

# *Friends*

## *of the Fairhope*

### *Museum of History*

Vol 10 Issue 4 August - September 2019



## Fairhope History Trolley Tours

### Roll Again!

While there are many attributes to living in Fairhope, the unpredictability of our weather is a notable factor of readiness. So on Saturday July 13, 2019 when the Trolley Tours were scheduled to roll, Tropical Storm Barry threatened and the *Friends* and the City planned accordingly, since they were not sure if we would have to close the Museum and batten down for the storm. The Tours were moved back a week, to Saturday, July 20, without too much 'taa-doo.' Only a few guests were unable to move the date and we are sorry for the inconvenience to all. On the next Saturday, though, the Tours went as planned.

Donnie Barrett came from retirement and his tea plantation to pontificate the virtues of the Single Tax Colony, the development of Fairhope and to tell personal stories about growing up in Utopia!

For the eighth year, the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History* sponsored the trolley tour of old Fairhope. This time, on a better but slightly rainy day. Three one-hour tours left the courtyard of the Museum at 9 a.m., 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. for a slow perusal through the Fruit and Nut District (so named for the street, not personalities) and the west side of the city where the founders came ashore and declared this a Single Tax Colony, to demonstrate the economic philosophy of everyone sharing property and other aspects of communal economic development.

Oversimplified, the beach, pier and parks remain everyone's space, yet the land is "yours" and what you build or cultivate becomes your reward for hard work.



The trolley trips covered forty-four historical landmarks. And along the way, guide Donnie provided the background and significance of homes, buildings, gullies and monuments, interspersed with facts, legend and just plain fun stories about the growth of Fairhope since 1894. In an entertaining manner, Mr. Barrett pointed out the homes of founders Authur Mershon, E.B. Gaston, Marie Howland (1<sup>st</sup> librarian), then Berglin's Ice Cream plant (1<sup>st</sup> in the State), Colonial Inn (one of the longest surviving hotels), Fairhope sanitarium, Nicholsville (founded before Fairhope), Magnolia Beach, the Organic School and the demise of eight prior Fairhope piers, due to fires and hurricanes.

For decades, the evolving personality of Fairhope has defied definition. It's mystical, Camelot, fairytale and dramatic, depending on what you feel when you see flowers, gravestones, twinkling lights and eclectic people. Most of us simply call it...home!

# Director Alan Samry

## Comes On-Board



## Alan's Angles

The Gulf Coast Media *Courier* on May 22, 2019 headline, front page, announced "Alan Samry has been named director of the Fairhope Museum of History." In the announcement, Mayor Karin Wilson, said, "Our Museum is a treasure and I am certain that under Alan's leadership, we will be able to preserve and present even more of Fairhope's history."

Alan took the reigns of the Museum of History on May 23, 2019 with a smile and declaration; "I'm so excited to share the Fairhope stories I've discovered and am looking forward to learning much more about the city's past. I know many of the docents at the Museum and they love sharing Fairhope's history as much as I do. For me, Fairhope history never gets old."

Mr. Samry, who has worked at the Fairhope Public Library since 2007, previously served the Museum as a volunteer and board member. He also has experience working with the Baldwin County Department of Archives and History.

Alan attained a degree in history from the University of South Alabama, a Masters of Fine Art in creative writing at Spalding University in Kentucky and a Masters of Library and Information Studies from the University of Alabama. In addition, he has performed extensive research and writing on Clay City Tile, the Fairhope librarians and historical analysis on several buildings. He is also the author of *Stump the Librarian: A writer's book of legs*.

Alan barely got a pen and paper on his desk before making the rounds to meet all of the docents and volunteers. His pleasant personality and enthusiasm for the task ahead was apparent to his gratis workers and he promptly gained their support and camaraderie. Alan readily acknowledged the need for the volunteers and the talents of the mostly senior residents to meet, greet and share in telling the Fairhope story. He also was appreciative of the job well done by Darby Wiik as Interim Director, to carry on the work of the Museum during the seven months of hiatus since retirement of Donnie Barrett in October 2018.

