



# DeSoto County Historical Society News

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

[www.historicdesoto.org](http://www.historicdesoto.org)

February 2025

This issue sponsored by - **René Collins in memory of Terry and Evelyn Collins.**

## Celebrate Black History Month!

To showcase the contributions of African Americans to the United States, the U.S. Government has recognized February as Black History Month since 1976. However, 50 years earlier, Dr. Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950), the first professionally trained African-American historian, established the second week in Feb. as “Negro History Week.” The week-long observance was later extended to a month.

Woodson knew he would improve the success of “Negro History Week” by scheduling it during the traditional birthday celebrations for Abraham Lincoln—held since 1865—and Frederick Douglass—honored since his death in 1895. Woodson also strived to include African Americans and their accomplishments in educational curricula: he believed that history was made by ordinary as well as prominent people.

In 1995, Sharon Goodman made local Black history when she was appointed to the City of Arcadia Council when Member Ron Turner resigned to run for Supervisor of Elections. (Turner is now Sarasota County’s Supervisor of Elections.) Subsequently elected, she served 16 years as the first woman and African-American woman council member, vice-mayor, and mayor.

In 2022, Dr. Sharon Goodman again made history in our county as the first African American and first African-American woman elected to a county-wide office when she was elected to the School Board, composed for the first time of five women.

Goodman taught school after receiving her Bachelor of Science in Education from Florida Southern College. With a master’s degree in Educational Leadership, she became an Educational Specialist in Early Childhood Education, working as a teacher and principal. In 2007, she earned her doctorate degree in ministry, and she is the pastor of Freedom Fellowship Church, 1528 NE Turner Ave., Arcadia.

A talented vocalist, she recorded and released in 2021 her debut album “Journey,” and she will sing the National Anthem during the opening ceremony for the DeSoto County Historical Society’s 21st Annual Pioneer Day & BBQ on Saturday, March 29, with the Arcadia American Legion Antique Tractor and Hit & Miss Engine Show at the Turner Agri-Civic Center!



Dr. Carter Woodson (1875-1950), the first professionally trained African-American historian, established “Negro History Week” as the second week of Feb. to honor the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas. —Photograph courtesy of the Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site.

## Member Meeting:

Monday, Feb. 17

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

Jim Weber will talk about World War I and Claude C. Jones, Sr., first commander of the Arcadia American Legion K-Post 11. Jones served in Evacuation Hospital #14 in France from July 26, 1918 until May 8, 1919, and was honorably discharged on May 13. He worked with his father, John L. Jones, who founded the DeSoto Abstract Company in 1889. After John’s death in 1934, Claude owned and operated the business until his death in 1958.



To celebrate Black History Month, the DeSoto County Historical Society invited Dr. Sharon Goodman to speak at their Feb. meeting in 2024. She will sing the National Anthem during the opening ceremony for the Society’s 21st Annual Pioneer Day & BBQ from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 29.

—Photograph courtesy of Carol Mahler.

## JANUARY WRAP UP

Cynthia Langston presented her personal thoughts on Dr. Martin Luther King at our member meeting held on MLK Day. She shared how his words and actions inspired her to become an educator and influence others to better themselves. Thank you, Cynthia for sharing your time and story with us.



### DeSoto County Ahead

We appreciate the Patterson Foundation Pay It Forward Fund at the Community Foundation of Sarasota County for the \$150.00 honorarium the Society received for participating in the 2025 DeSoto County Ahead Community Update Event. We are grateful to President Adrian Cline and Museum and Library Coordinator Carol Mahler for hosting a display of historic artifacts and information about the Society during the Community Resource Fair. Attendees enjoyed our guessing game and learned about our efforts to preserve and promote the history of DeSoto County for future generations. The Patterson Foundation generously provided supper, and the program featured presentations from “community change-makers.” The last half hour was designated “for more networking.”

## Thank You Notes

Welcome new members: Cynthia Langston, Mike and Cola Provau.

Thanks to Cindy McLeod Ely for planning and working with Matthew Griffin to rebuild the Pioneer Day wagon that the Society uses in parades. We also are grateful to Cindy for starting a PayPal Giving Fund to help pay for the lumber and labor for the repairs: a total of \$221.93 was donated by her generous friends.



Cindy has sanded and repainted the box donated by Beth Pelham.

The box will be used on the back of the wagon where a "chuck box" would have been.

**21st Annual Pioneer Day & BBQ**--Held in centennial commemoration of the Family Service Center, built in 1925 as West Elementary School, with the **Arcadia American Legion sponsored Antique Tractor and Hit & Miss Engine Show**

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Sat., March 29  
Turner Agri-Civic Center, 2250 NE Roan St.

