



**2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Millers Ferry  
Catfish Tournament  
Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup>  
Millers Ferry Camphouse  
5pm Weigh-in  
Emcee: "Big Daddy" Lawler  
Entertainment: Destiny Brown**



### 2012 Football and Cheerleader Signups

Saturday, June 9 and every  
Saturday until July 15  
10 am - 2 pm  
Registration: \$60.00-Football  
\$35.00-Cheerleader

All coaches, players, cheerleaders, and officials come out and be apart of the Wilcox County Youth Sports Program.

Signup in Camden at WOLS radio station.  
Contact: Tim Townsend

(256) 497-2840 or [timt@frontier.com](mailto:timt@frontier.com)



**Bass Tournament  
June 16, 2012**

100% payback minus polygraph test  
Safe light until 3pm

Registration and check-in site:  
Headz Outdoors

Launch Site: Ellis Ferry Landing  
\$80.00 per boat  
(optional \$10 lunker pot)

## Letter from the Chairman

Thank you for your membership in the Wilcox Area Chamber of Commerce. We are now taking nominations for board members for 2013.

Our bylaws require term limits of three years unless the fourth year is served as an officer and that any current director remain off the board for at least one year. With your ideas and help, there are many more things your Wilcox Area Chamber of Commerce can do for Wilcox County. Please let me know if you or someone you know is interested in serving as an officer or on the board of directors or any other capacity of the Wilcox Area Chamber of Commerce for 2013.

Hunter S. Hines  
[hunter.s.hines.maip@statefarm.com](mailto:hunter.s.hines.maip@statefarm.com)

### Director's Note!

The term "Chamber of Commerce" is one of the oldest and most well-recognized brands in the world. The whole of a Chamber of Commerce is greater than the sum of its parts, programs, people and participants. The Wilcox Area Chamber of Commerce is fortunate to have a strong community that supports and encourages growth, all working together for the benefit of our community. You are the "Chamber of Commerce".

Our "Natural Resources" make our community unique and the WACC thanks all members for their commitment, support and time promoting the economic, social and industrial growth of our area with local events. The WACC is blessed to have leaders, business owners, educators and a wealth of private citizens who recognize that we all share in the responsibility of creating economic success, stability and a healthy environment for our region.

If you are not a member of the Wilcox Area Chamber of Commerce, join "Your" Chamber today! (Membership applications and dues structure may be found at [www.wilcoxareachamber.com](http://www.wilcoxareachamber.com) or call our office at 334-682-4929 and we will be delighted to mail you a welcome package).

If you would like distribution and advertisement of any promotions, sales, events, etc. that you may be having, please email your flyers to [wilcoxdev@pinebelt.net](mailto:wilcoxdev@pinebelt.net). Visit [www.wilcoxareachamber.com](http://www.wilcoxareachamber.com) for all current events and recent happenings. Your business will benefit in many different ways. I look forward to continue working with you to make Wilcox County a better place to live, work and raise a family.

*Sandy Curl*



The Alabama State Record Alligator is on display in the Gee's Bend Ferry Terminal in Camden, AL. Keith Fancher of Shelby AL and a team of 6 friends and relatives caught the gator on the Alabama River near Fosters

Creek in Wilcox County. Over 1,500 visitors have viewed the Fancher Gator since the May 3, 2012 unveiling. Stop by and have your picture made with the "Monster Gator" that topped the 2011 season; it will be on display through the month of June.

For more information visit: [www.outdooralabama.com/oaonline/gator11.cfm](http://www.outdooralabama.com/oaonline/gator11.cfm)

2012-2013

#### Natural Choice Page Program

The Wilcox Area Chamber of Commerce is excited to announce the implementation of a Page Program for all 9th – 12th grade students residing in Wilcox County.

The application guidelines are underway and will be concluded by July 31st. These guidelines will be advertised and posted on our website. The Chamber Page

Program will be an opportunity for young women and men to become a part of the business community by being exposed to programs of the Chamber and assist at meetings, ribbon cuttings, grand openings and sponsored events.

We are looking forward to interviewing these young people, our future community leaders, and hope to be a part of their business development.



Twenty-two Camden School of Arts and Technology after-school eighth grade students participated in the Children's Patchwork History Project, funded by the Black Belt Community Foundation. They made this nine-square mosaic quilt for the Gees Bend Ferry Terminal, Camden, AL. The lesson on the Gee's Bend Quilters (Patchwork History Project) was developed by Linda Munoz, as part of her DANA Teaching Artist training through the Alabama Institute for Education in the Arts and the Kennedy Foundation. The Black Belt Heritage Area is managed by the Center for the Study of the Black Belt at the University of West Alabama.

