

Friends



Of the Fairhope Museum of History



NEWSLETTER

Vol 6 Issue 6 December 2015 - January 2016

Founders Day - 121st Anniversary

November 14, 2015

Back by popular demand, the founders of Fairhope, in costume and vintage attire, gathered at the Colony Cemetery to commemorate the founding and growth of our town and city through its first half-century. The cool brisk air and clear skies accented the beautiful 1904 theme setting for the Round Up of early Single Tax Colonists.



Colony patriarch, E.B. Gaston, played by Jerry Fortis, strolled through the landscape, chatting with citizens of the past about their contribution to the fledgling town as it took root and

bloomed as the most progressive single tax experiment in America.

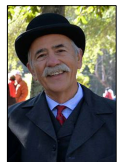
Twenty-two museum staff, docents and volunteers portrayed pioneers who now reside in the Colony Cemetery. Yet in their day, they committed their lives to making Fairhope a successful economic experiment and Utopian society.

The movie production company, Veritas, of San Diego, CA., worked in concert with the Fairhope Museum of History to digitally film the theatrical performances with the intent to produce a documentary of Fairhope's history. John Woods, Veritas producer, said, "We are excited to video this production, as people across the country are interested in Fairhope. Anything 'Fairhope' gets attention!"

The script played out as Mr. Gaston began at the gravesite of John Hunnell, (Donnie Barrett), 1st burial in the Colony cemetery, then moved on to:



Delia Bancroft (Rosanne Gulisano), one of the first married here;



George Bancroft (Gary Zeller), ran the first hotel overlooking the Pier;



Alfonso Swift (Ron Barrett), 1st Constable, barefooted & no-gun, Single Tax "Kicker;"



George Knowles (Jim Sapsner), Union private, namesake of Knoll Park;



John Franklin Johnson (Graham Timbes), Socialist Mayor and husband of Marietta;



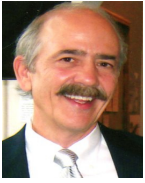
Marietta Johnson (Maggie Mosteller-Timbes), 1st progressive school teacher, organic school founder;



James Balangee (Dr. Ralph Thayer), 1st Single-Taxer, former college professor;



Dr. Floyd Moore (Larry Dotson), Built 1st hospital on Fairhope Av. Building still stands;



Director's Desk

Wow, what a production! I want to thank each and every one of you who played a part, figuratively and literally, in our Round Up Day (aka: Founder's Day) Anniversary play! The film producers were surprised at the variety of skills, talents and personalities of the characters and the wide range of emotions displayed. They were impressed with the costumes and at how well the parts were presented. And while it was tiring, we greatly appreciate the response to the "retakes" on Saturday, November 21 and 28, so the movie crew could get up-close footage of each role played.

The volunteers who arranged the lunch for the cast, ticket takers and those who helped set-up and take-down were all an important part of the success of our production. Everyone deserves credit for a fun and successful event.

To my surprise, I have received a lot of feedback about my passing comment that we may not do this play again. We will see how the video comes out and decide what we want to do next year to celebrate our annual Round Up Day.

Very few towns and cities in the country have a specific day that identifies their founding. We not only had a specific day, we had a written plan and had qualified people to implement that plan. We just reinforced that by portraying the cross-section of professions that made Fairhope what it is today. Landmarks like the Colony Cemetery, the organic school, 20 plus parks, pier, many buildings, wide streets and public beaches remind us about our great heritage. We are particularly fortunate to have these reminders.

I am very proud to lead our Museum of History and to work with such dynamic and creative docents, staff and volunteers!

