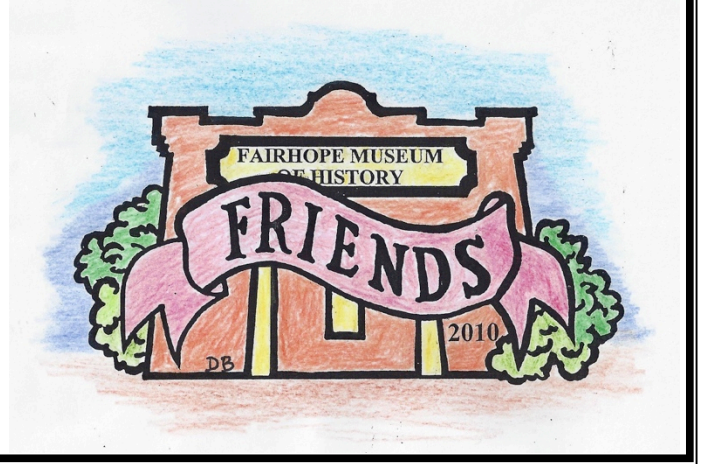


Friends

of the Fairhope

Museum of History

Vol 10 Issue 5 October - November 2019



Barney Gaston Day

Commemoration of our Local Hero

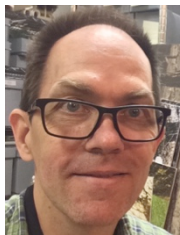


“It was awesome!,” said Alan Samry, Director of the Fairhope Museum of History. “The whole program was done with class and perfection!” And that opinion was shared by all who attended!

On Saturday, August 24, 2019, the Fairhope Museum of History and the Friends of the Museum hosted a Commemoration of local WWII hero, Lt. Barney Gaston, who gave his life in 1944 in France as an Army Air Corp pilot of a P-47 fighter, when his plane was hit by enemy gunfire in a defensive attack on Nazi forces to liberate the village of Sivry-Courty.

Mayor Karin Wilson joined over 125 residents and guests who gathered in the Museum atrium for the ceremony of patriotism and pride. The program opened with a Welcome by Director Alan Samry followed by Presentation of Colors by the Boy Scouts from Troop 47, believed to be Lt. Gaston’s childhood troop, accompanied by U.S. Armed Forces Honor Guard of Baldwin County. The scouts then led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Mayor Wilson commented on the contributions made by the Gastons to the Colony and City of Fairhope, then signed a Proclamation declaring August 26, 2019 to be *Barney Gaston Day* in Fairhope.

Commemoration, continued on page 2



Alan's Angles

Commemoration of Lt. Barney Gaston

Continued from page 1

Wow! It's been an amazing journey so far here at the museum. And my "Friends and Docents" are the reasons why.

Barney Gaston Day was our quarterly event, which drew a magnificent crowd. I came on board with things already in the works so thanks to our *Friends*, and our Barney Gaston Day committee, for helping us pull off a patriotic, heartfelt program in Barney's honor.

The Museum stayed open late for Art Walk on September 6. I plan on continuing it. I'd love for a few *Friends/docents* to join me.

What's ahead later this year? I'm looking forward to Fairhope's 125th birthday party celebration on November 15. I'm thrilled to be a part of 200 Years of Alabama Music, a joint Museum and *Friends* and Fairhope Public Library and Friends program on December 5.

Thanks to Rosanne Gulisano's inspiration and Michael Titford's wisdom we now have Bingo and Trivia for Museum visitors of all ages. I will be using them for group tours, but I encourage *Friends* and docents to try it out and offer the option to our visitors. This is just another tool in the docent toolbox to be used according to your own comfort level. The Education folder is in the docent desk drawer. It includes the trivia answer key!

Lastly, THE WOMEN OF FAIRHOPE, a new exhibit upstairs featuring Fairhope Women in History, will launch late spring or early summer 2020. There is a national tie-in too. August 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment giving women the vote. I realize how ambitious this is, but I didn't come on board to rest on Donnie's laurels. So please come forward and serve on our exhibit committee. The Museum needs your ideas, suggestions, and service on the Women of Fairhope exhibit. Thank you! See you at the Museum.



