

Friends

Of the Fairhope Museum of History

NEWSLETTER



Vol 8 Issue 2 April - May 2017

Fairhope Museum of History Supports and Promotes

Alabama 200

In 2019, our State will be 200 years old and the build-up of the celebration is already underway. Our Museum fired off its first exhibit for the Bicentennial in January 2017 by constructing a “Waddle and Daub” hut in the Museum courtyard; this was the family home of the early Mississippian Indians in South Alabama. These are the same people that left the shell middens along the shores of some of our bayous, after shucking oysters harvested from the bays and salt water estuaries. They also built the Bottle Creek Indian Mounds still visible on an island in the Mobile - Tensaw Delta. Museum Director Donnie Barrett said, “We’re looking at what the way of life was here more than 1,000 years ago.”

The second phase of the 200th Anniversary recognition will be the “First Alabamians,” depicted in late April, with a presentation on pottery, artifacts and arrow making. The natural clays found in this area of Baldwin County attracted French potters as early as 1717 at Fly Creek, north of downtown Fairhope. As the town was founded and developed, pottery became a major income producer for settlers on the Eastern Shore.

The third and fourth phases of the celebration will present the Spanish and French periods in South



Alabama. Just finding political boundary lines in the Eighteenth Century on the Gulf Coast was a controversial challenge, with the French on the west and Spanish on the east sides of our “No Man’s Land,” south of the 31st Parallel. The 31st Latitude, which passed through north Baldwin County, defined the south border of the new United States. Even though the British reigned from 1763 to 1780, these three countries dominated our landscape until Alabama became a State in 1819.

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Director's Desk

Spring feels really good, doesn't it? That warmth in the sunshine makes you want to take off your jacket and roll your sleeves up. I think spring is most people's favorite time of the year.

Ancient man thought spring was a big deal. Having survived the frozen winter without a heat pump or electric blanket, *homoerectus* would think of the quickly warming earth to be somewhat a miracle and would be greatly relieved to shrug off that bear skin that had been worn for months. He knew new food plants would grow, fish and clams would be easy to find, and with all the new yearlings so plentiful, running down and strangling dinner would not be so hard.

Ancient man thought of spring as a new beginning and had ceremonies and festivals to celebrate spring's arrival. These are the source of our Mardi Gras and Easter holidays. We celebrate spring by planting a fresh, new spring gardens, even though horticulturist, Bill Finch tells us we needed to do our planting during the winter months.

My father called it "the sap rising." As we lived on a farm, the annual cycle of crops depended on the weather and spring was the most important season. When I was teaching at the Organic School, I was surprised how removed our students were from nature, I called them "nature challenged" because they had no idea what was being planted or harvested at any given time.

Spring comes in wide-open for us at the Museum! This is field trip season for schools and we get large classes every week. We have walking tours every weekend in April as well as a tea every week, an Alabama 200 event, several small events and visiting clubs and then throw in the Satsuma Blossom Festival.

So yes, spring has sprung at the Museum!

Donnie Barrett

Alabama 200, continued from page 1

Other area historical programs also underway are:

The Fairhope Library will be presenting the *Founding of Fairhope*, a professionally produced video documentary performed by 24 actors and actresses associated with the Fairhope Museum of History, enacting roles of early residents and telling how they contributed to the town's development. Museum Director Barrett, producer and director of the video, will introduce that program with anecdotes about how it came about and will respond to questions after the viewing.

The Baldwin County *Alabama 200 Bicentennial Steering Committee* was created by the County Commissioners on January 17, 2017, to "support, create and execute events and activities in Baldwin County to commemorate Alabama's 200 Anniversary of Statehood."

The Baldwin County Historic Development Commission has initiated a project to document and mark over eighty historical landmarks throughout the County as tourist attractions within the next 3 years. Twenty-four of these markers will be completed in 2017. Bob Glennon, our newsletter editor, is a member of that commission and is active in marker historical accuracy and placement.

Cities across the county are motivated to create events to highlight the Anniversary. The Fairhope Waddle and Daub hut and the programs planned by our Museum, are some of our city's contributions to these activities.

For readers inclined to get involved, the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History* and area historical homes and museums are seeking volunteers to help with the creation and implementation of these projects. Check the Docent Desk at our Museum, or reply to our Newsletter Editor for more information about fun and educational opportunities; E-mail: FairhopeMuseumNewsletter@gmail.com.

