

Friends

Of the Fairhope Museum of History

NEWSLETTER



Vol 6 Issue 5 October - November 2015

ANNUAL ELDERBERRY FESTIVAL

SATURDAY AUGUST 8, 2015



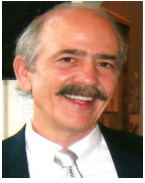
The Elderberry Festival on Saturday, August the 8th, brought a great sense of excitement to the Fairhope Museum of History. A large banner was draped across the front of the Museum and on a large post sign in the back next to the fountain, announcing the annual Elderberry Festival. There was lots of activity well before the usual opening time of 9:30. The Ice Cream man was set up with his yellow Igloo coolers of his delicious homemade ice cream. John Rezner, Fairhope potter, had his wheel set up at the back door to throw pots during the day and he also had a large table of his pottery for sale including his signature "Ugly Face" Jugs. Inside, Donnie Barrett was setting up his Elderberry props for his day long series of hourly lectures on "Everything about Elderberries". The Kracker Dan Minstrel Band began to arrive to set up their stage.

By 10 a.m., the Museum was full of people wander-

ing around looking at the displays and filling the historic council room. Donnie launched into his first talk with his usual flair, brushing the well dressed ladies in the front row with Elderberry branches shouting "Fleas be gone!" explaining that the branches contained enough *cyanide* to ward off insects and rodents. Having gotten everybody's attention, he recounted the history of the use of the Elderberry going back to Biblical times, the ancient Greeks, Romans and even modern times in Europe where Elderberry foods, potions, and icons were used for medicinal and mystical purposes. The Elderberry is the most healthful food, he explained, and also used in many medicines. Donnie then went on to explain how to identify, pick, process and preserve Elderberry juices and extracts.



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Director's Desk

Students are back in school and fall is coming soon. We've had an exciting summer with the *Bay Boat Era* exhibit attracting new crowds and the Elderberry Festival drawing more people than ever before.

Now, we have the "Calm Before the Storm." We have a brief quiet period this time *every* year. This seems to be the case with tourists too; summer vacation is over and everyone is back home and at work. Statistics show that if you have a function, party or some type celebration this time of year, few people will even attend. While we miss our higher number of guests, it's nice to get a breather.

September is our slowest month of the year for entertaining tourists. Our lowest recorded daily count ever was 9 on September 10, 2010 during the oil spill disaster that threatened the economy and ecology along the Gulf Coast. The headcount on the 2 days before that was 11 and 17 guests. Even on our rainiest, coldest or hottest days, we have not had so few. We usually enjoy an overall year-round average of 46 visitors per day.

We have finished our summer projects and are now looking toward the fall season when we get really busy. We first off, will put a display in the Baldwin County Fair, then put up historical decorations in Fairhope's Park and get ready for the many happenings that lead us into the holiday season.

The event I am most looking forward to this fall is the making of our *Round-Up Day* movie. It will be a rewarding experience to see this video production that so many of us have worked on now for four years. This will be a classic Fairhope movie that can be around for years to document our heritage!

Exhale slowly, because we have some very busy and exciting events coming up for the fall!

Donnie Barrett

Festival continued from page 1 -

Lottie Barrett and Claudia Hammer served the audience tasty samples near the end of the talk. The 11 a.m. lecture over-flowed into the hallway with people eager to see and hear the demonstrations.

Downstairs, Kracker Dan's Minstrels began playing, giving a musical background for Donnie's lively presentation. People gathered around the stage to hear the music, clapping their hands, tapping their toes and occasionally dancing a jig.



The lively crowd was then ready at noon for the annual Elderberry pie eating competition. The contest was limited to ten entrants which included men and women, boys and girls. Donnie gave the start for 60 seconds of no-hands eating and all faces were quickly into the pies. Sixteen year old Christopher Maloney won by a considerable margin! Most of the others ended with pie on their face and docent Louie Blaze even got purple Elderberries in his white beard. It was the most exciting 60 seconds of the day!

Kracker Dan's Minstrels returned again to the stage playing more spirited folk melodies.

