



# DeSoto County Historical Society News

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

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

March 2025

This issue sponsored by - Dale, Patty & Sue in loving memory of our parents, Howard & Velma Melton.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Florida Power and Light Proudly Presents the Society's 21st Annual Pioneer Day & BBQ on March 29, 2025!

This year, Florida Power and Light Company is celebrating their centennial, and we are, too! In 1925, FPL sold electricity and ice in Arcadia and many other Florida cities also. The Society will host a timeline display of their history including the historic photographs of the FPL ice wagon and their office in downtown Arcadia.

We thank them for their generous contribution as "title sponsor" and look forward to having the timeline and their booth in the lobby of the Turner Center and free giveaways and activities. Be sure to get your FPL tote bag!

See the complete Sponsor list on page 4. To be included in event promotional materials, sponsorships must be received by March 14.

## FEBRUARY WRAP UP

Memorial Elementary School  
3rd Grade Classes Enjoy Hands-On History  
Field Trips on Feb. 7 and Feb. 21

We are grateful to Jody South, a third-grade teacher at Memorial Elementary School (MES), and Carol Mahler for organizing visits to the Museum for all the MES third graders. We appreciate the teachers who brought their students: Valerie Carter, Heather Chandler, Hailey Cunningham, Ashley Grimaldi, Shirley Howell, Aike Puig, Jennifer Robbins, Jody South, Rodrick Woodard, and Christina Zolkos. We are thankful for the \$2.00 each MES student donated, for a total donation of \$282.00!



As a child, Allen Reesor helped his grandmother wash clothes using a scrub board, so he was happy to help students learn how to do it along with his friend Mark Welch, a retired police officer from Toronto, Canada, who was visiting.

Nancy "Eric" Erickson taught students how to rip rags into small pieces that create "loft" when stuffed in a mattress. However, her true delight was regaling the students with stories about the chamber pot and other pioneer conveniences. —Photos by Carol Mahler

—Continued next page and pg 6.



proudly presents . . .

The DeSoto County  
Historical Society's  
21st Annual



# PIONEER DAY

## & BBQ

with the Arcadia American Legion  
sponsored Antique Tractor and  
Hit & Miss Engine Show plus a Classic  
and Hotrod Car Show

9 to 3, March 29, 2025, Turner Center

## Meeting Notice:

There will NOT be a monthly program meeting on Monday, March 17.

The Board of Directors will meet that day at noon at DMH to finalize Pioneer Day plans.

We invite you to

*Come to Pioneer Day!*

## FEBRUARY WRAP UP – Con't

### Memorial Elementary School 3rd Grade Classes Visit

Thank you to those who volunteered to help the children learn about local history by doing hands-on activities, such as clothes washing, dip pen writing, jump roping, making quilt patterns, juicing oranges, stuffing a mattress, and typing on a manual typewriter, plus using a pitcher pump and outhouse: on Feb. 7—Sue Catalano, Nancy “Eric” Erickson, Kenny Gallt, Linda Keen, Vernon Keen, Carol Mahler, Bobbie Mears, Tonya Wallace, and Keith Wallace, and on Feb. 21—Cindy Ely, Nancy “Eric” Erickson, Elizabeth Kenney, Carol Mahler, Bobbie Mears, Chelsea Palmer, Allen Reesor with his friend Mark, Tonya Wallace, and Keith Wallace.

—Photos by Carol Mahler

Keith Wallace explained how the latch worked on the outhouse and what it was like to use one. He compared an outhouse to a porta-potty.



Bobbie Mears showed students how to write with a pen dipped in ink, and they wrote a sentence to understand how long the ink lasted before they had to dip the pen again.



Chelsea Palmer was amazed at the range of experience that the students had with jumping rope—some knew what to do and others had never tried. Several knew how to jump rope if they were holding both handles, but not if two people were turning the rope for them.

—More photos on pg 6.



Feb. 7 - Classes of Jody South, Valerie Carter, and Aike Puig.



Feb 7 - Classes of Christina Zolkos and Hailey Cunningham.



Feb. 21- Classes of Jennifer Robbins, Shirley Howell, and Ashley Grimaldi.



