

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

Official Newsletter of the Lee County Historical Society

Volume 45, Number 1 January 2012 Published Quarterly

SECOND SATURDAY at Pioneer Park

On Second Saturday, December 10, 2011, Santa visited the Pioneer Park Christmas Open House. He visited with children and played seasonal tunes on the dulcimer. Mrs. Claus was upstairs in the Trade Center reading Christmas stories aloud while others decorated cookies.



Meanwhile, the spinners and weavers were at work, a fire was burning on the hearth of the log cabin while dulcimers played, and the blacksmiths were practicing their craft at the forge. The Whistle Stop Pickers entertained as visitors strolled through the museum and grounds and enjoyed punch and cookies. A collection of Christmas gifts including homemade jellies, CDs, luminaries, and books were available for those in a shopping mood. Santa drew the winner's name in the Quilt drawing. All proceeds went to the aid of the LCHS Museums. *(See more pictures inside this issue.)*

Second Saturday is always a good time to visit Pioneer Park. The museums are open and various historical demonstrations and activities are planned for each month.

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LEE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 206
LOACHAPOKA, AL 36865

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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

January 8 - Regular Meeting

2:30pm - Speaker Dr. John T. Ellisor, "The Second Creek War"

January 14 - Second Saturday

Waxing Camellias, Making Hominy Pine straw baskets class meets 9-12. Class will meet weekly, for a total of 3 weeks. Fee \$35- supplies furnished.

Pre-registration required.

Contact: jkerr@elmore.rr.com or (334) 283-3060.

February 11 - Second Saturday

March 10 - Second Saturday

March 11- LCHS Board Meeting

2:30pm, Trade Center

April 8 - Regular Meeting

2:30pm

April 14 - Second Saturday

April 26-29, 2012

Fourth Annual

**Lee County Gathering,
Old-time Music Festival**

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

The program was opened by Deacon Clinton Jordan, with former students Barbara Ervin, Judy Lockhart and Emogene Crittenden presenting reminiscences. Former teacher Carrie Jones commented as well, and Loachapoka Mayor Jim Grout brought greetings from the town.

(Right) Dr. Ann Pearson presents concluding remarks. (Far Right) Allen McCord, LCHS President Jeannette Frandsen, and Mike Bunn, Executive Director, Historic Chattahoochee Commission, with marker.



LCHS Membership Renewal Due in January

Please renew your membership for 2012 so that the important work of LCHS can continue. Membership benefits include admission to the Historical Fair in October, subscription to the quarterly publication Trails in History, and the satisfaction that you are supporting a worthy effort to preserve the history and culture of Lee County and south Alabama.

Donations to LCHS are tax deductible. Your cancelled check is your receipt. Be sure to include your e-mail address on the form below if you would like to receive notices about Museum events via e-mail.



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

Name _____

Address _____

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**Rosenwald School Marker
Unveiling Ceremony
November 12, 2011**

Former students, one teacher, and approximately 100 community members gathered at Pioneer Park November 12 for the unveiling of a historical marker commemorating the site of Loachapoka Elementary School, a Rosenwald School. The school was dismantled in the 1950s after several decades of service.

Loachapoka's Rosenwald School was the first of some 5,300 built across the South as the result of the generosity of Julius Rosenwald, then the CEO of Sears & Roebuck, who sought to help educate black children in the time prior to integration. He asked locals to participate in each effort. He donated \$300 to the school and local citizens, black and white, raised the additional \$942.46.

The marker is a joint project of the Lee County Historical Society and the Historic Chattahoochee Commission. Research for the marker was conducted by Deena Rowell and Dr. Ann Pearson, who suggested the project after having discovered information about the school while researching other historical data. LCHS President Jeannette Frandsen welcomed the crowd, and Secretary Deborah McCord acknowledged special guests.

Many former students and one teacher, Carrie Jones, were on hand for the special occasion, as was Mike Bunn, Executive Director of the Historic Chattahoochee Commission. Donors to the marker included many individuals as well as members of Pleasant View Baptist Church, Ebenezer CME Church, Mt. Zion Baptist Church and the Town of Loachapoka. The Community Choir performed several selections for those present.

Deacon Clinton Jordan opens the program.

