

Lonnie, Alabama and Camp 8 Served Their Purpose

ASHS Column for June 5, 2008

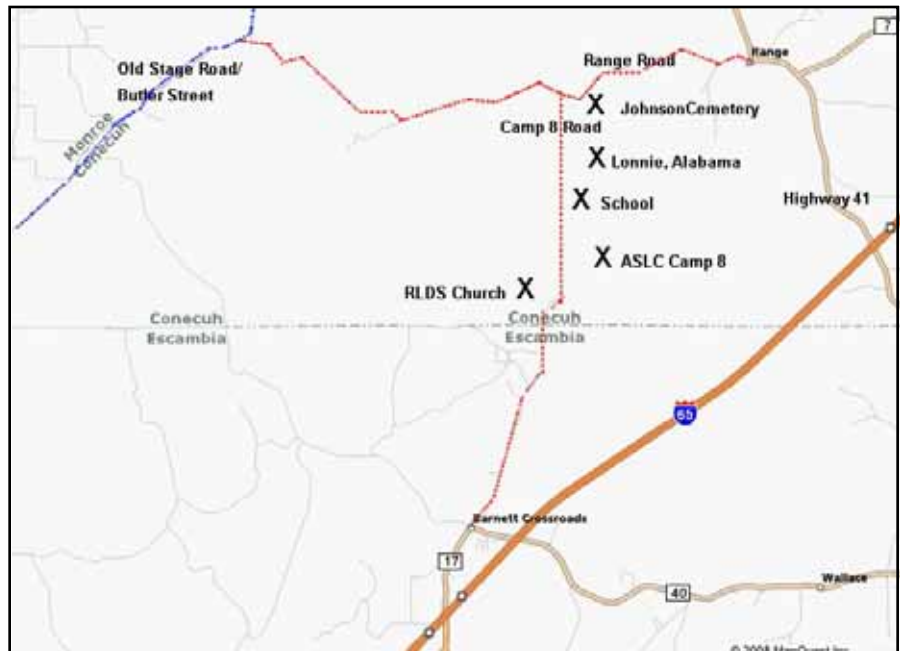
Jerry Simmons

One of the rewards of the privilege of associating with both the Alger-Sullivan Historical Society and the Escambia County Historical Society is discovering that many stories of one have much in common with the other. Today's column illustrates that well, taken from the May issue of the ECHS newsletter, "Echoes." It's part of a superb article written by Darryl Searcy, a native of near Barnett Crossroads and who presently resides in Range. Darryl is a past president and past vice-president of the ECHS, and currently is serving in the capacity of interim vice-president as well.

The full article may be found online at www.escohis.org. Click on "Newsletters," then on "May 2008" to find it in its entirety. Dial-up users may find the file too large, since it is just over 5MB. Hard copies may be purchased for \$5.00. Email escohis@escohis.org to order.

"Quite often one must speak of the people involved before a genuine account of an event or place can be discussed. Such is the case when writing about the Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company Camp 8 and its sub-camps, Alger's Reserve Pasture and the Huxford Camp.

"So vast and modern was the operation that men and women established homes and raised families within it. Schools and churches were built, and thriving communities sprang up on the fringes. One sub-camp was located inside the Alger Reserve Pasture in Conecuh County and the other was located near the community of Huxford in Escambia County. Camp 8, home of the main logging operation, was located a couple of miles south of the Reserve Pasture at the Escambia and Conecuh county lines on Camp 8 Road (now known as John Bland Road).



"Alger's Reserve Pasture and the Huxford Camp were, in fact, large tracts of land that spanned several sections in the southwestern part of Conecuh, Escambia, and Monroe counties, near the townships of Range, Repton, Huxford/Uriah and Butler Street, and the community of Barnett Crossroads. The overall working acreage touched or encompassed some 30 sections, or [over] 100,000 acres.

"Some say the land was more far-reaching, while others say it was less, but the fact remains that the Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company alone owned at least 25,000 acres [in that area] and had access to numerous unnamed tributaries, wetlands and flood plains that fed into the Big Escambia Creek to the west and Bushy/Burnt Corn creeks to the east.

"So much land and timber was involved that [it's said] little or no attention was paid should encroachment on Alabama or Federal lands occur, but for the most part, it was the job of surveyor Walker Pruett to keep the operation within company boundaries. To the north the land was bordered by Federal Highway 84, hard clay roads to the south, State Highway 41 to the east and Big Escambia Creek swamps and the Old Federal Road to the west, and bordering on lands owned by the Alabama Department of Corrections, known then simply as the Alabama State Farm, but known today as Holman Prison.

"Along the Conecuh/Escambia County line was Camp 8. Camp 8 had a commissary, as well as a dentist and a medical doctor, [both coming] from the Century mill operation on a weekly basis. There was a school located be-

tween Camp 8 and the Reserved Pasture for white students only and known as the Long School. Although the Long School was located inside Conecuh County, it was closed in 1929 and the children were bussed to the new Wallace School in Escambia County.

“The vast size of the Camp 8 operation naturally attracted other industry and homesteads to be established on its fringes. One such operation was a small general store and sawmill owned by Solomon Monroe Long. The Long property was situated on the northeast perimeter of the Alger Camp, between parcels that are now owned by Rayonier Forestry and John Bland.

“Mr. Long’s granddaughter, Frankie Long Gaupp, tells the amusing story that her grandfather minted a kind of script with which he paid his laborers. The coins could be redeemed only at the Long General Store. The enterprise became quite successful and the community that sprang up around it became known as Lonnie. A U. S. Post office was established there. By 1920 Lonnie had vanished into distant memory, but Mrs. Gaupp’s parents had the foresight to save a few of the coins as a reminder that a forgotten community once thrived on the edge of the Alger operation. Although the entire Alger-Sullivan operation, and people who lived in or around the associated destinations, were inside Conecuh County, the occasional U. S. Mail Service deliveries were made from Brewton, designated as Route 4, Brewton, Alabama.”

Lonnie, Alabama is no more, nor is Camp 8, but their memory is not to be lost because of thoughtful people like Darryl Searcy, who recorded it for posterity.

Margaret Collier will be back next week and will hopefully tell us of her adventures into the northern hinterland (Boston, Massachusetts).

Ya’ll come.