

ECHOES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The May Meeting will be Tuesday, May 26, 2026, 3:00 pm in the Meeting Room of the McMillan Museum on the Brewton College Campus. Kelly Elmore will be speaking on “Women in the American Revolution”.



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Women of the American Revolution:

“Remember the Ladies”

Those memorable words written by **Abigail Adams** to her husband John Adams will forever memorialize the role of women in the foundation of the United States. Women were the foundation in supporting and creating the United States. The idea of “**Republican Motherhood**” demonstrated the importance of women and raising the next generation of American citizens. Educating their children to become strong, independent thinkers which would one day take the reins of government. **Mercy Otis Warren**, published poems and pamphlets criticising the role of royal authority in the

colonies. She held protest meetings in her home, including the “Sons of Liberty”. Treason viewed in true definition through the eyes of the crown. **Phillis Wheatley**, a former slave, published her own works of poetry which inspired George Washington and Thomas Paine with her ideas of natural born freedom. **Deborah Sampson**, took up arms and fought on the frontlines. Disguising herself as a man, she joined the Patriot soldiers. She is the only woman to have received a full military pension for her role in the American Revolution. **Emily Geiger**, a young woman who risked her life to deliver a message for the Patriots. (see page 4)

Coastal Alabama Historical Society Update:

On Saturday, May 2, Mr. Sales and the Coastal Alabama Historical Society joined Mayfest in Atmore at Tom Byrne Park. They set up a booth to promote the Historical Society and Escambia County Historical Museum. A beautiful way to enjoy a Saturday.



Atmore Public High School 1925-1926

As this school year ends, let's look at Atmore Public School 100 years ago:

Atmore High School was the first public high school in the state of Alabama. A marker was placed in 2011 by the Escambia County Historical Society.

For the school year 1925-1926, which entered into session on September 14, 1925 at 9am, the cost was \$5. The fee was broken down to \$2.50 due in September and \$2.50 due in February. If you were coming from outside the district, students paid \$2 a month in advance.

All children between the age of eight and sixteen were required to attend school and attendance was strictly enforced.

Books were purchased at Reid Drug Co. downtown and were required by the first day of school.



Have a headache?

Brain surgery has changed over the years...

Trepanation was one of the oldest surgical procedures detailed in Hippocratic writings. It was done to treat head wounds and fractures even into the 19th century without anesthesia.

Trephine, courtesy of Thomas McMillan Museum

THE TACTICAL SITUATION- DECEMBER 1776

Stories from the American Revolution

By John Angel

In early December 1776, American morale was very low. The Americans had been ousted from New York by the British and their Hessian auxiliaries; the Continental Army was forced to retreat across New Jersey. Ninety percent of the Continental Army soldiers who had served at Long Island were gone. Men had deserted, feeling that the cause for independence was lost. Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, expressed some doubts, writing to his cousin in Virginia, "I think the game is pretty near up."

At the time, the small town Trenton, New Jersey was occupied by four regiments of Hessian soldiers (numbering about 1,400 men) commanded by Colonel Johann Rall and had taken up winter quarters on December 14, 1776. Washington's force comprised 2,400 men, with infantry divisions commanded by Major Generals Nathanael Greene and John Sullivan, as well as artillery under the direction of Brigadier General Henry Knox. Should an attack here be successful, further engagements could be planned for Princeton and New Brunswick.

During the week before the battle, US advance parties began to ambush enemy cavalry patrols, capturing dispatch riders and attacking Hessian pickets. The Hessian commander, to emphasize the danger his men were facing, sent 100 infantry and an artillery detachment to deliver a letter to the British commander at Princeton. Washington ordered Ewing and his Pennsylvania militia to try to gain information on Hessian movements and technology. Ewing, instead, made three successful raids across the river. On December 17 and 18, 1776, they attacked an outpost of jägers and on the 21st, they set fire to several houses. Washington put constant watches on all possible crossings near the Continental Army encampment on the Delaware, as he believed British General William Howe would launch an attack from the

north on Philadelphia if the river froze over.

On December 20, 1776, some 2,000 troops led by General Sullivan arrived in Washington's camp. They had been under the command of General Charles Lee and had been moving slowly through northern New Jersey when Lee was captured. That same day, an additional 800 troops arrived from Fort Ticonderoga under the command of General Horatio Gates.

At 0400 on the morning of December 26, 1776, the soldiers began to march towards Trenton. Not all units made it to shore, but the element of surprise was crucial. At around 0800, the attack began with Washington in the lead. The Hessian forces lost 22 killed in action, including their commander Colonel Johann Rall, 83 wounded and 896 captured - including the wounded. The Americans suffered only two deaths during the march and five wounded from battle, including a near fatal shoulder wound to future president James Monroe. Other losses incurred by the patriots from exhaustion, exposure and illness in the following days may have raised their fatalities above those of the Hessians.

The captured Hessians were sent to Philadelphia and later Lancaster. In 1777, they were moved to Virginia. Rall was mortally wounded and died later that night at his headquarters. When his body was examined, a note was found in his pocket from a British spy who had spotted Washington's crossing and reported it to Rall using a note. Apparently, he was having so much fun and Christmas cheer, he folded it and put it in his pocket for some other time. Washington then realized how close they had come to another possible defeat. This victory gave the Continental Congress new confidence, as it proved colonial forces could defeat the British in the future and also increased reenlistments in the Continental Army forces.

