

# Friends

Of the Fairhope Museum  
of History

Newsletter



Vol. 4 Issue 6, Dec 2013 – Jan 2014

## Round Up Day One Hundred and Nineteenth Anniversary

by Curt Cochran, Contributing Writer and Museum Media Specialist

The Fairhope Museum of History had a party to celebrate Fairhope's 119<sup>th</sup> birthday, on Friday night, November 15, 2013! The celebration included a cake, a large birthday card for everyone to sign and a one act drama, which depicted the early days of Fairhope, explaining the challenges and accomplishments of the founders. The planned street party was moved inside due to weather, but it was a lively evening none-the-less.

The featured event of the evening was the performance of the "Round Up Play," a dramatization of the Fairhope founders when they arrived at Battles Wharf on November 15, 1894. The play emphasized the many hardships faced by the founders, most of whom were active in the national political Populist Party and left a comfortable life in Des Moines, Iowa to relocate south. The play was written and directed by Museum Director Donnie Barrett.

It began with Henry George, played by Assistant Director Jim Bates, shouting the principles of the "Single Tax" from the second floor balcony of the Museum. He declared that the current system of capitalism was doomed and the only answer was communal ownership of land and a single tax on the value of the land.

As the spotlight went out on Mr. George, the cast of players descended the stairs with their luggage, signifying their arrival on the Eastern Shore. The founders and cast were:

E.B. Gaston, played by Alan Hoffman; Mrs. Clara Gaston by Catherine King; Harris Greeno by Louie Blaze; Anah Tuveson by Jacque Johnson; Marietta Johnson by Maggie Mosteller Timbes; Marie Howland by Eloise Rogers; James Bellangee by Ralph Thayer and Sylvania Smith by Lottie Barrett. Director Barrett emceed and narrated, calling each cast member forward on the pier stage.

The hardships the founders faced included sleeping on the sand floor of a cabin, fleas, flies and the absence of other creature comforts; these were noted in a scene with the entire cast expressing their thoughts. Director Barrett quickly moved into the next scene featuring the conflict

"Founders Day," continued on page 2, column 2





## Director's Desk

The play we all put on for the Round Up celebration was absolutely wonderful! I named it "Round Up Play" and depicted the Fairhope Industrial Association at their lowest point - the first day here. As the theme line said, the founders came with heads full of principles and dreams and anticipations for new homes. But on the first day "things were not going smoothly..."

Our Friends of the Museum took historical character roles and actually memorized their lines, which gave the play a very professional poise. The time spent learning lines, and perfecting costumes and props, was evident as the play ran perfectly without a single dress rehearsal. It shows how well we all work together to execute such a fine play telling one of our favorite stories. Great job Friends!

We often do not realize the importance of our jobs at the Museum as ambassadors for the City of Fairhope. We are often the face and voice of the City as our many visitors are deciding just what type of place we have here. They drive around and see our pier, shops, cottages and flowers; but only here do they see why we get so excited about our heritage. Here they learn about our town.

We are the only "locals" that some visitors talk with, and our knowledge, friendliness and hospitality make them feel that they have discovered a secret place of dreams of the past and memories for the future.

I am daily seeing sun-shinning faces and impeccable manners by our near-professional docents as they impress our guests. We send tourists through our museum - the average number last month was 91 guests per day - and they leave with the impression that Fairhope just may be the friendliest little city in the South.

Great going guys, I too, am impressed!

- Donnie Barrett

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between E.B. Gaston and Harris Greeno about the single tax philosophy. Gaston won the argument, but Greeno went on to become the first mayor of Fairhope. This scene was followed by the introduction of Marie Howland. Marie was a writer, intellectual and nudist, who came to Fairhope with experience in another utopian experiment and with a large collection of books. She established a lending library in a room in her house which became the first public library in Alabama. Next, Marietta Johnson had an exchange with E.B. Gaston in which he asked her to explain the philosophy of her School of Organic Education and why she chose Fairhope for its location. Ms. Johnson talked at length explaining how she developed her educational theories and why Fairhope was such a perfect place to demonstrate how well it would work. After these monologues, the entire cast came back to center stage for the conclusion and to blow out candles on the colony's birthday cake.



