



DeSoto County Historical Society News

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

www.historicdesoto.org

September 2024

This issue sponsored by Marguerite & Tom Hankins in memory of
Mr. & Mrs. T.J. Pipkin
(Pip & Alison Pickard Pipkin.)

A Taste of Local History: 4th Annual Florida Cracker Meal

Enjoy some food, fun, and a historic film at the Society's 4th Annual Florida Cracker Meal at 5:30 p.m. on Sat., Sept. 28, in the Fellowship Hall of Pine Level Church, 9596 NW Pine Level St. Seating is limited. Tickets for the Florida Cracker Meal are \$15.00 for adults, \$8.00 for children 6-12 years, and are available at the Museum 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Sept. 12, 14, and 19; Crews Bank and Trust, Member FDIC, 2747 S.W. State Road 70; Florida Farmhouse Coffee Shop, 103 W. Oak St.; on the Website historicdesoto.org using PayPal; or call 863-266-5774 or email desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

Screening - Silent Movie
Arcadia 1926

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

**Come to our Fourth Annual
Florida Cracker Meal**

**5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 28, 2024** **LIMITED SEATING -
Get your tickets early!**

**Pine Level Church
Fellowship Hall
9596 NW Pine Level St.**

**Tickets available from the
Society, Florida Farmhouse
Coffee, or Crews Bank and
Trust, Member FDIC.**

MENU
Traditional Florida Cracker
foods: pork steaks, tomato
gravy with rice, black-eyed
peas, collards, sweet
potatoes, corn on the cob,
cornmeal muffins, fresh
churned butter, guava or
peach cobbler, pickled
okra, and CAKE

**Enter
the Arcadia
Albritton Coker
Cake Contest.
If you are interested
please call or
email the
Historical Society**

**Tickets
\$15.00 for
adults
\$8.00 for
children**

historicdesoto.org ~ 863-266-5774
desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Florida Cracker cuisine dates from when Florida was a frontier and is related to—but distinct from—Southern cooking. The buffet will include traditional Florida Cracker foods such as pork steaks, collards, black-eyed peas, tomato gravy and rice, sweet potatoes, cornmeal muffins with freshly churned butter, guava cobbler, and more.

One story that explains why native-born Floridians are called "Florida Crackers" comes from the cowman or cowhunter. To drive the herd, he cracked a cow whip over the bovines. (The whip was not used on animals or people.) The "crack" or "pop" of the whip could be heard for quite a distance, so people started saying, "Listen. Here come the Crackers."

Will you bake a cake for us?

Please enter the Arcadia Albritton Coker Cake Contest!

Help make our Florida Cracker Meal a success! Please make your favorite cake "from scratch" and use your most traditional recipe or make up something fun. The judge will sample the cakes, and they will be judged on taste and texture. Two winning cakes will be chosen, "best traditional cake" and one that is "most creative cake."

Cakes must be delivered to Pine Level Church - Fellowship Hall, 9596 NW Pine Level Street, by 5 p.m. on Saturday, September 28.

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Email or call to let us know you will bake a cake!
To sign up please call: 863-266-5774 or 863-445-0789 or email Carol at desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com



Another story relates how Arcadia became the name of a settlement on the eastern shore of Peace River. The Rev. James Madison Hendry moved his sawmill to this area in 1883. When the settlers applied for a post office, he suggested the name "Arcadia" in gratitude to Arcadia Albritton Coker, a 22-year-old mother who had baked him a birthday cake when he stayed overnight with her family on his journey. So, Arcadia was the name in 1883 for the post office; in 1886, when the Town of Arcadia was incorporated, and in 1901, it became the City of Arcadia.

