

Friends

Of the Fairhope Museum
of History

Newsletter



Vol 4 Issue 4, August - Sept 2013

Fairhope Museum Celebrates 100,000th Visitor

by Curt Cochran,
Contributing Writer

A gleeful Donnie Barrett, Director of the Fairhope Museum of History, welcomes the 100,000th Museum visitor, at about 12:30 p.m., June 8, 2013. The visitor was Heather Kelley (photo center) with her companion, Greg Stratton from Lake Charles, La.

When the Museum opened on Saturday morning, only 25 visitors were needed to reach the 100,000 milestone. Several docents, Friends of the Museum and Sherry Sullivan, representing the city government, gathered at the Museum

at 11 a.m. to witness the event. When Heather came through the Museum door, everyone threw confetti and blew noise makers, while Docent Eloise Rogers released the balloons. Donnie presented the pleasantly startled Ms. Kelley with a certificate for the occasion and a Museum tee shirt.



Heather has been coming to the Gulf Coast on vacation for many years. Through those visits, she has fallen in love with Fairhope. She says she always spends a day or two here to enjoy the shops and the scenery. She especially enjoys “riding a bicycle through town and along Mobile Street, taking in the wonderful views of Mobile Bay.” She decided to come to the Museum on this Saturday to see the pottery exhibit.

This was a big milestone for the Museum which opened at its current location on April 5, 2008. In the first year, the Museum had about 11,000 visitors and the number has increased annually as exhibits and

programs have been added. In 2013, attendance is expected to top 25,000. The increases are due in large part to our energetic director, assistant director and docent volunteers who work constantly to make the museum interesting, relevant and fun. ~



Director's Desk

I was quite impressed during our last meeting of the *Friends of the Museum*, with the enthusiasm of our members. The excitement was buzzing around the room with plans for our many upcoming events. It is easy to think, "Oh, another Round-Up Day," but I heard members getting actually "bubbly" about plans for the next event. We always want to inject something different and we contemplated several new ideas. That makes the events fun to do and the plans, fun to make! We *DO* have great events here at the Museum!

Also, at the last meeting I expressed how appreciative the Museum is for the *Friends* organization. The members may not realize just how much is done by the *Friends* and how things are possible because we have cheerful volunteers to do them. A good example is the Elderberry Festival. After several hours of making jelly, demonstrating picking, smushing and crushing, with those little berries rolling all over upstairs; the tables and kitchen area are covered in a blue-black explosion! At one time last year, I counted over 60 containers that had to be washed and many dried, just to be used again. A major mess ... and the *Friends* managed the entire production. They do it so efficiently and cheerfully! It all could not be done without a team of dedicated volunteers. It is a good thing that Elderberry stains will wash out easily!

On behalf of the City of Fairhope and the entire Fairhope community, Jim Bates and I thank you for all this dedicated work! Your efforts as docents and as helpers at our events allow us to keep the doors open and greet our many guests with excellent exhibits, fun events and smiling faces!

- Donnie Barrett

Welcome Summer Interns

Jamie Lane, Lisa Darrough
& Kasey Hullett

We are pleased to welcome our student summer interns to our docent staff. The Fairhope Museum of History offers an intern and home-school program to encourage students with an interest in history. This year, we have 3 interns participating in the program:



Kasey Hullett is a sophomore at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, majoring in Journalism and History. He lives in Fairhope and while on campus, works at the Bryant Museum. He has a minor in creative writing and has already begun writing a novel. Kasey is an Eagle Scout and is in the Blount Undergraduate Initiative, a liberal arts honors program at UA.



Lisa Darrough says, "My family has lived on the Eastern Shore for ten years and I just graduated from Asbury University in Wilmore, KY. with a degree in American History. My passion has always been geared toward public, historical education and I am so grateful for the opportunity to learn from the Fairhope Museum of History. I would love to build a career working in a museum like this."



