

# PINTLALA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

**Next Meeting:**  
October 7th —1:45 p.m.  
Pintlala Baptist Church



c/o Pintlala Public Library  
255 Federal Road  
Hope Hull, Alabama 36043

Volume XXI, Number 4

October 2007

## **Six Daughters of William Joseph and Alabama Pool Sellers in Front of Thomas Duncan Home, Fleta, Alabama—date unknown**



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*Photograph, courtesy of Hattie Norman McLaney Smith*

**Pictured (L to R): Zerverah Sellers Duncan, Virginia Sellers Stough, Lozonias Sellers Edwards, Lubrita Sellers Norman, Letitia Sellers Sellers, and Hattie Sellers Norman**

## President's Message—Random Thoughts

The month of October will usher in opportunities to appreciate the history and heritage of our area. Consider a few of my scattered, disjointed thoughts:

- History and Culture. The study and stewardship of history is the mother of all academic disciplines vital to an enriching culture. Without it, the culture of any community will be fueled by other values which will be superficial at best. It is a privilege to live in Pintlala or surrounding areas. A sense of privilege is strengthened by a sense of history.
- Alice Carter has arranged an interesting trip for our upcoming PHA program. Please read carefully elsewhere in this edition the details of the October 7 event, noting the change of customary date. We shall visit Magnolia Crest, the house originally built by Warren Henley Stone who fought in the Revolutionary War at the age of 14 ½. In addition we shall also have the opportunity to tour the Stone's Chapel Methodist Church. Both house and church are located on SABIC (formerly GE) property.
- What about a website for PHA? We need one if for no other reasons than to promote events, provide access to related links, and to archive the newsletters. If you know of someone who can help, let me know.
- The Nominating Committee will present persons to fill annual vacancies on October 7.

Responsible citizenship will always express itself in the faithful stewardship of our history and heritage.

Gary Burton

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## PHA October Program

The October PHA meeting date has been changed. We will meet on **Sunday, October 7, 2007** for a field trip to a home that belonged to Warren Henley Stone Revolutionary War soldier and father to Barton Warren Stone and founder of the Stone's Chapel church. Both of these entities are on GE Plastics ( now Sabic Innovative Plastics) property at Burkeville. We will meet at Pintlala Baptist Church and travel together to the site.\* Please be on time, we will leave **PROMPTLY** at 2:00 pm. We will not wait for late comers! Security at Sabic Plastics is very tight. We must adhere to their rules and regulations.

This should be a real treat--hope to see you October 7, 2007 at 1:45 at Pintlala Baptist Church. Wear comfortable shoes as some walking and stairs will be involved.

*\*If you are coming from town you could meet us at County Road 37 off of Highway 80. Do not go on to the plant but pull safely off on the side of County Road 37 and wait for the larger group.*

## History of Duncan/Strickland House, Fleta, Alabama

by Alice Carter

The home of Dr. Thomas and Zerverah Sellers Duncan sits beside the Pettus Road near the intersection of Pettus and Ada/Union Academy Roads. Duncan purchased 19 1/2 acres in the sw 1/4 of section 10, township 13, Range 17 from Lititia Pool, grandmother of Zerverah, in 1897 for \$525.00 (Alfred Pool, husband to Lititia, died in 1883). The Duncans lost their two sons, Thomas and John William in infancy and reared their three daughters: Alalu, Buena Mae and Lucile in the home built around 1892 on this acreage.

Zerverah's parents were Alabama Pool and William Joseph Sellers who had six daughters and two sons who would become adults with close ties to each other, both geographically and emotionally, **and** to the small rural Fleta community where they all resided. The six Sellers daughters were: Zerverah, Virginia, Lozonias, Lubrita, Lititia, and Hattie. Their brothers were William Joseph, Jr. and Haden Sellers. The sisters married and five of them had homes in Fleta. Zerverah married Thomas Duncan; Virginia married E. L. Stough; Lozonias married George Edwards; Lubrita married William Caffey Norman and Hattie married Webb Norman. The Stoughs lived away from Fleta wherever E. L. Stough worked as an educator in Alabama. The other five sisters, their husbands and one brother lived in Fleta within "shouting distance" of one another.

