



# DeSoto County Historical Society News

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

[www.historicdesoto.org](http://www.historicdesoto.org)

October 2023

This issue sponsored by - **3PR - People for Protecting Peace River.**

## Third Annual Florida Cracker Meal an Outstanding Success



Every year, the Society holds one meeting in the evening especially for those folks who can't attend our luncheon meetings, and this year, we brought back our Florida Cracker Meal (FCM) as that meeting. Never intended as a fundraiser, FCM became one this year because everyone generously donated the food and its preparation! First and foremost, we thank Stella Parker, for serving as chairperson of the FCM Committee, and René Collins, Linda Keen, and Vernon Keen, for serving as committee members. Such excellent leadership ensured that our event would be a success.

We are grateful to Jimmy Fussell of Fussell Meats, 2039 SE Carlstrom Field Rd., for donating the pork steaks! Please tell him how much we appreciate his generosity when you purchase your meat! We appreciate Steve Fussell for serving as grillmaster and cooking to perfection all of the pork steaks.

So many people praised the delicious food, and we thank the following Society members for their generous donations of comestibles and their preparation: Norma Banas, Ruth Reynolds Dunn, Cindy McLeod Ely, Jeff Griffis, Ellen Hutson, Linda Keen, Vernon Keen, Marsha Kransdorf, Carol Mahler, Pam Miller, Stella Parker, and

—Con't next page

The Society is grateful to Pine Level Church for hosting the 3rd Annual Florida Cracker Meal in their Fellowship Hall.

—Above photo by Ed Horne

**More Florida Cracker Meal photos on next and last page.**

Breanne Simpson cleaned Bone Mizell's grave cover and headstone in preparation for a new coat of stucco thanks to Mike Tyson.

—Photo courtesy of Carol Mahler.



Member Meeting:

\*\*\*NOW ON THIRD MONDAY\*\*\*

Monday, October 16

**“Grave Maid”**

**Breanne Simpson**

DeSoto Memorial Hospital -

**McSwain Room**

Room open at 11:30 a.m.

Meeting 12 noon

Sixth generation Floridian and lifelong Lee County resident **Breanne Simpson** will talk about her “Grave Maid” business of cleaning tombstones and her family members buried in DeSoto County. She developed her profession thanks to her grandfather Freddie Wayne Boatwright who used to take her to Oak Hill Cemetery on weekends and tell her stories about their family members buried there. Enchanted with cemeteries, she started cleaning her family’s gravestones and discovered how much she enjoyed the work and researching those interred. A member of the Southwest Florida Historical Society Board of Directors, she is training to be a cemetery tour guide for True Tours of Fort Myers.

—Con't from previous page

Luke Wilson. Thanks to Cindy, we had jars of cream and a butter churning demonstration, and everyone had to



Entries for the Arcadia Albritton Coker Cake Contest filled an entire table!

“shake, shake, shake” to make their own butter for their corn and cornbread.

Enjoyment of the food was rivaled only by delectation of the cakes (and two pies) for dessert. We are grateful to the following bakers: Geraldine Barnwell, Kathy Bryce, Hans Bursa, Amber Collins, Cindy Ely, Kathy Mizell Kasper,

Michelle Miller, Chelsea Palmer, Linda Reesor, Janie Woods, and Judy Wertz-Strickland. Michelle Miller won the award for most original cake, and Kathy Mizell Kasper won the award for most traditional cake. Thanks to Jesi Cline of Batter Up Bakery/Rosé Cafe for judging the contest and— with Marsha’s help—slicing the cakes.

As we had enough cakes for dessert, we had a silent auction for the two amazing cakes baked by Cindy Kinard: Coconut (won by Jim Potter) and Chocolate Swamp Cabbage (won by Asena Mott).

We appreciate Carol for sharing the history of the Florida Cracker foods on the menu and to Luke for entertaining with his music and taking photos. We thank René, Eric, Linda, Vernon, Carol, and Stella for setting up the Fellowship Hall; Cindy for decorating the tables with her own items and artifacts from the Museum and donating disposable tablecloths. We appreciate Kathy Griffin, Allie Jane Griffin, and Sydalee Parker who helped out wherever needed. We are grateful to René for donating the disposable dishes and tableware.

During the event, Pine Level Church opened their Archives Room for those who wanted to learn more history about the church and congregation.



