



DeSoto County Historical Society News

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January 2021

This issue sponsored by Alvie Davidson in memory of
his parents, Ollie & Mary Lee Davidson

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MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The DeSoto County Historical Society's monthly meetings will be suspended. There will be no meetings for now as we choose to follow recommended social gathering suggestions and suspend our meetings until we are told it is safe to resume.

Tin Can Tourists Convention, January 1

The Tin Can Tourists organization was formed in 1919. The members did not pay dues. They pledged to help each other on the road, keep tourist camps clean, and protect the woods around the camps. They were called "Tin Can Tourists" either because they ate food from "tin cans" (some used a tin can as a hood ornament) or because of their metal "tin can" travel trailers or because they ate communal suppers off their "tin pans" (metal dinner plates).

Or perhaps because many drove Model T's, known as "Tin Lizzies."

The Arcadia City Mobile Home Park on U. S. Highway 17 (South Brevard Avenue) began as a camp for motorists who lived in tents or homemade "motor homes."

SOCIETY PROPERTY REMAINS CLOSED

Due to the increase in COVID-19 cases in our county, The John Morgan Ingraham House Museum and The Howard and Velma Melton Historical Research Library at 120 W Whidden Street will remain closed in January.

For more information call Carol at 863-445-0789.



Photograph courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society

Tin Can Tourists at the Arcadia Tourist Camp, January 1931

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Tin Can Tourists Convention, January 1

In 1924, it was established as the Arcadia Tourist Camp. F. E. Hanson served as a manager and had a service station and grocery store for their convenience. It became a local garage but was demolished when U.S. Highway 17 was widened to four lanes.

The Tin Can Tourists of the World met for their annual convention on New Year's Day in Arcadia from 1924 until 1931 when the convention moved to Sarasota. However, the Tin Can Tourists continued to meet at the Arcadia Tourists Camp for their "winter homecoming"—or Christmas holidays.

The Society owns five panoramic photographs of early conventions: four are on display in the Ingraham House Museum and one at the DeSoto County Chamber of Commerce. We are also grateful for recent donations of newspaper clippings and other documents about the organization when they were in Arcadia from Forrest and Jeri Bone, who renewed the club as "an all-make-and-model vintage trailer and motor coach club in 1998" (www.tincantourists.com).

For more information about the Tin Can Tourists, read an article by Connie Kaufman published in *Recollections II: A Collection of Historical Photographs, Documents, Stories, Recipes, Sayings, and Other Memorabilia about Arcadia and DeSoto County, Florida*. This book is available at the Museum Store online at historicdesoto.org or call Carol at 863-445-0789.



Photograph courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society

Tin Can Tourists, January 1924, at the Arcadia Tourist Camp, sold to the City of Arcadia by the DeSoto Park Association in December 1923, now the City Mobile Home Park.



Pearl Harbor Day Commemoration Ceremony

We are grateful to the American Legion for holding their Pearl Harbor Day Commemoration Ceremony at 10 a.m. on the 1924 (newly restored) Peace River bridge on Dec. 7. Legionnaires James Adkins, Ron Jones, and Carl Turner served as the honor guards and Adkins addressed the crowd. After the Honor Guard fired a salute, Society Member Lou Towne joined James O'Leary as the World War II veterans who tossed the symbolic flower wreath into Peace River to remember the 2,403 who died when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.



World War II veterans Society Member Lou Towne and James O'Leary

—photo by Carol Mahler

Historic Postage Stamps

Those who receive this newsletter via regular mail may have noticed the intriguing collection of vintage postage stamps on the envelope. Thanks to Carol Mahler and the late Frances Pooser for the vintage designs and to Karen Smoke and the late Victor and Mary Amemiya for the historic ones. We have plenty more to use, so enjoy a glimpse of times gone by, when a first-class letter cost 5 or 10 cents to mail!

A Message From The President

Dear Friend and Members:

I hope that all had a safe and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year's celebration. For the first time ever, my immediate family celebrated these events by ourselves. Although we enjoyed it, I hope that we never have to do that again. I believe that the sacrifices we make today will make a difference in the long run with this pandemic. Current Covid-19 figures reveal 1,306,123 positive cases in Florida, with 21,546 deaths. In DeSoto County there has been 2,883 positive cases, with 204 hospitalizations and 55 deaths. As the result the general meetings remain canceled until further notice. To keep up with current Society happenings, please check us out on our Web page or Facebook. If you haven't already done so, please pay your membership dues! Also, please note that you can now add donations to the same form, and you can now use our convenient PayPal account. Additionally, if you know anyone that may be interested in joining the DCHS, please provide us with an e-mail address so that we can send a complimentary issue of the newsletter to them.

I was deeply saddened to learn the news of the passing of Mr. James Westberry on December 20, 2020. James was a long time member of the DeSoto County Historical Society and may be the longest tenured school board member in Florida. For further information on Mr. Westberry, please see Carol Mahler's article in this newsletter. I personally hold Mr. Westberry in the highest esteem. He absolutely was one of the best people I ever knew. My condolences to his family, and I pray that God will give them strength and comfort in their time of grief.

