



DeSoto County Historical Society News

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

www.historicdesoto.org

February 2023

This issue sponsored by - **Rene Collins in memory of Terry and Evelyn Collins.**

Celebrate February As Black History Month: Dr. Sharon Goodman Makes History, Again! By Carol Mahler

In 1926, Carter G. Woodson established "Negro History Week" in Feb. to honor the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. The goal was to include African-Americans and their accomplishments in educational curricula, and the observance was subsequently expanded to a month, first recognized by the U.S. government in 1976.

In 2022, Dr. Sharon Goodman made history in November by winning election to the DeSoto County School Board that is—for the first time—composed of five women. She is the first African-American to be elected to a county-wide office.

The only other African-American to hold county-wide offices is Ashley Coone. In 2016, Gov. Rick Scott appointed her to fill out Mitzie McGavic's term as Clerk of Court, but she was not elected to that office in 2018. Then Gov. Ron DeSantis appointed her as County Commissioner to fill out the term of Juril "Buddy" Mansfield (1956-2021).

In 1994, Dr. Goodman was also the first woman and first African-American woman elected to a council member, vice-mayor, and mayor of the City of Arcadia. When Council Member Ron Turner resigned to run for Supervisor of Elections, she was appointed in 1995 and served out the remainder of Turner's term. She was subsequently elected and served total of 16 years.



Sharon Goodman at school board induction with Cynthia Dawkins, who held the Bible during the "swearing in."



Courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society

February Meeting:

New Venue/New Date

Thursday, February 16

**DeSoto Memorial Hospital -
McSwain Room**

Room open at 11 a.m.

Meeting 12 noon

Dr. Sharon Goodman will talk about her life from Smith-Brown days to serving on the School Board.

Please arrive early so you can go through the line ahead of the hospital employees.

Parking is currently tight due to construction—please park where you find space available away from the hospital entrance if you are able to walk the distance.

As a member of the City Council, Goodman called for the evaluations of the city administrator and other city employees. She requested an office in City Hall for the mayor to meet with people and work on the city's business. She also worked to rename W. Hargrave St. as Martin Luther King, Jr., St. and the Smith-Brown Recreation Complex as Dr. Louis C. Anderson, Sr., Park.

Appointed by Gov. Jeb Bush to serve on the South Florida Community College (now South Florida State College) Board of Trustees, she advocated for the state to build a campus in DeSoto County rather than a shared campus built in Hardee County. She is also the pastor of Friendship Fellowship Church, 304 W. Myrtle St.

—Photo by Carol Mahler

DeSoto County Fair: Celebrating 70 Years . . . The Tradition Lives On

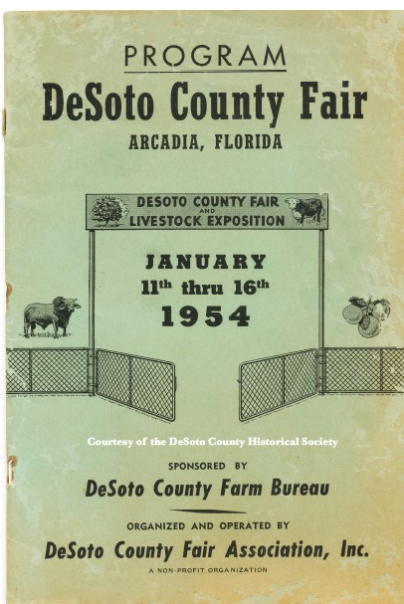
By Carol Mahler

The DeSoto County Fair opens at 5 p.m. on Feb. 3 and continues through Feb. 11 at the fairgrounds, 100 Heard St., with the theme “Celebrating 70 years: The Tradition Lives On.” Please visit the Society’s booth—and all the other ones, too! For more details, check online: desotocountyfair.com

The DeSoto County Fair began in the early 20th century, but it did not continue probably because the U.S. declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917. The Veterans of Foreign Wars restarted the Fair in 1940, and again the effort may have been suspended by the U.S. declaration of war in 1941.

