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Cedar Oaks Guild

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CEDAR OAKS GUILD NEWSLETTER

February, 2022



Cedar Oaks Guild met February 14 at Burns Belfry Church. Hostesses were Barbara Purdon, Nancy Kesselring, Patti Rish, Shellie Harrison, and Keri Dibrell. They served a lovely brunch of fresh fruit, egg casserole, chocolate croissant breakfast bake, caramel cake, and in honor of Valentine's Day, chocolates!



We were fortunate to have **Robert Saarnio**, Director, University of Mississippi Museum and Historic Houses, as our speaker. Mr. Saarnio has also been a member of the Historic Properties Commission for Oxford for more than 5 years. He thanked the Guild for their dedication to Cedar Oaks. It is Oxford's only historic property with a support group. The Museum umbrella also includes Rowan Oak and Bailey's Woods, and the Walton-Young House. The Museum serves as a teaching facility for faculty and students, and also as a resource for the general public.



The Museum began in 1939 with the Mary Bouie Museum, a gift of Ms Bouie and her half sister Kate Skipwith to the City of Oxford. In 1974, it was transferred to the University and a large addition opened in 1977. Permanent collections include American art gifted by Seymour Lawrence; the world-renowned David M. Robinson collection of ancient Greek and Roman artifacts; Southern folk art; the Millington-Barnard collection of state-of-the-art scientific instruments from the 1800s; and paintings by local artist Theora Hamblett (although she sold or donated some of her paintings, she did not part with her dreams and visions paintings, which were too personal). Only a small portion of the holdings can be shown, but further display facilities are in the works. In addition to the permanent collections, 6-8 rotating exhibits are held each year. Currently the work of Jacob Hashimoto is on display.

Decorated football helmets from Bloomingdale's Fashion Touchdown exhibit of 2013 led to a relationship with the Athletic Department. The Museum was able to acquire 3 of the designer helmets, auctioned to benefit the NFL Foundation. The Athletic Department now gifts sponsorships of programs to the Museum.



Most items are acquired by gifts rather than purchase. In fact, the University owned Rowan Oak but not the contents. Even Faulkner's famous typewriter could have been reclaimed by the heirs. A gift by Sandy Black in 2019 enabled the University to obtain ownership of all the furnishings of Rowan Oak. Fundraising projects include the annual Harvest Supper on the grounds of Rowan Oak, a special Christmas ornament, and football parking.

The Museum is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday while the University is open. Admission *and* parking are free!

Welcome to our newest members, **Linda Noonan** and **Suzanne Atkins**. We are happy to have you in the Guild.

Happy Birthday:

Marianna Ochs February 1
Reba Greer February 12
Janie Rozier February 16



Cedar Oaks Treasure: Dr. Baird and Yellow Fever



The historical marker in front of City Hall states “Oxonians suffered the yellow fever epidemic of 1878 with other Mississippians.” This was the epidemic that devastated Memphis and Holly Springs. Outbreaks occurred almost annually in the South from the 1820s to 1905, except during the Civil War, when trade and travel were blockaded. On August 12, 1878, the Board of Aldermen ordered Mayor M. D. Vance to establish a quarantine for all points south of Oxford, extended two days later to north of town. Trains were prohibited from stopping, and 24 men kept anyone from entering Oxford. In addition, 4 special police guarded the homes of people who fled, on orders to shoot to kill after one warning. Although the quarantine was later relaxed and trains were allowed to stop, places infected with yellow fever, including Memphis and Water Valley were restricted until the next fall.

But that was not the only yellow fever epidemic. Another outbreak in 1888 led to quarantining Oxford again. No person could enter the town, trains could not stop, and nothing could be brought into the town. Among the quarantine guards appointed by Mayor Kimmons was Hezekiah Turner, son of our builder William Turner.

On September 21, 1888 the Mayor, J.H. Kimmons and Aldermen W.H. Bryant, E.G.H. Tankersly, F.M. Stowers, J.M. Plant and H.H. Walton met to take quarantine action against districts infected with yellow fever. The resolution stated, “ordered by the Board that the town is hereby strictly quarantined against the world i.e. no person can enter this town, trains cannot stop and no material of whatever nature can be brought into the town until further notice.” Guards were employed to secure the roads entering Oxford and patrol its streets. The quarantine was clarified at several later board meetings and withdrawn on September 30 except for persons coming to Oxford from infected districts. The quarantine guards were: R.D. Reaves, Darwin Wood, David Archibald, Charles McLean, E.C. Foster, Edgar Beard, Sherwood Butler, Tom Chandler, Lawrence Thompson, Tank Wheat, John Johnson, W.H. Marshall, Jr., Tom Stowers, Bob Adams, T.A. Buckner, Hezekiah Turner, Frank Skipwith, Martin Robinson, Sam Holloway, Hal Ferrell, Henry Hutchinson, E.D. Pierce, Murray Faulkner, and J.R. Stowers.