There has been little Board action over the last month other than to schedule an in-person meeting on Monday, January 4, 2021. The main purpose of the meeting is to determine whether or not to hold our Pioneer Day event on the third weekend of March as scheduled. If you wish to provide your input into this decision, please give me a call at (863)990-0273.

Repairs and upkeep to the museum have slowed, but I hope that the work will pick up this month. We were able to add a second coat of paint to the bathroom, which competed our work in there. Now, we just have to move everything back in and add the fixtures to the tub. I am still looking for a contractor to do the repairs to the exterior of both the Museum and Seed House. If you know anyone who could and would be willing to do this work, please let me know.

As always, I wish to thank all of the people working in the front line of this pandemic and risking their lives. The doctors, nurses, and support staff at the hospitals, the emergency

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responders, the firemen, the law enforcement officers, and our U.S. Armed Services, whether here or abroad are truly heroes who deserve our gratitude. I myself plan to try and be vaccinated on Wednesday, January 6, and I will continue to follow CDC guidelines, and I urge you to do the same.

Until the next time, please stay smart, stay home, and stay safe!

May God bless and keep us all safe.

Lewis H. Parker IV
President, DeSoto County Historical Society



Historical Society Newsletter Sponsors

Jan. - Alvie Davidson in memory of
his parents, Ollie & Mary Lee Davidson

Feb. - J.R. Griffis & Jeff Griffis in memory of
their beloved Nancy Webster

March - Dale, Patty & Sue in loving memory of
our parents Howard & Velma Melton

April - Warren & Arlene Conley in memory of
Hazel & Leo Williams

May - Marshall and Hazel Whidden in memory of
our parents, Marshall and Barbara Whidden, and
our beloved son Douglas Marshall Whidden

June - Michelle, Dan, & Dow in loving memory of
our parents Eddie & Iris Garner

July - Ruth Dunn in loving memory of her late husband
Rudolph Dunn.

Aug. - Charlotte Hill Carter in loving memory of
her husband, Frederick Lawrence Carter

Sept. - Marguerite & Tom Hankins
in memory of Mr. & Mrs. T.J. Pipkin
(Pip & Alison Pickard Pipkin)

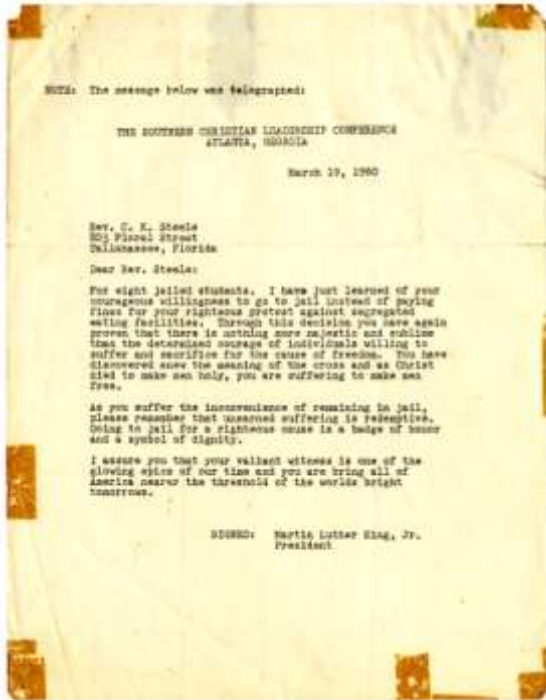
Oct. - People for Protecting Peace River

Nov. - Betty Hall Wood in memory of
her late husband G. Pierce Wood, Jr.

Dec. - The McLeod children in memory of
their Dad, Harold McLeod

Happy Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day!

As we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) on Jan. 18, 2021, let us remember the number of times he visited our state as well as the streets, libraries, schools, and other locations that are named for him. His words ring in the Florida State Archives in a copy of a telegram sent via Charles Kenzie Steele (1914-1980) to the eight Florida A & M University students who were jailed in Tallahassee in 1960 for trying to integrate a lunch counter. The Archives note, "King calls the students courageous and tells them that '[g]oing to jail for a righteous cause is a badge of honor and a symbol of dignity' (<http://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/329141>).



Tune in or go online for more local history

Carol Mahler talks local history monthly with Mark Anderson on his "Mark in the Morning" Show on Arcadia's radio station Classic Country 104.5 FM, so tune in at 7:30 a.m. on Thurs., Jan. 21, or listen online at www.classiccountrystation.com. She is also writing articles about local history for the new online newspaper *The Arcadia Community Local* published by the *Peace River Shopper*.

