



DeSoto County Historical Society News

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

www.historicdesoto.org

March 2026

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

Letter From the President

Dear DeSoto County Historical Society Members and Friends,

We are pleased to invite you to take part in the 22nd Annual Pioneer Day & BBQ on Saturday, March 28, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Turner Center.

This long-standing community celebration honors DeSoto County's pioneer heritage through fellowship, food, and hands-on history. The Arcadia American Legion will also be sponsoring an Antique Tractor, Vintage Car, and Hit & Miss Engine Show during the event, adding even more to enjoy throughout the day.

We welcome Society members to attend, volunteer, and help share our local history with visitors. Volunteers are especially appreciated to assist with set-up, greeting guests, historical displays, and general support during the event.

Your participation helps keep our traditions alive and strengthens the connection between our Historical Society and the wider community. Whether you can lend a hand for a few hours or stay for the full day, your presence will make a difference.

Thank you for your continued dedication to preserving DeSoto County's history. We hope to see you at Pioneer Day.

Warm regards,

Adrian H. Cline

President, DeSoto County Historical Society

March Program Is Pioneer Day!

Instead of meeting in the McSwain Room of DeSoto Memorial Hospital at noon on the third Monday of the month, the Society's Board of Directors unanimously voted to designate Pioneer Day as the March meeting, so please attend Pioneer Day from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on March 28 at the Turner Agri-Civic Center.

Florida Power & Light will again be the title sponsor, and in keeping with the County's history of agriculture, will feature their agri-voltaic programs in which they raise cattle or bees on the land where their solar collectors are located. They will have plenty of give-aways, such as tote bags and cowbells, as well as honey bears!

The 22nd Annual Pioneer Day will commemorate the centennial of Arcadia City Hall as well as the J.L. Jones Building and the Plaza Hotel. Thanks to a grant from the State Division of Historical Resources plus funds allocated by the City Council, Arcadia City Hall is being restored and renovated for use as City offices. Built for the DeSoto Abstract Company by owner John Lee Jones, the J.L. Jones building received a face lift last year thanks to present-day owner Gioia DeCarlo. The Plaza Hotel is the only 1920s-era hotel remaining in Arcadia. In addition, Pioneer Day will also celebrate America 250 or the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Declaration of Independence.



Everyone enjoys the bodacious barbecue, luscious strawberry shortcake and delicious baked goods, specialty lemonade, shaved ice, plus jams, jellies, kettle corn, and other tasty treats. Artwork by local artists, books by local authors, hand-crafted cottage goods, jewelry, organic soap, plants, wood crafts, and more will be available for purchase.

Artisans will demonstrate their pioneer skills in wood carving and

—Con't on next page

crafting, weaving, spinning, rag-rug making, quilting, butter churning, and more—both inside and outside the Turner Center. Those attending the festival may try out various old-time tasks in the Hands-on History area—plus play old-fashion games and enjoy a fossil dig.

Working and retired cattlemen will set up a traditional cow camp—complete with animals. Whip crackers will demonstrate their skill that gave rise to the name “Florida Cracker.” Making an appearance will be legendary characters such as Arcadia Albritton Coker—the woman who had a town named for her because she baked a cake—and Acrefoot Johnson who walked 60 miles in one day to deliver the mail between Fort Ogden and Fort Meade. Musicians—including Florida’s Harmonica Champion Johnny Shannon, will also entertain all day.

The City’s classic 1924 LaFrance fire engine will be on display along with information about the Thanksgiving Day fire that destroyed Arcadia in 1905. Fire and Rescue will also offer a fire hose demonstration. The Sheriff’s Office will chronicle its history, and DeSoto County Property Appraiser David Williams will have searchable digital copies of historic tax rolls. Supervisor of Elections Debbie Wertz will also have information about voting, and the Florida Dept. of Health in DeSoto County will have their history on display.

Charlotte County Libraries and History Services, Mount Ephraim Baptist Church, Pine Level Church, and the Sebring Historical Society will showcase their history, and other organizations—such as Area Agency on Aging, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Central Florida Regional Planning Commission, and Florida Rural Legal Services will offer information about their roles in our community.

