

# *Friends*

## *Of the Fairhope*

### *Museum of History*

Vol 9 Issue 1 February - March 2018



## Satsuma Blossom Festival Coming Up

### April 14, 2018

Who gets excited about a fruit blossom? WE DO! The satsuma blossom, and for that matter, the satsuma fruit, were favorites in the 1920s in and around Fairhope. The satsuma was destined to become a large truck-farming industry until in the late '20s, frost and bitter cold killed many of the trees and showed that the satsuma, while good to eat, could not be dependable as a livelihood for farmers. So that bit of our history lives on!

On Saturday April 14, 2018, residents, guests, history buffs and fun-seekers, will rally at the Museum of History to recognize satsumas and their brief, but tasty period in the economy of Fairhope. The fruit and beautiful blossoms still remain popular with locals.

*Satsuma Blossom Festival*, continued column 2, page 2



On March 10, 2018, beginning at 10:00 am, the Fairhope Museum of History will present a history game with teams competing for the title of Fairhope's History Survivor! This will consist of ten separate games where contestants will have to answer history questions to win positions on a large spinning wheel. Then an alternate game requiring carrying eggs in a spoon, balancing on a wood beam, or fishing a cooking Barbie doll out of a cook pot to again be placed on the spinning wheel selector. There will be surprise spins and hidden prizes on the winning wheel. Then with Lady Luck on your side, YOU could be the final Survivor. A trophy and a \$100 bill will be awarded to the winning team!

The games will be played out doors on a large bamboo set built around the fountain behind the Museum. In the event of bad weather, some activities will be moved inside, but others will be played in the rain.

Teams will consist of two people. They will answer questions together and write their answers on a slate. Competitors may be called upon to join-in a piggy-back race and play the skill games together. Ten teams will be registered and the game will be played with the first 20 people that sign up. To register, come in the Museum and sign our registration form. This will be a lot of fun! For more information call Donnie Barrett, Museum Director at 251-929-1472.

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## Director's Desk

I very much appreciate the support the *Friends* give to the Museum. The *Friends* docents bent over backward during the holiday season to assure that we kept the doors open on our regular schedule.

The Museum management is now also responsible for the City Welcome Center greeters. Thanks to extraordinary effort by some of our Museum docents, we covered entire weeks in December, so some seasonal WC volunteers could go home for the holidays.

Our Museum docents experienced the Welcome Center for the first time and found it quite different. The Welcome Center has more visitors, but the conversations are not as complicated. There, the staff answers questions about parking, bathrooms and restaurants, but here at the Museum, we explain the Single Tax concept over and over. If any of our other Museum volunteers want to take a turn at hosting at the Welcome Center, let us know. It's a different genre of greeting, but fun too.

Another way that the *Friends* have been especially helpful is by fund-raising that helps the Museum function. We put items on the City's annual budget but that certainly doesn't mean they get funded. This year, the City Council is still struggling with last year's budget proposal. Important items we have in our Budget Requests are a color copy machine, archival uniform boxes and an historical marker to honor Nancy Lewis. The *Friends* have again rescued us to get these things done! Year before last, it was the People's Rail Road Car and the color laser-light show in the Museum Plaza fountain...all provided by the *Friends*. Thank You!

We are not finished yet. We have a series of festivals and tours in March and April that need folks like you to help make happen. Extra help is needed on the nights of the three Mardi Gras parades, then in March for the three days of Fairhope Arts & Crafts Show traffic. I know you guys will kick in strong and keep us in the good light of our community as a Shining Star!

*Donnie Barrett*

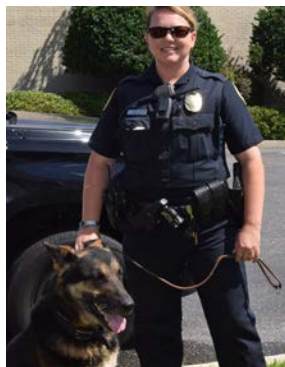
*Satsuma Blossom Festival*, continued from column 1, page 1

The Festival activities will begin at 10 a.m., for the fifth consecutive year. Several new enjoyable play ideas will make guests smile and some past entertainers will return, at popular request. Mad Mike and his charming assistant Sandy will again bring their Magic Show of mental games and illusions. Mike is always a favorite!



The 2017 crowd enjoyed musical entertainment in the lobby while other programs were underway upstairs.

The *Dogwood Trail Maids* will be on-hand, as they enjoy interacting with the guests and participating in activities. They also love to take pictures with the other attendees. The *Baklava Belly Dancers* from Mobile will again show that you can have fun and get good exercise at the same time. They bring their own traditional music and even the kids can give dancing a try!



Fairhope Police Officer Becky Woodruff has been invited to return for a second year, to surprise and educate visitors on the skills of *Segan*, her K-9 workmate on the Police Force. He responds only to commands in German and earns your respect as they demonstrate his ability to apprehend a villain.