Donnie Barrett

"Founder's Day," continued from page 1

Clara Gaston (Catherine King), first lady of Fairhope, wife of E.B. Gaston;



Dr. Clara Adkinson (Dr. Jacque Johnson), 1st female doctor, E.B. Gaston's sister;



Capt. Joseph Lawrence (Brent Uhlig), 1st boat builder;



Marie Howland (Abby Dunlap), 1st library and women's rights leader;



Joseph Keller (Tyrone Crowley), 1st blacksmith, still has large family in Baldwin Co.;



Shuah Mann (Wayne Brunson), selected the Fairhope site, increased size of Single Tax Colony property;

Arthur Mershon (Paul Czajka), 1st Post Office, oldest home in town;



Dr. Clarence Mershon (Bob Glennon), 1st doctor, Fairhope Pharmacy, 1st telephone system;

Lydia Comings (Fran Morley), invented physical education, national acclaim, organic school co-founder;



Clement Coleman (Parker Gray), 1st store, 1st water system, 1st subdivision;

Dr. Harris Greeno (Louie Blaze), first mayor, former Federal military officer;



William Federick Eernisse (empty chair w U.S. flag), 1st national hero, died and remains on the USS Arizona at Pearl Harbor.



After honorable recognition of Seaman Eernisse, the audience and cast sang *America*, followed by *Taps* played on trumpet by Assistant Director, Jim Bates. Jim also served as opening narrator.

The production was presented at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. for enthusiastic audiences totaling approximately one-hundred residents, visitors and guests.

~

People's Railroad

Progress Report



The City of Fairhope Public Works Department came to the aid of our Museum in early November and constructed a railroad bed just like in the old days; base coat of packed soil, gravel and crossties. The rails and small wheels acquired by the *Friends of the Museum*, were then placed in position. Next will come the spikes to hold it all into place and for safety's sake, the wheels will be tack-welded to the track.

Two large wheels, slightly bigger than those already on the rails, are on order. These will mimic the original passenger car that is found in photos of the People's Railroad, circa 1914.



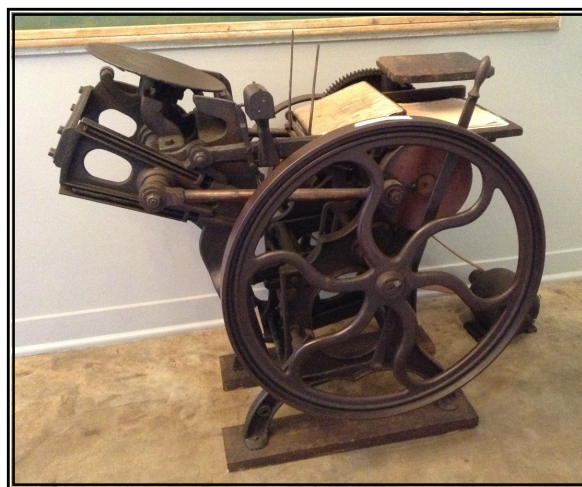
Already the track-bed is drawing attention and curious inquiries from visitors. The completion date is undefined until the delivery date for the large wheels is known. Then Director Donnie will plan the big "Driving of the Final Spike" ceremony. ~

The Fairhope Courier

is the story of Fairhope—

Research by Donnie Barrett

The *Fairhope Courier* was first printed in Des Moines, Iowa in 1894 as the voice of the Fairhope Industrial Association, the legal name for the Single Tax Colony. Printing of the *Courier* moved to Mobile in 1894, to Battles Wharf, AL. in 1895, then to Fairhope in 1896. The newspaper continued thereafter to be printed on Fairhope Avenue for the next 70 years.



This Chandler & Price printing press was made in 1901 and printed the *Fairhope Courier* newspaper and inserts until 1961. The press was given to the Fairhope Museum of History by the Gulf Coast Newspapers in November 2012.

Ernest Berry (E.B.) Gaston established the *Courier* to express political views for the founders of the Single Tax Colony. He never hesitated to promote his quest for this "Utopian Community". The paper was printed twice a month for the first 10 years, at the cost of 26 cents per year. In 1905, Mr. Gaston published the news weekly at a cost of 75 cents per year. By 1920, the *Courier* was 16 inches wide. During the 1930s to 1960s, the *Courier* was 18 inches wide. It returned to 16 inches in the '70s, 14 inches in the 1990s and is now 11 1/2 inches wide. Arthur Fairhope "Spider" Gaston, E.B.'s son, took over the business in 1926. Other Gaston family members helped in the *Courier* office as printers and assistant editors. In 1964, the Gastons turned the paper over to Eastern Shore Publishers. The *Courier* ceased being printed in Fairhope in 1975 and the office moved out of town in October 2014. Today it is published by Gulf Coast Newspapers. ~

Della Nichols – Fairhope’s First Artist

By Curt Cochran



Della Nichols – Fairhope’s First Artist

about a year before his mother, but the family kept it secret because of the property agreement in his divorce. The family just rolled him up in a blanket and put him “away”. When Della died, the family announced that Forest had died and rolled him out of his blanket and had his funeral service with his mother. They were buried side-by-side.

