

TRAILS IN HISTORY

Official Newsletter of the Lee County Historical Society

Volume 43, Number 2

April 2010

Published Quarterly

Spring Meeting of Lee County Historical Society

April 11, 2010

2:30 pm

LCHS Trade Center Museum

Loachapoka, Alabama

**“A Historical Analysis of the Creek Indian
Hillabee Towns in Clay County”**

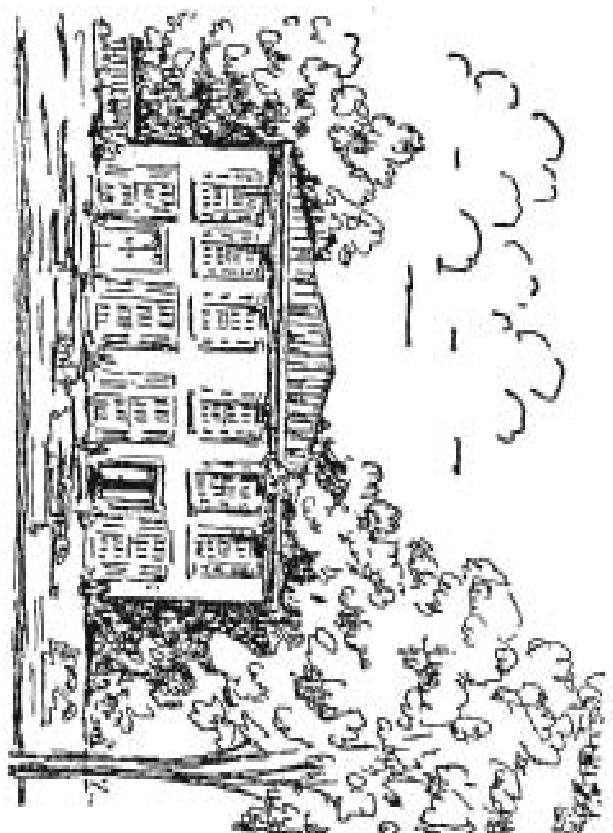
Speaker: Don C. East



Captain Don C. East was born in Elias (Cleveland's Cross Roads) in Clay County and graduated from Bibb Graves High School in 1957. He served over 35 years of active duty in the United States Navy as both enlisted and officer, retiring in 1992.

During his naval service, he served in numerous foreign countries including Russia, Turkey, Spain, Italy, Germany, Greece and Norway. His education includes undergraduate degrees in engineering science and international relations. His post-graduate work led to masters degrees in international relations and in national security affairs.

He currently lives on Lake Wedowee, where he is the owner and operator of The Creeks Tree Farms in Clay and Randolph Counties. He is also a part-time writer of history and nature articles for local magazines and newspapers. His latest writings are in the form of a book entitled “A Historical Analysis of the Creek Indian Hillabee Towns.”



Lee County Historical Society
P. O. Box 206
Loachapoka, AL 36865
Return Service Requested

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Loachapoka, AL
Permit No. 2

LEE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 206
LOACHAPOKA, AL 36865

web address:

www.leecountyhistoricalsociety.org

e-mail: lchs1968@hotmail.com

Organized October 25, 1968, chartered as a non-commercial, non-profit corporation under the laws of the State of Alabama, Charter filed with Probate Court, Lee County, Alabama, November 8, 1968.

OFFICERS

President: Deborah McCord
Vice-President: Charles C. Mitchell
Treasurer: Roxanne Daughtry
Secretary: Jeannette Frandsen
HCC Delegate: Ann Pearson
Trails Editor: Janet Sugg

TRUSTEES

Term expires December 31, 2012

Barbara Ervin
Doyle Keasal
Charles H. Mitchell
Betty Patterson
Dr. Ann Pearson
Peggie Webster

Term expires December 31, 2011

Ruth Ann Bond
Kay Campbell
Pat Conover
Sheila Eckman
Zack Sprayberry
Carl Summers, Jr.

Term expires December 31, 2010

Dottie Marcinko
Arvle Marshall
John Rice
John Ross
William Wilson
Jim Witte

MUSEUM CALENDAR

April 10 - Second Saturday,

10am - 3pm

April 11 - Regular Meeting, 2:30pm

April 23-25th - Second Annual Lee

County Gathering, Old-time

Music Festival - Special guest instructor Joe Collins, 2007 National Mountain Dulcimer Champion. For more info see www.leecountygathering.com.

