

Pea River Historical & Genealogical Society Newsletter

Identifying, collecting, preserving, archiving, researching, and promoting interest in historic and genealogical materials and records of Coffee County and the Pea River Region of South Alabama

May 2013

Dear PRHGS members,

The response to our inaugural issue was positive, but I must clarify -- the newsletter in no way replaces our quarterly journal Pea River Trails. You all will continue to receive the Trails by mail. The newsletter is intended to complement the Trails, giving us an outlet for topics that are time-sensitive, incidental, or otherwise not appropriate for the Trails.

The newsletter can be an ideal format for queries, notices, and invitations. Please send me anything you think our members will benefit from.

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PRHGS On-Line

- <http://www.peariver.org> (our official site)
- Look for Pea River Historical and Genealogical Society on Facebook and “Like” us!

May PRHGS Meeting

The PRHGS will meet on Sunday, May 19, at 2:00 pm at the Enterprise Welcome Center. As always, the May meeting is our annual business meeting. We urge members to attend this important meeting. Light refreshments will be served.



Do you have **two hours each week** that you could spend volunteering at one of our facilities? Give us a call at 393-2901.

You can make a **big difference** in allowing us to have our Gift Shop/Library, the Depot Museum, and the Welcome Center open every day from 10 am til 4 pm!

From the Treasurer

Dear Friends,

As some of you may know, we have been through a rough time lately as an organization. Two years ago, we started a process of turning around our Society financially. We had to obtain a loan to replace a worn-out heat pump for the Gift Shop & Library. We acquired equipment to produce the Trails in-house, saving a great deal of money annually. However, with our aging facilities, repairs and maintenance have increased and all our costs have gone up.

Last year, with the help of Goolsby Bros. Plumbing & Electric, we were able to fix the Depot plumbing at a reduced rate. Although we have made great progress, we have a great deal yet to do. We plan to expand and improve our Library, and to increase our publishing projects, giving us a potential source of additional income.

We have been fortunate thus far to get the “have-to’s” done, but there is no guarantee that we can continue being so lucky. We need our members to step up and give us a hand – donate beyond dues, or give us your time.

Working together, we can ensure that our society is on firm financial footing as we carry on into the 21st Century.

Brian Fleming
Treasurer

Queries & Requests

If you have a question, request, or something else to share with your fellow members, this is the place for it. E-mail Georgia at hyacinth@ala.net if you can answer questions or fulfill requests, and I will put you in contact.

- ❑ Wanted to buy: a Coffee County Heritage Book
- ❑ Wanted: a photograph of USS Bloomer, a stern-wheel steamer once laid up near Geneva and later used as a gunboat by the Union Navy
- ❑ Wanted: a map showing the location of Simmons Mill
- ❑ Wanted to buy: Pea River Reflections
- ❑ Wanted: a photograph of “The Houseboat”, a teen hangout in the 1960s and early 1970s on Highway 84 near New Brockton

Mark Your Calendars!

May 19 – July 13 – Memories of World War II: Photographs from the Archives of the Associated Press, Wiregrass Museum of Art, 126 Museum Avenue, Dothan. A visual record for all generations of the great sacrifice made during World War II. For more information, call 334-794-3871 or visit www.wiregrassmuseum.org.

May 17-19 – The Battle of Resaca Reenactment, Resaca, Georgia. For more information, see http://www.georgiadivision.org/bor_reenactment.html. Several regiments that recruited in Coffee County fought at Resaca, including the 33rd Alabama Infantry and the 53rd Alabama Cavalry.

May 30 – Unveiling of the Alabama Historical Commission Marker for the birthplace home of James E. (“Big Jim”) Folsom, in Elba, one block east of the courthouse on Putnam Street, next to the old jail, at 10 am. The marker is a project of the John Coffee Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution

June 3 – Troy Civil War Forum, 6:30 pm at the Troy Public Library. Henry Howard will talk about the First White House of the Confederacy in Montgomery, where he is an experienced docent. The Forum is open to the public; there is no charge for attending.

