



DeSoto County Historical Society News

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

www.historicdesoto.org

June 2024

This issue sponsored by - Michelle, Dan, & Dow in loving memory
of our parents, Eddie & Iris Garner.

Juneteenth At The DeSoto County Library—

Wed, June 19, 1:30
p.m.

Also known as Juneteenth Independence Day, Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Liberation Day, and Emancipation Day, Juneteenth is an elision of June 19, the day in 1865 when news of the Emancipation Proclamation finally reached Texas.

On September 22, 1862, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America, had issued "The Emancipation Proclamation" stating, "That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free."

More than two years passed before news of the Emancipation Proclamation was received by African-Americans in Texas when U.S. Major General Gordon Granger and his regiment arrived in Galveston on June 19 and announced that slavery had been abolished.

The first official Juneteenth celebration was held in 1866 in Texas and its observance spread across the United States from then to the present time. In 2021, the event became a federal holiday, and this year, Debra Clifton invites everyone to a Juneteenth Program at 1:30 p.m. at the DeSoto County Library: "Come let us journey together in unity to get more understanding of the importance of this celebrated day."



Photo provided—Debra Clifton

Member Meeting:

Our June Program Is A Field Trip

Mon., June 24, 2024

Meet at the John Morgan Ingraham
House Museum at 10:30 a.m.

We will carpool first to Wauchula for a
"Dutch-treat" lunch at a local eatery.
Then go to the Florida Cracker Trail
Museum in Pioneer Park in Zolfo Springs.

57th anniversary open house from 1:00
to 3:00 p.m.
Return to Arcadia approximately
4 p.m.

More about the
Florida Cracker Trail Museum
on next page



Photo—<https://images.app.goo.gl/fSmUPPSRX47qJ7iNA>

More about Society activities at the
Library on next page.

Florida Cracker Trail Museum

Founded by the Peace River Valley Historical Society (1964-1988) in 1967, the Florida Cracker Trail Museum in Pioneer Park in Zolfo Springs has collected more than 4,000 items related to pioneer-era Florida history. When the PRVHS disbanded in 1988, the museum closed. Hardee County reopened the Museum, but closed it again for lack of funds. Cargill Fertilizer donated \$50,000 to construct an addition to the museum, and the expanded facility opened in 1991.

The Pioneer Village began when a cane-grinding shed was installed followed by the donation of a 1914 locomotive and the construction of a "pole barn" to protect it. An 1897 blacksmith shop was reassembled in the park, and in 1979, Wendell M. Smith donated the 100-year-old Hart Cabin, where W. H. Hart and Mary Jane Hart raised their six children, and it was relocated to the park. A smokehouse was built. Two wagons dating from the 1880s, an 1886 post office and an outhouse were also moved to the park.



Above photos—<https://images.app.goo.gl/FkFWAYeNNsrGx8Va6>,
<https://images.app.goo.gl/rHmg3m9E4KJ3oXiF6>



Joyce Tullis, Hardee County Museum Coordinator, shows off a plat directory for Hardee County the Society donated.

Historical Adventure Begins At Your Library

The Society is partnering with the DeSoto County Library's Summer Reading Program, and the theme is "Adventure Begins At Your Library." At noon on Tues., Wed., and Thurs., a hot lunch will be available for children, and at 1:00 p.m., a program featuring a story and a hands-on activity will follow.

On June 18, 19, and 20, the Society will conduct the 1:00 program featuring "trains of DeSoto County" on Tues., quilts and quilting patterns on Wed., and local legends on Thurs. Then on Sat., June 22, the DeSoto County Mobile Library will be at the John Morgan Ingraham House Museum, which will be open from 10:00 a.m. to noon and offer some special hands-on activities.



