



DeSoto County Historical Society News

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

www.historicdesoto.org

August 2024

This issue sponsored by - Charlotte Hill Carter in loving memory of her husband, Frederick Lawrence Carter.

20th Anniversary of Hurricane Charley On Exhibit

By Carol Mahler

The DeSoto County Historical Society presents a 20th Anniversary Exhibit of Hurricane Charley at the DeSoto County Library, 125 N. Hillsborough Ave., from Aug. 10 through 31. It is free and open to the public during regular library hours.

The Society began gathering photographs, newspaper articles, and artifacts for the exhibit last Sat., Aug. 3, and the public was invited to share their materials. At the same time, Tropical Storm Debby approached the State. It sloshed through southwest Florida, dumping rain, and became Hurricane Debby on Aug. 4. It made landfall at 7:00 a.m., Aug. 5, near Steinhatchee, Florida, as a Category 1 hurricane with sustained winds of 80 mph. It continues to ransack the southeast coast of the U.S. with torrential rains and catastrophic flooding.

A Category 4 storm, Hurricane Charley was a very different event although it churned north along the west coast of Florida as did Debby. However, Charley made the infamous right-turn up the Peace River Valley. Not only did it have 150 mph sustained winds when it made landfall at 3:45 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 13, 2004, but it also had a forward speed of 21 mph or more. It followed on the heels of Tropical Storm Bonnie, the first time that two tropic disturbances hit one state within a single day.



Member Meeting:

Monday, August 19

DeSoto Memorial Hospital -

McSwain Room

Room open at 11:30 a.m.

Meeting 12 noon

Hurricane Charley memories

'Charley' was a catalyst for change in our community in many ways. It forced us to regroup and build stronger. Change is the only thing we can count on. Your involvement in our community is important for directing that change and keeping strong the things we hold dear.

At our member meeting this month we hope you will come out and share your Hurricane Charley memories.

WINK and FOX news were both in DeSoto County on Tuesday, August 13, 2024; we hope you see some of their coverage.

Several Society members said that they didn't care to remember Hurricane Charley because of its devastation and their personal losses. However, the Board of Directors voted to hold the exhibit as part of the Society's mission to promote and preserve the history of DeSoto County for future generations. If you have a story to tell, photographs or other documents to share, or artifacts from Hurricane Charley, please contact the Society at 863-266-5774 or desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com. Or you may bring the items to the DeSoto County Library, 125 N. Hillsborough Ave., to be copied, scanned, or recorded.

This article originally appeared in the *Arcadia Community Local* on Aug. 8, 2024

—Photos by Karen Smoke



Hurricane Charley shoved the John Morgan Ingraham House Museum from its support piers, knocked down the chimney, and tore off much of the roof.

—Photograph courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society.

Tour for Out-Of-Towners

Thanks to Carol Mahler for giving a tour of the Museum on July 9 to Cheryl Smith, Gainesville, FL; Elizabeth Gould-Kinney, Lake City, FL; and Anna Schmirian, Thurmont, Maryland, who were in Arcadia to teach in the “Harmony In The Streets” Summer Camp. The DeSoto County Sheriff’s Office along with the Florida Sheriff’s Youth Ranches hosted the free, five (5) day camp for youth ages 6 to 12. July 8-12, 2024. They participated in activities including but not limited to arts and crafts, environmental education, games, group building, law enforcement demonstrations, and team sports, all while building positive relationships with law enforcement.

Welcome New Members!

Ann Bursa

Gioia DeCarlo

Sondra Guffey

Crystal Walter

Coldwell Banker, Sunstar Realty, 920 N. Mills Ave.
- business member!

J.L. Jones Building of Arcadia, LLC, 10 N. DeSoto Ave. - business member!

Keeping Up With Landscape

Thanks to Jeff Griffis for keeping the lawn mowed, and to Carol Mahler for picking up trash and debris as well as trying to keep the flower gardens weeded. More help is needed! Please contact Carol if you have an hour or two to assist.



fcit.usf.edu/florida/maps/pages/12300/f12332/f12332.htm

Description: This map created by FCIT shows the track of hurricane Charley in 2004. The legend shows the different categories of hurricanes as follows: Cat 5 (dark red), Cat 4 (red), Cat 3 (orange), Cat 2 (yellow), Cat 1 (green), tropical storm (teal), tropical depression (blue), and lower category (purple).

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://historicsdesoto.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.

A Message From The President

Dear Members and Friends,

The DeSoto County Historical Society is an all-volunteer, not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of DeSoto County for future generations.

Historic preservation enhances the quality of life, fosters understanding among residents, and celebrates Florida's diverse heritage. Local economies benefit as historic properties attract visitors from nearby and beyond.

Here is why history matters:

1. Understanding Ourselves and the World: History provides a clear picture of how various aspects of society (such as technology, governmental systems, and culture) worked in the past, helping us understand how they evolved to their current state. It allows us to comprehend our world better.
2. Observing Society and People: By studying history, we can observe and understand how people and societies behaved. It provides data used to create laws and theories about various aspects of society.
3. Sense of Identity: History helps us form a sense of identity. Learning about our family's history, interactions with historical changes, and significant events contributes to this understanding.
4. Present-Day Issues: History enables us to ask deeper questions about why things are the way they are.

