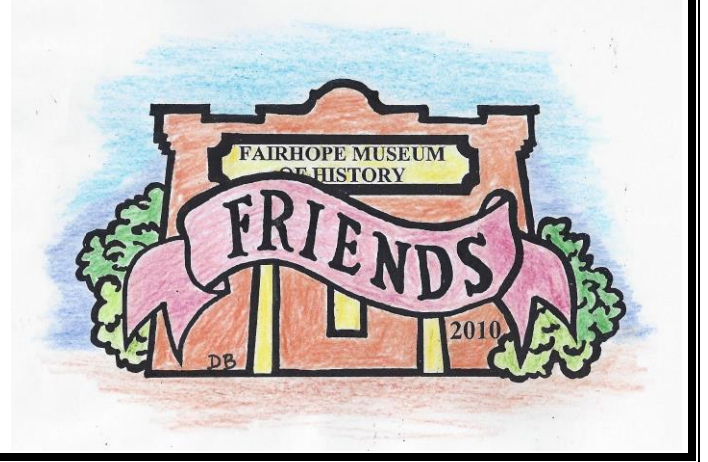


# Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History

Vol 10 Issue 3 June - July 2019



## Nancy Lewis / Frank Stewart Historical Marker Unveiled



The *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History*, together with the City of Fairhope, achieved a significant milestone in city history on Thursday, April 18, 2019, when an historical marker was unveiled on Bancroft Avenue only a few hundred feet from the past home sites of Nancy Lewis and Frank Stewart; two major personalities in Fairhope history.

Pictured above are (L-R) Louie Blaze, President of the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History*, Bob Glennon, Editor of the *Friends* Newsletter and project coordinator, Mayor Karin Wilson of Fairhope, Thelma Todd, Descendent of Nancy Lewis and project research contributor, and Donnie Barrett, historian and retired director of the Fairhope Museum of History. All were on-hand as the historical marker for Nancy Lewis and Frank Stewart was unveiled.

Mayor Karin Wilson greeted residents and guests, and expressed the significance of the marker. She then introduced Thelma Todd, a descendant of Nancy Lewis, who settled in the area before the arrival of the Fairhope Founders. Mrs. Todd led in a heart-warming prayer and expressed the gratitude to the City and the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History* for funding the historical landmark. Local historian and recently retired director Donnie Barrett said the marker had been a work-in-process for over two years. Researching the chain of title for the Lewis property required a study of Baldwin County deeds, Single Tax Corporation land purchases and tax records over the years.

Louie Blaze, President of the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum*, read the words embedded on each side of the marker regarding Mrs. Lewis and Mr. Stewart.



Descendants of Nancy Lewis attending the marker ceremony

After comments and formalities, the speakers and representatives of the Lewis and Stewart families gathered

Lewis-Stewart Marker, *continued on page 2, column 2*



# Editor's Notes

The past two months for the *Friends of the Museum of History* have been especially exciting. The effort to produce the historical marker has been a work-in-process for years. And the prominence of the landmarks has been a story in itself. The marker had to be placed at the site of Nancy and John Lewis' homestead and near Frank Stewart's Photo Shop and home. That gave latitude of only about 100 yards of real estate for the marker to be accurate. Thanks to Tamara Winzell, owner of *The Venue* and her offer to use her private property, and to the City of Fairhope and the Alabama Coastal Community College, we had several choice locations to mount the marker. We appreciate the cooperation of each of these property owners and the community spirit! The unveiling event also presented an enjoyable effort between the City, college and *Friends of the Museum*.

The Satsuma Blossom Festival on April 13<sup>th</sup> was for the fifth year, another successful event in family oriented activities sponsored by the *Friends*. Emogene DeMaagd led the team again and arranged outstanding entertainment for the whole day. Director Darby Wiik as always, provided facilities, hands-on assistance and greeted guests throughout the day. We appreciate and need Darby!

And the annual History Walking Tours by Donnie Barrett; what more can I say? Donnie is the best guide ever for telling the Fairhope story! As he says, he has lived about half of it! This program is a part of the Alabama Tourism Department, but I think if they stopped endorsing it, Donnie would still do the tours in the dark with a flashlight! His excitement for his hometown is contagious!

