



DeSoto County Historical Society
PAST • PRESENT • FUTURE
ARCADIA, FLORIDA

DeSoto County Historical Society News

P.O. Box 1824 • Arcadia FL 34265 • 863-266-5774

www.historicdesoto.org

December 2025

This issue sponsored by - **Adrian and Jane Cline** in loving memory of
Howard and Celia Sorrells

UPCOMING EVENTS

Member Meeting:

Monday, Dec 15

DeSoto Memorial Hospital -
McSwain Room
Room open at 11:30 a.m.
Meeting 12 noon

Dear Members and Friends of the
DeSoto County Historical Society:

You're invited to enjoy a holiday concert performed by the DeSoto Middle School chorus at our monthly meeting at noon on Dec. 15 in the McSwain Room of DeSoto Memorial Hospital, 900 N. Robert Ave., in Arcadia. Lunch is available for purchase in the cafeteria starting at 11:30 a.m. and may be eaten in the McSwain Room.

Before the concert begins, Property Appraiser Dave Williams will install our newly elected officers and directors. Please bring Christmas cookies to share with each other and especially the DMS chorus members.

We look forward to your participation in what promises to be a joyous holiday gathering with some of our young people. Your continued support and involvement in the Society are what makes our community so special.

Warm regards,

Adrian H. Cline

President, DeSoto County
Historical Society

Happy 139th Birthday, Arcadia! - December 6

by Carol Mahler

In 1855, the Third Seminole War (1855-1858) began, and Manatee County was established. The next year, Thomas Williams settled on Peace River's east shore in the area that today is the City of Arcadia. Peace River provided the main transportation, so the settlement was called Waldron's Landing after Williams' brother-in-law James Waldron or Raulerson's Landing because Harris Raulerson delivered supplies in his side-wheel steamboat and hauled the settlers' produce to market. The bulk of that produce was potatoes, so the area was also known as "Tater Hill Bluff."

The City of Arcadia Historic City Hall Restoration is funded in part by a half-million dollar grant from the Florida Division of Historic Resources.

—Photo by Carol Mahler

Article continues on next page—



DeSoto County **Ahead** 
Building Our Future With Every Voice

REGISTER TODAY
ALL ARE WELCOME

What: A Community Update Dinner
Date: Tuesday, January 13, 2026
Time: 4:00p – 6:30p Resource Fair
5:00p – 7:00p Dinner
7:00p – 7:30p Program
7:30p – 8:00p Networking
Location: Turner Agri-Civic Center
2250 NE Roan St.
Arcadia, FL, 34266



Please register by Tues, Dec 16

DeSoto County Ahead will showcase over 70 community organizations, valuable resources, and meaningful presentations by various community changemakers. The event aims to foster connections, promote learning, encourage the exchange of ideas, and ensure that each person leaves with a renewed sense of hope and inspiration, as well as steps to propel positive change within our community. There is no cost to attend this event, and dinner is provided thanks to the generosity of The Patterson Foundation.



The DeSoto County Historical Society will participate in the DeSoto County Ahead Community Update Dinner at 4:00 to 8:00 p.m., on Jan. 13, 2026, at the Turner Agri-Civic Center, 2250 Roan St., and we invite all members and friends to attend the Resource Fair, Dinner, Program and Networking. This event is free thanks to the generosity of The Patterson Foundation. Please register by Tues., Dec. 16, 2025, at the following link: <https://bit.ly/4gzxeCq>

Happy 139th Birthday, Arcadia! —Con't from pg. 1

In 1883, when the settlers applied for a post office, they chose the name Arcadia, and David S. Williams was appointed the first postmaster. Many stories explain the origin of the name, but traditionally, it is the namesake of Arcadia Matilda Albritton Coker (1860-1932) to repay an act of kindness.

