

Friends

Of the Fairhope Museum of History

NEWSLETTER



Vol 6 Issue 1 February — March 2015

Mardi Gras

The Carnival of our French & Spanish Heritage



Mardi Gras is Shrove Tuesday, which ends a time of eating and merriment before fasting through the Lenten season. In 2015, Mardi Gras Day is February 17. Parades began 3 - 4 weeks earlier in conjunction with celebratory balls, parties and frivolity by all!. Here at our Museum, we are eager to remind everyone that Mardi Gras is an exciting part of our history.

The Fairhope Museum will rise to the occasion with decorations and programs to highlight the festivities going on all along the Gulf Coast. Speakers will show the pageantry and tell the history of Mardi Gras. Director Donnie Barrett reminds us that the Museum is a great place for viewing the Fairhope parades. Come join the fun!

The Bay Boat Era

The colorful history of Fairhope is enriched by Bay Boats like the *Fairhope*, launched in June 1901.

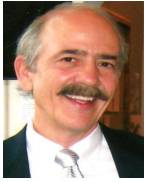
In April 2015, the Fairhope Museum of History will launch its own maritime exhibit about *The Bay Boat Era*. Six precise model bay boats, memorabilia and relics will be on display to remind us of the good ole days on the bay, chautauquas and the local culture built around the boats.

The earliest steamboats to ply the rivers from Mobile were the *Alabama* (1818), *Harriott* and *Cotton Plant*, (1821). It was some years later that specially designed shallow draft bay boats were in service between Mobile and the Eastern Shore. Fairhope bay boat historian Peco Forsman says



the *Ocean Wave*, *Annie*, *Heroine*, *James A. Carney*, *Fairhope I* and *Fairhope II* had a positive impact on the economy of Baldwin County before and after the settlement of Fairhope in 1894.

The new exhibit and the story of these special steamers will be featured in our April newsletter.



Director's Desk

January 17, 2015

Dear *Friends*,

We have accomplished another banner year; one which has really seen the *Friends of the Museum* on the go! Here are the highlights of 2014:

- Tea for Two programs (46)
- Mardi Gras Party – February 14
- The *Friends* newsletter published bi-monthly
- Gift Shop expansion with record sales
- Arts & Crafts Gift Shop – March 14-16
- Walking History tours – 4 in April
- The Way We Worked Smithsonian Exhibit – *Friends* construction and removal
- Satsuma Blossom Festival – April 26
- Civil War Exhibit – *Friends* construction
- Civil War Sing-along
- Published Civil War book by Donnie Barrett
- Bus Historic landmark tours – July 26
- Elderberry Festival – August 9
- Docent Pizza Party – September 24
- Docent Halloween Party at the Barrett's – Oct 25
- Roundup Day Play at the Cemetery – Nov 15
- Docent Christmas Party at the Blaze's – Dec 8

Our Assistant Director Jim Bates and I want to warmly thank the *Friends* for making all of this possible. You are the backbone of this Museum and your untiring efforts make this a great place for us all.

Yours sincerely,

Donnie Barrett, Director
Fairhope Museum of History

Planning History! A Look Behind the Scenes

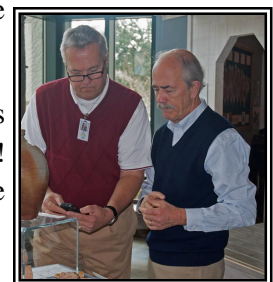
It's always interesting to drop by the Director's office as our Museum management team plans for the future. January and February are planning months. Director Donnie Barrett and Assistant Director Jim Bates are well along in re-thinking our history and planning events, exhibits and programs for 2015.

Late last year, the City of Fairhope approved funding for this year's new exhibits. So now, the professional staff has begun to design displays and draft script to accompany relics and memorabilia. Some exhibits get limited funding from the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum* organization, to procure unusual items like rubber flounders for the *Jubilee* exhibit. Then there are those major construction tasks like building the "revetments" for the year-long "Baldwin County During the Civil War: The War comes Home" story. Docents and volunteers joined-in to build and paint the backdrops for the armaments and photographs.