**CLICK THE BUTTON TO VOLUNTEER→**



Fun for the whole family includes bodacious barbecue, luscious strawberry shortcake, homemade cookies, jams, and jellies; Italian ices, kettle corn, and other tasty treats; demonstrations of old-fashioned skills and crafts; legendary characters; musical entertainment; traditional Florida Cracker cow camp, blacksmith, and whip crackers; classic 1924 LaFrance firetruck and fire hose demonstration with an exhibit about the 1905 fire that destroyed downtown Arcadia; explore historic records with the Property Appraiser; learn about the history of the Sheriff's Office and the Health Dept; Florida authors and artists; exhibits about historic churches; a free "hands-on history" area with time-honored tasks, vintage games, fossil dig, and more. Artisans and craftspeople will offer antique cowboy collectibles, handmade baskets, crocheted items, fiber and glass art, jewelry, macrame, rag wreaths, soap, 3-D wood puzzles, turned wood sculptures, and other unique pieces and objects.

*Whatever your age and ability, the Society has a place for you to volunteer for an hour or more to help prepare for, hold, or clean up Pioneer Day. Please call Carol Mahler at 863-445-0789.*

### A Message From The President

Presidents' Day, celebrated on the third Monday of February, holds great significance as it honors all U.S. presidents, both past and present. Originally established to celebrate George Washington's birthday, the holiday has evolved to recognize the contributions and leadership of all presidents who have shaped the nation.

In 2025, Presidents' Day will be observed on February 17. It serves as a moment to reflect on the country's history, the progress made under various presidencies, and the values of democracy, freedom, and justice that these leaders have upheld. The day also encourages citizens to think about the responsibilities and challenges that come with leadership and governance.

By celebrating Presidents' Day, Americans can honor the legacy of past presidents, appreciate the current leadership, and engage in thoughtful discussions about the nation's future. The DeSoto County Historical Society is proud to recognize the importance of Presidents' Day.

*Adrian H. Cline*

President, DeSoto County Historical Society

### Make a Memorial Donation

The Society welcomes and appreciates memorial donations in memory of those we have lost this year, or any other Society member. Funds are used for the maintenance of the Museum and Society property. Donations may be made online at <https://historicdesoto.org/>.

To donate by mail, make your check payable to Desoto County Historical Society, Inc. and mail to: DeSoto County Historical Society, Inc. P.O. Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265. Please include a note with the purpose of your donation.

We are grateful to Bobbie Mears for her donation of \$100.00 in memory of Lewis Henry Parker, IV (1956-2022) and Stella Joyce Parnell Parker (1952-2025).

### Contact Information

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### Historical Society Newsletter Sponsors

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

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

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  
9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the second and fourth Saturday of the month.

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

120 W Whidden Street

*Open by appointment only:*

Research assistance available. 863-266-5774

## Requests For Historic Images

Thanks to Carol Mahler for scanning and printing the copies of historic photographs and images requested by Slim's BBQ, 319 S. Brevard Ave., Arcadia. The restaurant plans to frame and hang them in the dining room.

We are also grateful to Carol for scanning historic photographs and newspaper articles and using them to design, print, and frame a collage of the history of the L. D. Harley building, 29 S. Polk Ave., for Groovy Smoothie.

*Let us tell your story – we are happy to help you tell the story of historic buildings downtown. Contact Carol with your request.*



Caitlin Sharp holds the framed collage of the history of the L. D. Harley building, 29 S. Polk Ave., outside of her business, Groovy Smoothie. —Photo by Carol Mahler



**L. D. Harley**  
THE CHAMPION - JAN. 1907  
Tailoring,  
CLEANING, DYEING, PRESSING  
"Our Pull is Push" Arcadia, Florida



Take your pick of these  
**Victor-Victrolas**

IV \$15 VI \$25 VIII \$40 IX \$50

It isn't necessary for you to have one of the more expensive Victor-Victrolas to have access to all the wonderful variety of Victor music.

Any instrument from the Victor-Victrola IV at \$15 to the \$200 Victor-Victrola XVI will play every record in the Victor catalog.

Select the instrument that is best suited to your home and start in to enjoy the music and fun. Come in and see us about it today.

L. D. HARLEY,  
ARCADIA, FLORIDA



Courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society



**L.D. HARLEY**  
The Victrola Man  
See His New Stock of Victrolas and Records in His New Brick Building on Polk Ave.

**VICTOR RECORDS**  
Will fit any Talking Machine using a Disk Record  
WE CARRY A FULL LINE  
of all the latest music played by leading bands and orchestras. Also latest songs by the world renowned singers such as Mam. Seabright, Nette and Gertrude.