May 8 - Second Saturday,

10am - 3pm

June 12 - Second Saturday,

10am - 3pm

June 13 - Board Meeting, 2:30pm

July 10 - Second Saturday,

10am - 3pm

July 11 - Regular Meeting, 2:30pm

August 14 - Second Saturday,

10am - 3pm

September 11 - Second Saturday,

10am - 3pm

September 12 - Board Meeting,

2:30pm

LCHS MEMBERSHIP

Due: January 1 of each year
Individual: \$20 per individual
Family: \$30 (spouse and children)
Additional Donations Appreciated

All memberships and donations to LCHS are tax deductible. Please send your check (payable to LCHS), your mailing address (and e-mail address if applicable) to

Lee County Historical Society
P. O. Box 206
Loachapoka, AL 36865

Museum Report

Jessie Summers, LCHS museum Curator

Phil Garrett gave us three very welcomed books which tell of the beginning and growth of the State Extension System in the Universities of Tuskegee and of Auburn:

- *State Agricultural Experiment Stations*
 - *The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth, and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System 1881-1990*
 - *Taking the University to the People*
- All are excellent resource material.

Lee Barker donated a piece of Wetumpka bedrock – composed of many layers of Mica Schist, beautiful silver in color, about 300 million years old. Yes, 300 million! Dr. David King, geography department, identified it. He said the bedrock was disturbed when a huge meteorite fell on what is now Wetumpka, AL about 75 million years ago.

Dr. David King gave the Society copies of two books he has written: *Wetumpka Impact Crater*, and *Alabama Dinosaurs*. Both will be in the study room for your research or just for your interest in learning something new.

Ann Nunn Robertson has donated several items from her paternal grandparent's home. One is the American flag which was given to Ann's mother, Annie Lou Rowell Nunn, after the death of her husband, Lt. Col. James H. Nunn. Also donated is a small brass school bell which Mrs. Nunn used in her second

grade classes in Cloverdale School in Montgomery. A wooden dough bowl, a buttermilk pitcher and a one cup coffee grinder shared the Nunn's kitchen for many, many years and now are together in our upstairs kitchen. The fine, heart pine chest is in the Victorian bed room. It is very large and beautifully crafted. It was also in the Nunn home on Wire Rd.

Our most recent project is the restoration of the floors downstairs in the Trade Center. **Charles H. Mitchell** was able to find a contractor who could restore, not replace, our 165 year old heart pine floor. Charles H. and his son **Matt** did a lot of preparation work. First they discovered that the foundation seal along the front wall had been destroyed, so they built a concrete buffer and a surface drain to divert the rain water from coming in the front rooms. Underneath the floor of the building, in very close quarters, they did a most difficult job of stabilizing the supporting members.

These generous people are helping to keep our restoration fund happy.

- Dr. and Mrs. Dick Amacher**
- Mr. and Mrs. Walter C. Dorsey**
- Mr. Thomas Eden III**
- Mr. and Mrs. Steve Gosser**
- Mr. and Mrs. Hardy Graves**
- Mr. Jay Jones**
- Mr. and Mrs. Allen McCord**
- Dr. and Mrs. B.T. Robertson**
- Mr. Yetta Samford**
- Mr. James C. Whatley, Jr**

Lee County Gathering Down from the Mountain... “OLD-TIME MUSIC FESTIVAL” APRIL 22-25, 2010

The 2nd annual Lee County Gathering Old-Time Music Festival will be held on the LCHS grounds this April. This year's festival is expected to be bigger and better than before with great nationally known dulcimer instructors such as **Joe Collins, Terry and Pam Lewis, Denise Guillory, and TNT.**

Local instructors include

Dr. Gwen Taunton - fiddle, Fred Lord - mandolin and guitar,

Wayne Foote - contra dance,

Bill Hogan - Sacred Harp,

Dr. Bill King - storytelling,

Bob and Rose Taunton - bass dulcimer and banjo and

Deborah McCord - autoharp and children's beginning dulcimer.

