boarding houses, an ice house, a barber shop, a very large commissary, a church, school, cemetery, and entertainment center.

(Continued on page 3)

The Shepard Mansion and the Sawmill Town of Poley, Alabama

(Continued from page 2)

The main feature of the town was the Miller-Brent Lumber Company which employed some 600 to 750 men. It consisted of a large saw mill, a large planer mill, a large boiler (steam power) plant for each of these two, a large machine shop and a complete rail-road system that extended some 25 miles in all directions from the mill.

As far as can be determined, a sawmill had operated in this location since 1856. In the early 1900's William T. Shepard, originally from Pensacola, Florida, bought 50% interest in the operation and moved to Poley. His house, constructed in 1908, was large and unusual for the area and soon became the social center for the surrounding counties with balls and orchestras imported from as far away as Montgomery.

The mill hit its peak in the early 1920's and began to decline for lack of available timber. The operations ceased and the mill equipment, even foundation bricks were sold. There was nothing left of the town except the Shepard House, which was occupied by the family until 1972. At that time, it was sold to the newly formed Opp Historical Society which planned

to restore it as a museum and headquarters.

From the article, "Shepard Family Leaves Mark on Covington County," *Andalusia Star News* (<https://www.andalusiastarnews.com/2009/06/12/shepard-family-leaves-mark-on-covington-county-history/>).

The house itself was of two-story construction featuring at least six bedrooms, large ballroom, court yard, kitchen, two living rooms, and it was surrounded on the north and east sides by a wooden porch. William Shepard completed building it in 1908 out of the finest grade lumber available. It was considered the largest and most modern house in the area.

Although the Shepard house was restored in 1972 by the Opp Historical Society, it unfortunately burned to the ground in 1976. The Shepard's daughter, Van, and her husband, John Hickey, were the last to make the house their personal residence.

Needless to say, William T. Shepard became one of Poley's most outstanding citizens. In addition to managing the large timber operation and serving as postmaster, he appears to have been the social leader of the area. He passed from this life in 1915 at a time that would appear to be during his prime years. The house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

Books by Frank "Trippy" McGuire

From the Amazon website

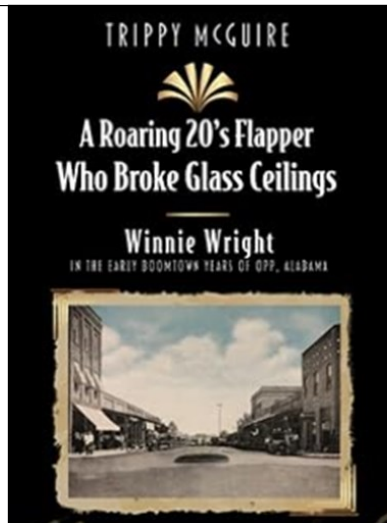
(<https://www.amazon.com>

[/Roaring-Flapper-Broke-Glass-Ceilings/](https://www.amazon.com/Roaring-Flapper-Broke-Glass-Ceilings/)):

The Roaring Twenties was an exciting time in American history, with new inventions, new forms of entertainment, leisure time, and relaxed mores. With the rise of the flappers, young girls who defied convention, women took on different roles, lifestyles, hairstyles, and attitudes, many of which were frowned upon by their elders.

Into this era came an intelligent, polite, determined young lady named Winnie Wright, a flapper with a dream. That dream to be self-supporting and to make her mark in a man's world drove her to a business career, which was a novelty for women of that time.

This book takes the reader through the Roaring Twenties, as seen through the eyes of this brave, remarkable young lady, in her adopted town of Opp, Alabama, during its early boomtown years.



Book Cover for A Roaring 20's Flapper Who Broke Glass Ceilings: Winnie Wright in the Early Boomtown Years of Opp, Alabama.

Independent and strong-willed, she overcame barriers and broke glass ceilings, seemingly with ease. She lived a life unlike any other woman of her time, becoming the executive assistant (stenographer) and confidante to three of southeast Alabama's leading businessmen.

The book is also a history of Opp from 1919 to 1932. Practically all the people written about in this work were actual people who lived back then.