1890: The Untimely Census

by Georgia Fleming

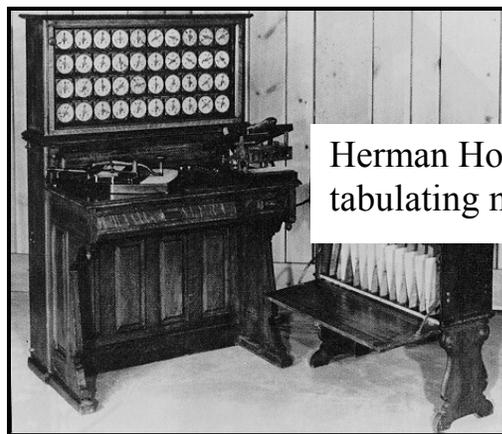
The Federal Census of 1880 forced the Census Office to reconsider the manual abstraction of data – it had taken seven years to tabulate, making the results obsolete when released. A high rate of immigration caused the population to grow dramatically from 1880 to 1890, and it was estimated that the Census of 1890 would take even longer to tabulate: 13 years! A Census every ten years is mandated by the Constitution, with the numbers used to determine the apportionment of taxation and Congressional representation. The notion of a census being unfinished before it was time to take another one sent the Census Office into action.

Herman Hollerith, the son of a German immigrant, had been working on a method to record data on a machine-readable medium, having taken the idea from watching railroad conductors punch holes in different places on tickets to record the gender and approximate age of passengers. Hollerith invented a tabulator that used electromechanical relays to increment mechanical counters. A punch card was placed over pools of mercury corresponding to the possible hole positions. Wires suspended over the card reader were pressed onto the card; a hole allowed the wire to touch the mercury and make an electrical contact.

Hollerith's method was used in the 1890 Census, the first to be tabulated by machine. Clerks entered information from the census returns by punching holes in the cards. Using mechanisms built by Hollerith under contract, the Census Office finished the 1890 Census in one year, and greatly under budget.

The success prompted census bureaus across the world, including those of Russia, Canada, Norway, and Cuba, to lease Hollerith's equipment. Hollerith went on to invent a keypunch and an automatic card-feeder to be used with his device.

In 1911, Hollerith's company along with three others merged to form the Computing Tabulating Recording Company (CTR). In 1924, the company was renamed and received a more recognizable acronym: IBM.



Herman Hollerith's
tabulating machine

Remembering . . . 1890

- Among those born in 1890 were: British mystery writer Agatha Christie (d. 1976); Colonel Harland Sanders, founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken (d. 1980); U. S. President Dwight Eisenhower (d. 1969); comedian Groucho Marx (d. 1977); and North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh (d. 1969).
- In the news: A detachment of the U. S. 7th Cavalry massacred 300 Lakota (including 200 women and children) at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota in December.
- In September of 1890, Wilford Woodruff, president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons), issued a Manifesto that officially terminated the practice of polygamy. This removed the barrier to Utah being admitted to the Union; statehood was granted in 1896.
- The average annual income in the U. S. was \$660.
- Unemployment in the U. S. stood at 4%.
- A first-class stamp cost 2¢.
- A loaf of bread cost 2¢, a gallon of milk was 19¢.
- The average house cost \$5800.
- Benjamin Harrison (Republican) was President of the United States. He was defeated for reelection in 1892 by Grover Cleveland.
- Thomas Seay was Governor of Alabama. During his term, legislation was passed limiting women and children to an 8-hour work day.
- Popular books published in 1890 were The Picture of Dorian Gray (Oscar Wilde), and The Sign of Four (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's second Sherlock Holmes novel).
- In the first Army-Navy game, played at West Point, New York, Navy defeated Army 24-0.
- Top songs of 1890 were: Tchaikovsky's "Sleeping Beauty Waltz," "Oh Promise Me," and "Little Annie Rooney."
- Life expectancy in the United States was 46.8 years (it is now 78 for males and 81 for females).
- First seen in 1890 – The States of Idaho and Wyoming, admitted to the Union as the 43rd and 44th states in July; execution by electric chair (at Auburn Prison in New York); commercial sales of picnic hams; and the pre-cut cardboard box (invented by Robert Gair).
- Last seen in 1890 – Substantial bustles on dresses for women; and the American Frontier (the Superintendent of the Census announced that, because of the rapid settlement of the West disclosed by census data, "there can hardly be said to be a frontier line.")
- Notable deaths in 1890: Joseph Merrick (the "Elephant Man"), John C. Fremont, Vincent van Gogh, and Thathanka Iyothanka (Sitting Bull).

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