



Friends

Of the Fairhope Museum of History

NEWSLETTER



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Round Up Day - 120th Anniversary

November 15, 2014



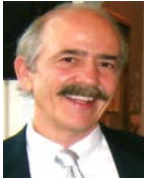
The history of Fairhope came alive on Saturday, November 15, 2014 at the Colony Cemetery on Oak Street. A creative one-hour theatrical production, written by Museum Director Donnie Barrett was presented at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. and took the audience of over 200 enthusiastic guests from the founding of the Single Tax Colony in 1894 to the middle of the twentieth century. The setting moved chronologically and physically through the grave-stones as enactors dressed in period attire, portrayed the people buried there.

Henry George (Jim Bates), whose economic philosophy conceived Fairhope, proclaimed "Free Land - Free Trade - Free People", as E.B. Gaston (John Robitaille), editor of the *Fairhope Courier* and colony founder, took the audience on a tour of now-deceased contributors to the growth of Fairhope. John Hunnell (Jerry Fortis) commented on his bathhouses, newlyweds Delia Bancroft

(Rosanne Gulisano) and husband, George Bancroft (Gary Zeller) talked about their land and hotel, and Alphonso Swift (Ron Barrett) added debate as a naysayer of the "Fairhope Plan." George Knowles (Jim Sapsner) talked about his Civil War years and complained about the poor soil for gardening, followed by John Franklin Johnson (Graham Timbes) the Socialist mayor. Marietta Johnson (Maggie Mosteller-Timbes) was also on hand to talk about her organic school.

James Bellangee (Ralph Thayer), the first Single Tax'er, listened in as Dr. Floyd Moore (Larry Dotson) talked about his first hospital for Fairhope and charming Clara Atkinson (Catherine King) showed great support for her Fairhope-founding husband, E.B., that "cooperative individualistic sweetheart!" And Dr. Clara Atkinson, (Jacque Johnson) the Colony's first female doctor, loudly proclaimed her frustrations about the "fair hope" of success.

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Director's Desk

It was actually amazing how the Museum *Friends* got together and produced the Round Up Day Play in the Fairhope Colony Cemetery. This was the most unique, one of a kind event this organization has ever pulled off and the people of Fairhope were impressed that we would even try to do such a thing. When folks heard about this, their mouths would fly open and they would say "What a good idea!" And it was. And it worked! The weather was a little coolish at first, but turned out to be a beautiful day with sunshine and no wind.

The level of research that had been done by the members of the cast was apparent. This was the third year that we did the play and the third year some of the cast had portrayed their town founder. They knew what to say and in what frame of mind to say it. We had words of praise, words of doubt, thoughts of failure, distrust and outright anger. There was solemn admiration and comic relief. I thought we were going to have to drag off Clair Atkinson and throw water on Mayor Greeno. The characters were wonderful and their costumes superb! Mr. Bellangee, where did you get that beard?!!

The attending public has heaped praise on us for this one-of-a-kind performance. We have a great organization that can put on a great show when everyone throws in and does their part. I would say let's look forward to next year, but we have all sorts of projects between now and then. Thanks for being there when we needed you, *Friends*!

Donnie Barrett

Round Up Day, continued from page 1 -

Captain Joseph Lawrence (Brent Uhlig) noted that his most shinning achievement was the building of the bayboat *Fairhope*. Marie Howland (Lottie Barrett) spoke proudly of her first library in Alabama and Shuah Mann (Wayne Brunson) talked of his travels expounding the virtues of single taxation.

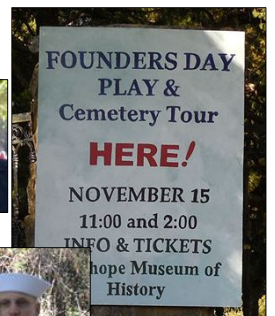
Joseph Keller (Skip Jones), first blacksmith and Arthur Mershon (Paul Czajka), the first postmaster



were there with Dr. Clarence Mershon (Bob Glennon), the town's first doctor. Lydia Comings (Fran Morley) talked about writing books and serving as president of the Fairhope library for 40 years and Clement Coleman (Parker Grey) announced his upcoming subdivision to compete with the Colony. Harris Greeno (Louis Blaze) argued about being refused membership twice in the Single Tax Corporation and respectfully in closing, Billy Eerinsse (Joey Lejsek) was recognized as Fairhope's National Hero at Pearl Harbor.