Pioneer Day has plenty of opportunities for volunteers: no matter your age or ability, there’s a task for you. Shifts are 9:00 a.m. to noon or noon to 3:00 p.m., so you may help half the day and enjoy the festival during the other half. Please contact Carol Mahler at 863-445-0789.

—Photographs from prior years
Pioneer Day by Daniel Sutphin



FEBRUARY WRAP UP

Arcadia Housing Authority Community Day

We are grateful to Carol Mahler for representing the Society at the Arcadia Housing Authority’s Annual Community Day on Feb. 6. She gave out Pioneer Day flyers and shared local history with those who attended.



Photograph
courtesy of
Chelsea
Palmer.

Highlands Hammock State Park’s 39th Annual CCC Festival

We appreciate Society members Nancy “Eric” Erickson, Carol Mahler, and Pam Perry for representing the Society at the 39th Annual Highlands Hammock State Park Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Festival from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Feb. 14, at the State Park in Sebring.

While Pam Perry demonstrated weaving on her heddle loom, Eric and Carol handed out Pioneer Day flyers and talked with visitors about County division (when Highlands County was formed in 1921) and quilts made by Karen Smoke. We are grateful to Karen Smoke for loaning some of her quilts, especially her Midway Cemetery Memorial Quilt (a remembrance quilt), for the display as well as updating the Pioneer Day exhibit.



—Photo
by Carol
Mahler.

—Con’t
on next
page.

FEBRUARY WRAP UP—Con't



Karen Smoke and Nancy "Eric" Erickson hold the Pioneer Day display board that Karen updated for the Society's exhibit at the Highlands Hammock State Park 39th Annual CCC Festival.

Nancy "Eric" Erickson stood by the Society's Pioneer Day and County Division displays during the Highlands Hammock State Park 39th Annual CCC Festival.

—Photographs courtesy of Carol Mahler.



Karen will show the Midway Cemetery Memorial Quilt as part of the Crewsville History Project on display at Pioneer Day. Be sure not to miss it and learn more about a settlement in DeSoto County that prospered from 1890 to 1910. Karen is interested in connecting with descendants of those buried in the small cemetery.



Society Pres. Adrian Cline presented a certificate of appreciation to the Rev. Dr. Richard Coone, Sr., for making a presentation about his life at Society's Feb. 16 meeting in honor of Black History Month.



—Photograph courtesy of Carol Mahler.

Icy Temperatures Cancel Museum Visits

The Memorial Elementary School third-grader teachers cancelled visits for their students to the Museum for hands-on activities on Feb. 24 and Feb. 25 because of the cold weather and work on the roof. The Society hopes to reschedule the visits.

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** in loving memory of our parents, **Howard & Velma Melton**, and our sister **Sue Melton Rich.**

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.

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

**Museum Maintenance—
Spring Freshening**

If you've driven past the Society property in the past few weeks, you probably noticed a lot of activity going on. Here's a breakdown and photo tour of what has been done.

Certificate of Appropriateness For Museum Roof

Thanks to President Adrian Cline for representing the Society at the Feb. 3 City Council meeting to speak on behalf of the Society's request for a waiver of the application fee (\$65.00) for a certificate of appropriateness for a new roof for the John Morgan Ingraham House Museum. We also appreciate Carol for writing the letter and the Council for granting the waiver.

We appreciate President Adrian Cline and Ron Jones, Sr. for attending the Feb. 9 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission in support of the Society's application for a certificate of appropriateness (COA) for a new roof for the Museum. Carol Mahler, who had written the application, and Adrian spoke on behalf the Society. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the COA.



Museum Reroofed

Thanks to Ron Jones, Sr., for contracting—on behalf of the Society—with such a great roofing company as JSC Roofing! The crew arrived on Feb. 24 and stripped off the



wood shingles from the John Morgan Ingraham House revealing the original 1890s purlins on the



front wing. They covered the purlins with plywood decking, then the entire roof with Proguard sheeting, and finally the 5-V crimp galvalume metal panels. They also replaced the metal on the front porch roof and the screws on the Ingraham Seed House roof finishing on Feb. 26.

On Feb. 27, Ron checked the work and found that the roofing crew had forgotten to replace the screws on the metal roof over the south porch, so that was done on Mar. 2. All supplies, tools, and the trailer full of debris were hauled away.