Alan's wife, Susan is a second-grade teacher at Daphne East Elementary School and they live in Fairhope.

In what other community can a one-legged Cape Codder transplant himself to the Deep South, write for *The Fairhope Courier*, dig into Fairhope History as a volunteer, get schooled in the South while working at the Fairhope Public Library, and top it all off by writing a book?

My wife Susan and I began our New South adventure with family already nearby in 2005. I arrived in town like I arrive anywhere - sporting a below-knee artificial leg. When I saw the late Bob Youens getting around swimmingly on his wooden peg leg, I knew I was in the right place.

I landed a job writing for *The Fairhope Courier*. Sheila Propp gave me the keys to 325 Fairhope Avenue. I learned about my new city from the inside out. I met so many wonderful Fairhoppers in a very short time.

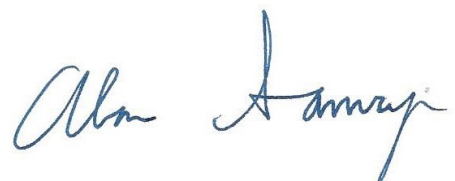
Less than a year later I decided to leave my position at the newspaper to further my education.

That's when I met Fairhope's historical character. In 2006, Donnie Barrett gave me a key to the old Bell Building, the original home of the Fairhope Historical Museum. Since we had so few visitors, I studied the exhibits and spent my time writing about Fairhope founders.

In 2007, Betty Suddeth hired me to work at Fairhope Public Library. Twelve years ago today, Betty handed me the keys to the Fairhope community. What an amazing journey I've been on! The library, my coworkers, patrons, and volunteers transformed my life. So what did I do? I wrote a book about it.

*Stump the Librarian: A writer's Book of Legs* is the culmination of my journey as an amputee, a writer, a librarian and a Fairhopian, thus far.

I've just begun my next chapter as the new keeper of keys at the Fairhope Museum of History. I'm so thankful for such a great group of *Friends* and docents. Thanks for telling our Fairhope story!



# Clotilda, Last Slave Ship Discovered Nearby

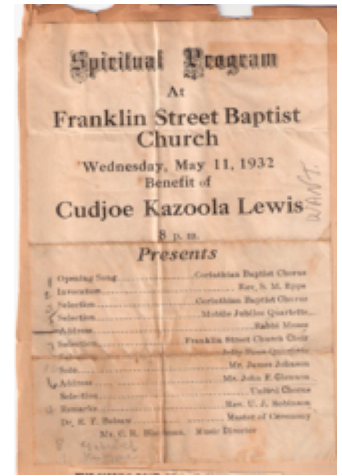
The national news media has been zealous about the recent finding of the Slave ship *Clotilda* in the Mobile River. This bit of little known Alabama and American history comes very close to home for Fairhope and the *Friends*.



There have been five books written about this episode in Slave history in America. Two of them by local authors, were in 2009, placed on display in the Mobile Museum of History for five years. These were Emma Langdon Roche's *Historic Sketches of the South* (1914) and Robert M. (Bob) Glennon's *Kudjo: The Last Slave Voyage to America* (1999). Mrs. Roche, a respected Mobile resident, personally talked to the last surviving Slave. But it was Bob Glennon's book that brings the story very close to home.

Mr. Glennon, a Fairhope resident and *friend* of the Fairhope Museum of History, has a tattered first-hand dissertation by his aunt, who also talked to Cudjoe Kazoola Lewis, who came on the ship. *Kudjo, The Last Slave Voyage*, was published here in Fairhope by Over-The-Transom Publishing Company, Inc. on De la Mare Street in 1999. Sonny Brewer, a Fairhope author and publisher, owned that company and edited the story. Neither Cudjoe, nor his only known surviving great-great-grandson, Israel Lewis, now living in Mobile, are mentioned in the recent national newspaper accounts.

