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The Hoover Historical Log

The Official Newsletter of the Hoover Historical Society, Hoover, Alabama

A Rare Titanic Family

A diagnosis of neurasthenia, an illness more common in women, city dwellers and “brain workers” in the late 19th century, included a variety of symptoms ranging from physical to psychiatric—and Sylvia Caldwell was afflicted “from the day we arrived in Siam”... said her husband Albert, both missionaries in what is now Thailand. With the birth of their son Alden, it became imperative for the young family to return to the States.

With no knowledge of the *Titanic*, the Caldwells made their way across Europe to London where the *Titanic* was docked, the largest liner in the world, along with the *Carpathia*. Albert begged for second class tickets as his wife needed a big, stable boat and was impressed with the fact that the ship was “unsinkable.” Surely her recovery could begin!

Julie Hedgepeth Williams “becomes” Sylvia, her great-uncle’s wife on the *Titanic* and tells the story from Sylvia’s point of view later in 1912.

A Rare Titanic Family, winner of the 2014 Ella Dickey Award for books that preserve history is “about my great-uncle Albert Caldwell, who survived the Titanic at age 26. He lived to be 91 and told me the story first-hand dozens of times,” writes Julie.

A reviewer wrote of *A Rare Titanic Family*: “Julie Williams has this uncanny ability to take your hand and make you fly with her to times past as you read her wonderful prose... You feel the chilly air on your face when she describes the night setting on the doomed ship, and you agonize with Albert as he weighs his next steps in the face of mortal danger rushing towards his little family,” wrote Istvan “Steven” Zerkowitz of Roger-Wilco, an editorial office for authors and publishers and an Air Force veteran who served 15 years of active duty.

Julie H. Williams returns with a program for our January 21st General Meeting scheduled at the Hoover Public Library at 1 PM. As always, HHS programs are free, open to the public. Come join us and hear this fascinating story of “the Caldwell’s story of survival.” **Editor's note: more Titanic on Page 4!**



Julie Hedgepeth Williams
as Sylvia Caldwell

What's wrong with
this photo?



Can you say anachronism?

Docent Melissa McLemore illustrates an anachronism: a person, object, or event that is out of place in time; e.g., a knight wearing a wristwatch in a movie set in the medieval era.

SAVE the DATES!

Board Meeting January 14th at
10 AM, Public Safety Center

General Meeting
January 21st
Hoover Public Library 1 PM
Downstairs Meeting Room
Free, Open to the Public

26th Annual Arbor Day
Saturday, March 1
8-11 AM
Hoover Beautification Board
at
Aldridge Gardens

'Field Trip!' at the Stinson Ole Place!



On November 15th, a homeschool group from Faith Community Christian School spent a day learning about how pioneers lived in the 1800s. There were 29 students from all the elementary grades, plus parents, siblings, and others.

They toured buildings like the smokehouse, the corn crib, and the outhouse. They asked many questions about the plumping mill, a water-powered hammer that crushed corn into cornmeal.

Mark and Becky Swindall led the singing. The children got to try out instruments like the banjo, guitar, mandolin, and fiddle. Mark explained each instrument and how and where it originated.

The Davis family demonstrated old-fashioned toys and games. The children learned what it was like to live in a log cabin without modern conveniences, how to wash clothes in an iron pot, and how to make quilts.

The weather was perfect, so everyone had a picnic at a nearby park. There was lots of laughter and joy!

—Jim Langley



Hoover-Randle Home & Gardens renovated & rededicated!

Thomas Hoover, son of William Hoover, founder of our city, and family members returned to the Colonial style home now listed on the National Registry of Landmarks for a rededication of the City's official "wonderful venue" after six months of renewal and renovation.