(Bottom Left) Former Rosenwald School teacher Carrie Jones with Barbara Ervin, Program Chair.

(Bottom Right) Approximately 100 community members assembled.



THE YEAR OF THE CREEK

*In keeping with its 2012 theme, "The Year of the Creek,"
the Lee County Historical Society presents
Dr. John Ellisor as speaker for the winter meeting.*

January 8, 2:30 pm

Pioneer Park, Trade Center Building, Loachapoka, Alabama

"The Second Creek War"

Speaker: Dr. John T. Ellisor

For 170 years the history of the Second Creek War, previously known as the Creek War of 1836, has been sorely neglected. Indeed, one could make the case that the whites who fought the war purposefully "expunged" its history because they felt embarrassed by the war's causes, conduct and consequences, and historians ever since have followed their lead in passing over this war, not recognizing it as an important event in the history of Alabama, the South and the nation as a whole. Certainly, we know a bit about the Creek land frauds that caused the conflict, a little about the battles as well as the Creek removal that the government used the war to justify, but only recently has the full story of this conflict come to light, including the fact that the war grew out of a highly competitive society where conflict cut across racial and ethnic boundaries, pitting whites against whites, Indians against Indians, etc. Furthermore, the war lasted for years and extended well beyond East Alabama where it began deep into Georgia and Florida. Dr. Ellisor, author of *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier*, will discuss some of the more interesting aspects of this previously hidden story and give particular attention to the role played by some of Lee County's people in the war, most notably the Creeks of Loachapoka, Sougahatchee, and Cusseta towns, some of the war's leading combatants.



*John T. Ellisor is an assistant professor of history at Columbus State University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Tennessee. His research and teaching specialties are early U.S. history and Native American history, and he has recently published a book, *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier*. Besides teaching at the college and university level, Dr. Ellisor has served as a research archivist at the Oklahoma State Archives and the American Indian Archives of the Oklahoma Historical Society. He also worked as a legal research consultant for the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes of Oklahoma. Dr. Ellisor lives in Auburn with his wife, Dr. Jennifer Brooks, a history professor at Auburn University, and his daughter.*

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.

Being President of this group is so easy. There are so many dedicated cheerful workers and companions.

Our annual October Historical Fair was a great success, though we do see room for improvement! Our dollar clearance was almost exactly that of 2010 - \$11,732. The weather was wonderful and there was lots to see and do.

The unveiling ceremony of the Rosenwald School Marker was held on November 12. Scenes from the event are included in this issue of *Trails*. We await the decision of CSX Railroad to place the sign on the highway across from the school's location.

December's Second Saturday Christmas Open House was a great success and included a visit from Santa. After-

wards, LCHS hosted a covered-dish luncheon for board members, their families, and our wonderful volunteers.

Our Society Secretary and Chief Grant Writer, Deborah McCord, has successfully written the following grants to help us continue our mission:

- Alabama Historical Commission \$15,000 to hire help to keep the museum open and provide clerical services like email and telephone answering. This will be a wonderful boon - to have a dedicated person to look after our shop.
- The Alabama State Council on the Arts has approved our \$1,200 grant for the Music Festival in April;
- The Historic Chattahoochee Commission has approved our grant for



Santa, aka Clifford Flood, visited the Second Saturday Christmas Open House in December.

a discussion of any kind. The whites at that first meeting were Jessie Summers, Jenny Hayes, and Sarah Etchison and the blacks were Dr. Betty Smith, Alonzo Ransom, Frank Hall, Ollye Dunn and Nora Potts.

Jenny Hayes remembers that at the first meeting, "We told our names and something about why we were meeting. We discussed at length what to name the group and came up with Human Relations Forum. (It was later expanded to Chattahoochee Valley Human Relations Forum). We decided to continue meeting socially and to invite others.

"We did invite others and our friends, Ruth Downs and Margie Wheeling, were among the first to join with us and become very active.

"The group grew in size and soon outgrew our living room. They met at numerous places including the Valley National Bank and the West Point Civic Center."

At times when the group left a meeting they would see a policeman nearby. Although the police did not approve of their activities, they were not there to harass them but to protect them. No one wanted a repeat in our town of what happened in Birmingham.

