

TRAILS IN HISTORY

Official Newsletter of the Lee County Historical Society

Volume 44, Number 4

October 2011

Published Quarterly

**LEE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
INVITES YOU TO THE 40TH ANNUAL**

HISTORICAL FAIR

Saturday, October 22

7:00am - 4:00pm

Pioneer Park

Hwy 14, Loachapoka, Alabama

FOLKLIFE DEMONSTRATIONS

Log Cabin, Blacksmith Shop, Gristmill, Indian Exhibits

Quilting, Spinning, Weaving, Pottery

Basket Making, Natural Dyes, Broom Making

MUSIC

Bands, Singing Groups, Dulcimers

COUNTRY COOKIN'

Sweet Tater Biscuits, Fritters, Beans, Collards,

Camp Stew, and BBQ

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

Free Surrey Rides, Petting Zoo, Story Telling

Garden Harvest, Sugarcane Squeezin', Cider Press

**\$5.00 admits you to the museum and grounds
Children under 12 (with an adult) and over 90 FREE**

No Charge to LCHS members

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: Jeannette Frandsen
Vice-President: Charles C. Mitchell
Treasurer: Marty Hoerr
Secretary: Deborah McCord
HCC Delegate: Ann Pearson

TRUSTEES

Term expires December 31, 2013

Lan Lipscomb
Arvle Marshall
John Rice
James Thrash
Deena Rowell
Jim Witte

Term expires December 31, 2012

Barbara Ervin
Doyle Keasal
Charles H. Mitchell
Burt Hitchcock
Dr. Ann Pearson
Peggie Webster

Term expires December 31, 2011

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

MUSEUM CALENDAR

October 8 - Second Saturday

10am - 3pm
Sun Bonnet Display
Preparation for Historical Fair
9am - 11am - Dulcimers

October 22 - 40th Annual Historical

Fair/Syrup Sopping Saturday in
Loachapoka, 8am - 4pm

November 12 - Second Saturday

10am - 1pm - Lee County Authors
and Book Signing
1pm - Dedication of Rosenwald
School Marker

December 10 - Second Saturday

10am - 3pm - Old Fashioned
Christmas, Father Christmas,
Punch and Cookies, Children's
Activities

Call Jessie Summers at
502-8313 to reserve
Pioneer Park facilities
for meetings. The Museum can
seat about 50 people.

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

LCHS President's Report

Jeannette Frandsen, President

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

So much has happened here in Loachapoka. Big signs proclaiming "Pioneer Park" have been installed high up on both sides of the Trade Center.

Pioneer Park is becoming a popular place for events and meetings. We have hosted several groups over the last few months. Visitors are always impressed and excited to discover what Pioneer Park has to offer. Frequently the Society picks up new memberships from these events, too!

The 40th annual Historical Fair is fast approaching - October 22. It promises to be an exciting, fun-filled time for the whole family. This year the Fair is being managed by committee. Several of our board members have taken charge of specific areas. In addition to our signature sweet potato biscuits and sausage and sweet potato fritters, we will be serving camp stew, collard greens and cornbread, and BBQ.

The blacksmiths will be working in the forge, the spinners and weavers will be demonstrating their crafts in textile room, and there will be fireplace cooking in the log cabin. Live music on the band stand will feature popular local talent, including The Plantation Heirs. The grist mill will be grinding corn meal and the kid-powered cane mill will be squeezing cane for lemonade. There will be several activities for children, including traditional games and hands on demonstrations. In the Crops Garden, visitors can dig sweet potatoes and peanuts. These items will be donated to the local food bank.

As always, the Fair would not be possible without the hard work and hours given by our dedicated members and volunteers. Thanks in advance for all your time and effort! We expect a very smooth operation, great weather and lots of fun!

President continued on page 4



Snapshot in Time

In 1935 the Alabama Polytechnic Institute used Hobby Horses to train their polo team. Here Elwood Rouse, ace member of the team that year, is limbering up on the wooden pony before a strenuous practice session.

President continued on page 4

The Rosenwald School Marker has arrived. A special thanks goes to Dr. Ann Pearson for her efforts to make this project happen.

The dedication of the historical marker at the Rosenwald School site is planned for November 12 (Second Saturday) at 1:00 p.m. Several Society members and friends have given generously toward this project. We'd

like to mention gifts from the Town of Loachapoka, Pleasant View Baptist Church and Mt. Zion Baptist Church. We hope to place the marker on Highway 14 across from Mt. Zion Church. The Loachapoka Rosenwald School stood on the Mt. Zion property and the outlines of the foundation are still visible.

As always, visit the Museum and bring your friends!