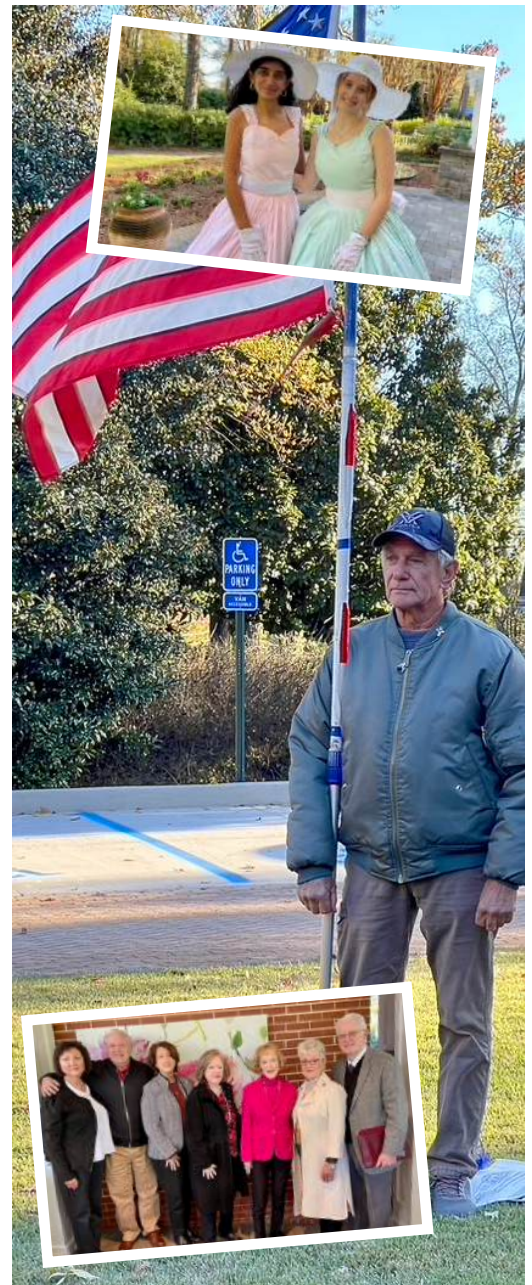
Mayor Frank Brocato opened the ceremony with a history of the home and City.

The City purchased the home five years ago for a "next generation showcase" said John Lyda in his opening comments. Among the improvements were a new roof over the patio replacing the vinyl covering and painted; three sets of French doors; removal of some stairs for wheelchair accessibility and ADA compliance.

Also in attendance were Ed and Barbara Randle who purchased the home from the Hoover family in 1997.

The event was attended by Hoover family members, left to right, Karen Parrish, Clay Parrish, Lynn Frazier, Elizabeth Holmes, Helen Holmes, Dottie Hoover, and Thomas Hoover.

Hoover Belles present were Raina Valliani and Ava Stefano. Representing our great country was Bessemer resident Roy Brook— known as the "flag man" at many local events—who was honored with the 2023 Freedom Award by the Hoover Chamber of Commerce and Hoover Veterans Committee as a "true American patriot" who "works" in Hoover in a different way. He attends major events and stands at Hoover's busy intersections with the American flag—reminding all of the value of patriotism.



HHS enjoys Chamber events...

Hoover's Chamber of Commerce hosted its first Annual Meeting and Giving Gala December 5th at the Hyatt Regency Birmingham-Wynfrey Hotel. Non-profit members including the HHS were invited to connect with guests with 60-second videos and displays featuring information about their organizations. Two HHS officers, Deb Burtnett and Pam Thompson, videotaped their 60-second appeal in late November for support of the Society's needs and projects.

Society members Paula Watts and Pam Thompson decorated a Christmas Tree for the Ho-Ho Hoover-Randle Open House held December 8th, 2024, to benefit Hoover Helps, a program that ensures every student in our 17 Hoover schools have their basic needs met. Hot chocolate was enjoyed by Santa and other guests along with "sweet treats...elf-approved for the little ones."



The Unknown Child at Fairview Lawn Cemetery, Nova Scotia



—a deck chair from the Titanic

A visit to the Titanic Museum in Nova Scotia



Julie Williams' story of a family surviving the *Titanic* disaster is truly remarkable. Learning more about this disaster is a fascinating pastime and tourist attraction.

Despite warnings, the 'unsinkable' *Titanic* entered a field of icebergs at full speed during the night of April 14, 1912, at 11:50 PM. The ship sank two hours and 40 minutes later—700 miles east of Halifax, Nova Scotia. There were only 20 lifeboats for 2,240 passengers and crew.

The Maritime Museum of the Atlantic* and the nearby Fairview Cemetery, final resting place of many victims known and unknown, tell the story of the tragedy, fascinating still 112 years later. One hundred fifty victims are buried in Nova Scotia in three cemeteries—Jewish, Catholic and Fairview (120). NOTE: Although the love story of Jack and Rose is fiction, there was a passenger with his name who died, see bottom left photo.)

