



Hoover Historical Happenings

Vol. 23 No. 3

January 2012

Dates

Jan. 17 General Meeting
Apr. 1 Membership Tea
Apr. 12 Deadline for reservations for Spring Trip
Apr. 17 Spring Trip

Executive Committee

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Make Your Reservations For the Spring Trip

Mark your calendars for April 17, 2012. We plan to travel to Anniston on one of Adventure's comfortable coaches to experience the wonders at the Anniston Museum of Natural History and the Berman Museum of World History. The Natural History Museum contains exhibits from Africa and Egypt as well as open-air exhibits of animals and birds. The Berman Museum makes history come alive with ancient treasures and objects from all over the world. The founder, Farley Berman, was a spy during WWII and you will be astonished at his magnificent collection. We have been promised a behind-the-scenes look in this museum. We will have a docent for our tour. This will also be a grand time of the year to stroll in the gardens and enjoy the spring flowers.

Lunch will be at the Classic on Noble. You will have three entrees from which to choose. The Classic on Noble is a history tour in itself. This beautifully restored restaurant has been featured in *Southern Living*, *Historical Restaurants of the South* and *100 Places to Eat Before You Die*. After lunch, you will have time to visit some of the shops and antique stores along Noble Street.

The inclusive cost for the trip will be \$50.00. Reservations and payment may be made to HHS and delivered to Tom or Charlotte Laggy, 127 Newgate Road, Alabaster, AL 35007, 663-6370. Both museums and the restaurant are handicapped accessible. Members will

have until March 15th to make reservations. After that date, the trip will be open to others who would like to join us. Reservations will close April 12th.

From Our President

I wish you all health and happiness for this New Year. As I will be your speaker for the January 17 General Meeting, I am looking forward to telling you about the little known Territorial Capital of Alabama, Old St. Stephens. It is a story that has been lost in time of the first town in the first county in Alabama after the American Revolution. Probably many of you will be saying, "Mobile was the first town in Alabama." Not true. Mobile was held by the Spanish until the war of 1812.

Sure hope you all will join us to hear "the rest of the story."

- Jackie Matte

A Simple Visit



Hudson McWilliams sharing letters from students with Hoover Officer Chad Godsey. See *A Simple Visit* on page 4.

In this our first year to award scholarships to outstanding history students in our city, our two scholarship winners were Jordan Davis, Spain Park High School, and Emily Graves, Hoover High School. We thought you would enjoy reading their essays submitted as part of the scholarship application. Here is Jordan Davis's essay; Emily Graves's essay will be printed in a future issue.

Someone once told me...

...that a person's past shapes their future. We are who we are today because of something that has once happened. I never quite understood that until I met Jack Bass and listened to his story. Jack Bass is one of the few Jewish people to have survived the Holocaust. I was fortunate enough to have gotten the opportunity to hear about his experience during World War II while in various concentration camps. His experience, like others, was irrevocably heartbreaking; yet, it was genuinely inspiring. It exceedingly had an impact on my life and how I viewed the world around me.

Jack Bass grew up in an anti-Semitic environment. He dealt with spiteful insults while growing up and as time went on, it only got worse. After his father passed away in 1932, Bass's family went through a series of moving to different cities. Eventually, his sister left for England to work in a children's hospital only two months before World War II began. Bass and his mother were brutally arrested in 1942 and deported. At the arrival to Auschwitz, Bass received an identification number tattooed on his arm--forever reminding him of this nightmare. His mother, however, was immediately sent to her death. Bass, now, alone, was forced into labor at five different camps. The only food prisoners received were inedible scraps that could be found in the kitchen. Because of this, Bass was sixty pounds when he was liberated on May 8, 1945, from Muhldorf by Americans. He was only twenty-two years old. Bass once stated, "I consider myself lucky. We thought those sent to the gas chamber were the exception, but actually we were the exceptions because we were the ones that got to live." Jack Bass is a hero in many people's eyes. Why? Because he lived to tell the tale. He told his story so he could help prevent someone else enduring all of the pain and suffering that he went through.

