

# Port St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc., Story

The Port St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc. (the “Society”) is a non-profit organization whose members actively work to preserve the history of Port St. Lucie. The Mission Statement of the Society is to:

- Stimulate greater government, business and public awareness and appreciation of the importance of the history of Port St. Lucie to our people.
- Encourage and facilitate opportunities for Port St. Lucie residents to participate in the preservation of the history of Port St. Lucie.
- Encourage local historic education in the public schools and other educational institutions of St. Lucie County.

The purpose and objectives of the Society shall be education, historical research, and study of items and objects of interest and value concerning St. Lucie County and the surrounding areas, and encouragement of interest in historical preservation

## Looking back...

A small group of women who wanted to preserve the history of Port St. Lucie started meeting informally during their lunch hours in September 1995. They wanted to collect and record information about the city and its roots and to eventually start a museum similar to the St. Lucie County Historical Museum in Fort Pierce. Edward Swanson, director of the St. Lucie Historical Museum advised the group: “Collect, research and have fun with it. The history of Port St. Lucie is kind of a real challenge.” He also advised them to “look at all the pieces of the puzzle before telling the history of a place. Telling just part of the story isn’t true history.”

+++++

## 1996

The Port St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc., was incorporated as a Florida Not for Profit Corporation under Section 617 of the Florida Statutes on April 3, 1997. However, the first meeting of the group took place at the Morningside branch of the St. Lucie County Library System in 1996.

Founding Members (per Articles of Incorporation) were:

- JoAnn Holcomb
- Paula Lewis
- Strelsa Schreiber\*
- Cynthia Trefelner (Crankshaw)

Initial Officers were:

- Chair - JoAnn Holcomb
- Vice Chair - Constance Richardson\*

- Secretary - Sandra K. Johnson\*
- Treasurer - Patricia Garthwaite

Initial Board Members were:

- Nina C. Baranski
- Bobbi Deemer\*
- Dolores W. DiOrio
- Maryann F. Garthwaite\*
- Patricia M. Garthwaite
- JoAnn Holcomb
- Sandra K. Johnson\*
- Paula A. Lewis
- Frances M. March
- Constance Richardson\*
- DeeDee Roberts
- Ed Swanson
- Virginia Swanson
- Strelsa Schreiber\*
- Cynthia Trefelner (now Cynthia Crankshaw)

Charter Members were:

- Nina Baranski
- Bobbie Deemer\*
- Delores DiOrio
- Maryann Garthwaite\*
- Patricia Garthwaite
- Sandra Johnson\*
- Frances March

- Constance Richardson\*
- DeeDee Roberts
- Ed Swanson
- Virginia Swanson

Other Initial Members included: John Carvelli, Lucette Chizik, Rachel Cook, Tomas Gonzales, Karol Kortier, Amy Kryak, Frances March, Lee Primerano, Peter Torelli, and Jovita Williams.

On September 27, 1996, they marked the founding of the New Pioneers. In a letter dated October 21, 1996, Chair Jo Ann Holcomb outlined the accomplishments made in one year and acknowledged the people who helped bring the accomplishments about.

*New Pioneers founded by Jo Ann Holcomb, Paula Lewis, Strelsa Schreiber and Cynthia Trefelner (now Crankshaw).*

*Strelsa Schreiber elected to represent the New Pioneers on the St. Lucie County Historical Commission.*

*By-Laws written and approved.*

*Officers elected: Jo Ann Holcomb, Chair; Connie Richardson, Vice Chair; Sandy Johnson, Secretary; and Pat Garthwaite, Treasurer.*

*Sandy Johnson worked on creating a not-for-profit corporation with a yet to be contacted attorney to assist, pro bono.*

*Participated in 35th Anniversary of City's incorporation with a display in vestibule of City Council Chamber.*

*Cynthia Trefelner wrote and published a history of Port St. Lucie for distribution at the event.*

*Jo Ann Holcomb and Paula Lewis were interviewed on television regarding the founding of the New Pioneers and their part in the 35th Anniversary celebration.*

*New Pioneers' display and participants were televised during the event.*

*Organized a field trip/tour to Spruce Bluff.*

*Worked on creating logos for the organization.*

Jo Ann Holcomb resigned her position with the organization "for personal reasons" effective October 21, 1996.