Moving his sawmill to the Arcadia area, the Rev. James Madison “Boss” Hendry stayed overnight with the Thomas H. Albritton and Frances M. Albritton family in Lily. He mentioned that his birthday was the following day. The Albritton’s 22-year-old daughter Arcadia—already married to William Coker and mother of a child—baked a cake for the Baptist preacher. In return for her kindness, Hendry said he would name a new town for her.

On Jan. 12, 1886, freezing temperatures killed citrus fruit and damaged trees in north Florida. The low was 15 degrees in Jacksonville according to the USDA Yearbook for 1886. Those growers who did not give up—plus others wanting to try citrus culture—turned to south Florida.

The easiest way to travel south was on the Florida Southern Railway. On March 4, the first train arrived in the Arcadia area which remained the end-of-the-line until June. So many people moved to Arcadia that by Dec. 6, it had enough population to incorporate as a town.

In May 1887, DeSoto County was formed, and in Nov. 1888, voters selected the Town of Arcadia as the new county seat. In 1901, the City of Arcadia was incorporated, but government operations were conducted in rented buildings until City Hall, 121 W. Hickory St., was built in 1926. The unique Mediterranean Revival structure is currently undergoing restoration.

Dues Are Due On January 1, 2026

Memberships in the Society are for the calendar year, starting on Jan 1:

- \$25.00 for an individual
- \$40.00 for a family
- \$50.00 for a sustaining member
- \$100.00 for a business
- Winter resident memberships are \$12.00 for an individual and \$20.00 for a family.

Bring your dues to the Dec. meeting or mail them to P.O. Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265 or use PayPal online at hisotricdesoto.org.

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800-435- 7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.

NOVEMBER WRAP UP

Gratitude for our November Meeting

A huge thanks to Ron Jones, Sr., for preparing the delicious buffet for our November 17th meeting! We also appreciate the Arcadia American Legion K-Post 11 for hosting the meeting in their hall at 2124 NW American Legion Dr.. We are grateful to Mike Dempsey, commander of the K-Post 11 Honor Guard, and K-Post 11 Adjutant Amber Jones for folding the U.S. flag while Society President and K-Post 11 Member Adrian Cline explained the meaning of the 13 folds.



Thank you to James D. Brewer, author and retired U.S. Army officer, for his presentation of his book *Blood at the Whistlestop: Murder on Florida’s Peace River*. He dressed as his protagonist James Lee “Choctaw” Parker and sold and signed copies of his book, the third in the Choctaw Parker Mystery Adventure Series that also includes *Blood on the Crossties* and *Blood on the Trestle*.

More information is available at: www.jamesdbrewerwriter.com

NOVEMBER WRAP UP—Con't

Museum Maintenance

We thank Ron Jones for cutting down the tall grass around the Museum property and picking up the bricks. We also appreciate him for coordinating with Selby Kinard to cut down the dying oak tree along the north fence. We are grateful to him and Amber Jones for applying Thompsons Water Seal to the handicap ramp and south porch.

Members Renewed

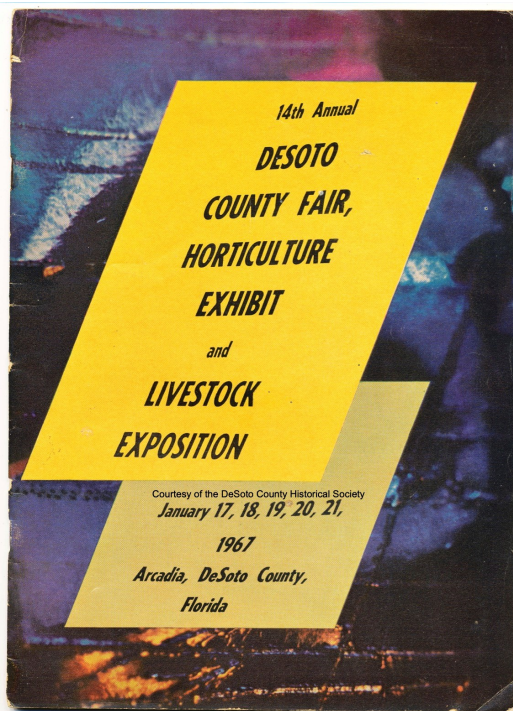
The Society depends on the enthusiasm and support of its members, and we thank Walter Bagnall, Charlotte Carter, René Collins, Roseanne Collins, Cindy Ely and Karen Smoke for renewing their memberships! We also appreciate Charlotte, René, and Cindy for renewing their newsletter sponsorships.