The festival will kick-off with an ice cream social and instructor's concert at the bandstand Thursday evening. Friday and Saturday will be two full days of instruction, continuous jams, concerts, and lots of fun. A Saturday evening dance will be held with all participants joining in the dancing or the "house band." Sunday morning will end with a hymn sing and jam. Food will be available on site. Limited campground sites are available on site. Information concerning other campgrounds and lodging is available on the website.

The festival is hosted by Allen and Deborah McCord (bigalmccord@bellsouth.net 334-821-1301) and Bob and Rose Taunton (banjobob@charter.net 334-283-3045). The host dulcimer satellite group is the Whistle Stop Pickers. For more information and to download an application, go to www.leecountygathering.com.



LCHS President's Report by Deborah McCord

Our Mission: to relate the history and traditions of Lee County, Alabama (and the surrounding areas) through preservation, restoration, education, presentation, publication, and acquisition.

I would like to welcome Dr. Ann Pearson, Barbara Ervin, and John Rice to the board of the LCHS. The board positions are unpaid and often unappreciated, but without them the society could not operate. They work very hard to maintain a Society that makes us all proud. Thank you, board members and officers.

As an all volunteer, non-profit organization, we are constantly looking for avenues of funding to support the work of the Society. Membership dues go a long way towards paying the utilities for the year. Thank you for paying your dues. Monetary donations received for the last two years along with proceeds from the Historical Fair are going toward the renovations on the Trade Center. Even so, we haven't received nearly enough to complete the project. Charles H. Mitchell and sons along with Jessie Summers are working diligently to get the floors repaired and refinished in the Trade Center.

Doyle Keasal received more than \$7,500 in grants to install a water collection system and work on our "wet lands" area. Doyle put in many hours along with Charles H. Mitchell and Charles C. Mitchell. My thanks go out to all who helped with this project and especially to Doyle for his vision and work towards gaining this funding. This project will become another demonstration area for the Society.

I am pleased to announce that the Society has received two new grants this year: \$1,000 from the Alabama Arts Council for the Lee County Gathering Old Time Music Festival to be held in April and a \$5,000 grant from the West Point Fund (Chattahoochee Valley Community Foundation) to continue our education programs. In addition to the grants, we have received two loads of gravel, donated by the Vulcan Materials plant, to place on the drive

Report continued on page 4



Resident artist Jean Kerr teaches pine straw basketry with assistance from Carolyn Williams at LCHS Second Saturday in February.

Report continued from page 3
through the property. I welcome your assistance in finding these grant opportunities. It will take all of us working together, seeking funding, volunteering time and labor, and opening new doors where funding may be found.

Volunteers are needed again this spring, summer and fall to open the Museum on a regular basis. It is our hope to continue our education programs including school fieldtrips. These are not possible without our many volunteers. The spring Lee County Gathering (April 22-25) requires many volunteers, as we are expecting more than 200 people to attend. When you are called on to volunteer for one of these activities, please agree to give a little of your time.

Second Saturdays are “gearing up” for the spring and summer. We had a

great Second Saturday in February, with resident artist Jean Kerr, teaching a “Pine Straw Basket” class. Esther Marshall demonstrated weaving, Jeanette Frandsen hosted children’s Valentine making activities, Arvle Marshall manned the log cabin, Bob and Rose Taunton taught beginning dulcimer lessons, and Melanie Ellis worked the refreshment table. Charles C. Mitchell worked in the gardens. Please come out on Second Saturday and support your Society.

Finally, please let me encourage you to think about donating towards the installation of a heating and air system for our Trade Center. This is a critical improvement necessary to preserve our priceless historical documents and artifacts. We need you. Please give generously to make these goals a reality.

LCCHS Spring Meeting: April 11, 2:30 pm

Speaker: Don C. East

“A Historical Analysis of the Creek Indian Hillabee Towns in Clay County”



Don C. East’s new book “A Historical Analysis of the Creek Indian Hillabee Towns (And Personal Reflections on the Landscape and People of Clay County, Alabama)” is the first book to detail the history of the Hillabee factions of the Creek Indian Nation and the subsequent white pioneer settlement of what would become southern Clay County. The first part of the book details the Hillabee Towns; which were the mother town of Hillabee and the four satellite villages of Lanudshi Apala, Enitachopko, Echoise Ligua, and Oktasassi. The extensive trading post and farm/factory complex belonging to the Scotsman Robert Grierson was co-located with the Hillabee mother town and is also discussed in the book.