In March of 1971 a young black man was shot and killed by a West Point policeman. This caused a great deal of distress in the black community. For a while, the blacks boycotted every store in the community, except for Hayes Store, which was operated by Jenny's husband and his family.

One of the forum's projects was to integrate a community swimming pool. The swimming party included both adults and children. Most of the black kids stayed in the shallow end as this was their first experience in a swimming pool. Integrating the pool was a sensitive and possibly danger-



Jenny Hayes, 1964

ous action at the time as there were many in this neighborhood who were strongly opposed. A group of our men were above at the top of the hill "just in case anyone might cause trouble". Fortunately there was no trouble and the swimming party was held without violence of any kind.

There were over 90 public spirited citizens throughout the community who joined the Human Relations Forum including many educators, several ministers, and even a few politicians. They worked tirelessly to reach the goal of a better understanding between the races from 1968 until the forum was disbanded at the end of 1972 after our local schools were integrated without incident.

What did the Human Relations Forum accomplish? It was a first start in getting whites and blacks to meet, talk and to know each other a little better. We believe this was a great help in easing the tension in our community over school integration.

Thank you Jessie and Jenny for being brave enough to start the Human Relations Forum at a time of high tension in our community, and thanks to the many others who joined with them to make it successful.

Brave Hearts

by Carl Summers, LCHS President Emeritus

During my working career Jessie and I lived in West Point, Georgia, and moved to Auburn in 1996. This story is about a time when we were still living in West Point. It is about the activities of Jessie and one of her close friends during the turbulent civil rights period of the 1960's. Few people today realize how difficult it was at that time for middle class whites living in a small southern town to support equal rights for blacks.

In the 1960's our way of life was threatened. Our little town of West Point, Georgia was in turmoil. Nothing would ever be the same.

The Supreme Court had spoken. Blacks would be eating in our restaurants, sitting wherever they pleased on our buses, voting in our elections, and the most objectionable of all was that blacks would be integrating our all white schools. We had an excellent white school that did a good job of preparing our children for college. The school would surely deteriorate when integrated with over 50% poorly schooled black children. What could be done?

The wealthiest families in our town contributed generously and raised the funds to start a "Christian School" for white children. A good school but many would not be able to afford the tuition.

A neighbor, Barbara, told her maid who had been with her many years that, "If you let your son attend our white school you are fired".

Presbyterian Elders were called off the golf course to decide what to do if a black tried to attend a Sunday morning service.

Our company (We were a one company town) operated a Community Cafeteria which was the best place in town to eat. It was closed to avoid integration.

City officials and leaders had not scheduled any meetings with the black community leaders to resolve problems.

In 1968 in response to this turmoil, Jessie Summers and Jenny Hayes, two good friends and brave hearts, came together and decided to do what they could. If no one else would talk to the blacks then they would.

Up to this point most of the blacks they had known had been servants. Now they wanted to establish a friendly relationship with the blacks on the basis of equality.

Jessie and Jenny first met in our home with Nora Potts, the black manager of a Day Care Center, and got her ideas on how to form such a group and who to invite.

A short time later they invited blacks and whites of like spirit to meet in our living room. This was the first time in our town a group of blacks had entered a white home through the front door and sat in the living room for



Jessie Summers, 1964

signage in the Trade Center in the amount of \$1,500;

- The Turner Foundation has given us \$5,000 to be used to construct a windmill water storage facility.

There are some sadnesses, too. Our Curator, Jessie Summers retired on December 31. Jessie served as Museum Curator from March of 2002 through 2011, although she worked with the LCHS much longer without the "official" title. As curator, and with the help of artists and friends, she completely renovated the Museum and the Museum exhibits. In recognition of her exemplary service to the Society, the board presented her with a Long Leaf Pine Basket created by master basketweaver Jean Kerr. The board is also purchasing a plaque to bear the names

of recipients of "The Jessie Summers Volunteer of the Year Award".

Building maintenance and repair continue. Large Pioneer Park signs were placed on the east and west sides of the Trade Center by Lan Lipscomb - ladderman extraordinaire!