Mrs. Barrett ceremoniously served the cake with the assistance of Mr. Barrett, while Ralph Thayer and Louie Blaze looked on.

Everyone was then invited to sign the 6 ft X 4 ft folding plywood birthday card, artistically designed and colored with all the trapping of an authentic holiday card.

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“Founders Day” continued from page 2, column 2

While the card was being signed, there was time for taking photos, including one featuring some of the cast and Donnie Barrett serving sandwiches.



Above is Donnie Barrett in the center with Maggie Mosteller Timbes to his left; behind them are (R to L) Catherine King, Eloise Rogers and Lottie Barrett.

As everyone ate cake and drank punch, Kracker Dan’s Minstrels took the stage and entertained for the remainder of the evening. The music was lively and there was dancing, clapping, laughter and a general good time!

Another grand celebration of Round Up Day came to an end. All commented on how lucky we are to live in such a wonderful city and how much we appreciate the dedication and fortitude of the founders during those early difficult years.



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## *Fairhope’s Colonial Inn*

by Curt Cochran

The Overton family of Fairhope, the one-time owners of the Colonial Inn, found a treasure in their attic! - An old scrapbook and photo album. The photos had baked for years in the hot storage area and newspaper clippings were crumbling. Yet, the album contained a wealth of information about life in Fairhope through the eyes of the guests at the Colonial Inn. Thanks to their generosity, those data are now a part of our Museum collection.

The Colonial Inn was the finest luxury hotel in Fairhope when it was built in 1909 by the Sacriste sisters: Vienna McClintock and Ann Morgan. Fairhope attracted tourists from the very beginning and became widely known as a very special place, attracting visitors from all over. By the 1920s, wealthier visitors came from Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee and other large Eastern cities to spend a few weeks or months during the winter and to enjoy the climate and Southern lifestyle. The Colonial Inn provided excellent food, attentive service, entertainment, parties and a great view of Mobile Bay.

The information in the scrapbook/album comes mostly from those guests who after returning to their homes, would write letters to the Inn describing what a great time they had during their stay and including pictures, poems and stories. The *Fairhope Courier* which always promoted a positive view of Fairhope would print their comments with the pictures, in a regular *Courier* column, “Colonial Inn News.”



The entertainment for the Colonial Inn guests included dinner music with local musicians, poetry readings in the evenings, plays which were usually put on by the guests

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## Scout Troop 47 on their 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

by Curt Cochran

Members of Boy Scout Troop 47 celebrated their 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Fairhope Museum on Monday, November 18, 2013. The Museum exhibit, shown here with Director Donnie Barrett, contains items selected by Troop Scoutmaster Seth Peden and Mr. Barrett to highlight some of the significant events of this 85-year history.

The flag and knot board come from the early years after the scout troop's founding. There is also a group photo from the 1950s, when the current sponsorship was established. Memorabilia from the last 10 years is also featured.

Since the anniversary celebration was on a Monday when the Museum is normally closed, the scouts had the building to themselves to celebrate, have discussions, tell stories, eat birthday cake and present honors and awards to individual scouts. Being the oldest troop in Alabama, they had a lot to celebrate!

Boy Scout Troop 47 was formed in 1928 with twenty-nine boys and a distinguished group of sponsors that included the postmaster and one of Fairhope's original founders, Arthur H. Mershon; Pastor W. F. Jordan; and businessman, George Fuller, who ran the local Playhouse movie theater. The troop is the oldest in the State of Alabama and currently has some seventy scouts which make it the largest in the Mobile Area Council. It has thirty-five adult leaders although sometime three times that number are involved with the Troop.

The Troop has a long time history of community support. It was first sponsored by community leaders, then the Fairhope Lions Club, in 1940 by the Rotary Club and in

1953, the Fairhope United Methodists Church took over and remains the sponsor today.

