



Amite County Historical and Genealogical Society

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December 2019

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WITHOUT A PAST, THERE IS NO FUTURE

AMITE COUNTY TORNADO TRAGEDY!

As many of you know, there was an EF 3 tornado that ravaged Amite County on December 16, 2019. Many families were affected by this tornado as it ripped through an area along Hwy 567. Local attorney, Sara Jones Hemphill, started a Facebook fundraiser that has raised \$25,000 to be distributed to the families involved. One of our members, Robin Elliott, and her historic home, the McGehee Beall House, was affected. (See page 2 for the story)

REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING:

Date: January 11, 2020

Time: 11:00 AM - **NOTE TIME CHANGE!**

Executive Committee (Officers) Meet at 10:00 AM

Place: Liberty Baptist Church Family Life Center

Future Meeting Schedule

Note: *Time and place of regular meetings is 11:00 am at the Liberty Baptist Church Family Life Center unless otherwise specified:*

February 8, 2020: Regular business meeting

March 14, 2020: Regular business meeting

April 11, 2020: Regular business meeting

May 2, 2020: HERITAGE DAYS!!!!

The Christmas Party was a success with 25 people in attendance! We had tons of great food! Thanks to everyone who came!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!!!
Thanks to all who have paid their dues!

Announcements:

LRSH:

Closed for renovations until further notice. There will be a notification about helping with renovations in the near future.

MEMBER AUTOBIOGRAPHIES:

We are asking all members who are willing to please submit a mini-autobiography to help other members get to know you! Please include where you live, your connection to Amite County, your hobbies, family information, etc. You get the drift! Include anything that would help others get to know you better! One member will be published in each newsletter! How exciting!

ANNUAL DUES ARE PAST DUE !!!!! -

38 people expired 2019 and 17 in 2018!

If you have not sent in your payment, please do so ASAP!

We need to mail out membership cards and would like as many people to have paid as possible before this is done.

Dues may be mailed to: PO Box 2, Liberty, MS, 39645

Please make checks or money orders payable to: Amite Co. Historical and Genealogical Society.

Please send PayPal payments to:

amitecohistory@gmail.com

Please fill out a new form regardless of payment type so that we may have your correct contact info - see the last page of the newsletter for the new form.

McGehee-Beall House

As many of you already know, this beautiful home was the location of our December 1, 2018 open house. The house was severely damaged in an F3 tornado on December 16, 2019, but is currently being rebuilt due to swift action on the part of current owner Robin Elliott, an active member of ACHGS.

This home was built in 1834 by William Hansford Crawford McGehee on land originally owned by his grandfather, Samuel McGehee on Pecan Road in Amite County. Samuel was an American Revolution Soldier originally from Virginia, who received several land grants in Mississippi for fighting in the American Revolution. Samuel came to Amite County in about 1804, bringing with him 10 of his 12 children, the last two, David and Nancy were born in Mississippi. Three of Samuel's youngest sons each married a sister from the Downs family.

After the death of William H. C. McGehee between November 1859 and January 1860, his widow remarried but divided the property between all of her children, including the children she had with her second husband, Mr. J. S. Reeves, as she was afraid Mr. Reeves would risk losing the property when gambling. The children's names were put in a hat and the property was divided. Jane Ophelia "Janie" McGehee became the next owner of the house which came with 160 acres of land, small cottages for their workers, a log barn, a dove coat, and smoke house. Janie married Thaddeus Ridley Beall in 1867 and had two sons and one daughter. Their daughter Martha "Mattie" Amanda Beall married Leon Compton McGehee and inherited the house after her father's death.

Mattie and Leon had two sons and three daughters. In their old age they decided to live apart and Mattie was left to run the farm on her own. Mattie ultimately decided that running the farm was too much for her so she listed it with a realtor in March of 1936 with a selling price of \$3,000. In 1943, Alney Jones and his wife Janie Lee McGehee (born in the house in 1900) purchased the house for \$1,100. As they worked and lived in Baton Rouge, they rented the house to Alney's brother John Jones and his wife Jency for several years.

Upon the death of Janie Lee McGehee Jones, her two children Robbie Adair Jones Yaun and Alney Webster Jones, Jr. divided up the land, with Robbie getting the house. Robbie was the mother of seven children, Robin, Jesse, Charles, Janie, Lucy, John and Ben Yaun. Robbie had the house appraised after her retirement when she moved into it after living in Louisiana. Not long after, during a family reunion when all of her children were present (two sons deceased - Jesse and Charles), Robbie went through the inventory of the furnishings with the children to decide who would inherit after her death. Several people wanted the same items so to be fair names were drawn from a hat. The house was won by Robin Adair Yaun Schexnayder Elliott, who is the current owner of the house.