The following history of the fair was compiled from newspaper clippings and fair programs archived in the Howard and Velma Melton Historical Research Library. Our collection of fair programs is incomplete: if you have an old fair program, please consider donating it (or loaning it so it may be scanned) to the Society.

1911: The DeSoto County Fair Organization chose to sell subscriptions to raise funds to hold a fair. Salesmen were appointed in each voting precinct of the county when it consisted of the present-day counties of Charlotte, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, and Highlands.



1914: The May 21 issue reported “the temporary organization of the DeSoto County Fair Association.” The headline in the Nov. 17 issue suggested “County Fairs Should Educate and Entertain . . . “The county fair, if rightly organized, offers the mass of farmers in a district one of the best means of useful instruction,

inspiration, and entertainment.” No record of a 1914 or 1915 fair was found.

1916: The Feb. 4 issue listed the many prizes awarded at the fair for fruit, cattle, fowl, horses, dogs, preserved products, floral displays, cakes and pies, plus school work including drawing, painting, lettering, and maps.

A “Baby Show Contest” was also held, as beauty contests were not popular until after the first Miss American Pageant in 1921.



1940: January 1940 was the coldest ever recorded in Florida. However, the Feb. 10 *DeSoto County News* reported that “The Veterans of Foreign Wars’ first DeSoto County fair closed tonight after a week of success from the standpoints of variety, number of exhibits and attendance.” Sue Smith, daughter of Mrs. Katherine Smith of Arcadia, was crowned queen at the Feb. 1940

DeSoto County Fair sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

1953: The idea for a DeSoto County Fair was discussed during a meeting of the DeSoto County Farm Bureau. Incorporated as a non-profit organization, the DeSoto County Fair Association was organized with the following officers: Abner G. Erickson, president; Gerald Tinsley, vice-president; W. L. Woods, secretary; and William A. Channel, treasurer.

1954: Sponsored by the DeSoto County Farm Bureau, the first DeSoto County Fair and Livestock Exposition was held Jan. 11-16. The Fair Association expressed their gratitude to the Arcadia City Council and the DeSoto County Board of County Commissioners “for their part in helping us secure a permanent Fair Grounds and for their 100% cooperation in the improving of same.”

1955: A “Farm Equipment Show” was added to the Fair and continued through 1958. Mary Dell Collier DeLoach was crowned DeSoto County Fair Queen following Peggy Yarbrough Jaicks crowned in 1954.

1956: The Junior Woman’s Club sponsored the DeSoto County Fair Queen Contest until 1958.

—Continued next page

- 1959: The DeSoto County High School Sub-Debs sponsored the DeSoto County Fair Queen Contest until 1968.
- 1960: No fair was held because two had been held in 1959—in Jan., with a “Frontier Days” celebration and in Nov. with a “Western Horse Show.”
- 1962: No fair was held because two had been held in 1961: in Jan., with a “Dixie Centennial Jubilee” and in Nov.
- 1966: Jacqueline Summers was crowned the Smith-Brown DeSoto Fair Queen, and in 1967, Michelle Jenkins.
- 1967: The Fair featured a Horticulture Exhibit that year and annually until 1978.
- 1968: The Smith-Brown School sponsored the integrated DeSoto County Fair Queen Contest. However, the “baby show” remained segregated until 1971.
- 1984: The Fair included “Peace River Valley Days.”



John Morgan Ingraham House Museum
300 N Monroe Avenue

MUSEUM OPEN:

9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Thursdays (except for the second Thurs. of the month),