- Lubrita and W. C. Norman's home was the farthest south on Pettus Road just past the four-way-stop and on the east side of Pettus Road. This home still stands today, serving as the country home of their son, Julius Britt Norman.
- Coming north on Pettus Road, stands the home of the Duncans on the west side of the road and north of the four-way-stop.
- Hattie and Webb Norman built their home next door to the Duncans. This home is no longer extant.
- The home of Lozonias and George Edwards was on the hill just north of the Webb Norman home. It was constructed in 1903 according to their son, Jim Edwards of Birmingham and former president of the Pintlala Historical Association. It still stands today but has been sold out of the family.
- Lititia married John A. Sellers (no relation) and their home was farther north on Pettus and on the west side of the road. It remains standing today in a remodeled form and has been sold out of the family. It is interesting that in later years after the death of Lititia in 1948, John A. Sellers would marry Buena Mae Duncan, his niece by marriage, in 1951, and that she would move up the Pettus Road to his home.



*Duncan/Strickland Home prior to renovation  
Photograph courtesy Margaret Lynne Ausfeld*

Their brother William Joseph Sellers, Jr. and his wife, Eula Durden also lived amidst the sisters. Their home (not extant 2007) sat between the Edwards home and the John A. Sellers home. It must have been comforting for these five sisters, their brother and their families to live so close to each other in a beautiful rural setting. The second brother, Haden, owned property near Lititia and John A. Sellers but he resided in Montgomery where he was deputy sheriff to Adkin Moseley long-time sheriff with roots in Pintlala. What a history these homes on Pettus Road share!

The Duncan home has recently undergone a reclamation by its current owner, Joan Strickland. She purchased the Duncan home and fourteen acres in 1993 from Saco Wood Company. Attempts to document the age of the house have not been fruitful but conjecture places the date about 1892 after the Duncan's marriage. Strickland lived in Florida at the time of this transaction but with inten-

tions of returning to her home state. In order to keep the interior of the vacant home dry, a new roof was installed in 1994 but Strickland did not return to Alabama until 2001. It was then that her work and dream of reclaiming the Duncan home truly began. In 2001 stabilization of the foundation was achieved. Consultation with architects was initiated with the goal of obtaining a workable and affordable plan to make the home comfortable for living in the 21st century, yet retaining as much of its nineteenth-century appearance as possible. Architect Doug McNabb of Montgomery successfully met this challenge. Major renovation on the house began in 2006 and was completed in the summer of 2007. A sunroom and small porch were added at the rear of the house placing the stairs to the second floor on the interior rather than their original exterior location. One bedroom was converted into a large modern bathroom versus only the sink and bathtub found in the old house. A small bathroom was created in the upstairs living space. Some of the original hardwood flooring was replaced where water damage was too extensive to reverse. Central heat and air were installed and a modern practical kitchen created in the original kitchen area. Existing outbuildings including a dovecote, out-house and crib remain on the property. With the help of wonderful friends and family, Strickland has done much of the refinishing of doors and mantels. She continues the reclamation process of the grounds but is enjoying the peace and tranquility found in her new "old" home.



*Duncan/Strickland Home after to renovation. Photograph courtesy Gary Burton*

A closer look at the family connected to this 19th century home completes the history of a house that nearly did not survive. Thomas and Zerverah Duncan's home site was also the location for Dr. Duncan's medical office. Duncan received his early education in local schools including two years of school in Fort Deposit, Alabama. He obtained a first grade teacher's license and his first teaching job was as an assistant in the Fort Deposit schools. He moved to Manningham, Alabama in Butler County, where he built a school house and served as principal of the high school for two years. In 1889 Duncan entered the Medical College of Alabama at Mobile and graduated in 1892, the same year of his marriage to Zerverah Sellers. According to an interview (by employees of Old Alabama Town) with the Duncan's three daughters in 1979, Duncan served as president of his



*Dr. Thomas Duncan leaving his Pettus Road home, date unknown. Photograph courtesy Old Alabama Town*

medical school class, year unknown.