Procurement and construction is now underway for "The Bay Boat Era" exhibit and the Civil War 150th Anniversary events coming in April. The Museum is also getting ready for the Satsuma Blossom Festival in late April—one of the most successful events on the annual calendar. Arrangements are now being made for music, prizes, rides and games for youngsters. About 30 docents and volunteers will be scheduled to run the games and host visitors.

And before all of that's over, detail planning will be in process for the ever popular annual Elderberry Festival which comes in August. It's too early to bake the pies, but special entertainment, ice cream and ride vendors are now being sought.

Behind the scenes, there is lots of activity underway! We are busy bringing the past into the future!!



The World of the Docent

by Audrey Peterson

At the very heart of the word docent is the Latin word *docere*, meaning “to teach.” This is appropriate because a docent’s job is to lead guests through the Museum and teach them about the history of Fairhope. So far, my experience as a docent has been more about learning than teaching. I have only been a docent at the Fairhope Museum of History for a few months, but I have already learned so much about hospitality and what it takes to run a museum. I would love to one day graduate with a Masters in Museum Studies. I am very thankful for all of the lessons I have already learned as a student volunteer.

As a docent, the number one priority is to make sure that the guests are learning and having an enjoyable time. Greeting guests and interacting with the kids that visit, are the biggest parts of being a docent. I have helped some kids unlock the safe by doing the scavenger hunt. We also offer a chance for kids to try to escape from the old jail cell. It is equally fun for them and for me to do the interactive bits on the tours. I have benefited from exercising my hospitality and communication skills, which are vital for anyone wishing to work in a museum. The guests always leave with a smile; thanks to the wonderful docents we have at the Fairhope Museum of History.

Since I have been volunteering at the Museum, I have also done some curatorial work. Because I have an interest in working in museums in the future, Mr. Barrett has allowed me to help restore some artifacts. For example, I repaired a broken piece of pottery. I have also been lucky enough to help out a little bit with archiving some of the museum’s treasures. I have archived a railroad spike and a shovel. At the previous museum where I volunteered last summer, I was never exposed to this side of the museum world. The archival process is fascinating to me and I hope that I will be able to do more work like this later on.

Another fun part of being a docent is helping with museum events. When Santa Claus flew down from the North Pole in early December to visit our Museum, I played the part of Santa’s elf. Handing



out candy canes and visiting with the children and families was such a fun role.

Some of the docents volunteered to participate in the Round Up Day play last November. As an attendee of the performance, I can account for the fantastic acting and the brilliant script - the work of the docents and the Museum director respectively. Event planning is a bigger part of running a museum than one would think. I learned more about the administrative side of event planning than I had anticipated. The docents are an integral part of making certain that the events are a success.

Because I have been given the opportunity to be a docent at the Fairhope Museum of History, I will be much better prepared to decide what to study in college and in which area to specialize. Being a docent is just as much about learning about museums as it is about teaching guests about the beautiful history of Fairhope.

Ms. Peterson pictured above, is a Fairhope High School Junior serving as a docent at our Museum and is interested in Museum Studies as a career. This is the second article she has written for the Friends Newsletter.

Fairhope Golf History

the untold story

by Curt Cochran & Bob Glennon

Fairhope opened its first golf course in 1916; twenty-one years after the founding of the Single-Tax Colony. The course was built between Fairhope and Morphy Streets, as the *Fairhope, Golf, Gun and Country Club*. This was the “focal point of golf and social life in our community,” said the *Fairhope Courier* on January 5, 1923. The course was closed in the late 1950s when the land was returned to the Single Tax Corporation for housing development. For thirty years, residents turned their attention to other golf courses less convenient, or to the Bay for their outdoor activities.