Bob Glennon explains how he became familiar with the details of the last voyage and the *Clotilda*. His grand-



father, John F. Glennon was a well-regarded historian of the day. And in 1932, he (John) was the keynote speaker at a Benefit for Cudjoe Kazoola Lewis (pictured above left), held on May 11, 1932 at the Franklin Street Baptist Church in Mobile. It was there that Rosemary Glennon, daughter of John, arranged to meet with Cudjoe (*name spelled differently in the book*) and hear him tell the details of his life. He spoke of being taken into Slavery, brought into Mobile Bay and after Emancipation in 1865, settling in Plateau, now known as Africatown. Rosemary wrote about the experience, put it into a folder and herself, died in 1940. Bob Glennon found the story in a tattered envelope in 1997 and began researching the fascinating discovery.

A member of the *Clotilda* owner's family provided Mr. Glennon with a copy of the *Clotilda* log that recorded specifics of days at sea, going and returning from Whydah, Dahomey, now the country of Benin. It had evaded three man-of-war vessels at sea that were on-lookout for Slave traders, and dodged African pirates, before arriving back in Mobile Bay.

In the narrative by Rosemary, she cited Cudjoe as saying that the ship was burned to destroy evidence of the sinister deed fifty-two years after it became illegal to import Slaves into the U.S. Cudjoe also said that the *Clotilda* was "scuttled and set aflame near the north end of Blakeley Island and the mouth of Chickasabogue Creek." This is slightly south of where the media is now taking photos one hundred and sixty-nine years later.

The *Clotilda* was a two-mast schooner; eighty-six feet long and twenty-three feet wide, with a copper plate overlaying a wooden hull. By comparison, the ship was six-feet longer than a semi-trailer truck with cab, and slightly over twice as wide; quite small to transport one-hundred-ten humans as cargo, plus crew for the seventy-five day voyage to Mobile.

The location of the hull of the ship was for years, a poorly kept secret. The fire burned the ship to the waterline

# Barney Gaston Day Commemoration August 24, 2019

## 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Liberation of Sivry-Courtry France by the U.S. Army Air Force



Lt. Barney Gaston II, from Fairhope, was a P-47 Thunderbolt Fighter-Bomber Squadron pilot serving in the 38th Fighter Group, 53rd Fighter Squadron, of the 9th Army-Air Force. During a German counter-offensive after D-Day, Lt. Barney Gaston, liberated the French village, Sivry-Courtry, from the Nazis in World War II, defeating the enemy there and

causing them to hastily retreat on August 26, 1944. However, Lt. Gaston's plane was hit by gunfire, then it hit a tree and crashed. French locals hurried to the site only to find that Lt. Gaston had died in his mission. A young French maiden tenderly laid flowers on his chest. Sivry-Courtry, France erected a memorial to the fallen hero, Lt. Barney Gaston. Each year, the town pays tribute to Gaston on the Anniversary date, August 26.

On Saturday, August 24, the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History*, our History Museum and the City of Fairhope, will host a program to commemorate Lt. Gaston's sacrifice for our City, his country, and international relations. This will be the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the event, held two days early this year, due to the weekend.

The commemoration will be held at the Museum of History, 24 N. Section Street, with Museum Director Alan Samry serving as Master of Ceremonies. A Proclamation in French and English will be read to recognize the significance of the event. Boy Scout Troop 47 will provide the Honor Guard for the Day.

***Please come be a part of this Commemoration beginning at 10 a.m. on Saturday, August 24 2019.***

Clotilda, continued from page 3



Above L to R: Story written in 1932 that was found by B. Glennon in 1997, the Story as told by Cudjoe Lewis the last surviving Slave on the Clotilda, and the book written by Bob about the last Slave Voyage to America.

and old-timers along the river knew where it was. After the Civil War, souvenir hunters pillaged the remains and when World Wars I and II came, all metal was stripped and sold for wartime use. The timbers rotted away and receded into the mud and silt of the river. Only small strips of lumber remain as clues for the currently on-going search for *Clotilda*.

As a professor at the University of South Alabama, Dr. Eugene Wilson, also a Fairhope resident and *friend* of our Museum, supported the U.S. Corp of Engineers on two field trips in 1986 to the purported site of the ship in unsuccessful magnetometer searches for the vessel. He also wrote a report in 1983 for the U.S. Corp of Engineers that is now being used to help find the location and remains of the historic vessel.