Emogene DeMaagd, chairperson for the event for the past 3 years, says, "It's amazing how all ages come out and find something to their personal liking. Everyone has fun!"

No matter the weather, the *Show Will Go On!!*



# Fairhope Museum of History Celebrates Tenth Anniversary in April



Director Donnie Barrett's phone rang eleven years ago. His reputation and enthusiasm for Fairhope and local area history were well known and when the City of Fairhope decided to turn the Old City Hall into the new History Museum, Donnie became the topic of conversation at the new City Hall.

The City of Fairhope decided to vacate the Old City Hall and Police Station at 24 N. Section St., in 2002. The building then sat empty for six years. On April 10, 2008, it reopened as the Museum of History.

Mr. Barrett was the premier candidate to direct the Museum. He accepted the role and immediately began reminding the remodeling contractors what was historic and what could be hauled away.

April 10, 2018 will complete the first exciting decade for the Fairhope Museum of History.

The first Fairhope history museum was the inspiration of Mrs. Flo Simmons, a lifelong Fairhopean. For years, Mrs. Simmons collected relics, artifacts and stories and her collections became the exhibits of the first Fairhope museum. She was the heartbeat of the founding committee that formed in 1990, to establish a museum.



The Bell Building on the Faulkner State College campus (now Coastal Alabama College) was selected for that purpose and it opened in 1995. Mrs. Simmons served as a docent on a part-time basis, three days a week until shortly before she passed away in 2005.

Mrs. Simmons' home on Mershon Street and Fairhope Avenue was the gathering place for school children, including young Donnie Barrett, in the 1950s and 60s. Donnie was the same age as her son William. Mrs. Simmons loved to take the kids on adventure trips. Donnie recalls those early trips along the bay shore where they would pick up pottery shards and historical items. Mrs. Simmons enjoyed explaining archaeology, geology and history to the youngsters. From that, our Director Barrett stirred a lifelong interest in the legacy of his hometown.

The Museum we have today has risen from Flo Simmons' box of collections to the most creative and progressive city museum in Alabama, for a city of Fairhope's size, and surpassing attendance at museums in some much larger cities.

The Tenth Anniversary will be celebrated as a part of the Annual Satsuma Blossom Festival on April 14<sup>th</sup> this year. Along with appropriate Pomp and Circumstance, a Time Capsule will be filled with notable items to let citizens a century from now, know what we saw as significant, way back in 2018. ~

# Fairhope Architecture

by Michael Titford

Say the word, "Architecture" and your mind might go to the Flatiron building in New York, the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, or Falling Water, the Frank Lloyd Wright house in Pennsylvania. But Fairhope residents don't have to go so far to see interesting architecture, for Fairhope has its own, albeit more modest.



The E.B. Gaston house at 118 Magnolia was built in 1910 and has the floor plan and steep roof typical of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Mid-Western house style familiar to the early Fairhope settlers who came from that area. The steep roof allows the snow to slide off in the bitter winters up there. Not really necessary in Fairhope. It is one of the oldest structures in Fairhope. Gaston built it on "the outside of town."

Brenny's Jewelry shop at 333 Fairhope Avenue was built in 1914 and exhibits a tall flat front, typical of many early business structures in downtown Fairhope around 1900. You see similar structures in early photographs from the frontier days out West, and in cowboy movies! The Roman style brick used for the façade of the shop was made locally at Clay City. The original equipment used to create these bricks can be seen in the museum.

The American Legion building at 400 South Mobile Street was built in 1912 for the Business Woman's Club of Mobile and was called "Pine Needles". Early photographs show ladies gathered on the porch (No doubt discussing business!) and attractive woodwork decorating the building. The first and

second story porches have been enclosed, but some of the early architectural details can still be seen.

The two houses on the South East corner of Fels Avenue and South Mobile Street are Sears Roebuck houses. Between 1908 and 1940 Sears Roebuck, together with other manufacturers, produced prefabricated houses. The parts, each individually labeled, together with nails, bolts, etc. were shipped to the house site to be assembled according to a plan. Different styles were available. The records of these sales were not being kept by Sears, but there are other Sears Roebuck houses in the area. Also on Fels Ave. is the First Church of Christ, Scientist, built in 1923 in the Egyptian Revival style. This style became popular following Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and continued with the discovery of King Tut's tomb in 1922.



And Fairhope has its own Frank Lloyd Wright connection! The house (above) at number 7 Laraway Lane was designed by a former Frank Lloyd Wright pupil and associate, who later lived in Fairhope. While modest in size, the half bricked walls and large overhanging roof resemble a Frank Lloyd Wright house and the structure fits right in to the Fairhope scenery.