Jamie Lane fills in for docents here at the Museum on occasion but has graduated from college and is looking for a career in history. Her parents moved to Fairhope when she was 5 years old. She graduated from Bayside Academy and attended Wofford University in Spartanburg, S.C. She received her Master Degree in History from University College in London, England.

It's a pleasure to have the youthful smiles and academic enthusiasm of students on our "campus". It's educational for us all; the traditional and contemporary viewpoints make for fascinating discussions around almost every historical display.

The Flowers of Fairhope

by Curt Cochran, Contributing Writer



The beautiful flowers that line the sidewalks, decorate the street crossings, hang from posts in baskets and fill many planter boxes in Fairhope's downtown are the first things that catch the visitor's eye. Scenery and flowers have been a part of our history since this property was wilderness, but the cultivation of this ambiance has become a part of Fairhope's appeal. Many visitors as well as residents who visit the Fairhope Museum of History often ask, "How do you do that and who was the driving force behind planting these lovely flowers?" The quick answer is retired Mayor Jim Nix.

In the early 1980s, then-Mayor Nix and his family were traveling in Europe and he became inspired by the flowers in the towns and villages. When he returned to Fairhope, he talked with the city council and with their

endorsement, started the flower planting program. Differing tales have been added to Mayor Nix's story over the years about where he got his ideas. The most often repeated explanation is that he was traveling in Southern France and even more specifically, Nice, France, when the flora caught his attention. Others versions give an American slant; that it was Carmel, California, or even a town in North Carolina, where he recognized the civic pride and inviting appeal of flowers and decided to implement a plan in Fairhope.

In a recent interview, Mayor Nix recounted how the Fairhope Beautification Program took place. He is an avid traveler and on his many trips to Europe he has always been impressed with the beautiful towns and villages. He recalled that he was traveling after Hurricane Frederic (Sept 12th, 1979), taking a break from the massive



Ex-Mayor Jim Nix

rebuilding effort that Fairhope was undergoing to repair storm damage. As he saw the flowers in Southern Germany and England, he recalled thinking, "Fairhope can do better than this". When he returned home, he met with the City Council, telling them that Fairhope needed to start a flower planting program and the initial step was to hire a horticulturalist. The City Council agreed.



Mayor Tim Kant

The first horticulturalist, Tim Kant, was hired in 1983 and given the charter to start the beautification program. And Kant, an Auburn graduate, enthusiastically promoted the new venture. The first of nine greenhouses was complete in 1985. Then a full-time landscaping staff became a part of the city work force. That staff has grown to nine, with one person devoted full-time to watering. The watering is done every day starting at 4 AM with hand equipment and a water tank truck. The number of flowers on display has also grown as the city has gained population and visitors. Now there are 110 hanging baskets, 80 flower boxes and about 50 trash container/flower boxes, in addition to the street corner and sidewalk beds. The flowers are changed at least once every season.

"Flowers of Fairhope", continued in column 1, page 4

“Flowers of Fairhope”, continued from column 2, page 3

Tim Kant was elected Mayor of Fairhope in 2000. As mayor, he has retained his interest and oversight of the Fairhope beautification program and has been known to call city employees at all levels to give instructions, ideas and advice about the flowers and other landscaping projects. He is totally dedicated to keeping Fairhope the idyllic community in which he has spend most of his life. After being elected mayor, Mr. Kant was succeeded as city horticulturist, by Jennifer Fidler.

The flowers are predominately downtown, but these are only part of a much larger beautification effort that began after *Frederic*. The enhancement began with tree plantings, since thousands of trees were uprooted or destroyed by the hurricane.

Fairhope first received the *Tree City USA* Award in 1984 from the U.S. Forestry Service and the national Arbor Day Foundation. It continues to win that award (as recently as 2012) for its long running effort to include trees in its beautification programs and has received International awards for landscaping. In 2002, Fairhope received the national *America in Bloom Award* for its flowers. The beautification program has expanded beyond downtown to include impressive large flowerbeds on Greeno Road / Hi 98 at the corners of Fairhope and Morphy Avenues.

