

Friends

Of the Fairhope Museum of History

NEWSLETTER



Vol. 8 Issue 4 August—September 2017

Did it again! History Trolley Tours Another Successful Event



On Saturday, July 15, for the sixth year running, Museum Director Donnie Barrett toured guests around “Old Fairhope” and told stories and history of his hometown. The trolley style bus was perfect for great views as Mr. Barrett showed the landmarks and told the history of our fair city.

Four tours spaced generously throughout the day, left the Museum driveway on Bancroft Street and proceeded west to criss-cross Single Tax land, through Nicholville and the “Fruit and Nut,” all the way to the Bay and back. Donnie talked fast, packing-in classic history of homes and businesses of original colonists and those who came shortly thereafter to build Utopia.” His factual array was inter-

twined with personal stories of his childhood, playing in the gullies and missed opportunities in “those days” to talk with the older adults who *were* the history of Fairhope.

Donnie covered numerous spots during the one hour ride: Whittier Hall, Art Mershon’s and founder E.B. Gaston’s homes, residence of James Ballangee, who picked the Fairhope site, Knoll Park, Klumpps’s Auto Livery and Motor Company, Stacks Gully, early churches, the Fairhope Inn; he explained the stone on the Christian Science Church, Nicholville, then made mention of the early raucous life of curious visitors

“Tours”, continued on page 2, column 2



Director's Desk

The docents and volunteers in our *Friends* organization continue to amaze me with their willingness and talent. Our *Friends of the Museum* have between 70 and 75 active members who enthusiastically greet visitors, play parts in skits, organize and run our big events, like the Elderberry Festival, Satsuma Blossom Festival, and are ever-ready to chip-in to build exhibits, pick tea at the plantation for our Gift Shop and even help at the Welcome Center next door, which is now under our watch-care. We could not function without the big hearts and smiles of our volunteers!

Four weeks ago, our Assistant Director, Jim Bates, received a promotion to go over and manage the Nix Senior Center. He came to us on April 30, 2013, with great business experience, efficient work habits and cost savings ideas; he also had many skills that helped us tremendously. Since coming, he has hosted *Tea for Two* when needed, found train wheels and axles for our People's Railroad, searched the internet, negotiated with vendors, and managed our Gift Shop inventory. He played the trumpet in our Founder's Day documentary movie, has smashed pie in his face at the Elderberry Pie contest, climbed on the roof and hauled lumber; none of that was in his job description. He coordinated everything it seems, to make them happen on time and as planned. He made it possible for me to do my job as Director. We will continue to appreciate Jim for his contribution to our success. I don't think I will ever find someone to fill his job that will be as cooperative and easy to work with.

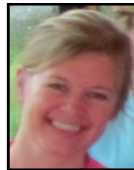
Congratulations to Jim for his well earned promotion and we are happy that we will get to continue to work with him only a few blocks away.

Now, I am rowing for two, for a while. I am so thankful for the reliable volunteers that are dependable and ready, to step in where needed. Thanks to each of you!!

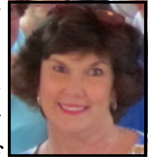
Donnie Barrett

"Tours", continued from page 1

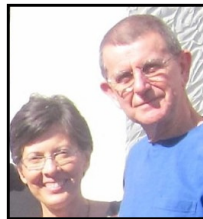
and mischievous sailors,. He also touched on the piers, casinos and nudist camps. He gave insight into personalities, such as Clarence Darrow of Monkey Trial fame, Marie Howland, librarian and health advocate, Constable Jack Titus, first Doctor Clarence Mershon and "Spider" Gaston, his one-time neighbor. All fascinating and fun facts about the town.



Anna Moore, a new resident of Fairhope and her visiting mom, Julie Johnson from Columbia, S.C., were on the tour for the first time. When asked her impression of her new homeplace, Anna said, "Fairhope is the most welcoming town!" And her mom, here to help Anna and her Coast Guard husband settle-in, is really enjoying the discovery of our unique city. On their first visit to the Museum, Director Donnie Barrett told Anna the history of her Fruit-and Nut cottage. "The visit to the Museum and this tour are really quick ways to get to know about Fairhope," said Julie.