---

The Spruce Bluff field trip was opened to the public to keep interest in the fledging society high and to quell the snickering and giggles they heard when they spoke about Port St. Lucie History.

+++++

## 1997

- Chair - Constance "Connie" Richardson\*
- Secretary - Sandra Johnson\*
- Treasurer - Pat Garthwaite

The law firm of Warner, Fox, Seeley, Dungey & Sweet of Stuart helped the New Pioneers draft their Articles of Incorporation that were filed on April 3, 1997.

Ed Swanson, superintendent of museums for the St. Lucie County Historical Society, spoke at a meeting of the Port St. Lucie Historical Society in August 1997. He outlined a plan for starting the new organization.

Strelsa Schreiber was asked to introduce her book at a Society meeting.

+++++

## 1998

- Chair - Sandra Johnson\*
- Vice Chair - Maryann Garthwaite\*
- Secretary - Mary Manning
- Treasurer - Pat Garthwaite
- Directors – Nina Baranski, Dolores DiOrio and Constance Richardson

These officers were confirmed at a meeting on October 5th. There was also some discussion about holding meetings at the Community Center in the hope that more city employees would become members. It was also mentioned that, although there were 17 members on the Society’s mailing list, few if any members attended meetings.

Sandy suggested getting some early residents to speak and to record their recollections.

The Society conducted a second tour of both the cemetery and mound at the Spruce Bluff Preserve on May 2nd. At that time the “Spruce Bluff Nature Trail” was under the auspices of the St. Lucie County Department of Leisure Services.

The Society also sponsored a tour of the St. Lucie River on November 21st originating at the Marina off Prima Vista Boulevard.

+++++

## 1999

- Chair - Sandra Johnson\*
- Secretary - Mary Manning
- Treasurer - Pat Garthwaite
- Directors – Maryann Garthwaite and Constance Richardson

At an Executive Committee Meeting on March 30th, the following four volunteers offered to assist the Society in cataloging and identifying photos, news clippings, etc.: Ollie Lee, Marie Sarol, Bonnie Cruz and Greta Acton. They agreed to work every Wednesday for 3 or 5 hours. Sandy Johnson was to work on finding a suitable place for them to work.

+++++

## 2000-2001

- Chair - Sandra Johnson\*
- Secretary - Mary Manning
- Treasurer - Patricia Garthwaite
- Directors – Maryann Garthwaite and Dolores DiOrio

The officers and directors continued to meet and continued to collect artifacts, looking forward to the day when more people would join and the Society would receive help from outside sources in the city and among residents.

+++++

## 2002

- Chair - Sandra K. Johnson\*
- Vice Chair - Maryann Garthwaite\*
- Secretary - Mary Manning
- Treasurer- Patricia Garthwaite
- Director – Dolores DiOrio

Members at the time of reactivation: Mayor Bob Minsky, Sue Harrington Bird, Patricia Foreman, Christine Williams, Donna Gottschalk, Delores DiOrio, Nina Baranski, Tim Gomez, George Hanna, Greta Acton, Strelsa Schreiber, John Lamplough, Frank Knott, Martha York Clements, DeeDee Roberts, Patricia Selmer, Susan Kilmer, “Butch” Post, and Jane Rowley

City officials decided to help the reactivated Port St. Lucie Historical Society by offering space to store items that the Society collected and some advertising support.

The Society held a “Fundraising and Artifact Collection Event” at the Shell Bazaar on October 12th.

+++++

## 2003

- Chair - Sandra Johnson\*
- Secretary – Mary Manning
- Treasurer – Pat Garthwaite
- Directors – Pat Foreman\* and Christine Williams

Thanks to support from the City, the Society had a permanent exhibit at City Hall.

The Society held a History Event on February 25th at City Hall dubbed “Cowhunters and Native Americans” highlighting the first settlers in the area that is now Port St. Lucie. Pat Foreman, president of the St. Lucie Historical Society arranged for the noted author and historian Lewis “Nick” Wynne of the Florida Historical Society to speak at the event. Complimentary tickets to hear him speak were available with a donation or membership.