The book makes the transition to the early white pioneer settler hamlets springing up in what would become southern Clay County after the removal of the Creeks. These were Millerville, Bluff Springs, Pinckneyville, Harlan, Cleavelands Cross Roads, Brownsville and Hollins.

Spring Meeting continued on page 5



Dick and Mary Jane Teague, circa 1978.

crews with heavy fog and terrible visibility. The planes had been scheduled to take off at dawn, but there were all sorts of complications with the ‘forming up’ process. Most of the crews had already been up for hours. No aircraft took off anywhere near the right time. ‘The Great Speckled Bird’ didn’t clear the English coast until after one p.m.. When the last of the escorting P47s wagged their wings goodbye to the bombers and headed back to England, wave after wave of German fighters rose to greet their American visitors.

One observer wrote: “I witnessed something that mankind will never see again... hundreds and hundreds of aircraft in the sky at once. [There were so many men bailing out] it looked like a parachute invasion of Germany. There were planes...going down so often it was useless to report them. My God, I had never seen anything like that before... Even Hollywood could never match that.” Speaking of Hollywood, Clark Gable, who was an officer with the Eighth Air Force, flew on that Schweinfurt raid.

When the war was over a changed Dick Teague came home. Well, not completely changed. He did get in a fist fight in Atlanta, and he did let the family

believe that his swollen hand was the result of mistreatment in prison. But his aim now was to go back to school and settle down. He entered Auburn in 1946 where he met his future wife, Mary Jane Morris from Kentucky. They married in September of 1947. Dick graduated with a degree in Agriculture and began work as a County Extension Agent here in Lee County.

On retirement in 1978, he and Mary Jane went as missionaries to Nigeria to share their Christian faith as well as teach improved farming methods. Dick Teague died in 1991.

Tom Brokaw wrote a book which caught the imagination of the country – ‘The Greatest Generation’. It told the story of those young Americans who fought – many giving their lives – in World War II. You might challenge their status as the greatest generation. We’ve had others who could lay claim to that title. But you would be hard pressed to name any greater than men like Dick Teague and those others who sacrificed so much for our nation and for us all.

Written by Winston Smith T in the spring of 2006.

Author’s Note: I could never have written this account of Dick Teague without the help of Mary Jane Teague who graciously lent me materials she kept these many years as well as recounting things she remembered being told by Dick and some papers he wrote himself shortly after the war telling about his experiences. I have also included a few items that I remember Dick telling me about those World War II years. My thanks to Mary Jane Teague for her invaluable help.

Teague continued from page 12

– on the 19 months he spent in Stalag 17. But this funny feeling, that something important was missing, kept troubling me. And then I realized that neither of the two previous accounts gives an adequate picture of the man himself – what he was like – how he came to be in that B17 that was shot down over Germany in August of 1943.

Richard W. Teague was from St. Clair County in Alabama northeast of Birmingham. He was born in Branchville and raised just three miles up the road in Odenville. He was the eighth of nine children. His father farmed and had a small broom factory. There were simply no family resources to send child number eight off to school, but Dick was determined to go to Auburn and get a college education.

He worked at the Greenhouse boarding house for his meals. He contracted with a lady to milk her cow every day for a small fee. Even so, Dick flunked out of college his freshman year. He failed chemistry twice. Years later, when he reminded Dr. Land of this, Mrs. Land turned to her husband and

said, “Everybody we talk to says you failed them. Didn’t you ever pass anybody?” But the real problem was that this “country boy” who had never been “turned loose” before, “partied” too much and too often that freshman year. So it was back home to Odenville for Dick.

The Dick Teague I remember, later on, was a model of rectitude, integrity and Christian virtue. He was, for many

years, an elder in the church he helped found – Opelika’s Trinity Presbyterian. He was one of the finest men I ever knew – this man who had grown up from a strong-willed and high-spirited youth.