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

Contact Information

Editor: Karen Smoke, 863-558-0532 gypsygirlrides513@gmail.com

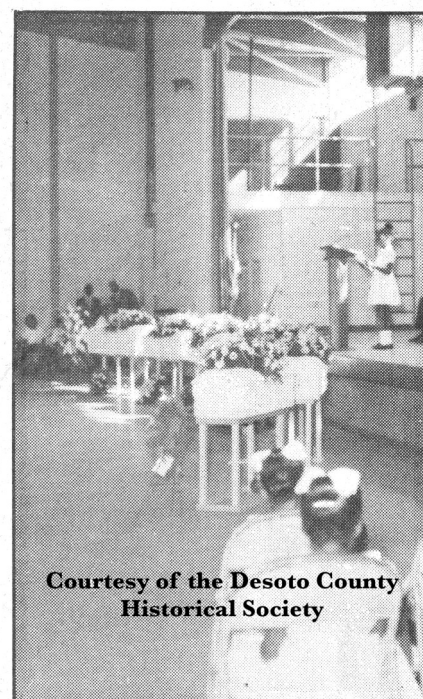
Historian: Carol Mahler, 863-445-0789
desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

President: Norma Banas, 863-558-6115 sanctuaryofarcadia@gmail.com

Historical Society Newsletter Sponsors

- Jan. - **Alvie Davidson** in memory of
his parents, **Ollie & Mary Lee Davidson**
- Feb. - **Rene Collins** in memory of **Terry and Evelyn Collins**.
- March - **Dale, Patty & Sue** in loving memory of
our parents, **Howard & Velma Melton**
- April - **Warren & Arlene Conley** in memory of
Hazel & Leo 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**

Dr. Sharon
Goodman as a
seven-year-old
Smith-Brown
student
singing at the
funeral of the
seven
Richardson
children in the
Smith-Brown
gym in 1967.



**Courtesy of the Desoto County
Historical Society**

A Message from The President

Holidays are over and we are back to work with lots to accomplish. Our January general meeting was very productive as the members present helped clarify ideas for meals at the meetings. "Bring your own" was voted dead in the water. Surprisingly, "paying to have our meal catered" was the favored idea. After contacting several potential sources of catered meals, we found the cost quite high. But, we think we have found the ideal solution. **We have made arrangements with DeSoto Memorial Hospital to use their meeting room and their cafeteria.** Each individual will be able to buy what they desire from a variety of foods which will include dessert and drinks. To take advantage of their meeting room monthly, we had to agree to move our monthly meeting to the **third Thursday** of the month. We hope you will be as pleased with this choice as we are and that we will see more of you at the next meeting.

Next, I would like a volunteer (or two—one in the morning and one in the afternoon) to go to Sebring on Feb. 11 to help me man our booth at the Highlands Hammock CCC Festival. Our booth will be a selection of old items plus publicity for Pioneer Day. I will set up the booth and I will stay all day and close up. Call me. 863-558-6115 if you can help.

Our main goal for the next month is preparation for Pioneer Day. We need sponsors and publicity, both of which you can help with. Do you do business with a local company who has not sponsored Pioneer Day? (See the list of Sponsors on this page at right.) Can you help spread the word about our event with your friends, neighbors and at your church? Each little bit of help goes a long way.

Happy Valentine's Day,

Norma

**VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITIES**

Lots of hands-on help is needed for Pioneer Day! Contact Carol Mahler, 863-445-0789

desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

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

Thanks to our Pioneer Day Sponsors

Please sponsor the 19th Annual Pioneer Day & BBQ from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on March 25 at the Turner Agri-Civic Center, 2250 N.E. Roan St.! We have levels from Platinum (\$5,000.00) to Friend of the Society (\$25.00), and every dollar will be used to preserve and promote the history of DeSoto County for future generations.

2023 Sponsors to Date

Bronze Sponsor - \$500

Peace River Electric Cooperative (PRECO)

Event Sponsor - \$250

Arcadia Rotary Club

Entertainment Sponsors - \$100

Glass, Antique or Not

John and Trudi Super

Peace River Tax Services

Steve and Anna Flint, Bar4JBar Ranch

United Country / Gulfand Real Estate

Williamson Group Realty (\$150)

Friends of the Society - \$25

Linda and Vernon Keen

Karen Smoke

Norma and Marsha

Marilyn McConnell

In-Kind Sponsors

Arcadia Printing

Dakin Dairy



Save the date!