Soon-to-be residents, Gene and Julia Ingram from Oktibbeha, County, MS were also on the tour to learn more about Fairhope. "The tour was great! We love to walk," said Julia, "and this is a wonderful place to walk, see things and meet people."



Occasional rain showers discouraged some would-be attendees, but the trolley bus made for a fun and scenic ride. At the ticket desk, the docents greeted many repeat guests. Everyone praised the trips and Director Barrett for the fun and educational experience!

All proceeds from the tours go to the *Friends of the Museum* to support programs, events and projects. ~



Think Elderberry!
Coming Saturday, August 12
Fairhope Museum of History

Does the Old Daphne Courthouse Jail reside in Fairhope?

Bob Glennon



It was in 1901 that J.D. Hand, a Bay Minette entrepreneur did the sinister deed of coaxing the Alabama Legislature to move the Baldwin County Courthouse from Daphne to Bay Minette. On October 10 - 11, 1901, he and a band of men from North Baldwin came to Daphne under cover of night and the next morning, took the courthouse safe and records, disassembled the jail and took them to Bay Minette against the will of Eastern Shore residents. That's background, but for now, we are talking "Jail."

Since 2008, when our Fairhope Museum of History moved into the Old City Hall, there has been conjecture about where our old jail came from. The most frequent told story is that the cells came from a concrete ship that was built, or dismantled, in Mobile, after WWI. The reason in most minds is that the iron bars are bolted together in the corners, the floor and overhead appear to be steel plates, it's painted gunmetal gray and it is conspicuously old. The etching of initials and words are the authentic handiwork of the residents over the years.

Of the 12 concrete ships that were built nationwide as a part of the Emergency Fleet of WWI, only two were built in Mobile. We don't know which were built here, but all 12 are accounted for:

- 7 are now sunk and decaying on the ocean floor, *none* near Mobile (nearest is Galveston)
- 3 were last seen as oil barges in Louisiana
- 1 is a floating breakwater in CA.
- 1 is still a 10-room floating hotel in Cuba

All concrete ships built in Mobile were commercial ships. None had jails that were removed or available to Fairhope; after all, Fairhope was only 31 years old when the jail bars were acquired.

We asked retired Chief Warrant Officer and Marine Inspector Jeff Penninger, of the U.S. Coast Guard-Mobile and fellow Fairhopean, to look at our jail cells to see if there are any clues of nautical heritage. "It looks like a brig alright, but there is nothing to indicate that it came from a ship," Jeff offered. So the search for history continued.

The fact that the Daphne Courthouse jail was bolted together remains our most intriguing clue. Particularly since the original design of the Old City Hall jail was documented in City records to be made of hollow tile. The Fairhope City Council Minutes dated March, 1922, show that Councilwoman Brown was tasked to "get an



estimated cost of constructing a jail of hollow tile, for a jail to be 10 ft X 18 ft outside and 8 ft high." The councilwoman made a report on the approximate cost of constructing a jail of hollow tile, later mentioned to be \$4,000. The matter of jail construction was not mentioned in the Council records again for over 3 years.

Engineering and construction of the Fairhope City Hall and jail took place in 1925 - 28. On September 14, 1925, for no defined reason, City Council minutes showed that "the Marshal [Titus] reported the jail cells in Bay Minette to be in good condition and that same could be secured by applying to the County Commissioners."

"Jail", continued on page 4

“Jail”, continued from page 3

A motion was made by Councilman Mershon to meet with County Commissioners to discuss the matter of purchasing cells.” The City made application for a steel cell and door. By now, it was possibly realized that a real villain could easily knock down the hollow tile wall and “terrorize the town.”

In Bay Minette, the County Commission records of October 8, 1925, show that the City of Fairhope could have (*take possession of*) the cell(s), provided they “would not injure the building or [*incur*] cost to Baldwin County.” On October 12, 1925, the Fairhope City Council made a motion “that [*Councilman*] Mershon be empowered to have someone in Bay Minette *take the cells apart*.” They were hauled to Fairhope at Fairhope expense and assembled in the new Fairhope City Hall in their current location. The number of cells or flat iron for windows or doors was not documented.