Lafayette County Heritage, p. 35

Nearly a decade later, the yellow fever scare returned. Mayor J. F. Brown established a limited quarantine on September 13, 1897; 3 days later it was expanded to an absolute quarantine. Guards were taken from the voting list. By early November, the quarantine was relaxed somewhat, and then discontinued.

The next summer, yellow fever had an even more profound effect on Oxford, invoking another quarantine and essentially emptying the town. In August of 1898, nearby communities of Taylor and Or(r)wood had experienced

outbreaks. One of its first victims (d. Aug. 9, 1898) was Dr. S. A. Gray. The Gray house in Orwood, which Turner had built in 1854 for Dr. Gray's father Charles Gray, was considered the center of the outbreak.*

The mayor and board met on August 31, 1898 and established a limited quarantine against yellow fever in Taylor and Orrwood. On September 2 the quarantine regulations were increased with an absolute quarantine established on September 8. The final quarantine prohibited public assembly with a 9:00 p.m. curfew. In addition a guard line was established along a perimeter five miles from the square. Each guard station was instructed to put up a rope barrier across the road no closer than fifty feet to the station to avoid any opportunity for physical contact with intruders. The City Health Officer was ordered to have guards placed around any house where there was yellow fever, or suspected infection, to prevent contact with any person in that house. The quarantine was phased out in November.

Lafayette County Heritage, p.36

Dr. W. H. Baird was County Health Officer for Lafayette County at that time, having been appointed in 1893. He worked closely with the State Health Officer, Dr. H. A. Gant, and Dr. H. H. Haralson, State Board of Health Medical Inspector and quarantine inspector. Dr. Haralson arrived in Oxford September 19, 1898, and found 12 cases of yellow fever. Dr. Gant had already announced the disease, and many residents had fled the town. Dr. Haralson decreed that "nothing short of depopulation would prevent an epidemic in Oxford. I was more interested in depopulation on account of the severe type of the disease, which showed evidences of being more malignant than I had seen elsewhere." *Biennial Report*, pp. 82-83

Many residents went north or out into the country to escape the town. For most of the rest, Dr. Haralson arranged to have tents procured and established camps outside the city. The old Methodist campground east of town was used for 40 or 50 whites. A camp for Blacks, called Camp Haralson, was established along the railroad property north of town, with about 450 people sent there.** Even the local doctors were urged to leave, except for Dr. Chandler, who was ill with the fever, and Dr. Baird, who was thought to have some immunity. When Dr. Haralson arrived in Oxford, he described the town as having 3,000 residents. The number left after depopulation was 202. There were a few cases in the camps, thought to be previously infected, but no deaths or additional new cases occurred in the camps. There were about 85 cases and 12 deaths among the people who remained in town. By the end of October, the weather had cooled and houses had been disinfected. Residents were allowed to return October 20, and the University reopened November 15.

Yellow fever was indeed a horrible disease, and the transmission by the female *Aedes aegypti* mosquito was not known for many years. The community of Taylor was thought possibly to have been infected by a large bunch of bananas one of the residents had imported from New Orleans, or by a railroad crew. Clothing and bedding were believed to have fomites and often burned; bodies were hastily buried. Dr. Carlos Finlay of Cuba suspected mosquitoes, but his research was ignored in 1886. After his death (from a deliberate mosquito infection experiment,) Major Walter Reed and others confirmed Finlay's theory. Mosquitoes hatched from eggs of infected insects would have the disease, or mosquitoes would contract it from biting an infected person, and then spread it. The detailed records kept by Dr. Gant and Dr. Carter on the cases in Taylor and Orwood contributed to the knowledge of incubation time. Mosquito eradication programs and vaccines eventually ended the yellow fever epidemics in most parts of the world.

**Lafayette County Heritage*, p. 176, Wikipedia, and other sources designate Ed Gray as the doctor. Dr. Gant's report specified that Ed was the brother of the doctor, A. S. Gray. Gravestone shows Dr. A. S. Gray. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/146313271/albert-sidney-gray>

**In *Faulkner's County: The Historical Roots of Yoknapatawpha County*, p. 305, Doyle speculated that "many black residents were sequestered in a detention camp, evidently to safeguard the property of whites in flight." Based on the report of Dr. Haralson, I believe that although the camps were segregated, they were established for health reasons.

Sources:

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