If we had to seek a silver lining, it would be the Annual Volunteers Dinner sponsored by the City in late April for the docents and volunteers for all city facilities. Mayor Karin Wilson made us feel good all over again and Darby was quick to acknowledge the benefits of having a staff of talented helpers and docents to get things done around the Museum.

Fairhope truly *is* a community of caring friends!

Lewis-Stewart Marker, continued from page 1, column 2



Mayor Karin Wilson addressing audience at Historical Marker Ceremony

at the base of the marker and pulled ribbons to unveil the marker. The smiles and applause clearly noted the prominence of the occasion.

Nancy Lewis, a widowed ex-Slave sold her homestead in 1895 to the Fairhope Industrial Association. Her acreage was a part of two hundred acres bought by the Fairhope Founders and Mrs. Lewis having paid taxes on her homestead for many years and proving ownership, became a contributor to the settlement of the Single Tax experiment on the Bluff. She used \$4.58 of that payment to buy forty acres where Thomas Hospital stands today.

Frank Stewart, the Picture Man, photographed a growing Fairhope for a quarter century. He came to Fairhope in 1903 and became popular for creating postcards for tourists and locals. His pictures documented the day-to-day lives and struggles of moving to this new place some called Utopia.

Mrs. Grey, the great-grandniece of Frank Stewart, still lives on Mr. Stewart's farmland purchased in 1903.



The Marker was designed and purchased by the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History*. The City of Fairhope Public Utilities Department erected the marker and arranged media coverage. It was an exciting team effort!

The narrative on the marker is shown on page 8, column 2.



# Satsuma Blossom Festival

April 13, 2019



Saturday, April 13 was a beautiful day in Fairhope! Section Street was bustling with small children at the Welcome Center next door to the Museum to meet the Easter Bunny and Historian Donnie Barrett departed at 10 a.m. on one of the traditional April City History Walking Tours. Several hundred children and adults gathered 'round and soon scattered to their activities of choice. Everything was happening!!

At the Museum of History, the *Friends of the Museum* kicked off the 6th Annual Satsuma Blossom Festival with a sing-a-long and concert by the Eastern Shore Ukelele Club.



Youngsters who came for the Bunny next door, found the police dog "Bauer" and officer Babb fascinating. Kids were invited to give the well trained dog, instructions in German and later, pet him while the officer told about the dog's training and

double life as a family member and protector of his handler. Other folks later joined the fun and games in the Museum Courtyard. They played Bean Bag Toss, Ring Toss, Rocket Blast, Crack-the-Safe and participated in a Cake Walk. Upstairs in the Museum, youngsters enjoyed painting and craft projects. With a modicum of fanfare, Satsuma Blossom Festival Queen Becky Jones descended the Museum stairs escorted by Wayne Brunson, followed by the attractive Dogwood Trail Maids in their colorful Ante-Bellum dresses. Queen Becky charmed the maids and guests as she told about her mother being the first queen of the original Satsuma Blossom Festival in Mobile in 1926.



After the outdoor activities, everyone returned upstairs for Entertainer and Magician Beau Broomall, to again mesmerize the audience with impressive illusions and tricks. Even the children assisted as he joyously puzzled everyone with his magic!



Emogene DeMaagd, chairperson for the 6th year, was all smiles as the day's activities came to a successful end. "That was so much fun," she said. "The day went great and everyone seemed to go home happy; you can't beat that!" It was a great day for photos with the Easter Bunny, being out on a beautiful spring day, and reflecting on our history with the Satsuma Blossom. ~





## April History Walking Tours



Retired Museum Director Donnie Barrett returned this April and again led free tours each weekend in April for citizens and guests who wanted to know more about Fairhope and to hear Mr. Barrett's stories of growing up in our fascinating city. The first tour attracted sixty people to follow along as Donnie told about the buildings on Fairhope Avenue.

The second tour that moved north then south of Fairhope Avenue along Section Street had many repeat walkers back for another dose of history. The third outing began at the arched gate and covered the Single Tax Colony Cemetery and its residents. This tour always includes fascinating Donnie stories of old acquaintances that he knew as a youngster growing up in town. The last Saturday of the month began with a short stroll around the Rose Garden and Pier area at the bay. This brought flash-backs of bayboats, the old Casino and theater performances in the gully by visiting actors and musicians.