Moonshine & Magnolias

Moonshine & Magnolias – a new concept, no-holds-barred membership party focusing on current and potential members – was held May 21 on the Society's grounds. Guests were served wine and soft drinks in the Cook House, and snacks of all varieties were available at every venue, encouraging newcomers to see everything available. Thanks to our wonderful volunteers, all demonstration venues were up and running, giving the guests a complete picture of all that LCHS has to offer.

The new nickname, "Pioneer Park," was unveiled during a brief presentation at the bandstand, and Mrs. Peggy Webster was honored for her long service to the Society. The Whistle Stop Dulcimers

performed to an enthusiastic crowd.

Of particular interest was a working moonshine still provided by Robert Campbell. Visitors had a lot of questions and Robert was ready with the answers, the main one being, "No, it's just water!"

Thanks to the many LCHS members who brought a variety of finger foods and to our demonstrators for suiting up and making the day so special. The weather was a little warm, but guests did get around to the various venues and there were many compliments. LCHS gained several new members and it is hoped that the party will grow with the passing years, becoming springtime "must do" for area residents.



Guests at the first Moonshine & Magnolias membership party enjoy the evening air and the Whistle Stop Dulcimers. LCHS gained several new members.

From the Gardens. . .

Grandma's Bottle Tree

Charles C. Mitchell

Vice President, Lee Co. Historical Society

If you have walked through Grandma's Garden to the back of the McLain Building near where the Millstone Fountain gurgles gently onto the gravel, you will notice a new addition to Grandma's Garden, a "bottle tree." The Master Gardeners who developed Grandma's Garden created this during the summer. They also used colorful bottles to border flower beds throughout the garden. I always thought that bottle trees were something that originated in the South in an attempt to add additional color to the landscape. A quick web search taught me that this tradition goes way, way back in our cultural history. "The History of Bottle Trees" on page six is an excerpt from an article written by Dr. Felder Rushing, a well known Mississippi horticulturist, gardener and author who specializes in gardening folk art. You can see more of Rushing's creations on his web site www.felderrushing.net.



Master Gardeners who created the "bottle tree" in Grandma's Garden, L-R. Becky Large, Debbie Hartman, and Pixie Dillard.

THE HISTORY OF BOTTLE TREES

by Felder Rushing

Reprinted from <http://www.felderrushing.net>

“Poor Man’s Stained Glass”

For years I subscribed to the common thread of lore that dates the origin of bottle trees to the Congo area of Africa in the 9th Century A.D. But after extensive research, I find that bottle trees and their lore go back much farther in time, and originate farther north. And that the superstitions surrounding them were embraced by most ancient cultures, including European.

Although glass was made deliberately as early as 3500 B.C. in northern Africa, hollow glass bottles began appearing around 1600 B.C. in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Clear glass was invented in Alexandria around 100 A.D.

Soon around then, tales began to circulate that spirits could live in bottles – probably from when people heard sounds caused by wind blowing over bottle openings. This led to the belief in “bottle imps” and genies (from the Arabic word djinn) that could be captured in bottles. Somewhere in there, people started using glass to capture or repel bad spirits. The idea was, roaming night spirits would be lured into and trapped in bottles placed around entryways, and morning light would destroy them.

Incidentally, you will run into folks who refuse to put up bottle trees because of the connection to pagan superstitions. However, before people

learned about cold germs and allergies, early Greeks and Romans thought that sneezes were bad spirits being expelled. When someone sneezed, nearby people would snap their fingers to keep the spirit out of their own bodies, and say “Jupiter preserve you” to keep the spirit from reentering the sneezer. Because

The idea was, roaming night spirits would be lured into and trapped in bottles placed around entryways, and morning light would destroy them.

superstitions were so hard to stop, and pagan festivals were so ingrained, a pope in the 3rd century AD (the same one who decided to “go with the flow” and put Christmas on the pagan winter solstice festivities, and

Easter on the pagan spring fertility festivals) changed “Jupiter preserve you” to “God bless you.”

All this is well-established. So, like it or not, folks who say “God bless you” are performing an ancient pagan superstitious ritual. And they get indignant when this is pointed out – yet they continue to assume that those of us who love colorful bottle trees are somehow involved in pagan practices! Sheesh.

Anyway, the bottle imp/bad spirit thing was carried down through sub-Saharan Africa and up into eastern Europe, and eventually imported into the Americas by African slaves – and Germans, Irish, and other superstitious folk who among other things put hex symbols on barns and celebrated

May Day and Halloween. Europeans brought “witch balls” (hollow balls with an opening in the bottom to capture witches) and “gazing balls” to repel witches.

Nowadays, bottle trees are mostly used as interesting garden ornaments that glisten in the sun, and the use of colorful glass garden art is on the upswing, as any visit to upscale garden shows (including the Chelsea Flower Show in London) will prove.