Dick went to work in the Childersburg plant making gun powder and explosives. This job provided deferment from military service. But Dick was unhappy. We were at war and he was missing out on all the action. He enlisted in the Air Corps but he told his daddy he had been drafted. That wasn’t the only time he misled his father. He was assigned as a gunnery instructor at Casper, Wyoming, and could have stayed there the entire war. But once again he wanted to get into combat. So he volunteered for overseas duty as a crew member on a bomber. He wrote home that he had been “ordered” overseas.

The B17 bomber, ‘The Great Speckled Bird’, arrived in England minus its tail gunner. The regular gunner had been too drunk to join his crewmates when they left the States. That’s how Dick got assigned to his new job. He was twenty-one years old.

The “Bird” flew seven missions before its final one. They bombed the German submarine pens at St.-Nazaire on the French coast. On one raid Dick shot down a German fighter and won the Silver Star, but, by the time his kill had been confirmed, he was a prisoner in Stalag 17 so the medal had to be presented to his father, Chesley Teague, back in Alabama.

August 17 – the day of the raid on Schweinfurt – greeted the bomber

The Story of an Alabama Farmer

(As told by himself)

T.A. Whatley

This story was published by the Opelika and Lee County Chamber of Commerce, Opelika, Alabama, circa 1930’s. Mr. Whatley is a native of Lee County. His only business, is farming. He has no land for sale. What he has done others can do. The opportunity is here.

My farm is operated by my son, T. A. Whatley, Jr., and myself with enough help to run 12 plows. The cotton crop is the principal money crop, it ranging about 6 bales to the plow, or 75 to 80 bales per year, worth at present prices about \$10,000,

Cotton seed is a valuable crop. They bring \$20 to \$25 per bale, or \$1,500 to \$2,000 yearly. Our corn crop runs 1500 to 2000 bushels annually with field peas and velvet beans grown in large quantities with the corn.

The pea crop and price is usually good. It comes in as a money crop during January. The velvet beans are mostly left in the field for hogs and cattle, except enough for seed. They always sell well for seed if gathered.

The oat crop is generally used on the farm as a feed for the work stock. Rye is grown for grazing, mostly in the early spring. We raise some hairy vetch for hay

T.A. Whatley’s story of an Alabama Farmer does not leave any time for taking it easy for a few weeks after the crops were “laid by”.

Every time I read his article I get so tired that I feel like lying down and taking a nap.

– Carl Summers

and soil building. Sugar Cane and sorghum both grow very fine. Sorghum is used for feed, being very fine for hogs, mules, and horses. It is a good crop either alone or sowed with peas after oats and cut for hay.

Our syrup crop is always good and a market is always ready for all that is not consumed on the farm. We make about 500 gallons yearly.

Beef cattle are usually sold in January, bringing \$300 to \$350 per year. Three or four milk cows are sold during

Farmer continued on page 6

Spring Meeting continued from page 4

The final portion of the book contains anecdotes concerning ways of life among the early white settlers that were borrowed from the departing Creek Indians. Some of these customs and ways of rural life persist until this day. The publisher writes on the flyleaf of the book: “The story of the Hillabees has been both the Cinderella and the Rodney Dangerfield of Creek Indian history. Until now, it has been neglected and has garnered little respect. But author Don C. East changes that in this extensive historical look at the rise and fall of the Hillabee faction of the Creek Indian tribe and its existence in Clay County, Alabama.”

Books will be for sale following the spring meeting of the Lee County Historical Society and the author will be available to sign them.

Farmer continued from page 5
the year at \$100 to \$140 each. Hogs on foot bring about \$400 per year in addition to meat killed for home use.

The Opelika creamery furnishes a ready market for any amount of cream any time. Our cream sales average about \$25 per month.

We operate a grist mill and cotton gin, grinding corn into meal and ginning our cotton crop and some for our neighbors. We also operate a sawmill in connection with the farm during the months not engaged in making and gathering crops, mainly December, January, and August.

The foregoing mainly covers or outlines the main farm and only a very few days are lost from work, prevented by occasional cold weather.

