



THE BIRMINGHAM GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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THE PIONEER TRAILS NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2015

General Meeting for February: The Birmingham Genealogical Society will meet at 2:00 p.m. on **Saturday, February 28th** on the fourth floor of the Birmingham Public Library (in the Arrington Auditorium). The Board of Directors will meet at 1:00 p.m. in the same room.

Please join us as Suzanna Rawlins, current BGS President, discusses "How to locate and document ancestors who served in the Civil War" for the purpose of joining a lineage society. At some point, you will want to obtain documentation of your ancestor's service. You will want to work with two record sets: Civil War Service Records, and Civil War Pension Records. Service records are brief descriptions of your ancestor's service. Most data is placed on small cards with info on where the soldier enlisted, payment, and when they were mustered out of service. Pension files provide rich genealogical data, often reflecting the earlier life of the soldier, info on where they lived and a good amount of data pertaining to their physical health. In many cases after the soldier died, his surviving widow received a pension and her many depositions are included in those files as well.

Please join us for this informative program!

Please note we will also be installing our 2015 officers and voting on the revised bylaws!

UPCOMING EVENTS: The *Alabama Genealogical Society* Spring Seminar will be held on Saturday, March 28, 2015, at Samford University in Birmingham. Registration will open at 8:30 a.m. The seminar will end at 3:45 p.m. The speaker is Michael John Neill. Michael has written hundreds of genealogical how-to articles and currently writes the weekly newsletter *Casefile Clues* and "Genealogy Tip of the Day". He has lectured to genealogy groups across the country on a wide variety of topics. He will speak on *Research Refocus: Maximizing Online and Offline Resources*. Individual topics are: "Tried and Tested Tidbits", "Researching the Entire Family", "Organizing Online Research" and "I Found It – Now What." For additional information about the speaker and to print the registration form go to <http://algensoc.org/main/SeminarFlyer.pdf>

ANCESTOR SWAP MEET – APRIL 18, 2015 – Sponsored by the Northeast Alabama Genealogical Society. J. Mark Lowe, CG will explore the records available for WWII genealogical research. Please visit <http://neags.com> for additional information.

The past is not dead. It isn't even past. --William Faulkner

Scott A. Martin, BGS Newsletter Editor



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DID YOU KNOW? The **Battle of Avondale** was actually a very brief skirmish between Union officers of Wilson's army and a local guard in the spring of 1865 at the home of Jefferson County Sheriff Abner Killough as it was reported in an 1885 story in the *Weekly Iron Age* and an 1893 story in the *Birmingham Age-Herald*. The Killoughs had been granted 1,640 acres covering most of what is now Avondale and Forest Park in 1858. They built a home with a veranda perched on top of the hill next to an apple orchard in what is now Avondale Park and was then known as Big Spring for its cold spring-fed pool. According to the 1885 account, Mrs Killough was home alone, knitting on her porch, when a group of U. S. Army officers who had been camped on the ridge of Red Mountain brought their horses down to the spring to water and stopped at the house to pass the time. They were laughing and singing when a unit of the home guard led by Captain James Truss of St Clair County, a veteran of the 10th Alabama Infantry, saw them gathered around the house and took them for looters, perhaps after the gold Killough was rumored to have stockpiled on the property. The guardsmen took aim and fired to disperse the Yankees, but Mrs Killough, standing to signal to them, was the only casualty, suffering the passage of a lead ball through her shoulder. The Yankees retreated to the ridge and were not pursued. In the 1893 account, the Union officers were racing to rejoin their unit on the road South to Selma and stopped to water the horses at the Spring. The home guard, which had stationed themselves outside the Killough's house, spied the blue coats from about 300 yards away and took aim for a volley. The rifle balls hit the water like hail and prompted the Yankees to return fire, one of their bullets wounding Mrs Killough in the breast. Other neighbors appeared at the sound of firing, but before the conflict escalated, the officers beat a hasty retreat, resuming their Southward course. Mrs Killough recovered from her wounds. She and her husband sold the property to Peyton King in 1876 and moved to a new home near Montevallo.