*Moving day for medical office. Photograph courtesy Old Alabama Town*

His nearly fifty years practicing medicine in south Montgomery County included serving as physician for the Walter Brothers Convict Farm at Sprague Junction. His daughters listed Mt. Carmel, Fleta, Snowdown, Sprague, Bethlehem and Ada as communities served by Dr. Duncan. His office was small as most of his patients were treated in their homes. Mrs. Duncan would accompany him when difficult obstetric cases were anticipated. In 1979 the Duncan's three daughters donated his office to the Old Alabama Town complex in Montgomery where it is representative of medical offices found in the rural south in the late 1800s and early 1900s. As with the house, documentation for a date of construction of the



small office is not known. It was most likely completed at the same time as the residence. Their oldest child, Alalu, was born in 1894 and the daughters felt that their parents were settled in Fleta by that time. It is interesting that the deed to the property lists the year 1897 for the purchase from Liti-tia Pool. Would the house and office been built prior to the purchase of the land?

TRANSCRIBED LETTER FROM THOMAS DUNCAN TO HIS WIFE ZERVERAH FROM NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA. DR. DUNCAN WAS APPARENTLY ATTENDING SOME TYPE OF CLASSES AT THE NEW ORLEANS POLYCLINIC, POST-GRADUATE DEPARTMENT, TULANE MEDICAL COLLEGE

Nov. 30th 1906

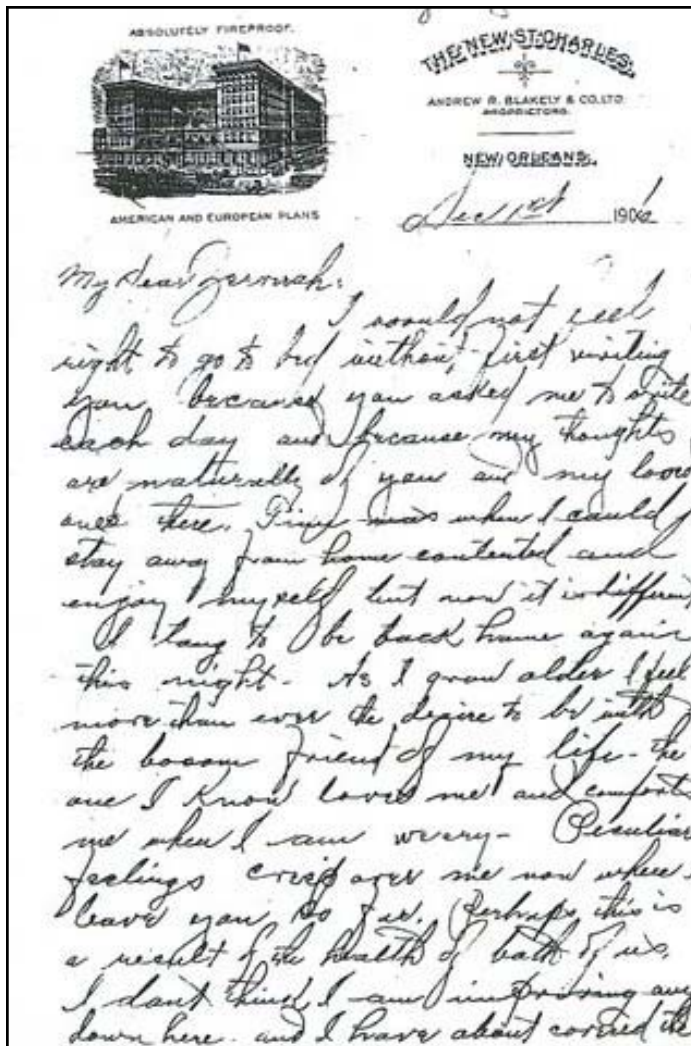
Dear Zerverah,

I received your first letter today and we read and reread it with exceeding great interest "Oh that letter from home, "that letter from home" always makes a fellow feel better-so far away- I am looking for another tomorrow. We saw some interesting operations today. One of the professors here does all of his operations under cocaine-about 8 drops of a 2% solution injected into the back between the backbones is quite sufficient for an amputation of a lower limb or any other cutting operation on the lower part of the body. Saw a man thus treated look on while they cut- burnt with actual cautery (red hot iron) and he never grunted or winced a single time Said it didn't hurt at all.- This Dr. Delaup whose name occurs above doesn't use any more chloroform or ether now-but just this new method called spinal analgesi(?)

