

the  
*Hoover Historical Log*

*The official newsletter of the Hoover Historical Society, Hoover, Alabama*

## Africatown Heritage House Museum opens

The Africatown Heritage House Museum opened in 2023 with an exhibit tracing a Black community founded by the enslaved survivors of the *Clotilda*.

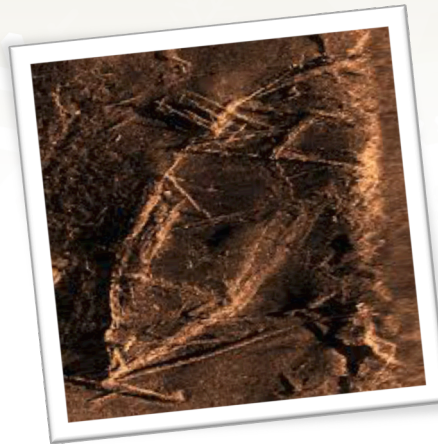
Visitors to the museum, located at 2465 Wimbush Street, may use an audio guide with sections about Cudjoe Lewis in Africa and America, the growth of the town, and the discovery of the ship sunk near Twelve Mile Island in 1860.

Just five years later, the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution freed all enslaved persons, but the survivors found it too difficult to finance a return to their African home. So, they built a life in America that honored their culture and history.

The museum is open 10AM to 5PM Tuesday through Saturday. For info, call 251-206-5268 or visit [clotilda.com](http://clotilda.com). — Adapted from *South Magazine*, 2023



Heritage House Museum,  
Mobile, AL



The *Clotilda* is shown in a sonar image; Archivist Stacye Hathorn



## Identifying and Preserving the *Clotilda* — America's Last Slave Ship

Recently 60 Minutes and journalist Anderson Cooper visited Africatown USA-Plateau just three miles north of Mobile. Africatown, founded by 32 West Africans, is still populated today by their descendants. On a bet, wealthy landowner Timothy Meaher said he could break the 1808 law prohibiting the importation of slaves to the United States. To hide his crime, he scuttled and burned the *Clotilda* to avoid prosecution. Until 2019, the location of the last known slave ship remained unknown until Ben Raines (and many others) found and documented the ship. Our speaker in January is Archivist Stacye Hathorn, the project manager and lead scientist of the investigation that identified the *Clotilda* in the Mobile River in May 2019. *Continued Page 5*

## Save the Date!

### Board Meets

**January 9, 2024**

10 AM at the  
Archive/Office  
2020 Valleydale  
Rd. #108

### General Meeting

**January 16, 2024**

Hoover Public  
Library meeting  
room; 1 PM; lunch  
with Stacye at 12PM

### Coming soon...

**March 2024**

Jimmy Langley  
will share info re:  
his Tour of Hoover

## Visiting The Folklore Center-

is almost a rite of passage for first and fourth grade students at Bluff Park Elementary!

In Fall, the Stinson Ole Place becomes The Folklore Center with docents and students present to learn about life in 1840's pioneer Alabama. Three classes from BPES under the guidance of teachers Laura Powell (gr. 4), Ana Terpo (gr. 2 which was rained out last Spring) and Natalie Battle (gr.1) visited TFC October 27, 30 and November 17<sup>th</sup> respectively. Jim Langley, Pam Thompson, Linda Joseph, and Gene Fuller coordinated the groups for lessons in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century home life, laundry/washday, quilting, musical instruments, tools *'First things first'*, toys, and other topics related to life in pioneer Alabama.

A special treat this year was the return of the Southern Appalachian Dulcimer Association under the leadership of Robert Angus. One of the group's associates loaned ten

Above: SADA members taught students to play simple tunes on dulcimers; right, Melissa McLemore describes the Monday Washday Blues, and bottom right, Judy Buster talked about quilting and its importance in pioneer life. Judy is an award-winning quilter.

dulcimers for the students to play simple tunes with the docents. Carolyn Rials (SADA-VP), Ken Waites (newsletter editor) and Bob Trussell instructed the students on the dulcimers. Other docents included Ginny Peterson (upstairs), Peggy Patton (tools), Judy Buster (quilts), Deb Burtnett (downstairs), Melissa McLemore (washday), Marjo Gann (toys), Mark and Becky Swindall leading sing-alongs and making musical instruments out of everyday items.