In 1985, there was an attempt to bring golf back to Fairhope on land “to be donated” by Angelo Corte, Fred Corte and Madeline Berglin. But in July 1985, the Fairhope City Council voted to cancel all plans to construct an 18-hole course on donated land. The City later bought land off Highway 181 and built Quail Creek, a municipal course that opened April 4, 1988.

That is the public story of Fairhope’s municipal golf. But, what happened to the “to be donated” land?

Mr. A.A. Corte, began buying Rock Creek land north-northeast of downtown Fairhope, in 1876. In 1992, Olympia Corte-Dyas, the granddaughter of Mr. Corte, sold the land, part of which was the controversial “to be donated land,” to Mr. David Head. Mr. Head hired Earl Stone, a well-known Southern golf course architect, to design and build a 7000-yard championship golf course as the central part of the planned Rock Creek housing development, an upscale community that would have one thousand homes by 2013. It was common practice at the time, to have as many houses as possible on the course to improve the aesthetics and increase the value of those lots and homes. The golf course wound through the neighborhoods and crossed Rock Creek four times. The four wooden golf cart bridges that cross the swampy areas of the creek bed are up to one hundred yards long, to give the course a quaint appearance. Almost all of the eighteen golf holes go uphill or downhill, which give it a challenging look and increases the difficulty. Most of the trees and other vegetation along the golf course and Rock Creek

were left in their natural state to provide a habitat for the local wildlife including fish, turtles and a beaver dam. Over seeding with rye grass in the fall keeps the course green all year round.

From the beginning, the Rock Creek golf course was a semi-private, selling memberships while remaining open to the public on a fee per golf-round basis. Most of the members are year-round residents and play golf throughout the year. Faulkner State College uses Rock Creek as a home golf course for their collegiate golf team. Bubba Watson, the well known professional golfer, played at Rock Creek while he attended Faulkner and some long-time members still remember him on the course.



The Rock Creek community grew rapidly in the boom times of the 1990s. Mr. Head sold the course in 1999 to Honors Golf, a start-up golf company at the time. Unfortunately, Honors Golf got into the business just before the downturn in the housing market. The boom times for golf and the U.S. economy suffered a major setback in 2001. The Rock Creek golf course was also substantially affected by Hurricane *Ivan* in 2004 and *Katrina* in 2005. Consequently the course had to close for several months for clean up and repairs. This significantly decreased the number of people playing golf. While still recovering from the effects of the hurricanes, there was another setback in the economy in 2008, then the Gulf oil spill in 2010 deterred visitors from the Gulf Coast. The Rock Creek golf course is sustaining well now and the community has maintained very high standards through the difficult times.

As for golf in Fairhope, there are now two courses available to citizens and guests - Rock Creek, *almost* destined to be a municipal course on “donated land”, and Quail Creek, the Fairhope municipal course, both providing great entertainment on a sunny afternoon!

- Docent News -

Fortis to receive Honorary Doctorate

Our Museum Docent Jerry Fortis' wife Dixie, who passed away on August 22, 2013, will posthumously receive an Honorary Doctoral Degree during the Southern Illinois University graduation in May. The Fairhope Arts Center recently presented a special art exhibit of Mrs. Fortis' work. She is also a founding member of the Chicago Women's Hall of Fame. The Museum Docent staff is very proud of Jerry and Dixie's credits and achievements!



Newsletter Editor to be on WABF 1220 Radio March 12

Bob Glennon, Editor of the Museum *Friends* Newsletter, will return to Fairhope's WABF, 1220 AM radio show, "Culturally Speaking with Tod Jonson, Man about Town" to discuss the Fairhope Museum of History upcoming events and the *Friends* Newsletter. The program will be aired at 10:30 - 11:00 a.m. Thursday, March 12.



Docents

The Fairhope Museum of History currently has 54 Docents who serve weekly at the Museum as hosts, hostesses, greeters and tour guides.



Helping Fairhope Tell its Story!

Satsuma Blossom

Festival

April 18, 2015

Fun - Games - Treats

Storytellers - Area Celebrities

Remember the day to come out and play!