The home features a central hallway with original antique furniture, a display case that houses many small historical items that were found throughout the house (of note a family hymnal from 1839 and the original lock and key to the Liberty Jail), as well as oil lamps original to the house. Luckily this display case and the contents were spared in the tornado. The hallway originally led from the front porch to a back porch and subsequently a raised walkway to the original kitchen. The back porch was enclosed by Robin's grandmother in the 1960's and the present kitchen, pantry, and bathroom were added. This addition as well as the front porch was badly damaged in the tornado and is currently under reconstruction. There is a stairway in the hallway leading to the upstairs hallway, two bedrooms, two dormer porches, and two attic spaces. Sadly, the front dormer fell off the house after the tornado and subsequent torrential rain. Of note, when the house was being inspected and researched by the Register of Historic Places, they noted that these pedimented, finely detailed, decorated, Greek Revival dormer porches might be the only examples of their type in the state. This dormer is currently being rebuilt.

Upon entering the central hallway from the front porch, the first door to the right opens to a front room which

served a dual purpose as a bedroom and sitting room. The original hand-painted “marble” wainscoting and faux finished doors are painted to look like mahogany and birds-eye maple. The paint has never been retouched or restored. The committee for the Register of Historic Places thought the wainscoting might be the only regional example of this decorative treatment known to exist. The plaster work is all original but the brick fireplaces ultimately had to be replaced with modern brick to prevent further deterioration of the unfired original brick. Both chimneys were badly damaged and lost to the tornado. The floors in home are the original loblolly pine plank flooring. The floors in this front room have received the most wear and tear over the years. This room contains a half canopy bed with a matching armoire and dresser which were purchased by Robin’s grandmother and were not original to the house but to the period.

The parlor is located to the left as you enter the home and also has the original wainscoting paint. There is an original marble topped table, a brass clock, a pump organ, and a settee that folded out to make a single bed. The antique dining table and buffet were purchased by the current owner. The buffet houses a wealth of the family’s historical documents which have been preserved in page protectors. Luckily these documents were spared by the tornado.

The original dining room is connected to and behind the parlor. During the 1940’s this room was used as a kitchen. It is currently being used as a sitting room with modern entertainment equipment. There is also a back bedroom behind the front room of the house and across the hall from the original dining room. These four rooms made up the downstairs of original main house.

Upstairs there is a large hall and two bedrooms. The west bedroom or “boys” bedroom has an original armoire and table to the right of the bed. The red and black quilts on the twin beds are antique Hawaiian quilts. The east bedroom or “girls” bedroom contains a European canopy bed and a sleigh bed that is original to the house. The upstairs has the original flooring but the rooms have been sheet rocked. Lining the stairway are the original photos of the previous owners of the house. The upstairs received water damage during and after the tornado but is being restored.

Robin feels fortunate that the house was not damaged any more than it was and is positive that the house will be better than ever after reconstruction!



Annual Membership Contribution
Amite County Historical and Genealogical Society

PO Box 2

Liberty, MS 39645

amitecohistory@gmail.com

Check or circle choice

- \$15.00 – Individual \$25.00 – Family \$10.00 – Senior (over 65)
 \$200.00 – Lifetime \$150 -- Lifetime, couple 70+ age \$100 - Lifetime, 70+ individual
 \$10.00 – Student (under 18) \$50.00 – Sponsor or Ancestor Memorial

All contributions are tax-deductible.

Please make checks or money orders payable to: **Amite Co. Historical and Genealogical Society.**

Please send PayPal payments to: **amitecohistory@gmail.com**

(Please print)

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Zip+4: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

E-mail address: _____

Thank you for joining the Amite County Historical and Genealogical Society. Your contribution helps us continue to collect and preserve historic treasures from Amite County's past, as well as to promote family history. Membership also provides an opportunity to attend programs and participate in special events.

I am interested in helping with:

- Archives Membership Programs Newsletter Other (specify):

Prefer newsletter to be mailed () Prefer newsletter to be emailed ()

Please let us know if you would prefer to receive the newsletter via email instead of snail mail. This would allow us to save money on postage which would in turn allow money to be spent more prudently.

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