In honor of that tradition, those attending the event are invited to enter the **Arcadia Albritton Coker Cake Contest** by baking their most traditional or most creative "from scratch" cake recipes. Winners will be announced, prizes awarded, and all cakes will be plated and served. To enter the cake contest, please register by calling 863-266-5774 or email at: desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

More About the Annual Florida Cracker Meal And Pine Level History

The Society began the Florida Cracker Meal as an evening meeting for those unable to attend the monthly luncheon meetings. Amateur Historian Carol Mahler—also a professional storyteller and published author—will present a silent movie filmed in 1926 in Arcadia plus historical information to help identify what is shown in the film. Luke Wilson, an expert on local history—plus a talented musician, writer, and artist—will entertain with music and a sing-along.

Pine Level Church is one of the oldest congregations in the County. After the U.S. Civil War, Pine Level was founded as the seat of government for Manatee County, established in 1855. The eastern half of Manatee County became DeSoto County in May 1887—encompassing today's counties of Charlotte, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, and Highlands. About ten miles inside the new County's boundaries, Pine Level served as county seat until voters selected Arcadia in November 1888.

In 1914, tracks for the East and West Coast Railway (E&WCR) were laid between Bradenton and Arcadia, roughly paralleling the route of State Road 70. A town platted as New Pine Level was built near the depot about two miles north of the original Town of Pine Level, so the DeSoto County Board of Public Instruction (today's "School Board") built a new school on N. Florida Ave. that is now a private residence. The original school on Pine Level St. was sold to the church. After a hurricane damaged the second story, it was re-roofed as a one-story sanctuary. The history of the church will be on display before and after the meal in the "archives room" in the Fellowship Hall.

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.**

Board of Directors Meeting:

Monday, Sept. 16

DeSoto Memorial Hospital -

McSwain Room—12 noon

(Florida Cracker Meal is our Member meeting this month.)



Attendees at the 2023 Florida Cracker Meal packed the Fellowship Hall of Pine Level Church and enjoyed a meal of traditional foods.

—Photo courtesy Ed Horne

A Message From The President

Dear Members:

The DeSoto County Historical Society is hosting a Florida Cracker Meal at the historic Pine Level Church on September 28, 2024, from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm. This event will include a presentation on the history of the Pine Level Church and a screening of a historic silent film. It is a great opportunity for members who cannot attend the noon meetings to participate and enjoy some local history.

Pine Level Church has a rich history dating back to the 1800's when Pine Level was a bustling community in DeSoto County. The church continues to be a significant part of the community.

This is a great way to connect with local history and enjoy a unique meal.

Sincerely,

Adrian H. Cline

President, DeSoto County Historical Society

Gratitude For Gifts

Thanks to the following for their generous donations:
Judy Schaefer for a 2016 DeSoto County Fair Program; and Cindy McLeod Ely for a roll of brown mailing paper, clothesline and clothespins, some round-to-its, and old-fashion toys including a propeller toy, whimmy-diddle, and thumb-twiddler.

Thanks to Linda and Vernon Keen for making a \$100 donation to the Society's Education Fund in memory of Ray Smith and a donation of \$100.00 in memory of Jewel McLeod. Thanks also to Maria Hagg for a \$20.00 donation through PayPal accessed from the Society's Website.



SAVE THE DATE!

DeSoto County Historical Society
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Holiday Tour of Historic Homes and Buildings
Saturday, December 14, 2024
4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Please join us for this tour of local Historic Homes and Buildings decorated for the holidays! The locations are kept secret until the night of the tour; you are sure to enjoy this wonderful and festive exploration of some of Arcadia's historic treasures, with knowledgeable docents at each stop. This year the tour will begin and end at the Family Service Center, 310 W Whidden Street. You will board a bus and be able to get on and off at the various stops, as the buses will circulate around the tour loop.

Tour tickets are \$15.00 each, and will go on sale at our member meeting on Monday, November 18, at noon in the McSwain Room of DeSoto Memorial Hospital. Tickets will also be available through our website, at the museum, and several locations about town, TBA.

For more information see: www.historicdesoto.org
Or call: 863-266-5774 or 863-445-0789

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

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Manatee Genealogical Society – Zoom meeting

Your society members are invited to attend the meeting and program on Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 pm EST. Our program speaker, Dustin Axe, will present virtually **“Getting Started in Family History Education”**.