Today, you can visit *our* jail and see the “assembled” corners of the original Fairhope jail.

The historical facts are:

(1) The jail in Daphne’s Courthouse was “disassembled” in 1901 and taken! This is amplified in the details of the raid by Mr. Hand. The details are documented by all journals of the time; *the Baldwin Times*, *The American Banner*, and the more recent, Judge Charles Partin’s documentary account of the event; all recorded that the jail was “disassembled”. When the men showed up under false pretenses, the Sheriff discovered their plan and locked them in the cells. Since they were now inside the cells carrying tools, they began to disassemble the jail from the inside. Over the sheriff’s objection, the men loaded the ox carts with the jail, the county safe, all records and furniture. This pilaging continued through Friday and Saturday. The wagons returned to Bay Minette and the jail was reassembled in a wooden house on Hoyle Street, adjacent to the new Courthouse under construction on two and a half acres of Hand’s donated land;

(2) The price quote obtained by Councilwoman Brown for City Hall and jail was \$4,000. The finished costs were \$4,200. The hollow tile was not designed to withstand horizontal stress. Even with the wall, the City likely learned that it needed to reinforce the wall. Acquiring the free jail *late* in the construction process, was a cost savings idea, to reinforce the hollow wall, doable even after the wall was erected;

(3) The 1901 wooden building containing the “assembled” jail in Bay Minette, was demolished

in 1911. The old iron bars of the original jail, “four cells with flat bars on the windows,” were moved upstairs in that new jail built on Hand Street in 1911-1912. This is documented in the Baldwin Co Archives. The new jail was overbuilt and refurbished at that same location “several times”



over the next seventy-five years, but no records can be found as to the whereabouts of the old jail bars - *except* for the Fairhope City records. Taylor “Red” Wilkins, a well-respected Bay Minette attorney, while a youngster with his dad as Sheriff in 1948, saw and played in that county jail. When shown photos of the Fairhope jail, he said, “The jail *didn’t* look like that.” That confirmed that the old round and flat-iron jail had been removed prior to the late - ‘40s. The old assembled jail bars were put into storage, destroyed, or came to Fairhope. In our research, we were sent to the old Bay Minette train station where surplus items are stored, and have talked with long time county employees, but no similar iron bars, or flat iron from the jail, remains. They have been disposed of and no records can be found, *except* those in Fairhope;

(4) Our Museum has circa 1900 sales literature showing that jails of that era, were indeed assembled, not welded. Welding wasn’t a standard construction practice at the turn of the 20th Century; forge welding was done by Blacksmiths, but not common for building.

No county records remain as to what happened to the old jail bars, even though interviews and physical and historical document searches have been conducted by this writer for five years. There are no other known “assembled” jail bars known to exist in the county. Others are firmly affixed vertical bars with doors, across to mortar, brick or concrete walls everywhere - *except* Fairhope.

While it cannot be unproven, or documented with irrefutable fact, we have a compelling case that Fairhope possesses the original jail that was taken from the Baldwin County Courthouse in Daphne on October 11, 1901. ~

Storeroom Stories

New Feature on the Friends of the Fairhope Museum Facebook Site

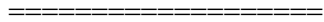
The *Friends of the Museum* Facebook team has initiated a new fun feature on the *Friends* website. There are many fascinating items in the archives that alone, do not make an exhibit, but are interesting items. So Director Barrett and Webmaster Becky Brunson are doing short video clips about some of these items. Go online to [facebook.com/FairhopeMuseumofHistoryFriends](https://www.facebook.com/FairhopeMuseumofHistoryFriends) for the latest fun facts and features.



The first 1:10 minute video was about a face jug. It is logged as item 070101 because it was the first item in the first collection archived in the Museum, when the filing system was started in 2007. "It is an Albany-slip glazed face jug bought by Dr. Godard for his wife in 1900," said Mr. Barrett.