While I have seen incredible garden ornaments made from bottles and other forms of glass, there seems to be little or no difference between bottle trees. All are simple variations on the same theme: bottles on sticks. Bottle trees – often referred to as “poor man’s stained glass” or “garden earrings” – can be made of dead trees or big limbs tied together (crape myrtles and cedars have the best natural forms), wooden posts with large nails, welded metal rods, or

bottles simply stuck on the tines of an upended pitch fork or a small number of rebar rods stuck in the ground.

Most are festooned with bottles of many colors, but the blue bottles are considered “best”. Blue has long been associated with ghosts, spirits, and “haints” – there is even a blue paint used around windows and doors of cottages to repel spirits called “haint blue”. But one of my favorites is a tree made of a blend of just green bottles and clear bottles – it looks great and sparkles in the sun without being a poke in the eye to fussy neighbors.

In some of my garden books I coined a Latin name for bottle trees – *Silica transparencii* (for “clear glass), along with whimsical “cultivars” including ‘Milk of Magnesia’ blue, the mixed-color ‘Kaleidoscope Stroke’, and even a rare one called ‘Texas Bluebonnet’ (lower half is all green bottles, capped with blue bottles at the top).

Out front was a clean dirt yard with every vestige of grass patiently uprooted and the ground scarred in deep whorls from the strike of Livvie’s broom. Rose bushes with tiny blood-red roses blooming every month grew in threes on either side of the steps. On one side was a peach tree, on the other a pomegranate.

Then coming around up the path from the deep cut of the Natchez Trace below was a line of bare crape-myrtle trees with every branch of them ending in a colored bottle, green or blue.

There was no word that fell from Solomon’s lips to say what they were for, but Livvie knew that there could be a spell put in trees, and she was familiar from the time she was born with the way bottle trees kept evil spirits from coming into the house - by luring them inside the colored bottles, where they cannot get out again.

Solomon had made the bottle trees with his own hands over the nine years, in labor amounting to about a tree a year, and without a sign that he had any uneasiness in his heart, for he took as much pride in his precautions against spirits coming in the house as he took in the house, and sometimes in the sun the bottle trees looked prettier than the house.

– excerpt from Eudora Welty’s short story “Livvie”

SECOND SATURDAYS

at Pioneer Park

On the second Saturday of every month, volunteers and re-enactors gather at Pioneer Park 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 hearth or outdoors over an open fire. The Trade Center Museum and other museums are always open on Second Saturdays, and the Whistle Stop Pickers (dulcimer players) gather to practice. What a great opportunity to visit the museum!

October 8

Sun Bonnet Saturday

Traditionally, women in the South wore sun bonnets to protect themselves when they worked outdoors in the harsh sun. Fair skin rather than a suntan was considered attractive. In the early 20th Century, millenary shops were just as common as general stores and designing and making quality, attractive hats was an art and a skill. Today, LCHS will feature its collection of fine hats and traditional sunbonnets. Members and guests are invited to bring in their heirloom “sunbonnets” to show off. Contact Esther Marshall (e-mail: sweetbaysprings@bellsouth.net) for more detail.

Come at 9 am to join the garden “walk and talk” to be followed by a herb workshop with Tia Gonzales. Today, Tia will be making herb infused vinegars and preparing herbs for Christmas decorations.

The Whistle Stop Pickers will meet and play from 9 am to 11 am.

November 12

Book Signing - Lee County Authors Dedication of Rosenwald School Marker

Local authors will be on hand to promote and sign their latest books. Homemade Brunswick stew will be cooked over an open fire and served for lunch as long as it lasts.

The 9 am garden “walk and talk” will feature composting those fall leaves and garden trash and preparing the garden for winter.

Ceremonies surrounding the placement of a historical marker commemorating the first Rosenwald school built in America will be held at Pioneer Park at 1 pm. Guest speakers will tell the story of this school which was located in Loachapoka.

December 10
Old Fashioned Christmas

Special treats will be available in the Trade Center along with holiday games and arts and crafts for children. A classic holiday meal typical of the early 10th century will be prepared over the open hearth of the log cabin.

We're always looking for historically-related demonstration and activities to feature during one or more Second Saturdays. If you have ideas or 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! For more information on Second Saturday activities, contact: Charles C. Mitchell, email: mitchc1@auburn.edu or home phone: 334-844-5489.

LEE COUNTY GATHERING
OLD-TIME MUSIC FESTIVAL

APRIL 26-29, 2012

Instruction for Mountain Dulcimer, Hammered Dulcimer, Bass Dulcimer, Penny Whistle, Autoharp, Banjo, Fiddle, Mandolin, Ukulele, Sacred Harp Singing, Native American Flute, Clogging, Spirituals, and more!