Five Hundred Years of Baldwin County, 1500-2000

ESILL History DVDs Available

By Dot Bremer

Eastern Shore Institute for Lifelong Learning (ESILL), is a non-profit adult education program offering a wide variety of courses twice a year. ESILL was founded in 1977 by retirees who believed that the latter years of one's life could and should be rich and rewarding. Beginning with a few courses of popular interest, the Institute has continued to flourish to the present term offering more than 60 courses attracting students of all ages.

In 2002 when ESILL was celebrating its 25th anniversary, the Institute hosted a series of lectures which would say "thank you" to the community for its years of support. *Five Hundred Years of Baldwin County, 1500-2000*, was presented as a series of 14 one-hour lectures designed to weave a tapestry of the rich and dramatic history that belongs to Baldwin County. Each lecture covered the characters, culture, crises, and influences of the many peoples and nationalities that inhabited our region over the centuries. The presenters of the lectures were eight top scholars, historians, authors, and experts on their chosen topics. The entire program was captured on video that was paid for by generous gifts from the Baldwin County Commission and from an anonymous donor who cared deeply about our history and preserving our heritage. Sets of seven VCR tapes were donated to the area libraries for the public to avail themselves of this rich collection of history.

ESILL is now happy to announce that those tapes have been converted to DVDs and are again available for students and interested parties of history. There are 14 hours of topics within the set of 7 DVDs with the following 8 lecturers: Dr. Greg Waselkov, Jay Higginbotham, Shawn Holland, Jim Parker, Donnie Barrett, Dean Mosher, Mary Lois Timbes, and Dr. John Borom. A detailed list of the entire program is included with each set of DVDs.

For information of how to borrow these valuable recordings of historical importance, call Dot Bremer, (251) 604-9342. Arrangements are being made presently to handle lending details.

Tea for Two

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

Upcoming Programs

February 3 - **Chief Joseph H. Petties** – Chief Petties is the Fairhope Police Chief and a graduate of Fairhope High School. He joined the police force in 1986 and became the police chief in 2013.

February 10 - **Mary Lois Timbes** – Mary Lois is the author of “The Fair Hope of Heaven” and “Meet me at the Butterfly Tree” and she will tell us some 1920’s Upton Sinclair stories.

February 17 - **Donnie Barrett** – Donnie will give us the history of Mardi Gras as well as information about Mobile’s exhibit “The Art & Design of Mardi Gras.”

February 24 - **Owen Stimpson** – Owen is a Fairhope native and will talk about Stimpson’s Saw Mill and attending the Organic School.

March 3 - **Tom Morley** – Tom is a well known violinist and guest artist for the Mobile Symphony as well as a fiddler for the Celtic band “Mithril.” He will present a program of Civil War music and short stories.

March 10 - **Sue Leavins** – Sue is the Director of the Women’s Care Medical Center in Robertsdale and will talk about their Baldwin County program to aid pregnant women and their families.

Tea for Two

Upcoming Programs, continued

March 17 - **Carl Clark** – Carl is a floral designer and the owner of Southern Veranda in Fairhope. He has over 30 years of floral design experience and will tell us about his career and business as well as several amusing stories.

March 24 - **Ben Raines** – Ben is the Executive Director of the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation and just completed a series of lengthy articles in the Mobile Press Register on the Mobile Delta. He will present for us a program on the “American Amazon.”

March 31 - **Donnie Barrett** – Donnie will continue his series of Civil War programs and will talk about the battles of Fort Spanish and Fort Blakeley.

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April Walking Tours

Each Saturday in April, a walking tour will leave the Museum of History promptly at 10 a.m. to visit downtown or the Colony Cemetery. The one hour tour will be lead by Museum Director Donnie Barrett. This is the 4th year for this popular event.

Come enjoy an entertaining casual walk through old Fairhope.

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## 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. Contact: [Fairhopemuseumnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:Fairhopemuseumnewsletter@gmail.com)  
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# Fairhope Museum of History

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

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