Second Saturdays organized by Charlie C. Mitchell have been a great success. Second Saturdays have recently included several workshops such as the Walks in the Herb Garden with Tia Gonzalez, the Fiber Arts Guild workshops, and Rainbarrel and Teacher Workshops conducted by Doyle Keasel.

We look forward to another year of service and growth. Please join us and spread the word to your friends and neighbors.

More pictures from Second Saturday in December on next page.



(Above) Peggy Webster, stirs up punch in a handmade bowl donated to LCHS by her parents.



(Top Right) Winnie Rowell presides over the cookie decorating.



(Bottom Right) The Whistle Stop Pickers play tunes of the season.

Scenes from Second Saturday December 2011

(Clockwise from Top) 1. Santa draws the name of the winner for the donation quilt. 2. Spinners and weavers demonstrate their craft upstairs in the Trade



Center.
3. Blacksmiths are hard at work in the forge.
4. After the open house, LCHS hosted a covered dish dinner for board members and volunteers.
5. Guests sample Christmas cookies and visit with Santa.



Pomegranates

I often hear comments like, “My grandparents used to have huge pomegranate bushes on their property but I cannot get them to grow.” It is true that Alabama homesteads often had nice, productive pomegranate bushes. These are difficult to find today. I’m told that certain soil-borne, root diseases have moved in which can be devastating to pomegranates, especially in wet weather. We have not been unable to get them to grow at Pioneer Park.

Persimmons

Wild, American persimmons grew everywhere and the fruit was plentiful. Every child growing up in rural Alabama had the experience, just once, of tasting an under-ripe, wild persimmon.

However, once a hard freeze softens the pulpy fruit, the astringency disappears and the sweet flavor is remarkable. Our ancestors had to fight the raccoons, possums, and deer for a taste of this native fruit. Only recently have the large, non-astringent, Asian persimmons become popular in backyard orchards in the South.

Fruits you will not see at Pioneer Park

Raspberries, cherries, kiwis, bunch grapes, olives and citrus were not grown on 19th century homesteads in Central Alabama. We were either too far south or too far north or simply did not know about these fruits or didn’t have the time to cultivate them.

First Pioneer Park Book Fair, November 2011

Local Authors Showcase Work

Pioneer Park’s first Book Fair, held on November 12, was a success since it attracted many newcomers to the Museum and gave Lee County authors an opportunity to showcase their work. Noted historian Wayne Flynt showcased his latest book, *Keeping the Faith*, his take on the unvarnished truth of Alabama.

Cartoonist Jimmy Johnson’s *Beaucoup Arlo and Janis*—including 1,000 samples of the quirky, intelligent, meaningful humor that has made Arlo and Janis so popular—attracted another demographic.

The six local women who comprise the Mystic Order of East Alabama Fiction Writers presented *Be the Flame*,

their first work, a collection of shortstories which has been described as a written “come to Jesus meeting.” They are Margee Bright, Joanne Camp, Marian Carcache, Mary Dansak, Gail Langley and Judith Nunn.

There was something for everyone, since Peter Huggins had a children’s book, *Trosclair and the Alligator*, featuring a boy and a dog searching for turtle eggs in Louisiana and Melissa Dickson, an artist, presented *Cameo*, her debut into the realm of poetry, much of which deals with the Civil War. John Ellisor presented *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier*, a story that goes beyond the conflict itself.

Heirloom Fruits continued from page 9 of the McLain Garden. If the pioneers had access to some of the thornless blackberry varieties that we have today, they might have been more motivated to cultivate blackberries on the farm.

Blueberries

Fifty years ago, most Southerners had never picked a cultivated blueberry. The little wild ones found in the woods and meadows were called ‘huckleberries’. Blueberries were grown up north (mostly *Vaccinium corymbosum*, northern highbush). Development of the native rabbiteye blueberry (*Vaccinium ashei*) has transformed blueberry consumption in the Deep South over the past 40 to 50 years. A selection of modern, named varieties are planted along the McLain Garden fence although they were never grown in 19th Century gardens.