In a subsequent interview, Donnie said that the Fairhope tours draw more attendance than several of the larger cities in Alabama combined. The event is hosted by the Alabama Tourism Department. ~

## Contemporary History

Darby Wiik



The Fairhope Museum of History received a generous donation Friday April 5, 2019 from Barry and Dorothy Stevens. The unique crab-shaped piece of artwork was once on temporary loan to the museum as part of a bay boat exhibition in 2015. Originally part of the Jumpin' Jubilee Fundraiser 2011, the crab was sponsored by Roberts Brothers Realty and was won in a live auction by Don and Ingrid Cheney.

The Stevens acquired it in 2016 and wanted to give "Steamer Crab" a home in the Museum's permanent collection, property of the City of Fairhope, as the couple is moving back to Michigan. Created by Melissa Smith and Tom Yeager, the crab depicts bay steamers, landings and maps related to the history of Fairhope and Mobile Bay transportation. ~

## Barney Gaston Day Coming Up in August

Watch for details of this celebrated  
Fairhope WWII hero.

A 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event is in the works  
to honor Lt. Gaston, U.S. aviator over  
France on August 26, 1944.



# Fairhope Intermediate School has Field Days at the Colony Cemetery

Darby Wiik & Bob Glennon



Darby Wiik, our Interim Director showed her talents for Fairhope history and student interaction between April 28 to May 8, when she guided many of the eight hundred students from Fairhope Intermediate School through the Single Tax Corporation Cemetery, also known as the Colony Cemetery. Five large groups escorted by parent-chaperones, paid close attention, as Darby used the gravestones as props as she asked the students a series of questions to get them thinking about how Fairhope came to be. With the goal of Utopia in mind, she reminded the class that Fairhope was founded by 28 people, including 9 children on November 15, 1894. She told about the creation of the *Fairhope Courier*, Single Tax and the naming of the town.

In their stroll though the stones, she challenged them

to find certain headstones then told fun and interesting stories about those celebrities who founded the City. She drew responses from the students so she could tell them about city founders like Ballangee, Gaston, Hall and



She kept her audiences entertained with bits of area history and a kind of scavenger hunt of colored pinwheels throughout the cemetery as students located graves, studied names and considered birth and death dates to draw conclusions about family relationships and timelines. “The students were really engaged; it was clear they were learning and excited about it,” said Bob Glennon, Newsletter editor, after eavesdropping on one tour. “It was fun watching Darby inter-relate to the youngsters and it was amazing how she kept their interest throughout the hour!”

The students learned about John Hunnell, the first death in the new colony (1895), as well as Marie Howland who is credited with founding the first library building in the state of Alabama in her home in the new community of Fairhope. The kids also discovered the grave of a child lost by Marietta Johnson, founder of the famed Organic School of Education, and her husband, John Franklin Johnson, Fairhope’s second mayor, due to a tragic accident when the boy was only two years old. Other Fairhope “firsts” were discussed while visiting the final resting places of members of the Mershon family including the community’s first postmaster, first school teacher, first doctor and more.



After “meeting” Lydia Comings, the librarian, Harris Greeno, first mayor, U. S. sailor William Eernisse, who is actually buried on the U.S.S. Arizona in Hawaii, and others, the tour came full circle by ending with two more generations of Gastons: Arthur Fairhope Gaston, E.B. and Clara’s fifth child, known as the first baby boy born to the new colony (1896), and his son, Ernest “Barney” Gaston, a WWII fighter pilot killed in the line of duty (1944), who is credited by the town of Sivry, France for saving their community from annihilation in WWII.

It was a great day to be out; even for kids in a cemetery! ~

## Dr. Ralph Thayer Recognized as Volunteer of the Year by the City of Fairhope

In addition to providing an excellent dinner sponsored by the City of Fairhope, Mayor Karin Wilson announced that



the Annual Volunteer of the Year for 2019 is Dr. Ralph Thayer, a long-time docent at the Museum of History! Mayor Wilson said, “He was one of my first appointments to the planning commission board in 2016. His service to the City of Fairhope didn’t begin in 2016 though. He has volunteered as a docent at the Fairhope Museum

for many years, is a member of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation and has been co-instructor of their ten-week long economics course. He is a foremost authority on Geologist Economic Theory and as you may know, this was the theory that inspired the creation of our city in 1984.”

