



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

January 2026

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

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Member Meeting:

**Monday, Jan 19**

**Dr. Martin Luther King Day**

**Guest Speaker: Ashley Coone**

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:

We are pleased to welcome Ashley Coone, a dedicated advocate for children and families in DeSoto County. Ashley brings extensive experience in government, education, and nonprofit leadership, and is known for her ability to build strong partnerships with business leaders, donors, and policymakers.

She is the co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Links to Success, a nonprofit organization providing free college and career readiness programs to middle and high school students in DeSoto County. Ashley also serves on the Boards of Directors for All Star Children's Foundation and The Smith Brown Community Foundation. She is actively involved with The Patterson Foundation and the Suncoast Campaign for Grade Level Reading.

Ashley led the Smith Brown Project, a grassroots capital renovation effort that restored the historic Smith Brown Gym and established the first Boys & Girls Club in DeSoto County — a milestone achievement for local youth and the community.

Sincerely,

*Adrian H. Cline*

President, DeSoto County Historical Society

### We Hope To See You

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 as soon as possible, at the following link: <https://bit.ly/4gzxeCq>.

### FDOT Holds Corridor Alternatives Meetings

(A version of this article by Carol Mahler was published in the Jan. 8 issue of "The Arcadia Community Local.")

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District 1, will hold three "Corridor Alternatives" public meetings from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.: Jan. 15, at the Turner Agri-Civic Center Exhibit Hall, 2250 NE Roan St., Arcadia; Jan. 22, at the Hardee County Agri-Civic Center, 515 Civic Center Dr., Wauchula; and Jan. 29 at the Town of Lake Placid Government Center, 1069 U.S. Highway 27 N., Lake Placid. In addition, a Self-Guided Virtual Meeting Room will be available on the Project Website from Jan. 15 to Feb. 12, 2026: [www.swflroads.com/project/455782-1](http://www.swflroads.com/project/455782-1).

—Article continues on page 4.

### You're Invited To The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Parade!

At 10:00 a.m., on Jan. 19, 2026, the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade will start at the intersection of S. Orange Ave. and W. Magnolia St. (State Road 70), proceeding south and then west on Martin Luther King, Jr., St. to the Smith-Brown Recreation Complex where a bazaar will be held from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Park. Both events are sponsored by Building A Village.

Formore information call Shawn 239-560-8260 or Darien 863-244-6640.



## DECEMBER WRAP UP

### Grinchmas in DeSoto Parade

Thanks to Cindy McLeod Ely for donating materials to decorate our float and banner for the Christmas Parade! We appreciate James Hampton for pulling the float with his 4 x 4, Carol Mahler and Jahna Leonard for carrying the banner, and Cindy, Karen Smoke and Liz Pine for walking with the float. Mark your calendars to walk with the Society in the Arcadia Rodeo Parade on March 14.



The Society posed a moment before the Grinchmas in DeSoto Parade began on Dec. 6, 2025: from left, James Hampton, Cindy McLeod Ely (dressed as “Cindy Lou Who”), Jahna Leonard, Karen Smoke, Liz Pine (waving her Grinch-glove) and Carol Mahler.

### Pearl Harbor Day: We Will Remember

Thanks to Adrian Cline for serving as keynote speaker, Sheriff Jim Potter for giving the invocation, and Adrian and Art Southwell for casting the wreath into Peace River for the American Legion K-Post 11’s Pearl Harbor Day

commemoration at 10:00 a.m. on Dec. 7 on the 1924 Peace River bridge. We also appreciate Ron Jones and all members of K-Post 11 for organizing the event that included a gun salute. We are grateful for everyone who was able to attend.



**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.

CLOSED May-June-July-August.

**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



Arcadia American Legion K-Post 11 Honor Guard fired a gun salute at the Pearl Harbor Day Ceremony: from left, Fred Wheatley, Honor Guard Commander Mike Dempsey, K-Post 11 Commander Sgt. Maj. Ron Jones, Sr., Louis Reuter, and Amber Jones.



Society and K-Post 11 Members Adrian Cline and Art Southwell paused a moment before they tossed the commemorative wreath into Peace River during the Pearl Harbor Day Ceremony.

—Photographs courtesy of Carol Mahler.