—Photos this page courtesy of Luke Wilson



Thanks to Pastor Ed Horne for saying the blessing and leading the “Pledge of Allegiance” at the start of the 3rd Annual Florida Cracker Meal.

Thanks to President Norma Banas giving a wonderful welcome speech plus greeting everyone and taking their tickets. She placed all tickets in the raffle basket, and Pastor Ed Horne drew one ticket for the door prize, won by Bonnie Malloy. She quipped that she would not select the \$25.00 gift certificate to Radio Shack that she had donated! We are grateful to Michelle Potter of Crews Bank and Trust, Member FDIC, for selling tickets.

We congratulated Pine Level Church on the centennial anniversary of their purchase of the old Pine Level School that still serves as their sanctuary. Thanks to Pastor Ed Horne for saying “the prayer and pledge” at the start of the meal, and to Connie Bateman for a brief history of the church. We appreciate the looping presentation of slides about the history of the church and having access to the archives room to learn more about the church’s history. We are grateful to Pastor Ed for answering questions and helping out—plus taking photos—and to the whole church family for welcoming us to use their commodious Fellowship Hall for our event. The Society donated \$300.00 to Pine Level Church.

Those attending the event were so generous to give nearly \$300.00 (we rounded our check up to that) in the “tip jars” for the members of the Pine Level Youth Group who helped in the kitchen and with serving and clean-up: Mailie Bonville, Juan Ramirez, and Maggie Reynard. Thanks to them and to Youth Group Leaders Lorelle and Edward Reynard!

Thanks to Kathy Bryce for setting up, working, and cleaning up a Historical Society table to sell our books and postcards; Elizabeth Kenney for keeping accounts for the scholarship fund and membership; René and Eric for inviting everyone to donate to the scholarship; and to Elizabeth and Stella for inventorying and packing up the Museum artifacts used to decorate the tables.

### A Message From The President

Thank you everyone who attended our Cracker Meal on Sept. 30 and all who supported it with donations and good wishes. It was wonderful seeing people catch up with each other, see the enjoyment of a real Florida meal, and feel the support and interest in the Historical Society. We gained new friends and new members and indications of more who wish to volunteer.

It is time to select your new Board of Directors I have chosen to not run again, but wish to express my heartfelt thanks for being allowed to be your President for the past two years. I have worked with the Society in just about every capacity since joining and plan to continue to do whatever is asked of me. The Board has been like a family and I will miss being part of it, but all of you are also friends and I know we will continue to meet as volunteers and participants in events. This is a great organization and I am proud to be a part of it. Thank you all for supporting me and the Society.

*Norma*

### 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

### Contact Information

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### Scholarship Fundraiser

We are so grateful to all those who donated cash to our scholarship fund: Jim Brewer, Ann Bursa, Kathy Bryce, Amber Collins, Collins Management, René Collins, Crankshaw Veterinary Services, Mary Dow Realty, Easy Mini-Storage, Rodger Fender, Florida Outdoor Properties, Betty Hollingsworth, Ed Horne, Ellen Hutson, Linda and Vernon Keen, Dr. Michael Krzyzkowski, Elton Langford, Maassen Oil, Carol Mahler, Mid-Florida Credit Union, Jim and Michelle Potter, Allen and Linda Reesor, St. Edmund's Church, Paul Bennet Seusy, Karen Smoke, Terry Stewart, Linda and Jerry Waters, and David Williams.

We thank all those businesses and individuals who donated "thank-you" gifts for the scholarship fund. Please let them know how much we appreciate their generosity when you do business with them: Advance Auto Parts, AutoZone Auto Parts, Arcadia Golf Course, Norma Banas, Before & After Beauty Salon (Missy Fountain), Before & After Beauty Salon (Judy Schaefer), Mary Margaret's Tea & Biscuit, Biggar and Biggar Antique Mall, Blossoms Beauty & Boutique, Connie Dillander, Groovy Smoothie, Judy's Jungle, Martin's Country Market, MyShelly's Kitchen, Oak Street Deli, Stella Parker, Radio Shack, Roseanne Collins, Sadie Mae's Chocolates, Sun Bulb, Terra Fried Chicken, Treasure Alley, Valley Florist, and Yellow Deli.

At the Florida Cracker Meal, the Society presented René Collins with the "Outstanding Fundraiser" award because she requested and received so many donations—more than \$1,000 in cash and 22 or more thank-you gifts: we appreciate you, René! We also thank Carol for asking for and receiving about ten thank-you gifts.