Plums

Native plums grew all over Alabama and there are several species of native plums other than the widespread (*Prunus americana*). Like blackberries, there was little reason to cultivate them when thickets of juicy red and yellow plums grew everywhere. The sour, marble-sized fruit of what I think was wild Chickasaw plum (*P. angustifolia*) made the best jellies and plum sauces. The popular, cultivated prune plums from Europe (*P. domestica*) did not grow well in the mild climate of Alabama. Most of our cultivated plums today are crosses with the juicy, large Japanese


plums (*P. salicina*). Cultivated plums have some of the same challenges as cultivated peaches because they are both stone fruits. The biggest problem of both wild and cultivated plums is the plum curculio. Today it’s hard to find many ripe, unsprayed plums that aren’t “wormy” because of this insect.

Strawberries

In the early 20th century, commercial strawberries were more popular in Alabama than peaches. They were also easily grown in or near the backyard garden on a typical Alabama homestead. Strawberries offered a tasty treat in the early spring before any other fruit was available. Strawberries were usually planted in or near the family’s vegetable garden. Since we have no heirloom vegetable garden at Pioneer Park, there are no strawberries.

Figs

Figs are perhaps the easiest and most dependable fruit crop one can grow in the Deep South. That is why most homesteads in Central and South Alabama had figs. Several varieties of hardy figs will grow in Central Alabama but the standard variety is ‘brown turkey’, a medium size, purple fig that is used for preserves, jams, pickles, and dried figs. Many varieties, including ‘brown turkey’ may freeze during an unusually cold winter but they often will re-sprout from the roots and produce another small tree or bush within a year or two. Note that several varieties of figs are planted around the McLain Garden including ‘brown turkey.’



The biggest problem of both wild and cultivated plums is the plum curculio. Today it’s hard to find many ripe, unsprayed plums that aren’t “wormy” because of this insect.



From the Gardens. . .

Southern Heirloom Fruits

Charles C. Mitchell

Vice President, Lee Co. Historical Society

I’ve been asked on several occasions about planting an heirloom fruit orchard on the grounds of Pioneer Park. I have experience growing fruits on my nearby homestead and could probably develop a nice little demonstration orchard on the LCHS property. However, my concern is its historical authenticity. Did pioneers in East Alabama have fruit orchards in the 1800s? I don’t know the answer. Undoubtedly, some homesteaders planted

Fresh fruits were seasonal and mostly collected from the wild—dewberries and blackberries, wild huckleberries, plums, muscadine and possum grapes, wild persimmons, etc.

fruit trees but most of my readings about Alabama’s agricultural past suggest that fruit orchards were not a high priority with Alabama’s pioneers. Even into the 20th Century, most Alabama farmers were obsessed with

strictly for local consumption. Along with these, some figs and pomegranates from the Mediterranean seemed to thrive in Alabama’s climate. Even today, one might find an old fig tree or a hardy pear tree growing near an old, abandoned house site in rural Alabama.

Peach

The peach has always been Alabama’s number one tree fruit in spite of the fact that we grow far less peaches than our neighbor, Georgia. Commercial peach production in Alabama can be traced back to the mid 1800s. Peaches really gained prominence by the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. According to the Encyclopedia of Alabama:

The Alabama peach industry intensified with the arrival of Scandinavian immigrants Theodore Thorson and John Peterson, who established the settlement of Thorsby in 1895 in Chilton County. Peach trees were set as early as 1898, and the hilly landscape and climate seemed ideal for their cultivation. Although Georgian P. C. Smith was the first horticulturist to raise peaches commercially in Chilton County, it was the Scandinavians and other Thorsby growers who established a significant number of orchards, vineyards, and berry fields. Elberta was the variety of choice at the time, and Thorsby’s

Heirloom Fruits continued on page 8

Heirloom Fruits continued from page 7
farmers set between 135 and 170 trees on their 10-acre plots, netting about 75 cents per crate (slightly more than a present-day bushel).

Backyard peach production has always been a challenge in Alabama because of the disease and insect pressure on this fragile crop. Even today, a peach tree's productive life is only about 11 years. There are no peaches at Pioneer Park because of the intensive pesticide spray program necessary to assure nice fruit.