To volunteer contact Carol Mahler, 863-445-0789

desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Text or leave a message on the Society phone:

863-266-5774

Society Donates \$1,000.00 To A-Team

Thanks to Stella Parker for her suggestion that the Society donate \$1,000.00 to the DeSoto High School Academic Team to compete in the National Academic Quiz Tournament (NAQT) in Atlanta, Georgia, during the Memorial Day weekend. They were ranked 293 of 320 teams. The team from Barrington High School, Illinois, won first prize; St. Mark's School of Texas in Dallas second, and Livingston High School, New Jersey third (naqt.com).

In the past 12 years, the team has consistently reached the final round of the Commissioners Academic Challenge (CAC), winning second place four times, and missing first place twice by one question! This year, they secured a place in the top 15% with their performance at the Manatee Mayhem Invitational in Bradenton, and so competed in the NAQT for the first time.

Stella Parker presented the check to Andrew Hagen, Coach of the DeSoto High School Academic Team.



A Message From The President

Dear Members:

July 4th, also known as **Independence Day**, holds great significance in the United States. Here are some reasons why it is celebrated:

- 1. Declaration of Independence:** On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress adopted the **Declaration of Independence**, officially declaring the thirteen American colonies' independence from British rule. This historic document, drafted primarily by Thomas Jefferson, marked the birth of a new nation.
- 2. Symbol of Freedom:** Independence Day represents freedom, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It commemorates the hard-fought struggle for self-governance and individual rights.
- 3. Traditions:** People celebrate with fireworks, parades, barbecues, and patriotic displays. It is a time for family gatherings, picnics, and community events.
- 4. National Unity:** July 4th brings people together, regardless of their backgrounds, to celebrate their shared identity as Americans.

Remember, it is more than just a day off; it is a celebration of the principles that define the United States.

Sincerely,

Adrian H. Cline

President, DeSoto County Historical Society

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
The Howard and Velma Melton Historical
Research Library in the Ingraham Seed House
120 W. Whidden Street

Contact Information

Editor: dchsocietyfl@gmail.com

Historian: Carol Mahler, 863-445-0789

desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

President: President: Adrian Cline, 863-494-5758
adriancline@outlook.com

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.

We Need You On July 4th

The Society will be walking in the annual Independence Day Parade with our banner, 38-star U.S. flag (the flag used in 1887 when DeSoto County was established), explanatory signs, and our whip crackers. If you would like to participate in the fun,

please call or text
Carol Mahler at
863-445-0789.

When the Town of Arcadia was incorporated in 1886 and DeSoto County was established in 1887, the U.S. flag had only 38 stars as seen in this replica carried on July 4, 2017, by



friends and members of the DeSoto County Historical Society: Elizabeth Barrera, Jose Barrera, Tonya Bordner, Milagros Jacobo, Rosa Jacobo, Rachel Ruiz, Camille Ruiz, Sophia Ruiz, and Allyssa Ruiz.

—Photograph courtesy of Carol Mahler.



Hands-On History at the Arcadia Housing Authority

Thanks to Carol Mahler for organizing the Suncoast Remake Learning Days activity “Hands-On History” at the Arcadia Housing Authority on May 1! We appreciate Adrian Cline for supervising cane pole fishing, Nancy “Eric” Erickson and Carol Mahler for encouraging the bucket brigade, Forest Reynolds for helping children juice oranges, Karen Smoke for facilitating dip-pen writing, and Stella Parker for explaining the history of—and how to use—the manual typewriter.

We are grateful to Becky Sue Mercer for hosting us in her lovely facility, Kathy Severson of the Family Service Center for donating ice and Joshua Citrus for oranges. We only planned for 60 children, and we had more than 100 participate—those who live in the neighborhood and the students from Louis and Gloria Flanzer Boys and Girls Club.



Clockwise from top left: Bucket brigade, dip pen writing, manual typewriter, cane pole fishing, more bucket brigade.

