



DeSoto County Historical Society News

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

www.historicdesoto.org

July 2026

This issue sponsored by - Ruth Dunn in loving memory of her late husband, Rudolph Dunn.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members and Friends,

We hope you will join us for our next meeting on **Monday, July 20, 2026**, in the **McSwain Room at DeSoto Memorial Hospital**.

The meeting will begin at **12:00 p.m.** with lunch available for purchase in the hospital cafeteria beginning at **11:30 a.m.** We encourage everyone to come early to enjoy lunch and fellowship before the meeting.

Our guest speaker will be **Debbie Wertz, DeSoto County Supervisor of Elections**. Mrs. Wertz will present the history of the DeSoto County Elections' Office and discuss important details about the upcoming 2026 elections. This promises to be an informative and timely presentation, and we hope you will plan to attend.

We would also like to extend our sincere appreciation to **Arcadia Main Street** and **Pam Ames** for partnering with the DeSoto County Historical Society to present the **America 250 Speaker Series**. We are especially grateful to our outstanding speakers—**Mac Martin, Luke Wilson, Judy Wertz-Strickland, and Dave Williams**—who shared their knowledge and helped make the series a tremendous success.

In addition, the Historical Society was pleased to collaborate with Arcadia Main Street to present "**The Arcadia Rodeo: A July 4th Tradition**." The wonderful collection of Arcadia Rodeo memorabilia that was displayed for public viewing was enjoyed by many and highlighted an important part of our community's heritage.

These programs and events were a meaningful way to celebrate **America's 250th Anniversary** while preserving and sharing the rich history of DeSoto County. We also extend a heartfelt thank you to every Historical Society member who volunteered their time and talents to make these events successful. Your dedication and support are truly appreciated.

We look forward to seeing you on **July 20**.

Sincerely,

Adrian H. Cline

President
DeSoto County Historical Society

JUNE WRAP UP

June Meeting: Dave Williams & More

As part of the celebration of America's

250th Anniversary, the Arcadia Main Street Program

presented "a series of local history luncheon programs featuring engaging speakers who

shared stories, songs, insights, and memories that have shaped our community" while those attending enjoyed a delicious "down home" meal prepared by Linda Williams.

As part of the series, DeSoto County Property Appraiser Dave Williams gave a presentation at the Society's June meeting about "The Beginning of the Tax Appraiser's Office." We appreciate Williams for his thoughtful remarks, explanation of some of the jargon, plus showing us some old tax rolls and an old Arcadia subdivision map.



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JUNE WRAP UP

June Meeting: Dave Williams & More

—Con't from pg. 1

Featured in the Arcadia Main Street office at 17 N. Polk Ave., other speakers in the series including Mac Martin offering “Florida Songs” on June 8; Luke Wilson, “The History of G. Pierce Wood Memorial Hospital” on June 9; Adrian Cline, “Early Education in DeSoto” on June 10; and Judy Wertz-Strickland, “The Old Days of Arcadia” on June 11.



Society President Adrian Cline presented a certificate of appreciation to Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland for her participation in the America 250 Speakers Series.

Society President Adrian Cline presented a certificate of appreciation to Property Appraiser Dave Williams for his program about the tax appraiser's office at the Society's June meeting and also as part of the America 250 Speaker Series.



Society President Adrian Cline presented a certificate of appreciation to Linda Williams for her assistance with the America 250 Speakers Series, especially her preparation of the “down home” luncheon meals served.



Society President Adrian Cline presented a certificate of appreciation to Assistant Warden William Bowden and Major Ted Gjerde for the DeSoto Correctional Institution's assistance with yard work in preparation for the Ingraham House Museum's Grand Re-Opening on May 1.



We Helped Celebrate Juneteenth!

Deborah Clifton and a group of friends call themselves the Sisterhood, and the Society partnered with them to celebrate and commemorate Juneteenth on June 19 at the DeSoto County Library. Thanks to Carol Mahler for setting up a display of some Black-owned businesses in southwest Arcadia that the Society and the HCW Foundation had presented for Black History Month in 2022: it added some local history to the educational and informative exhibit that the Sisterhood assembled.

We appreciate Evelyn Dallas, a member of the Sisterhood, for making available at the event the reprint edition of *The History of the Smith-Brown School: 1892-1950* that the Society and the HCW Foundation published. She said, “This is the third year that we have done this, and we thank everyone who was involved, and we appreciate everyone who came. The Lord willing, we'll be back again next year.”



Standing in front of the likenesses cut of cardboard of President John Kennedy and President Barack

Obama, Evelyn Dallas holds a copy of *The History of the Smith-Brown School: 1892-1950* that the Society and the HCW Foundation reprinted.

Mabel Johnson and Wanda Bailey appreciated the display of Black-owned businesses in Arcadia that the Society loaned to the Sisterhood for their Juneteenth Celebration at the Library.