Now, in addition to the foregoing, I personally, with a small amount of hired help, operate a small truck farm. Sales

begin in January, mostly with cabbage, collards, and turnips that were sown in October and November before. They bring about \$100 each month. March is a short month while April and May are good ones with fresh turnips, turnip greens, mustard, rape, lettuce, carrots, radishes, spinach, beets, onions, English peas, snap beans, and strawberries. All sell well and run well over \$300 for April and May. June comes with snap beans, squashes, okra, tomatoes, Irish potatoes, and other vegetables. During July and August tomatoes, beans, canteloupes, watermelons, roasting ear corn, and white peas are in abundance. During August, September, and October we sell beans, corn, melons, okra, squashes, and tomatoes from the garden and green peas from the corn field.

I sold during September of last fall, a dry time, \$75 worth of green field peas picked from a corn field in a short time.

Mr. T. A. Whatley, a farmer of Opelika, Lee County, Alabama, is here shown with twenty-seven products grown on his farm.



Photo: Alabama Department of Archives and History

was torture. No blankets, but lots of bed bugs. Dick didn't sleep at all. Next morning the men got blankets, and Dick spent most of the day getting rid of the bugs in his mattress. Later he would write, "Thank God that first night in Stalag 17 was over. I hope that as long as I live I never spend another night like that one."

Once a month the prisoners were taken to the de-lousing unit for fumigation and to have their heads shaved. The sole compensatory feature of this procedure was the hot shower that came along with it.

Meals in camp consisted of horse meat – often spoiled – black bread and watery soup. The average GI may have turned his nose up at canned Spam. But, for the 'kriegies' in Number 17, a Red Cross package with Spam was a delicacy to be savored. The cigarettes in those packages were priceless. They constituted hard currency for trading with the guards as well as locals.

Two former POWs at the camp wrote the script for the Broadway play – later made into a movie – 'Stalag 17'. William Holden won an Academy Award for his portrayal of the brash and unpopular Air Force sergeant who is suspected of working for the Germans. A good many events pictured in the movie do mirror incidents that actually occurred. But, as to the dramatic conclusion of the picture – the unmasking and death of the real traitor, that, according to Dick Teague, came out of the creative imagination of the authors.

"Yes, we knew there were informers" Dick would later say," but we never

learned who they were." And then he added, "And I was glad we never did."

Although there were numerous tunneling attempts, there was never a successful escape from Stalag 17.

In late April of 1945 Russian troops were nearing Krems from the east. Advance units of Patton's Third Army were closing in on the prison camp from the northwest. The camp authorities decided it was high time to clear out of Stalag 17 with their 4,500 charges in tow and to make for the Bavarian Alps in southern Germany. There the Nazi regime hoped to make a last ditch stand in their mountainous redoubt.

The prisoners were organized into smaller groups with guards assigned to each group. The 250 mile trek took them through such picturesque and historic Austrian towns as Braunau, Hitler's birthplace, and Linz where Hitler grew up. The POWs camped out each

The POWs camped out each night, and it wasn't long before they noticed that each morning when they awoke there were fewer and fewer guards to police the march.

night, and it wasn't long before they noticed that each morning when they awoke there were fewer and fewer guards to police the march. Finally, one morning there were no guards at all. They had simply melted away during the night. There they were – prisoners in what was left of Nazi Germany

– without any keepers. The men hastily organized themselves and began efforts to make contact with Patton's forces. On 5 May 1945 American troops arrived and officially 'liberated' the former 'kriegies' of Stalag 17.

My original intention was to write two articles on Dick Teague – the first about the Schweinfurt raid. The second

Teague continued on page 12

The Dick Teague Story (part II)

by Winston Smith T

This is the story of Dick Teague's experiences in WW II. Dick Teague was the county agent for Lee County for 30 plus years.

Previously [Part I - *Trails in History* January 2010] I wrote how Dick Teague, tail gunner on a B17 bomber, had to bail out over Germany before reaching the target, the ball bearing plants at Schweinfurt. He eluded capture most of the afternoon and evening until midnight when he was picked up by a two man patrol.

He was marched back to the village train station where he sat under the watchful eyes of his guards. When he asked to be allowed to use the bathroom, he was told to "go on the floor". There were German civilians in the waiting room watching him. Dick wrote later that he felt like "an animal in a cage."

He was taken for questioning to Frankfurt. His interrogator greeted him with a big smile. "Welcome," he said, "We have been waiting for you" and proceeded to tell Dick all about himself, his unit, his service record, even the name of his hometown in America. The Germans wanted to know every detail of the B17 and, especially, information as to when our new B29 Super Fortress might arrive in Europe.