In summary, historical societies contribute to preserving collective memory, fostering informed citizens, and shaping our future by valuing the past. The DeSoto County Historical Society plays a crucial role in preserving this rich heritage, and its volunteers contribute countless hours to educational and engaging activities. If you are interested, consider joining this fascinating group of people.

Adrian H. Cline

President, DeSoto County Historical Society

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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.**

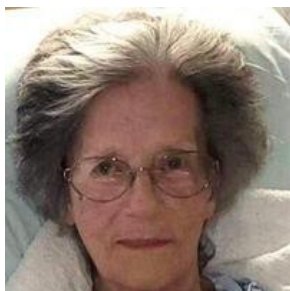
MUSEUM AND RESEARCH LIBRARY CLOSED FOR THE SUMMER

The Museum and Research Library will be closed for the months of June, July, and August, so that our volunteers may clean and update the exhibits and research space.

Research assistance and tours will be available by appointment only; please call Carol Mahler at 863-445-0789.

John Morgan Ingraham House Museum
300 N. Monroe Avenue

In Memoriam



Jewel H. McLeod
1934 - 2024

Jewel was born in Muncie Indiana on December 11th, 1934 and passed away on June 24th, 2024. She is survived by her children, Cindy M. Ely, James E. "Sam" McLeod, Alice M. Ames, Grandson Steven Ames (Zoe) and Great Grandson Henry. Brother Charles Hopper and sister Karen (Bill) Seig. Close family friends Anne Marie Driggers, Jim Young and Devin Young.

Jewel worked at Wheeler's Restaurant for 34 years and will always be remembered as the "Peanut Butter Pie Lady".

Online condolences can be made at www.pongerkaysgrady.com

Beryl Hamilton Griffis Jr.
1935 - 2024



Beryl Hamilton Griffis Jr., age 89, passed away July 25, 2024 in Arcadia, Florida. He was born in Wauchula, Florida to Beryl H. Griffis Sr. and Clyde Willis on February 7, 1935. He graduated from Hardee County High School, Class of 1954, and joined the U.S. Army Reserve. He moved to Arcadia in 1953 to establish and help operate the family business, South Side Shell. Beryl was a member of Trinity Methodist Church in Arcadia. He enjoyed football and was an avid Florida Gator fan. He enjoyed watching movies especially old westerns and had an extensive collection. The Three Stooges were also a favorite of his. Beryl enjoyed reading and spending quality time with family and friends.

He is survived by his son Jeffery R. Griffis from Arcadia, Florida, stepdaughter Karan Cowden (Robert Cave) of Parrish, Florida, two grandchildren Crystal Ruiz (Chano), and Andrea Carson (David), three great grandchildren Maxson Ruiz, Ava and Chance Carson.

Beryl is preceded in death by his parents Beryl H. Griffis Sr., and Clyde Willis, his sister Joyce E. Selby and his beloved companion of more than forty-five years Nancy P. Webster.

A Celebration of Life was held Saturday August 10, 2024, at 10 a.m. at Trinity Methodist Church with Pastor Louie Mabrey officiating.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to one of the following; Desoto Memorial Hospital, Tidewell Hospice, or Trinity Arcadia Methodist Church.

Online condolences can be made at www.pongerkaysgrady.com

Andrew "Ray" Smith
1941 - 2024



Andrew "Ray" Smith, age 83, went to his heavenly home on July 28, 2024 at Sarasota Memorial, surrounded by his family. He was born on July 21st, 1941 in Estero, Fl to Hugh and Della Smith of Estero.

He survived by his wife of 52 years, Roberta "Bobbie" Smith, daughter Marilyn Patton of Arcadia and sons Robert Smith of Arcadia and Jackie (Tanya) Smith of O'Brien, Fl; 11 grandchildren, 9 great grandchildren and 1 great grand fur baby, which he thought the world of and numerous nieces and nephews. Ray is preceded in death by his son-in-law John Patton of Arcadia, his sister Kay and husband John McCullers of Estero, his brother George Smith (Luan) of California and his parents Hugh and Della Smith of Estero.

Ray was well known in the community as the Postmaster of Nocatee, where he worked 35 years in the postal service. Most say when going into the post office you knew you were going to be a while because Mr. Ray loved to hold conversations and catch up on how the family was doing. He dedicated many years to the youth in DeSoto county by volunteering and supporting the youth agriculture programs and exhibitors.

Although Ray Smith was not a Society member, he and his wife Bobbie supported our mission to preserve and promote the history of DeSoto County for future generations. When we started participating in the DeSoto County Fair again, they welcomed us and assisted us with logistics.

Visitation was at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, August 10, 2024 at Ponger-Kays-Grady Funeral Home (Arcadia) with funeral service at 11:00. The interment followed at Joshua Creek Cemetery.

Online condolences can be made at www.pongerkaysgrady.com

Donations In Memoriam

Thanks to Cindy McLeod Ely for her donation of \$50.00 each in memory Beryl Hamilton Griffis, Jr., and Andrew Ray Smith.
