

Friends Of the Fairhope Museum of History

NEWSLETTER



Vol 8 Issue 1 February—March 2017

Founding Fairhope Exhibit Now Open!



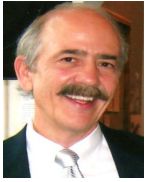
The twenty-eight Fairhope Founders met on the shoreline of Mobile Bay and declared November 15, 1894 to be Round-Up Day - the kick-off of a new economic experiment in society. By the end of one year, most of those founders had moved-on due to hardship and disappointment. But others had come with new zeal and enthusiasm and grew the innovative community. The new *Founding Fairhope* Exhibit now open at our Fairhope Museum of History, steps back to that one day in 1894 and incorporates the successes beyond that original few on the shoreline. The true founders were those who make Fairhope happen!

Fifteen of the early settlers are presented in life-size photographs as their contribution is told with 2-dimension cut-outs, personal memorabilia and stories of their lives before and after coming to the "Colony." Other contributors are also on display.

Shuah Mann and James Bellangee were sent out from Des Moines, Iowa to investigate sites for a new colony and they chose the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay. Mr. Mann was a member of the National Greenback labor party and an anti-monopolist. In 1894, Shuah and his son Thomas Mann, joined the Fairhope Industrial Association. By 1904, the Association became the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation and still today supports the City of Fairhope and helps in community investments and history related activities.



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Director's Desk

This is an exciting time of the year with so much going on. Just this weekend we are building an Indian house using wattle and daub construction. This is part of the Alabama 200 celebration that will include activities all year long. We have scheduled several bus load tours at the Museum and well as a long list of school classes all this month. We also have coming up, downtown activities like Arbor Day, Volunteer Fair, Chinese New Year and four Mardi Gras parades. It is going to be busy here!

This will give our docent staff opportunities for a little "over-time." It takes extra docents to cover these events, especially the Mardi Gras parades, which brings large numbers of visitors. Watching the parades from the Museum's upstairs windows has become somewhat of a custom for several of our *Friends* groups.

We are now starting to have committee meetings for our Satsuma Blossom Festival. If you want to give input, just let Emogene DeMaagd know your ideas. We are going to try several different things this year. We have a lady living in Fairhope whose mother was crowned "Satsuma Blossom Queen" in 1929. We are going to see that she carries on the family tradition.

Notice the fine slate of speakers we have for our *Tea for Two* programs we have on every Tuesday. Our crowds have grown rapidly over the past year. I almost did not have a seat just yesterday. This is also an opportunity for a hands-on helping experience. We can always use help putting out cookies and washing cups.

In this issue is an article about our good friend Curt Cochran moving back to Colorado. You do not realize how much someone is doing until you lose them. Not only is Curt our *Friends* president, but he has done so much to help us operate and advertise our Museum activities. Also, it breaks our heart to lose such a good friend. We wish him and Patti the best as they move to new exciting Rocky Mountain adventures.

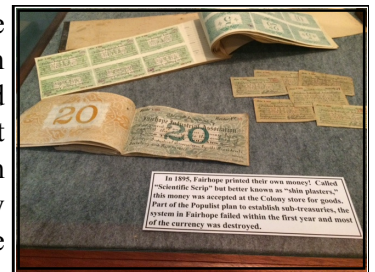
Donnie Barrett

Founding Fairhope, continued from page 1



Ernest Barry Gaston (1861-1937), grew up in Des Moines, Iowa and began the *Fairhope Courier*, which became the communications medium for the Single-Tax Colony. By 1894, the *Fairhope Courier* was being sent all over the United States - from Iowa! It moved to Fairhope when the Colony established here.

In 1895, Fairhope printed its own money, called "Scientific Scrip" but better known as "shin plasters." This money was accepted at the Colony store for



goods. This currency failed within the first year and most of the currency was destroyed.

Marie Howland and husband Edward, came to Fairhope from Topolobampo, Mexico in 1899 with 1100

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books. She built a library in her home and started the first library in Alabama. She was a national leader in the women's suffrage movement and her "open letters" appeared in newspapers and magazines all over the United States.