It can be extremely rewarding for young students to learn about themselves and their family history, yet genealogy is a challenging subject to teach and learn. Hear the Youth Genealogy Curriculum Coordinator Dustin Axe discuss the unique challenges and opportunities that genealogy presents educators of all kinds.

Guests attending via Zoom must register at least one day in advance by emailing: info@mgsfl.org. The Zoom meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m. EST.

Mahler To Present Arcadia History At The Tampa Bay History Center

Carol Mahler will participate in the Tampa Bay History Center's "Living History Saturday" from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Oct. 26. At 12:30 p.m., 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. she will give a 10-30 minute presentation, and otherwise will be available in the galleries for informal storytelling. The title of her formal presentation is "Remembering the RAF Cadets In Arcadia."

Before the U.S. entered World War II, Royal Air Force cadets trained in the U.S. under what was known as the "Arnold Plan." In March of 1941, the Riddle Aeronautical Institute opened in Arcadia, Florida, and the first RAF cadets arrived in June. Arcadians—including Helen Scott (1916-1977)—welcomed the cadets into their lives. Carol Mahler will portray her and share her scrapbook as well as information about 23 cadets buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery.

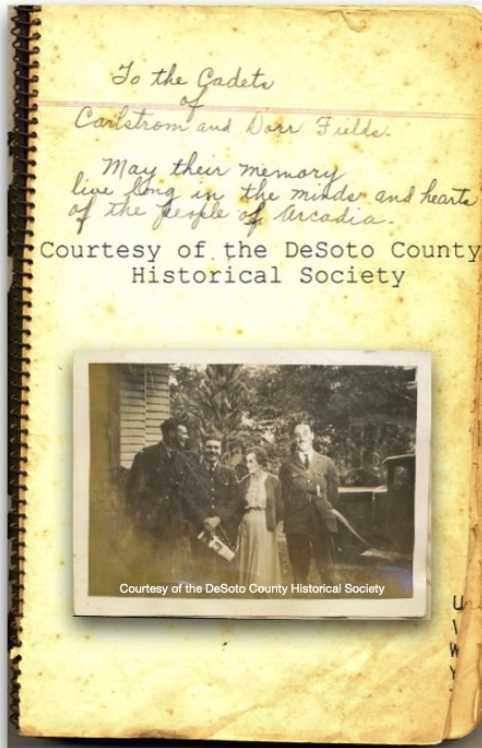
Born in 1916 to John L. Scott and Elizabeth Chandler Scott, Helen grew up in Arcadia and graduated in 1935 from DeSoto County High School. That year, she, her mother, and sister Johnnie Scott Turner won a contest for their singing. Helen kept a scrapbook of the Royal Air Force (RAF) cadets she knew and later of U.S. cadets who trained at Carlstrom Field. Her nephew John Scott "Scotty" Turner and his wife Jane Raulerson Turner donated digital images of the scrapbook to the Society, and Carol will use a facsimile copy of the scrapbook in her presentation.

In 1954, Helen married Raymond C. Strunk (1917-1998) who graduated in 1935 from South High School in Minneapolis. During World War II, he served in the U.S. Navy Air Corps and then transferred to the U.S. Air Force until he retired in 1973. They lived in Mary Esther, Florida, not far from the Eglin Air Force Base.

Arcadia History Included In PhD Dissertation

Thanks to Carol Mahler for providing Daniel Heiser with information and digital copies from the Howard and Velma Melton Historical Research Library about the Royal Air Force (RAF) cadets who trained in Riddle Aeronautical Institute at Carlstrom Field in DeSoto County and those cadets who are buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Arcadia. Heiser is writing his dissertation for a PhD in History from Liberty University. It "is a focus on how the RAF changed from the First World War to the Second in technology, aviation technology, and tactics."

A photograph of RAF Cadet Veron C. Bull and two other student pilots with Mrs. J. L. "Liz" Scott is superimposed on a digital copy of the dedication page of the scrapbook that Helen Scott kept of the cadets she knew during their training at Carlstrom Field during World War II.



