

Friends

Of the Fairhope Museum of History

NEWSLETTER



Vol 5 Issue 4 Aug–Sept 2014



Bus Tours of Fairhope add a new Turn

The Annual historical bus tours of Fairhope took place on Saturday, July 26, 2014. For the first time in the four years of the event, the tours also covered the east side of town, as well as the customary cottages, bay views and beach areas. Tours left the Bancroft Street entrance of the Museum at 9 and 11 a.m., and 1 and 3 p.m. in a novel trolley style bus, with Director Donnie Barrett telling facts, stories and legendary tales of places and personalities in our heritage. Two tours went west through the streets named for fruits and nuts and 2 additional tours went the new route on the east side of downtown, into areas where the Single Tax Colony expanded in later years. The one-hour tours also included drive-by highlights of sites used by the French, Spanish and British, before the founding families came to implement their economic experiment.

The new eastern journey led to C.W. Coleman's

real estate development, landmarked by the strange turn in Fairhope Avenue as it curves eastward at Ingleside Street and by the original Fairhope golf course built in 1919. It also covered the Laraway's in-town farm, the Lone Pine horse monument, Emperor Clock, the sites of nudist cabins off Gayfer Road and past many homes of early business owners. A glimpse into the Black history of Fairhope was also covered as the trolley passed the homes and streets named for descendants of the Lewises, Youngs and Nichols.

The ride through the Fruit and Nut District offered nostalgic views of summer cottages of Mobilians in the early 1900's and gave a first hand look at the homes of the Gastons, Ballangees, Mershons, Lydia Cummings, Mayor Greeno, Walter Forster, Marie Howland and Berglin's Ice Cream plant.

The tours were again a sell-out for those who wanted to know more about the early colorful days of Fairhope. As they departed the trolley, participants again declared this one of the most enjoyable and popular events of the Museum's annual agenda! ~



Director's Desk

Our bus tours for this year have proven to be very popular with tickets again quickly selling out. We have to do little to advertise as word of mouth alone proves to be sufficient. This shows that people are hungry to know more about their history and newcomers want to know more about the place they live.

We have printed a little booklet on the Civil War in our area. I simply wrote down the same stories that I tell over and over. Curt Cochran put art and photos with it and Jim Bates set it up for printing and *SHAZAM*, I am a published author. Almost, anyway; it is only 16 pages long.

For four days last week we had over 100 guests each day come into the building. That's a lot of tourists! Our docents have been very busy and seem to enjoy large groups of visitors. It does slow the office work down a bit because Jim Bates and I have to spend so much time being docents. We had one visitor write a note to the mayor and say they just arrived in Fairhope and discovered the Museum. They went on to say the docent they met was so positive and up-lifting that it set the tone for their entire visit and it was one of the best vacations they have ever had! Good work docents!

We are getting all geared up for this year's Elderberry Extravaganza! This Elderberry Festival will be August 9, 2014 and it looks like this year's crop will be abundant and right on time. We have to set the festival date many months ahead and it is hard to predict exactly when the crop will come in. Last year we had to use lots of dried Elderberries from California because ours were still green.

At Fort Morgan this year will be the 150th Anniversary which will involve the Governor and large crowds. The Fort had asked me to be the infantry commander because of my many successful years organizing reenactments there. But I have asked to be relieved from this duty to join the "boys in Blue" on the other side. I will now be a private in the attacking force that takes the Fort and saves the Union. "See you in the Fort, Thomas."

Donnie Barrett

Baldwin County during the Civil War The War Comes Home!

Our Civil War exhibit that celebrated its ribbon cutting on May 16, has been open for 3 months and has exceeded expectations in popularity and interest. "Being on top of some of the most documented battles of the Civil War, gives us a unique ability to gather relics and memorabilia from direct descendants of the conflict," says Bob Glennon, local historian and editor of our newsletter. The replica revetments (fortifications made from locally available materials) and actual artifacts on display are indeed, available only because of where we are. Guest questions like, "Where did you get this stuff?" bring a smile to the docent guides, as they reply, "From the man next door to me," or "A lady brought that in yesterday." The war was at home!

