



## The September Newsletter: The Meeting will be Tuesday, September 24, 2024, 3:00 pm in the Meeting Room of the McMillan Museum on the Brewton College Campus.



**Eddie Nall**

### The Program: Eddie Nall Will Present a Program on the History of the Bank of Brewton.

In the article "Nall Knows His Bank History," (Brewton Standard, 2005), Lydia Grimes writes: "Nall was born in Brewton, although his family lived in Evergreen at the time. They later moved to Brewton. His father was an auto mechanic for 20 years before becoming a minister, thus following in the footsteps of his great grandfather, who had been a circuit riding preacher in Conecuh County and the first pastor of Ramah Primitive Baptist Church at Lenox.

Nall went through the Brewton city school system and in his words "struggled some

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### Refreshments

Thank you to those who brought refreshments to the last Meeting. Plan on again bringing your favorite finger foods for refreshments after the program at the September Meeting.

### October Meeting

Artist/Potter Larry Manning will present the program. Paintings and pottery by Larry will be on display and for sale.



**Wagons haul cotton bales by streetcars and businesses in Court Square in downtown Montgomery, Alabama.**

*Photo date unknown. From Collection of ADAH.*



Tuskegee Institute Band marching in a parade as part of the commencement day festivities. Photo taken between 1890 & 1930. From Library of Congress.

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### Our Business Members Remember to Support Our Business Members

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## The Program

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until about the 11th grade. He graduated in 1968 from T.R. Miller High School and attended Jefferson Davis Junior College taking business classes, but enjoying the history classes.”

Eddie began his career at the Bank of Brewton as a bookkeeper and worked his way up to the position of Senior Vice-President.

Lydia in her article notes that he has another job, an unofficial one with the bank. “There is no title for this job but one could call him the expert on the history of the bank. It is a job that he has found to be challenging and fun at the same time.

“According to Nall, the bank came about because Charles Sowell declared in 1889 that Brewton was in need of a bank and that ‘if he loaded all of his gold and silver on a wagon, the mules couldn't ever haul it.’

“Mr. Sowell was a veteran of the Civil War. He was wounded, captured and detained in a prison camp. At the end of the war he was sent by ship to Mobile and walked home from there.

“Nall tells the story of his being injured in battle and left on the battlefield to die. A Yankee doctor came by and figured Sowell was too near death to try to save. He came back a few hours later and found Sowell still living, so he decided to try to save him. The arm was amputated and Sowell was lucky enough to make it back home alive.

“After that he got involved in the timber business



**Front of the Bank of Brewton Showing Bank's Historic Marker.**

and made lots of money, apparently enough to want to open a bank to house it.

“Nall gets very excited talking about the history of the bank. He has found a copy of the Montgomery Advertiser dated March 15, 1928, telling an amusing tale.

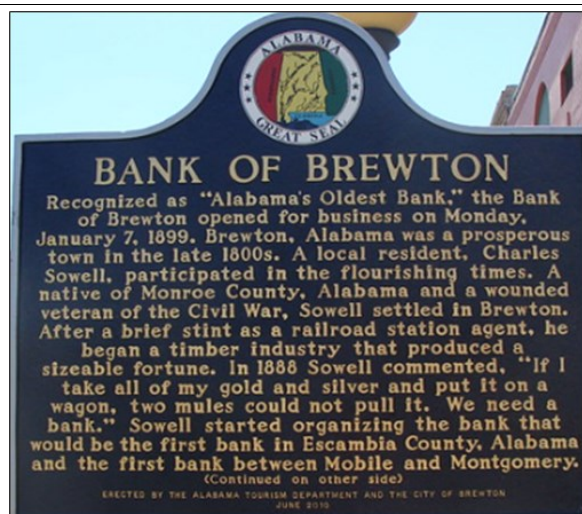
“In 1899, 10 years after the founding of the bank, rumors got out that the bank was connected to a Florida concern, which failed.

Although there was no danger to the depositors' money, the bank was overrun by people wanting to withdraw their money. When they were about to run out of money, bank officials notified their depository in Pensacola to ship some money to Brewton right away.

“The Pensacola bank sent \$2,000 in round, shining silver dollars, which they shipped in a barrel by train. During the unloading of the barrel in Brewton, the container slipped and hit the ground. The weight of the money inside caused the metal bands of the barrel to break and the coins scattered. As one official expressed it, :”The mass of spilled dollars looked no less than a million.”