Cornelius "Cornie" Alonzo Gaston, the middle son of E.B. Gaston, was only 3 years old when he landed in Fairhope with the first boatload of Single-Taxers. He became a chiropractic doctor and took a major interest in the Colony, where he was secretary for many years.

Olaf Tuveson (1863-1940) and his wife Anah, with three small children, Elof, Rudolph and Betty (Paul was born here) were on the first boat to arrive in Fairhope in November 1894. They bought land and built a farm south of town and ran a store, then later, a gasoline filling station in town.

Lydia Comings came to Fairhope in 1904 after teaching, lecturing and writing books on physical education. After she wrote "*Muscular Exercises for Health & Grace*," she was instrumental in expanding physical education programs across the USA. "Physical exercise stimulates learning," she would say. She co-founded the School of Organic Education in 1907. She was president of the Fairhope Library board for 40 years and helped start the Baldwin County Historical Society in 1923. She published her last book "*A Brief History of Baldwin County*" in 1928.

Frank Brown moved to Fairhope in 1896 and was a productive Colony member. He built a sawmill where Thomas Hospital is today and a brick manufacturing machine across the street. Besides selling all types of building materials, he operated a watch repair business, grist mill, and pulled teeth. He became enamored with pottery tile and bricks, so in 1916, bought a previously used site on Fish River and founded Fairhope Clay Products. He and his family operated this business until 1995, where they made a wide variety of pottery wares and building blocks.

Clement LeFevre Coleman came to Fairhope during its early days and was a strong single tax supporter. He took on the job of "Superintendent of Business" and ran the Colony Cooperative Mercantile. The business took the Colony "Shinplaster"

scrip and subsequently failed within months. Coleman first built his house across from the pharmacy where the town clock is today. He later bought 40 acres near Ingleside Street., Fairhope Ave., Morphy Ave. and Greeno Road, which he named *Ingleside*.



Nathaniel Mershon was on the first boat to arrive in Fairhope for Roundup Day. He built the second house in town. He and his brother Arthur operated the Mershon Brothers store. His sister was Clara Mershon Gaston. In his old age, Nathaniel moved back to Iowa.

Arthur H. Mershon, Clara Gaston's brother, arrived in Fairhope on October 5, 1895 to find that there were only five houses in town. He built his home, the first two-story building. Today it is the oldest building in Fairhope. Arthur and his brother Nathaniel bought the Colony Cooperative Mercantile in 1899 and built the Mershon Brothers store. Arthur Mershon was also Fairhope's first postmaster.

Dr. Clarence Mershon came to town in 1895 when he was 25 years old and a new graduate from medical school. He set up his practice in 1898.

Adolph Oscar Berglin (1875-1952) moved to Fairhope in 1896 and went into the timber business. He married Mary Eva LaVigne and was an extremely successful businessman. He was on the original board of directors of the First National Bank of Fairhope, Executive Council of the Single Tax Colony and served as Fairhope's Mayor from 1915 to 1917.

In 1908, Mr. Berglin started the first ice cream plant in Alabama. Having been shown primitive refrigeration

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Founding Fairhope, continued from page 3, column 2

techniques, he burned pine lighter knots to compress ammonia to make ice. He built this first ice plant and creamery down by the bay to sell ice cream cones and cantaloupe-a-la-mode to tourists getting off the bay boats.

Berglin's Creamery innovated small paper milk cartons for school lunch rooms and delivered them daily into Mississippi, across Alabama and into Florida. The company was sold to Barber Milk Co. in 1962.

Mrs. Marietta Johnson (1864-1938) picked up a copy of the *Fairhope Courier* and thought "This is the perfect place to start my new progressive school." She moved to Fairhope from St. Paul, Minnesota in 1904. Her husband bought a large pecan farm in Barnett, Mississippi so she moved there for three years. They returned to Fairhope in 1907 and she started her School of Organic Education." With the help of nationally known educator Lydia Comings and the Single Tax Colony, Mrs. Johnson built the school to include ten buildings covering a city block. By the 1920's, they had over 250 students. The school, where there were "no tests, no grades and no shoes", moved to a modern brick building campus in 1984. Now on Pecan St. south of Fairhope, the Organic School is 110 years old and provides an excellent educational opportunity for Fairhope children.