—photos by Carol Mahler

Suncoast Remake Learning Days

We are grateful The Patterson Foundation (TPF) for inviting the Society to participate in their Suncoast Remake Learning Days for the third year in a row! TPF initially supported our efforts with a donation of \$3,000.00, and then we received the following letter on June 4, 2024:

“We are appreciative of your participation in the third Suncoast Remake Learning Days supported by The Patterson Foundation. Your enthusiasm, leadership, and willingness to connect with the children and families of our region is inspiring. This year, Suncoast Remake Learning Days consisted of 304 events across four counties in 15 days with over attendance topping 36,500 people!

“After reviewing the initial Letter of Agreements and event attendance surveys, we have found that your event attendance has qualified your organization for additional event support.

“The enclosed check is \$1,000 in additional event support dollars . . .

“Again, thank you so much for your participating in Suncoast Remake Learning Days!



“Sincerely,
Beth Duda,
Director
Suncoast
Campaign
for Grade-
Level
Reading”



Donations

Thanks to following people for their generous donations: Hal Thompson for a directional sign for the 1929 All-Florida Chautauqua; and Louise Riley for donating a framed sample of tatting for the Museum.



At Pioneer Day 2024, Hal Thompson donated a directional sign for the All-Florida Chautauqua held Jan. 17 through Mar. 7, 1929, in the 4600-seat amphitheater built on property now owned by Peace River Campground.



Louise Riley (1956-2024) has demonstrated the art of tatting for many years during our annual Pioneer Day, and this year, she donated a sample of her work for display in the Museum.

—Photos this page by
Carol Mahler

In Memoriam: Eva Louise Riley

Born on Dec. 30, 1956 in Tampa, Florida, to Charles and Isabelle McLeod, Louise McLeod Riley passed away on May 20, 2024. A 1974 graduate of DeSoto High School, she was a long-time volunteer who demonstrated tatting at our Pioneer Day. She is survived by her son, Christopher McLeod, and the Society extends our sympathy to him.

In Memoriam: Dan Carroll Shelfer

Born on Aug. 1, 1939, in the Joshua Creek area to Arthur and Martha Ella Carroll Shelfer, Dan Carroll Shelfer graduated from DeSoto County High School in 1958 and served in the United States National Guard for eight years. In 1959, he married his high school sweetheart Carolyn Head Shelfer, and they had two children, Dan Kevin Shelfer and Duane Carey Shelfer.

A fourth-generation citrus grower, Dan was also a cattle owner, cowboy, and hauled cows in a semi-truck all over the country. He was an accomplished welder, farmer, and rib cook. His hobbies included hunting, fishing, and lobstering with his family and friends.

The Society offers our condolences to his family, especially Lynn and Kevin Shelfer, owners and operators of Joshua Citrus, a business member of the Society.

National Historic Preservation Month Open House

We appreciate Carol Mahler and Nancy “Eric” Erickson for setting up for the National Historic Preservation Month Open House from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. on Thurs., May 2, at the Museum. Thanks to those who attended the event: Arcadia Main Street Director Pam Ames, Bill Hackney, Deputy Mayor Keith Keene, Cindy Keene, Mayor Bob Heine, Samantha Poe, Allen Reesor, Karen Smoke, and Florida Cracker Trail Museum Coordinator Joyce Tullis. Both Keene and Heine mentioned the event in their comments during the May 7th meeting of the City Council.

We are grateful to Kathy Bryce and Carol Mahler for giving tours of the Museum to those who attended. Thanks to Kathy, Eric, and Elizabeth Kenney for cleaning up after the event.

From left: Eric Erickson, Bob Heine, Samantha Poe, and Joyce Tullis at our our National Historic Preservation Month Open House.



News From Our Sister Societies

Your society members are invited to attend the **Manatee Genealogical Society** zoom meeting and program on Tuesday, July 9, 2024, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm EST. Our program speaker, Melissa Barker, will present on "It's Not All Online: Researching in Archives". Register by emailing info@mgsfl.org.



History Park Sunday Artisans Market

9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Year-round!
501 Shreve St.