(REST OF LETTER MISSING)



Letter courtesy Old Alabama Town



Letter courtesy Old Alabama Town

The Duncan file held by Old Alabama Town contains copies of letters written from Dr. Duncan to his wife while he was in New Orleans in November and December of 1906. He was there attending classes at the New Orleans Polyclinic which was a



Dr. Thomas David Duncan, date unknown. Photograph courtesy Thomas Ray

post-graduate department of Tulane Medical College. Reproduced and transcribed in this article is one page of a letter describing Dr. Duncan's observations of surgical procedures. This description certainly impresses upon readers how far medical science has progressed in two centuries. So much for the "good ole days"! His letter of December 1 is of a more personal nature and reveals the devotion of a husband for his wife. Dr. Duncan also mentions that a Dr. Suggs is with him in New Orleans. This most likely was Dr. Samuel David Suggs, who practiced medicine in Montgomery and owned land on the Wasden Road in Hope Hull.

Thomas Duncan was also interested in the politics of Montgomery County. He served two terms on the Montgomery County Board of Revenue after being appointed by Governor William D. Jelks who served as governor of Alabama from 1901 to 1907. Duncan was also a Postmaster at Fleta from November 16, 1901 to September 25, 1905.

Agriculture was another interest for Dr. Duncan. He maintained a farm with cattle, horses and barn, located behind the home off Ada/

Union Academy Road. PHA member, Jack Hornady remembers as a child of around eight or nine (1936 or 1937) riding with Dr. Duncan in his green 1936 Ford automobile to inspect his farm and animals. Jack's family ran and lived at Lassiter's Store (located where Pettus Road dead-ends at Highway 31). Each week day during that summer Duncan would bring his daughter Lucile to meet a ride to Montgomery for summer classes at Huntingdon College and return in the afternoon to take her home. He would take Jack home with him on the am trip to help with small jobs—primarily opening the gaps while on his farm tour. Jack would often eat lunch at the Duncan home and then be taken back to the store. Jack was very fond of Dr. Duncan and treasures his memories of that summer.

Dr. Duncan died in 1938 at age 72 following an intestinal operation. Zerverah, his three daughters and three grandsons survived him. Their home remained the residence for Zerverah until her death in 1943. Daughter, Alalu married Briggs Dillard of Mathews, Alabama where they resided with their three sons. Daughters Buena Mae and Lucile lived in the homeplace on trips home from their teaching jobs in Laurel, Mississippi. According to letters found in the home by Joan Strickland they must have taught there until 1950 or early 51 when they returned permanently to Fleta. Lucile obtained a Civil Service job at Gunter Field and worked there for many years and Buena Mae married John Sellers in 1951 when she was 49 years old. John Sellers died in 1967. Lucile moved in with Buena Mae after Lucile's health began to fail. Lucile died in 1985 and Buena Mae in 1991. Buena Mae made several substantial bequests in her will—one made possible the construction of the Pintlala Branch Library and the other was to the Mt. Carmel Methodist Church. The Duncan home remained vacant for many years falling victim to the ravages of nature and vandalism until being rescued by its current owner.

PHA hopes to plan a tour of the reclaimed home in the near future.

#### Sources:

Notable Men of Alabama

Interviews with: Thomas Ray, Jack Hornady, Joan Strickland, Hazel Norman, Hattie Norman McLaney Smith

Materials from files at Old Alabama Town, courtesy of Carol King, Curator

Files from Historical Section of Pintlala Branch Library



**PINTLALA HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION**

*c/o Pintlala Public Library  
255 Federal Road  
Hope Hull, AL 36043*

**NEXT MEETING**

**OCTOBER 7, 2007**

**1:45 P.M.**

**STONE HOME AND THE  
STONE'S CHAPEL CHURCH**

**(SABIC INNOVATIVE PLASTICS  
"GE PLASTICS")**

Join the Pintlala Historical Association  
Please mail completed form, fee & dues to :

**Pintlala Historical Association  
c/o Thomas Ray  
2995 Pettus Road  
Hope Hull, AL 36043**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Home & Office) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of Interest \_\_\_\_\_

If you are interested in genealogy, please indicate family surnames \_\_\_\_\_

**\$5.00 Registration Fee (One Time) - \$10.00 Annual Dues**