In addition, the Davis family helped the HHS by serving as guides and modeling their historically accurate clothing (see Page 4). The Society also welcomed new volunteer Paula Watts who helped with setup and photography.







Left: Former Hoover Mayor Tony Petelos brought several binders of materials for our Archives; volunteer members worked the tent at the Moss Rock Festival (Melissa, Debbie, Pam); and the Society was represented at the Thank A Veteran kickoff at The Finley Center in November.

## Save our Green Spaces!

If I could summarize 2023 as a headline, it would be “Save our Green Spaces!” The call has been loud and clear to keep our trees and save our historic areas for future generations. Top of the list are Bluff Park/Shades Crest combined area of the Hale Springs, Tip Top, and Lover’s Leap which dates to the 1800s as being named a park and preserve “for all time”, and the Moss Rock Preserve area which has the boulder fields, a waterfall and stream, and hiking trails threatened with encroachment of more building. Friends of Shades Mountain continue to lead the effort in the former, and Friends of Moss Rock the latter. Let’s keep these green spaces, complete with spectacular views and the potential for peaceful

hikes and walks, at the forefront for the coming year. Once gone, forever gone!

It is time to elect officers for the upcoming year. I can honestly say that serving as President has been a fully rewarding venture due to a willing group of volunteers. Please let me know if you would be interested in serving on the board at [lindajoseph02@gmail.com](mailto:lindajoseph02@gmail.com) or [info@hooverhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@hooverhistoricalsociety.org). We meet five times a year for board meetings and for the programs in September, November, January, March and May. We want you! I look forward to hearing from you. May 2024 be the best year yet!

*Linda Joseph*

## A note of thanks...from our president

I am so grateful for the many hands who make the HHS worthwhile, particularly Carolyn and Bob Kolar, Deb Burtnett, Pam Thompson, Gene Fuller, Mark and Becky Swindall, Edna McWilliams, Jim Langley, Caroline Boone, Paula Watts, and all others who serve as docents; especially Melissa McLemore and her husband Charles who lit the fire needed for our Washday station! We are thrilled that we have new volunteers to help at the Archive/Office and the Stinson Ole Place. Repairs at The Folklore Center are ongoing—fences are on the mend and a storage area built inside the barn for overflow materials; caulking the cabin walls is planned. A special thanks to Mrs. Powell’s fourth graders for trimming our tree at the Hoover-Randle Home with cute tree slices featuring their original art!!

## This home school family lives history!

We are a homeschool family (13 years now!) and one of my favorite aspects of that is it allows us to explore our interests deeply. And our chief interest (though we have many) is history! Our history connection is strong. My mom taught World and American History with passion for several years; my dad is a genealogist, and we enjoy hearing the most recent discoveries he's made that connect us to our family in the past.



I taught high school English before having my own kids and began homeschooling when my oldest was three. We chose a curriculum that is history-driven, and we have loved it year after year. Along the way we have customized our schedule to accommodate our love for history read-aloud time. We end almost every school day with that. We repeatedly find ourselves stirred, warned, and inspired. Sometimes we want to laugh; sometimes cry and other times to exclaim, "Can't you see what's coming? It's happened so many other times throughout the ages!"