Gratitude for Gifts

Thanks to Cheryl Rowley for donating a 1967 DeSoto County Fair program to the Society! We have a very good collection of Fair programs, especially of the early years thanks to a donation from Linda Mansfield, but we are missing a few: 1974, 1976, 1978, 1980-1995, 2001, 2003, and 2013.

If you have any of these programs, please consider donating them or allowing the Society to scan them. Contact Carol Mahler at 863-445-0789 or desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

We are grateful to Caroline Cox Thornton and Lanark Thornton, her son, for visiting the Museum and donating additional Cox family items to the Museum: military funeral U.S. Flag for George Cox who died during World War I, and framed photographs of him, the Cox family homestead, and the Bowling Green Methodist Church.



Historical Society Newsletter Sponsors

Jan. - **Adrian and Jane Cline** in loving memory of **Howard and Celia Sorrells.**

Feb. - **René Collins** in memory of **Terry and Evelyn Collins.**

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

April - **Arlene Conley** in loving memory of **my husband, Warren Conley, and my parents, Leo and Hazel 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. - **Adrian and Jane Cline** in loving memory of **Ada Carlton Cline, Adrian B. Cline, Hazel G. Cline, and Donna Faye Cline.**

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

John Morgan Ingraham House Museum

300 N Monroe Avenue

MUSEUM OPEN:

9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Thursdays

and on the second and fourth Saturday of the month.

The Museum will be closed on Christmas Day as well as the 4th Sat. in December, which is Dec. 27, and New Year's Day.

CLOSED May-June-July-August.

The Howard and Velma Melton Historical Research Library in the Ingraham Seed House

120 W Whidden Street

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

WANTED: Volunteers For 3rd Grade Field Trip

The third grade classes of Memorial Elementary School would like to visit the John Morgan Ingraham House Museum sometime in February 2026 to learn about local history through hands-on activities such as using the typewriter or washing clothes with a scrub board. If you would like to have fun with them, please contact Carol Mahler at 863-445-0789 or desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

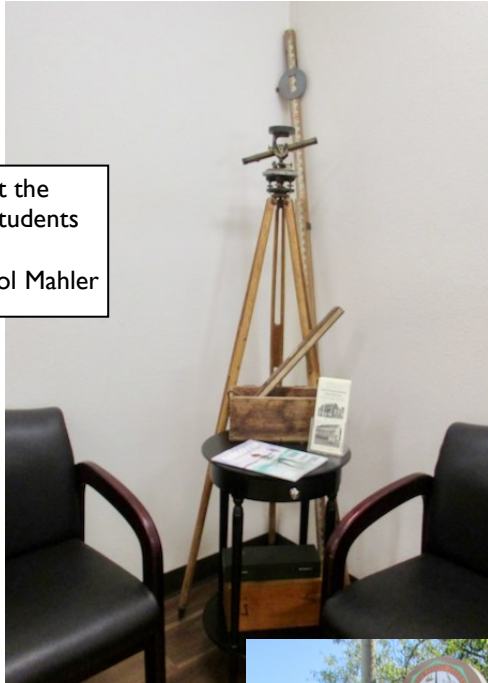


Ken Gallt talked with the 3rd graders about the pitcher pump while Pam Miller taught the students how to wash clothes.

—Photos this page by Carol Mahler

Historical Display In Property Appraiser's New Office

As you may know, Property Appraiser Dave Williams moved his office to the County's newly remodeled Mills Complex, 815 N Mills Ave., along with the Dept. of Health-DeSoto. The Tax Collector will also have an office there, but that move probably won't happen until 2026.