DeSoto County Historical Society's 19th Annual

Pioneer Day

March 25, 2023

*with the Arcadia American Legion
sponsored Antique Tractor, Vintage Car,*

and Hit & Miss Engine Show

Turner Agri-Civic Center, 2250 NE Roan St.

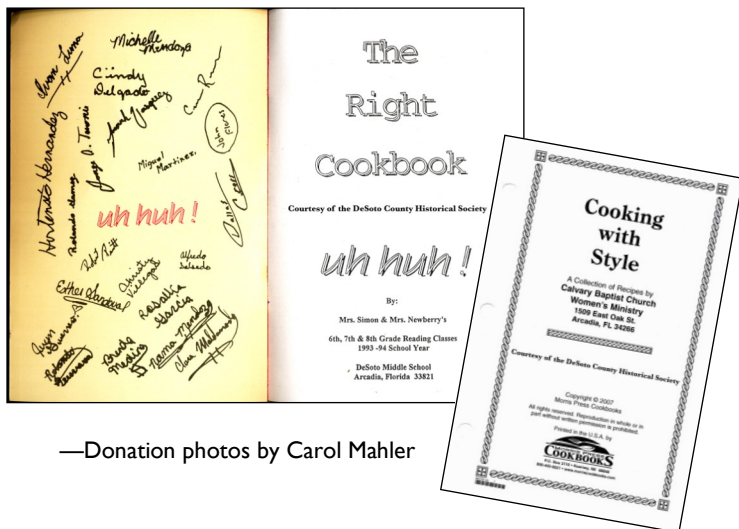
P.O. Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265 * 863-266-5776

desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

www.historicdesoto.org * Like us on Facebook!

Gratitude for Gifts

Thanks to Kathy Bryce for donating two local cookbooks: *The Right Stuff: Uh Huh!* by Mrs. Simon's and Mrs. Newberry's 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade Reading Classes, 1993-1994 school year at DeSoto Middle School, and *Cook With Style: A Collection of Recipes by Calvary Baptist Church Women's Ministry* published by Morris Press Cookbooks in 2007.



—Donation photos by Carol Mahler

Thanks to George Arnold, specializing in fine arts and antiques in Ormond Beach, for donating \$1200.00 to the Society to purchase the World War I British model airplane that hung for years in the Opera House Museum.



Annual dues in the DeSoto County Historical Society are due January 1. Payment may be made online, by mail, or in person at one of our gatherings.

Thank you for your support!

An article from the Jan 27, 1916 *DeSoto County News* about the fair. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn95026908/1916-01-27/ed-1/seq-1/>

PROGRAM DE SOTO COUNTY FAIR OPENING TOMORROW AT 9 A. M.

Thursday, Jan. 27th.

9 a. m. Fair gate opens.

1:15 p. m. Governor Trammell, escorted by reception committee, Capt. George M. Lynch, chairman; T. B. King, Mayor A. P. Hollingsworth, A. C. Freeman, W. G. Welles, R. F. Lewis, C. D. Boring, A. L. Durance, E. T. Smith, Judge F. A. Whitney, with military escort over city to fair grounds.

2 p. m. Grand opening of fair. Arrival of Governor Trammell announced by military salute with big guns; governor opens fair gates, and delivers address from grand stand inside fair grounds.

4 p. m. Capt. Atwood "sliding for life;" exhibition of wonderful educated horse.

9 p. m. Grand fireworks inside the grounds.

9:30 p. m. Capt. Atwood sliding for life; fireworks.

Friday, Jan. 28—School Day.

9 a. m. Gates open; judging in all departments commences; placing of ribbons.

2 p. m. Dr. A. P. Murphree, president State University, will deliver address from grand stand inside fair grounds.

4 p. m. Baby show; babies will assemble on east side of main exhibition building inside fair grounds.

4:30 p. m. Capt. Atwood sliding for life; educated horse.

9 p. m. Grand fireworks inside the grounds; sliding for life, educated horse.