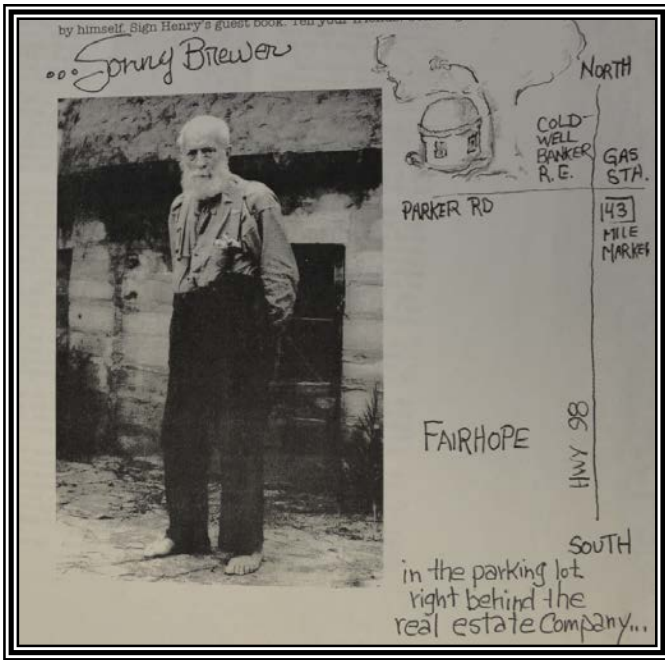
The program ended with the Stars Spangled Banner and the playing of Taps by Asst. Director Jim Bates. Then the cast took a bow to exuberant applause.

As guests returned to their automobiles afterward, there was many affirming comments encouraging a repeat performance next year!!



The Hermit of Montrose “Poet of Tolstoy Park”

By Curt Cochran



Sonny Brewer’s map to the Henry Stuart house.

Photo and map used with permission

Tourists often come into the Museum and ask whether there is an exhibit on “The Poet of Tolstoy Park” or if there are directions to Tolstoy Park. The above picture provides a good map drawn by Sonny Brewer, the Fairhope author who made the house and the hermit famous, with his book “*The Poet of Tolstoy Park*”. The photo shows Stuart with a beard and no shoes, which was his usual appearance. He named the ten acres he owned “Tolstoy Park” because he was a great admirer of Count Lev Nikolayevich (Leo) Tolstoy, Russian writer, philosopher and political thinker. Mr. Brewer’s book is fiction, but it does accurately record what is known about Henry Stuart.

Mr. Stuart came to Montrose in 1923 from Idaho on the advice of his doctor to go to a warmer climate. The doctor suggested Southern California, but Henry chose Montrose instead. He was 65 years of age at the time and didn’t expect to live very long – an apparent bad diagnosis. Nonetheless, he busied himself writing poetry, weaving tapestries and building his round block house, a marvel of building ingenuity. The house was ready for occupancy before the 1926 hurricane which was severe in the Mobile Bay area. It isn’t clear whether he lived in the house all of the time, since he also retained the earlier building in which he lived while constructing the creative round structure.

Although his appearance made him look like a hermit, he was no recluse. He was more of a philosopher and was a long time student and admirer of Tolstoy. With his Bachelor degree in Divinity and a lifetime of reading and study, he was well educated for the time. Stuart often had guests in his house, as indicated by his original guest book that had more than twelve-hundred signatures, including that of Clarence Darrow, the civil liberties attorney famous for his defense in the Scopes “Monkey” Trial of 1925. There are several local newspaper stories which compared Stuart to Henry David Thoreau, another philosopher who lived similarly. He left Montrose in 1944 to return to his family in Oregon. He died about two years later.

Sonny Brewer arranged to rent and restore the block house while writing his book and often stayed in it. The book was published in 2005 and quickly became a best seller. The house is now open to the public with a new guest book signed by several thousand recent visitors to Tolstoy Park!

The round “Poet of Tolstoy Park” home of Henry Stuart is located north of downtown Fairhope, on the northwest corner of Parker Road and Highway 98, between the office buildings. Admission is free.

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Curt Cochran is the producer of the Fairhope Museum of History Friends Website, photographer, docent volunteer and contributing writer for the *Friends Newsletter*.



Alabama Public Radio Presentation Recorded at Museum

It was "Lights! Camera! Action!" on Thursday, November 13, as the Fairhope Museum of History provided the set for two recording sessions for Alabama public television. The "filming" was part of the Bookmark Series of educational interviews by the University of Alabama Center for Public Television and Radio.



The shows were professionally hosted by Dr. Don Noble, professor emeritus, of the College of Communication and Information Sciences at the University of Alabama. He had traveled from Tuscaloosa to talk with well-known author Winston Groom about his recent books and with popular published writers Suzanne Hudson and Joe Formichella about their recent works. The Old City Hall Council Chamber was transformed into a movie set with endless wires, massive cameras, light reflectors and expensive sound equipment.

Each session directed by Production Manager Michael Letcher, recorded live and non-stop for 25 minutes. Then there was a brief intermission to reset the furnishings and change guests. The audience was made up of Fairhopeans and Museum docents who provided responses, laughs and applause during and after the interesting dialogue.

Production Manager Letcher and his crew of technicians and cameramen began set up on Wednesday morning to assure that the sound system, lighting and acoustics were correct. And by show-time when the guest celebrities arrived, the stage was literally set, with furniture on risers and cameras ready.