(Source: http://www.bhamwiki.com/w/Battle_of_Avondale)

"ANN KILLOUGH SURVIVES"

WEEKLY IRON AGE, Birmingham, Ala., 3 September 1885

A few days ago an AGE reporter was out at Avondale Park, rambling about over the hills. When the rain began to fall in torrents, shelter was sought in the front veranda of the old looking house on the top of the hill above the apple orchard. As he was watching the rain drops patter against the side of the walls of the porch, a number of small holes were observed that looked as if they were caused by bullets. The companion of the reporter, who was one of the oldest settlers of Birmingham, remarked that the holes were made by bullets and that the old house was the scene of the first battle and the only bloodshed that occurred in Jefferson county during the late war. He was asked to tell the story and he did so: "It was in the spring of 1865, when Wilson's army marched through this section, southward. The command camped in Elyton (later called Birmingham) and the picket lines extended around the mountain side to Avondale Park. At the time, the house was occupied by Mr. Abner Killough, the sheriff of the county (Jefferson), who owned considerable money and had it hidden in the hills around. Mrs. Killough, the wife of the sheriff, was one day seated in the veranda knitting when she was approached by a number of Yankee officers who came to the porch where she was sitting with her head leaned back against that old window in an old rocking chair. The soldiers were laughing and singing when suddenly the home supporting force, commanded by Captain Truss, rode up to the corner of the yard, and seeing the verandah lined by blue coats, fired and the bullets flew fast and thick. Mrs. Killough, recognizing the Confederates, arose from her seat and was pierced by a ball which passed through her body sinking in the wall beyond. She fell and was picked up bleeding and unconscious. She survived the wound and now lives with her husband near Montevallo, Shelby County. The Yankees fled and no one was hurt except Mrs. Killough. This was the first battle and only blood shed in Jefferson County during the war." The gentleman took his pocket knife and began to cut around the dark-looking hole and out rolled a battered bullet, the one that had wounded the good woman. The ball had been imbedded in the wood for just twenty years.

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EARLY WEATHER EVENTS IN ALABAMA

The first organized weather service were made by weather observations in the State were made by voluntary reporters to the agricultural journals of the day. Shortly after 1850 the Smithsonian Institution took charge of this work, and while the reports were more or less irregular, there were some records made, and the observations were published in the Patent Office Reports, and in Transactions of the Smithsonian Institution. In 1870, the system was transferred to the Chief Signal Officer of the United States Army, who established two stations in the State, one at Mobile and the other at Montgomery. These were both in charge of paid observers. These were the only regularly organized stations until 1880, when sets of thermometers and rain gauges were installed in a number of railway stations, and the agents were placed in charge. They were compensated for telegraphing the observations, during the crop seasons, to the central stations at Mobile and Montgomery.

In February, 1881, a meteorological station was established at Auburn by the Agricultural and Mechanical College. By direction of the Chief Signal Officer, in 1884 Auburn was made the central station of the Alabama Weather Service. In March, 1884, the first bulletin was issued, compiled by Capt. W. H. Gardner, containing reports from 22 observers. During the first three months, the number of observers was increased to 45. On the organization of the service at Auburn, the commissioner of agriculture and industries agreed to publish the bulletins as a part of the transactions of his department, but this support was withdrawn in February, 1885, and the publication of the bulletins was transferred to the college. Bulletins were issued monthly, and during the crop seasons, weekly on Saturdays. Special bulletins were issued at irregular periods. The method of indicating changes of weather in advance by the present system of flags was introduced in Alabama in September, 1884, more than a year before it was adopted for the entire country by the Chief Signal Officer. A cold wave flag, however, did not belong to the Alabama system.

The year 1840 was the dryest of which there is record. Fish died in great numbers in the Warrior River, which came very near drying up. The Alabama was too low for navigation. The total rainfall at Huntsville was only 29.08 inches. An immense cotton crop was produced on this account. The years 1854 and 1855 were very dry and only 37.85 inches fell at Auburn during the entire year. In 1870 a very dry year resulted in a large cotton crop, but in 1883 the same conditions resulted in the opposite way, since the drought continued through October. General droughts have been recorded for 1825, 1839-40, 1845, 1851, 1853, 1857, 1860, and 1904.

Storms have usually come in March and April. The prevailing direction is southwest to northeast. The highest hourly wind velocity recorded in the State was at Mobile, on the 18th of October, 1916, when 115 miles from the east was reached. The year of greatest frequency was 1884, when there were 19 storms.