Do Try a Victor Machine

L. D. HARLEY  
AGENT,  
ARCADIA, FLORIDA

### The L.D. Harley Building

was built in 1921 at 29 S. Polk Ave. by Contractor J. A. Christ for \$5,500.00. Harley moved the store he founded in 1907 there, and it closed after his death in 1948. He sold phonographs, pianos, sewing machines, and later radios and refrigerators.

In 1953, William A. "Bill" Channel opened Channel Insurance Agency in the building until 1989. Between 1962 and 1983, the Credit Bureau of DeSoto County was also located there. In 1993, the building served briefly as a church, and in 1999, it became an antique store. In 2019, Groovy Smoothie opened.



**VICTOR RECORDS**

Acknowledged Standard of the world. All the popular Songs, Readings, Band, Orchestra and Dance Music, Etc., by the favorite artists. A Complete Stock Always on hand  
Victor Records Fit All Machines Using Disk Records

L. D. HARLEY, Agent  
Arcadia, Florida



The Same  
**L. D. HARLEY**  
The Victrola Man  
The Same  
**Bargain Prices**

Pianos Piano Players  
Singer Sewing Machines Latest Records  
Victrolas

Just a New Location in  
**HARLEY'S NEW BRICK BLDG.**  
Close to Ever-Ready Garage

MEET ME IN MY NEW LOCATION



Courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society

L.D. Harley Building stands after September 1926 Hurricane.  
Next door, the Ever-Ready Garage was damaged, then demolished.



The Surest Way to Make HER HAPPY  
**Majestic** RADIO REFRIGERATOR

L. D. HARLEY, Arcadia, Florida



**L. D. HARLEY**  
Victrola Man

What Do You Want?  
Mother Wants Brother Wants Sister Wants  
Uncle Wants Auntie Wants Grandpa Wants  
Grandma Wants

What Do You Want? VICTROLA for Xmas  
—So PA GETS IT AT \$22.50

L. D. HARLEY - The Victrola Man

### Pioneer Day 2025 Sponsors

Update as of Feb. 10, 2025

#### **Bronze Sponsor: \$500**

Millennium Physician Group  
Peace River Electric Coop (PRECO)

#### **Event Sponsors: \$250**

Ames Agricultural Services, LLC  
Arcadia Stockyard  
Crews Bank and Trust  
Fender Auto Parts  
People for Protecting Peace River (3PR)  
Performance Automotive  
Sheriff Jim and Michelle Potter  
Turner Realty

#### **Entertainment Sponsor: \$100**

Adrian and Jane Cline  
Allen and Linda Reesor  
Cowpens, LLC  
E and I Family, LLC  
Keith and Cindy Keene  
Kiwanis Club of Arcadia, Florida  
Luis Velasco  
Maassen Oil Co  
Marshal Quinn Jones  
Ruth Reynolds Dunn  
United Country/Gulfland Real Estate  
Wingman Aviation

#### **Pioneer Friends of the Society: \$50.00**

Cindy McLeod Ely  
Parker Hall  
Susan Kuczenska  
Steve Hickox

#### **Friends of the Society: \$25**

Arcadia Garden Club  
Ruth Reynolds Dunn  
Williamson Group Realty

#### **In Kind Donations**

A+ Environmental Restoration  
Arcadia Printing  
Arcadia Computer  
Bryan Farm Supply  
DeSoto Sign Company  
Peace River Shopper

### Hosting Visitors at the Museum

On **Mon., March 3**, C and D Tours will bring a bus of 50 people from Polk County to Arcadia. As they finish their lunches at Myshelly's Kitchen, 15 W. Oak St., Carol Mahler will present a brief introduction to DeSoto County's history. Although some of them will go shopping, others will ride the bus with Carol to tour the Museum. Please volunteer to help them enjoy the Museum from **1:00 to 2:00 p.m.**! Carol has prepared notes for you to talk about a few items in each room. Please call her at 863-445-0789 to volunteer.

### Highlands County Heritage Festival

The Highlands County Heritage Festival will be from **10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sat., Apr. 12, and Sun., Apr. 13** at the Edna Pearce Locket Pearce Homestead on the Kissimmee River near the Highlands County/Okeechobee County Line. In the Fort Basinger School House (now located on the Homestead property), the Heritage Association of Highlands County has invited the Society to be part of a showcase of the counties that were DeSoto County between 1887 and 1921. Representatives from Charlotte, Glades, and Hardee counties will have exhibits, so our Society will have a key display—if we have volunteers. Please call Carol Mahler at 863-445-0789 if you would like to attend one or both days of this festival.