The effect of the incident was to satisfy those in the crowd that the Bank of Brewton did indeed have money and there was no need to withdraw what they had.”

Note: Mr. Nall previously spoke to ECHS on the History of the Bank of Brewton in Sept. 2005.

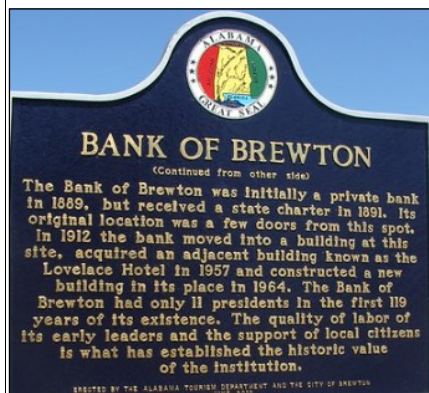


### Text for Side A of Historic Marker for Bank of Brewton

**Recognized as “Alabama’s Oldest Bank,” the Bank of Brewton opened for business on Monday, January 7, 1899. Brewton, Alabama was a prosperous town in the late 1800s. A local resident, Charles Sowell, participated in the flourishing times. A native of Monroe County, Alabama and wounded veteran of the Civil War, Sowell settled in Brewton. After a brief stint as a railroad station agent, he began a timber industry that produced a sizeable fortune. In 1888, Sowell commented, “If I take all my gold and silver and put it on a wagon, two mules could not pull it. We need a bank.” Sowell started organizing the bank that would be the first bank in Escambia County, Alabama and the first bank between Mobile and Montgomery.**

## The Program

(Continued from page 2)



### Text Side B of Historic Marker for Bank of Brewton

The Bank of Brewton was initially a private bank in 1889, but received a state charter in 1891. Its original location was a few doors from this spot. In 1912 the bank moved into a building at this site, acquired an adjacent building known as the Lovelace Hotel in 1957 and constructed a new building in its place in 1964. The Bank of Brewton had only 11 presidents in the first 119 years of its existence. The quality of labor of its early leaders and the support of local citizens is what established the historic value of the institution.

Erected in 2010 by the Alabama Department of Tourism and the City of Brewton.

## Society Member Saves a Garden Plant from Extinction and Names It Escambia.

### By Robert B. Smiley

The extended family of society member Robert B. Smiley for generations grew a purple pole snapbean that they called simply the “purple pole bean.” But, as the years went by and people passed on or grew too old to garden, the bean was no longer planted or the seed saved.

Later, Robert discovered he had the only seed left. Not wishing to see it go extinct, when he also passed away, he sent a large amount of seed to the Sand Hill Preservation Center in Calamus, Iowa. This organization is said to be responsible for saving over 675 vegetable variations that may well have become extinct. They also raise a large number of different types of poultry in danger of going extinct or becoming difficult to acquire.

Needing a name other than “that purple pole bean,” Robert Smiley settled on the name Escambia. Most families that send in seed that has been passed down for generations name it after their family or a member of it. Robert wanted a name that honored the land more than the people. We all become part of it in the end anyway so Escambia it was.

This bean has been sold for several years and seems to do well all over the country. The plant has a purple tint to the stalks and leaves and should be picked young as it develops “strings” when reaching full size. Mr. Smiley is also responsible for saving another vegetable. This may be covered in a later article.

A note of caution: the Escambia Bean is susceptible to root knot nematodes.

## New Newspaper Digitalization Machine and a Second Desk Top Microfiche/Microfilm Reader/Viewer.

The Society has quotes now for a new newspaper digitalization machine and a desktop microfiche/microfilm reader/viewer. The current viewer was damaged by rainwater and parts are not available for repair anymore.

The General Fund can not meet the entire cost of these purchases, so we are asking for any donations towards these machines from any readers who are able, or anybody you may know who might be inter-

ested.

We are also researching grants which might become a possible resource. All donations and contributions are tax deductible, as always, since we are a 501(c)e entity.

Thank you all in advance.



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

251-809-1528 or  
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"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

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**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](mailto:escambiahistoricalociety@gmail.com) or call 251-809-1528.*

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