**Thank you gifts are still available, see page 6.**

### Gratitude For Gifts

Thanks to Myron Wickey for donating two seeders—machines that plant seeds mechanically—to the Society. We appreciate Forest Reynolds for donating several hundred glass bottles of all sizes and shapes. The Museum saved a few for our collection and sold the rest—thanks to Forest for donating the proceeds of the sale to the Society.

### History On The Air

Thanks to Mark Anderson for talking about local history with Carol Mahler on Sept. 14 during his "Mark in the Morning" show on Classic County 104.5 FM, Arcadia's only radio station. Tune in at 8:00 a.m. on **Thurs., Oct. 12**, as they discuss bygone years and more.



## September 16 Work Day

Thanks to Carol Mahler and LTC Ron Baynes for organizing another work day at the Museum and Research Library. Col. Baynes and Cadets Joel Camacho and Immanuel Knight worked under the Museum to secure the new sheathing boards and furring strips. The other cadets weeded flower beds and spread mulch and cleared the weeds and vines from under the copse on Monroe Ave. and along the north fence.

We are also grateful for volunteers: Norma Banas, Amber Collins, Nancy “Eric” Erickson, Carol, Pam Miller, and Chelsea Palmer. Kathy Bryce worked in the Research Library and answered questions.

① —Photographs courtesy of Carol Mahler.



Above: LTC Baynes, Lizet Velazquez, Isabella Ayala, Nayeli Garcia, Angelica McLucas, Sanora Quezada, Jasmine Daniel, Joel Camacho, Immanuel McKnight, River Rhodes, Katherine Orozco, and Airis Paniagua gathered for a group photo at the end of the work day.

**Photos at left:** 1. Pam Miller and Angelica McLucas clean the cowboy bathtub while in the background, Jasmine Daniel returns from hauling weeds to the trash pile. 2. Immanuel McKnight and Joel Camacho worked with Col. Baynes beneath the Museum to nail the sheathing panels and furring strips to the floor joists. 3. Airis Paniagua, Isabella Ayala, and Nayeli Garcia tackled the weeds under the copse along Monroe Ave. 4. Lizet Velazquez, River Rhodes, and Sanora Quezada weed the garden in front of the Museum while in the background Amber Collins used her weedeater. 5. Chelsea Palmer trimmed and weeded the garden along the curb on Monroe Ave. 6. When he realized he was being photographed, Joel Camacho smiled as he worked under the Museum. 7. Sanora Quezada and Katherine Orozco swept the driveway after weeding.



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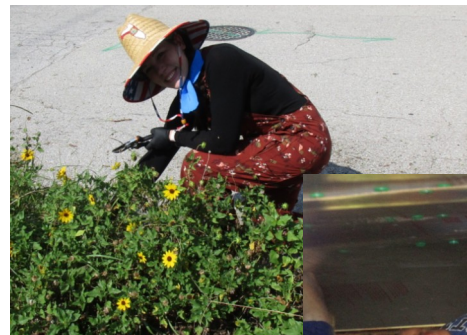
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## News from our Sister Societies—

### Manatee Genealogical Society

In person and Zoom link meeting (Hybrid)

Your society members are invited to attend the Manatee Genealogical Society meeting and program on Tuesday, November 7, 2023, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. EST. Our program speaker, Matt Woodside, will present in person on "Living Off the Land". Matt is the Curator for the Manatee Village Historical Park.

This presentation will explore how settlers in the mid-1800s through the early 1900s took advantage of readily available natural resources of the land and the sea.

Matt lived in South Dakota and California prior to moving to Bradenton 13 years ago. Matt holds a Bachelor of Arts in art and a Master of Arts in museum studies. He worked in the aviation and commercial construction industries before starting his career in museums in 1995.

Members of the public are welcome to attend in-person at the Manatee Central Library, located at 1301 Barcarrota Blvd West, Bradenton, Florida 34205. Guests attending via Zoom must register at least one day in advance by emailing: [info@mgsfl.org](mailto: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.

### Southwest Florida Military Museum

We are grateful to Carol Mahler for delivering many World War II maps and books—some of which were donated by Debi Fugate—to the Southwest Florida Military Museum (SWFMM) located in the Edison Mall in Fort Myers. Filling a single storefront, the Museum highlights the wars that the U.S. has fought with murals, artifacts, and more. Fran Marsino of the Museum said that their reproduction military uniforms are the best sellers.