When I heard Jack Bass's story, it honestly made me see life in a different perspective. Because I was

raised in a Jewish family myself, I know what it is like to encounter anti-Semitic jokes and insults at school. Emotionally, it was hard for me bear and to this day, I still do not understand how kids could say such awful things. As I grew up; however, I learned to tune out the jokes and stand up for myself. Jack Bass's story showed me that by keeping a positive outlook on life, happiness can easily be maintained. Despite the fact that all odds were against him, Bass came out of the war alive and as a better person. He told himself that this world IS a good place and that it WILL be good to him again; he was so right. Most importantly he showed me that regardless of how unfair life can be that with the right amount of courage I can overcome anything that life throws my way.

Bass endured things in his life that most people could not even dream about. But most importantly, he lived to share those things with us. His experiences within the various concentration camps made him the person he grew up to be. Bass learned the value of life in the most brutal manner. I hope that as I grow up, I can learn to appreciate life as much as he did. He motivated me to look past insignificant things that may upset me, because in the long run they do not matter. What matters is your love for God, your love for your family, and your determination to be the very best person that you can possibly be. After all, we are we are because of who we once were. Jack Bass taught me that.

-Jordan Davis

Works Cited:

Birmingham Holocaust Education Center. "Jack Bass." A Resource Center for Holocaust and Genocide Education. 2010. BHEC. Web. 11 March 2011. <<http://www.bhamholocausteducation.org/bio-bass.htm>>.

Childree, Zach. "Holocaust remembrance seeks to rekindle." The Chanticleer Online. 10 April 2008. Web. 11 March 2010. <http://elmo.academyart.edu/reference-help/mla_citation_guide.html#website>.

Hoover Historical Society To Meet January 17

Hoover Historical Society will meet January 17 at 1:30 at Artists On the Bluff, formerly the Hoover Community Education Building, at 517 Park Avenue. We will hear Jackie Matte speak on *Old St. Stephens, Territorial Capital of Alabama*. You'll enjoy seeing old friends and making new ones! And there will be refreshments, too!

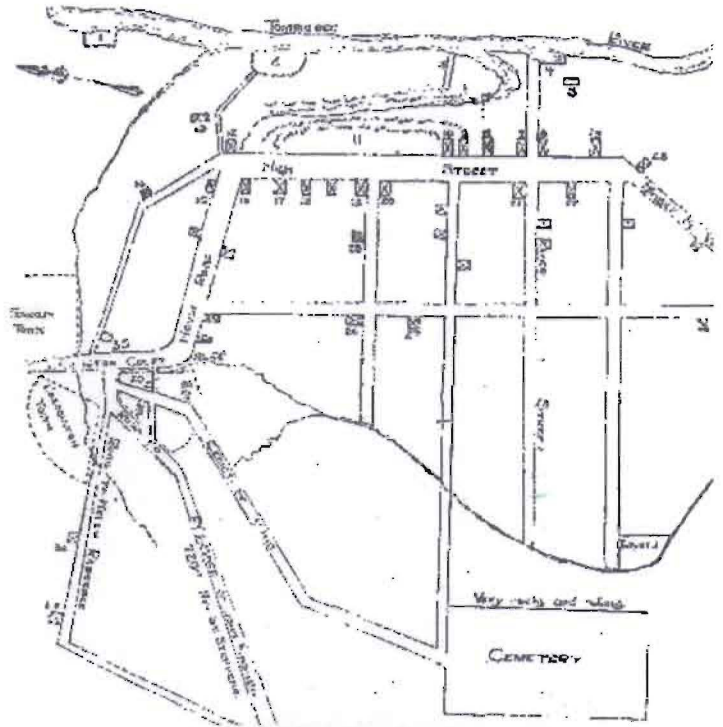
The Lost Shoe

by Jackie Matte

Last summer, I had a great time at Old St. Stephens digging at the site of the Chamberlain Hotel and visiting the limestone quarries with the young campers and their parents. I had never been in that part of OSS. A paleontologist from University of Alabama led us on a tour to three different locations. I took pictures of ancient seashells and starfish and collected several that were just lying on the surface of the ground. After seeing the height of the quarry walls, I can imagine how deep Quarry Lake must be. Three people have drowned in it. Really kind of scary when you think about it! Speaking of scary, I had a kind of scary experience—foolish on my part.