Artist and Historian John Durham was also there in native costume with a chickee hut.

The Society held a “2nd Annual ‘ROUND UP’ Yard Sale & ‘CHUCK WAGON’ bake Sale at the Port St. Lucie City Hall on October 11th.

+++++

## 2004

- Chair - Sandra K. Johnson\*
- Secretary – Mary Manning
- Treasurer – Pat Garthwaite
- Directors – Dolores DiOrio, Patricia Foreman\* & Christine Williams

Once again, the officers and directors struggled to keep the Society viable and looked for people with fresh ideas to join them and to help with the organization of their growing archives.

+++++

## 2005

- Chair – Sandra K. Johnson\*
- Secretary - Mary Manning
- Treasurer – Patricia Garthwaite then Stan Hicks
- Directors – Tom Minch, Dell Cook\* and Christine Williams

The Society was engaged in planning a Reunion of Early Settlers (people who were in the Greater Port St. Lucie area in the 50s, 60s and/or 70s) to be held in October.

With the expert assistance of Dell Cook, Stan Hicks designed and developed an archive database to record historical items as they became available to the Society.

+++++

## 2006

- Chair - Christine Williams
- Secretary - Stevie Savage

- Treasurer - Stan Hicks\*
- Directors: Tom Minch, Dell Cook\* and Sandy Corriveau

In November 2006, Richard McAfoos began a wonderful, comprehensive oral history program capturing on videotape recollections of longtime residents of the City, River Park and the surrounding area.

The Society “manned” a tent at the 45th Anniversary of the City.



## 2007

Initial Officers and Directors:

- Chair - Christine Williams
- Vice Chair - Randy Green
- Secretary - Stevie Savage
- Treasurer - Stan Hicks
- Directors: Tom Minch, Marge Organ and Richard McAfoos

Officers and Directors as of September 25, 2007:

- Co-Chair – Richard McAfoos
- Co-Chair - Randy Green
- Vice Chair & Secretary - Joan Beyer\*
- Treasurer - Stan Hicks
- Assistant Treasurer – Christine Williams
- Directors: Tom Minch and Marge Organ



***Left to right, Tom Minch, Christine Williams, Randy Green, Mayor Patricia Christensen (guest), Stan Hicks, Joan Beyer\*, Richard McAfoos, Marge Organ at Sept. 25, 2007 meeting.***

The Society obtained its 501(c)3 status on June 22, 2007, retroactive and effective on April 3, 1997, the date the Society's original Articles of Incorporation were filed.



In August, Mayor Patricia Christensen announced the formation of the City's "Celebration Committee" (later to become the "Celebration Executive Committee"), including four of our directors: Joan Beyer\*, Stan Hicks, Richard McAfoos and Christine Williams. The Committee was charged with planning the 50th Anniversary of the City's incorporation on April 27, 1961.

Through the initiative of County Commissioner Doug Coward, and with the cooperation and approval of the entire County Commission, St. Lucie County graciously made office space available to the Society in the new St. Lucie County Building on Walton Road. The Society adopted the following new logo:



Guest speakers at the September meeting of the Port St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc. were PSL Mayor Patricia Christensen and Dr. Jeff Fox. Christensen, a member of the Society, emphasized the value of preserving Port St. Lucie's evolving history for future generations and the need of a high visibility role for the Society. Dr. Fox was the first dentist in Port St. Lucie, arriving here in 1976 when the population was only around 5,000. Christensen predicted the need for a future Port St. Lucie Historical Museum to complement other educational and cultural resources in our vibrant city.

# Farewell to Strelsa Schreiber



On October 20, 2007, author, columnist, school board member, and Port St. Lucie Historical Society co-founder Strelsa Schreiber died at 92 years of age.

She wrote *The Early Years of Port St. Lucie, Florida, A Personal Memoir*, which was published in 1998.

In December 2007, the Society invited people interested in recording their recollections to participate in a special taping of a “Tribute to Strelsa Schreiber”. Many people who knew and loved her eagerly responded to the invitation.