Saturday, Jan. 29th.

9 a. m. Fair gates open; awards in baby show to be announced from grand stand.

2 p. m. Payment of premiums begins from grand stand.

4 p. m. Capt. Atwood sliding for life; educated horse.

Ladies' rest room upstairs over Owens' Cafe. Entrance on Oak street; also rest room at The Arcade, on West Oak street.

Men's wash room at court house.

Admission to the Grounds.

Season adult tickets, 50 cents.
Season school age tickets, 30 cents.
Day admission, adults, 25 cents.
Day admission, school age, 15 cents.

In addition to the three buildings of county exhibits to which no charge is made, except the above, the DeSoto County Fair Association has arranged for a fine aggregation of attractions to which reasonable entrance fee will be charged. Not a dull moment. Three days of jollity and merry making.

BRADENTOWN CITIZENS COMING TO THE FAIR IN LARGE NUMBERS

Bradentown Evening Journal Says "Land of Manatee Folks Have Opportunity to Visit Sister Arcadia, on East and West Coast Special."

The East and West Coast Railway is carrying in the Bradentown Evening Journal a well worded half page advertisement calling attention to the many attractions at the DeSoto County Fair to be held in this city three days, beginning tomorrow. This progressive road is offering a special rate of \$1.25 for the round trip, and that these special inducements are bearing fruit may be found in the following article clipped from the Evening Journal:

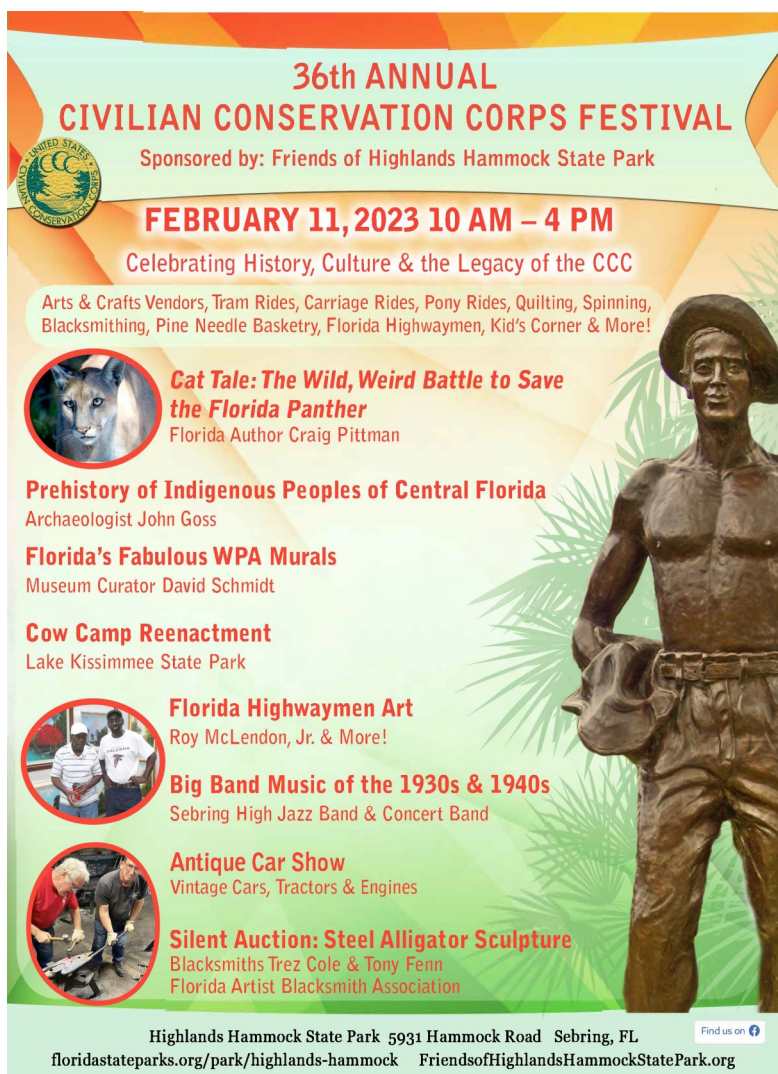
"Numbers of Bradentown residents and residents from other parts of the county will attend the DeSoto County Fair at Arcadia, which is to be held on next Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Information from Arcadia indicates that the fair will be a success from every point of view, with varied products of farms and homes on exhibition.