The novelty of a woman's being in the office with a man sometimes led to unwanted advances by the

(Continued on page 4)

Books by Frank “Trippy” McGuire

(Continued from page 3)

male employer toward the female employee. After years of working in an office undisturbed, Winnie finally encountered such a situation. She then unwittingly became the center of a firestorm that made headlines and resulted in the trial of the century in Covington County up until that time.

She broke another glass ceiling by being a woman testifying as a star witness in a trial. The trial involved some of the greatest courtroom gladiators of

that day. The author draws from his own experience and knowledge as a former prosecutor and a judge to give insight into the emotion, drama, and strategies of that epic trial. Also revealed are the prevailing attitudes of jurors of that day.

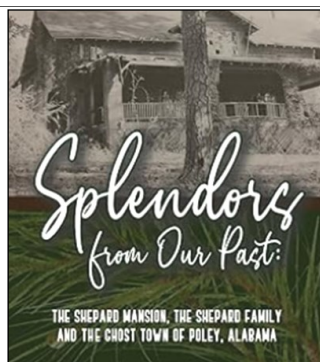
The first part of this book is relaxing and entertaining to readers interested in the lifestyles, habits and entertainment of small town Americans during the Roaring Twenties. The last part of the book becomes gripping and full of drama, as the trial, and the reasons behind it, unfolds.

From the Amazon website (<https://www.amazon.com/SPLENDORS-OUR-PAST-Shepard-Mansion/>):

As the 1800s came to a close, the immense forests of the South were giving way to the formation of new towns. While cotton had previously been the South’s cash crop, timber became the cash crop as the Twentieth Century dawned. With the harvesting of that timber, new towns and new money emerged. One of those towns was Poley, Alabama, a sawmill town in Covington County, Alabama.

A dynamic businessman, William Thrower Shepard, came to Poley with his family in 1908, as a co-owner of the Miller-Brent Lumber Company. He built a beautiful mansion which became a landmark and a social center for the area.

Orchestras from Montgomery were brought down in the Miller-Brent private rail car to entertain at the



**Book Cover for
Splendors from Our Past:
The Shepard Mansion,
The Shepard Family and
The Ghost Town of
Poley, Alabama**

lavish parties and balls thrown by the Shepards. Shepard’s wife, Kate Shepard, became the name most associated with the Shepard Mansion. Beautiful, cultured, educated and intelligent, she became an accomplished poet, lecturer and humanitarian.

She authored two books of poetry during her lifetime. She and her three eye-catching daughters were often the subject of the society columns of Montgomery, Alabama newspapers. Two of those daughters married men who later distinguished themselves on the world’s stage.

This book takes the reader back to Poley’s heydays and examines the fascinating life of the Shepard family,

a family that made its mark and brought splendor to the pine forests of south Alabama.

Churches in Covington County: Left to Right, the First Methodist Church of Opp, from 1905-1924; the First United Methodist Church in Andalusia, Print from 1969; Church of Christ, Opp, Built in 1912, Burned in 1940.



The ECHS *Journal* Section

D-Day Is Taken in Stride Here but Interest Runs Deep Underneath the Surface

From the *Brewton Standard*, Thursday, June 8, 1944 at (https://www.newspapers.com/image/534908709/?match=1&clipping_id=149139367).

Brewton residents received calmly but with intense interest early Tuesday the news that allied troops were storming the French coast to begin the heralded invasion of Western Europe. The word got around after Fire Chief Bill Rogers, who turned on his radio to confirm it, then called Mayor C. C. Fountain.

Advance plans called for the fire alarm to be sounded as a signal for citizens to know D-Day had arrived but it was such an early hour (2:30 a. m.) the mayor hesitated, then decided to telephone Rev. Geo. W. Kerlin, pastor of the Methodist Church, for his opinion. City authorities and local pastors had collaborated on plans for the invasion day program.

Rev. Kerlin advised that the hour was not propitious. But he went back to his room and started thinking. "If I had a boy in that thing, I'd want to know about it," he decided.

At his home a few blocks up the street, the mayor was having much the same thoughts. Both started for the telephone to call the other. Reverend Kerlin got there first. They agreed the first decision was wrong.