Dr. Thayer taught for over thirty years as a professor of Urban Planning and Public Administration at the University of New Orleans before moving to Fairhope. He also served as the Regional Planning Commissioner for metropolitan New Orleans and in the Office of Management and Budget for the White House. He wrote the documentary about our Museum’s fire truck in our Museum publication *Fairhope – A Decade of Stories*, released last October. He also played the role of James Ballangee, pictured here, as the first Single Taxer and former college professor in the *Friends* video production of *Founders Day 2015*.



As a docent, his experienced classroom demeanor is evident to guests who visited the Museum. He is friendly, tutorial when talking Fairhope history, and is well informed on many subjects.

Dr. Thayer is currently on an unofficial sabbatical from the Museum due to person health and as caregiver for his wife who is ill.

Congratulations Ralph! You have made us all proud to be colleagues and fellow volunteers! ~

## Fairhope Museum Welcomes Visiting Colleagues from Alabama State Department of Archives, Museum of Alabama

Darby Wiik



Pictured above L-R: Div. Director John Harkin, Ryan Blocker, Our Interim Director Darby Wiik, Fairhope City Councilman Jack Burrell, Program Specialist Eric London and *Friends of the Fairhope Museum* VP Claudia Fortis

On Wednesday, April 3, the Fairhope Museum of History welcomed three visiting colleagues from the Alabama State Department of Archives, Museum of Alabama. John Hardin (Museum Division Director), Ryan Blocker (Museum Collections Coordinator), and Erik London (Education Program Specialist) traveled from Montgomery to tour the Fairhope museum, meet docents and discuss resources with the museum’s Interim Director, Darby Wiik. The group ended their visit by addressing the City’s Museum Advisory Board and providing a small-museums’ collections assessment checklist, suggestions for grants and tools available through the American Association for State and Local History. City Council member Jack Burrell attended the meeting along with over a dozen Museum supporters. The Fairhope Museum plans to be in touch with the state museum regarding further recommendations post visit. Special thanks to Honey Baked Ham for providing the guests with box lunches donated through the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History*. ~

### Friends Newsletter

The *Friends* Newsletter is the official publication of the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History*, 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.

Robert Glennon, Newsletter Editor. Direct inquiries to:  
FairhopeMuseumNewsletter@gmail.com



## Friends News

### Memorial –

### Pete Bremer

Bernhard Peter Bremer served as a *Friend of the Fairhope Museum of History* for ten+ years. He passed away on April 26, 2019.



In his professional career as a petroleum engineer from LSU Baton Rouge, he and Dorothy (Dot) lived in Louisiana through his thirty-five years with Texaco. They had two children. After retirement, they moved to Fairhope. He was very active in Trinity Presbyterian Church as an Elder, class teacher to young children and jokingly, according to his Pastor, dishwasher for years after many social events at the church. He was also active with the Eastern Shore Art Center, Baldwin County Master Gardeners, Baldwin Rose Society, Fairhope Harbor Committee and Eastern Shore Institute for Lifelong Learning (ESILL).

Pete was a charter member of the *Friends* beginning in 2010. He shared his talents with us; he built the arch around the large founders photograph in the Old City Council Chamber upstairs and was along side Dot for most of the Elderberry Festivals and Founders Day programs. He was often seen with a hammer in his hand when new exhibits were under construction. Pete helped build our Museum into what it is today!

A Memorial Service was held at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Fairhope on May 8, 2019, attended by many friends from his church, community organizations in which he was a member, and *Friends of the Museum of History*. ~

## The Friends

### of the Fairhope Museum of History

The Friends organization began in 2010 as a support function for the Fairhope Museum of History. It is chartered by the State of Alabama as a not-for-profit corporation, which provides a tax free status for purchases and a U.S. Federal tax deduction of monetary and assessed-value donations to the *Friends*.

Since it started, the *Friends* entity has attracted an average of eighty professional retirees, high school students, lawyers, clergy, medical nurses & technicians, teachers, professors and public servants to assist at the Museum. Currently, there are over ninety! Seasonal residents have also now found the Fairhope Museum to be an excellent way to learn about City history and enjoy meeting and greeting residents and visitors to this historic "Utopia". The variety of docents and volunteers bring a diverse perspective to guests. Often conversations evolve to pleasant comparison of stories to "back home" history and relics.