Governor Park Trammell will open the fair and deliver an address on the opening day, Thursday.

The East and West Coast Railway will run special trains from Bradentown and intermediate points on account of the fair.

A train each day of the fair will leave Bradentown at 7:45 in the morning, and will arrive at this station, on the return trip, at 8 o'clock. Special rate inducements are to be offered."



**36th ANNUAL
CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS FESTIVAL**

Sponsored by: Friends of Highlands Hammock State Park

FEBRUARY 11, 2023 10 AM – 4 PM

Celebrating History, Culture & the Legacy of the CCC

Arts & Crafts Vendors, Tram Rides, Carriage Rides, Pony Rides, Quilting, Spinning, Blacksmithing, Pine Needle Basketry, Florida Highwaymen, Kid's Corner & More!

Cat Tale: The Wild, Weird Battle to Save the Florida Panther
Florida Author Craig Pittman

Prehistory of Indigenous Peoples of Central Florida
Archaeologist John Goss

Florida's Fabulous WPA Murals
Museum Curator David Schmidt

Cow Camp Reenactment
Lake Kissimmee State Park

Florida Highwaymen Art
Roy McLendon, Jr. & More!

Big Band Music of the 1930s & 1940s
Sebring High Jazz Band & Concert Band

Antique Car Show
Vintage Cars, Tractors & Engines

Silent Auction: Steel Alligator Sculpture
Blacksmiths Trez Cole & Tony Fenn
Florida Artist Blacksmith Association

Highlands Hammock State Park 5931 Hammock Road Sebring, FL
floridastateparks.org/park/highlands-hammock FriendsofHighlandsHammockStatePark.org

Learn more about Florida history by visiting events of area historical organizations. Take your pick.

Head northeast to Sebring for Highlands Hammock State Park's **36th Annual Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Festival** on February 11, 2023. The park is located at 5931 Hammock Road Sebring, FL. floridastateparks.org/park/highlands-hammock FriendsofHighlandsHammockStatePark.org

Or head southwest to Englewood for the Lemon Bay Historical Society **19th Annual Cracker Fair** at Pioneer Plaza, Dearborn Street Englewood, FL 34223 on Saturday, February 11, 2023. lemonbayhistory.com.

The CRACKER FAIR is the culmination of "Lemon Bay Fest," February 4 – 11, a full week of local history events presented by the Englewood libraries. <https://www.scgov.net/government/libraries/library-events/lemon-bay-fest/>

Manatee Genealogical Society meeting and program on Tuesday, February 7, 2023, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm EST. Our program speaker, Shelley Bishop, will present in person "Avoiding an Ancestor Identity Crisis". Guests attending via Zoom must register at least one day in advance by emailing: info@mgsfl.org. The Manatee Central Library Auditorium will open at 9:45 a.m. for in-person attendees. The Zoom meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m. EST. For more information, please visit our website at: <https://mgsfl.org/>.

NOCATEE OLD TIMERS REUNION

Saturday, Feb. 11, 2023

If you are a Nocatee Old Timer you'll know the details. For more info you might contact Luke, sorry folks, that's all I have. —Editor

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.

The Lemon Bay Historical Society
presents
**The 19th Annual
CRACKER FAIR**
A CELEBRATION OF OLD FLORIDA!

Music by John Tuff & Friends,
James Hawkins, Vinyl Recall
and Gottfried Creek
Lemon Dessert Baking Contest
Food, Vendors, Crafts & Fun
Saturday, February 11
Pioneer Plaza, Dearborn St.
FREE ADMISSION!
10AM-4PM
For more Information
941.474.2007
www.lemonbayhistory.com