

TRAILS IN HISTORY

Official Newsletter of the Lee County Historical Society

Volume 43, Number 3

July 2010

Published Quarterly

Summer Meeting of Lee County Historical Society

July 11, 2010

2:30 pm

Auburn City Hall Annex

130 Tichenor Avenue

(enter on the west side of the building)

“Why is Historic Preservation Important?”

Speaker

Elizabeth Ann Brown

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

The title of this brief paper is not a question which the members of the Lee County Historical Society ask one another often, because for you, it is a given. You just know historic preservation is important. Not too many years ago, however, I was faced with trying to convince someone who only dealt with things you could quantify of the worth of saving old buildings. It was then

that I realized that historic preservation has both a rational and philosophical or emotional side, and that recognizing both was important to successful preservation.

To better explain this, I'll use the device of left brain and right brain thinking. Scientists tell us that the left side of your brain controls your rational thought process—things you can add up.

Preservation continued on page 5

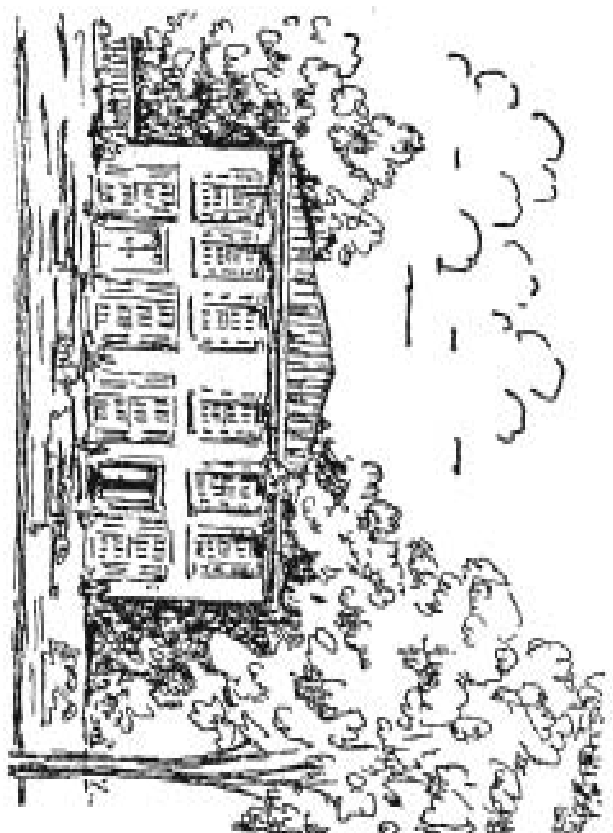
Elizabeth Ann Brown graduated from Auburn University more times than she'd like to admit, with a B.S. in Home Economics (1968) and B. Architecture and Master of Community Planning (1987). She has worked at the Alabama Historical Commission for more than 20 years, and is the Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer.

Born in Birmingham and a resident on Montgomery for two decades, she also lived in Lee County for 18 years, some of that time in Loachapoka. She lives in Montgomery's Garden District in a bungalow built in 1913, and enjoys riding her bike, writing, making jewelry, and working on her old house.



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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.

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MUSEUM HOURS

(Summer 2010)

Thursday, Friday, Saturday
12 noon - 5:00 pm

MUSEUM CALENDAR

July 10 - Second Saturday,
10am - 3pm

July 11 - Regular Meeting, 2:30pm
Auburn City Hall Annex
130 Tichenor Avenue, Auburn,
Alabama (enter on the west side of
the building)

August 14 - Second Saturday,
10am - 3pm

September 11 - Second Saturday,
10am - 3pm

September 12 - Board Meeting,
2:30pm

October 9 - Second Saturday,
Fair Preparation

**October 30 - 39th Annual Historical
Fair/Syrup Sopping Saturday**
8am - 4pm

LCHS MEMBERSHIP

Due: January 1 of each year
Individual: \$20 per individual
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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

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All contributions are Tax deductible. Federal I.D. No. 23-7227476

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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.

What's new at the museum? Come and see the newly refinished floors downstairs in the Trade Center, the new water collection system, as well as the newly designed (and still under construction) Grandma's garden.

Summer hours for the museum are Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 12:00 to 5:00 pm. Volunteers are needed to help host on those afternoons. Jeannette Frandsen and Betty Patterson will be getting in touch with members to schedule times. Please be consider coming out one afternoon per month.