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# *Walking Tours of Fairhope*

Each weekend in April



Museum Director Donnie Barrett will again conduct a walking tour of Fairhope each weekend in April. Each week, the tour will begin promptly at 10:00 a.m. and will last one hour. These are casual-paced walks, in and around the downtown area. There is no admission fee.

**April 1 - Fairhope Avenue.** The Welcome Center on Section St, next door to the Museum, is the starting point for this walk. From there, the group will move through the center of town where participants will hear the history of the buildings and many businesses that once occupied them. The now famous “neo-classic, 1920’s skyline,” is a popular tourist and shoppers’ attraction of Fairhope.

**April 8 - Fairhope Beach and Shoreline.** Begin at the Rose Garden at the Fairhope pier. This talk-n-walk features the story of the Fairhope beach area, which was once the center of Fairhope’s social activities. You will hear what happened to the previous eight piers and about the casino, bowling alley, several hotels and restaurants, the baseball field, amusement park rides and the walk-in movie theater.

**April 15 - Section Street.** This tour departs from the Welcome Center and takes guests along both sides of Section Street from Magnolia Street to Greer’s Grocery and back. You will learn about the buildings and their history. Donnie will tell how Fairhope has developed over the years and explain the Single Tax concept that spawned the town in 1894.

**April 22 - Knoll Park Tour.** This is the longest of the walks, from the Welcome Center, west (toward the bay) to Knoll Park overlooking the pier. This short hike goes west on Magnolia Street in front of several of the original town founder homes, as well as several early hotels. The trek crosses Knoll Park while you hear its many stories, and back up Fairhope Avenue to the Welcome Center. This tour also tells much of the single tax story.

**April 29 - Fairhope Colony Cemetery.** Park in the Fairhope Conference Center lot by City Hall and enter the arched front gate of the cemetery at Oak and Section Streets. Director Barrett will slowly walk the paved roadway, pointing out the resting places of several colorful personalities of early Fairhope. You will also hear interesting and amusing stories about early eccentric citizens and get a good explanation about the town founders’ politics.

This annual walking tour series is a part of a state-wide imitative of the Alabama Tourism Department to feature the history and highlights of our State. It is particularly meaningful this year as this is the tenth year of our participation and this year, it helps kick-off the upcoming 200th anniversary of Alabama.

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## **Fairhope Museum participates in U.S. Archives Project**

The City of Fairhope was invited to participate in the launch of the StoryCorps Project for the United States Archives. Mayor Sandy Stimpson of Mobile and Robert (Bob) Glennon, our Newsletter editor representing Fairhope, were the invited speakers for the launch of this national program in South Alabama. On February 9, 2017, Mr. Glennon, an area historian, with fellow Fairhopean, Ron Meszaros, a veteran media journalist, recorded a 42 minute special broadcast about “What makes Fairhope unique,” highlighting the city’s free-spirited history, its appeal to artisans, the natural resources and creative environment for thinking and living “outside the box.”

The broadcast will be edited for National Public Radio and will be retained by the U.S. National Archives as an historical resource about Fairhope.

# Satsuma Blossom Festival

April 15, 2017

Saturdays are great days for family events and one of the most popular annual happenings at our Museum is the Satsuma Blossom Festival!

First, why get excited about a Satsuma Blossom, you ask? They are a part of Fairhope's history! This fruit of the orange family, was the trendy fruit on the Eastern Shore in the early 1900s. Satsumas became a popular revenue-bearing, truck-farming fruit, and the blossoms were loved by housekeepers for their fragrance as the bay breezes blew the aroma through the open windows in early Fairhope. A couple of sever winters in the 1930s ruined the crops and caused a drop in interest in commercially growing the fruit, but the blossoms continue today as an attractive flower in homes and gardens. And the fruit is also enjoyed, if the spring temperatures cooperate. Our Satsuma Blossom Festival is designed as a reminder of the hometown things and memories that make our history.

On April 15, 2017, we will enjoy our Fourth Annual Blossom Festival. The program will begin at 10 a.m. Saturday morning and continue until 4 p.m.. Between those hours, on-the-hour, there will be entertainers, musicians, dancers, demonstrations and story-telling. Ice cream will be available too, including Satsuma flavored! Emogene DeMaagd, chairperson for the event, says, "We expect a bumper crowd again this year. Everyone always has a great time and it's fun to be reminded of the good-ole days in Fairhope!"