Della was well known as an artist. Her favorite medium was painting on silk or satin which decays rapidly so very little of this work survived in good condition. She also did some painting on canvas, producing beautiful nature scenes, especially flowers. The centerpiece of her artwork that remains in the possession

Everyone who comes to Fairhope soon learns that it is an artist’s haven that also attracts writers, musicians and other people with unique talents and abilities. It takes a while to learn that the first artist in Fairhope was actually here before Fairhope was founded. That artist was Della Nichols, who came with her husband in the summer of 1894. They arrived here and were waiting to welcome the Single Taxers.

Della Oswalt Nichols, an accomplished artist from Shorter, Alabama, married Charles Edgar Nichols, a sea captain from Boston, MA in 1888, when she was 24 years old. They acquired 50 acres of land on the Eastern Shore in the middle of what would become Fairhope, with the plan to build a house for themselves and 12 rental cottages. The house, called “Liberty Castle”, was built with three stories to give Della a third-story window where she could place a lantern so that Charles, the sea captain, could see it and find his way home in the dark.

This house was the only three-story house in Fairhope for a long time and remained the family home until the 1950s when it was sold to a developer to build the Bay Winds Condominiums. It was torn down in 1967. The cottages on the 50 acres known as Nicholasville were also sold and the name Nicholasville disappeared, as did the subdivision names of Adelville, Madelineville and Forrestdean. Nichols Ave. was named for the family. Liberty Street was named for the large elegant house.

Three generations of the family lived in Fairhope. Their one child, a son named Forest Edgar Nichols born in 1895, also became one of Fairhope’s legends. He married and had two children, but was otherwise a rather helpless alcoholic. He died

Della Nichols, continued on page 5

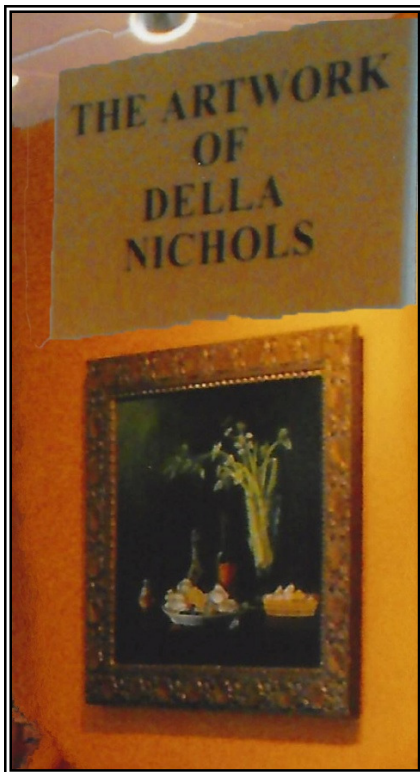
Della Nichols, continued from page 4

of her family is a large 6 ft by 6 ft quilt that has a variety of scenes and musical instruments, commonly called a “crazy quilt.”

Most of her work remains as property of her family and hangs in their homes and rental cottages.

Della’s great-granddaughter returned to Fairhope and began collecting and restoring Della’s artwork. She agreed to put the art that she had on display at the Eastern Shore Art Center to celebrate the Fairhope Centennial in 1994. The artwork and family history was documented in the *Fairhope Courier* and other local newspapers during the Centennial year. It was a major part of the year long celebration in 1994.

Della’s art was the first special exhibit of the Fairhope Museum of History when it opened in 2008. The photo here on the right shows one of four paintings that was part of the Museum exhibit. The quilt was also on display.