The Lee County Gathering music festival in April was a great success thanks to the many society members who answered the call for help (see page 5).

We would like to thank Jody Harper, manager of the Vulcan Materials plant, for the donation of three truck loads of gravel for the grounds. We would also like to thank Brett McAnally of M & M Trucking for supplying the trucks to deliver the gravel to the museum. Thanks to Charles H. Mitchell for spreading the gravel and working on the driveways.

The Master Gardeners are relocating Grandma's Garden to the west side of the McLain building and designing walking paths along the garden. They are putting in many long hard hours. Another volunteer who has put in many long hard hours cutting privet hedge, moving gravel, assisting in grounds care is Herb Martin. If you see him out quietly working, thank him.

Second Saturdays are perfect times to bring the family out for a picnic, view the demonstrations and gardens,

listen to the music and learn a little more about our history. There will be something cooking in the log cabin, snacks available at the cookhouse, children's activities and music from the bandstand. Dr. Charles C. Mitchell does a fantastic job of planning activities. Come join the fun.

Looking for a place to hold your civic club meeting or a place for Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts to learn about the outdoors? The Lee County Historical Society and museum is the perfect spot. You can arrange these meetings or "campouts" by calling Jessie Summers (334-502-8313).

The Lee County Historical Society belongs to all of its members and every member is needed. Please consider volunteering to help in some way: with the gardens, the exhibits, the demonstrations, or the activities and programs. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact me, Deborah McCord (334-703-3646) or bigalmccord@bellsouth.net.

Second Annual

Lee County Gathering

Music filled the air and our hearts during the Second Annual Lee County Gathering in April. Thursday and Friday the weather was perfect, but Saturday brought the storms. Even with damp weather, our participants stayed with us and enjoyed the wonderful sounds of the Plantation Heirs and the Heritage Singer at our noon concert. What a fabulous treat! We hosted more than 200 people per day for music classes, jam sessions, concerts, and a

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 Saturday night dance. The Alabama State Council on the Arts assisted in providing partial funding for the festival this year. Participants came from all parts of the state as well as from Virginia, Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, Florida and Louisiana.

I would like to thank the many people who donated time or assisted in some way to make the festival a success. Mayor Liz Jennings of Loachapoka came in support of the festival and assisted in reserving the community center for our Saturday night dance. Commissioner Mathan Holt and his wife Jill were in attendance and provided the use of two golf carts to shuttle people from the parking areas to the events. The Whistle Stop Pick-

ers members put in long hours with set-up, clean-up, driving golf carts, delivering supplies, picking up supplies and helping out anywhere they were needed. Peggie Webster, Charlie and Peggy Mitchell, Doug and Shirley Ward, and Winnie Rowell worked in the cookhouse preparing breakfast and lunches. Bob and Rose Taunton co-hosted the festival, hosted the concerts, managed registration and scheduling, and provided the sound system. Board and/or society members Arvle and Esther Marshall, Jeannette Frandsen, Betty Patterson, Bill Wilson, Carl and Jessie Summers, Charles H. Mitchell, Harvey and Barbara Gosser, Joan Colburn, James and Janelle Estes, and Allen McCord donated time and effort to make the festival a success.

Scenes from the 2010 Lee County Gathering...



LCHS Members and Donors

Listed below are the members who have paid their dues for this year along with the life members and the donations received in 2010. We urge those who have not yet paid their dues to please do so by mailing a check to the Lee County Historical Society, P. O. Box 206, Loachapoka, AL 36865. It cost the Society about \$8 per member each year to publish, print and mail Trails and we can only keep those on the mailing list who are current with their dues.

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- *A Century of Agriculture in the 1890 Land Grant Institutions and Tuskegee University 1890-1990* by B.D. Mayberry
- *A History of the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station 1893-1983* by Norwood Allen Kerr
- *The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System 1881- 1990* by B.D. Mayberry
- *Taking the University to the People* by Wayne D. Rasmussen
- *Alli Abernathy's Scrapbooks 1893-1923* compiled by Laura Abernathy
- *Ancestor Trails to Georgia and Alabama* by Dorman McDonald
- *Ancestors and Descendants 1480-1985 of George W. Prather 1858-1935 Randolph County, Alabama* by John Wallace Prather 1985
- *Historic Architecture in Alabama* by Robert Gamble
- *More Than Money: A Community, A College, Its People and the Bank that Served Them* by Jacqueline Kochak

• *1100 Marks on Foreign Pottery and Porcelain*

Our own Master Gardner, **Peggy Mitchell**, has done a beautiful, and scientifically correct, job of planning and developing the McLain Garden. Now the area around it is being designed and planted by six other master gardeners: **Julie Burns, Steve Crannel, Beth Dorman, Debbie Hartman, Kaite Lunsford, and Dottie McKissac**. Come and see! The plants were donated by members and other friends, the rail fence was given by **Peggy and Charles Mitchell**.