## Camden

By Margaret Walker  
Black Belt Living

**IMAGINE A PLACE WHERE EXCHANGING PLEASANTRIES** is the height of good manners, where friends and strangers alike welcome one another with a smile or quite possibly a “How do you do?” Where the traffic that leaves even the most saintly big city dwellers yawning under their breath, is scarce. Where the age-old adage encouraging people to “stop and smell the roses” is not an anomaly but a way of life. Where, against the curtain of aged buildings weathered with character, enterprising farmers sell freshly-harvested produce or catfish at the curbside market to eager buyers.

This is Camden.

Camden grew up humbly until the 1850s. On September 14, 1832, Thomas and Martha Dunn provided twelve acres of forest to establish a new county seat in Wilcox County. Located four miles from the Alabama River, this parcel of land—initially christened “Barboursville”—was incorporated and renamed Camden in 1841. By the 1850s, Camden had become a cultural, educational, commercial, and legal center of Wilcox County.

The importance placed on education by early Camden residents was evident in the establishment of the Wilcox Female Institute in 1850. In order to provide the type of boarding school education a young lady would receive in places such as Virginia and the Carolinas, wealthy plantation owners donated the necessary funds to build a local school. The female college was a great success, attracting students from all over the South. Today, the structure is the home of the Wilcox Historical Society. The Society's commitment to raise money to restore the institute to its former glory saved the historic landmark from destruction, preserving an iconic piece of Camden's history.

A trophy case of antebellum structures, Camden is a town that marries past and present in one beautiful landscape. The focal point of downtown Camden is the imposing red brick, Greek Revival courthouse built in the late 1850s. It is one of only four antebellum courthouses still in use in Alabama. The Wilcox County Library is located on the second floor and contains an expansive collection of genealogical records.

The Historical Society sponsors an annual tour of homes and historic landmarks. The most recent tour held in February 2012 included the oldest documented structure in Camden: the Dunn-Fairley-Bonner-Field home, originally built for Thomas and Martha Dunn. The tour also showcased GainesRidge, built in the 1830s. In 1985, Betty Gaines Kennedy and her sister Haden G. Marsh converted this antebellum structure into GainesRidge Dinner Club. The quintessential southern dining experience offered by Mrs. Kennedy with her fried catfish fillets, homemade bread, and black bottom pie tempts customers from miles away.

Built in 1851, the Sterrett-McWilliams house displays a broad mix of architectural styles ranging from Victorian to Greek Revival. Owned by Garland Cook Smith and her sister Jean Lindsay Cook, this home has also been featured in the tour of homes. The sisters' great-grandfather, Richard Ervin McWilliams, fought in the Civil War with a group known as the Wilcox True Blues. The True Blues, comprised mainly of young men from eastern Wilcox county and Camden, carried a distinctive blue flag. Samuel Tepper hand-painted the name, “Wilcox True Blues” on one side and an image of a rattlesnake, cotton boll, and a steamboat on the other. Although the True Blues proudly carried their flag into battle, the regiment was captured by Union forces in Tennessee in 1862 and their flag confiscated.

Decades later, an unusual turn of events reunited McWilliams with the True Blues' flag. In 1917 while visiting family in Lansing, Michigan, McWilliams' youngest daughter found the flag on display in a museum. She recognized the flag because of the detailed descriptions her father had previously given her. She contacted her father with the unlikely news and the quest to bring the flag back to Alabama began. In 1921, the state of Michigan returned the flag to McWilliams. In recent years, the Wilcox Historical Society, working in conjunction with the Alabama Department of Archives and History, had the flag restored.

Camden is not only a town with a rich, intriguing history but also one with a healthy appreciation for the artistic culture of the Black Belt. Anyone planning a trip to Camden should venture into Black Belt Treasures, a gallery filled with items by Black Belt artists. The craftsmanship and artistry on display is staggering. Items for sale include books, paintings, pottery, hand-woven baskets, jewelry, and quilts made by the famous Gees Bend quilters. Whether shopping at Black Belt Treasures, touring antebellum homes, or buying fresh produce from the curbside market, the peaceful tranquility this small town offers is well worth a visit. Friendly people who delight in the simple pleasures of life make Camden an inviting oasis for those who appreciate a slower pace of living.



1001 Earl Hilliard Rd.  
Camden, AL 36726