Stella Parker and Carol Mahler at Gift Bag pick up.
—photo by Karen Smoke

Gift Bag Project

Thank you to Joshua Citrus for partnering with the Society to offer "Delicious Gifts of DeSoto County History" gift bags! We offered a combination of citrus marmalades and dressings/sauces to compliment our books and postcards. We are grateful to Carol Mahler for designing the gift bag tags, taking and fulfilling orders, plus working with Kathy Bryce to pack the gift bags with the items ordered. We also appreciate everyone who ordered a gift bag: Francesca Anderson, Kathy Bryce, Cindy Ely, Linda Keen, Carol Mahler, Stella Parker, Karen Smoke and Trudi Super. The project raised \$318.09 for the Society!

We appreciate Karen Smoke for designing an attractive flyer and distributing it throughout the community with help from Carol Mahler, and Cindy Ely for posting the information and invitations on the Society's Facebook page. Thanks to Carol for talking about the fundraising project on Arcadia's radio station Classic County 104.5 and to Mark Anderson for inviting her to do so! We are grateful to Carol Mahler and Stella Parker for setting up (with help from Karen Smoke) a tent and table for the gift bags pick-up day on Dec. 12, and working from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and then cleaning up. Many people responded to the Society's invitation to stop and pay their membership dues and buy some Society merchandise, including the popular blanket flower seeds. We sold \$50.00 in additional merchandise and received \$52.00 in donations in addition to \$475.00 in membership dues collected.



Christmas Parade

Thanks to Cindy McLeod Ely for organizing our entry for the **DeSoto County Chamber of Commerce's Annual Christmas Parade!** We also appreciate her and Karen Smoke for carrying our Society banner. We are grateful to **Carol Mahler for making our "float"**—a garden wagon showing the history of Christmas home movies from 1923 when Eastman Kodak sold the first 16 mm home movie camera—and pulling it in the parade. Karen **declared that the Society's unit was the most compact and energy efficient of all!**



Member Profile: Max Fitzpatrick

A retired farmer, educator, and County Fair administrator, Max Fitzpatrick is a snowbird with plenty of experience in historic preservation. A member of the Society for more than a decade, he is also a member of the Johnson County, Indiana, Historical Society, **established in 1976. He serves as Johnson County's** Historian, a position appointed by the Indiana Historical Society and the Indiana Historical Bureau (<https://indianahistory.org/across-indiana/hometown-resources/county-historians>). The Society nominated him to a renewable three-year term that he has held for 25 or 30 years. He said, "It's hard to keep count when I'm having so much fun."

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A sketch of the Johnson County Museum in Franklin, Indiana

Founded in 1931 by the Alexander Hamilton Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Johnson County Museum of History in Franklin first used a room **in the southwest corner of the courthouse.** The DAR's Museum Committee managed the collection that was moved in 1963 to a home donated to the Museum. The Historical Society and Johnson County purchased the former Masonic Temple and moved the museum there in 1991 (<https://co.johnson.in.us/jcmuseum>)

Max's late wife Lois Rachel Fitzpatrick (1934-2010) worked as a volunteer, including assisting the curator, from 1979-2009. Lois and Max also volunteered their time and talents in DeSoto County, and we are grateful that Max continues to do so. He also established the **Retired Ranchers' and Farmers' Club, and members** from 13 states learn about Arcadia and DeSoto County. The Club suspended activities this season because of the COVID-19 pandemic.



—photo by Carol Mahler

In Memory of James Westberry

The son of Walter H. Westberry and Mildred Williams **Westberry, James “Jimmie” Waldron Westberry, Sr.**, was born in 1935 and died on Dec. 20, 2020. He graduated from DeSoto County High School in 1953 and owned DeSoto Auto Repair and citrus groves. He served on the DeSoto County School Board for 36 years.

A member of the Arcadia Church of God, he served as clerk for 28 years and as a member of Pentecostal **Theological Seminary’s Board of Directors. He was a** member of the Arcadia Rotary Club, Bulldog Boosters, DeSoto County Peace River Valley Citrus Growers, Florida Farm Bureau, Florida National School Board Association, and the Historical Society.

He served on the Society’s Board of Directors and traveled to Tallahassee with his wife and granddaughter to lobby for the grants to restore the John Morgan Ingraham House. Later, he and Bebe Bradbury co-signed the loan needed to build the John Morgan Ingraham Seed **House. He often set up the “washpot” for washing** clothes at Pioneer Day sharing his memories of growing **up in our county, and he portrayed “the banker” in early** Pioneer Day skits. He was a faithful member and always brought his warm smile and kind words to every meeting.

According to his obituary posted at Ponger-Kays-Grady Funeral Home’s **Web site: “He was a devoted** husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, and friend. He is highly respected and admired by everyone who knew him. He was a man of great integrity and compassion for **mankind”** (<https://www.pongerkaysgrady.com/obituary/james-jimmie-westberry-sr>). We will miss him and extend our sincere sympathy to his family.



From top—James as Banker Ziba King.

James Faison and James Westberry.

Westberry with Arcadia Albritton’s Cake, March 14, 2009

—photos provided by Carol Mahler