A destructive cyclone on the Gulf coast in 1740, totally ruined the rice crop, and much privation resulted. More than 300 head of cattle were drowned on Dauphin Island. From August 31 to September 3, 1772, a destructive storm visited Mobile Bay. Vessels were driven into the heart of the town of Mobile, and the salt water, forced over the ground, destroyed all vegetation. In August, 1794, a tornado is recorded. On August 25, 1819, and again on August 25, 1852, occurred violent storms in Mobile, and on the Gulf coast. In 1878, 1880, 1881, 1882, and 1883, storms occurred in March and April, and on September 9 and 10 in 1882.

The year 1884 witnessed 19 violent storms throughout the State. The most remarkable was on February 19, in the afternoon, and passed through Montgomery, Perry, Elmore, Coosa, Jefferson, Cherokee, and Calhoun Counties. Nineteen were killed and thirty-one wounded. Leeds in Jefferson County was almost destroyed. Tornadoes occurred on March 11, 24, 25, April 2, 14, 15, 16, and December 12, 1884. Numbers of people were killed, and there was much property damage. On January 11, April 30, May 6, and November 6, 1885, there were tornadoes, resulting in much property damage and a number of deaths. On March 27, 29, and 30, 1886, storms did considerable damage in Clarke, Lee, and Bullock Counties.

A cyclone lasting two days, March 26 and 27, 1888, accompanied by heavy rainfall, caused much damage to railroads and telephone and telegraph communication over most of the State. West Indian storms on the Gulf coast in 1907 and 1916 resulted in millions of dollars loss of property and some deaths. The storm of July, 1916, was the most destructive in the history of Mobile at the time, where there was a property damage of nearly \$2,000,000. During the storm of 1907 there were many deaths on the coast below Mobile, and much damage to shipping.

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The earliest reference to cold weather in the Gulf section is by Cabeza de Vaca. In his narrative of the Narvaez expedition to Florida in 1528, in describing the stay of 25 days in June and July at Apalache, probably near the present Tallahassee, Fla., he says: "The country is very cold." Records show the years 1748, 1768, 1772, 1779-80, 1793, 1794, 1796, and 1799 to have been severely cold during the winter months. The winter of 1779-80 was extremely cold, beginning November 15. Snowstorms continued throughout the entire winter, rivers and creeks froze over, wild turkeys froze in the forests, domestic fowl on their roosts, deer sought refuge around the settlers' cabins, and many wild animals perished in the forests. The year 1783 was cold during the entire period, July and August being cold enough to resort to winter clothing.

The years 1807, 1816, and 1823 were very cold, and the lowest temperature up to that time recorded at Mobile, was registered on February 16, when 5° above zero was reached. February 16, 1807, was so cold that the sap in trees froze, causing the bark to explode. Killing frosts formed every month in the year, as far south as latitude 34°, and on June 8, frost reached 33° South. During the year 1825 there was little cold weather, and immense crops were produced. On May 27, 1827, a killing frost damaged the cotton crop. After winter had set in the ground continued hard frozen until March, 1828. The winters of 1832, 1833, 1834, 1835, 1846-47, 1852, 1855-56, and 1857 were extremely cold. In the winter of 1855-56 the streams froze over, and there was skating at Mobile, almost unusual occurrence for that latitude. For 1823, 1835, and 1857 the lowest mean average temperatures were shown.

On April 13, 1857, there was a very heavy snow; and on December 30, 1876, occurred the fiercest snowstorm ever known in Alabama. During the first week in January, 1877, the Tombigbee River as high up as Columbus, Miss., was frozen over. The temperature at Columbus reached zero. The years 1884, 1885, 1886, and 1887 were severely cold. In 1886, during the early part of the year, considerable stock was killed. During the month of December snowstorms of unusual intensity occurred. On December 5, a fall of 20 inches was recorded in north Alabama, and as much as 12 inches was reached in the southern counties.

The winters of 1898 and 1899 were severe, and the temperature reached at Mobile, on February 13, 1899, the lowest record for that section of the State, recording 1° below zero. Snow fell over most of the State on February 23, 1914. The most spectacular meteoric display ever recorded in the history of the State occurred November 13, 1833, during the early part of the night. The event has long been known as the "night the stars fell."