In addition to her other many accomplishments, Strelsa served 23 years on the Indian River Community College Foundation. A conference center on the St. Lucie West Campus of what is now Indian River State College was built in her name. A “Celebration of the Life and Legacy of Strelsa Schreiber” was held in the Schreiber Conference Center in January 2008.



Special copies of the “Tribute to Strelsa Schreiber” video were presented to Strelsa’s daughter Paula Gaylord at the Celebration.

# Farewell to Dell Cook

Wendell (“Dell”) Cook died on August 15, 2007. Some Society members had the following to say about Dell:

*“Dell was very passionate for his love of history. He will always be remembered for his dedication and hard work toward preserving historical records. We will miss him but not forget him. God Bless.” Tom Minch*

*“Thank you, Dell, for all the expert help you gave me. We will benefit from this for years to come.” Stan Hicks*

*“Dell was a good friend to all that knew him, and a valuable asset to the Port St. Lucie Historical Society and will be greatly missed. May he rest in peace.” Christine Williams*

“Few will recognize the depth of knowledge or the degree of commitment Dell had. His gift was beyond measure and he will be sorely missed. God Bless him.” Allan King



+++++

## 2008

- Chair - Richard McAfoos
- Vice Chair - Randy Green
- Secretary - Joan Beyer\*
- Treasurer - Christine Williams
- Directors: Dennis Grabhorn, Tom Minch and Marge Organ

In conjunction with the Celebration Executive Committee, the Society announced that Nina Baranski, former Communications Officer with the City, had contracted to author a history book celebrating the city’s 50 year life; “Port St. Lucie at 50”, A City For All People. Three businesses

stepped up and said they would fund the book's cost – Core Communities, Johnson Brothers, Inc. and Riverside National Bank.

In March, the St. Lucie County Commission first gave permission for the Society to use a 10x12 room in the County Annex on Walton Road to use as an office.

Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation and Amended and Restated Bylaws were adopted at the Board's November 25th meeting. The documents were later filed with the Secretary of State and St. Lucie County.

Christine Williams organized a series of "Pioneer Gatherings" where members, guests and friends shared their recollections of Port St. Lucie before, during and since incorporation. Pictured here are members and friends of the Society at Beth Gessner's home.



Members of the Society participated in the Santa Lucia Day celebration in Fort Pierce on Santa Lucia Day, December 13th.

The Society acquired a "Certificate of Exemption" making future purchases for the Society tax-free.

+++++

## 2009

- Chair - Richard McAfoos
- Vice Chair - Randy Green
- Secretary - Joan Beyer\*
- Treasurer - Christine Williams
- Directors: Dennis Grabhorn, Tom Minch and Marge Organ

In conjunction with the Celebration Executive Committee, Chair Richard McAfoos negotiated a contract with a local production company, Treasure Coast Films, Inc., and began working on a full-length docu/drama motion picture to document and celebrate the City's 50th Anniversary the week of April 27, 2011.

Richard McAfoos also conceived and supported work on an Eagle Scout Project for Erik Christensen to create an interactive map and photo section that will be a part of the Society's web site.

Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation were filed with the Florida Secretary of State on January 12, 2009.

A plaque of appreciation was presented to former director and member Stan Hicks to thank him for his long time dedicated service to the Society.

+++++

## 2010

- Chair: Richard McAfoos
- Vice Chair: Randy Green
- Secretary: Joan Beyer\*
- Treasurer: Christine Williams
- Directors: Dianne Aguiar, Tom Minch and Marge Organ
- Special Advisor: Dennis Grabhorn

The new Board of Directors and Special Advisor were photographed at the home of Richard McAfoos.