Feb. 21- Classes of Rodrick Woodard and Heather Chandler.

### A Message From The President

Dear Members of the DeSoto County Historical Society,

We hope this message finds you well. Please note that our scheduled membership meeting on **March 17, 2025**, has been **replaced** with a special event: **Pioneer Day on March 29, 2025**.

Pioneer Day promises to be a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our rich history, with engaging activities, exhibits, and a chance to connect with the community. We warmly encourage all members to attend and make this day a memorable one.

We look forward to seeing you on March 29th

*Adrian H. Cline*

President, DeSoto County Historical Society

Lots of hands-on help is needed for Pioneer Day!

Contact Carol Mahler, 863-445-0789

[desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

Text or leave a message on the Society phone:  
863-266-5774

**CLICK THE BUTTON TO  
VOLUNTEER→**



### Tune In To Local History

Thanks to Mark Anderson for talking with Carol Mahler about Pioneer Day and other topics of local history on the "Mark In The Morning" show on Classic County 104.5 FM, Arcadia's only radio station. Tune in at 7:30 a.m. on



Thursdays, March 13, 20, and 27, to hear about the festival and related historical topics.

Listen for Pioneer Day advertising too!

### Contact Information

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President: President: Adrian Cline, 863-494-5758

[adriancline@outlook.com](mailto:adriancline@outlook.com)

### 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

## 2025 Pioneer Day Sponsors as of March 8

### **Title Sponsor: \$5000**

Florida Power & Light Company

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

Millennium Physician Group  
Peace River Electric Coop (PRECO)

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

Adrian and Jane Cline  
Ames Agricultural Services, LLC  
Arcadia Stockyard  
Confederate Cow Cavalry, Sons of Confederate  
Veterans Camp #2181  
Crews Bank and Trust  
Fender Auto Parts  
Kinard's Tree Service  
Mid-Florida Credit Union / Kelli Ali  
People For Protecting Peace River  
Performance Automotive  
Rotary Club of Arcadia  
Sheriff Jim and Michelle Potter  
Team Arcadia  
Turner Realty

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

Allen and Linda Reesor  
Arcadia Abstract and Title Co.  
Cowpens, LLC  
DeSoto County Democratic Executive  
Committee  
E and I Family, LLC  
Keith and Cindy Keene  
Kiwanis Club of Arcadia, Florida  
Linda and Vernon Keen  
Luis Velasco  
Maassen Oil Company  
Marshal Quinn Jones  
Paul Bennett Seusy  
Peace River Campground  
René Collins  
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

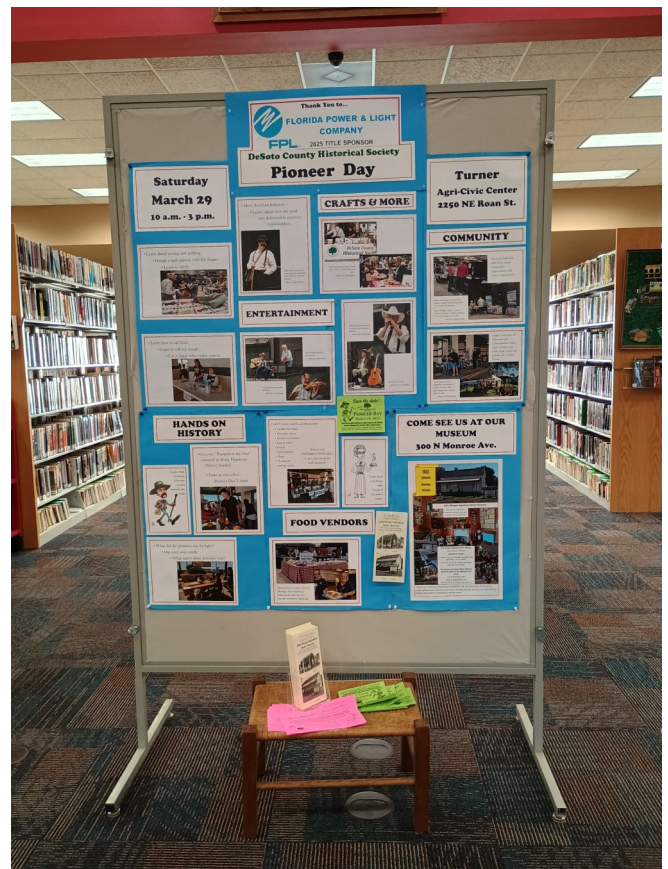
### **Friends of the Society: \$25**

Arcadia Garden Club  
Judy Wertz-Strickland  
Ruth Reynolds Dunn  
Williamson Group Realty