The *Friends* are managed by a board of directors and a slate of officers who oversee the operation of the all-volunteer group. In 2019, the officers are:

President: Louie Blaze  
Vice-President: Claudia Fortis  
Secretary: Catherine King  
Treasurer: Bill Fives

The *Friends* meet at 3 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month after the Tea at Two Speaker Program to plan new events and discuss the business of serving the Museum. The sessions are open to potential new *Friends*. Annual dues are inexpensive; ask any docent on duty and come join us!

## Watch for the Fairhope Historical Bus Tours Coming July 13, 2019

Guide – Retired Director Donnie Barrett

Tours leave from the Museum Courtyard at 9:30, 11 and 12:30 p.m.

Ticket go on sale at the Museum June 4 - \$20  
All funds go to the Friends to support Museum Programs

# Tea at Two Speakers

*A Presentation Every Thursday about Fairhope and its History*

**June 6 – Seth Pedden and Tracy Hirsh** tell us about Boy Scout Troop 47, the oldest Troop in the State of Alabama, based here in Fairhope.

**June 13 – Catherine King**, the Secretary of the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum* and talented researcher of local history will talk about “Finding Fairhope and the Search for the New Colony’s location – 1894.”

**June 20 – Alan Samry**, Director of the Fairhope Museum of History, will discuss his vision for the Museum and his personal passion for Fairhope. Come meet Alan, affectionately known as *Stump the Librarian*.

**June 27 – Billy Bolton**, Executive Director of the Annual Alabama Pecan Festival will tell the history of pecans in Lower Alabama.

**July 4 – Independence Day** – Museum and City offices closed.

**July 11 – Bryant Whelan**, Director of the Eastern Shore Art Center, will tell about the Art Center, its historic old kiln and the story of Arts in Fairhope.

**July 18 – Bob Glennon**, local historian and author will talk about the Glennons of Mobile and Baldwin Counties; family ties to the Point Clear Grand Hotel, the founding of Montrose and Battles Wharf, the first radio station in Mobile and the Last Slave Voyage to America.

**July 25 – Cecil Christenbury**, owner of *Olde Time Feed and Seed* will tell how feed and seed grew Fairhope - a history story! Outstanding speaker with unending stories about his love for and life in - Fairhope.

*Your \$2 donation in the jar by the teapot helps support our speaker programs*

## This is the wording on the new **Nancy Lewis – Stewart the Picture Man Historical Marker**

### **Nancy Lewis**

At the end of the Civil War, former Slaves John Lewis (1838-1891) and his wife Nancy Lewis (1841-1910) enjoyed newly found freedom and moved here to southwest Baldwin County, Alabama.

The Lewis lived on unused land and had an informal agreement that they could homestead here if they paid the County land taxes of \$2 per year.

John and Nancy Lewis, their 6 children and extended family cleared 15 acres, built houses, outbuildings, orchards and gardens, and kept many farm animals. They're reared a closely knit, happy and hardworking family on this site.

In 1894, the Fairhope Industrial Association "Single Taxers," bought the land and paid the widow Nancy Lewis, a generous \$100 for her home. They then helped her buy a nearby 40 acres for \$4.58. In years to come, Nancy Lewis became a prominent Fairhope citizen.

### **Stewart the Picture Man**

Frank Stewart (1855-1942) came to Fairhope in 1903 with a large box camera that made glass plate negative images. He wrote on the glass plates which produced white script on his paper prints so identifying the pictures as "Stewart the Picture Man" photographs.

On this site in 1918, Stewart purchased town founder Shuah Strait Mann's bungalow home and this became the Fairhope Photo Shop. He operated the business along with his wife Hattie and her sister Clara Chamberlain until 1938.

Stewart photographed the Fairhoppers' efforts to build a new community, chronicling their achievements as well as their struggles. His specialty was the popular photo post card. We know so much more about Fairhope's history because he captured the moment in his crisp black and white images marked "Stewart the Picture Man."

## **Fairhope Museum of History**

24 North Section Street (251) 929-1471

Hours: 9 – 5 Tuesday through Saturday

Admission: Free!

Like us on: [facebook.com/Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History](https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Fairhope-Museum-of-History)