Our own museum building deserves a mention too. Built in the Spanish Mission Revival style in 1928, the architect had visited St Augustine Florida and had seen Spanish revival style there and introduced it to Fairhope. The George Dyson house at 505 Morphy is in the same style. There are other Spanish mission/Spanish colonial style houses in Fairhope.

Hidden away behind the trees on Oak Avenue is the whimsical house of Craig Sheldon. Built of local rock with a tower and a multicolored shingle roof, the house looks like it is from a child's nursery tale.

Architecture, continued on page 5, column 1



# Docent News



To complement it, Craig's daughter Pagan and son-in-law Dean Mosher, have built a similar house across the road with a bridge for good measure. You expect to see a knight in shining armor ride across the bridge on a white charger!

The architecture of Fairhope exhibits the progressive nature of the early Fairhope settlers and their sense of adventure, which continues to this day. ~

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## Friends of the Fairhope Museum

### Compete in AHA Kuykendall Award Program

The Alabama Historical Association solicits Non-Profit Historical Organizations in Alabama bi-annually, to participate in the James Ray Kuykendall Competition. The quest is to recognize the organization that contributed most to a greater appreciation of local and State history in the past 2-years. The selection will be made at the Annual AHA Conference in Birmingham on April 12-14.

The documents submitted by our *Friends* to AHA in January presented a detailed report of activities, books, *Founders* video and programs produced by our *Friends members*, impacting Fairhope, Baldwin County and Alabama to preserve and promote our history. It's an impressive portfolio of the hard work by our organization. We want those braggin' rights in the upcoming 2019 Bicentennial year!



For the fourth year in a row, Louie and Barbara Blaze opened their home for the Annual *Friends* Docent Christmas Party. It was a year-end Funfest and Christmas Party, all wrapped into one. About thirty-five docents and volunteers arrived spreading cheer and bringing food dishes and dirty-Santa gifts to share. The Blazes were master hosts as they served up lots of good food, munchies and refreshments. After greeting and eating,



Louie MC'ed, as gifts were dispersed to grateful smiling faces, with the known caveat, that someone could steal the gift, if they preferred it over their own. The crazy frenzy went on for over an hour, as greed for the other person's gift set in.

It was an enjoyable evening for every-one!

## Fairhope Walking Tours Each Saturday in April 10 a.m.

Director Donnie Barrett will again lead History Walking Tours each weekend in April, as a part of the statewide initiative of the Alabama Tourism Department to feature the history and tourist sites in our state. This will be the eleventh year for Fairhope to share statewide press.

The calendar for the walks is:

- April 7 – Fairhope Ave. Tour –  
This walk will depart from the Welcome Center on Section Street promptly at 10 a.m. Donnie talks about the buildings, people and skyline.
- April 14 – Beachfront Tour –  
Begin at the Rose Garden at the Fairhope Pier. Hear about the 8 piers, the rose garden idea and the walk-in movie theatre.
- April 21 – Section St. Tour –  
Leave from the Welcome Center and walk a few blocks along Section Street, for lots of stories about the businesses and characters.
- April 28 – Colony Cemetery Tour –  
Park in the Fairhope Conference Center lot by City Hall and enter the arched front gate of the cemetery at Oak and Section Streets. Donnie will meet you there.



**Do It! Survivor – March 10**

## Tea for Two

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

Feb 6 - **Randal Wright** is the president of the *Friends of the Fairhope Public Library*. She will talk about their exciting upcoming projects and activities, from children's programs to adult educational lectures and more.

Feb 13 - **Happy Mardi Gras! Donnie Barrett** will present "The History of Mardi Gras." If you're lucky, you might even catch some beads or a flying Moon Pie! **Laissez Le Bon Temps Rouler!**

Feb 20 - **Darby Wiik**, Assistant Director at the Fairhope Museum of History, will talk about her adventures before coming to Fairhope including working at the world's largest children's museum and her hopes and dreams for our own facility.

Feb 27 - **Kathryn Thompson** is originally from Mobile, but her family owned a house near the Grand Hotel and so she grew up "over the bay" and has wonderful stories of the early Eastern Shore.

Mar 6 - **Irene Wegner** is a well known story teller who teaches folklore ESILL classes. She will come tell us some of her traditional American folk tales.

Mar 13 - **Gary Scoville** will present his new film, "The Squire of Fairhope" on the Mayor Nix years; 28 years of success for our beautiful City of Fairhope!

Mar 20 - **Wade Wellborn**, better known as "Dr. Music" has had a successful music shop in Fairhope for 20 years. Come hear what has changed and what has stayed the same through two decades of the music industry.

Mar 27 - **Brian Kane** is the manager of the Fairhope Brewing Company will come tell us about this super successful Fairhope venture.

## Fairhope Museum of History

24 North Section Street (251) 929-1471

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

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