Soon the alarm sounded. It was 3:40 a.m. Lights were switched on in many homes. Some figured out

immediately what was up, remembering the public announcement six weeks previously that citizens would be advised in this manner. They turned on radios. Some called neighbors to be sure they were aware.

Others had forgotten and thought a real fire was under way somewhere in town. They called the telephone exchange and the operator hardly had an idle moment the remainder of the night.

A score of volunteer firemen came to the city hall prepared to fight a conflagration. They remained to hear details of a world-shaking event. Many of the awakened citizens, unable to pull themselves from the radio, remained up the rest of the night. Some men not only did that, they took their radios to store and office with them.

D-Day services at three local churches went off as originally scheduled, being held at the Baptist Church at noon, at the Presbyterian at 5:30 p. m., at the Methodist at 8:00 p. m.

The program consisted of scripture reading, prayer and song. At the night service, the pledge was given to the American and Christian flags. About 150 persons attended each of the day services, 300 the one at night.

That Time When America Air-Dropped Pianos For Troops in Battlefields

By Kaushik Patowary

From *Amusing Planet Website*, July 2, 2019 at (<https://www.amusingplanet.com/2019/07/that-time-when-america-air-dropped.html>).

You thought pianos dropping from the sky is a gag for cartoons? Then hear this story out.

During World War Two, all kinds of production involving metals, such as iron, copper, and brass, that was non-essential to the war effort were halted by the American government, because these metals were needed to make guns, tanks, and artillery. Many musical instrument makers were affected by the new regulations, which



**"Victory Verticals" or
"G. I. Steinways,"**

meant that either they had to manufacture something else the military could use, or wait for the war to end, which was as good as going out of business.

Steinway & Sons, one of the "Big Four" piano makers whose legacy went back a solid ninety years (at the time war broke out over Europe), was also affected by the restrictions. Instead of shutting down their factory, Steinway decided to

bid their time manufacturing coffins and parts for troop transport gliders. Likewise, the Baldwin Piano

(Continued on page 6)

The ECHS *Journal* Section

That Time When America Air-Dropped Pianos For Troops in Battlefields

(Continued from page 5)

Company made wooden airplane wings and the Gibson Guitar Company made wooden toys. These ventures were hardly profitable, but at least it provided the company some semblance of a running operation

Steinway's patience was rewarded when the US Military granted them a contract to make heavy-duty military pianos for soldiers. By June 1942, Steinway's workers had designed a small upright piano, no more than forty inches wide and weighing 455 pounds—light enough to be carried by four soldiers. Each piano was treated with special anti-termite and anti-insect solution and sealed with water-resistant glue to withstand dampness. Ivory keys were coated with white celluloid to protect them in tropical climates, and soft iron was used instead of copper for windings on the bass strings. The best part was—the

Music was used as an escape for American troops abroad, and the government looked to the pianos as a way to help soldiers remember what they were fighting for. The President of Steinway and Sons had four sons in the military at the time of the creation of the Victory Verticals, so had close connections with the frontlines.

piano used only 33 pounds of metal, about a tenth as much as a typical grand piano.

Known as “Victory Verticals,” and GI Steinways,” these pianos could be packed into crates and conveniently

dropped by parachutes along with tuning equipment and instructions. An estimated 2,5000 pianos were dropped to American soldiers fighting the war in three continents.

Music was an excellent way to keep the men from going insane from the horrors of war and from homesickness, and these pianos played an important role in this front providing soldiers with countless hours of diversion, education, entertainment, worship, enrichment, and outreach.

By the time the war ended, Steinway had shipped some 5,000 instruments, but not all went to the

(Continued on page 7)



Steinway Placed the Lightweight Pianos, which Could Be Lifted by Four Men, in Sturdy Boxes which Would Allow the Pianos to be Parachuted.

From (<https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/instruments/piano/steinways-parachuted-world-war-two/>).



Dance Band in the Philippines.



Actress Marlene Dietrich Singing for a Group of GI's in France.



A 1945, Steinway “Victory Vertical” or “Steinway G.I.” upright piano with an olive drab case, recently sold at [Besbrode Pianos](http://www.besbrode.com) Website.

From (<http://www.golden-age-of-pianos.com/steinway-victory-vertical-GI-upright-piano-318745-khaki.htm>).