The War exhibit features five major areas that brought the conflict to Baldwin County:

- Fort Morgan. Considered to be the strongest fort of the Confederacy late in the War, Fort Morgan became the single most difficult obstacle blocking a Federal victory.
- Point Clear. From this site the Battle of Mobile Bay was visible and the Point Clear Hotel and the Gunnison House on hotel property served as hospitals for the Confederacy.
- Dannelly's Landing, where the Federal troops bivouacked 3 months before moving to attack Spanish Fort, then Fort Blakeley.
- Spanish Fort, the first land battle for Mobile, the last remaining major seaport of the Confederacy. This assault lasted 13 days; it began March 27 and ended April 8, the day before General Lee surrendered at Appomattox, VA.
- Fort Blakeley, the second and final wave in Federal General Canby's attack, lasted from April 1 to April 9, 1865, ending on the same day General Lee surrendered to Union General U.S. Grant. Blakeley was the last decisive battle of the Civil War.

The displays allow youngsters of all ages to touch the uniforms, bullets and cannon balls and to see sabers used in parades and combat. If that isn't enough, the Museum staff can suggest locations nearby, where reenactments are taking place during this 150 commemoration year and where scars remain on the land to remind us of the War coming home to Baldwin County.

August 5

The ships were dressed from stem to stern in flags, as if for a gala day, and every man sprang to his station when the roll called, "All hands to general quarters." It was twenty minutes to six in the morning and day was just beginning to break. Eighteen Federal ships moved at "low steam" past the Sand Island bar into the channel entering Mobile Bay. Suddenly out of the southeast, the *Red Gauntlet* swept into hazy view. In another twenty minutes, this sleek gray, almost invisible side-wheel steamer designed to outrun almost any ship of its time, would slip safely into the bay. This blockade runner was ending a voyage of seven thousand miles without incident. There was a west wind and flood tide. At 6:47 a.m., a puff of smoke appeared from the lead ironclad and the day became an historic milestone – the beginning of the Federal attack on Fort Morgan. The Battle of Mobile Bay had begun.

The Union ships, including 4 ironclads, began their attack on Fort Morgan, as four Confederate warships, with one ironclad, waited in the bay. Near Fort Gaines on Dauphin Island, Federal land troops had advanced to within 1,700 yards of Fort Gaines. By 10 a.m., the battle was over. The Confederate Ram, *CSS Tennessee*, the most formidable warship in the Southern fleet, was compelled to surrender. *CSS Admiral Buchanan* was so seriously wounded that Union Admiral Farragut sent his regrets and offered anything in his power to help. Buchanan only requested that his "fleet-surgeon" and his aides be allowed to accompany him wherever he might be sent, until recovered from his wound. Confederate General Page at Fort Morgan, allowed under flag of truce, for the *U.S.S. Metacomb* to take Buchanan and other wounded Confederate sailors to the Union hospital at Pensacola, where they could receive "more comfortable quarters than we can give in the fleet." This humanitarian gesture characterized the virtues of gentlemen in this War Between the States.

This formidable event occurred 150 years ago. The acrid odor of gunpowder and the thunder of Brooke rifles and Dahlgren cannon, stirred wildlife that morning as it grazed on the bluff that would become Fairhope, thirty years later.

150th Anniversary

Annual Elderberry Festival

Set for Saturday, August 9



Pictured above (L to R) are Assistant Director Jim Bates and Reigning Elderberry Queen Eloise Rogers, with Past Queens Catherine King and Mary Ann Maradik and Museum Director Donnie Barrett.

The Sixth Annual Elderberry Festival will be underway shortly! The popular event began in 2009 to recognize the value through the years of the local Elderberry, a local wild berry harvested by settlers and still used by many for jams, jellies, pies and cakes. "This has become the most successful event on the annual calendar of the Museum," says Alan Hoffman, chairperson for this year's event.

The program will begin at 10 a.m. at the Museum of History, 24 North Section Street, downtown Fairhope. Residents compete eagerly for ribbons and bragging rights for all kinds of treats that can be made with the berries; categories include pie, cake, bread, jam, jelly, juice, gelatin, butter and elder-flower creations. Judging will begin on Saturday morning, so entries should be brought to the Museum by 5 p.m. Friday, August 8. Demonstrations on how to use the Elderberry will be held hourly from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Queen Eli IV will be announced mid-afternoon. Musical entertainment will be provided by Kracker Dan Minstrels from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. There will also be an old fashion ice cream maker, serving Elderberry ice cream.

Come and enjoy the fun!!

Fairhope's Devotion to Henry George

By Curt Cochran

Everyone who visits or lives in Fairhope has heard about the “Single Tax Colony” based on the principles of the political economist, Henry George. They will likely also see Henry George Park on the bluff and the white marble obelisk in the corner of the park. On the side are chiseled quotes of Henry George about Land, Labor and Capital. The curious would then wonder why Fairhope would have a monument to a 19th century political economist.