Then, in October he and a large group of prisoners were loaded on freight cars and shipped south to a prison camp that would become that best known and certainly the most infamous of the war – STALAG 17. Later

he wrote: "Three miles north of Krems, Austria, on the Danube is the most desolate place I have ever seen. There, in a German prison named Stalag 17B, is where twenty-one months of my life were wasted behind barbed wire."

His first night there was October 13. Thirteen hundred POWs had just completed that 150 mile train ride – fifty men to each box car. They were sore and cramped and cold. After being unloaded and counted, they began the three mile hike to camp. Dick wrote that when they topped the last hill and looked down on all those drab, ugly barracks and all that barbed

wire, "once again I got that sinking feeling that I was an animal trapped in a cage."

The prisoners weren't taken to the barracks right away. First, they had to go to the 'delouser' to have all their hair cut off and their clothes fumigated. This took until midnight. There they were without any clothes huddled together trying to keep warm. They began to amuse themselves by giving each other nicknames based on how they looked with shaved heads. Dick got the name "Eagle".

When they got to the barracks around one o'clock it was a "rat race" to find an empty bunk. Each barrack housed 150 prisoners. That first night

Dick wrote that when they topped the last hill and looked down on all those drab, ugly barracks and all that barbed wire, "once again I got that sinking feeling that I was an animal trapped in a cage."

Turnip greens come again at this season and a small rich bottom is ready in a very short time. It returns from \$100 to \$200 per acre; and is off in time for fall cabbage in October to come in December and January.

Turnips can be sown continually from August to November and have a continuous crop for market, stock, and home use. We make a large crop at a small cost.

Various kinds of stock beets grow well and are easy to keep through the winter. Rutabagas grow fine. They are sown in July and August. Snap beans and tomatoes hold out until frost.

We always put up beans, okra, tomatoes, corn, and such in summer for winter. For a number of years we have had home-grown vegetables through the winter for home use, coming the last of July and holding out until the next spring if we plant, enough.

We can always get a summer crop of some kind after the winter crop of cabbage and turnips. I have some

crops that I get three in one year. Plant English peas in February, they make in 60 days and are off by May 1; follow with corn, tomatoes, or any summer crop that is off by October 1; then put out fall cabbage which go to market in December and January. They are off in February ready for English peas again, thus making a continuous money crop the entire year.

My good wife also raises and sells a nice bit of poultry and eggs in addition to liberal amounts for home use, running well over \$200 per year.

I wish to stress the value of rape. It, like turnips can be sown most any time of the year and grows so quickly. I have hardly half an acre now (April 25). It was sown in February, just two months ago; but I have sold over \$25 worth of greens and we have been pulling it by large basketfuls every day for about 30 pigs and 4 hogs and over 100 chickens. They all relish it. I can soon put in a crop of corn and peas that will come off in time for another fall crop.

SECOND SATURDAYS

On the second Saturday of every month, volunteers and re-enactors gather at the LCHS Museum in period attire to demonstrate their arts and crafts. Blacksmiths are usually working at the forge, spinners and weavers are upstairs in the Trade Center, and someone is always cooking up a meal in the log cabin over the open or outdoors. The Trade Center Museum is always open on Second Saturdays, and local dulcimer players gather to practice. What a great opportunity for LCHS members and visitors to visit the museum! If you have a skill to demonstrate or just would like to help out on Second Saturdays, just dress up in 19th Century attire and join the fun. It's kind of like a mini-Historical Fair throughout the year!

- April 10
- May 8
- June 12
- July 10

From the Gardens. . .

Most of the crops in the Crops Garden at LCHS will be planted in May and June. Visit the garden during the summer to see typical field crops of 19th Century Alabama farms. . . cotton, open-pollinated corn, sugarcane, sweet sorghum, sweet potatoes, peanuts, cowpeas, etc.