The ECHS *Journal* Section

That Time When America Air-Dropped Pianos For Troops in Battlefields

(Continued from page 6)

military. Roughly half were sold to the United States armed forces, and the rest were bought by religious organizations, educational institutions, hotels and their places of public gatherings.

Steinway's pianos continued to serve the military well after the war was over. When the nuclear-

The pianos were an immediate hit with troops serving overseas. They appeared in camps, hospitals and airfields, and were used by such USO performers as Isaac Stern, Bob Hope and Benjamin DeLoache. According to one soldier, it was a great morale booster:

“Two nights past we received welcome entertainment when a Jeep pulling a small wagon came to camp. The wagon contained a light system and a Steinway piano. It is smaller and painted olive green, just like a Jeep. We all got a kick out of it and fun after meals when we gathered around the piano to sing... I slept smiling and even today am humming a few of the songs we sang.”

From (<https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/instruments/piano/steinways-parachuted-world-war-two/>).

powered submarine USS Thomas A. Edison was built in 1961, a Steinway upright was installed in the crew's mess area at the request of its captain.

The instrument remained on board until the sub was decommissioned in 1983. It now lives in the Navy Historical Center in Washington, D.C.



Guadalcanal. T/4 William Kuehl of the 10th Special Service Co. tuning one of the GI Pianos in the Music Repair Shop on Guadalcanal.

GI's Grouped around a Piano in Normandy. (From the National Archives.)



Soldiers Playing a Dilapidated Piano during Operation Overlord, June 1944. (Photo Credit: Galerie Bilderwelt / Gett).

At Right, Cpt. Philip Mancini at the Keyboard of an American-Made Piano Found in the Ruins of the Town of Agst on Recaptured Guam. Around Him, Members of a Howitzer Unit Who Salvaged the Piano in 1944 (Photo credit Bellmann/Getty Images).



At left, Troops Enjoying Piano and Guitar Music. Location Unknown.



ECHOES
THE NEWSLETTER FOR
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

251-809-1528 or
escambiahistoricalociety@gmail.com

We're on the web!
www.escohis.org

The Museum is on Facebook at
<http://www.facebook.com.
McMillan Museum>.

FIRST CLASS MAIL
DATED MATERIAL
Address Correction
Requested

"Donations and contributions that are not for books or membership dues may now be made online through PayPal to <escambiahistoricalociety@gmail.com>. Please continue to use the form shown for book requests and membership dues, by mail, as your complete name and address are needed for our records. Thank you again for your support!"

Books Available by Contribution

	Regular	Mailed
History of Escambia County, Alabama	\$90.00	\$96.00
Headstones and Heritage	\$20.00	\$26.00
Escambia Historical Society Cookbook	\$10.00	\$15.00
Wildflowers of The Conecuh/Escambia River Basin CD	\$10.00	\$15.00
History of Brewton and E. Brewton (SC)	\$40.00	\$46.00
Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook	\$30.00	\$36.00
Addendum to Headstones and Heritage	\$20.00	\$26.00
Headstones & Addendum Together	\$40.00	\$52.00

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

Date ____/____/____

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Email Address _____

Do you prefer to get your newsletter by
U.S. Mail ___ or email? ___

Dues

(\$25.00/person; \$35.00/ family at same address; Lifetime, \$500.00/person; \$100.00/year business)

Dues _____
Donation _____
Total Enclosed _____

Your Interests _____

You Will Help With _____

Dues are to be paid at the beginning of the year
Many members give a membership as a gift!
Business members get a large scale
advertisement 11 months of the year.

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 escambiahistoricalociety@gmail.com or call 251-809-1528.

OFFICERS

President, *Jimmy Adkisson*
Vice-President, *Don Sales*
Secretary, *Vacant*
Treasurer, *John Angel*
Echoes Editor, *Ranella Merritt*
Librarian, *Vacant*
Publicity, *Clay Lisenby and*
John Angel
Historian/Curator, *Tom McMillan*
Chaplain, *Rev. Patrick J. Madden*

ECHS Poet Laureate and
American Military Historian,
Robert Smiley

Trustees

Ann Biggs-Williams
Ranella Merritt
Tom McMillan
Sally Finlay
Charlie Ware, Alternate