Henry George is little known, except for a few enclaves like Fairhope and a few academic circles. But in the 1890s, he was very well known. His first book, “Progress and Poverty” was one of the most widely read books in the country. It was published in 1879 and within a few years, there were thousands of study groups discussing how to form a better social structure and eliminate poverty. One such group led by E. B. Gaston of Des Moines, Iowa and several of the members of that group later became the founders of Fairhope. They focused on George’s land policy. He believed that land was the source of all wealth and was the only thing that should be taxed by the government. This theory of taxing land only, became known by the late 1880s as “Single Tax” and became a significant factor in U.S. politics with over 500,000 people claiming to be Single Taxers.

Gaston and his fellow reformers in Des Moines were focused on creating a communal Utopian society and decided to include the Henry George proposed Single Tax as one of the founding principles of Fairhope. They had already decided to have a corporation, which became the Fairhope Industrial Association, to own all of the city land and lease it to residents for a yearly amount based on the land value. This was a modified version of the single tax. They were hoping that Henry George would endorse Fairhope as a good demonstration of the Single Tax, but he didn’t. Mr. George wanted implementation at the national level and didn’t endorse any small experiments with the “Single Tax”, fearing that it would discredit his ideology.

Henry George lived the last 17 years of his life in New York City where he wrote other books explaining his theories and was heavily involved in local and national politics. He died in 1897, during his second run for mayor of New York City. After his death, the single tax movement went into a slow decline.



Fairhope also struggled with the Single Tax experiment. The Fairhope Industrial Association could not get control of all the land around the city and decided to form a conventional city government in 1908. The Fairhope Industrial Association changed its name to the Fairhope Single Tax Colony (FSTC) in 1904 which retained their allegiance to the movement. Basing property taxes on land values alone, became unlawful in Alabama. So the lease amounts charged to the lessees became the county and local tax assessment amounts, plus other fees. The small additional fee that is currently charged by the FSTC is for the stated purpose of demonstrating Henry George’s principles.

Even with the many setbacks, leaders of Fairhope and the FSTC through the years, continue their devotion to Henry George and his philosophy. E. B. Gaston continued to write newspaper editorials stating that Fairhope was doing well as a Single Tax colony. Other newspapers and magazines published stories about Fairhope’s success with a modified single tax system. People from Fairhope often attended Henry George Conferences where they spoke about how well Fairhope was doing based on implementation of Henry George’s principles. Sam Dyson, a long time Fairhope lawyer, a believer in Henry George’s economic principles and one-time head of the FSTC, is believed to be the sponsor of permanent monument to Henry George.

In 1982, the FSTC commissioned a monument in the park to honor Henry George. The Obelisk was selected and designed by a committee and was dedicated on Sept 2nd, 1989, the 150th anniversary of his birth. There was a full day of celebrations with speeches, music, dancing and a birthday cake that was cut by Craig Shelton. The Governor of Alabama declared that day to be Henry George day in the State of Alabama. It was a great celebration of Fairhope’s unending devotion to the social and economic principles of Henry George. ~

“She’s Bound to be A Goer”

By Peco Forsman

Book Review

By Bob Glennon



To know Peco Forsman is enough to tell you that the story contains historical research, technical detail and passion! Peco’s newly released “*She’s Bound to be a Goer!*”, tells the story of Fairhope via the development of bayboats and their contribution to the economy of the Eastern Shore, which is an impressive perspective since the growth of the central Eastern Shore was brought about by bayboats. The book’s title is taken from an article in the *Fairhope Courier* that reported, “by mid-January 1901, the basic lines of the boat [bayboat *Fairhope*] were starting to show themselves, and the verdict was that ‘given reasonable power, she is bound to be a goer!’”

Even though there were bayboats before the Single Tax Colony was founded on the Eastern Shore in 1894, Mr. Forsman uses the settlement and development of Fairhope to show the merits of the boats. Mobile Bay separated the Single Tax Colony from outsiders, yet the residents soon realized that isolation was not an asset. They needed to stimulate local businesses. Fairhopeans needed timely delivery of building supplies, raw materials, finished goods and customers. In turn, they needed outbound transport for commodities to the consumers everywhere. The bayboats provided both.

Peco’s skills and historical acumen was recognized in 2006 by the Single Tax Corporation, when he was commissioned to build models of ten different boats. His models have become renowned for their technical scale, quality work and historical accuracy. His talent has become his gift to the citizens of our community.