## DECEMBER WRAP UP—Con't

### Installation of Officers and Directors

We are grateful to the Society's officers and directors who have volunteered to serve for 2026, and to Society Member and Property Appraiser Dave Williams who installed them at our Dec. meeting: from left, Dave Williams, Research Library Coordinator Carol Mahler, Interim Secretary Elizabeth Kenney, Kathy Apodaca, Luke Wilson, Treasurer Nancy "Eric" Erickson, Ruth Reynolds Dunn, Jeff Griffis, Corresponding Secretary Nancy Humphrey, Vice President Vernon Keen, Ron Jones, and President Adrian Cline.



—Photograph courtesy of Dylan Tyndall.

### Christmas Concert

Thanks to Adrian Cline for arranging for a concert from Arcadia Christian Academy students when the DeSoto Middle School Chorus was unable to attend our Dec. meeting. The kindergarten students sang several songs and then chose some cookies from those brought to the meeting to take back to school. We appreciate everyone who brought cookies to the meeting and especially Adrian and Jane Cline for donating a box of specially made, individually wrapped cookies for the students to take with them.



### 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.**



—Photos this page by Carol Mahler

Society members enjoyed listening to the Christmas Concert courtesy of the Arcadia Christian Academy delightful kindergarteners. We thank the two teachers and one parent chaperone who brought them to DMH to give one concert, and their willingness to extend their time and do an encore performance for our group.

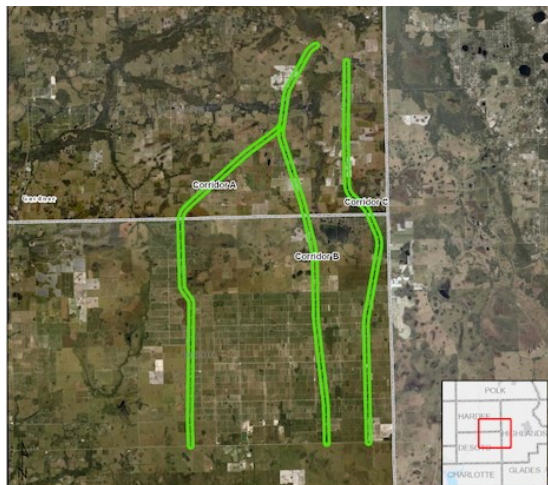
**FDOT Holds Corridor Alternatives Meetings**  
 –Con’t from page 1

The meetings offer the public a chance to review the alternatives, ask questions, and offer opinions about the proposed transportation improvements west of U.S. Highway (U.S.) 27 and east of U.S. 17 between State Road (S.R.) 70 and S.R. 66 in DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties as part of the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study. One of the alternatives is a toll road.

The corridor alternatives are located in northeast DeSoto County where Jules Freeman (1914-2013) and his brother Jack Freeman (1919-2019) developed “Joshua Grove” in 1968. In 1953, the brothers had established San Carlos Park, and according to the Website for San Carlos Park Homes ([sancarlosparkhomes.com/san-carlos-park](http://sancarlosparkhomes.com/san-carlos-park) - accessed on April 15, 2025): “Larger than the City of Manhattan, the groves were once recognized by National Geographic Magazine as the world’s largest.”

The property was acquired by American Agronomics Corp. (AAC) that included a citrus grove management operation that sold property, planted in Valencia oranges, ranging from 2.5 acres to 30 or more acres, to investors. In the 1980s, Golden Grove Management, an AAC subsidiary, cared for the properties, including cultivation, harvesting, and fruit sales.

AAC merged with Orange-Co of Florida, Inc., and in 2014, they sold to Alico, Inc. In 1898, the company had been founded as the Atlantic Land Improvement Company, a subsidiary of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, and in 1960 became the Alico Land Development Co., and then in 1974 was named Alico, Inc.

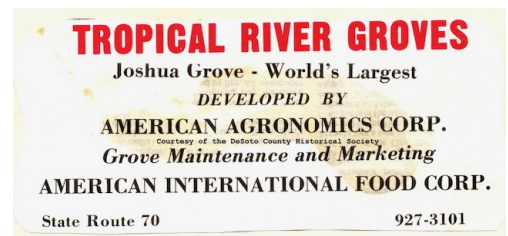


The Corridor Alternatives are located in northeastern DeSoto County for transportation improvements east of U.S. Highway (U.S.) 17 and west of U.S. 27 between State Road (S.R.) 70 and S.R. 66 as portrayed on this aerial map provided by FDOT.