In April the Auburn Study Club held their Annual meeting with us and the Valley Garden Club joined us on the Second Saturday. All of the visitors were gracious in their complimentary comments which makes us very happy.

On June 8th members of OLLI's Tuesday Study Group began their summer classes at the museum. They brought brown bag lunches and happy feelings that resulted in a lovely, festive meeting. Several expressed delight in the progress being made to the museum and grounds.

Preservation continued from page 1

In this respect, preservation's left brain concepts include the following:

- It builds property values
- It protects the investment in your home or business
- It builds jobs, not just sales, in the local economy
- It's already green
- It takes the best advantage of the investment your community has in infrastructure

Building Property Values

A few years ago, we have a study conducted across the state to find out how locally designated historic districts stacked up against similar but undesignated houses. We looked at large places like Huntsville and Montgomery, medium-sized places like Selma, and small places like Talladega—nine cities in all. In every case, in every town, historic property resale values were higher than other properties.

Protecting Investments

For most of us, our homes are our largest investment. The same study I've already mentioned shows that historic properties held their value and increased more over the long term than similar, non-historic property.

Building Jobs

Preservation is a jobs-intensive activity, and new construction is a materials-intensive activity. In preservation, you are fixing things, which means jobs for skilled local people. When you pay someone a salary in a local economy, this turns over about six times in the local economy. When you go buy materials in a big box store, this turns over about twice.

Being Green

There's lots of talk being green and following green building practices these

days, and the more I learn about it, the more I see that many things are a revival of practices that were popular when our historic houses were built—Things like natural ventilation and saving rainwater. Historic buildings also represent an investment in resources that you don't have to repeat—No more trees have to be cut, no off gassing vinyl windows need to be installed. A historic house is one that's already green, and easy to make greener.

Taking Advantage of Existing Infrastructure

Historic houses occur in neighborhoods where the investment in water lines, streets, and sidewalks have already been made. The garbage truck doesn't have to drive three miles outside of town to start to collect the trash—He can drive up and down the densely populated streets that are close in to town. You may not have thought about it, but residential neighborhoods which are out of town often cost cities and towns money because of the cost to provide them services.

But this isn't the only side of preservation. Preservation is also a right-brain activity, feeding that side of the brain that craves meaning in life. Those right-brain qualities include the following:

- Builds intangible quality of life characteristics
- Creates a unique sense of place
- Tells the story of who we are to future generations

Building the Quality of Life

We all want to feel that we belong, and that the place we belong to is a good place. Well-kept houses and streets, and a few buildings that are a part of our lives help to do this. Schools, churches, even a movie theater all represent buildings that many people touch and have

Preservation continued on page 6

Requesting Your Help

Donations of Old Brick for Grandma's Garden

Lee County Master Gardeners are creating a new, improved and enlarged "Grandma's Flower Garden" at the Lee Co. Historical Society Museum in Loachapoka. They need donations of all the old, used bricks they can get for the new flower beds. Broken bricks will work as well and whole ones.

If you have some old bricks that you'd like to donate, please just drop them off near the McLain building at the museum or contact one of the following Master Gardeners by email to arrange for someone to pick up the bricks.

- Julie Burns - voicejules@yahoo.com
- Steve Crannel - stevecrann@earthlink.net
- Beth Dorman - bethdorman@yahoo.com
- Debbie Hartman - hartman304@bellsouth.net
- Kaite Lunsford - digginlife77@yahoo.com

Preservation continued from page 5
memories of that tie them to place. The rationalists may write this off as nostalgia, but it's actually a strong force that makes people want to stay, which is important if we want our investment in Alabama to grow.

Creating a Unique Sense of Place

I don't know about you, but when everyone gets bored after Christmas and needs to get out of the house, I don't say, "Let's take a drive and go see the new Hardees."