### **In Kind Donations**

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

The Society is grateful for all our sponsors, and we encourage everyone to thank them. Also, please patronize the businesses who so generously donated a sponsorship.



We are grateful to Director Linda Waters for allowing the display to be "front and center" in the library

## FEBRUARY WRAP UP – Con't

### DeSoto County Fair

We are grateful to Carol Mahler for designing, setting up, and taking down our exhibit at the DeSoto County Fair on display from Jan. 31 through Feb. 8. This year's theme was "Stars and Stripes and Country Nights," so Carol set up the reproduction U.S. flag with 38 stars that was in use when Arcadia was incorporated in 1886 and DeSoto County was formed in 1887. The U.S. flag that draped the coffin of Eugene "Gene" Melton (1922-1943) was also on display along with information about the Society's publications. Past programs from the DeSoto County Fair decorated the other table and information about Pioneer Day was available.



### February Member Meeting

Thank you to Jim Weber for his talk at our February meeting about World War I and Claude C. Jones, Sr., first commander of the Arcadia American Legion K-Post 11. After the war, Jones worked with his father, John L. Jones, who founded the DeSoto Abstract Company in 1889. After his father's death, Claude owned and operated the business until his death in 1958.



### Arcadia Housing Authority Community Day

We appreciate Nancy "Eric" Erickson and Carol Mahler for gathering materials and transporting them to the Community Day on Feb. 14 at the Arcadia Housing Authority, 7 Booker T. Washington. Ave.. We thank Carol Mahler for setting up the booth and representing the Society during the event. We are grateful to Carol, Mike Provau, Keith Wallace, and Tonya Wallace for cleaning up and transporting the items back to the Museum. We congratulate Director Becky Sue Mercer for a successful event and for extending the invitation to participate to the Society.



### Pioneer Day Display

Thanks to Karen Smoke for updating the Pioneer Day display with this year's information and for using it to represent the Society at the 37th Annual Civilian Conservation Corps. Festival on Feb. 8 at Highlands Hammock State Park. We also appreciate her and Carol Mahler for setting up the display at the DeSoto County Library, 125 N. Hillsborough Ave., and then on Feb. 28, moving it to Joshua Citrus. We are grateful to Director Linda Waters for allowing the display to be "front and center" in the library, and to Lynn Shelfer for providing a prominent place for it at the grove stand.





Con't from pg 2—  
**Thank you to  
our awesome  
demonstrators  
for bringing  
history alive!**

Vernon Keen not only explained the outhouse and pitcher pump to students, he also fixed the pitcher pump when the leather gasket slipped off the shaft. We are grateful for his explanations and experience.

Linda Keen demonstrated the how to use the washboard and tub of soapy water, and to wring the cloth out before dipping in the rinse water tub.



Tonya Wallace encouraged students to make - and name - their own quilt-square designs using felt triangles and squares. It was a lesson in creativity and geometry!



Cindy Ely explained the history of manual citrus juicers and then invited students to use a reamer to squeeze some juice for themselves. **We are grateful to Joshua Citrus for donating oranges for all four groups of MES students!**

Kenny Gallt on Feb. 7 and Elizabeth Kenney on Feb. 21 taught students about a manual typewriter before each student had a chance to type his or her name.

Sue Catalano helped students learn how to jump while two other students turned the grapevine. This lesson was based on a story told by Frances Pooser (1918-2019) of how her mother Frances Michael "Mikey" McLenon

Pooser (1886-1981) and her friends cut grapevines for jump ropes when they attended the Fort Ogden School.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Suncoast Remake Learning Days (SRLD) 2025

The Society will offer three, free hands-on activities as part of the Suncoast Remake Learning Days Festival, April 19 to May 3, sponsored by the Campaign for Grade Level Reading and with the generous support of The Patterson Foundation.