The crowd of 350 attendees set a new record high attendance for the festival. The ice cream man sold out by mid-afternoon and John Reznar had a good day showing and selling his pottery.

By all measures, it was a great Elderberry Festival! ~

By Curt Cochran,
Docent & Contributing Writer.



Bay Boat Era

Exhibit draws memories from elder citizens



The popular *Bay Boat Era* exhibit, now in its third month at the Museum, has brought smiles to many guests and long-time residents. “Part of the fun of this exhibit,” says docent Jerry Fortis “is eavesdropping on senior visitors as they reminisce with family stories.” Some react as though they had ridden the *Fairhope II* or *James A Carney* themselves, as they tour the glass enclosed models. “My mom told me about this one,” a lady said, as she pointed to the deck of the *General Lee*. More than in earlier exhibits, visitors seem to “find themselves” on the steamers and early propeller-driven boats that served the Eastern Shore for over a hundred years.

The exhibit features seven model bay - boats built to scale by Fairhope bay-boat historian Peco Forsman for the Single Tax Corporation. A continuous video and other memorabilia are also on display in the upstairs reception area of the Museum.

This premier exhibit will remain until spring 2016.

Our Lineage in a Nutshell

Our part of Alabama is unique; it became French territory in 1699, British in 1763 and Spanish in 1783. The United States acquired the lower part of the Mississippi Territory, which included Alabama and excluded the Gulf Coast, in 1798 and annexed the north part of the Mississippi Territory in 1804. Spain retained ownership of the coast until it was annexed in 1812. Baldwin County in Mississippi Territory was founded in 1809 and Alabama Territory was established in 1817. Alabama, with borders as we know them today, became the 22nd U.S. State in 1819.



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Technology at Work

Interactive Computer Display in Colonial Inn Exhibit, Update -

The Museum of History recently introduced its Colonial Inn Exhibit in the corridor downstairs near the Old Jail, with timely plans to supplement the display with an interactive computer display using the rings of the 163 year old Pine tree that stood across the street from the Inn. The concept was and is, to have the rings of the Pine represent specific years in history. By simply touching any ring, the guest will be able to read about events in history that occurred at that time.

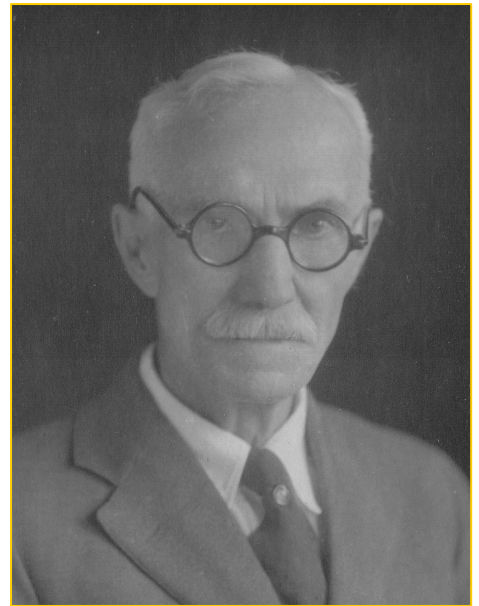
The City of Fairhope Information Technology department is working toward completion of the exhibit, but first, the telephone system must be updated to accommodate the data capacity required for the new phones and transmission of data. Consequently, the display has temporarily been delayed. Assistant Director Jim Bates, who is overseeing the project for the Museum, says, “We are still excited about implementing this exhibit. This first-of-a-kind interactive educational display will be worth the wait.”

Stewart, the Picture Man

By Curt Cochran

Frank Stewart, “The Picture Man,” has done more than anyone to document the early history of Fairhope in pictures. His pictures are everywhere. Many are on display in the Fairhope Museum of History; many are in the books about Fairhope and some are still prized family possessions of Fairhope families. The Fairhope Museum has a collection of several hundred of his photos and many of them were on display as a special exhibit during the years 2009 and 2010. Everyone enjoys his pictures of historic Fairhope but few know about how he got to Fairhope or and how he produced all those photographs.