The process of moving provides plenty of challenges, and two weeks after the Property Appraiser moved, the office still did not have proper telephone service. However, already set up in the waiting

"I Spy DeSoto Bus" for Suncoast Remake Learning Days

HOP ON, HOP OFF
I SPY DESOTO BUS
APRIL 18TH
FREE TRANSPORTATION TO EVENTS 9 AM - 3 PM
DESIGNATED STOPS
 Park at one of the designated locations and catch the FREE transportation bus!
FREE RIDE FREE SNACKS FREE ACTIVITIES

The Suncoast Campaign for Grade Level Reading with funding from the Patterson Foundation is again sponsoring Suncoast Remake Learning Days from April 18 to May 2, 2026. We are so grateful to Ashley Coone and Tonya Wallace for working with Carol Mahler to coordinate events on Sat., April 18, so the "I Spy DeSoto" Bus will help families learn about local history as they participate in other hands-on learning events.

room was one of the historical displays—with Society brochures—from the old office in the Administration Building, 201 E. Oak St. The Society thanks Dave for his appreciation of history and his support of the Society!



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CLICK THE BUTTON TO SEND AN EMAIL TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT VOLUNTEERING.

Follow The Brick Road by Carol Mahler

The Florida Dept. of Transportation (FDOT) is completing their State Road (SR) 70 Project Development and Environmental (PD&E) Study W of SR 31 to SE Highlands County Line Road in DeSoto County that includes the proposed demolition of the old brick Dorr Field Road, also known as Old SR 18/Mahon Avenue (8DE00828).



The historic brick road recalls the importance of the two World War I U.S. Army Aviation Training Camps that were built outside of Arcadia in 1918, and the brick road connected Arcadia with Dorr Field. The facility was also linked to the City via railroad tracks from the other camp (Carlstrom Field) but the road was the more direct route. When it was completed to Okeechobee and West Palm Beach, it served as part of the “western route” of the Dixie Highway routing tourists from Michigan to Miami until the Tamiami Trail was completed in 1928.

Although the Society desires to preserve the historic brick road, we also recognize that FDOT cannot acquire and use the right-of-way south of SR 70 and west of NE Forest Ave. without relocating the Florida Gas Transmission Co. line. In addition, the current condition of the brick road is not suitable for a multi-use path. Years ago, the portion of the historic brick road from Toby’s RV Park to the Goodwill/Tractor Supply shopping center was paved with asphalt to facilitate travel by pedestrians, cyclists, and golf carts from Big Tree, Arcadia Village and Toby’s parks. At least the old roadbed and route were preserved—and perhaps the bricks underneath.

The Society is in favor of the proposed mitigation although a portion of the original brick road—perhaps near a bridge crossing—could be preserved rather than the brick road being reconstructed. Preserving a part of the historic

brick road near a bridge crossing would allow the new multi-use path to bypass a short section of the historic brick road that could be accompanied by a kiosk to provide the history of the road as well as a resting area for those using the path.

If the historic brick road has to be reconstructed, it might be more appropriate to do so at the Arcadia Municipal Airport as more people—especially aviation enthusiasts—would visit and appreciate the reconstruction at that location. Of course, this mitigation would require negotiation with the City of Arcadia and coordination with their Airport Masterplan.

To receive more information or to make a comment, visit www.swflroads.com/project/451942-1 or contact Project Manager Joe Lauk, P.E., 801 N. Broadway Ave., Bartow, FL 33830, or 863-519-2525 or joe.lauk@dot.state.fl.us

U.S. Semiquincentennial Anniversary by Carol Mahler



The Society will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the U.S. during the 22nd Annual Pioneer Day and BBQ on Sat., March 28, 2026. Neither DeSoto County nor Arcadia was established 250 years ago, and during the Revolutionary War, Florida was a loyal British colony. After the French and Indian War (Seven Years War), Spain had transferred the Florida colony to Britain, and it was split at the Apalachicola River into two colonies: East and West. Settlers pursued agriculture, growing cotton, rice, and indigo.