References.—Henry, "Climatology of the United States," U. S. Weather Bureau, Bulletin Q (1906), pp. 364-381; U. S. Weather Bureau Report, 1900-1901, vol. 2 (Serial No. 4320); U. S. Weather Bureau, Climatological data, Alabama section, 1901-1916; F. P. Chaffee, in Alabama Official and Statistical Register, 1907, pp. 348-351; P. H. Smyth, "Climate of Alabama," in Alabama's new era, 1911, vol. 1, pp. 96-101, also in the Alabama land book, 1916, p. 22 and also in Montgomery Journal, Nov. 17, 1913; Dr. P. H. Mell, "Climatology of Alabama," (Alabama Experiment Station, itui Ictin No. 18, n. s., August, 1890). The last named title contains the fullest available details as to actual weather conditions in the State, and was compiled from all available historical and other sources, including meteorological observations from 1811 to 1890.

The Birmingham Iron Age, 23 February 1882

Our community was excited last week by the report of a man missing named Billy Poe. After a search of five days he was found near Mr. J. A. McClintock's on Friday evening of last week. Esquire Fancher held an inquest on the body. Mr. Poe had fallen of a bluff of rocks fifty feet high, on rocks below and his body was badly mangled. He and one Mr. Bailey on the Friday before went to Brock's Gap and remained there till Saturday, drinking. After they had gone, about half an hour Mr. Bailey returned to Brock's to get more whiskey but did not return that night to hunt for his friend. It is believed that Poe suicided by jumping off the bluff as he was tracked to the bluff and no other track with him. It is said that on one other occasion he had made an effort to kill himself and was only deterred by the fear of being buried and that he sought this out of the way place to prevent being buried.

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The Christian Index, 11 July 1872

When a good man dies it seems proper that some suitable mention should be made of his life and works. In obedience to this thought, I will notice, briefly, the record of the Rev. Allen McDonald, who was born in South Carolina, in November, 1791, and died at his residence, in Jefferson County, Ala., May 15th, 1872--aged 81 years. While he was a young man he went to Tennessee, where he lived a few years; and while there the Indian war broke out. He was a young man and joined the army, and served his country under Jackson--was in that campaign all through what is now known as Talladega County, Ala. In 1814 he was married to a Miss Phoebe Ray, and indeed, she was an "helpmeet for him." They soon came to Alabama, and settled in Jefferson county; and soon afterward, he attached himself to the Hebron church of said county. It was soon seen that the Lord had a work for him to do, and so he was licensed to exercise his gifts. The country was new, many persons coming in all eager for money, and hence in this new field of labor, there was a vast amount of work for him to do. God had given him a sound and healthful body, great zeal, strong lungs, and well did he use all his powers for God's glory. He was never regarded as a very strong man in doctrine, (yet, "sound to the core,) but he was what was for better, a "good man," "known and read of all men." In the days of "Camp" and "Protracted" meetings, Bro. McDonald was considered almost an indispensable. When such meetings were appointed, he was always invited, and when he could, always attended. His work was so well understood by all that it was hardly necessary for the committee on devotion to say, "Bro. McDonald will close the exercises." The writer of this sketch has often been with him on those occasions of which he now speaks. After the congregation had been dismissed, and all had retired to rest, some poor, wounded sinner would desire that someone should pray for them, when Bro. McDonald was almost certain to be sent for. How often we have listened to his well-known voice, with all the energy of his soul ascending to God. It may be said of him: He was truly a man of "prayer" and "faith," and for hours would he thus spend his time--sometimes almost all the night would be devoted to praying, singing, instructing and exhorting. Many stars will be in his "crown of rejoicing." Bro. McDonald was ordained to the full work of the ministry in 1843, by Byars, Scott and Holcombe. He sustains an irreproachable character. He was one of the few men whom the tongue of slander could not reach--he was "above suspicion." His end was almost like the sainted "Enoch," he was not for God took him. On the day of his death he ate dinner as usual, was cheerful, talking to his family, went and lay down on the bed, and, in five minutes, passed away almost without a struggle. He leaves his aged companion and many relatives to mourn after him. May his mantle fall upon his son. A. J. Walcrop.