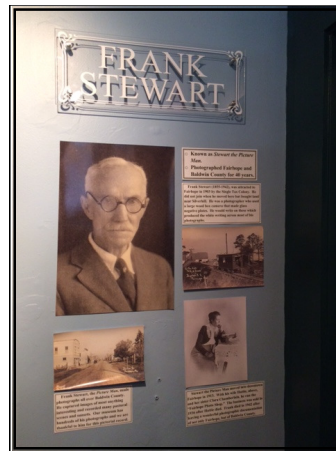
Oswald Forster (1872-1980) came from Germany to America in 1885. When he married Martha Reddel in Chicago in 1894, he moved to Fish River, east of Fairhope. Mr. Forster moved his family to the foot of Pier Street on Mobile Bay in 1910. There he and his three sons operated Forster &

Sons and built many homes and businesses in the older part of town. They also built the first four gasoline service stations in Fairhope; three of which are still standing.

Dr. Harris Greeno (1832-1919) was a Captain of Company E, 6th Kansas Volunteer Cavalry. He was

also a military doctor (dentist). Dr. Greeno came to Fairhope in December, 1900, having been attracted by the Single Tax Colony. Upon his arrival, he disapproved of the Colony's technique of applying the Single Tax. He also contributed to a local anti-single tax newspaper, *The Monitor*. These anti-Single Taxers were known as "Kickers." When the City of Fairhope was incorporated in 1908, Dr. Greeno ran against E.B. Gaston for Mayor. The vote was close; Gaston 19, Greeno 21, making Greeno the first town Mayor. The second Mayor, John Franklin Johnson, Marietta's husband, named the new road he had built, "Greeno Road."

John Bowen (1841-1930), was a river boat captain on the Ohio River, living on a houseboat when he picked up a copy of the *Fairhope Courier*. Soon thereafter, he and his son-in-law, Walter Logsdon, moved to Fairhope in 1906. He collected Indian artifacts, told Indian stories and led an interesting and exciting life.



Frank Stewart (1855-1942), was attracted to Fairhope in 1903 by the Single Tax Colony. He did not join the group however, when he moved here, but bought land near Silverhill. He was a photographer who used a large wood box camera that made glass negative plates. *Stewart, the Picture Man*, as he

became known, moved into downtown Fairhope in 1913. He, his wife Hattie and her sister, Clara Chamberlain, ran the Fairhope Photo Shop. The business was sold in 1936 after Hattie died. Frank passed in 1942 after leaving a wonderful photographic documentation of not only Fairhope, but of Baldwin County. Our museum has hundreds of his photographs and we are thankful to him for this pictorial record.

We acknowledge that this feature story is longer than customary for our history newsletter. As we view the impressive new exhibit, we find that the presentation deserves a quality summary, as it captures the contributions not only of the original twenty-eight, but those of generations for a century thereafter, to make Fairhope the unique historical landmark that it is today. ~

Docent News

Curt Cochran relocating to Colorado



Curt Cochran has served over the past 7 years, as our *Friends* photographer, Webmaster, docent, president of the organization and *Tea for Two* speaker. But in February 2017, he and wife Patti are moving to Colorado.

Director Donnie Barrett said, "While we have many talented volunteers at our Museum, Curt has been invaluable because of the numerous things he has done for the *Friends* and our Museum. He has been "my right hand man" for a couple of years. He has worked hard to make our Museum the best; he is always available to come on short notice and serve as a docent, and loves to take candid photos of almost every event we have. I don't know what we will do without him."

Curt, a career aerospace scientist, has written over twenty, well-researched feature articles for the *Friends* Newsletter and in 2016, created our *Friends* website that gets about 100 hits average per month. He also wrote text, added videos and maintained the Museum's popular site [facebook.com/FairhopeMuseumofHistoryFriends](https://www.facebook.com/FairhopeMuseumofHistoryFriends) which has reached over 100,000 viewers per year since it was created in 2015.