As a nonprofit organization, SWFMM "honors our veterans, preserves our military history, and educates the public and future generations about our nation's military heritage. We achieve this by preserving and displaying military artifacts and memorabilia, providing educational programs and support veterans owned businesses." <https://swfmm.org>

Thanks to Larry Johnston and Genevieve Bowen of the Southwest Florida Historical Society for meeting Carol at the Museum and accepting our donation of the 1975 and 1976 R. L. Polk And Company Cape Coral, Lehigh Acres, Pine Island Directory, includes Bookeelia, Matlacha, Pine Island and St. James City.



For more information, please visit our website at: <https://mgsfl.org/>.

<https://www.facebook.com/ManateeGenealogicalSociety/>

Right—On behalf of the Southwest Florida Military Museum, Fran Mersino accepted the Society's donations.

Below right—Murals, posters, artifacts of all kinds, weapons, uniforms, and more are on exhibit at the Southwest Florida Military Museum near Entrance F of the Edison Mall in Fort Myers. Below—Carol met Larry Johnston and Genevieve Bowen of the Southwest Florida Historical Society at the Southwest Florida Military Museum, and on behalf of the SFHS, they accepted our Society's donation of two Cape Coral city directories.

—Photographs courtesy of Carol Mahler.



### Thank-You Gifts Available For Scholarship Fund Donations

**For \$10.00 or more donation, you may choose one of the following:** *American South* book, Beach scene or buck print signed by Victor Amemiya, A Florida Highwaymen 2006 Calendar signed by Artist Robert L. Lewis, *Moments of Discovery: Adventures With American Birds* book, My Family Register book, *Old South* book, *Great Trail Ride* book, OR *Tramp Artist: The Life of Robert Webb, Jr.*

**For \$15.00 or more donation, you may choose a** framed reproduction of the famous 1907 print: "Lee and His Generals."

**For \$20.00 or more donation, you may choose one of the following:** Blossoms Beauty & Boutique gift certificate, "Ringling Golden Jubilee" photograph by Edward J. Kelty photo copy, Rotarian 100th Anniversary magazine in sealed plastic bag, OR Treasure Alley gift card.

**For a \$25.00 or more donation, you may choose one of the following:** Advance Auto Parts gift card, AutoZone Auto Parts gift card, Before & After Beauty Salon (Missy Fountain) gift certificate, Before & After Beauty Salon (Missy Fountain) gift certificate, Before & After Beauty Salon (Judy Schaefer) gift certificate, Bulldog Rootbeer Bottlecap handmade necklace, Mary Margaret's Tea & Biscuit gift card, Oak Street Deli gift card, OR Radio Shack gift certificate

**For a \$50.00 or more donation, you may choose the** Biggar & Biggar Antique Mall gift certificate.

**For a \$100.00 or more donation, you may choose** the Arcadia Golf Course gift certificate for playing 18-holes for four people with a golf cart.



We need volunteers for the upcoming **West Elementary School** student visits to the Museum on **Tues., Oct. 17** and **Fri., Oct.**

**20.** Morning shifts are 8:45 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. on Tues. and Fri. and the afternoon shift is noon to 1:30 p.m. on Fri.

Volunteers are needed for our Annual Holiday Tour of Homes and Buildings on **Sat., Dec. 9, 2023**, 4 to 8 p.m.

Contact Carol Mahler, **863-445-0789**  
[desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.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.**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

### Holiday Tour of Historic Homes and Buildings

Saturday, December 9, 2023  
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 20, 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](http://www.historicdesoto.org)  
Or call: 863-266-5774 or 863-445-0789

**In Memory of  
Max Ray Fitzpatrick  
(1934-2023)**

Born on Jan. 17, 1934, in Clark Township, Johnson County, Indiana, to Charles Ray Fitzpatrick and Lola Fern (Hommel) Fitzpatrick, Max Ray Fitzpatrick graduated from Clark Township High School. He earned his Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees from Franklin College, his Masters of Science from Indiana University, his Academy of School Executives from Butler University and the Indiana Academy of School Principals.

He taught and served as principal at Webb Elementary—where the gymnasium was named in his honor (Max Fitzpatrick Gym)—and Needham Elementary School for Franklin Community School Corp. He retired in 1991.

He volunteered at the Johnson county 4-H Fair and at the Johnson County Museum of History in Franklin. He married Lois Rachel Hamilton Fitzpatrick on June 19, 1981, and she preceded him in death on May 12, 2010.

