

ECHOES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**The July Meeting will be Tuesday, July 28, 2026, 3:00 pm at the McMillan Museum.
Mike Bunn will be speaking. His book "The 14th Colony".**



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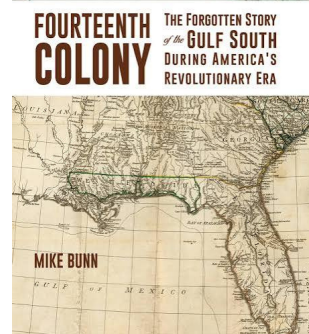
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The Forgotten Battle of The Village

The Gulf Coast has long been a region rich in natural resources, attracting the attention of European powers during the Age of Exploration. As a result, France, Great Britain, and Spain each claimed portions of the area at various times. Although most Revolutionary War battles occurred in the northern colonies, the conflict also reached present-day Alabama. One notable engagement took place at The Village, located between Mobile and Pensacola. Historian Mike Bunn describes the site as being "at the head of the bay near the route of modern Interstate 10 between the present-day cities of Daphne and Spanish Fort, about eight miles east of the city of Mobile." The Spanish established an outpost there to protect Mobile from British advances. After Bernardo de Gálvez captured Fort Charlotte and Mobile in March 1780, British leaders feared that Pensacola would be the next Spanish objective. In January 1781, British forces launched an attack on The Village. Arriving under cover of dense fog, they caught the Spanish garrison as it began the day. Heavy rains had damaged much of the Spanish artillery, forcing the defenders to rely primarily on smaller weapons.

When the fog and smoke finally cleared, casualties were significant for both sides. British losses were estimated at fifteen to twenty soldiers, while the Spanish reported fourteen killed. Despite these losses, the Spanish retained control of The Village. The victory strengthened Spanish determination and helped pave the way for further military operations to the east, culminating in efforts to capture the important British stronghold at Pensacola.

Bunn, Mike. *The Fourteenth Colony: The Forgotten Story of the Gulf South During America's Revolutionary Era*. NewSouth Books, 2020.

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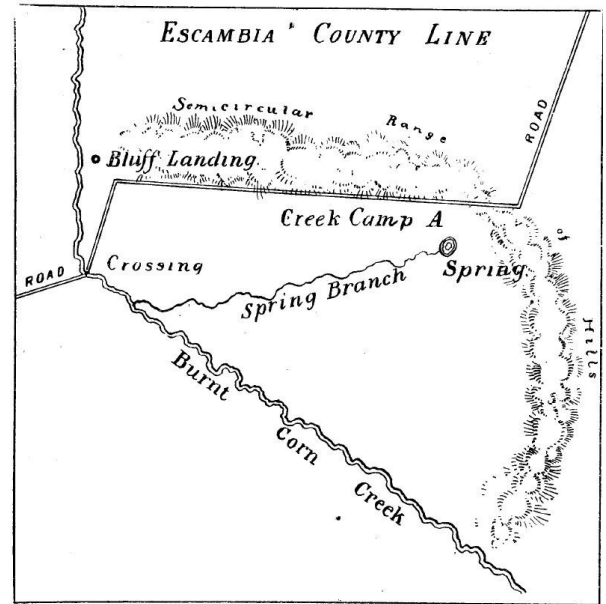
BANK OF BREWTON
"Alabama's Oldest Bank"

Battle of Burnt Corn Creek

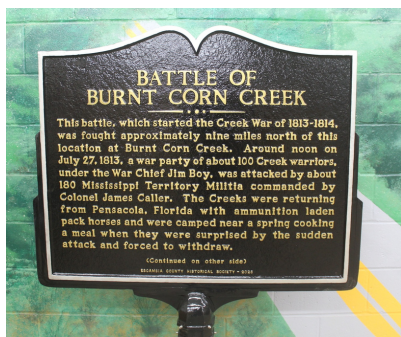
On July 27, 1813, a significant intratribal conflict marked the opening engagement of the Creek War, a broader military struggle that would ultimately involve United States forces and a militant faction of the Muscogee Nation known as the Red Sticks. At the time, the Muscogee people were deeply divided by political and cultural differences. One faction supported a more centralized tribal government and advocated continued cooperation with the United States. In contrast, the opposing faction resisted the increasing encroachment of American settlers and sought to preserve traditional Muscogee customs, values, and restore ways of life. This traditionalist group became known as the Red Sticks.

In an effort to strengthen their resistance, the Red Sticks traveled to Pensacola, then under Spanish control, where they acquired weapons, ammunition, and other military supplies. During their return journey, they were unexpectedly ambushed at Burnt Corn Creek by a force composed of Mississippi Territory volunteers, local militia members, and allied mixed-race Muscogee warriors. Although initially caught off guard, the Red Sticks demonstrated remarkable resilience by tactically regrouping and launching a successful counterattack that forced their opponents to withdraw.