Birmingham State Herald, 22 December 1895

The preliminary trial of Officer Byars was continued yesterday morning before Justice Benners in the circuit court ...several witnesses were examined and Attorney Vaughan opened arguments for the prosecution, after which court adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

Mr. A.M. Byrum, superintendent of the gas company, was called for the defense. The witness saw Officer Byars running after a woman on the morning of the 16th and saw him fire a pistol in the air and afterwards catch the woman near the place where Lizzie Durr was killed. It was dark and when the officer caught the woman she was about 350 feet from the railroad track. The witness saw no other person near.

Officer J. N. Byars then took the stand on his own behalf. I have been on the force five years. I was on my regular beat in the neighborhood of the gas works on the morning of the 16th. We had instructions from superior officers to watch out for coal thieves. Officer McCullom and I were at the gas works warming about 5 o'clock, when he suggested that we go to Wyeth's saloon and see if all was well. On the way there I saw three forms on a coal car. I drew my pistol and told them to come down. One of them threw a lot of coal on me and the other jumped on me. I fell and my pistol accidentally fired. When I got up I saw one of the women running off and I ran after her. I met Officer McCullom as I was going back. I asked him if he caught any and he said that she had been killed. I thought he was saying the woman I had with me. I asked the woman who threw the coal on me and she said it was a boy. I had no intention of killing anyone. My pistol was a self-acting revolver. Mr. McCollum was behind me when the woman jumped. It was too dark to tell whether the forms on the car were men or women.

The witness was cross-examined, but his statement was not shaken.

Several witnesses testified to defendants good character, among them were M.A. Porter, S.V. Acton, T.C. McDonald, Charles G. Brown and

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Dr. Wynam testified that the bullet.....the skull at the base of the brain ...of the center, ranging downward and that its effect was instant death.

Captain Weir of the police force said that he gave defendant instructions to patrol the district where the shooting occurred and give the coal stealing special attention. He also testified as to the defendant's good character. Dr. A.M. Brown's expert testimony harmonized with Dr. Wyman's regarding the location and effect of the wound. After the argument by Attorney Vaughan the court adjourned.

The Birmingham Age-Herald, 3 July 1905

Fire, which started at 2 o'clock in the four-story building occupied by the Birmingham Paper Company at 2105 and 2107 Morris Avenue, destroyed that building and at the hour of going to press the Collins & Company's wholesale grocery adjoining at the corner of Twenty-first street and Morris Avenue was virtually destroyed. Fireman Gip B. Spruell was killed by a falling wall at 3 o'clock and Fireman Hoffman and Fireman Hodges were seriously injured.

The origin of the fire is not known, but by the time the department had reached the scene the entire Paper Company building was wrapped in flames and the fire was spreading to the buildings on either side, the Tyler Grocery Company on the east side and the Collins Building on the corner. The fire loss will probably reach \$175,000.00.

Before 2:30 o'clock the floors of the Birmingham Paper Company had commenced falling in . Fireman Stanfield was caught under one of the walls and his left foot was badly bruised. His injuries are not serious. He was taken to fire department headquarters where medical attention was given him. Chief Mullin received a severe cut in the shoulder from falling glass, but paid no attention to the wound. Other firemen received lesser injuries.

At 2:40 o'clock the fourth floor of the front wall fell, About a dozen fireman were standing under the wall, but all escaped except Huffman, who is the department electrician and Spruell, who has only been in the department a short while. The held a line of hose from one of the steamers. They were buried under the falling brick and it was some minutes before they were discovered as they were so completely covered by the debris. As soon as they were found willing hands revoked the debris and dragged them to one side. Physicians were summoned, but by the time they arrived Spruell was dead. His head and chest were badly bruised by the brick. He died as he was being taken to an ambulance at First Avenue and Twenty-First Street. Former City Physician Whelan attended him. He leaves a wife and two or three children. He was about 45 years old.

Hoffman was carried to Hillman Hospital. He had a severe wound in the head and several deep gashes about his face. As usual the fire department was entirely too small to cope with the fire. Chief Mullin stated at one time, when there was a chance to save the Collins Building, with proper equipment: "See. I have not enough men to do this work. We are hampered by lack of men."

The fire had gained such a head way at 2:15 o'clock that the aerial truck was useless, as it could not be raised on account of the heat. Later it was used on the Collins Building. AT 4:15 Collins and Company's Store was still burning and there seems no chance of saving any part of it. It was a four-story structure. The fire started at the top and worked its way downward.

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