Spending the winters in Arcadia Village, they were members of the Society and volunteered their time and talents. He actively participated in the Society's annual auctions to support our scholarship fund and worked at Pioneer Day.

He enjoyed the advancement of young people, antique tractors, automobiles, camping, carpentry, farming, outdoor life, promoting fairs, reading, and traveling. He also established the Retired Ranchers' and Farmers' Club, and members from 13 states learned about Arcadia and DeSoto County through presentations and "field trips." He attended the First Presbyterian Church of Arcadia. He died on June 24, 2023.



"He served on various boards and had committee assignments for the Johnson County Historical Society, Indiana Fair Association and the Indiana Ride Safety Commission/Homeland Security. Max was also a participant in the International Association of Fairs and Expositions Convention in Las Vegas, NV and attended and participated in the State

and National Elementary Principal Conventions, organizer of the Johnson County Indiana Bicentennial Parade, chairman and manager for the fund-raising and moving of the Franklin Railroad Depot so that the Franklin Educational Foundation might be formed to operate the Chamber office building and railroad museum, leader of children's education trips to Chicago and Southern Indiana and former secretary/treasurer of the Indiana Fair Association.



"Max received the Franklin Kiwanis Club Rural Life Award two times, once as a 4-H member and once as an adult 4-H Leader, Franklin Jaycee's Outstanding Young Educator, Indiana Association of Elementary Principals, Principal of the year in 1983 and 1990, 50 year 4-H leader, he and his wife Lois were chosen as Friends of Purdue University Extension Service in 2004, Phoenix Award two times-SAE, Franklin, IN, Indiana University outstanding alumni, Franklin College Alumni Citation Award, Franklin Chamber of Commerce Outstanding Citizen award now known as the Max R. Fitzpatrick Distinguished Citizen Award, past president award from the Indiana Association of Fairs, a member of the Indiana Association of Fairs Hall of Fame, honorary Lt. Colonel of the Indiana State Police, Franklin City Navy-Commander Franklin, IN and honorary Kentucky Colonel, and a Johnson County Historian. . . .

"Memorial contributions may be made to the Indiana 4-H Foundation, P.O. Box 3125 Indianapolis, IN, 46206 or at [www.in4h.org](http://www.in4h.org), or the Johnson County 4-H and Agricultural Fair, Attention Kim Roberts, 250 Fairground Street, Franklin, IN 46131.

Online condolences may be sent to the family at [www.swartzmortuary.com](http://www.swartzmortuary.com). Information 317-738-0202." — [www.indystar.com/obituaries/ins150775](http://www.indystar.com/obituaries/ins150775)

Photos: March 26, 2010, Field Trip that the Society took to Randell Research Center on Pine Island: from left, Lewis Hall, Jr. (1924-2020), Max Fitzpatrick (1934-2023), and John Reynolds (1937-2022).

Max working in the General Store for Pioneer Day.

—Photos courtesy Carol Mahler.

## Third Annual Florida Cracker Meal —Sept. 30, 2023



Carol Mahler holds the microphone for Luke Wilson as he performed an original song about growing up in Nocatee.

While Marsha Karansdorf, right, listened, Norma Banas welcomed everyone to the 3rd Annual Florida Cracker meal by listing the Society's accomplishments for 2023.



Connie Bateman offered a brief history of Pine Level Church from its origin in the Pine Level Campground Cemetery to the reroofing of the old Pine Level School as a one-story sanctuary—still in use today.



Serving line is from left, Mailie Bonville, Juan Ramirez, and Maggie Reynard of the Pine Level Youth Group, and Society Member Pam Miller.



Stella Parker received a certificate for "Outstanding Chairperson" of the FCM Committee.



From left, Vernon and Linda Keen receive the "Outstanding Committee Members" certificate of appreciation from Carol Mahler.

—Photos this page courtesy of Ed Horne.

We are grateful to Pastor Ed for answering questions and helping out—plus taking photos!

The "Best Bakers in DeSoto County" received certificates of appreciation: from left, Cindy Collins Kinard, Judy Wertz-Strickland, Hans Bursa, Chelsea Palmer, Linda Reesor, Kathy Bryce, Amber Collins, Kathy Mizell Kasper, and Cindy McLeod Ely. Bakers unable to attend the event were Geraldine Barnwell, Michelle Miller, and Janie Woods.