Mayor Wilson signing Proclamation, while Alan Samry, Chantal Juerie and Jill Godard look on.

The Proclamation was then read aloud in English by docent Kris Lafferty and in French, by Chantal Juerie. It was noted that a similar ceremony was being performed in Sivry-Courtry, France on Sunday, August 25 to also commemorate this special event in history. Museum Special Projects Manager Darby Wiik talked about the significance of the occasion and Jill and Rusty Godard, Gaston family members, talked about Lt. Gaston. In closing, *Taps* was played by the Honor Guard bugler, Tommy Langham (pictured here).



After the ceremony, Darby Wiik continued the program for those interested upstairs in the Museum at a special Gallery Talk at the Barney Gaston Exhibit. She told many details about the Gaston family, Lt. Gaston as relayed by his fellow aviators, and elaborated on the actions that day over Sivry-Courtry.

Catherine King, Secretary of the *Friends of the Museum*, said, "This was a very patriotic program, obviously heartfelt by everyone who was there!" Dot Bremer, Museum Docent, said, "It made me proud to be an American and a Fairhoper." ~

125th Anniversary of Founding of Fairhope November 15, 2019



Marker in Henry George Park acknowledging the Principles of Progress and Poverty.
- photo from Fairhope Single Tax Corp collection -

The Barney Gaston Story



Barney was born in Fairhope in 1924. As the grandson of Fairhope's founders, E.B. and Clara Gaston, Barney began life as something of a local celebrity. Barney's father, Arthur Fairhope Gaston (1896-1987), was the first male born in the new colony known as Fairhope. Barney was well known and loved in the community and had a reputation for being exceptionally smart, kind and handsome. After graduating from Fairhope's renowned Organic School of Education in 1942, Barney went to Auburn University then enlisted in the Army. He was described by fellow squadron members as a highly talented fighter pilot. Along with other members of the 9th Air Force, 53rd Fighter Squadron, Barney fought heroically on many missions, piloting the P-47 Thunderbolt with experience and skill.

On August 26, 1944, on a mission south of Paris, his aircraft was hit by enemy fire in a heavily wooded area and, as he tried to pull up, it is said he clipped a tree, flipped and crashed. His heroic actions hitting tanks and infantry ultimately eliminated the German threat and brought liberation to the village of Sivry-Courtry. The community built a monument in Barney's honor near the crash site. Each year, Sivry-Courtry holds a commemorative ceremony to recognize fallen heroes including Fairhope's beloved 2nd Lt. Ernest B. Gaston II. 2019 marks the 75th Anniversary of the event that took Barney's life at just 20 years old as he fought to preserve freedom and Democracy. Barney's remains were returned to Fairhope in 1948. He is buried in the Colony Cemetery.

This year's Round-Up Day celebrates will be the One Hundred Twenty Fifth Anniversary of Fairhope. The city's founders arrived on November 15, 1894 and established a colony with a single-tax structure based on the philosophy of Henry George, author of the influential 1879 book, *Progress and Poverty*.

The Museum will host a "Birthday Social" and all residents and guests are invited! For added fun, everyone feeling a bit of nostalgia for those times over one-hundred years ago, is encouraged to come in vintage attire, dressed as a specific character in our history, or as a "citizen" of the time. A prize will be given to the "Most impressive" costume of the late 1800s or early 1900s, the era in which the Single Taxers gathered to hold "Round Up Day" on the bluff by the bay.

YOU are also invited to share your Fairhope story with us. Submit up to 300 words about what you love most about Fairhope, or something you experienced or know about Fairhope history that isn't broadly known. Your story may be used on Social media as a new "history story", if you don't mind (we will ask before we publish). Send your story via email to alan.samry@fairhopeal.gov. A deadline of November 5, 2019 will allow us time to review, edit if needed for available space, and blending your story with others for posting, publication or reading to the audience. ~

International Music On the Porch Day



The Fairhope Museum of History was proud to be the location and venue for “International Play Music On the Porch Day,” on Saturday, August 31, 2019. Music, particularly string-instrument music, is very much a part of our history and the front porch of the Museum at 24 N. Section Street seemed like a good place to welcome the event. So Museum Director Alan Samry responded to the idea and offered our front porch that Saturday morning.