We also have the Rose Garden located near the Fairhope Pier that was started with private donations and built on land partially reclaimed from the bay. The fountain was built by city employees. The roses are sprayed, cut and weeded each week during growing season and the grass is mowed 3 times a week. There are over 1000 bushes and 41 varieties of roses in the garden. The national *All-America Rose Selections* organization has recognized Fairhope twice over the years for its roses and its impressive maintenance commitment.

Retired Major Nix noted that many cities have tried to emulate Fairhope’s flowers but none have come close.

The cliché “Take time and smell the roses” has personified Fairhope since 1894, with people coming to enjoy the scenery of our Single Tax Colony. Since 1983, we have also had the flowers...

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*Curt Cochran is a Volunteer at the Museum of History and a writer for the Friends Newsletter. He is a retired engineer from the aerospace industry. His photography hobby has also been a real asset to the Museum, the Friends Newsletter and the Museum facebook site. Thanks Curt!*



## DOCENT---VOLUNTEER--- TOUR GUIDE

Whatever your title, it is a fun “job” at the Fairhope History Museum. Where, oh where, is it your “job” to talk to people from all over the world? You name the country and we have had visitors from there, to come into our beautiful Museum and learn all about this unusual town.

Of course, the most often asked question is “Can you tell me about this Single Tax?”, “How does this Single Tax work?” And – recently I had a man ask many, many questions; stood there looking at me for a while, then said, “You know, this single tax thing will not work.” I told him “Thank you, I’ll pass that information on to the Single Tax Corporation.” Funny statement from a man who does not live here and take the time to understand.

The flowers are another question. “How do they water them?” “They are going to freeze with this weather coming.” “Are they expensive to keep them?”; “Is there some special reason for the flowers?” Yes, we do get some real characters come into the Museum. It takes all kinds to make up this crazy world of ours. I’ve talked to some mighty naive people and then by golly, the next visitor is a very smart dude. He sometimes can ask questions faster than I can answer them. And yes, I really, really do enjoy people of all shapes, sizes and colors. There are no funnier walking-around things than people.

Then, if you want to do something other than tour guide, you can always ask the director if he has anything else you can help with. Watch it, tho! The more you ask, the more you learn, and the more often you are asked to do something else.

I came here thinking I could maybe do something in the background. HA! A’fer I knew it, I was cleaning out the file cabinets. You never know what you can learn! Then I found thousands of old photos in boxes. I learned the proper way to insert them – get museum albums!! I had the great privilege of getting Rusty Goddard to help me with who-was-who and who was related to whom; My! Did those early people marry back and forth with one another! You better not say anything nasty about anyone, ‘cause they are likely to be kin to your brother-in-law. Watch it!!

“Docent – Volunteer”, continued on page 5, column 1

“Docent – Volunteer”, continued from page 4, column 2

I have torn apart displays, helped put them up, given so many tours, gotten many family trees of the founding families and looked at so many pictures, that walking through the cemetery is like walking through *my* family cemetery, I swear! Our director, the Honorable Donnie Barrett, is an amazing lot of fun and energy. He moves so fast and quiet that you can't keep track of him. He is like an animated puppet, the way he twists and turns; he's so much fun to “work” with. This is a great group to spend time with. I just love it...!!!

I had the honor of helping to pack and move the old museum to this location. There were many boxes that had been donated, but not yet opened, due to lack of space to display more items. I was so happy to have the privilege of opening those boxes and sorting the many relics and memorabilia. I even found historic items that Donnie did not know of. What a thrill!!

We have room for you, if you have time for us! Just let Donnie know you are full of energy and want to be busy. Your answer will come fast! You will be helping to preserve and tell of the wonderful history of this fantastic Utopia!

- Eloise Rogers,  
Docent and All-round Volunteer

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Eloise Rogers began as a docent at the Fairhope Museum when it opened in its current location in 2008. And before that, she helped move exhibits from the previous museum to the current location. She moved to Fairhope in 1984 and calls the Museum “my second home”. She volunteers almost every day that the Museum is open and truly does enjoy the work. Just ask her - and be prepared for a dissertation on the exhibits, the people and her love for Fairhope! We all appreciate the fun and dedication of Eloise!