Why is that? It's because Hardees in Montgomery looks about like Hardees in Scottsboro or Opelika. Popular culture is about the same everywhere, which is not all bad in a large and diverse country like ours—It's something that ties us together. But to market our towns, our cities, our state, we need to put forward the things that set us apart and make us interesting and different. Historic buildings are one of those things that set us apart, and give us a sense of place.

Telling the Story of Who We Are to Future Generations

Unless we make a conscious decision to do otherwise, land use decisions, decisions that shape our environment, are made by money, and they often seem to be a strip shopping center or a cookie cutter drug store. Are these the buildings we want to be remembered by? Are these our great pyramids? If these aren't your idea of the legacy for our children and grandchildren, then you must get involved in the preservation of buildings that mean something to you and tell the story you want to tell.

It's our job at the Alabama Historical Commission to help you accomplish the important work of Historic Preservation,

and we have a toolbox of programs to help. Many of these tools are part of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which was sponsored by Alabama Congressman Albert Raines of Gadsden, Alabama. We also have the help of groups like the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation, the Alabama Historical Association, and dozens of local historical societies like the Lee County Historical Society to assist.

What are the historic preservation tools?

First, survey, how can you know what you want to save unless you look to see what you have? Actually, the Lee County Historical Society under the direction of Dr. Alexander Nunn headed up one of the first official historic structures surveys in the state here in Loachapoka, which brings us to tool number two: The National Register of Historic Places.

The National Register is an honorific listing of places which are important to national, state, and local history. That survey of Loachapoka led to listing on the National Register. Our office also maintains a state register, the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage. Listing on the National Register comes with no restrictions, but it does make income-producing property eligible for tax incentives, which has helped in the rehabilitation of thousands of buildings in Alabama, and the revitalization of many a downtown.

Tool number three, the Certified Local Government Program, is a local planning program that helps cities and towns that want to have local preservation programs, city preservation commis-

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Museum Report

Jessie Summers, LCHS museum Curator

The major, and I fear the never ending, task of the museum is being tackled by **Dennis Hale** for whom I shall be eternally grateful. All the inventories and small bits of note paper have been gathered so that we can have an accurate record of our holdings. There are ever so many duplicates and little extra bits of information on little bits of paper, and puzzles to be solved.

One puzzle is a letter from a young fellow from Notasulga named Stevenson who wrote on the letterhead of United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Entomology, Washington, D.C. The return address is United States Department of Agriculture, Federal Horticultural Board, Houston, Texas. The letter is addressed to Mr. J.E. Bridges, Auburn, Alabama,

but there is no date. The postmark is covered except for "6PM TEX". It is a delightful letter from a young man. He wrote "I sure am going to miss the football games, especially that Columbus trip." That may refer to when Auburn played Georgia, so maybe the letter was written in the 1940s. Please tell us something about him, and solve the puzzle for us.

Mike Garrett, another young man with the talent we need, is inventorying the many books in the very large bookcase that once housed Dean Dugger's books on agriculture, but now has a wide variety of titles. Mike has donated these many volumes to the collection:

- *Handbook of Alabama Agriculture*
- *Cattle in the Cotton Fields* by Brooks Blevins

Museum continued on page 12

Preservation continued from page 6
sions, and architectural review boards that work to preserve local character.

Finally, there is the Environmental Review. The spirit of the National Historic Preservation emphasized that our money shouldn't be used to destroy our heritage. Section 106 of the act specified that federal agencies should examine their actions to identify historic and prehistoric resources, and seek to minimize any effects their activities might have. Through this act we review the work of things as diverse as road building and cellular communications towers.

Our office also has an active cemetery program to help people survey and register historic cemeteries, help people organize to save endangered

cemeteries, and learn how to properly clean and repair stones. We work with schools and a variety of summer programs to teach about archaeology. We own historic sites all over the state and use those sites to interpret our diverse history.

So, why is historic preservation important? It's an activity that feeds our economy and our souls. It's something good for us in which we can feel good about being involved. In these hard times, it's an activity that creates local jobs, not just sales, in the local economy. It's the way we can make sure that the story of who we are, our values, and the story of America, is available to future generations.

Gardens continued from page 9
blueberries for visitors to enjoy. Our ancestors would have ventured into the woods to find wild huckleberries.