All photographs this issue courtesy of Carol Mahler, unless noted otherwise.

JUNE WRAP UP—Con't

On June 12, the Society presented the history of branding cattle at the request of Children's Librarian Ama Burns as part of the Summer Reading Program at the DeSoto County Library. We appreciate Livestock Agent Kendall Gill for partnering with Carol Mahler to present the history that was an introduction to a leather-working craft provided by the Art and Agriculture Program. We appreciate Vernon Keen for loaning his branding iron and to Linda Keen for delivering it and a copy of the registration to Carol.



Top—

Using the branding iron loaned by Vernon Keen, Carol Mahler demonstrated how it was applied to the animal using a piece of leather that Keen had already branded.

Livestock Agent Kendall Gill explained about the State brand registry book that was an important resource before the digital registry.

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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

Happy Centennial To The Plaza Hotel

As the owner of the Plaza Hotel was not able to attend Pioneer Day and accept the Society's Certification of Congratulations on the centennial of his building, Zach Cassidy will have it on display in the Pixel Vault, 11 W. Magnolia St., the west end of the Plaza Hotel, next door to his other store, the Mana Vault, 31 W. Magnolia St., the east side of the Graystone Apts. Thanks to Carol Mahler for negotiating with Cassidy, who looks forward to other opportunities to work with the Society.



Plaza Hotel Certificate held by Alexis Perkins of The Pixel Vault

A Centennial Coincidence

Sweet Magnolia Creamery and Confections, 203 W. Oak St., is located in what was originally built for Michael Schlossberg as the Four-Way Arcade. The first business to occupy one of the shops facing Oak St. was the Ateyeh Confectionary that also sold homemade ice cream. Now, 100 years later, Sweet Magnolia—also selling ice cream, candy, and more—occupies the same storefront. Visit the shop to enjoy the historical display researched and written by Carol Mahler—and some delicious ice cream—the perfect summertime treat.



Florida Cracker Trail Museum Closed

For its 59th anniversary, the Florida Cracker Trail Museum in Pioneer Park, Zolfo Springs, was closed for some renovations, and Museum Coordinator Joyce Tullis is looking forward to celebrating the 60th anniversary next year. She wrote about the current project: "They are painting the ceilings, walls, and floors, shelving and installing new glass tops on the display cases in the case room. My office is getting all new furniture, and the front lobby is getting a new glass shelving counter. I'm very excited.

"Outside, we replaced the old chain link fencing around the train and installed a beautiful black rod iron fencing as well as lights all around the train at night. They installed an information box out front of the museum for current events, and we also have new trash bins and benches and picnic tables. Sometime after October, they will install handicap accessible doors at the front entrance and for the bathrooms ... as well as plexiglass doors on the Blacksmith Shop as we did to the Hart Cabin and the Post Office."

Society Participated In The Independence Day Parade

Thanks to Cindy McLeod Ely for organizing the Society's entry to the 250th Anniversary of Independence Day Parade and for donating the "goodies" that the Society shared with the crowd: U.S. flags and patriotic hand fans. We appreciate Cindy, Liz Pine, and Dakota Vargas for handing them out, and James Hampton and Jacki Hampton Vargas for driving the vehicle that pulled the Society's wagon. We thank Nancy "Eric" Erickson and Carol Mahler for carrying the Society's banner.



Parade photographs courtesy Cindy Ely.

The Arcadia Rodeo: A July 4th Tradition

Thanks to Arcadia Main Street for inviting the Society to hold a one-day exhibit for their July 4th celebration of

America's Semiquincentennial Anniversary in their beautiful new offices at 17 N. Polk Ave.. We appreciate Karen Smoke for designing an attractive flyer inviting people to place on loan their rodeo memorabilia after the Society's Board agreed to try to recreate the display of rodeo memorabilia held in 1994 when the Society opened a research library in

the Family Service Center, 310 W. Whidden St.—the newly restored 1925 West Elementary School.

The Society is grateful to those who loaned images for the exhibit: two digital displays from the Arcadia Rodeo Association—a video with reminiscences by Adell Brown, Debbie Hansel Carlton, and Sage Welles Gray as well as a slide-presentation of historic photographs; a photograph, circa 1931, of African-American Cowboy Leron Simpson from Minnie Jean Simpson Jones; photographs of Jackie Duncan Condo and Matt Condo from Sorrel Condo Pickle; and photographs of Donald Boyd and Judy Boyd from Jody Boyd Sullivan.



On July 4, Nancy "Eric" Erickson welcomed visitors to the one day exhibit.



