
President's Update

Jackson County Historical and Genealogical Society
Pascagoula, Mississippi

Barry McIlwain, President
www.jchgs-ms.org January, 2010

Looking for Mexican-American War gravesites

Greenwood Island exploration reaps additional findings

Members of our Society participated in an anthropology expedition Dec. 28 on Greenwood Island in East Pascagoula, which was the site of Camp Jefferson Davis at the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848.

Twice in the last 30 years, local fisherman have discovered wooden coffins containing the remains of U.S. veterans exposed by ongoing beach erosion. After years of wondering, "what else is out there," the Jackson County Historical and Genealogical Society (JCHGS), Coastal

Environments, Inc. (CEI) and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History teamed up with Southern Miss for a final comprehensive search of the beach.

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MGS sets annual meet

The 2010 Mississippi Genealogical Society (MGS) annual seminar will be held on Jan. 23, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Canton Multiplex Building, on Watford Drive in Canton.

Book vendors will be present, and tables will open at 8 a.m. All MGS books will be on sale half price for that day only at the seminar.

Speaker will be Thomas W. Jones, PhD, CG, CGL, FASC, FUGA. Dr. Jones has edited the National Genealogical Society Quarterly since 2002. A former trustee and a past president of the Board for Certification of Genealogists, Dr. Jones holds numerous other offices and honors. His research covers every state east of the Mississippi, as well as Iowa, Missouri, Texas, England, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, and Wales.

A specialist in Georgia and Virginia, his topics will be "Solving the Mystery of the Disappearing Ancestor," "Five Ways to Prove Who Your Ancestor Was," "Going Beyond the Bare Bones: Reconstructing Your Ancestor's Lives," and "Finding Unfindable Ancestors."

Cost is \$50 and includes cost of seminar and handouts, and a box lunch. Advance registration guarantees seating in a limited meeting space, but you can register at the door at full price and not be guaranteed a lunch. Checks should be made to "MGS," and mailed to MGS, Sharon Nettles, president, 26 Wimbleton Drive, Jackson, MS 39211-3433. For more information, call 601-956-7461.

Free workshops resume

Else Martin will resume conducting the free monthly genealogy research workshop for beginners and advanced on Saturday, Jan. 16, at the Pascagoula Public Library.

She will take a beginner's group from 9 to 11:30 a.m., and then from 1 to 4 p.m. will conduct a "problem solving" class.

Attendees will be familiarized with resources available in the library's Local Genealogy and History Department. Special direction will be provided in the afternoon session.

Workshops are also scheduled for Saturdays, Feb. 20 and Mar. 20, same times. The department is located on the second floor of the library, located at the intersection of Pascagoula Street and Delmas Avenue. For more information, call the library at 769-3078.

Tuesday, January 26 Meeting
6 p.m., Pascagoula Public Library
Meeting Room
Free Door Prize drawing
Program on Greenwood Island Expedition

Greenwood Island exploration reaps additional findings

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“We learned from Post Records that 105 soldiers, many of whom had arrived sick or wounded, died in East Pascagoula, and a few on Greenwood Island,” said Dr. Marie Danforth, Professor of Anthropology at Southern Miss.



“When we arrived on the beach, another coffin had been exposed by the sand being churned up from wave action. The work on Greenwood Island has allowed Southern Miss students the unique opportunity to learn about the lives of these soldiers by analyzing their remains and interpreting their findings within the rich historical context that has become available through the dedicated efforts of many JCHGS members.”

With a little help from Chevron’s HumanKind program, which reimburses employee volunteer time; the team rented a high-tech Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) system to scan the beach.

“We had plans to re-inter the previously found remains at Biloxi National Cemetery, but before we did so, we needed to ensure we didn’t leave any others behind,” said Roger Hansen, Chevron Pascagoula Refinery employee, Veterans of Foreign Wars member and JCHGS military committee member.

When tides were at a optimum low, anthropologist Kelsey Lowe of CEI conducted the analysis while Southern Miss faculty and students, JCHGS volunteers and additional CEI professionals mobilized to assist with the work. Subsequently, the entire stretch of beach where the graves were found was searched using GPR technology. Although the findings have yet to be fully analyzed, it does not indicate that more coffins are present.

Coordinated by Hansen, the JCHGS plans to re-inter the newly found remains and those of three other previously discovered soldiers into Biloxi National Cemetery on Memorial Day 2010. This will make a total of six soldiers interred at the cemetery from Greenwood Island in 20 years.

“We eventually hope to uncover the names of all 105 soldiers who died at the camp,” said JCHGS President Barry McIlwain. “We have confirmed 40 of the names and there are plans to erect some type of memorial to the history of the camp.”

For more information and photos of the expedition, go to www.jchgs-ms.org or contact Joanne Anderson, JCHGS Publicity Chairman at jmanders@cableone.net or 228.355.0711. For more information on archaeology digs and projects of the Southern Miss Department of Anthropology and Sociology, including a Web page on Greenwood Island, visit www.usm.edu/antsoc

A reception hosted by Society member Dr. Chris Wiggins was held at his Pascagoula home for the Society and the team following the day’s activities.

Photos are posted on the Society’s website of all the day’s events.