Photographs— from top left

- A. Ingraham Museum original purlins 02.24.2026
- B. Removing shingles
- C. Proguard south roof
- D. Front metal roof
- E. North metal roof
- F. Flashing chimney



—Photographs by Carol Mahler.



G. Ingraham Seed House
rescrewing roof 02.26.2026

H. Rescrewing south porch



Siding Replacement Ongoing

We are also grateful to Ron Jones, Sr., for contracting—on behalf of the Society—with R. D. Welch Company for repair of the siding on the John Morgan Ingraham House Museum. They carefully replaced only the boards that were rotten. One of their challenges removing and reinstalling the threshold for the back (north) door, and they did a great job. The painting of the new wood is in the future.



Museum Siding
Repairs

—Photographs by
Carol
Mahler.



New and Renewing Members

The Society relies on its members to fulfill its mission of preserving and promoting the history of DeSoto County, Florida, for future generations. We are grateful to Nancy Humphrey for sending out dues reminders and to those who renewed their memberships: Vivian Auster, Ellen Hutson, Ron and Amber Jones, Joshua Citrus (business membership), Linda and Vernon Keen, Pam Miller, John Olin, and Judy Wertz-Strickland. We also welcome new members Erin Miller and David Batcher.

Gratitude for Donation

The Society thanks The Patterson Foundation (TPF) for publishing “The DeSoto Digest: Connecting Communities, Sharing Stories” and for often including information about the Society in it. We also appreciate TPF for offering a \$100 Pay-It-Forward Award to one of the many contributors to “The DeSoto Digest” during its second year of publication. Using a digital spinner wheel, TPF selected Carol Mahler for the award, and she chose the Society to receive the donation. We are grateful to Carol and TPF!

Suncoast Remake Learning Days: I Spy DeSoto Bus

Thanks to Briana Harris and Ashley Coone—with input from Carol Mahler and Tonya Wallace—for making an attractive and informative flyer for the Suncoast Remake Learning Days: I Spy DeSoto Bus activity on April 18. We are grateful to partner with Links To Success and the DeSoto County Schools to provide a bus so that families may travel without any fee from one free hands-on activity to the next and learn local history while they ride. This image is the top of the flyer only because the schedule is still a work-in-progress, and we’ll have the full flyer ready to share at Pioneer Day.



Sharing Some History of Agriculture

Thanks to Carol Mahler for meeting with Brian Ries, a consultant for The Patterson Foundation's Community Impact Initiative, to "explore the role of agriculture in our region and opportunities to strengthen its impact on future generations." As he is gathering information about agriculture in Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota counties, she gave him an historic overview of raising cattle, citrus, and crops in our area.

According to Branan Jacobs, "Ries brings over 20 years of experience in media leadership to The Patterson Foundation, with a strategic focus on cultivating public awareness and understanding of critical community issues. As a key member of the executive team at the Herald-Tribune, he successfully expanded coverage of topics vital to our region by forging partnerships with community groups and philanthropic organizations, including The Patterson Foundation."



"I saw firsthand the positive impact that The Patterson Foundation has on our community when I was at the Herald-Tribune," Ries said. "I am excited to now be on the other side of the table and help The Patterson Foundation continue engaging with people, businesses, nonprofits, government and media to build a better future for our region."

The Patterson Foundation's Community Impact initiative aims to increase mission impact by utilizing a portion of the organization's investment portfolio in impact investing — investments designed to create a positive impact on our world. The initiative explores insights from nationally proven practices and understanding the local region for investment opportunities that foster wide participation around shared quality-of-life aspirations, such as affordable housing and a strong agriculture industry. For more information about Community Impact, please visit thepattersonfoundation.org.

Celebrate March As Women's History Month

A few months ago, Dr. Lynette Long called the Society about her "Fighting for Gender Parity" project, in particular the Florida Historic Marker Program. In 2010, she had established EVE, a not-for-profit committed to creating Equal Visibility Everywhere for women. EVE's focus is on achieving gender parity in the symbols and icons of the United States" facebook.com/EqualVisibility.