Fairhope songwriter Mike Turner organized the “play day” here. The concept of an International Play Music On the Porch Day was founded in Los Angeles and is held each year on the last Saturday of August.

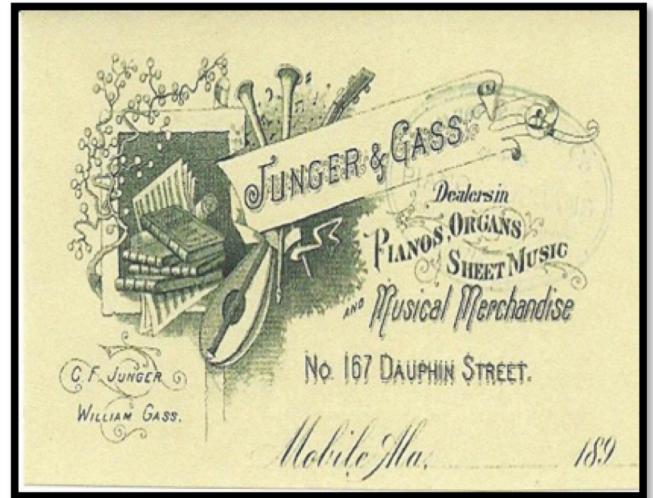


A clear blue sky created a nice setting for about twenty artists who came together and played instruments of all kinds. Participants included the Eastern Shore Ukulele Club and the Back Porch Folk Singers.

An enjoyable time of unanimity in all-things-musical, occurred for two hours as passers-by stopped and listened to blues, blue-grass and folk songs being played and sung. It was a pleasant casual activity for all participants. ~

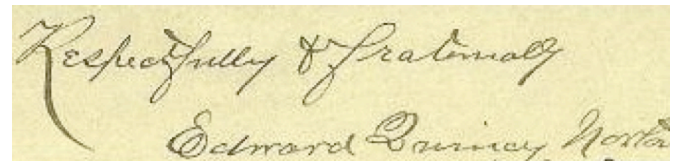
Fairhope Founders Hoped to Farm

Catherine King



Fairhope Industrial Association leaders envisioned the new colony as a place to farm, and were interested in the quality of the soil. Edward Quincy Norton, the Fairhoppers’ contact in Baldwin County, shipped soil samples to E.B. Gaston in Des Moines in August of 1894. Using a Mobile music store’s stationery, he wrote “that [dirt] in the cigar boxes is from the Tatum lands, ... one from the house lot, the other from the piney woods lands.”

Fairhope’s pioneers deemed the soil good enough, with the area’s many other attributes more than making up for the less-than-optimal soil. They bought their first acreage for the new Colony from Mrs. Sarah Tatum, finalizing the sale in January 1895. This land is what we know as our bay front and downtown area. Mr. Norton, whose signature is shown below, continued to assist the Fairhoppers as they made plans to arrive on-site in November 1894.



The above article is taken from a letter in the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation Archives, August 8, 1894. This “soil sampling” in Fairhope was done three months before the founders came to Alabama. Note that E.Q. Norton closes his letter with ‘fraternally,’ a term of common use during that time to signify a brotherhood of men supporting a cause or reform, in this case, the single tax movement. ~

Tea Speakers

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

Tea Speakers, Continued:

* Your \$2 donation helps support on-going programs *

Friends Gift Shop

The *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History* Gift Shop has a nice variety of Fairhope books, Tee shirts and caps, as well as packets of delicious Fairhope Tea Plantation organic tea. Just added to the inventory are beautiful note cards featuring the art of Fairhope by local native and artist Vicky Nix Cook.

The shop is open Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and is located in the nook under the east atrium stairs.

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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Fairhope Museum of History

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Hours: 9 – 5 Tuesday through Saturday

Admission: Free!

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