What a great way to spend the morning!

Visit Punta Gorda's only weekly Artisans Market, held every Sunday in the History Park. You will discover local artists selling their creations, as well as our resident artists in the History Park Artisan Village, where the Peace River Woodturners, the Punta Gorda Fiber Arts Group, and Southwest Florida Potters Guild each work out of one of our historic buildings. Their buildings are open to the public during market hours on Sunday, as well as during Music in the Park and other events.

In addition to our artisans, the Sunday market vendors include local providers of farm fresh produce and eggs, locally hived honey, home baked artisan breads, goat cheese, and other goodies. Come check out our wonderful vendors!

Support Local Businesses!



MANATEE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Manatee County has a rich history from the Spanish landing of 1539 to the thriving Sun Coast area of today.



Speaker: Melissa Barker (presenting virtually)

"It's Not All Online: Researching in Archives"

Zoom Meeting

Tuesday, July 9, 2024

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. EST



"Statistics say that there is less than 10% of all the world's genealogical records are online". This statement has been said by many genealogy professionals and archivists, including myself. The truth be told that percentage is probably more like 3%-5%. As genealogists, we are living in a time when there are huge amounts of genealogy records being put online daily. We can do research in the comfort of our own homes with our pajamas & fuzzy slippers until 3 o'clock in the morning if we want to. Unfortunately, we have been lulled into thinking that "everything is online", when most of all genealogy records are sitting in repositories waiting to be discovered by the genealogist. This presentation will show why you need to contact or visit an archive & seek out those records that are not online.

Melissa Barker is a Certified Archives Manager and Public Historian currently working at the Houston County, Tennessee Archives & Museum. She is affectionally known as *The Archive Lady* to the genealogy community. She lectures, teaches, and writes about the genealogy research process, researching in archives and records preservation. She conducts virtual presentations across the United States and other countries for various genealogy groups and societies. She writes a popular blog entitled [A Genealogist in the Archives](#) and is a well-known published book reviewer. She has been a Professional Genealogist for the past 20 years with expertise in Tennessee records, and been researching her own family history for the past 34 years.

Following the program and questions: There will be a moderated open discussion period relative to genealogical topics. Attendees are encouraged to ask questions on issues pertaining to the program.

For more information:

Email: info@mgsfl.org

MGS meetings are hybrid for November-May.

Internet website: www.mgsfl.org

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/ManateeGenealogicalSociety

Monthly Membership Meetings: generally held first Tuesday of the month.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, August 6, 2024

USPS: Manatee Genealogical Society
PO Box 1194, Bradenton, FL 3420

STAY IN THE KNOW!

Turner Center Terrific Tuesdays ARE BACK!
For details and many other community events follow this link to the Visit DeSoto Community Calendar:

<https://visitdesoto.com/events>

Use this link to submit an event:

<https://visitdesoto.com/events/submit/>



Proposal to Nominate a Historic District Composed of Historic Structures in Southwest Arcadia to the National Register of Historic Places

At a special meeting on June 6, the City of Arcadia's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) considered a proposal to nominate a historic district composed of historic structures in southwest Arcadia to the National Register of Historic Places.

Residents of the area—and others—spoke both in favor and against the suggestion. At first, the majority seemed to favor the honor of representing Florida to the nation by listing in the National Register, but toward the end of the meeting, residents voiced concerns about not wanting to abide by the requirements of the City's historic preservation ordinance.

In the end, the HPC voted to recommend the new historic district to the City Council, and the recommendation may be presented to the Council at the July 16 meeting. The public is welcome to share their comments at 6:00 p.m. at the July 2nd and/or July 16th meetings.

Map images courtesy PaleoWest.

The boundary of the proposed Southwest Historic District—except the portion crossing Peace River will not be included—is shown in blue on both maps. The original district is shown in purple outlined in yellow. Yellow line along 17 south represents the historic railroad easement.