***Left to right seated: Vice Chair Randy Green, Secretary Joan Beyer\*, Treasurer Christine Williams and Chair Richard McAfoos. Left to right standing: Directors Tom Minch, Marge Organ and Dianne Aguiar, and Special Advisor Dennis Grabhorn.***

With the able assistance of the City's Communications Department, the Celebration Committee adopted the following logo that will appear on all City announcements and letters between April 2010 and April 2011:





# Proclamation



**WHEREAS**, the City of Port St. Lucie was incorporated by House Bill 953 approved on April 27, 1961, by Governor Cecil Farris Bryant and signed on May 10, 1961, by Secretary of State Tom Adams, and will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on April 27, 2011; and

**WHEREAS**, upon incorporation the City covered 62.5 square miles and had less than a dozen permanent residents. Steady growth over the past ten years increased the population to 155,000 and the land mass to 115 square miles; between July 2003 and July 2004, the City of Port St. Lucie was named the fastest growing City according to the U.S. Census Bureau; and

**WHEREAS**, since August 2007 the Celebration Executive Committee has been planning for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. The City of Port St. Lucie and The Port St. Lucie Historical Society will capture that history with the production of a full length docu/drama entitled "City of Dreams"; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Port St. Lucie and The Port St. Lucie Historical Society will honor this significant milestone with the publication of a history book entitled "Port St. Lucie at 50: A City for All Ages;" and

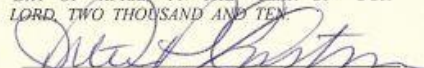
**WHEREAS**, on April 27, 2010, the City of Port St. Lucie will begin its 50<sup>th</sup> year of history, culminating on Monday, April 25, 2011, with an exciting week filled with special events that reflect Port St. Lucie's lifestyle such as a Baseball game, a Multi-cultural Festival, a Golf Tournament, Fireworks, a Book Signing, and a Birthday Cake, among other events for our Residents.

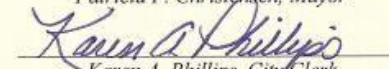
**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Patricia P. Christensen, Mayor of the City of Port St. Lucie, Florida, do hereby ask everyone to join me in congratulating the City of Port St. Lucie as it observes:

## The City of Port St. Lucie's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I HAVE HEREUNTO  
SET MY HAND AND CAUSED THE OFFICIAL  
SEAL OF THE CITY OF PORT ST. LUCIE,  
FLORIDA, TO BE AFFIXED, THIS TWENTY-SIXTH  
DAY OF APRIL, IN THE YEAR OF OUR  
LORD, TWO THOUSAND AND TEN.

  
Patricia P. Christensen, Mayor

  
Karen A. Phillips, City Clerk

At the City Council Meeting on April 26, 2010, Mayor Patricia Christensen presented the Society with the a proclamation from the City acknowledging the Society's significant involvement with and management of Port St. Lucie's 50th Anniversary Celebration on April 27, 2011. The Society's Officers continued to head up the history book, docu/drama movie and celebration week activities.

The Society was an active participant on the long-standing St. Lucie County Historical Commission, holding two seats, until the sun set on the commission early in 2010. The Society's Chair and Secretary remain active with the St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc., that holds its meetings in Fort Pierce, the County's first and largest such society.

McAfoos addressed the St. Lucie County Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Class on Feb. 11, 2010.

+++++

## 2011

- Chair: Richard McAfoos
- Vice Chair: Randy Green
- Secretary: Joan Beyer\*
- Treasurer: Christine Williams
- Directors: Dianne Aguiar, Tom Minch (resigned June 2011), Patricia Christensen (appointed June 2011) and Dennis Grabhorn

Being the City's 50th anniversary of incorporation, 2011 was a huge year for the Port St. Lucie Historical Society. The 200-page history book *Port St. Lucie at 50: A City for All People* by Nina Baranski was published. Richard McAfoos oversaw the Society's production of a full-length



docudrama *City of Dreams*, which later won "Best Documentary" and "Best Theme Song" awards at the Treasure Coast Film Festival. It was premiered at the April celebrations and made available as a DVD. The soundtrack won the Soundtrack of the Year honor for its composer Mark Barnes at the 21st Annual Los Angeles Music Awards.

### **More on the 50th Anniversary celebrations**

The Society took a lead role in virtually all of the anniversary celebrations. Numerous oral histories were recorded for the





docudrama and future use in cooperation with the City's Communications Department in what has grown into a continuing program.

McAfoos addressed the St. Lucie County Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Class on Feb. 10 and the Chamber's Young Professionals Council on Feb. 15, 2011. He spoke to the local Peace Corps National 50th Anniversary event on March 1, the county's Economic Development Council on Aug. 2 and the Cascades Men's Club, assisted by Grabhorn, on Aug. 13, 2011

The Society purchased and transferred archives to the Past Perfect museum software program used by historical associations throughout the U.S. The website, pslhistory.org, grew and added a gift shop and Q&A section.