Since moving to Alabama from Texas in 2020, we have enjoyed several history-focused outings. Last year we visited the Stinson Ole Place for the first time, the Owen House and Dickens Downtown. This year we attended our first reenactment at Tannehill Ironworks State Park and multiple events at American Village; those [activities] flipped the kids head over heels into the world of dressing up with a purpose. They've always been keen on dressing up and putting on little shows for us. But as they go older, they outgrew their costumes and such things seemed like to stay in their memories. Reenactment opened the possibility of doing that as a big kid/teen/adult in a thoughtful way—a way to be a walking museum if you will! They have spent many hours researching (books, YouTube, etc.) for historically

accurate clothing, methods, music, literature, gear, and food preparation techniques. These studies have supported the development of my oldest daughter's soon to be published novella, *Flowers for Georgia* (set in 1850s Texas); the creation of an extensive collection of historically based paper dolls; the emergence of a read aloud podcast—*Four Peas in a Podcast*; showcasing books such as *Soldier's Song* (a unifying story from the Civil War); and the writing of fact-based articles on topics like the history of American coins.



We were delighted to have the opportunity to be "real" history players when Mr. Langley invited us to docent at the Stinson Ole Place. It's another page in this chapter of our personal history book! Thank you for letting us participate!

**Above right: Jim Langley and the Davis Family; Blake helps Dancin' Dan perform!**

*By Amber Davis with Hannah, Blake, Elissa & Jenna Davis*



## Curating the *Clotilda's* artifacts...

*From Page 1*

"The elation and international attention that greeted the discovery [in 2018] prove the ship has already become a cultural touchstone. The *Clotilda* is an internationally important artifact...the only ship ever found that brought enslaved Africans to America...a piece of a slave ship about the size of a brick [is] on display in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture, but it is from a South African ship...and has nothing to do with the American slave trade. Having the burnt, rotten hull of the last American slave ship on display...is vital to both resurrecting Africatown's declining fortunes and reconnecting the people living there to their own history."

—**The Last Slave Ship: The True Story of How *Clotilda* Was Found, Her Descendants, and an Extraordinary Reckoning** by Ben Raines

The purpose of *60 Minutes* program was to bring together the descendants of Meaher and *Clotilda* to explore reconciliation and healing—something that had not happened when Raines' book was published. The authentication and confirmation of the *Clotilda* was led by the Alabama Historical Commission, with which our speaker is affiliated. Smithsonian curator, Paul Gardullo, stated, "This was a search...to find our history and this was a search for identity, and this was a search for justice... and involves hard, truthful talk about repair and reconciliation."



A worker gathers a water sample; Ben Raines holds the first piece of the *Clotilda's* timber brought to the surface.



## State Christmas Ornament...

Charter HHS member Linda Cato Wurstner was honored by Governor Kay Ivey recently as one of her photographs was featured on Alabama's official Christmas ornament for 2023.

She stated, "I am thrilled the state of Alabama chose one of my pictures [for] the state Christmas ornament for 2023! It was a picture that placed a few years ago in the Outdoor Alabama contest." The image is King's Chair at Oak Mountain State Park at sunset.

"The Governor was so sweet; I brought her and her aide, Lee Sellers, my famous holiday pecans. They assured me they would eat them and not hand them off to Security!"

The ornament was manufactured by the same company that creates for the president and [went] on the tree in the Governor's Mansion. It is available at the Tourism Gift Shop.

Speaking of Christmas, the HHS decorated a tree for the *Ho Ho Hoover Helps* annual fundraiser at the Hoover-Randle Home with the help of fourth graders from Bluff Park Elementary. Many thanks to them for the Third Place Award!

Shown: L to R:

Melissa McLemore, Linda Joseph, Pam Thompson and Paula Watts.





## HOOVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### Membership Form

Make checks payable to **Hoover Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 360233 Hoover, Alabama 35236-0233**

Or pay online via Pay Pal at our website:  
**[www.hooverhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.hooverhistoricalsociety.org)**

#### Types of Membership

Individual	\$10
Couple	\$20
Sustaining	\$50
Patron	\$100
Corporate	\$150

NAME : \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work) \_\_\_\_\_ (Cell) \_\_\_\_\_

INTERESTS: Archives/Historical Research \_\_\_\_\_ Folklore Center Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

SKILLS: Computer \_\_\_\_\_ Fundraising \_\_\_\_\_ Publicity \_\_\_\_\_ Leadership \_\_\_\_\_

SPEAKERS/PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

*The Hoover Historical Society*

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[Recipient]

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