Pears

The European pears e.g., 'Bartlett' types, that are so popular worldwide have never performed well in the heat and humidity of Alabama. Fire blight will usually kill them within a few years of planting. However, Alabama pioneers discovered that certain very hardy varieties could tolerate Alabama's climate and produce an acceptable, hard pear that was perfect for preserving and canning. Most Alabama homesteads had one or more "hard" pear trees planted around

Two popular, heirloom varieties of grafted pears, 'Keiffer' and 'Orient', are planted at the rear of the McLain Garden at Pioneer Park.

the garden. Trees can live for decades and produce a crop of hard pears in late August and September. These pears are the sources of pear preserves, canned pears, pear relish, pear pickles, dried pears and lots of other products that homemakers made from these heirloom pear trees that grow so well in Central Alabama. Two popular, heirloom varieties of grafted pears, 'Keiffer' and 'Orient', are planted at the rear of the McLain Garden at Pioneer Park. The round, Asian pears that have become

popular during the last few decades were unknown to our ancestors but will grow in Alabama.

Apples

Most apples have a high chill requirement (1000+ chill hours below 40 degrees F) and perform best in colder regions of the country. However, there are many varieties of apples that will grow and produce in Central Alabama. Undoubtedly, our pioneer ancestors brought some of these trees with them from the Carolinas, Virginia, and Georgia when they moved into East Alabama. Gary Gray, a horticultural Extension agent in Chilton County, remembers that his grandmother who was the daughter of Rev. C. W. Walton, the Methodist minister who pastored at Notasulga around the 1920s, told him that she remembered that they grew "Horse" apples, also called "Yellow

Horse". Commercial production was never widespread but most homesteads had hardy apple trees near their gardens. Hardy crab-apples, in particular, could be found growing wild throughout the South. I recall a crab-

apple tree on the playground behind my elementary school in West-central Alabama. Today, apples are a challenge to grow this far South. New insects such as Japanese beetles and diseases such as fire blight and bitter rot thrive in our heat and humidity. There are no apples planted in Pioneer Park due to this increased pest pressure that our pioneer fathers did not have to deal with.

Possum Grapes and Muscadines
Viticulture (grape growing) never caught on in early Alabama. Alabama

history tells the story of the aristocratic French exiles who settled present-day Demopolis with the intension of growing grapes and olives ("The Vine and Olive Colony"). The Colony failed. While we had our own native bunch grapes called possum grapes or fox grapes (*Vitis aestivalis*) by most Alabamians, the types used to make European and Californian wines (*Vitis vinifera*) and the fox grapes native to the northeastern U.S. (*Vitis labrusca*) just did not do well here in the Deep South. Wild muscadine grapes (*Vitis rotundifolia*) thrive. Why would our ancestors bother growing them when they grew so abundantly around the edges of the woods. In the early fall, these native grapes were used for homemade sweet wines, jams and jellies, and incredible muscadine pies and cobblers. A light-colored to bronze muscadine found in North Carolina was named 'Scuppernong'. Because it was the first light-colored muscadine cultivated, the name 'Scuppernong' came to be used today by many Southerners to refer to any light-colored,

bronze, or white muscadine. Breeding efforts since WWII have resulted in the release of some incredible new muscadine varieties and the expansion of the wine industry in the South. Four improved varieties are planted along the west side of the McLain Garden: 'Cowart', a black, heirloom variety used for jams and jellies; 'Supreme', a large, improved black variety; and two, large, bronze varieties, 'Pam' and 'Sweet Jenny'.

Blackberries and Dewberries

Why cultivate them when one could fill up a bucket from wild plants growing in ditches and abandoned fields all over Alabama? Dewberries grow along the ground and mature a few weeks earlier than blackberries. Blackberry thickets can be several feet high and almost impenetrable because of the stiff thorns. Blackberry or dewberry cobblers and 'stir-rounds' are a mainstay of Southern desserts. Raspberry, blackberry's red, northern cousin, doesn't do well in the Deep South. Today, most landowners consider the canes a weed and kill them to clean up pastures and woodlots. Most residents do not have access to the wild berries. The more productive, cultivated blackberries are the mainstay in supermarkets and roadside fruit stands. 'Kiowa', a large, productive blackberry variety that is just as thorny as its wild cousin, is planted along the east side
Heirloom Fruits continued on page 10



Cultivated blackberries grow along the split rail fence around the McLain Garden at Pioneer Park. Our ancestors did not cultivate blackberries; they gathered them from the wild.