Frank Stewart was born into a large family in Indiana in 1855. His family moved to Kansas soon afterwards and spent the Civil War years there. His father was a political activist who played a role in forming the Lincoln Republican Party in Kansas. Not much is known about his early years although there is an urban legend that he was present for the Golden Spike ceremony of the Union Pacific Railroad in Utah in 1869, when he was 14 years old. At age 36, he was working for the C.R.I. & P Railroad in Chicago, as secretary to the president. That year, he married Ms. Harriet “Hattie” Gray. Like millions of others at the time, Stewart became enamored with the Single Tax theory and in the late 1890s decided to move to the vicinity of Fairhope to be part of the action. He found land cheaper outside of Fairhope and bought a 40 acre farm on Pole Cat Creek (which he called Silver Creek). By this time, he was an accomplished professional photographer using both glass plates and celluloid film and started his photography business right away, often traveling about in a horse-drawn buggy and later by car, while always carrying his heavy camera. In 1913, he gave up on the farm and moved into Fairhope to become an integral part of the city and the Single Tax experiment.



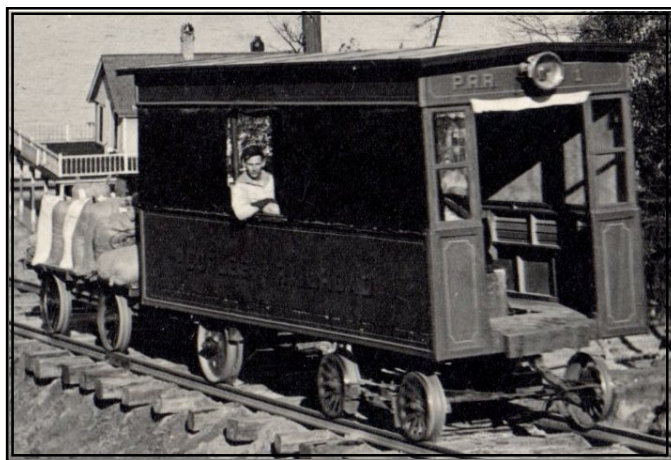
His Fairhope house and studio was on Section St. near the present day Greer’s Market. His photography studio was busy but he still had time to go out photographing the Bay Boats, the People’s Train, big celebrations and everyday life in Fairhope. He had a special camera which used celluloid film to make postcards, a popular item at the time. In the studio, he still used a glass plate camera for portraits because it could produce better quality pictures. Although he was 59 years old when he moved to Fairhope, he was able to climb to the top of the water tower in the center of town for pictures to record the development of the town. The first few years in Fairhope were his most active and he photographed just about everything. While there were other photographers in Fairhope who competed with him, none matched his variety or volume.

As more people were able to buy cameras and film, he went into film developing and printing pictures. Those who knew him, described him as a very formal man who was always well dressed. Family portraits in his studio were always a formal affair with his wife and niece getting people ready for pictures. Although he did have competition, he became the photographer that everybody wanted and remembered – Stewart the Picture Man. He worked on until 1936 when he sold the business – he was 81. His photographs remain a treasure for Fairhope. ~

People's Railroad Hands-On Outdoor Exhibit Chugs ahead Slowly

In July, a set of railcar wheels appeared on the lawn outside the Bancroft Street Entrance of the Museum. Then some iron rails and cross-ties were delivered. These curious items placed on the grass signal the beginning of something good!

Director Donnie Barrett conceived the idea 3 years ago, of a touch and feel, full-scale People's Railroad passenger car in the Fountain Park between our circular driveways. With the support of the *Friends* and the City of Fairhope, the project is moving forward at a pace likened to a little locomotive ascending a hill—slowly but surely.



Two small, yet larger than already-there train wheels, are being sought by everyone associated with the Museum. Assistant Director Jim Bates has searched the internet and local shops for iron railcar wheels meeting the original dimensions of the People's Railroad car. Even docents on vacation around the U.S. have been on the lookout.

