

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

Winter 2013-2014

Mark Your Calendars

Please note: the Troy Civil War Forum, usually held on the first Monday of each month, has been cancelled for the month of February.

February 11 - The Board of Directors of the Pea River Historical & Genealogical Society will meet at 3:30 pm at the Gift Shop and Library on Main Street, Enterprise.

February 13, 7:00 pm at the Enterprise High School Performing Arts Center - The Dallas Brass will present their concert "A Musical Journey," described as "a musical travelogue through American history. From the time of George Washington to the present day ..." Visit <http://www.coffeecountyartsalliance.com> for ticket information, or call 1-334-406-ARTS.

February 15 - The Museum of Alabama's new exhibition, *Alabama Voices*, will officially open to the public. For more information, see the press release on page 6 of this newsletter.

Yard Sale Rescheduled for April

In order to avoid schedule conflicts, we are planning to have our Yard Sale in April. We can use clothing, tools, collectibles, kitchen equipment, CDs, electronics, books ... anything in sellable condition you want to donate.

Drop-off points are:

- The PRHGS Gift Shop/Library at 108 S. Main Street
- The Depot Museum on Railroad Street
- Fleming Multimedia at 122 S. Main Street

If you have items you want to donate and are not able to transport them to one of the drop-off points, let us know and we will arrange to have them picked up.

Please help us make this fund-raiser a success. If you can volunteer a few hours of your time to help set up and run the yard sale, call us at 393-2901.

Remember ... and Teach

Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

-- Deuteronomy 4:9

A Must-Have at Our Gift Shop!

The PRHGS Gift Shop is pleased to offer Tupelo Honey, produced from the tupelo gum tree (*Nyssa Ogeechee*) growing along the Apalachicola and Chipola Rivers in northwest Florida.

Bees are placed on platforms along the edge of the river, close to the blossoming tupelos. All stored honey is removed from the hives just as the tupelos bloom, and the new crop is harvested before the bees produce honey from other sources, thus insuring that it is pure Tupelo Honey.



Unlike other honeys, Tupelo Honey does not crystallize. This is due to its high fructose content, averaging 44%.

Drop by the Gift Shop at 108 S. Main Street, Enterprise, to taste a sample! We have Tupelo Honey in one and two-pound jars.

New Board Member

The Board of Directors welcomes new board member Mack Lott of New Brockton. Mack is a farmer who also serves as Vice President of the Battle of Newton Society, and 1st Lieutenant Commander of Camp 911, Coffee County Rangers, Sons of Confederate Veterans.

**History remembers
only the celebrated.
Genealogy remembers
them all.**

-- **Laurence Overmire**

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: a map showing the location of Simmons Mill.
- ❑ A few scans from a 1977 Enterprise High School Encoala (yearbook) – recipient will pay for them.
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ Wanted: our Gift Shop/Library is in need of an answering machine. If you have one you are no longer using, please consider giving it to the Society. (Email hyacinth@ala.net)
- ❑ Wanted: a copy of The Heritage of Geneva County.
- ❑ Wanted: a photograph (digital) of Travis Bedsole (1832-1899), whose wife was Rosa P. Ward.
- ❑ History and other information on 205 Daleville Ave. (the old Sherling House)



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 open Monday-Friday 10-4, and expanding open hours for the Depot Museum.