+++++

**JOAN HOLLY BEYER, HISTORICAL SOCIETY SECRETARY, DIES SUDDENLY**

Joan Holly Beyer, 72, of Port St. Lucie, Florida, died unexpectedly November 29, 2011, at Lawnwood Regional Medical Center, Fort Pierce, Florida.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, she resided for many years in Bergen County, New Jersey. Joan lived and worked in London, England, and Sydney, Australia, and travelled widely. Joan received her Bachelor of Arts from Fairleigh Dickinson University and Doctor of Jurisprudence from Rutgers University School of Law, North New Jersey.

She moved to Port St. Lucie, Florida, in 1999 and was a Realtor for 10 years and a member of the Realtors Association of St. Lucie.

Upon her retirement from real estate, Joan was an active member in many organizations including serving on the boards of the Port St. Lucie Historical Society, the Port St. Lucie Downtown Lions Club and the Port St. Lucie Council of Arts Corporation. She was a founding member of the Friends of the Port St. Lucie Botanical Gardens, a member of the A. E. Backus Museum and St. Lucie Historical Society and served as a volunteer at the St. Lucie County Regional History Center.



+++++

**2012**

- Chair: Richard McAfoos
- Vice Chair: Randy Green
- Secretary: Mary Dodge
- Treasurer: Christine Williams
- Directors: Dianne Aguiar, Patricia Christensen, Dennis Grabhorn



The Society was the featured charity and received funds from the Coalition of Sandpiper Bay Associations/Club Med golf tournament, conceived and directed by McAfoos, who also headed the coalition. The Society's team of Dennis Grabhorn, Sandi Rodriguez, Larry Kilburn and Dylan Kelley took first place.

Membership gatherings were held. Work continued on archiving and the web site. Discussions continue with city about site for a museum.

## 2013

- Chair: Richard McAfoos
- Vice Chair: Dennis Grabhorn
- Secretary: Mary Dodge
- Treasurer: Christine Williams
- Directors: Dianne Aguiar, Jolien Caraballo, Patricia Christensen

A booth with Society items was manned at the September Hometown Lunchfest at City Hall. Interviews, including state and national survivors, were organized by McAfoos were taped at the October Remember Holocaust exhibit Event at the Civic Center, sponsored by Vice Mayor Linda Bartz.

The Society created a Facebook page. McAfoos spoke at the Downtown Lions Club luncheon on March 12, 1013.

McAfoos headed a fund-raising effort to provide *Port St. Lucie at 50: A City for all People* history books and DVDs to all school libraries in St. Lucie County.

Gatherings at Rick's Diner featured two of the city's first residents: teacher Beth Gessner in March and real estate broker Paul Zinter in May. Veteran area journalists Joe Crankshaw and Mary Dodge spoke at the September gathering at Mark Barnes' home, also the site of the holiday gathering.

Meetings continued with City Hall about a site for a PSL history museum. Archiving and other Society business continued.

## 2014

- Chair: Richard McAfoos
- Vice Chair: Dennis Grabhorn
- Secretary: Mary Dodge
- Treasurer: Christine Williams
- Directors: Dianne Aguiar, Jolien Caraballo, Patricia Christensen

The Port St. Lucie Historical Society in partnership with the Port St. Lucie Downtown Lions Club gifted 50 history books, *Port St. Lucie at 50*, and 50 DVDs of the docudrama *City of Dreams* to the St. Lucie Public School District during the Jan. 9, 2014, principals meeting in Fort Pierce. The items are for permanent use in all of the schools' media centers. The gift, valued at \$2,750, was a joint effort of the Lions Club, which raised the seed money, and the society, which provided the books and DVDs at cost.