Harriet Outlaw, nee Brill, our local friend and Fairhope folklorist, remembers as a young girl, seeing items from the ship. The Brills lived next door to family members of the ship owners.

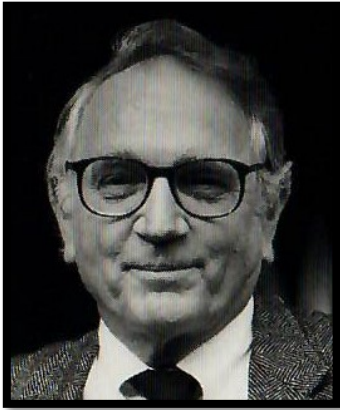
It's unusual Slave mission was due to a \$10,000 wager made by a New Yorker traveling on a steamboat between Montgomery and Mobile with Timothy Meaher, owner of several seagoing vessels, that he could not bring Slaves into this county any longer. "It wasn't what he said as much as the way he said it," said Meaher, according to documented accounts.

There were three trials in 1860 of principals in the case; one for the ship's owner, one for a potential buyer and plantation owner and one for the captain of the ship. Two of the three could not find evidence of the crime within the jurisdiction of the court and the last never adjudged a ruling. In each case, the claim was related to smuggling goods without paying taxes on the imports, not for human slavery.

Two decades ago, the State of Alabama acquired property believed to have been donated by the Meaher family, and built a state park on the Cochran Bridge Causeway. The family also still owns land in Pt. Clear, south of Fairhope.

The *Clotilda* did indeed come close to home. ~

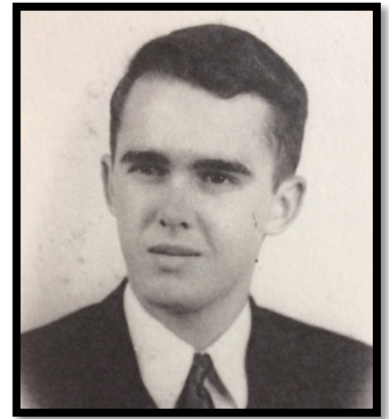
# Memorials



Paul Gaston



Frank Laraway



Paul Gaston, grandson of Earnest B. (E.B.) Gaston, a founder of Fairhope, passed away on June 14, 2019 in Virginia. Mr. Gaston was Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Virginia and is best known in Fairhope for his book, *Man and Mission: E.B.; Gaston and the Origins of the Fairhope Single Tax Colony*; 1993. Here he relates his grandfather's founding of Fairhope to realize an "equality of opportunity, the full reward of individual efforts and the benefits of co-operation in matters of general concern."

In another of his books, *Coming of Age in Utopia: The Odyssey of an Idea*, Paul had spoken of how his upbringing in Fairhope influenced his view of life. He said the Single Tax Colony founded by his grandfather and later run by his father, was committed to "establish a model community that would be a practical demonstration of how right kinds of public policies and private commitments could foster a just society."

Mr. Gaston taught history at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville for forty years. During that time, he became a Civil Rights activist and in 1963, invited Dr. Martin Luther King to speak at the University and was arrested after taking part in protests to integrate a local movie theater and restaurant. He was a nationally known Fairhoper.

He is survived by his children Blaise, Chinta and Gareth and granddaughters Eliza and Mira. A memorial service is being planned but details are not available. ~

William Frank Laraway had a passion for Fairhope history! He spent an active lifetime walking the backwoods and seeking facts about our heritage. After a short illness, he passed away on March 22, 2019.

Mr. Laraway knew Alabama and was known by many history students and researchers who needed an answer to a history question. Over the past decade, he frequented our Museum and usually carried a relic or some item of memorabilia in his hand to donate or talk about with our director, or most anyone who took notice.