The Friends of the Museum will pay for the wheels and the City has agreed to provide gravel for the foundation for the cross-ties. Then the rails will be nailed in place, just as they were in 1916. The passenger railcar however, will be static with wheels welded in-place for safety sake and kids and adults will be encouraged to sit, play, take pictures and kick the wheels.

The search is on. When the slightly larger wheels are found or manufactured, the project will again be on track!

Founders Day Theatrical Production Scheduled for Saturday, November 14

The Mayor of Fairhope has declared that the founding of Fairhope shall be commemorated annually. This year, the event will take place on Saturday, November 14, 2015. A cast of 24 personalities in period costume will present a play depicting the early years of the Single Tax Colony. The play was introduced in 2012 and grew into a full scale production in 2014, set in the Colony Cemetery. It has been a resounding success and this year, will be filmed by a professional movie production company from San Diego, California and made into an historical documentary.

The performances will take place at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. at the



Cemetery on Oak Street, with advance tickets on sale at the Fairhope Museum of History. Admission is \$10; all proceeds go to the *Friends of the Fairhope Museum* for expenses not in the annual Museum operations budget.

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## - Docent News -

**Curt Cochran**, our Museum *Friends* facebook webmaster, will teach a class for Eastern Shore Institute for Lifelong Learning (ESILL) about Henry George and the Fairhope Single Tax Colony. The class will feature the fundamental principles that attracted the Single-Taxers to the Eastern Shore in 1894. The class will be held on November 10.

**Dot Bremer**, another of our veteran docents, is also quite active in ESILL.

Our **Gene Labrato** is also now serving as docent at Mobile's new *Gulfquest Maritime Museum* on Thursdays and Sundays!



## Tea for Two

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

### Upcoming Programs

**October 6 – Jon Thornton** – Jon and his wife Becky first saw Fairhope in the early 1960's. It soon became their home, filling their lives with Eastern Shore activities. Jon now manages and directs productions at Theater 98 and is ready to tell us about it.

**October 13 – Jim Nix** – Mr. Nix was the Mayor of Fairhope from 1972 to 2000. During this time he modernized our city's infrastructure, sewer system, recycling, Civic Center, Senior Center, Rose Garden and fountain but most importantly, started the city's beautification program. Come help us thank him for all he has done for Fairhope.

**October 20 – Lt. John Hamrick** – Lt. Hamrick is a Fairhope native who has just been promoted to Lieutenant in the Fairhope Police Department. He has started several programs at the Police Dept. that he is excited to tell us about.

**October 27 – Janice Charles** – Janice is the Director of the Fairhope Film Festival. She will tell us about its history, venue locations, prices, opening night parties and the 40 films that will be shown during the Festival.

**November 3 – Alan Samry** – Alan has presented programs on Fairhope founders Lydia Comings and Frank Brown and has quite an interesting career himself. He will read for us some of his impressive writings and tell about some of his other projects at the Fairhope Library.

**November 10 – Donnie & Judy Weston** – Donnie & Judy are Fairhope natives who were childhood sweethearts and have also raised their children here. Judy was Donnie Barrett's neighbor and they played together as children. Come enjoy hearing about their lives growing up in Fairhope during simpler times.

## Tea for Two

### Upcoming Programs, continued

**November 17 – Wendy Allen** – Wendy will talk about her public life here in Fairhope. She was once a Baldwin County Commissioner, worked with *Smart Coast*, an many other projects that have benefited our area.

**November 24 – Charles Scovill** – Charles is a professor of astronomy who went to South Africa to study the skies of the southern hemisphere. He has a very entertaining slide presentation of his travels through South Africa.

### Upcoming Friends Meetings

**The next planning meetings of the Friends of the Museum will be October 13 and November 17, 2015, 3:15 p.m. in the Council Chamber Room upstairs at the Museum.**

**Officers for Year 2016 will be elected in the October Meeting.**

~  
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. Contributing Writers vary with each issue. Contact: [Fairhopemuseum-newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:Fairhopemuseum-newsletter@gmail.com). Editor: Bob Glennon.

## Fairhope Museum of History

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

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