EMILY GEIGER'S WILD REVOLUTIONARY RIDE

Stories from the American Revolution

By Emily Sommer

During the Revolutionary War, women were patriots in nontraditional roles to aide in the cause. Women kept homes and businesses while their husbands, fathers and brothers fought the British on the frontlines. They functioned as spies, couriers, nurses and even as soldiers. The Revolution was won with everyone taking on a role.

Women were primarily limited to the domestic sphere during this era. Few women owned businesses or property. While this was the norm, many women had men in their lives who understood how important women were to the revolutionary cause. Emily Geiger was one of these women, who at a youthful age, was given a task meant for a man that could only be done successfully by a woman.

On the evening of 1781, General Nathanael Greene crossed Broad River in South Carolina to join General Thomas Sumter so that they could coordinate an attack on Lord Rawdon. South Carolina had a prominent level of Loyalists, and this would be a dangerous task to deliver a message from Greene to Sumter. Emily Geiger, who cared for her father at the time volunteered. Her reasoning was that as a female, she would be able to get past the enemy who was expecting a man. She had family in the area and would use this as an excuse for traveling.

General Greene agreed and sent her with a written message as well as giving her the message verbally in case of capture. Emily took off on her ride on the morning of July 2, 1781. Spies were everywhere and ever watchful. Emily was captured on her ride on her second day by Lord Rawton's scouts. It was inappropriate for men to search a woman and so they summoned a matron.



During this time, Emily tore and ate the paper message, being sure to silently rehearse the message to memorize it. When the matron searched Emily, no message was found and she was sent on her way. Emily was able to reach General Sumter and deliver the message verbally.

Emily Geiger is an established patriot with Daughters of the American Revolution. The Emily Geiger Chapter is in Bluffton, South Carolina.

WELCOME TO THE TOWN OF HUXFORD

Take a drive North on Highway 21 from downtown Atmore, past the interstate where the farmlands open up. You will soon find yourself in downtown Huxford. There's a white sign on the right to welcome travelers to this little hamlet zip code 36543 home to about 197 people (2022). The Huxford post office closed in November 2011. Huxford began as Local, Alabama as settlers from Butler County made their way along Federal Road to settle around the turn of the 1900s. They found fertile farmland and plenty of long leaf pines. Cotton, soybeans, corn and wheat exist still as the main crops in the area.

Due to the plethora of long leaf pines, temporary tracks were put in to set up logging camps and harvest. The logging camps loaded the pines onto these temporary tracks which took the timber south to Pensacola. The town of Local grew quickly. Around the 1920s the Frisco line came through and built permanent tracks which connected them to Birmingham and Pensacola. They built a coal shoot in Huxford which served as a service station for train until the railroad began using diesel.

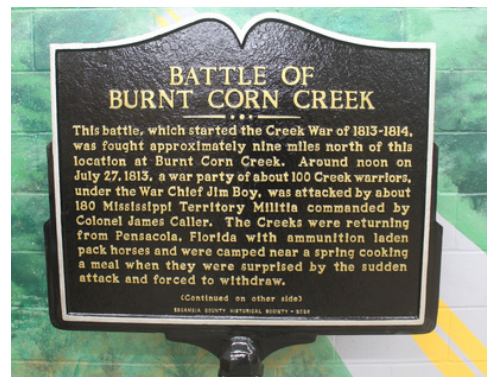
In 1927, C.C. Huxford donated over 8,000 acres of his turpentine land to the state to build a prison system. It was known as the "state farm" which is now Fountain and Holman prisons. The farmland around the prisons helped fill the train cars by growing potatoes, radishes, corn and provided another source of employment for the local citizens. In 1928, the citizens of "Local" decided to rename their town, "Huxford".

Huxford High School opened in 1928 for grades first through ninth. In 1974, the school became an elementary school for grades Kindergarten to sixth grade and the older students were sent to Atmore High School.



Designed by TownMapsUSA.com

Downtown Huxford continued to grow and by the 1940s contained a post office, grocery store, cotton gin, grist mill and barber shop. As large timber companies began buying large parcels land to harvest timber, small farms began to disappear. The younger generations left and did not return. Huxford's primary business now is Huxford Pole and Timber Company which is located on Highway 21 in the heart of Huxford. It opened in 1959 and is owned by Mike Beech whose family has been the sole owner.



Save the Date!

Mark your calendars for Saturday, July 25, 2026. We will dedicate the new Battle of Burnt Corn Creek Historical Marker. More details to follow!

ECHOES

THE NEWSLETTER FOR
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Headstones and Heritage	\$20.00	\$27.00
Escambia Historical Society Cookbook	\$10.00	\$16.00
Wildflowers of The Conecuh/Escambia River Basin CD	\$10.00	\$16.00
History of Brewton and E. Brewton (SC)	\$40.00	\$47.00
Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook	\$30.00	\$37.00

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ECHOES, The newsletter for the Escambia County Historical Society, a 501 (c) (3) corporation, is published monthly except November and December. Comments are welcome. You may email the Society at escambiahistoricalociety@gmail.com or call 251-809-1528.

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