History Around Town

We are grateful to Carol Mahler for writing and designing an illustrated timeline of the history of Arcadia that is now on display in **Florida Farmhouse Coffee Shop**, 103 W. Oak St. Owner Charity Reesor asked for the timeline because so many people visiting her shop asked about the City's history.

Carol also wrote and designed a history of 127 W. Oak St. for **Glass, Antique or Not**, a business member of the Society. Shop Manager Toni Badovinac asked for the history to post outside her store to engage, educate, and entertain visitors.

A couple visiting the **Florida Farmhouse Coffee Shop** in the Rosin Arcade reads about the history of Arcadia that Carol Mahler wrote and designed as a timeline. Photograph courtesy of Charity Reesor.



20th Anniversary of Hurricane Charley Exhibit @ DeSoto County Library

Due to its popularity, the Society's 20th Anniversary of Hurricane Charley exhibit will continue at the DeSoto County Library until Sept. 30—so check it out! Carol Mahler and Karen Smoke will “refresh” the exhibit with some additional material, and there's still time for you to submit your memories, photographs or other images to be included.

Thanks to all those who shared their memories and experiences at the Aug. 19 meeting of the Society: Kathy Bryce, Ann Bursa, Adrian Cline, René Collins, Roseann Collins, Nancy “Eric” Erickson, Jeff Griffis, Nancy Humphrey, Vernon Keen, Elizabeth Kenney, Carol Mahler, Pam Miller, Stella Parker, Karen Smoke, Terry Stewart, and Luke Wilson.

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

Bell Tower Cupola Featured in Park Design

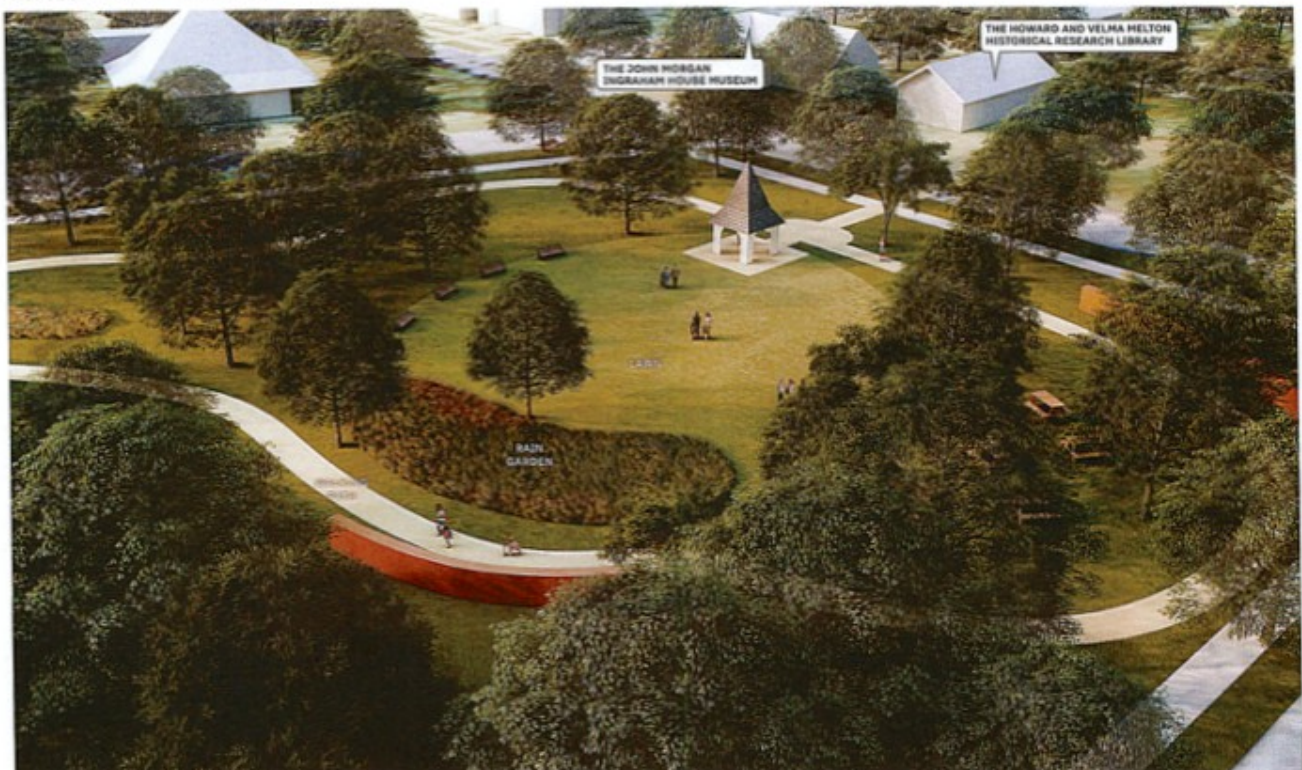
The City of Arcadia showcased the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Recovery and Resiliency Partnership Project (R2P2) Conceptual Designs for seven improvement projects and received public comments on the ideas at the “What Is Main Street?” event held at the Oak Park Inn on Aug. 29.