Heretofore, there have been many articles about individual bayboats and a few well written books about the bay

Continued in column 2

Fort Morgan Special Event

Fort Morgan is planning a three day event on August 1,2 & 3 with a night bombardment starting Friday at dusk followed by a fireworks show. Local artist Dean Mosher is going to present a painting of the Battle of Mobile Bay to Alabama Governor, Robert Bentley. At 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, our own Donnie Barrett will portray a Union private who storms the fort.

“*She’s Bound to be a Goer*”, Book Review, continued:

and the golden years of the Southern economy, but no technocrat, or literary artist has heretofore, been familiar enough with bayboats to define the distinguishing benefits of these shallow-draft watercraft. For over four decades, the bayboats were the primary tool of commerce between Mobile and the Eastern Shore.

The book clearly cites the entrepreneurial spirit of the founders of the Single Tax Colony and businessmen of the time, as they competed for passengers, mail and freight crossing the bay.

The fifty plus pages that tell of the “Merry Steamboat War” are entertaining and revealing about the flagrant competition wrought to make a profit in Fairhope’s community-property environment. E.B. Gaston, editor of the *Fairhope Courier*, was not shy about pronouncing the attributes of the bayboat, *Fairhope* as faster, cheaper and in the public interest.

While viewing progress from the boat’s wheelhouse, the book foretells development of the first roads for the automobiles and planned rail lines in Baldwin County, even at the demise of the bayboats. Other businesses impacting bayboat profits were the Berglin Ice Plant (ice had previously been brought by boat), the planned Eastern Shore trolley and the Eastern Shore Bus Line. On the humanitarian side, the boats also facilitated a reunion of Union and Confederate veterans in 1909 in Fairhope, wherein ex-Union major, Mayor Greeno, welcomed all who came.

It’s rare that we get a “new” piece of our history in such a pleasant format. Mr. Forsman’s “*She’s Bound to be a Goer.*” grants us another enjoyable contribution to Alabama history by a rising Fairhope historian.

Tea for Two

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

Upcoming Programs

August 5 - – **Donnie Barrett** – Donnie will give another of his 150th anniversary Civil War classes on this actual date of the “Battle of Mobile Bay.”

August 12 – Creighton C. ‘Peco’ Forsman – Peco, a life-long resident of Baldwin County, former U.S. Navy Corpsman and Viet Nam veteran, will present his new book “She’s Bound to be A Goer!” about the bay boats which served the communities along Mobile Bay

August 19 – Ron Driesboch – Ron will present a history of the Eastern Martial Arts of Tai Chi and Chi Gung and demonstrate simple techniques to improve memory and balance

August 26 – Flo Schneider – Flo is the great granddaughter of Fairhope Founder, Clement Coleman and daughter-in-law to Fairhope Mayor Joe Schneider. She certainly has many Fairhope stories to tell.

September 2 – Curt Cochran – Curt will present a program on Henry George who was born on this day in 1839. Curt has done extensive research on George and will reveal many interesting facts.

September 9 – Gigi Hackford – Gigi is a local artist and part owner and manager of “Fairhope Artist Gallery”. She specializes in American flag patriotic art. Her father was a famous inventor during WWII and she will tell us many of her stories.

September 16 – Pam Jones – Pam is the Principal of the Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education. She will come and tell us about the latest projects and activities at the school.

Tea for Two

Upcoming Programs— Continued

September 23 – Rochelle McKee – Rochelle is a lifelong Fairhope resident who was a Nelson and later married the handsome dentist, Dr. Robert McKee from Mobile. They both have great stories to tell.

September 30 – Taney Brazeal – Taney managed Schermer Pecan Company starting in the 1950’s and helped Alto Schermer grow his business into an international market. He later managed his own business, Gulf Farms, buying the Schermer business. He is now retired here in Fairhope.

====

Upcoming Friends Meetings

The Next meetings of the Friends of the Museum will be August 19 and September 16, 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. It’s a great way to get behind the scenes at our Museum!

~~~~~

## The Newsletter

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: [Fairhopemuseumnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:Fairhopemuseumnewsletter@gmail.com). Editor: Bob Glennon.

## Fairhope Museum of History

24 North Section Street (251) 929-1471

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

*Like us on: [facebook.com/FairhopeMuseumofHistoryFriends](https://www.facebook.com/FairhopeMuseumofHistoryFriends)*