If you don't attend, you can grieve as you read in our June Newsletter, about all the fun *everyone else* had, while you sat at home eating *your* satsuma!

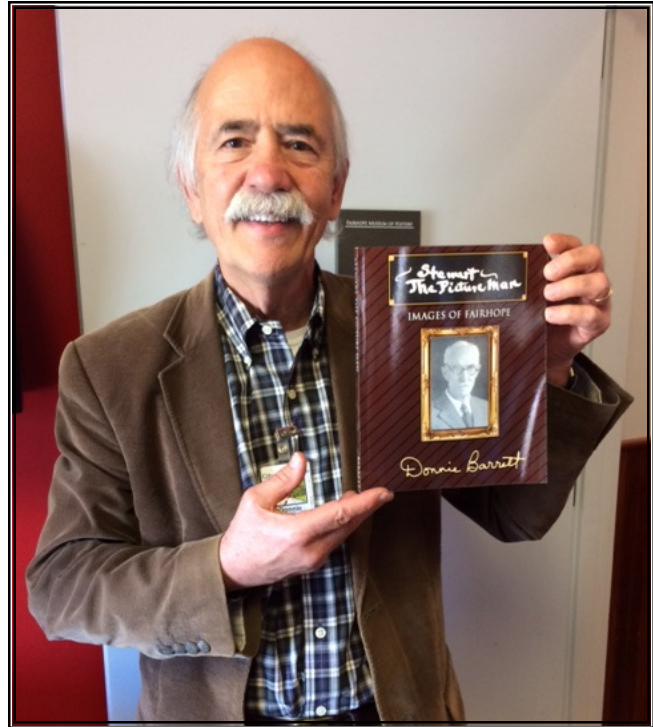
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*Helping Fairhope Tell it's Story*

## Stewart the Picture Man; Images of Fairhope

### Book Review

by Bob Glennon



The view of Fairhope changed in October 1903, when Frank Stewart got his first camera and began shooting photographs. From that time until October 1938 when he sold his photo shop, he preserved Fairhope's legacy on glass negatives, film and in postcards. He was the Picture Man!

Our Fairhope Museum of History Director Donnie Barrett spent years researching and has now written the story of *Stewart, the Picture Man*, from Frank Stewart's birth in Lafayette, Indiana in 1855, until his death in Fairhope, in 1942, at the age of 87. Donnie researched Mr. Stewart's family history and after twenty years of reflecting on the value of being 100% accurate and realizing that facts and discoveries continue to reveal themselves in time, he decided to finalize the book, even though there will surely be more to know in the future, about Mr. Stewart's great work.

Frank Stewart was an early advocate of the Single – Tax idea and became interested in Fairhope in the late

*Stewart, The Picture Man*, continued on p.5., column 1

1890s. He visited several times before deciding to move to nearby Silverhill, in 1903. While in Silverhill, he became interested in photography, but was blind in one eye! But this limitation became an asset because he was fascinated by lights and shadows. He then acquired his first bit of photographic equipment; a wooden box camera that captured images on glass plate negatives. He put a metal mask on the glass so two postcard size images could be put on one negative plate. In 1906, he got an Eastman Kodak folding pocket camera that used rolled celluloid film the same size as a postcard. On the back side, he printed the address box and stamp mark. This new book shows a photo of Frank washing postcards in Pole Cat Creek. Today, the ammonium thiosulfate fixer he used would be considered a pollutant in the creek, but his intentions were all positive.

He bought a new "horseless carriage" in 1909 and took photos of his family in their new car. He tried his hand at farming, but in 1913 he gave up and moved into downtown Fairhope. Half of his house was used as his studio and the other half was his and wife Hattie's home. In addition to studio quality pictures, he also found postcards to be a money-maker. He began to travel the back-roads and took serene scenes and photos of the gullies, bays and shoreline. Frank operated his Fairhope Photo Shop for many years and produced thousands of pictures.