### Suncoast Remake Learning Days (SRLD) 2025

Sponsored by the Campaign for Grade Level Reading and with the generous support of The Patterson Foundation, the Suncoast Remake Learning Days Festival is **April 19 to May 3**. The Society has participated in this event in 2022, 2023, and 2024, and we're planning for more fun this year. If you enjoy working with children, please volunteer to help.

At **3:00 to 5:00 p.m., on Wed., April 23**, at the Arcadia Housing Authority, 7 Booker T. Washington Ave., the Society will present "Sensational: Florida Native Plants That The Pioneers Used." We'll encourage families to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell native plants that the pioneers used. They will sample a leaf and taste a tincture, make a rubbing of a native plant and a starter pot to take a seedling home, and more.

The lead organization for "I Spy DeSoto on the Magic School Bus, the Society will contract with the DeSoto County School District to use two school buses with drivers on **Sat. April 26, and Sat., May 3**, to provide free transportation to families traveling between SRLD events in DeSoto County. The buses will follow a loop route, so that families may move from one location to the next and then a third or more. We will partner with Links To Success to provide a hands-on activity for families riding the bus. Guides will help families learn about local history by playing "I Spy DeSoto," a brochure listing historical sites, landmarks, and symbols. Finding certain items will trigger the singing of a song. Families will take home their brochures that include an "I Spy" image to do later.

**CLICK THE BUTTON TO VOLUNTEER→**



## In Memoriam Stella Parnell Parker

Stella Joyce Parnell Parker died on Jan. 29, 2025. Born on Sept. 11, 1952, in Munford, Alabama, she was the youngest child of Lawrence Dumas Parnell and Ethel Fuller Parnell. After graduating from Munford High School in 1969, she accepted a respiratory therapy technician job at DeSoto Memorial Hospital (DMH). “She was a brave young woman,” her son Thomas said, “as she moved to Arcadia not knowing anyone.”

Working as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), she met her late husband who was also an EMT at DMH. Married in 1979, they had two sons. She also worked in medical records for DMH, and for more than 25 years, as the lead office staff for Dr. Louis Kirschner at Arcadia Chiropractic Clinic. She retired after ten years serving as a control room operator at the DeSoto County jail.

A member of the DeSoto County Historical Society, she served as a director and secretary. Newsletter Editor Karen Smoke wrote, “Stella would take on tasks that she was uncertain of and do them to perfection. She had a quiet determination to see a project through.” A member of Trinity Methodist Church, Stella volunteered for events, on the scholarship committee, and taught Sunday School.

She loved to travel and collect souvenirs. Her miniature silver spoon collection chronicles her journey to Paris and Europe. She also enjoyed camping and the outdoors.

Strong and resilient but very humble, Stella was devoted to family first. She participated in whatever her sons chose to do—Boy Scouts, 4-H, sports, and more. She cared for her family and extended family, including her mother-in-law and grandmother-in-law.

She is survived by her sons, Travis Parnell Parker and Thomas Marion Parker, III; granddaughters Addisyn Marie Parker and Sydalee Taylor Parker; siblings Melba Parnell Ware and Kenneth Parnell; sister-in-law Karen Parker Raineri; nephew Kyle (Sandy) Parnell, and other nieces and nephews. She is preceded in death by her husband Lewis Henry Parker, IV; her parents; sister-in-law Louana Parker Thompson, and brother-in-law Barry Raineri.

A Celebration of Life will be at 11:00 a.m. on Mar. 1 at Trinity Methodist Church. In lieu of sending flowers, please make a donation to the DeSoto County Historical Society or Trinity Methodist Church.

Stella Parker presents a \$1,000.00 check from the Society to Andrew Hagen, sponsor of the DeSoto High School A-Team, for the A-Team's expenses to compete in the National Academic Quiz Tournament (NAQT) in Atlanta, Georgia, during the Memorial Day weekend, 2024.

Norma Banas and Stella Parker congratulate Piper Phillips on winning the Society's \$1,000.00 scholarship in May 2023.

Carol Mahler thanks Stella Parker for serving as "outstanding chairperson of the 3rd Annual Florida Cracker Meal on Sept. 30, 2023, at Pine Level Church.

Stella Parker, Ruth Dunn, and Sydalee Parker (Stella's granddaughter) enjoy some strawberry shortcake before the crowds arrive in the Hands On History Area for the 20th Annual Pioneer Day and BBQ in 2024.