Thousands of young men have been a part of this troop and every year new scouts join as other young men move off to college or careers. Troops 47 proudly boast one hundred and twenty-three Eagle Scout projects that have benefited Fairhope in many ways.

The current Scoutmaster is Mr. Seth Peden. Mr. Peden has been the Scoutmaster since 1993, after years of other service to the Scouts. He is truly a dedicated leader and has received many awards over the years for his service to the Troop, Camp and Boy Scout Council. Scoutmaster Peden helped the Troop move into their new headquarters at State highways 13 & 44. The Dantzler Memorial Scout Lodge opened in 2005 and sits on land provided by the Fairhope Single Tax Association. On September 28<sup>th</sup> of this year, a celebration was held at the lodge to honor the 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Troop 47.

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*“Colonial Inn,”* continued from page 3, column 2

themselves and of course parties – lots of parties. The Sacriste sisters were great entertainers. The new Colonial Inn exhibit features pictures of people in costume at a “patent medicine party”, where the party goers dress as their favorite medicine. It shows some insight into the culture of the 1920s when patent medicines were very popular. Another photo shows guest dressed as pirates in a treasure hunt, looking for planted clues. Pictures and descriptions of many other parties, the various guests and life in Fairhope are contained in the many pages of the album and will be used for future updates to the Colonial Inn exhibit. The glory days of the Colonial Inn documented in the album were from about 1916 to 1930. The national personalities who visited Fairhope and stayed at the Inn during that time included educator John Dewey, actor Robert Smith, presidential candidate and New York Mayor Al Smith and famous attorney Clarence Darrow. The Great Depression of October 1929 initiated a decline for the Inn. In the 1940s, other newer hotels opened to serve the influx of people into Mobile's shipbuilding industry during WWII. This created more competition. The decline continued until the Colonial Inn closed in 1992 and the building was demolished. This Overton album with its pictures and documents has helped preserve this great story and the “good ole days” of the Colonial Inn!

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Photograph: Courtesy MobileBayVintagePhotos.com

# Bay Boat “Fairhope”

by Bob Glennon

Edited for historical accuracy by Peco Forsman

At the time Fairhope was founded in November 1894, several boats served the Eastern Shore. Daphne, Montrose, Battles Wharf, Point Clear and Zundel’s Landing, all had bay boat service to and from Mobile. These towns were served over time by *The Ocean Wave*, *Annie*, *Heroine*, *Apollo*, *Bay Queen*, *Pleasure Bay*, *James A Carney* and others. But the Single-Taxers wanted daily reliable service to and from Mobile. They didn’t feel they could rely on private bay boats to meet their wishes or needs. Also, some of the Fairhopeans wanted to reduce the winter rate increases and “a competing boat would do that,” they said.

On October 8, 1900, those locals interested in building a public steamer gathered. Since the Fairhope Industrial Association constitution forbade interest-bearing debt, a trustee plan was adopted, which would offer investors a reasonable profit. However, all earnings from the boat after operating expenses, were pledged to retire the stock. The boat would then be turned over to the Association.

The 95-ton bay boat “Fairhope” was launched on June 27, 1901, but it was not without trauma nor was it as successful as they had hoped. On December 12, 1901, the *Heroin* and *Fairhope*, proceeding on their regular trips across the bay, had a near miss. “The *Fairhope* left the dock a few minutes ahead of the *Heroine*. A short time later when

*Heroine* was approaching *Fairhope* to pass, she blew for her side,” reported the *Baldwin Times*. “*Fairhope* answered and gave the right of way. Just as *Heroine* was about halfway past, the *Fairhope* pulled in, ostensibly to get the suction from *Heroine* and in doing so, struck *Heroine* a little back of the wheelhouse. The only damage was a couple of planks broken on *Heroine*, but *Fairhope* careened so badly that the passengers on *Heroine* who saw the accident thought she would surely turn over.” Notwithstanding this event, the boat continued daily service between Fairhope and Mobile.