As Tories escaped from the 13 colonies, Florida’s population increased especially in St. Augustine where the British held some prisoners of War. When the Treaty of Paris in 1783 ended the Revolutionary War, England transferred Florida back to Spain. Most English settlers emigrated to Britain or to the Bahamas.

During the Revolutionary War, natives—mostly Creek people from Georgia and Alabama—continued to move to Florida. They were called “Seminoles” from the Spanish word “cimarrone” meaning “outsiders” or “runaways.” They hunted extensively along Peace River and also built villages. However, the first European explorer in the Peace River Valley was Horatio Dexter who drew the first map of Peace River for Governor William Duval, the State’s first elected governor after Florida became a U.S. territory in 1821.

Pioneer Day will also celebrate three centennial anniversaries: Arcadia City Hall, 20 N. Monroe Ave., currently under restoration, built by Ralph Cannon, who also built the Plaza Hotel, 1-9 W. Magnolia St., for Michael Schlossberg; and the J. L. Jones Building, 10-14 S. DeSoto Ave.

In Memoriam:

Toni Ann Badovinac (Oct. 7, 1962- Nov. 2, 2025)

Born in El Paso, Texas, Toni Ann Badovinac is the daughter of the late Col. Nick John Badovinac, Jr., and the late Algie May Didlaukies. Because of her father’s career in the U.S. Army, Toni grew up in San Francisco, Kentucky, Maryland, Puerto Rico, and Germany. As an adult, she spent time with her father and his extended family in Pueblo, Colorado. In her later years, she moved to Florida, and “of all the places around the world where she lived, Arcadia became



the place she loved the most. She was a cherished part of the downtown Arcadia community and will be remembered as a pillar of kindness, creativity, and generosity.”

“She worked in customer service

and hospitality, managing a bed and breakfast inn, antique stores, a bowling pro shop, and several Dollar General stores. A talented and creative soul, Toni expressed herself through stained glass, poetry, and art of every kind. She loved her days spent with her beloved German shepherd, Bella, who went everywhere with her.”

“Toni was also a devoted caretaker . . . for paternal grandmother Mary Badovinac, as well as her mother, Algie, and stepfather, Wolf Didlaukies, during her mother’s final years. She was a daughter, mother, grandmother, sister, and friend.

Toni’s life was defined by empathy and service to others. A free spirit and self-described nomad, she devoted herself to helping anyone in need. Her passing occurred while she was doing what she so often did — helping someone when no one else would.” <https://www.roselawnpueblo.org/obituaries/toni-badovnac/#/>

www.roselawnpueblo.org/obituaries/toni-badovnac/#/
Obituary



Now two angels in Heaven, Toni Badovinac stood with her mom Algie Didlaukies in front of their store, Glass, Antique or Not, 127 W. Oak St. in November 2023.

From Manatee Genealogical Society

Check the Calendar of Events for additional information, and be sure to visit the MGS Facebook Page for tips and tools and what’s new in genealogical research. <https://mgsfl.org/eventListings.php?nm=34>

Saturday, January 24, 2026 Annual Seminar:

<https://mgsfl.org/cpage.php?pt=82>

The Manatee Genealogical Society is hosting a Virtual Seminar on Saturday, January 24, 2026, 10:00 a.m. - 4:15 p.m. EST.

Four nationally known speakers will address the theme of the seminar: “Finding Your Elusive Ancestors – The American Experience”.

 <i>David Quimette</i> Seven Immigration Methodologies, with Case Studies Across the Centuries	 <i>D. Josh Taylor</i> Advanced Colonial American Research: Embracing New Technologies and Modern Techniques
 <i>Michael Strauss</i> Forging a National Army from the Colonial Era to the Early Republic, 1750-1800	 <i>Shannon Combs-Bennett</i> Revolutionary War Home Front Researching Your Civilian Ancestor’s Life

Registered attendees will have access to recordings of the speakers for 30 days.