Mr. Cochran has trampled through wooded Civil War battle sites with Donnie to photograph field trips, fought the smoke of Ft. Mims and endured raucous boat-rides to photograph the shoreline for the wall-size pictures for last year's *Bay Boat Era* exhibit.

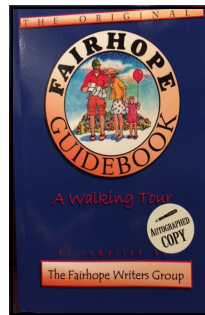
Curt has demonstrated commitment and dependability that makes the Museum a fun place to work and play. We will miss him immensely and he will be a *Friend* forever!

Did we mention that we could use a few Short-Term Docents?

Since our *Friends* program began in March 2010, we have been honored to have a cadre of excellent volunteers and docents serve at our Museum. That enthusiasm and talent continues. But with the seasonal activities coming up in this calendar quarter, we can use a few extra docents to assist. With Mardi Gras in late February, the Annual Arts and Crafts Show in Mid-March and other *Alabama 200* Bicentennial events in the works, a few additional volunteers would be handy. Seasonal residents make perfect short-term helpmates!

New History and Guidebook in our Gift Shop

The *Original Fairhope Guidebook* was released by the Fairhope Writers Group in December 2016 with great reception! This Guidebook contains the history of our eclectic historic small town and educational articles about the Fairhope Pier, Colony Cemetery, Old City Hall, Magnolia Park and frequently-asked-about landmarks in Fairhope. It also contains fun and practical blurbs about "Where the heck do we park" and "Where do these people come from?" It also gives reviews of where to eat, shop, groom your pet and just be a tourist.



We emphasize the history of our Single Tax Colony but this new inexpensive book in our gift shop has been proclaimed a best-seller for its variety of content. All sales go to the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History*. 173 pages. \$15.

Tea for Two

Each Tuesday 2 p.m. in the Museum Council Chamber

Upcoming Programs

February 7 – Jessie Patterson – Jessie is the principle of the Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education and has made great strides recently in developing the school. He will tell us about his recent progress.

February 14 – Officer Shane Nolte – Officer Nolte of the Fairhope Police Department will tell intriguing stories of the murky crime-riddled underbelly of Fairhope. He is the grandson of Henry Nolte who was the police chief here from 1985 to 1989.

February 21 – Catherine King – Catherine will present a program on the newly digitized Fairhope Single Tax archives. She will read from previously unavailable documents that give great insight to the beginnings of Fairhope.

February 28 – Donnie Barrett – Donnie will present his slide show on the history of Mardi gras. “Laissez les bon Temps roulez!”

March 7 – Parks Rogers and Cliff McCollum – Parks is the Gulf Coast Media Publisher and Cliff is the editor of the Courier. They will discuss the goings on and future of the Courier and the newspaper business.

March 14 – John Parker – John has done much work to contribute to the quality of the Fairhope community over many decades. His passion now is preserving with a renewed awareness the Hwy. 98 corridor.

Helping Fairhope Tell its Story!

Tea for Two

Upcoming Programs

March 21 – Robert Brown – Robert is the newly elected member of the Fairhope City Council and will tell his Fairhope story. He will also entertain questions about City Council business.

March 28 – Fred Bostrom – Fred sold Donald Trump the building where Trump Towers is today. He came to Fairhope when his father operated Gayfers Department Store. He now coordinates Baldwin Senior Travelers. Great story teller!



Upcoming Events at the Museum!

Walking Tours of Fairhope coming each weekend in April, hosted by Director Donnie Barrett—Always a big hit!

Annual Satsuma Blossom Festival—Watch for this date in April too, featuring new activities, entertainment, demonstrations and stories. The homemade ice cream sells out every year!



The Newsletter

The Friends Newsletter has been published since 2010. It is the official publication of *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History, Inc.*, an Alabama Corporation organized exclusively for charitable, scientific and educational purposes within the meaning of Part 501(C) (3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code. Editor: Robert M. Glennon, at Fairhopemuseumnewsletter@gmail.com.

Fairhope Museum of History

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Hours: 9 – 5 Tuesday through Saturday Admission: Free!

<http://www.fairhope-museum-of-history-friends.com>

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