The Crops Garden

Charles C. Mitchell, with the help of other LCHS volunteers, has planted a historic crops garden next to the block building since this new property was acquired in 2006. This year, expect to see an old-fashioned, open pollinated corn, "Hickory King", that is popular for making grits and hominy. Also cotton, peanuts, tobacco and sorghum are planted. The sugarcane came back poorly after the unusually cold winter of 2010 but fortunately, a new row was planted last fall and this looks fine.

The Bog Garden

Doyle Keasal rented a backhoe to install the rain collection system on the McLain Building last winter. He also used the backhoe to clean out the spring-head just beyond the Blacksmith's Shop and create a small

reflecting pool. Bog plants now line the pool and create a pleasant diversion in that part of the museum grounds. Early spring is best when the Louisiana irises and native azaleas are blooming.

Heirloom Camellia Garden.

This new garden began this winter with a few heirloom camellias - 'Professor Sargent' (1850s), 'Daikagura' (1851), 'Donckelaari' (1834), and 'Lady Clare' (1887). The idea is that the garden will evolve to include all the varieties that have been grown in Alabama for at least 100 years. The Auburn-Opelika Men's Camellia Club is helping to locate and propagate plant material. Three of the varieties planted this winter were donated by Luke Lanier of Opelika from his garden. Several more selections were grafted this winter from the garden of Tom Corley, and they should be ready to plant in 2011. The Heirloom Camellia Garden is along the west side of the Trade Center Building in front of the old Grandma's Flower Garden.



Two huge rainbarrel cisterns on the west side of the McLain Building collect runoff from the building to water the new Grandma's Flower Garden and the McLain Garden. A third cistern is hidden underneath the Millstone Fountain. Together, the three cisterns can store almost 4000 gallons of rainwater.

Letters from the Past

The following is from a Civil War soldier's hand-written letter which was donated to the LCHS. If anyone can identify this soldier, identify family, or link him to Alabama we will run the information in subsequent Trails. Send information to: lchs1968@hotmail.com

Near Hattiesburg, Mississippi
July 21st, 1862

Dear Mother

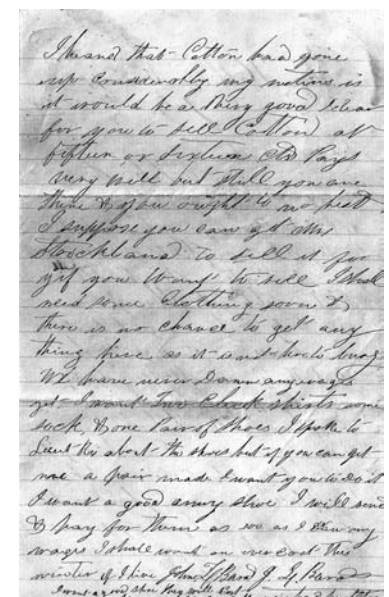
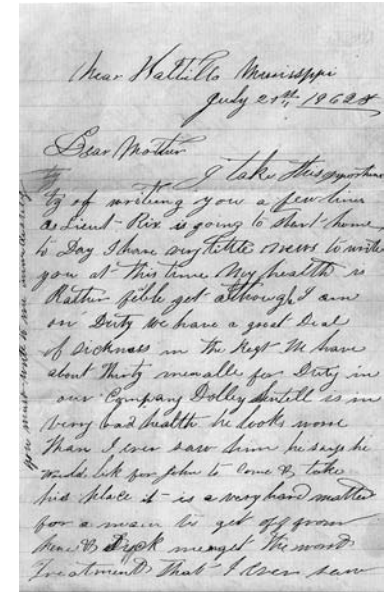
I take this opportunity of writing you a few lines as Lieut. Rix is going to start home today. I have very little news to write you at this time. My health is rather feeble yet although I am on duty. We have a great deal of sickness in the regiment. We have about thirty men available for duty in our company. Dolby Sentell is in very bad health. He looks worse than I ever saw him. He says he would like for John to come and take his place. It is a very hard matter for a man to get off from here and stuck amongst the worst treatment that I ever saw.

I heard that cotton has gone up considerably. My notion is it would be a very good idea for you to sell cotton at fifteen or sixteen. It pays very well but still you are there and ought to know best. I suppose you can get Mr. Strickland to sell for you if you want to sell.