Sorghum versus Sugarcane: Climate, Tradition and Taste

Charles C. Mitchell

Vice President, Lee Co. Historical Society

I grew up on a farm in West Alabama almost directly across the state from Loachapoka. It was a tradition in my grandfather's day to raise sugarcane for syrup making. The sugarcane was planted down by the creek, and in the fall after the cotton was harvested, the tenant famers would gather to cut the cane and cook the syrup. Everyone took home a few gallons of the homemade syrup. My grandfather's cast iron syrup kettle is now being used as a water trough for cattle, but I love the sweet, amber sugarcane syrup, because I grew up around it.

Later, when I lived in North Alabama and upstate South Carolina, everyone talked about how wonderful "sorghum" was. I could not image why anyone would make syrup out of sorghum. In West Alabama we grew sorghum for silage to feed the dairy cows. The sorghum syrup that I tried was black, bitter and totally unacceptable to my palate, but folks on Sand Mountain and other areas of North Alabama made it, sold it to tourists, and generally sang its praises. You'll have to pay \$10 or more for a pint of true sorghum syrup today.

Some Agronomics

As an agronomist, I now understand that Loachapoka is near the northern limit for successful sugarcane (*Saccharum*

officinatum L.) production. Because it is a lot easier to make syrup from sugarcane, farmers in this region have always grown it. Sugarcane needs at least 160 frost free days and hot, humid weather to make a decent size stalk 4 or 5 feet tall. It grows even better in the tropics where, as a grass, it just keeps on growing and will produce stalks more than 10 feet tall. Go just a little bit further north in Alabama, say Clay and Randolph Counties, and the season is just too short and cool for profitable sugarcane production. Sweet sorghum, an annual grown from seed each year, satisfies the need to produce syrup in North Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky and Ohio. Sweet sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor* L.), which is the same species as grain sorghum and forage sorghum, can produce finger-size, juicy stalks in about 120 days from seed. Sorghum yields about a gallon of syrup from about 15 gallons of sorghum juice. Sugarcane can yield a gallon of syrup from about 10 gallons of sugarcane juice. Sorghum also yields less juice per acre. The flavor of sorghum syrup comes from all the extra tannins and minerals that are found in sorghum juice.

Sorghum in the Crops Garden

Two years ago, I planted two rows of sweet sorghum in the LCHS Crops Gar-

den with the intention making syrup. Unfortunately, it was so hot and dry that summer that the sorghum stalks matured and dried out before we could make syrup. I planted the seed during the second week in May and the sorghum was mature before September. It was just too hot to be cooking syrup that early. Maybe this is another reason we prefer sugarcane in Lee County to sorghum. Sugarcane matures in late fall when the weather is much cooler. Sorghum matures in the summer. Lee Humphrey and I managed to get about 2 gallons of juice out of our sorghum crop in 2008 and we cooked it down to about a pint of marginally acceptable syrup. But better than the syrup, Lee Humphrey saved the sorghum seed, ground them into a flour and made "sorghum bread" using the syrup. The bread was dark and chewy and nutty flavored.

I plan to try sweet sorghum again this year in the Crops Garden. I've acquired some sweet sorghum seed of a different, long-season variety that I plan to plant in June rather than May. The seed came from a Master Gardener friend in Randolph County who makes sorghum every year. If we're lucky, maybe we'll

have enough juice to make a larger batch of sorghum syrup this fall.

Pan versus Kettle

LCHS currently has no way of cooking large batches of juice into syrup. In 2008, Lee cooked the test batch of sorghum juice over an open fire in one of the big black cook pots. During the fall Syrup Soppin' Day, the folks across the road use the "pan" method to cook cane syrup. Juice is cooked as it flows from chamber to chamber of a large flat copper pan, and becomes syrup by the time it reaches the bottom of the pan. This "production" pan method is the cooking method that I remember as a child, but it is a 20th Century innovation. In the 19th Century (1800s) the "kettle" method was more common on farms and plantations in the South. A huge, cast iron kettle was used to cook juice to syrup one batch at a time.

In February, I visited Landmark Park and the Alabama Agricultural Museum in Dothan, where they demonstrate the kettle method of making sugarcane syrup. Long-range plans are for LCHS to build a cook house and use the kettle in the Taylor Whatley Museum to make sugarcane and, possibly, sorghum syrup.



Sid Brannon, farm manager at Landmark Park in Dothan, Alabama, shows off their syrup cooker which uses the "kettle" method of cooking syrup.