Continued in lower right column

The Importance of Museums

By Audrey Peterson
Museum Student Intern, Fairhope High School

As a child, I cherished every opportunity I had to visit museums. Museums have so much to offer in terms of content that you could spend hours or even days exploring everything. They offer a unique experience. You are able to explore the exhibits to learn; unlike reading or hearing a lecture. Museums are an important part of education because they can spark an interest or an idea in a visitor. They contribute to the community in a unique way, both academically and in terms of public education. Knowledge and awareness are so important and museums help us to achieve these. I have a deep appreciation for museums.

Fairhope is lucky to have such a great museum. Because I am planning to major in museum studies in graduate school, I have done volunteer work at two different museums. During my short time as a docent at the Fairhope Museum of History, my love for museums has only grown.

I am very excited to continue to work with the Fairhope Museum of History.

Audrey Peterson is a Fairhope High School Junior and is interested in Museum Management as a career. Director Donnie Barrett takes the initiative annually to invite students to participate in our program, to gain hands-on experience at a real progressive and fun Museum. Audrey is doing great!



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Alabama Public Radio, continued:

"The video will now be taken back to the studio in Tuscaloosa," said Dr. Noble in our interview with him, "edited, then titles, credits and voice-overs added." The recordings are then made available to the Alabama Public Broadcasting producers for use to schedule programming. The viewing dates therefore, are not yet known.

The event was another fascinating happening at our Museum of History!

Docent Party

September 24, 2014



In appreciation for the hard work of our active and creative docents and volunteers, the Museum staff threw a party for the gang on Wednesday evening, September 24, 2014.

The turnout was fantastic with almost everyone on the volunteer staff attending. A large table filled with pizzas and various sodas and drinks were available for the docents, friends and special guests from the City of Fairhope. Director Barrett was his usual jolly self as he welcomed each guest and expressed appreciation for their efforts. Assistant Director Jim Bates co-hosted the event.



Several door prizes were awarded by Mr. Barrett and everyone lingered for several hours with drinks and munchies in-hand.

Potpourri -

about the Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History

- The Friends organization currently has 72 duly recognized members and 52 volunteers serving as docents on a regular basis.
- The Friends Newsletter is e-mailed to 135 patrons worldwide each Issue, plus another 175 copies are distributed by the docents and picked up by visitors to the Museum.
- The docents who voluntarily staff the Fairhope Museum of History daily, are made up of retired university professors from scientific and technical fields as well as the arts (ie: history), high and middle school educators with advanced degrees, student interns, professional writers and poets, attorneys, scientists, including one who worked on “cold-war” espionage programs, one nationally known jazz artist, an Alabama Circuit Clerk, and several life-long residents of Fairhope with fascinating stories about growing up in this eclectic town turned city. All have outgoing personalities and enjoy talking about Fairhope.

Tea for Two

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

Upcoming Programs

Dec 2 - **P.T. Paul** – P.T. is the reigning Poet of the Year for 2014 and has won several awards in the 2014 Spring Poetry Competition from the Alabama State Poetry Society. She will present to us some of her latest works.

Dec 9 - **Mickie Boykin** – Mickie is a native of Daphne and will tell us of her growing up on the Eastern Shore and her activities in historic preservation, including the Daphne Museum.

Dec 16 - **Jon Robitaille** - Jon manages the Wine Shop at the Piggly Wiggly grocery store and will have a discussion on different wines available, wine history and information. He is a featured actor at Theatre 98 and will tell us about his life in Fairhope.

Dec 23 - *Christmas Holiday*

Dec 30 - **Mildred Stephens** – Mildred is a life-long Fairhope resident and will tell us about growing up here. Her parents founded **Ingersoll Dairy**, one of the first dairies in Baldwin County.

Jan 1 - *Happy New Year!*

Jan 6 - **Nancy Raia** – Nancy is the Community Arts Director for the Eastern Shore Arts Center and has recently been named Alabama's Art Educator for 2015. She will tell us about all of her recent art related activities.

Tea for Two

Upcoming Programs— Continued

Jan 13 - **Jill McLemore** – Jill is a long-time resident whose father went to the Organic School and where she taught art. She also worked in Hollywood, CA as an art director for TV shows, including “All in the Family.”

Jan 20 - **Cella Parker** – Cella is a native of Fairhope and has many fond memories of growing up here. She says that everyone has a different story of Fairhope and hers is a good memory of our special town.

Jan 27- **Kyla G. Kelim, Esq.** – Kyla is a Fairhope resident and a nationally recognized and entertaining speaker explaining issues effecting seniors; i.e. nursing home Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security disability matters.



Special Appreciation

goes to Curtis Cochran, Producer of the Fairhope Museum of History Friends Website and to him and Becky Brunson for the photographs of the performers in the Colony Cemetery Theatrical Production



The Newsletter

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Fairhope Museum of History

24 North Section Street (251) 929-1471

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

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