Frank was born May 26, 1933 and was a native of Fairhope. He attended the Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education for fourteen years. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Guilford College in Greensboro, N.C. in 1956. He was an architectural apprentice to Frank Lloyd Wright in the late 1950s and acquired his degree in Architecture from the University of Michigan in 1963. While in Ann Arbor, he married his wife Pat, before moving back to Fairhope in 1965. They were married and soul mates for 56 years.

He is past secretary and president of the Baldwin County Historical Society and committed his available time to exploring, researching and sharing stories with fellow historians. He spent many hours in search of the original Mobile settlement at Mauvila and visited Civil War sites and Indian mounds all over Alabama.

His adventures also manifested interest in traveling with the Sierra Club for events around the country. He toured the botanical trail of nationally known naturalist William Bartram and planted many plants described by Bartram, on his property at Fish River. He was a longtime supporter of the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in South Baldwin County. He also became an enthusiastic kayaker and biker, as a lover of nature and the outdoors.

A celebration of Frank Laraway's life was held on May 26, 2019 at the Fairhope Unitarian Fellowship. Interesting that that date was the 86<sup>th</sup> birthday for a man full of life! ~

## 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.

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[FairhopeMuseumNewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:FairhopeMuseumNewsletter@gmail.com).

# Tea Speakers

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

**August 1** – **Mary Katherine Kilgore** will talk about the development of the Eastern Shore Choral Society, it's goals and summarize it's exciting agenda and 2019 – 2020 schedule.

**August 8** – **Dot Bremer**, long-time supporter of the Eastern Shore Institute for Lifelong Learning (ESILL) will tell us about the history of the organization, begun in 1977.

**August 15** – **Jill Godard** and Rusty Godard will give us insight into Fairhope's upcoming **Barney Gaston Day**, commemorating Lt. Barney Gaston, U.S. Air Force aviator who on August 26, 1944, during WWII, participated in an air offensive to liberate Sivry-Courtry, France from the Nazi Army. He is a Fairhope War hero who is remembered annually in Sivry-Courtry.

**August 22** – **Mayor Karin Wilson** will give us the background story and success of Page and Palette, as one of the most successful Independent Bookstores in the Southeast. It's more than just a bookshop!

**August 29** – **Peco Forsman**, author of *She's Bound to be a Goer!* will talk about the contribution of Bay Boats to the development of Fairhope and the Eastern Shore. Peco has built many exact scale model bay boats for the city and Single Tax Corporation.

**September 5** – **Dean Mosher**, local artist and historian, will tell the fun and fascinating stories of the Storybook Castles of Fairhope.

**September 12** – **Helen Garrett** will tell about the Lowell family that lived in this area before the Single-Taxer Colonists came and were here when they arrived. The Lowells became supporters of Single Tax and owned some of the earliest businesses of Fairhope.

# 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Founding of Fairhope November 15, 2019

**Mark your calendars!** This year's Round-Up Day celebrates the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Fairhope. The city's founders arrived on November 15, 1894, launching a colony with a single-tax structure based on the philosophy of Henry George, author of the influential 1879 book, *Progress and Poverty*. The main event is a birthday social and will be held at the pier. Everyone is invited and encouraged to come in period costume as your favorite person who arrived in 1894 or any of the other "Founders" of Fairhope. The Museum and the *Friends* will have many events telling the rich history of the city leading up to November 15 celebration.

## Share your Fairhope Stories!

**You are invited to please share your Fairhope story with us. Submit stories of up to 300 words about "what you love most about Fairhope, or Fairhope history and why." Stories can be emailed to [alan.samry@fairhopeal.gov](mailto:alan.samry@fairhopeal.gov) and participants are asked to include a photo of themselves for online publication. Some stories and photos will be used on social media channels from now until November.**

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## Tea Speakers, Continued:

**September 19** – A video will be shown about the history of Fairhope, provided by Clarence Bishop, patriarch of B & B Pecan Company and the regional pecan industry. The movie is not yet titled and is currently being edited for use.

**September 26** – **Ecumenical Ministries** of Baldwin County, Inc. celebrates its Fiftieth Anniversary in 2019! Sally Dean will tell us the history and all about it.

# 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)