The battle resulted in relatively limited casualties on both sides. While the Red Sticks lost a portion of the valuable ammunition and supplies obtained from Spanish Florida, the engagement was considered a strategic victory for their forces because they successfully repelled the American-led attackers and maintained control of the battlefield.



The historical significance of the Battle of Burnt Corn Creek extends far beyond its immediate military outcome. The confrontation escalated the Creek War—also known as the Red Stick War—from a localized intratribal dispute into a wider regional conflict involving multiple nations and interests. As a result, the war became closely connected to the broader geopolitical struggles of the War of 1812. Furthermore, many of the individuals who participated in the Battle of Burnt Corn Creek later took part in the attack on Fort Mims, where Red Stick warriors launched a retaliatory assault against American settlers and militia forces in what became known as the Fort Mims Massacre. This event further intensified hostilities and contributed to the lasting historical importance of the Creek War.



Dedication Event:

Mark your calendars for Saturday, July 25, 2026 at 9:30am. We will dedicate the new Battle of Burnt Corn Creek Historical Marker (*on the creek side by Aunt Elsie's Ice Cream Shoppe*).

188 South Boulevard Brewton, AL

Please join us in marking this historical site.

JAMES ARMISTEAD LAFAYETTE

Stories from the American Revolution

By John Angel



James Armistead Lafayette

James Armistead Lafayette (1748 or 1760 -1830 or 1832) was an enslaved African American who served the Continental Army under the Marquis de Lafayette and later received a legislative emancipation. As a double agent, he reported the activities of Benedict Arnold after he had defected to the British and of Lord Charles Cornwallis during the run-up to the siege of Yorktown. He fed the British false information while disclosing very accurate and detailed accounts to the Americans.

James was born to an enslaved mother either in North Carolina or Virginia. He became the property of Colonel John Armistead of New Kent County, Virginia. Well before the Colonel's death in 1779, he became the first slave owned by, and personal manservant, of Armistead's son William. Most sources believe that he was born in 1748, though others put his birth around 1760. James's enslaver taught him to read and write.

His enslaver William Armistead was an ardent patriot and served as Commissary for Virginia's troops in the Revolutionary War. After his father died in 1779, he inherited stores and land, as well as James (who never used "Armistead" as his surname during his lifetime). When the conflict began in 1775, Virginia's royal governor, Lord Dunmore, promised freedom to slaves who joined his forces. Instead, James volunteered for the Continental Army under General Lafayette. He worked for Lafayette as a courier, laborer and spy. Posing as a runaway slave, James joined former Continental Army officer Benedict Arnold's camp in Portsmouth, Virginia, ostensibly as a spy for the British. This role allowed Armistead to gain Arnold's confidence,

in part by guiding British troops through local roads. After Arnold departed north in the spring of 1781, James remained in Virginia and continued his work at the camps of Lord Charles Cornwallis. Now employed by the British as a courier, James traveled between their camps and often overheard officers speak openly about their strategies. His espionage was instrumental in helping American and French forces defeat the British during the siege of Yorktown (1781).

Although Virginia enacted a Manumission Act in 1782 allowing for the freedom of any slave who had fought in the Revolutionary War, James Armistead remained the property of William Armistead. This was because the next year (1783), another law specifically freed only slaves who had been issued firearms (i.e., whose owners had used them as substitutes for army service). James had served as a spy, not a soldier, and did not carry a weapon. Thus, his first petition for emancipation was not passed, even by a legislative committee before the session ended. However, James persisted and succeeded with the support of William Armistead- again in 1786 as a member of the House of Delegates- and Lafayette's personal 1784 testimonial as to James's service. On January 9, 1787, Virginia's governor signed James's petition, which both houses of the assembly had passed. Virginia later compensated Armistead for James' manumission. Upon receiving his freedom, James added "Lafayette" (or "Fayette") as his surname to honor the French general.

James Lafayette acquired two parcels totaling about forty acres in New Kent County in 1816 and became a relatively wealthy farmer in the areas with his (second) wife and several children (including a son). An interesting fact is that is that he also became a slave owner. In 1818, Lafayette applied to Virginia's legislature for a pension based on his Revolutionary War service. He eventually received \$60 (equivalent to \$1,262 in 2025) for present relief and a \$40 annual pension (\$841).

NANYEHI

Stories from the American Revolution

By Emily Sommer

Nanyehi was a leader in the Cherokee society. She was a member of the Cherokee Nation's Council and the head of the Women's Council. The Cherokee society was determined by the mother's family. She was born into a well-known family in the Wolf clan and sister to Attakullakulla, one of the most influential Cherokee leaders. This was unusual in American customs in the 18th century, a fact which she understood and used to her advantage. She called upon American leaders "we are your mothers, you are our sons". This idea of motherhood resonated with everyone to see the humanity of the human race beyond the color of one's skin. In 1781, she addressed this sentiment to Virginia militia who had just destroyed several Cherokee towns. This led to the Cherokee not losing any land in the subsequent treaty negotiation.