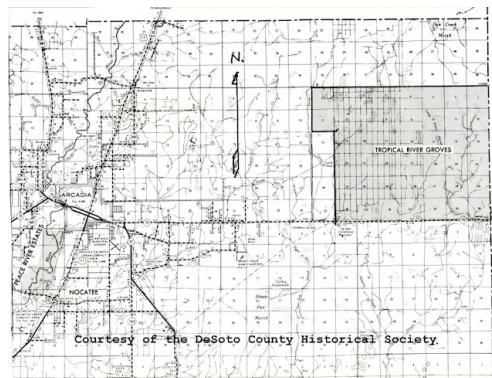
The PD&E Project exhibits will be on display during the informal, open-house format of the in-person meetings, and the same materials will be provided at each meeting. Study-team members will not make any formal presentations but will be available to answer questions and record comments.

The public may also submit comments through the project website <https://www.swflroads.com/project/455782-1> or email FDOT Project Representative David Long at [David.Long@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:David.Long@dot.state.fl.us) or mail them to 801 N. Broadway Ave., MS 1-41, Bartow, FL 33830. Comments may be submitted at any time, but to be included in the meeting record, they must be submitted by Feb. 12, 2026.

American Agronomics Corp. called the area “Tropical River Groves” in this undated advertisement from the Howard and Velma Melton Historical Research Library.



An undated photograph shows the neat grid of citrus trees planted and maintained in Tropical River Groves aka Joshua Grove owned and operated by American Agronomics Corp..



The vintage map shows clearly the location of Tropical River Grove and is on the back of an undated map of the City of Arcadia.

## MORE UPCOMING EVENTS

### Stars and Stripes and Swing

You're invited to the Arcadia Main Street organization's Stars, Stripes and Swing event at 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Jan. 24 at the Arcadia Municipal Airport, 2269 SE A.C. Polk Jr. Dr. in Arcadia. The Oak Park Inn will serve a 1940's inspired meal and a jazz band and swing dancers will provide entertainment and vintage cars will be on display. A silent auction will be included. Tickets are \$50.00 per person and table sponsorships are available: [www.arcadiamainstreet.com](http://www.arcadiamainstreet.com).



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### WANTED: Volunteers For 3rd Grade Field Trip

Tues., Feb. 24 & Wed., Feb. 25, mornings. If you would like to have fun with showing young people how things were done in pioneer days, please contact Carol Mahler at 863-445-0789 or [desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

**Suncoast Remake Learning Days** from April 18 to May 2, 2026. 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. Volunteer to share local history with families.

A large event poster for "Stars, Stripes, & Swing" set against a background of a waving American flag. The poster features two "AMERICA 250 FLORIDA" logos at the top corners. The main title "STARS, STRIPES, & SWING" is in large, bold, white letters. Below it, the date and time "Saturday, January 24, 2026 5:30pm to 8:30pm" and the location "Arcadia Municipal Airport 2269 SE A.C. Polk Jr. Drive" are listed. A row of seven red stars is positioned above a paragraph of text: "Every hometown has a story—today, we celebrate how Arcadia, FL played a major role in history during WW I and WW II. Learn how we became the Aviation City and have a little fun doing it." Below this is a circular illustration of a 1940s-style event with vintage cars, a dinner table, and people dancing. Labels around the illustration include "1940's inspired Dinner", "Vintage Cars", "Silent Auction", "Swing Dancers", "Music", and "and loads of fun!". At the bottom, a ticket icon is shown next to the text "\$50 per person Table Sponsorship Available" and "TICKETS MAY BE PURCHASED AT WWW.ARCADIAMAINSTREET.COM".

### Enjoy Community Day at AHA!

You're invited to the Annual Community Day from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Feb. 6 at the Arcadia Housing Authority, 7 Booker T. Washington Rd., and the Society will be one of the community organizations at the event. This is a great opportunity to share information about the Society and Museum and to invite community members to our annual Pioneer Day. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Carol Mahler.

**“I Wonder Wednesday” on Facebook**

We appreciate Carol Mahler and Kathy Bryce for scanning and preparing our “unknown” photographs and for posting them every Wed. on Facebook. We thank the following people for trying to help us identify the people, places, and things in these photographs.

