

# Friends

## Of the Fairhope Museum of History



NEWSLETTER

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# The Bay Boat Era



## Exhibit In Full Swing!

Seven models of authentic bay-boats that served Fairhope for some time during the period 1894 to 1933 are now on display in the main exhibit hall of the Museum. On June 12, Mayor Kant cut the ribbon to officially open of the newly created exhibit of bay-boats that served the Eastern Shore, with emphasis on

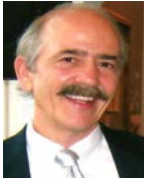


*The Bay Boat Era*  
*"Fairhope's Link to the World"*  
1894 - 1933

those that plied the waters to Fairhope after the founding of the Single Tax Colony.



*Bay Boat Era*, continued on page 2, column 2



## Director's Desk

This Museum has certainly been steaming ahead lately. Just this past week the *Friends* had four events in one week! We recently got word that our Museum is going to be nominated for the State Tourist Attraction of the year. This is because of lots of hard work by lots of hard working people. Things are really looking up and it is a collection of efforts on our *Friend's* parts that make all this happen. We have a large number of *Friends* and docents, but let's just look at a few:

Mary Ann Maradik is the President of the *Friends* and the Museum's docent coordinator. She meets with the Museum staff every week to see that our needs are met and the *Friends* are doing their job. She also spends an hour-a-day juggling time slots and filling spaces when a docent calls in sick. We can always depend on Mary Ann.

Lottie Barrett is the *Friends* treasurer who has the organizations financial records up on the computer every morning. She chases down bills and receipts, keeps perfect records, pays for everything, then pays State, County and City sales tax every month. Don't even mention Income Tax time!

Jim Bates is a City employee who balances our gift shop every week, daily checks ticket sales, orders our supplies and finds us the best deals and saves us lots of money. Jim does so much for me I get anxiety when he is not here. He is a business machine working for us! He also plays a mean "Taps" for our Round Up plays.

Curt Cochran is our Museum photographer and maintains our successful facebook page. He also works on our City web page and has written many excellent articles for our newsletter and news releases. He produces wonderful posters and flyers for all our events. He makes videos that are real popular on facebook and U-tube. He works at all this constantly and as soon as you turn around, flash, he takes another photo!

Bob Glennon produces this *Friends of the Fairhope Museum* Newsletter which has impressed many other professional agencies on how polished it is. The balance between history of Fairhope and the reporting of *Friends* meetings and activities is beyond excellent.

These are just a few of our hard workers, not to mention the dozens of docents that allow us to open our doors and greet visitors. This large group effort is really paying off with this very successful Museum!

Donnie Barrett

## *Bay Boat Era*, continued from page 1

The models were commissioned by the Single Tax Corporation and built by Peco Forsman, a recognized historian of bay-boats and author of "*She's Bound to be a Goer!*", a text published in 2014 about the legendary boats. After much research of technical specifications, Mr. Forsman constructed the models to exact scale. In his book, he also cited the history of each boat, some with lineage back to the Civil War and allegiance to Federal and Confederate interests in the conflict.



The bay boat era came to an end shortly after completion of the Cochran Bridge Causeway in 1927.

The charm and romance of the steam whistle could not compete with the economics and flexibility of motorized vehicles moving people and commerce across Mobile Bay.



## *The Bay-Boat Era* exhibit was designed by



Museum Director Donnie Barrett and will remain on display until the spring of 2016. Admission is free! ~



# Fairhope History Tours

## Fill Buses Again



On Saturday, July 18, 2015, Director Donnie Barrett again hosted four bus tours of Fairhope, taking guests back in time with facts and stories about places, people and events that contributed to the founding of Fairhope. Unlike tours in the past that continuously moved through streets, each of the tours this year stopped at homes, businesses and vacant lots - sites of former historic buildings - and went into more detail about the men and women of old Fairhope.

The tours left the Museum's Bancroft Street entrance at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. The tours moved through the "Fruit and Nut" district and featured Church Street landmarks. At the bay-shore Rose Garden, Donnie told the history of the pier, the people's railroad and the significance of the gullies throughout the Single Tax Corporation landscape. He also showed the locations and shared tales about a few of the more raucous entertainment spots in the city's early history.

The comfortable air-conditioned bus carried capacity crowds on each of the tours. Funds from ticket sales are used to construct exhibits and cover expenses that are not in the regular Museum budget.

## Seventh Annual Elderberry Festival

Saturday,  
August 8, 2015

The most popular event at the Museum for the past 6 years has been the Elderberry Festival.



Culinary Enthusiasts are invited to enter their food, cookies, drinks and desserts in the competition on products made with Elderberries. Bring them to the Museum by 5 p.m. Friday afternoon, August 7.

The activities will include:

Pie Eating Contest  
Elderberry Ice Cream  
Musicians  
Games  
Artisans making pottery

Come Join the Fun!!

# *Flo Simmons*

## *Founder of Fairhope's Museum of History*

By Curt Cochran



Flo Simmons about 1990

Flo Simmons, one of Fairhope's great characters, accumulated an extensive collection of historical artifacts, photos, and stories that became the exhibits of the first Fairhope Museum of History when it opened in 1995. She had taken a class on how to operate a museum and was well known in the community; so that when people started discarding items of historical significance, they would give it to Flo instead. Her house overflowed with boxes. She was a leader of the founding committee that was formed in 1990 to establish the Museum.

The committee was able to secure the Bell Building on the Faulkner State College campus for the first Museum location which opened on a part time basis in 1995. Flo worked there as a docent three days a week until shortly before her death on Oct 13, 2005. The Bell Building didn't have room to display all of her collections. The Museum moved to its new location on Section Street in 2008 and has a large amount of Ms. Simmons' archive material.