In his book *The Night Lives On*, historian [Walter Lord](#) devoted a chapter ("What Happened to the Goodwins?"), a family traveling in third class. One of the victims, "The Unknown Child," remained unidentified until 2002 when DNA technology and a recovered baby's shoe (guarded by a police officer whose descendants preserved it in 1912) identified the child as Sidney Leslie Goodwin. The child's shoes are now in the Maritime Museum and his English family chose to leave Sidney at Fairview Lawn where he had been so lovingly "taken care of."

Many books, programs, and documentaries have researched the *Titanic* and tell many stories of the tragedy and ensuing inquiry. Of course, we recommend Julie's and historian Walter Lord's books as well as many others for a variety of experiences.

*two other museums are at Branson, MO and Pigeon Forge, TN

—Deb Burtnett



A visit to the Stinson Ole Place

by Hannah Davis



Above: The Davis Family docents

November 30th, 1858

Dear Jacob,

I must write and tell you about the time we had here on Thursday, the 22nd! Fourth graders from Bluff Park came to visit the cabin. So many children—so many new faces! I often find that to be one of my favorite things of all—just looking at each one and wondering what sort of a person they are...

The morning was a bit cold, but very beautiful—hardly a cloud in the sky. It was pleasant in the sun, but rather chilly in the shade! We began by singing "Oh! Susanna" and watching Dancin' Dan, operated by Blake!

The children were then divided into groups and sent off to their respective stations. My brother, sisters, and I began by joining our mother at her station where she demonstrated different games and toys. Each group of children had the opportunity to play two games while they were with us—"Graces" and "Button, Button, where's the Button?" Both games went well, and I think that the children enjoyed themselves! There were

a few mishaps—unfortunately, both of our wooden hoops are now broken. I suppose we'll have to fix them or procure some more.

After a while Blake, Elisssa, Jenna and I left the games station and attached ourselves to some of the other groups. First, I joined the children who were listening to Mr. Mark who was demonstrating several different instruments—a guitar, dulcimer, a mandolin, a banjo and a fiddle. I think that if I could ever learn to play another instrument, it would be the fiddle. How I love the way it sounds! I suppose it's the Scottish blood in me! One of my favorite songs to hear played on a fiddle is "Wi' A Hundred Pipers"—it makes me want to dance a jig every time I hear it! I also love "Money Musk", "Irish Washerwoman", and "Home, Sweet Home." And, of course, don't forget "The Birks of Aberfeldy!"

I next joined the children inside the cabin. I love the cabin, too. I often wish I could be alone there for hours to look at all the interesting things inside. While Miss Debbie was teaching the children on the main floor, Miss Ginny described the upstairs. Downstairs on the wall, there is a sampler made by Mrs. Marie Taylor—very pretty I thought! There is also a pump organ which my fingers itch to play! It has some lovely carvings on its side. Two more stations were Miss Melissa's demonstration of washday—doing laundry and Miss Peggy talked all about how it was for new settlers to come to this state and the tools they needed.

There are others who have stories to tell—Miss Pam, Miss

Judy, Mr. Jimmy, Miss Dottie, and Mrs. Becky, Mr. Mark's wife! We concluded our time together by singing "She'll be Coming Round the Mountain" in front of the cabin like we usually do!

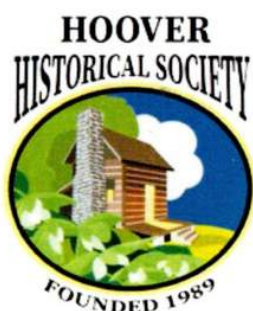
Do you know, Jacob, I do not regret coming here. I have grown to love the beautiful rolling hills and forested ascents. And I have met so many new, dear friends. I do hope that someday you can come here and see it all for yourself. This is getting to be quite a lengthy letter, so I will close.

Good-bye and God be with you,
Your affectionate cousin, **Hannah**



Above: Mrs. Davis and Blake, who makes Dancin' Dan (below)dance!!





**HOOVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Membership Form**

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

Or pay online via Pay Pal at our website:
www.hooverhistoricalsociety.org

Types of Membership	
Individual	\$20
Couple	\$30
Sustaining	\$50
Patron	\$100
Corporate	\$150

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Phone: (HOME) _____ (WORK) _____ (CELL:) _____

<p>INTERESTS: Archives/Historical Research ____ Folklore Center Volunteer ____ Other ____</p> <p>SKILLS: Computer ____ Fundraising ____ Publicity ____ Leadership ____</p> <p>SPEAKERS/PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS: _____</p>

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