After digging all morning at the old hotel site, I walked back to where my car was parked at the beginning of High Street. I had planned to go to the air conditioned artifact sorting shed, eat lunch and sort a few trays of artifacts. Instead, I decided to walk down to the site of the old Spanish fort and take pictures of the fort and the river. After walking a mile or so taking pictures of the new horse trails that have been opened and covered with pine bark, I decided I had gone far enough. I had my car keys and camera with me, but no cell phone and had not told anyone where I was going.

I took a short cut on one of the horse trails that led from the river up to Quarry Lake and around to the old road. I came to a low, muddy section where it looked like horses' hooves had sunk pretty deep into the mud. I looked for a dry spot and tentatively put my right foot down. It seemed firm enough so I stepped on over on my left foot and it sunk into the mud. I jerked it out, but my Nike sneaker came off in the mud. I fell down on my knee, but managed to crabwalk backward away from the muddy spot to where by leaning forward, I could reach down into the muddy hole to pull my sneaker out. I think Lorenzo Dow's ghost was down there pulling my sneaker down, because the more I pulled, the lower it sunk, making sucking noises. Within a couple of minutes, I was up to my elbow in mud and could not see or feel my sneaker anymore, so I said to heck with my shoe and let Lorenzo's ghost have it. He didn't get my sock, so I hobbled up the hill about a mile to my car with my sock on my left foot and my sock and shoe on the right foot, with thick red mud up to my elbow. When I got to the restrooms by the pavilion, I washed the mud off my hands, legs and arm, took off



St. Stephens on the Tombigbee, 1841

View full map on theusgenweb.org/al/washington/St_Steph.html

my socks and right shoe and dumped all into the trash can. I got in my car and drove to my Cousin Doris's house, where I was staying.

That night, Doris and I had been invited to eat supper with the campers and then speak to them about life in OSS in its heyday. I told them about the plays put on in the theater, no churches, 69 tavern licenses and four hotels, the school teachers, and the curse of Lorenzo Dow. I got really quiet when I told them about the preacher being tarred and feathered, put on a raft and pushed down the river, cursing the townspeople and threatening them for being so evil. The younger campers seemed kind of frightened, so then I told them what a foolish trek I had taken without telling anyone where I was going and that I thought Lorenzo Dow's curse was still working because his ghost took my shoe. That got a big laugh out of all of them, young and old alike. Later when I was in Atlanta, I told my children about it; they gave me Heck! They envisioned finding me headfirst down in the mud hole with only my right foot sticking up!

Overseer's House To Host Membership Tea

Hoover Historical Society's Membership Tea will be held this year at the Overseer's House, 393 Park Avenue, in Bluff Park. The date is April 1; the time is 2-4 pm. The Overseer's House is one of Hoover's historic homes, and we're sure you will enjoy your visit.

Hoover Historical Society
P.O. Box 360233
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Return Service Requested



A Simple Visit

As a retired teacher I have come to realize that a simple visit to a fire station or an opportunity to hear an elected official connects us to our core values. To shake hands with a hero (police officer or fireman) or listen to the goals of an elected official makes us feel that we are a part of humanity.

What a joy it was to follow the Fourth Graders at Bluff Park Elementary up the hill from the school to the neighborhood Fire Station #5! Mrs. Caroline Adams arranged the trip, and she led the students as they recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Alex Herron read a poem she had written about being a firefighter's daughter. Maria Timberlake and Bria Hicks gave the firefighters cookies.

The children formed lines and one by one they handed a firefighter a hand-made card. The awestruck youngsters shared comments with the firemen like, "You are my hero. Thank you for always helping others."

Then, the children waved and headed back to school. I don't know if the others walked differently, but I know I felt a little taller!

We are celebrating the 220th birthday of our Bill of Rights this year. The students will be learning about the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen. I hope the lessons from our childhood are never forgotten! God Bless America!

-Peggy Patton

Time Cabinet Donors Need ID

We need to identify the donors for the following:

- Tin Band-aid box probably from the early 60's
- Black and silver candle holder
- China mister (sprayer) for flower arrangements

Many thanks to all who contribute and help with the cabinets. Keep looking.

-Betty Tucker, 824-9976