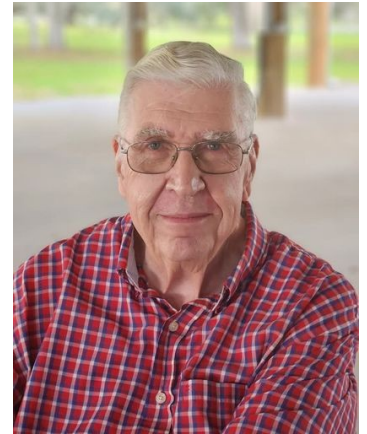
From **9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., on April 19 and 26**, the Society will partner with Links To Success (L2S) for “I Spy DeSoto on the Magic School Bus.” With two DeSoto County School District buses, the Society and L2S will provide free transportation and a hands-on activity to families traveling between 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 they may remain on the bus. Carol Mahler and Tonya Wallace will help families learn about local history by playing “I Spy DeSoto,” a brochure listing historical sites, landmarks, and symbols. Families will take home their brochures that includes an “I Spy” image to do later.



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 and learn how the pioneers used them. They will sample a leaf and taste a tincture, make a rubbing of a native plant, and more—plus, a free Florida native plant to take home.

### In Memoriam: James Allen Pollard (1945-2024)

The only child of Walter James Pollard and Annie Mae Thompson-Pollard-Robinson, Jim Pollard was born in Plant City, Florida, and he owned the Orange Blossom Tea Room and Catering there. After he moved to Avon Park, he served as the beloved Director of the Sebring Historical Society, “where his deep love for history and genealogy positively impacted many lives. . . . His passion for life and dedication to preserving the rich history of Highlands County for future generations will be fondly remembered.”



<https://www.morrisfuneralchapel.com/obituaries/james-pollard>

### Memorial Donations

Thanks to Linda Keen and Vernon Keen as well as Jane Turner and Scotty Turner for their donations in memory of Stella Parker. Jane wrote, “We are sending a donation in loving memory of Stella Parker. She will certainly leave a void in our lives and her family. I shall always remember her dedication to your Society and her community and church.”

### 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.

CLICK THE ORANGE BUTTON TO VOLUNTEER!

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**



**Sensational!** Florida Native Plants That The Pioneers Used

**3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 23, 2025**  
Arcadia Housing Authority, 7 Booker T. Washington Ave.

When the pioneers arrived in Florida, they found no grocery stores or hardware shops or department stores. So they looked for what they needed in nature. This is your chance to see, hear, taste, touch, and smell native plants, and learn how the pioneers used them, and more.

**And take home a free Florida native plant!**

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863-266-5774  
desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com  
[www.historicdesoto.org](http://www.historicdesoto.org)  
And we're on Facebook, too!



Please print or share this page!

In centennial commemoration of the West Elementary  
School building and Florida Power & Light Company



*DeSoto County Historical Society's 21st Annual*

# FPL PIONEER DAY

*with the Arcadia American Legion sponsored  
Antique Tractor and Hit & Miss Engine Show  
plus a Classic and Hotrod Car Show*



*James Mitchell "Acrefoot" Johnson (1850-1922)  
Nearly seven feet tall & 250 lbs., "Acrefoot" was named for  
his size-14 shoe or for walking 130 miles round-trip to  
deliver the mail from Fort Ogden to Fort Meade.*

## & BBQ!

**9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

**March 29, 2025**

**Turner Agri-Civic Center  
2250 NE Roan St., Arcadia**

- **Bodacious BBQ, Luscious Strawberry Shortcake, and other delicious treats**
- **Classic Firetruck and Fire Hose Demo**
- **Demonstrations of Time-Honored Skills**
- **Florida Cracker Cow Camp**
- **Hands-On History Area with Fossil Dig and Old-Time Games**
- **Legendary Characters**
- **Musical Entertainment & Much More!**

**Parking \$5.00 per vehicle. Like us on Facebook!**

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