Art Southwell believes one of the ladies in the group on the patio in our unknown photo for Nov. 19, 2025, is Sue Treadwell sitting in the farthest-left rocking chair. Jeff Griffis sent the photo to John Mizell, and he agreed with Jeff that the lady standing behind the second-from-the-right rocking chair, may be John’s mother, Marilyn Purvis Mizell. Jeff also thinks the group may be on the patio of the home at 415 W. Imogene, owned by Judge Lewis Purvis and Erma Purvis from 1935 to 1989.



Donald Marten, wrote, about our Dec. 10, 2025, unknown photo: “Logging truck, appears to be a Case or a Mack truck with hard rubber tires, hand crank starter, dates it pre-1923. Donald Boyd used a similar Lincoln, with a hydraulic claw for lifting the logs on the back of the log hauler.”



Jeff Griffis was curious about F. W. Borton writing Christmas greetings with his wife from Habana, Cuba, to Manila McLenon in Fort Ogden in 1922, our Dec. 24, 2025, unknown photo. He found that Frederick William Borton (1889-1976) had “built WFAW-WQAM’s first radio transmitter in 1920 at the Electrical Equipment Company garage [in Miami] . . . and when it was completed, he sent a boy two blocks away to tune in on the crystal set. The youngster dashed back yelling, ‘I can hear it!’” This may qualify WFAW-WQAM as the first radio station broadcasting in Florida. His wife is Frances Hester Macomber Borton (1900-1972).



Luke Wilson and Jeff Griffis both recognized the entrance to the DeSoto County High School, built in 1914, in the background of the group of men in our Dec. 31, 2025, unknown photo. Not young enough to be students, the men could be members the Florida Educational Association that met at the school as recorded in the Dec. 28, 1916, issue of “The DeSoto County News.” Jeff posted a photo of a car parked in the high school entrance to show how it opened up to a vestibule inside.



Below the photo Jeff posted on FB.

Note from the Editor—I know you can’t read the newspaper image above, the intention is just to show you what we have lost in 109 years! If you would like to be able to read a daily Florida newspaper online for free, please contact me at [aandksmoke@gmail.com](mailto:aandksmoke@gmail.com). Just a survey at this point, but if enough interest may lead to more. —KS



### Gratitude For Gifts

We appreciate David Edson for donating six hard-cover books from the Bicentennial Floridiana Facsimile Series to the Howard and Velma Melton Historical Research Library:

Campbell, Richard Lewis, "Historical Sketches of Colonial Florida: A Facsimile Reproduction of the 1892 edition with an introduction and index by Pat Dodson," The University Presses of Florida, 1975.

Fairbanks, George R., "The History and Antiquities of the City of St. Augustine, Florida: A Facsimile Reproduction of the 1858 Edition with an introduction and index by Michael V. Gannon," The University Presses of Florida, 1975.

Mowat, Charles Loch. "Florida As A British Province 1763-1784: A Facsimile Reproduction with editorial preface by Rember W. Patrick," University of Florida Press, 1964.

Roberts, William, "An Account of the First Discovery and Natural History of Florida: A Facsimile Reproduction of the 1763 Edition with an introduction and index by Robert L. Gold," The University Press of Florida, 1976.

Simmons, Dr. William Hayne, "Notices of East Florida: A Facsimile Reproduction of the 1822 Edition with introduction and index by George E. Buker," University of Florida Press, 1973

Stowe, Harriett Beecher, "Palmetto-Leaves: A Facsimile Reproduction of the 1873 edition with introductory matter by Mary B. Graff and Edith Cowles," University of Florida Press, 1968.

### Thank You, Burton Family Foundation

We are grateful to the Burton Family Foundation of Tampa, Florida, for their annual \$2,000 donation!

### Postage Donation

Most Society members receive a digital copy of the newsletter, but we have a few who receive a printed copy by U.S. mail, and that requires a postage stamp. We thank Karen Smoke for her donation of postage stamps that allowed us to mail the newsletter—and other correspondence—during 2025! Please feel welcome to donate postage stamps.