One of the improvement projects is the park across Whidden St. from the Museum and Research Library, and the proposal placed the bell tower cupola from the Nocatee Baptist Church as part of the design along with a walking trail, wall of history, and “rain gardens”—to help disperse the stormwater that sometimes causes Jordan Branch to flood.

The City will choose one or more projects and then seek funding.

Arcadia Civic League Park

PROPOSED DESIGN - PERSPECTIVE



Aug. 31 Work Day At The Museum

We appreciate Carol Mahler and Col. Ron Baynes, U.S. Army, retired, for organizing a work day to prepare the Museum for re-opening to the public after being closed for June, July, and August. We thank the following DeSoto High School JROTC Cadets for volunteering: Jessie Benitez, Dezmond Brown, Kimberly Galindo, Saryah Grant, Regina Hudson, Juan Mendoza, Maggie Mootispaw, Geovani Orozco, Katherine Orozco, and Cristina Santiz.

We are grateful to Vernon and Linda Keen for bringing their new pressure washer and using it to clean the north side of the museum, and to Jeff Griffis, Juan Mendoza, and Dezmond Brown who also helped with that task. We are grateful to Jeff for mowing the lawn before the work day, bringing his tree saw, and using it to trim the palm fronds and low-hanging limbs in the mango, oak, and ear pod trees. We thank the students for working with Jeff to move all the cut limbs and fronds to the street.

We are grateful to Col. Baynes, Carol, and Chelsea Palmer for weeding the gardens and accomplishing other yard work along with Jessenia Benitez, Dezmond Brown, Juan Mendoza, Geovani Orozco, and Katherine Orozco.

We appreciate Norma Banas and Nancy “Eric” Erickson for supervising the students working inside the Museum who dusted, vacuumed, swept, shook quilts and rugs, washed fixtures, and more: Kimberly Galindo, Saryah Grant, Regina Hudson, Maggie Mootispaw, and Cristina Santiz.

Thanks to Kathy Bryce for working in the Research Library and to Carol for making sure everyone had cold water or Gatorade and plenty of snacks.



On Aug. 31, the JROTC cadets pose on the front porch of the John Morgan

Ingraham House Museum, from left, bottom row, Cristina Santiz, Kimberly Galindo, Katherine Orozco, and Jessenia Benitez; from left, top row: Juan Mendoza, Maggie Mootispaw, Regina Hudson, Saryah Grant, Geovani Orozco, Dezmond Brown, and Col. Baynes.

Right from top—From left, Nancy “Eric” Erickson with Saryah, Regina and Maggie. Col. Baynes with Jessenia, Geovani and Katherine. Chelsea Palmer, Dezmond, and Juan. Norma Banas, Cristina and Kimberly. When everyone else took a break from using the pressure washer, Linda Keen started to use the machine to on the Museum’s north side.



—Photos by Carol Mahler