Della Nichols Exhibit at the Museum

Della Nichols continued with her art until her death in 1938. The few pieces that remain show her artistic talent and ability. Her long career as an artist gives some credence to the theory that it is the lovely location on the Eastern Shore that attracts artists and contributes to their creative energy. Fairhope is a very special place. ~

Friends of the Museum of History Elect 2016 Officers

Our *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History* organization has had a standing cadre of about 70 volunteers who have shown enthusiasm as *Friends* since its beginning under its State of Alabama granted charter in 2010. “The talent and education level of our volunteers is well above average,” says Director Donnie Barrett. “Our Museum is rapidly becoming one of the most popular tourist attractions in South Alabama.” Being in Fairhope makes us unique—and we make Fairhope unique. Towns our size don’t have history museums that attract about 30,000 visitors a year like we do.

On October 13, 2015, our *Friends* organization held its annual meeting to elect Officers for 2016. The new officers are:

President: Curtis Cochran
Vice-President: Louie Blaze
Treasurer: Lottie Barrett
Secretary: Catherine King

While these officers preside over meetings and planning throughout the year, they also assist the Director and Assistant Director in implementing new exhibits and programs. The *Friends* volunteers eagerly staff each seasonal and historic event.

The president of the *Friends* for the past 4 years has been Mary Ann Maradik. Mary Ann demonstrated organizational talents that were “par excellence.” She also served as Coordinator of Docents, assuring that volunteers were on hand every time the doors were open and that more staff was on-hand for events, sometime needing 10 to 20 helpers for one afternoon. She also presided over monthly meetings of the organization and met weekly with the director to discuss upcoming plans and to critique past events to assure continued success. She also worked closely with program chairpersons for all activities.

We enthusiastically applaud Mary Ann for her past years and future service to the *Friends* and to the Museum! Thanks Mary Ann!! ~



Tea for Two

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

Upcoming Programs

December 1 – Mike Turner – Mike is a musician, songwriter, music historian and a collector of old fashioned stringed instruments. He will tell us the history of these instruments and sing us a song or two.

December 8 – Art Thomas – Art is the chairman of the Middle Bay Lighthouse Association. He and Jack Granade will talk about the importance, history and care of Alabama’s lighthouses.

December 15 – Lynn Hastie Bozone – Lynn will present her new book “Stockton Leaves” and tell us about the years it took to write it. She will also tell us about the new Stockton Museum which Donnie Barrett helped her to open.

December 22 – Christmas Week – No Tea speaker this week only.

December 29 – Albert Key – Albert has “lived most of the last century” as a native of Point Clear. He and his family have been part of many projects and community activities. He’ll have lots of “stories on the waters of Mobile Bay” to tell.

January 5 – John Reno – John has lived in Fairhope with his family for 20 years. He will tell us about himself, play his guitar and sing many delightful songs.

January 12 – Jaca Hicks McLaren – Jaca’s grandparents (the Fondreau family) owned land in Point Clear. Her family moved her around the country until she was in high school. She is past chairman of the Arts & Crafts Festival and is now a Fairhope ambassador at the Welcome Center.

The Newsletter

The Friends Newsletter is the official publication of *Friends of the Fairhope Museum of History, Inc.*, an Alabama 501(C) (3) Corporation. Editor: Bob Glennon.



Tea for Two

Upcoming Programs, continued:

January 19 – Curt Cochran – Curt has taught an ESILL class on the Single Tax Colony and Henry George. He has a slide show of many historical photos and political cartoons. Good Fairhope history!

January 26 – George Fuller – George’s grandfather, George Sr., started Spanish Fort Estates where George grew up and attended Fairhope High School. He has always been very creative, light-hearted and a lively character. He made his career in the advertising industry and has now moved back to Fairhope.

Special Thanks...

goes out to all docents and *Friends* who worked behind the scenes at the Founder’s Day production for set-up, ticket sales, gate admissions, lunch for the cast and general assistance as-needed...

And to Director Donnie Barrett, who wrote & directed the historical play and made it fun!

- The Cast

Upcoming Friends Meetings

The next planning meeting of the *Friends of the Museum* will be January 19, 2016, 3:15 p.m. in the Council Chamber Room upstairs at the Museum.

~
Mary Ann Maradik, President 2015
Curtis Cochran, President 2016



Fairhope Museum of History

24 North Section Street (251) 929-1471

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

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