On her Website, Dr. Long wrote, "Out of the almost 1000 historic markers listed, only six, yes six, honored women: Annie Tommie, a Seminole Leader; Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'; Milly Francis, labeled the Creek Pocahontas; Princess Murat, the great grandniece of George Washington; Women's rights activist Roxcy O'Neal Bolton; and Zora Neale Hurston, author of 'Their Eyes were Watching God'." drlynettelong.com.wordpress.com/historical-markers. Thanks to the efforts of Dr. Long, more women have been honored with markers since then.

When Dr. Long asked Carol Mahler if Arcadia or DeSoto County had any famous women who could be honored with a Florida Historical Marker, she put the question to the Society's Board of Directors, and the matter was discussed during the Jan. meeting. They chose Frances Earle Pooser (1918-2019)—longtime Society member and beloved teacher—to formally propose as the first woman from Arcadia and DeSoto County to honor with a Florida Historical Marker. If you would like to work on this project, please contact Carol Mahler.



Contact Information

Editor: dchsocietyfl@gmail.com

Historian: Carol Mahler, 863-445-0789
desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

President: President: Adrian Cline, 863-558-1596
adriancline@outlook.com



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

Pioneer Day 2026 Sponsors

Thanks to Florida Power and Light for being the title sponsor of the Society's 22nd Annual Pioneer Day & BBQ! Individuals, businesses, and organizations in our community have been very generous, and when you see them in the community, please thank them for supporting the Society, especially Pioneer Day—our celebration of the history and heritage of DeSoto County.

We appreciate Nancy "Eric" Erickson, Jeff Griffis, Vernon Keen, and Carol Mahler for inviting sponsors to donate, and to Nancy Humphrey for keeping the list.

Title Sponsor (\$5000.00):

Florida Power & Light

Bronze Sponsor (\$500.00):

The Pink Building

Event Sponsor (\$250.00):

Adrian and Jane Cline

Ames Agricultural Services

Arcadia Rotary Club

Arcadia Stockyard

Big T Tire

Confederate Cow Cavalry,
Sons of Confederate Veterans 2181

Cowpens, LLC

Crews Bank & Trust, Member FDIC

Jim and Michelle Potter

Mid-Florida Credit Union

MyShelly's Kitchen

People For Protecting Peace River (3PR)

Entertainment Sponsor (\$100.00):

Arcadia Abstract & Title

Arcadia Kiwanis Club

Before and After Beauty Salon

René Collins

DeSoto County Democratic Committee

Ruth Reynolds Dunn

E and I Family Trust

Fender's Auto Parts

Florida Farmhouse Coffee

Robert W. Heine, Jr.

Linda and Vernon Keen

Cindy and Keith Keene

Maassen Oil Co.

Peace River Campground

Peace River Tax Services

Paul Bennett Seusy

Recovery Solutions - Florida Civil Commitment Center

Reesort-Homestay by Allen Reesor

Luis Velasco

Judy Wertz-Strickland

Pioneer Friend of the Society Sponsor (\$50.00):

Arlene Conley

Cindy McLeod Ely

Parker Hall

Peace River Chapter of the Daughters of the American
Revolution

Susan Kuczenska

Karen Smoke

Friend of the Society (\$25.00):

Arcadia Garden Club

Dee's Bees by Dee Washington

In-Kind Sponsor:

Arcadia Computer

Arcadia Printing

Arcadia Rodeo

Bryan Farm Supply

Dakin Dairy

DeSoto Sign Co.

Easy Mini Storage/U-Haul

Fussell Meats

Joshua Citrus

JSC Roofing

Kinard's Tree Service

Peace River Shopper

**In centennial commemoration of Arcadia City Hall,
J. L. Jones Building, and Plaza Hotel and celebrating
the 250th Anniversary of Independence!**



FPL



DeSoto County Historical Society

22nd Annual

Pioneer Day

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



Luke
Wilson

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 28, 2026

**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, Whip Crackers**
- **Legendary Characters**
- **Hands-On History Area & Fossil Dig**
- **Arts & Crafts**
- **Live Music**
- **and Much More!**

Save the date! **April 18: I Spy DeSoto Bus:**
free transportation to events while you learn local history.



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

www.historicdesoto.org * 863-266-5774

desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com