Nanyehi was born around 1738 in present day Tennessee. She married Kingfisher and had two children with him. In 1755, at the Battle of Taliwa, Nanyehi was with her husband on the field. She would prepare the bullets which he would fire. When Kingfisher was shot and killed in front of her, she picked up his rifle and continued to fight in his stead which led them to victory in the battle. Her bravery led her to be known as "Beloved". While the Cherokee did not have kings or queens, the power of this title was viewed as very similar by outsiders.

In the late 1750s, Nanyehi married an Irish trader named Bryant Ward and became the Americanized "Nancy Ward". Traders often married into Native American tribes to gain influence and trade in their society. In the Cherokee society, women were free to marry and divorce as they wished and her marriage to Bryant Ward was short. However, her name "Nancy Ward" remained.

In her status of being a "Beloved Woman" she was privy to diplomatic relations, rituals and working for peace within their tribe and anyone who became threatening. She also had the authority to decide the fate of captives. During the Revolution, Cherokee warriors captured white settlers who had laid claim in Cherokee territory. One woman, Lydia Bean, was spared from being burned at the stake by Nanyehi. She took Lydia to her home and nursed her back to health. Lydia in turn taught Nanyehi a new type of loom-weaving and how to care for cows and make dairy products. Nanyehi then in turn taught these skills to the other Cherokee women which helped to support their tribes.

As the American influence increased and America charted its own path as a country, women's roles changed in Cherokee society. They began to mimic the all male institutions of government so the power of women's voices became lost.



An illustration of Nanyehi, Nancy Ward. Artist unknown

One of Nanyehi's last recorded public acts was in 1817. She sent word to the Cherokee Council protesting the ceding of Cherokee land to the United States. Unfortunately her words were in vain as this was one of the first steps of the Cherokees to move west on the Trail of Tears. Nanyehi died in 1822 at an inn that she owned in southeastern Tennessee on the Ocoee River. She is buried at the Nancy Ward Tomb with her son, Fivekiller on a hill near the site of her former inn in Benton, Tennessee.

Indigenous women's words were rarely recorded during the eighteenth century. Wilma Mankiller, the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation from 1985 to 1995, once observed that written records generated by men largely ignored the history of Cherokee women: "The voices of our grandmothers are silenced by most of the written history of our people. How I long to hear their voices!"²³ Nanyehi is an exception. Because of her prominence in Cherokee diplomacy and politics, her words were occasionally written down. They don't tell us her whole story (not least because these words were often transcribed by a colonist). But even in their limited form, they offer a portrait of a powerful woman—among many others unnamed—who was committed to peace, mercy, and the sovereign strength of the Cherokee Nation.

WELCOME TO THE TOWN OF FREEMANVILLE

This month we journey north from downtown Atmore along Highway 21, veering slightly left onto Jack Springs Road (County Road 1) and traveling approximately four miles to the historic community of Freemanville. Although the small “downtown” area has long since disappeared, Freemanville was once home to a post office and one-room schoolhouse located near the railroad. The Freemanville Post Office operated from 1908 until 1955. Nearby, the Freemanville School educated children in grades one through seven and served as an important center for the community for events and education.

According to *“History of Escambia County”* by Annie C. Waters, Freemanville was **“settled at an early date (1840s), mostly by homesteading Black families.”** Waters further suggests the community’s name may have originated during the post-Civil War era, when formerly enslaved African Americans embraced their new status as “free men” following decades of bondage. This historical context reflects the significant role that African American families played in the establishment and development of the community.

When Freemanville was founded, it was part of Baldwin County, as Escambia County was not established until 1868. The community predates the formation of the county, making it one of the area’s older settlements.

Agriculture has long been the economic foundation of Freemanville. The surrounding landscape is characterized by expansive agricultural field and rural homesteads. During the autumn months, cotton fields stretch across the countryside, transforming the landscape into a brilliant sea of white that resembles a winter snowfall. This striking seasonal display serves as a reminder of the region’s deep agricultural heritage.

Freemanville also played a notable role in the timber industry during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At a time when railroads were the primary means of transporting harvested lumber, the Southern States Lumber Company maintained its headquarters in Freemanville. The railroad enabled the efficient movement of lumber products to broader markets, contributing significantly to the local economy. As the industry evolved, however, the company eventually relocated its principal offices to Walnut Hill, Florida.



Many longstanding families have contributed to the rich cultural and historical fabric of Freemanville. Among the community’s prominent family names are Dailey, Williams, Knight, Middleton, Salter, Hines, Robinson and Brooks. Their descendants continue to represent an enduring connection to the area’s heritage and serve as living links to the community’s remarkable past.

Today, Freemanville remains a place of historical significance, reflecting the perseverance, agricultural traditions, and cultural legacy of the families who helped shape northern Escambia County.

ECHOES
THE NEWSLETTER FOR
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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History of Escambia County, Alabama	\$90.00	\$97.00
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Escambia Historical Society Cookbook	\$10.00	\$16.00
Wildflowers of The Conecuh/Escambia		
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History of Brewton and E. Brewton (SC)	\$40.00	\$47.00
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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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