Remembering . . . 1913

- Among those born in 1913 were: Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford; actors Danny Kaye, Tyrone Power, and Lloyd Bridges; labor leader Jimmy Hoffa; legendary football coaches Vince Lombardi and Paul "Bear" Bryant; and actress Vivien Leigh.
- Notable 1913 deaths: financier J. P. Morgan, abolitionist Harriet Tubman, and inventor of mail order Aaron Montgomery Ward.
- New York City's Grand Central Terminal re-opened as the world's largest railroad station.
- Woodrow Wilson (Democrat) was President of the United States, succeeding Republican William Howard Taft.
- The Woolworth Building was completed in Manhattan; at 792 feet it was the tallest building in the world from 1913 until 1930.
- Average income was \$1034/year. Unemployment stood at 4.3%.
- A first class stamp was 2¢; gas was 8¢ a gallon.
- The World Series was won by the Philadelphia Athletics, who defeated the New York Giants 4-1. (The Athletics moved to Kansas City in 1954 and to Oakland in 1967; the Giants moved to San Francisco in 1957.)
- The world heavyweight boxing champion was Jack Johnson
- Death Valley, California, recorded a temperature of 134°F, a world heat record that still stands.
- The 1913 Auburn Tigers were named national champions by selectors Billingsley Report, 1st-N-Goal, and James Howard.
- "Feature-length" films were becoming more frequent. Movie stars of 1913 include Lillian Gish, Mabel Normand, William Garwood, Mary Pickford, and Henry Walthall.
- Top songs of 1913 include "Danny Boy" (lyrics by Frederic Weatherly), "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" (Chauncey Olcott), "You Made Me Love You" (Al Jolson), and "Because" (Enrico Caruso).
- A dozen eggs cost 32¢, a loaf of bread 6¢, and a gallon of milk 36¢.
- Emmet O'Neal (Democrat) was Governor of Alabama. He was the son of Confederate General Edward O'Neal, who had also served as Governor. Emmet O'Neal was the first governor to live in the Governor's Mansion, purchased during his term.
- Among books first published in 1913 are D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, *O Pioneers!* by Willa Cather, and *The Custom of the Country* by Edith Wharton.
- Life expectancy in the United States was about 50.3 years for males and 55 for females (it is now 78 for males and 81 for females).
- Henry Ford developed the first moving assembly line.
- The 16th (Income Tax) Amendment to the Constitution was ratified on February 3; in April, the 17th Amendment was passed, providing for direct election of Senators.
- First seen in 1913 – The first crossword, in the *New York World*; stainless steel was invented by Harry Brearley in Sheffield, England; HMS Queen Elizabeth launched, the first oil-fired battleship; the Lincoln Highway, the first transcontinental highway for automobiles in the U.S., was dedicated; the Federal Reserve Act created the Federal Reserve System as the central banking system of the U.S.; and the first toy erector sets were sold by the Mysto Manufacturing Company.

No, Family Names Were Not Changed at Ellis Island

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There is a family myth amongst tens of thousands of American families: "The name was changed at Ellis Island." The stories claim the immigrant arrived at Ellis Island and was unable to communicate with the officials. A record was then created by some official who assigned the immigrant a new name.

That is a great story but is always false. This fairy tale refuses to die. Let's look at a few simple facts:

1. Passenger lists were never created at Ellis Island. They were created abroad, beginning close to the immigrant's home, when the immigrant purchased his ticket for the ship. In 99% of the cases, the clerk filling out the forms and creating the passenger list in "the old country" knew how to speak, read, and write your ancestor's language. That clerk filled in the proper name. In the case of Eastern European or Oriental languages, those forms even included the correct non-Roman characters. To be sure, spelling variations were common as many immigrants were illiterate and often didn't know their own alphabets or how to spell their own names. The clerks wrote what they heard, which may or may not be the same spelling used elsewhere. Perhaps there was no "correct" spelling. Generations of your ancestors may have used the same surname without knowing how to spell it. If a person could not read or write and did not know the letters of his or her own alphabet, spelling was a minor issue for that person. However, what was recorded on various forms ALWAYS sounded correct, especially when pronounced in the immigrant's language.

It is unlikely that anyone at the local steamship office in "the old country" was unable to communicate with the immigrant or his/her family. Names were most likely recorded with a high degree of accuracy at that time. Those lists of names were later delivered to immigration officials at Ellis Island or other ports of entry.

The steamship companies were very aware that any passenger denied entry at Ellis Island or any other American port of entry was always sent back to the port of embarkation at the steamship company's expense. As a result, those steamship companies were very careful to make sure that each and every passenger had complete documentation, including the correct surname, before allowing that passenger to board the ship. Documentation was delivered to the ship's captain or to a member of his staff before the ship weighed anchor.

2. The passenger lists were always prepared in "the old country" by steamship company officials. Upon arrival in New York or any other port of entry, that passenger list was delivered by the ship's captain or a member of his staff to immigration officials BEFORE those passengers were allowed to leave the ship. (First class and second class passengers did receive faster treatment. However, most immigrants arrived in steerage.) If any immigrant arrived at Ellis Island and provided a different name to officials or had no documentation, he or she was always denied entry. If a brief investigation could not clear up the mystery, the immigrant was shipped back to the old country on the steamship's return trip.

3. The idea that the immigrant was unable to communicate with officials at Ellis Island is ludicrous. In fact, one third of all immigrant inspectors at Ellis Island in the early twentieth century were themselves foreign-born, and all immigrant inspectors spoke at least three

languages. In addition, Ellis Island and other ports of entry also hired an army of interpreters, most of them as part-time employees. These interpreters always (repeat: ALWAYS) could speak, read, and write the languages of other immigrants.