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*Helping Fairhope Tell its Story!*

## July Bus Tours of Fairhope Big Success Again!!



“And up this hill ran the People’s Railroad...,” said Donnie Barrett, Museum Director, as he stood mid-aisle in the tour bus, extolling the attributes of Fairhope in the old days.

The Annual History of Fairhope bus tours were again a sell out, even with a fourth tour being added to this year’s program. The bus left the portico drive of the Museum at 9 & 11 a.m. and 1 & 3 p.m. on Saturday, July 20, with 34 enthusiasts on each tour. Each trip was a little different, mostly because Director Barrett had more stories to share than any one tour allowed in time.

The bus went along Church and Summit Streets, past the Fruit and Nut area cottages, along the shore on Mobile Street and up Fairhope Avenue, with facts and tales being dispensed at every turn. The guests were all attentive and curious, with some participants seriously absorbing information, while others enjoyed the stories and the pleasant, scenic ride. “Everyone had fun,” said Jim Bates, Assistant Director. “It was fun for me too, since this was my first real opportunity to greet and chat with many of our visitors and supporters outside of the Museum”.

If you missed the tour, put it on your calendar for July 2014!

## Next Friends Meetings

The Next meetings of the *Friends* of the Fairhope Museum of History will be held on Tuesdays, August 20 and September 17, at 3:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber Room upstairs at the Museum. Non-members are invited to attend and participate in Exhibit and Event planning with us.

Due to the many exciting programs underway, the *Friends* will be meeting “for a while” on a monthly basis to stay current on the business at hand.

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### Join the *Friends*!

Should you choose to join the *Friends*, we would love to have you. It’s fun, as Eloise says!

Dues: Annual Membership: \$20/yr  
Discount for Docents: (\$10/yr.)

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### *Friends of the Fairhope Museum* Officers for 2013

President: Mary Ann Maradik  
Vice-President: Bob Glennon  
Secretary: Kris Lafferty  
Treasurer: Lottie Barrett

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The Newsletter

The Friends Newsletter is published six times a year covering news, events and announcements for two month periods. It is the official publication of *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History, Inc.*, 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. Contributing Writers vary with each issue. Editor: Bob Glennon. Contact us at: Fairhopemuseumnewsletter@gmail.com.

Tea for Two

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

Upcoming Programs

August 6 – **Calvin Hunt** – Calvin started the Do-Blue Ribbon campaign with the American Cancer Society about cancer awareness and particularly men’s prostate cancer.

August 13 – **Zach Sierke** – Zach is a local potter on Twin Beech Road whose family has a history in pottery. He uses traditional techniques and is an interesting speaker.

August 20 – **Doris Allegri** – Doris is a local native who has collected relics, promoted many historical programs, started museums, and saved cemeteries.

August 27 – **Donnie Barrett** – Donnie was vice president of the Fort Mims Association for 14 years, started the annual reenactments and will discuss the 200th Anniversary of the infamous Massacre.

Sept 3 – **Walter Crook** – Walter is a native of Fairhope and will tell us some of his high school tales and about his career with the Baldwin County Sheriff’s Department.

Sept 10 – **Frances Coleman** – Frances is an editorial columnist for the Mobile Press Register. She will entertain us with any of her exciting stories.

Sept 17 – **Robert “Butch” Mason** – Butch’s family has been involved in Fairhope’s politics, history, pharmacy business, and post office from the beginning days. He will tell us his family history.

Sept 24 – **Joyce Willard** – Joyce grew up here and has fond memories of old Fairhope. She was married to Curtis Willard, the well-known photographer and movie maker.

Fairhope Museum of History

24 North Section Street (251) 929-1471

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

find us on: [facebook.com/fairhopemuseumofhistory](https://www.facebook.com/fairhopemuseumofhistory)