In an interview in 1996, his grand-niece, Ms. Roberta Billie, said, "Frank was a good looking man, slender, moustache and fought hard against stooping as he aged. He always wore a collar and he and Aunt Hattie were so very proper. He was a fine person. He helped people in a quiet and unassuming way. They had a summer cottage on Perdido Bay that he called *Stewarthaven*."

The Fairhope Museum of History has about seven hundred photographs by Frank Stewart. His distinctive way of marking his negatives and film with white writing, identifies the photographer. Unfortunately, no Stewart cameras are in the Museum.

The new book, "*Stewart The Picture Man; Images of Fairhope*," includes many photographs made by Stewart. The book is published by Intellect Publishing, Pt. Clear, AL., and will be released in April 2017. It can be found in the Museum Gift Shop, local bookstores, or can be ordered on-line from Amazon.com. Paperback only. ISBN 978-1-945190-22-3. ~

## Friends News

Catherine King, an officer of the *Friends*, and Museum docent, along with colleague Alison Knight, chairperson of the Archives Committee of the Single Tax Corporation, spoke at the Fairhope Library as part of a five-part lecture series on Fairhope history. The series began on January 5th and continues until May 11, 2017. The ladies talked about the corporation's historical archives and urged everyone to try it; go to [fairhopesingletax.pastperfectonline.com](http://fairhopesingletax.pastperfectonline.com).

Donnie Barrett, our Museum Director, also is speaking in this series on Fairhope history.

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Rosanne Gulisano, writer and Museum docent, spoke at the Pensters Writing Group on March 11, about "Ghostwriting." She writes for those with a story to tell, but not skilled themselves at putting it into print. Rosanne says, "It's a thrill to have our older people tell their story for their kids and to have their experiences preserved for area history."

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Bob Glennon, our newsletter editor, presented a program on February 10 at Westminster Village, Spanish Fort, AL., to veterans and retirees about "The View of Alabama History from the Veranda of the Grand Hotel at Pt. Clear."

Bob also spoke March 2, to students at the new St. Michael's High School, Fairhope, about his book, *Kudjo: The Last Slave Voyage to America*.

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### 2017 Officers of the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History*

**President: Curtis Cochran**  
**Vice President: Louis Blaze**  
**Secretary: Catherine King**  
**Treasurer: Lottie Barrett**

## *Tea for Two*

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

### *Upcoming Programs*

**April 4 – Glenn M. Isaacs** – Glenn is a Coast Guard Auxiliary Public Affairs Specialist and will speak on shipbuilding in Mobile and Baldwin counties and how this laid the ground work for today's Austal and Airbus.

**April 11 – Jack Burrell** – Jack is currently the president of the Fairhope City Council and will tell us his Fairhope story and fill us in on the latest goings-on with the Fairhope City Council.

**April 18 – Stephen McNair, Ph. D.** – Stephen is a professional historic preservation consultant formerly hired by the City of Fairhope to advise the City Council. He will tell us of the benefits of historic preservation.

**April 25 – Donnie Barrett** – Donnie will continue his *Alabama 200* celebration with a program on the Alabama Indians in our area. He will demonstrate pottery and arrow making.

**May 2 – Donna Esslinger** – Donna is a rare book collector and professional book appraiser who assessed the Marie Howland collection we have in our archives. She is inviting us to bring an old book and she will appraise it for free.

#### **The Newsletter**

The Friends Newsletter 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](mailto:FairhopeMuseumNewsletter@gmail.com).

## *Tea for Two*

**May 9 – Eastern Shore Ukulele Club** – The Club members will come play a selection of their favorite tunes. It is happy, good-feeling music! Their leader, Carl Couret, will tell us a bit about Ukulele music and how popular it is in our area.

**May 16 – Lt. Stephanie Hollinghead** - Our Museum has had several Fairhope officers come tell us their stories at our Tuesday's teas. In continuing our enthusiastic support of our Police officers, we are presenting Lt. Hollinghead, who will share her Fairhope story with us.

**May 23 – Gary Wolfe** – Gary came to Fairhope in the 1960's to manage the Bayview Funeral Home. Over the years he has acquired most of the funeral homes in our area and now he and his wife, Judy, are backbone members of our Fairhope community. Come here his interesting story!

## **Satsuma Blossom Festival**

**- Saturday -**

**April 15, 2017**

**10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

***Fun Time!***

## **Fairhope Museum of History**

**24 North Section Street (251) 929-1471**

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

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

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