

Changing the Way You Think About Tourism

What if I told you that you are always a tourist, and that you should think like one...even if you live right here in Bibb County? A common response might be "you're out of your mind!" That response is rooted in the long-standing perception that tourists are people who pass their leisure time far away from their home...at places like the beach, mountains, rivers, metropolitan areas or others. Truth is we're all tourists in ways we don't even think about, right here at home!

Consider, for example, someone from West Blocton, Woodstock, Pondville, Randolph, Six Mile or elsewhere, who comes into Centreville for the day to attend to business at the Courthouse. Or, vice versa, someone from Centreville, Brent or other points heading into north Bibb County to enjoy a race, see the upper Cahaba, or a devour a barbecue lunch. With maybe a few exceptions, this person is almost certain to spend money outside of their own community, yet still contribute to the county's economy through sales taxes and fuel taxes. Whether they are stopping for gas or snacks at a convenience store, shopping the new WalMart Super Center or getting a hard-to-find item at the hardware store, Bibb Countians are tourists from within generating revenue for the county.

With the Chamber of Commerce's "Shop At Home" drive underway, consider not only buying at home, but also enjoying the unique natural wonders and scenic locations in our county---instead of driving hours or days to see others. This will lighten your pocketbook, and the money you do spend stays here at home!

Changing our way of thinking about tourism evokes a poignant moment from the Mississippi-Alabama Rural Tourism Conference in Tuscaloosa last week. In paraphrasing 19th Century scientist Charles Darwin, tourism consultant Berkeley Young reminded the audience it is neither the strongest nor the most intelligent of a species that ultimately survives---rather, it is those who are the most responsive to change.

A great way to respond to change and generate interest in Bibb County is to simply tell its story. This process began at Payne Lake last month, where 15 participants spent a Saturday afternoon talking about "places gone bye" like Keaton's Corner, Belle Ellen and others. More opportunities will present themselves soon for persons with memories to share the Bibb of yesteryear.

Even if you don't want to talk, maybe you could share interesting old photos of Bibb County. How can you help? Let David and Karen at Karen's Photography digitally scan your photograph(s) at no cost to you. They are working on a pictorial history of Bibb County that they would like to see published. Just call them at 926-4426 or visit them at Karen's studio in downtown Centreville to find out how you can get your photos to them. They will also appreciate any information you can provide with the photos. There is a great shortage and need for photos of Old Blocton, West Blocton, the lumber industry, coal mining, extinct coal towns, the Cahaba River, Rural Communities-Present and Past, and family and individual photos of well-known Bibb Countians.

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