Upon arrival at Ellis Island, would-be immigrants were assigned to different groups for processing. Those who spoke Polish were grouped together and assigned to an interpreter who spoke fluent Polish, those who spoke Italian were assigned to an Italian interpreter, and so forth. Each interpreter then led his or her group through the immigration procedures and interviews. No immigrant was ever processed through immigration without an interpreter/guide, except perhaps for a few immigrants from English-speaking countries.

If a new immigrant arrived and no interpreter was available for his or her particular language, that immigrant was detained at Ellis Island until a qualified interpreter was located and brought in for the interview. Most immigrants were processed through Ellis Island within a day or two but there were cases where immigrants were detained for several days until an interpreter became available and proper documentation was examined. Nobody passed through the immigration process without being interviewed by someone who was fluent in a suitable language. Paperwork was also examined closely by the same interpreter who could read and write the language used in those documents.

For example, Fiorello LaGuardia was one of the hundreds of part-time interpreters employed at Ellis Island. He was American-born of immigrant parents: Achille La Guardia, an Italian immigrant from Cerignola, and Irene Coen, a Jewish lady from Trieste, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Fiorello was fluent in several dialects of Italian and could easily read and write Italian. Of course, he later became well known as the Mayor of New York for three terms from 1934 to 1945. He also was elected to Congress in 1916 and 1918, and again from 1922 through 1930. Hundreds, probably thousands, of Italian-speaking immigrants were guided through the immigration process by Fiorello LaGuardia.

NOTE: Many immigrants were refused entry for a variety of reasons and were returned. Estimates seem to vary from 12% to 18% of all would-be immigrants were denied entry into the United States and instead were sent back to their originating countries. The fates of most of these returnees have not been well documented.

4. Later immigrants had to verify their correct names every year. Starting in July of 1940, the Alien Registration Act required every alien resident in the United States to register at their local post office every January. As part of the registration process, the immigrant had to provide ALL names by which he or she had ever been known, including his or her full name as used in "the old country" as well as the name used currently and any maiden name or nicknames ever used. Alien Registration requirements applied to all aliens over the age of fourteen, regardless of nationality and regardless of immigration status.

Despite these facts, the Ellis Island name-change story (or Castle Garden, or earlier versions of the same story) is as American as apple pie. However, there is little to no truth to these stories.

When did the names change? After processing through Ellis Island and settling within the United States, many immigrants DID change their names. In numerous cases, the names were changed for them by public officials, schoolteachers, shopkeepers, and neighbors. Anyone from Eastern Europe, with a name long on consonants and short on vowels, learned that his name often got in the way of a job interview or became the subject of ridicule at his child's school. Any change that might smooth their way to the American dream was seen as a step in the right

direction. In many cases, these later name changes were made without court papers or any other official recognition.

In any case, the records at Ellis Island and other ports of entry always contained the correct original names, although with frequent spelling variations.

Alabama Voices Exhibition Grand Opening Set

The Museum of Alabama's new centerpiece exhibition, *Alabama Voices*, will officially open to the public on Saturday, February 15, 2014. This permanent, Smithsonian-quality exhibition is the culmination of nearly a decade's worth of research, planning, and fundraising. Construction commenced in February 2013. Occupying nearly 11,000 square feet on the museum's second floor, *Alabama Voices* will cover the dramatic unfolding of Alabama history from the dawn of the 1700s to the present. More than 800 artifacts and hundreds of images will tell the story of struggles over the land, the rise of a cotton economy, industrializing, world wars, civil rights, the race to the moon, and more.

The public Grand Opening on February 15, will feature a wide variety of activities for the entire family. The official ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held at 9:30 am on the front terrace of the Alabama Department of Archives and History. From 9 am to 5 pm, visitors can tour the new exhibition, enjoy food, art, and performances by Alabama musical groups on the Archives' front lawn, listen to fascinating presentations by contributors to the exhibition, participate in fun activities for families and children, and more. Musical groups to perform include the Birmingham Sunlights, Flying Jenny, Bay City Brass Band, and Mariachi Garibaldi, among others. A complete schedule of events will be released in the coming weeks. This event is free to the public.

The Alabama Tourism Department recently named the Museum as Alabama's 2014 Attraction of the Year and the Grand Opening of *Alabama Voices* as a Top 10 Event for the year. With *Alabama Voices* completed, the Museum of Alabama is the only destination offering a complete telling of the story of Alabama from prehistory to the present.

The Museum of Alabama is located at the Alabama Department of Archives and History in downtown Montgomery. Open Monday-Saturday, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm. Admission is always free. For more information about the Museum of Alabama and the Grand Opening of *Alabama Voices* call 334-328-9088. Visit the ADAH's website at www.archives.alabama.gov and follow the ADAH on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.



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