Thanks to Duffy O'Donnell and Carol Mahler for moving artifacts for the exhibit: a metal reproduction of the Arcadia Rodeo Mural on the west side of 47 W. Magnolia St.; Jack

Duncan's saddle and the saddle rack; photographs of—and a yoke associated with—Oscar, the Ox, that advertised the Arcadia Rodeo as far north as the 1939 World's Fair in New York City; the sign for the American Shoe Shop owned and operated by Alvie Twiss and "Rodeo Queen" Delia Twiss plus a two "twister leggings" that Alvie patented in 1957 and the couple manufactured; and many historic photographs.

We appreciate Arcadia Main Street Volunteer Sheila Bowden for helping Carol to set up the exhibit as well as Nancy "Eric" Erickson and Carol Mahler for hosting visitors to the exhibit on Sat., and for cleaning up everything on Mon., July 6. We are grateful to Kathy Bryce for helping to select the images and to Carol for scanning the historic photographs and designing the placards. About 50 people signed the guest book which means that many more appreciated the display.



Above—Granddaughter Everly Pooley stood with Tax Collector Susan Pooley who held some of the historic photographs loaned to the exhibit by Sorrel Condo Pickle, who works for Pooley and whom Pooley encouraged to contact the Society.

Left—Tim Martin held a reproduction of an article and postcard from 50 years ago when he helped his father Everett Martin,

Rick Dodd, Ed Graber, Alfred King, George Wheeler and Paul Whitlock build a log cabin on the courthouse lawn to celebrate the Independence Day Bicentennial.

Far left—From left, Hal Thompson, his daughter Clancey Hernandez Morel, and another couple perused "The Arcadia Rodeo: A July 4th Tradition," a one-day exhibit hosted by the DeSoto County Historical Society.



Oral History Project

Share Your Story: The Arcadia Rodeo Oral History Project

"Preserving the legacy of 'The Granddaddy of 'Em All'"

About the Project Are you a part of the Arcadia Rodeo's rich history? Whether you are a past competitor, a long-time volunteer, a family member of a founder, or a dedicated fan who has never missed a year, your memories are a vital piece of Florida's heritage.

In alignment with the **DeSoto County Historical Society**, we are launching a dedicated oral history project to capture and preserve the personal stories of the people who made the Arcadia Rodeo the legendary event it is today. As a librarian and oral historian, my goal is to professionally record these memories so that future generations can understand the grit, community, and spirit behind the rodeo.

What to Expect An oral history is simply a recorded conversation. We will sit down together, and I will ask you questions about your experiences, memories, and personal connections to the rodeo. Your voice and your story will become a permanent part of the historical record.

Who We Are Looking For We want to hear from anyone with a strong connection to the Arcadia Rodeo, including:

- Riders, ropers, and competitors
- Founders, organizers, staff, and volunteers
- Multi-generational attendees and local families
- Vendors, announcers, and stock contractors
- Anyone with a rodeo story!

How to Participate We are currently scheduling one-on-one interview appointments starting in **August 2026**. Interviews will be conducted in a comfortable, quiet setting.

Schedule Your Interview Today

Please reach out to secure your spot or to ask any questions about the process. If you know someone whose story needs to be told, please feel free to pass this information along!

- **Contact:** Kristin Fowler
- **Phone:** 239-315-0221
- **Email:** arcadiarodeooralhistory@gmail.com

Help us keep the history of the Arcadia Rodeo alive for the next generation!

SHARE YOUR RODEO STORIES—

Contact: Kristin Fowler

Phone: 239-315-0221

Email: arcadiarodeooralhistory@gmail.com

You're Invited!

Manatee Genealogical Society Free Zoom-only Presentation

Date: Tuesday, August 4, 2026

Time: 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM EST

(Zoom opens at 9:50 AM)

Featured Program

"Our Quaker Ancestors: Their History and the Records They Left"

Presented by **Annette Burke Lyttle**

Annette Burke Lyttle, CG® owns Heritage Detective, LLC, providing professional genealogical services in research, education, and writing. She speaks on a variety of genealogical topics at the international, national, state, and local levels and loves helping people uncover and share their family stories.

What You'll Learn

Quakers were among the earliest settlers in North America and as they moved west, they were often the earliest settlers in newly opened territory. Quakers were amazing record-keepers. Not only did they record births, marriages, and deaths, they kept extensive records on those who came into their local meetings and those who left. Learn about the history of these pioneering Americans and how to find the rich records they left behind.

Following the presentation, stay online for our **"Members Helping Members"** session.

Registration & Attendance

Open to the public (no charge)

Registration is required at least 24 hours in advance — please email info@mgsfl.org with the subject: *Zoom Registration August membership meeting*

Zoom access link will be emailed.

Visit our website: <https://mgsfl.org/>

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

Fall is right around the corner...
Save the Date for our Sixth Annual
Florida Cracker Meal
Saturday, October 3
Pine Level Church
Fellowship Hall
9695 NW Pine Level Street