In 1905, the *Fairhope* received a complete overhaul of the boiler and machinery. This overhaul cost \$6,000, which had not been insured because the trustees thought insurance was too expensive. Shortly after it returned to service, the *Fairhope* burned to the waterline on November 21, 1905 while moored at the Fairhope pier. But the Colony itself did not suffer in the deal. Settlements were made out of court and the trustees were relieved of further responsibilities.

In 1906, another bay boat was purchased on behalf of the Single-Taxers by the Fairhope Improvement Company, which had no legal connection with the Fairhope Industrial Association (later called the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation). The “*Fairhope II*,” an iron hull craft, ran directly between Fairhope and Mobile, leaving Fairhope early each morning, except Sunday, and returned leaving Mobile in mid-afternoon. This allowed for passenger connections to the train heading north out of Mobile on weekday mornings. The boat also left Fairhope for Mobile on Saturday afternoon late and returned on Sunday morning, allowing for an overnight stay in the city. The adult fare was 25 cents each way and children between 5 and 12 years old paid 15 cents. The boat served well until mechanical problems demanded that it be retired in 1910. It was returned to creditors in Mobile where it made a brief, but unsuccessful attempt to resume service to the Eastern Shore. Other bay boats continued to serve Fairhope daily, even after the Cochran Bridge Causeway was opened in 1927. Unfortunately, business dropped off rapidly as personal automobiles and commercial trucks had easy access over the bay.

The last of the steam-powered bay boats, “*Eastern Shore*” sailed her final trip across the bay on Thursday, October 12, 1933. A romantic and historic era ended as the sun set on shallow draft steamers on Mobile Bay.

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*Helping us tell Fairhope's Story!*

# Tea for Two

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

## Upcoming Programs

- Dec 3 - **Dean Mosher** – Dean and his daughter Megrez will promote their newly published book “The Spirit of Fairhope” which captures the feel of our town and puts into words what makes it so special.
- Dec 10 – **Bob Bung** – Bob came to Fairhope in 1942 when his father founded the Western Woodworking Productions Co. The company made checker and bingo playing pieces to be sent back to Wisconsin to their family business. Bob has a great Fairhope story to tell.
- Dec 17 – **Val Webb** – Val teaches art courses illustrating techniques to capture the beauty in nature. For us she will present a “botanical demonstration” with many subjects and illustrations.
- Dec 24 – **Museum Closed for Christmas**
- Dec 31 – **New Year’s Eve!**

### 2014

- Jan 7 – **Warren Slay** – Warren’s grandfather moved to Baldwin County in 1904. His family moved to Fairhope when he was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. He is known as an expert walking cane maker and owns and operates East Bay Engraving.
- Jan 14 – **Alison Knight** – Alison, whose family did lots to build Fairhope, will promote her new book “Salubrious Climate; Five generations and their relationship to the Fairhope Single Tax Colony”.
- Jan 21 – **Jennifer Magli** – Jennifer and her husband run the Magli Honey Co. in Daphne which raises and sells queen bees. This is part of the honey production business that few know about.
- Jan 28 – **Wendy Schlumpf** – Wendy, former animal breeder and beekeeper will tell us about her latest farming escapades and will describe her wine making hobby.

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**Next Friends Meeting**

The Next meeting of the Friends will be January 21, 2014, 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.

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## A Complete Archive of Museum Newsletters is now available

All past Issues of the *Fairhope Museum of History Friends Newsletter* are now available for researchers and guests. The Newsletter began in July 2010 shortly after a Charter was granted to the *Friends* organization by the State of Alabama. The Archives are on the City of Fairhope Website ([cofairhope.com](http://cofairhope.com)) and at the Museum.

### *Friends of the Fairhope Museum* Officers for 2014

President:	Mary Ann Maradik
Vice-President:	Louie Blaze
Secretary:	Bob Glennon
Treasurer:	Lottie Barrett

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**The Newsletter**

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The Friends Newsletter 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. Contact us at: [Fairhopemuseumnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:Fairhopemuseumnewsletter@gmail.com). Editor: Bob Glennon.

## Fairhope Museum of History

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