STAY IN THE KNOW!

City website:

<https://arcadia-fl.gov/>

Find Agendas and minutes here:

<https://arcadia-fl.gov/documents/>

Contact your City Council
members here:

<https://arcadia-fl.gov/city-council/>

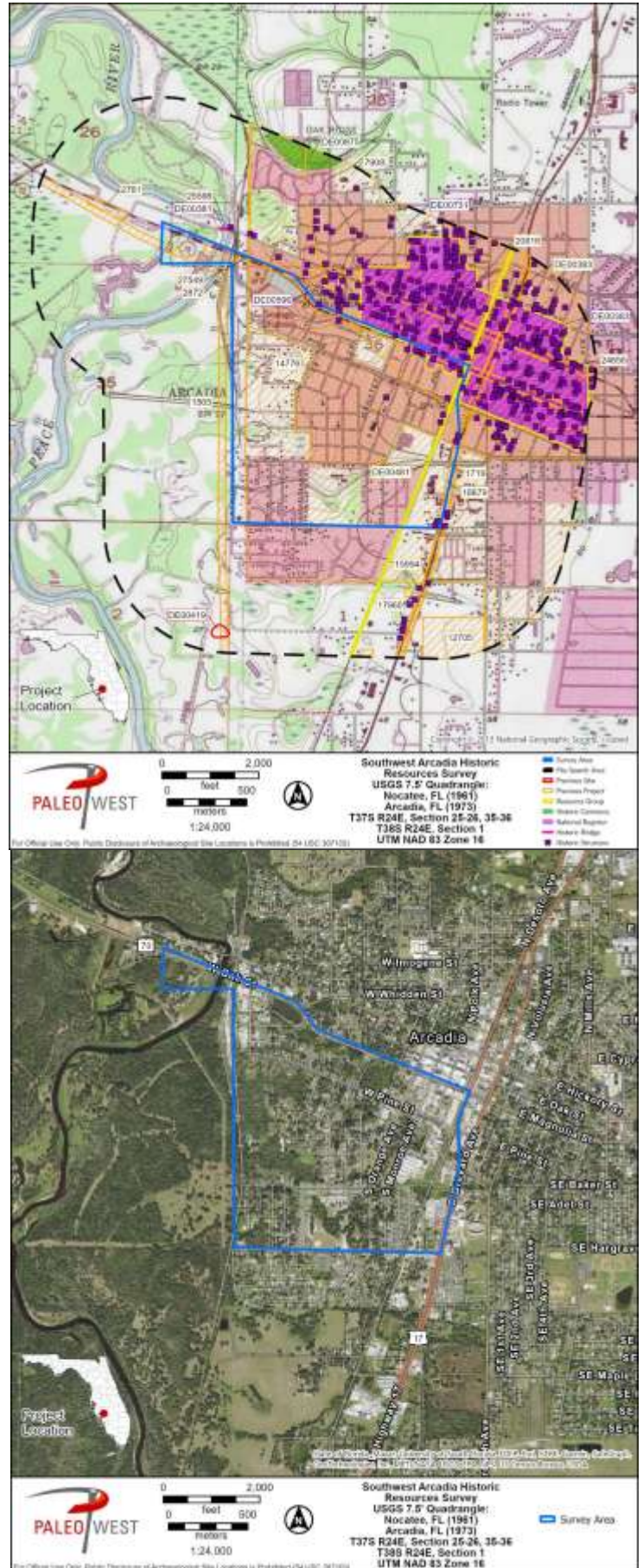
Contact City Clerk's Office: Peggy Delaney

pdelaney@arcadia-fl.gov +1863-494-4114, Ext 301

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It was a beautiful morning at the British Memorial ceremony hosted by [Arcadia Rotary Club Dist 6960](#). It was a pleasure to participate in honoring the 23 British pilots who passed while training for WWII.



Photos this page courtesy Michael Wolfe and Karen Smoke