Flora Maye Simmons, born in 1918, was the daughter of the well known Dr. & Mrs. Claude George Godard, Fairhope's most famous physician. Dr. Godard picked the name "Flora Maye" because it was the name of a Parisian perfume that he learned to like in France during WWI. (Dr. Godard apparently didn't spend all his war time in the trenches) She spent her entire life in Fairhope, becoming a bit of an eccentric. Besides discovery walks on the beach and nature exploration, she collected Indian artifacts and other unusual things to go along with her museum collections.

Her house in Fairhope at the corner of Mershon Street and Fairhope Avenue, has long been abandoned. The house was a gathering place for youngsters in the 1950s and 1960s and even Museum Director, Donnie Barrett, the same age as her son, William, remembers hanging out there with young musicians practicing in the attached kitchen. Flo was always up for taking Fairhope youngsters on adventure trips or to a concert in her Nash Rambler station wagon with push button gears. Life changed for her in 1966 when her husband died of a heart attack and she had to move in with her aging parents to care for them. The house (photo on right) has been vacant since she left, with the only use being as a haunted house for a few years. Those that remember Flo are getting fewer in number too, but her contributions to creating the Fairhope Museum of History will live on.



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# New Touch Screen Display nearing Introduction at the Museum

The Colonial Inn exhibit in the corridor of level one of the Museum is the backdrop for a new touch screen video presenting the chronological history of Fairhope and other significant events that influenced our city's history.



A core slice taken from the 163 year Long Leaf Pine tree that stood in the front yard of the old Colonial Inn shows the rings that represent each year in the tree's life. By simply touching any ring, the guest can read about events in history that occurred at that time. Interesting facts about Fairhope will be supplemented by national and international events that were occurring at that time.

Jim Bates, Assistant Director of the Fairhope Museum of History is project managing this creative interactive exhibit and researching the historic content. Jim says, "This will be a first for our visitors to be able to touch a screen and get a response to their personal inquiry. It becomes an educational 'toy' and more beneficial than a video game."

The video screen is being funded by the *Friends of the Museum*. The graphics and wireless interconnect are being implemented by the City of Fairhope Information Technology staff. ~

## - Docent News -



### Appreciation Party —

A party for docents and *friends* of the Museum of History was held at the home of Wayne and Becky Brunson in Fairhope on July 18th. Approximately thirty attendees enjoyed fellowship, good food and refreshments for several hours. Donnie, in a manner akin to the town crier, from his perch on the back porch, pronounced his appreciation to all docents and *friends* for their hard work. Each docent volunteers about 20 hours a month at the Museum. In a later interview, Mr. Barrett said, "We want everyone to know that we appreciate them. We have great and talented people!"

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## *Fifth Anniversary of our Friends Newsletter!*

The first Issue of the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History* Newsletter was distributed in July 2010. The Friends organization received its Articles of Incorporation on March 31, 2010 from the State of Alabama and held its first meeting on May 22, 2010 to elect officers. The Newsletter has been produced bi-monthly (every other month) since February 2011. Electronic subscribership has grown to over 150 readers around the world, plus approximately 200 copies distributed in Fairhope. Bob Glennon, an area historian and author, has been editor for five years.



## Tea for Two

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

### Upcoming Programs

**August 4** – **Michelle Kurtz** will tell us about the new coastal insurance work group she has organized with Joe Faust and Trip Pittman.

**August 11** – **Donnie Barrett** will dress in period costume and tell the story of the Massacre at Fort Mims. This major American tragedy changed forever, the history of Native Americans, the War of 1812 and ended our Colonial period.

**August 18** – **Harriet Outlaw** will premiere her new book "Haunted Baldwin County" which will be released August 10, 2015. She will tell us her best stories and invites the audience to tell her theirs.

**August 25** – **Diana Brewer**, Director of Marketing & Public Relations for the Gulf Quest National Maritime Museum of the Gulf of Mexico will give us a report on the exciting opening of this grand facility on Sept 26, 2015. The museum has amazing displays and interactive exhibits and we will hear about the many features that will dazzle visitors. Diana Brewer is also a member of the Fairhope City Council.

**September 1** – **John Borom** will tell us about the Alabama Coastal Birdfest. This week-long event happens at birding sites all along the coast and attracts hundreds of visitors from all across the nation.

**September 8** – **John Nelson**, life-long Fairhopean, has operated many businesses here and was once director of the Eastern Shore Chamber. His great-grandmother was Delia Bancroft, Fairhope founder and his wife is Mary Ann of *Mary Ann's Deli* fame.

**September 15** – **Gay Lindsey**. *Poppies for Veterans: Symbols of Sacrifice*. Gay will tell about this ongoing art project to produce hundreds of ceramic poppies and the meaning behind it.

## Tea for Two

More Upcoming Programs

September continued

**September 22** – **Corky Ellard**, a member of the Schermer pecan family, has worked for many years for the community of Fairhope, doing civic service with youth groups and other activities. This is a *real* Fairhope story!

**September 29** – **Sherilyn McNally** has organized a troop of actors and actresses who plan to do Shakespearean & other type plays here in the old fashion Fairhope style. She will tell us about her program and present several examples of their plays.

### Upcoming Friends Meetings

The next planning meetings of the *Friends of the Museum* will be **August 18 and September 15, 2015, 3:15 p.m. in the Council Chamber Room upstairs at the Museum.**

~  
Mary Ann Maradik, President  
*Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History*  
and Museum Coordinator of Docents

### 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. Bob Glennon, editor; e-mail: Fairhopemuseumnewsletter@gmail.com.

## 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)