Follow the link on www.leecountyhistoricalsociety.org or
www.leecountygathering.com

Featured Instructors:



Stephen Seifert



Guy & Sharrie George



TNT - Ginny Cliett, Linda Smith, Deby Libby

Museum Report

Jessie Summers, LCHS museum Curator

In mid July we were happy to welcome two field trips from students from **The Learning Zone** and also, once again, happy to hear their complementary remarks on what we have to offer children and adults

For the July Second Saturday **Kay Campbell** arranged a beautiful quilt show which attracted many, many quilters and quilt collectors.

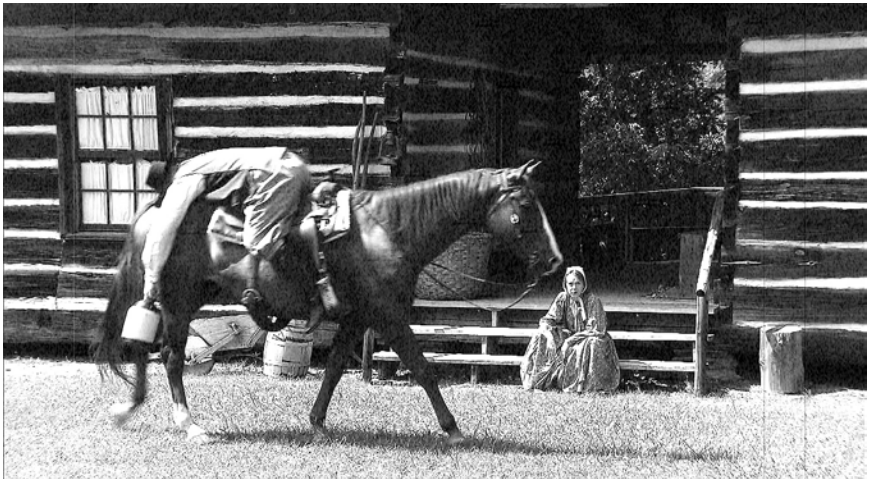
Sheila Eckman held a program on "Conservation Alabama" which attracted a large number of interested

people, as did **Doyle Keasal's** workshop "Observing Alabama's Cultural Landscape".

The Willow Creek Neighborhood Association met in our meeting room, and so did several other groups, including **The Humanist**.

Carol Bramlett gave us a pretty gasoline lantern which is now in our parlor.

Cary and Roxanne Daughtry added nine books to our collection of local research material. Of particular



The Office of the Governor of Alabama sponsored the filming of a TV Public Service program for Don't Drink and Drive on the grounds around our Log Cabin. Here's a scene from the finished product (above) and a shot of the filming in progress (at right).



interest is *The History of Opelika and Her Agricultural Tributary* by Rev. F.L. Cherry.

Deborah McCord donated 6 copies of Confederate money. All are in the Confederate case in the hall upstairs. One of particular interest is a \$500 bill "issued by The Confederate States of America. Will pay to the bearer on demand."

Brenda Lindahal gave us a very old quilt which is hand pieced and hand quilted, with the beautiful Oak Leaf design. We will enjoy seeing it in an exhibit soon.

Linda Seay brought boxes which she said were full of "all that stuff" but

I say were full of all those wonderful pieces, from an adorable baby quilt to an elegant ink pen, and from a Kriss Kross aluminum razor to corn shuck dolls, etc.

The Office of the Governor of Alabama sponsored the filming of a TV Public Service program for Don't Drink and Drive on the grounds around our Log Cabin. **Deena and George Rowell** were asked to bring over their horses to be a part of the film. Maybe some more visitors will come to see us - now that we are famous.

Remember to call me at 334-502-8313 when you would like to reserve some space for a meeting. We can take care of about 50 seated.

The Lee County Historical Society is a non-profit volunteer organization with no paid staff. It depends on dues and donations from its friends and members to maintain and pay the operating cost on the eight buildings in Pioneer Park. All donations are tax deductible.



Membership / Donation

Lee County Historical Society

P. O. Box 206

Loachapoka, AL 36865

I want to support the work of the Lee County Historical Society.

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

- Individual - \$20 Family-\$30 Friend - \$50 Patron - \$100
- Support - \$250 Blue Ribbon - \$500 Benefactor - \$1,000

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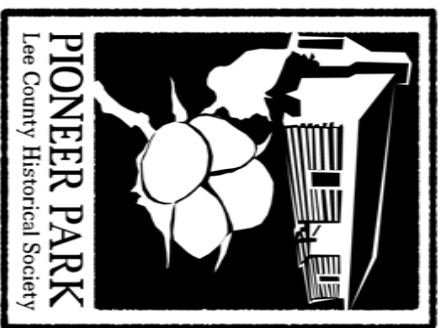
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