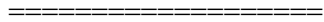
"The jug was later owned by Dr. Godard, father of Flo Simmons, who founded this (our) Fairhope Museum in 1995 on School Street. She donated the jug to our Museum."

Face jugs were made by early potters, from clay found in area creek beds. They are representative of the artistic culture and history of the Eastern Shore.



Photographs and Maps

The storeroom has numerous photographs, many one-of-a-kind, of the Single Tax Colony and early Fairhope, that have been given to the Museum as older residents move away or decease. There is also a map of North America that is not found anywhere else, according to Dr. Greg Waselkov of the University of South Alabama Archaeology Department.



World Wars Military Uniforms

Many veterans of the World Wars, or their spouses, have left U.S. Army and Navy uniforms from the Greatest Generations.

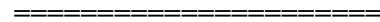
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Storeroom Stories, continued

Fishing Lures manufactured in Fairhope



Mr. Thomas W. Kannig manufactured fishing tackle and rods in Fairhope in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. His lathe and some of his rods and lures are in the Storeroom!



Friends

NEWS

Curt Cochran, President of the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum* is shown here with wife, Patti, in therapy in Colorado, after experiencing a stroke. He sends his well wishes and says he is really missing everyone. He hopes to write for us again soon. Hurry and get well, Curt!!



School for the Fun of it!

The School for the Fun of it! No Prerequisites, No Tests, No Grades! Eastern Shore Institute for Lifelong Learning's (ESILL's) Fall Term, 2017, will mark its 40th continuous term. This adult educational program was conceived by Dr. Donald Lester in 1977, who believed that intellectual stimulation and continuing mental development were ingredients of a longer and richer life.

The **FRIENDS OF ESILL** invite everyone to its Birthday Party on Sunday, August 20, 3 - 5 p.m., at the Unitarian Fellowship, 1150 Fairhope Ave. Come and celebrate this big milestone!

Submitted by Dot Bremer

Tea for Two

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

Upcoming Programs

August 1 – Theresa Jensen – Theresa is an author, speaker and writer whose pen name is T. Jensen Lacey. She has an impressive list of book titles, but is best known for “Henry the Pelican.”

August 8 – Charles Scovil – We have a full house every time this astronomer speaks. He will tell us about the upcoming eclipse and meteor shower in a program called, “Chicken Little was right!”

August 15 – Wayne Dyess – This City Director of Planning and Zoning will tell us about growing up in Baldwin County and about the challenges Fairhope faces with the current population explosion.

August 22 – Mike Lyons – Mike owns the Lyons Share framing shop next door to Page and Palette. Being in the middle of town, he has a great perspective on all things Fairhope.

August 29 – Donnie Barrett, who invented the reenactment of Fort Mims and narrates the event every year, will tell the stirring story of the Ft. Mims tragedy.

September 5 – Glenn Issacs – Glenn is a Coast Guard Auxiliary Public Affairs Specialist and will present a Civil War program on what went wrong during the Battle of Mobile Bay.

September 12 – Stephen Savage – Stephen is the spokesperson for the Baldwin County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and is often seen on TV holding a puppy. Maybe he will bring one for adoption!

Friends Newsletter Editor - Bob Glennon

Tea for Two

September 19 – Daymond Rehorn - Officer Rehorn, of the Fairhope Police Dept., is working with the City’s teenagers. Our best tea programs are having these fine officers who protect us and better our community. Please support them and come hear their stories.

September 26 – Sherry-Lea Bloodworth Boto – Fairhope’s Economic Development Director has a most impressive resume of past executive positions on a global scale. She has now moved back to Fairhope and joined our current administration. Come hear her exciting plan for Fairhope’s future.

Ninth Annual Elderberry Festival August 12, 2017



Celebrate the Elderberry, a part of our history!

11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

- **Pie Eating Contest** 11 a.m.
- **Music** 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- **Demonstrations on the hour for uses of Elderberries**
- **Treats, Eats, Games and Sweets**

One of our Biggest and most fun Annual Events!

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>

Like us on: [facebook.com/FairhopeMuseumofHistoryFriends](https://www.facebook.com/FairhopeMuseumofHistoryFriends)