I shall need some clothing soon and there is no chance to get anything here as it is not here to buy. We have never drawn any wages yet. I want two check shirts, some socks, and one pair of shoes. I spoke to Lieut. Rix about the shoes but if you can get me a pair made, I want you to do it. I want a good army shoe. I will send and pay for them as soon as I draw my wages. I shall want an over coat this winter if I live. I want a good shoe very worth cost, (seven or eight dollars) in bad weather.

John F. Band

(You must write to me immediately.)



From the Gardens. . .

While old buildings need some maintenance and care, gardens need constant maintenance and care. Museum exhibits change whenever we want to change them. Gardens are constantly changing whether we want them to or not. The new gardens at LCHS are transforming the grounds into a dynamic display of our agronomic and horticultural history.

If you've had a chance to visit LCHS this spring, you have witnessed a transformation. We now have 5 major garden areas in the landscape that are constantly evolving.

Transformations

Charles C. Mitchell

Vice President, Lee Co. Historical Society

The New Grandma's Flower Garden

Just a few years ago, there was only one garden on the LCHS grounds. Grandma's Flower Garden was hidden, tucked away behind a little picket fence on the west side of the Trade Center Building next to the Loachapoka Post Office. It was rarely visited. Pecan trees had grown up next to the garden shading it from the west, and huge boxwoods shaded it from the east. In spite of noble attempts by Jeannette Frandsen and others, the heirloom plants struggled to compete with the trees for water and sunlight. Weeds seemed to fare better than the flowers.

A group of enthusiastic Lee County Master Gardener interns adopted the challenge of moving Grandma's Flower

Garden to a new, better, and more visible site. The area between the McLain Garden and the McLain Building is being developed into the New Grandma's Flower Garden. Master Gardener interns, Julie Burns, Steve Crannel, Beth Dorman, Debbie Hartman, Kaite Lunsford, and Dottie McKissac spend one day each week working on the new garden. In late winter, they designed it. In April, they held a yard sale to raise funds for plants and landscaping material, and since then they have been gradually transforming the site into pathways and plantings and fencing.

A walk around the path to the back of the McLain Building brings you to the "Millstone Fountain". This fountain, installed by Doyle Keasal, is part of the rain-collection system that recycles

Master Gardener interns Beth Dorman, Julie Burns, Kaite Lunsford, Debbie Hartman, and Dottie McKissac sell trees and other items at a yard sale to raise money for materials and plants for the new Grandma's Flower Garden.



Master Gardener interns Beth Dorman, Steve Crannel, and Debbie Hartman, set out plants around the new Millstone Fountain behind the McLain Building. The fountain is part of the rain collection system on the McLain Building and will be part of the new Grandma's Flower Garden.



runoff water from the McLain Building into irrigation water for the new gardens. Mysteriously, water gurgles up through an old millstone and disappears again into washed gravel stones. Grandma's new flower garden will eventually end here with a bench for visitors to sit and enjoy the fountain. Every week something new appears in the garden and it will soon be a destination for museum visitors.

The McLain Garden: Herbs and Medicinal Plants

This is the third year for the McLain Garden and already it is attracting visitors who come to enjoy the diversity of cultivated herbs and medicinal plants that Master Gardener, Peggy Mitchell,



Peggy Mitchell (background) works with herbs and medicinal plants in the McLain Garden. Unripe blackberries drape the east fence.

grows in 12 raised beds inside a split-rail fence. The fence and beds were built with the help of local Boy Scout Troop 11. A brochure describing some of the plants is available inside a mail box at the garden entrance. Visitors are often surprised that many familiar plants also have medicinal use other than their fragrance or flower. The idea of this garden began when the McLain family told us that Mrs. McLain (the good doctor's wife) had a small garden next to the Doctor's office where she grew herbs and medicinal plants for the doctor to use in treating his patients. Medicines were not readily available in Salem, Alabama, in the early 20th Century.

Surrounding the split rail fence around the McLain Garden, Charles C. Mitchell has planted a few traditional fruits that may have been grown on a 19th century Lee Co. homestead. These include disease-resistant southern pears, 'orient' and 'keiffer', a few muscadine selections on a trellis, and several fig varieties. While no self-respecting southerner would think of growing blackberries when the fields and fencerows were full of wild ones, we do have some cultivated berries growing along the fence. We've also planted a few cultivated, rabbiteye

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