**Take the Mobile-Friendly,  
Online, Self-Guided  
Tour of Historic  
Downtown Arcadia**

### Pioneer Day Sponsors

Thanks to Arcadia Printing for being the first sponsor of the Society's 22nd Annual Pioneer Day and BBQ by agreeing to donate \$100.00 worth of printing as an In-Kind sponsor! We also appreciate Heather Mills of DeSoto Signs for agreeing to donate the updating of our Pioneer Day banners and signs as an In-Kind Sponsor. Please ask the other organizations to which you belong and those with whom you do business to sponsor Pioneer Day. Sponsors may fill out and made their donation online or they may fill out a paper form and mail it and a check to the Society.

Both a membership form and sponsorship form are found on the next page for your convenience.

### Members New and Renewed

The Society appreciates the support and enthusiasm of its members: thank you to Gil Muscarella for joining as a new member! We are also grateful to the following members for renewing their memberships: Kathy Apodaca, Leon Arthur, Adrian Cline, David Edson, Ken Gallt and Suzanne Catalano, Skip Gerencer, James Lee Faison, III, Susan Kuczenska, Carol Mahler, Curt and Kaycee Mays, Michelle Montgomery, Mike and Pat Provau, Art Southwell, Dylan Tyndall, Myron Wickey, and Dave Williams. We also appreciate Susan K. and Dave W. for giving an additional \$25.00 donation and Adrian Cline for donating two sponsorships for the Jan. and Nov. newsletters and Michele Montgomery for renewing her June newsletter sponsorship.

### 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 Jan. meeting or mail them to P.O.

Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265 or use PayPal online at

[hisotricdesoto.org](http://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.



**DeSoto County Historical Society, Inc.**  
**P.O. Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265**  
**863-266-5774 ~ [historicsdesoto.org](http://historicsdesoto.org)**  
**[desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewing \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**2026 Membership Dues**

___ Individual	\$25.00
___ Family	\$40.00
___ Sustaining	\$50.00
___ Company	\$100.00
___ Winter resident	\$12.00
___ Winter res. family	\$20.00
___ Donation	\$ _____
___ Magnetic name tags	\$10.00

Dues are due in January.  
 Make your check payable  
 to the DeSoto County  
 Historical Society.

The DeSoto County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) not-for profit corporation, dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of DeSoto County for future generations. Like us on Facebook!

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. DTN3667994

**DeSoto County Historical Society**  
 PAST - PRESENT - FUTURE  
 ARCADIA, FLORIDA

**DeSoto County Historical Society, Inc.**  
 P.O. Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265  
 863-266-5774  
[www.historicsdesoto.org](http://www.historicsdesoto.org)  
[desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)  
*We're on Facebook, too!*

**22nd Annual Pioneer Day**  
**9 a.m. to 3 p.m., March 28, 2026, at the Turner Agri-Civic Center**  
 with the Arcadia American Legion sponsored Antique Tractor and Hit & Miss Engine Show  
*Please support the DeSoto County Historical Society  
 by sponsoring our 22nd Annual Pioneer Day!*

- The names of ALL SPONSORS will be listed . . .**
- in the Historical Society's Newsletter through April
  - on the Society's Website for the year
  - in a special feature on our Facebook page
  - on the stage banner
  - announced from the stage during the event.

- \_\_\_ **Gold Sponsor - \$ 2,500.00**
  - Listed on all flyers
  - Listed in promotional materials and event program.
  - Area of festival (fossil dig, for example) named for you
- \_\_\_ **Silver Sponsor - \$1,000.00**
  - Listed in promotional materials and event program.
  - Area of festival (fossil dig, for example) named for you
- \_\_\_ **Bronze Sponsor - \$500.00**
  - Listed in event program.
  - Area of festival (fossil dig, for example) named for you
- \_\_\_ **Event Sponsor - \$250.00**
  - Area of festival (fossil dig, for example) named for you
- \_\_\_ **Entertainment Sponsor - \$100.00**
- \_\_\_ **Pioneer Friend of the Society Sponsor - \$50.00**
- \_\_\_ **Friend of the Society Sponsor - \$25.00**
- \_\_\_ **In-Kind Sponsor**

**Sponsor Contact Information**

Company name & contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount or type of help offered: \_\_\_\_\_

Fill in the contact information and send check payable to the DeSoto County Historical Society with this form to P.O. Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265.

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. DTN3667994