***Pictured: (L-R) Greg Smith, President of Port St. Lucie Downtown Lions Club, Superintendent Genelle Zoratti Yost, School Board Member Kathryn Hensley, Richard McAfoos, Chair of the Port St. Lucie Historical Society.***

The Port St. Lucie Historical Society's docudrama DVD *City of Dreams* was shown Sunday, July 27, 2014, in the beautiful Savanna Club Theatre for 160 members of the community's homeowners association and guests. McAfoos and Grabhorn made a presentation to more than 100 members of the Cascades Men's Club in St. Lucie West on Wednesday, Aug. 13, 2014.

McAfoos, Dodge and Grabhorn presented a two-session adult education class given in October 2014 for the Fielden Institute of Indian River State College at the Strelsa Schrieber Center on the St. Lucie West campus. They were aided by persons who witnessed and have participated in making the city's history.

## 2015

- Chair: Richard McAfoos
- Vice Chair: Dennis Grabhorn
- Secretary: Mary Dodge
- Treasurer: Christine Williams
- Directors: Dianne Aguiar, Jolien Caraballo, Patricia Christensen

About 50 members of the Men's Club at Temple Beth El Israel in St. Lucie West attended a Jan. 11, 2015, presentation by McAfoos and Grabhorn.

Three volunteers, Christensen, Grabhorn and Dodge, from the PSL Historical Society were among the 19 judges when hundreds of seventh grade students in the St. Lucie County Public School District displayed their Project Citizen boards and supporting materials at Indian River State College's Kight Center on Thursday, Jan. 29, 2015.

The Port St. Lucie Historical Society was invited to provide a brief session on the city's history on Thursday, Feb. 12, 2015, at the St. Lucie County Chamber of Commerce's St. Lucie, a series of classes for participants chosen as those who can provide proactive within the county. After an introduction by McAfoos, Dodge and Christensen gave presentations.



The auditoria of Palm Pointe Research School at Tradition was packed with exhibits Saturday, Feb. 21, 2015, as students vied in the county History Fair to be chosen to take their presentations to the state finals in Tallahassee in May. Board members Caraballo, Grabhorn, Dodge and long-time society member Beth Gessner (*shown*) volunteered.

The Society moved history books and other items from its former storage facility to one near the Civic Center, thanks to a crew of volunteers led by Grabhorn.

Board members attended the March 13 charette and March 31, 2015, public workshop to discuss and suggest plans for the Westmoreland project, next to the Botanical Gardens, which is to include a city museum. The Society remained active in these discussions throughout the year.

McAfoos reported in October that the City Council had approved the proposed concept plan for the Westmoreland Boulevard site to be added to the City's Comprehensive Plan. The grant funding (est. \$395,000) of moving the Peacock Ranch buildings to the site had been approved at No. 25 of a list of 50 projects in place for the state to fund in FY 2016-17.

## 2016

- Chair: Richard McAfoos
- Vice Chair: Dennis Grabhorn
- Secretary: Mary Dodge
- Treasurer: Christine Williams
- Directors: Dianne Aguiar, Jolien Caraballo, Patricia Christensen

The society opened the year by again providing judges (Grabhorn, Dodge and member Beth Gessner) for two St. Lucie School District events: Project Citizen District Showcase and County History Fair.

Planning for and discussions about a future museum continued through the year as the public was becoming more aware of plans for the Westmoreland tract. The Veterans Office donated a display on V-mail for use in a future museum.

McAfoos, in cooperation with the City's PSL TV-20, wrote and produced a tribute DVD in recognition of rancher Alto "Bud" Adams Jr.'s 90th birthday.



The history books for city employees were replenished at City Hall. Work continued in archiving print and other material in museum software.

Butch Post led a presentation of the school busing issue at the March gathering at her home. The May gathering was at the home of Beth Gessner, where she and Dodge discussed the real life events behind Dodge's fictional book *The Reel Hot Summer*, about an adult movie theater proposed for St. Lucie County in 1980.

The 2016-17 season of the Port St. Lucie Historical Society kicked off at the home of Dan Kurek with a talk

by lifetime St. Lucie resident Cynthia Putnam (*right*) and St. Lucie County Commissioner Paula Lewis (*left*) about the early days of the New Pioneers that morphed into the city's historical society. Cuban specialties were the highlight of the Holiday Gathering in the home PSL City Councilwoman Jolien Caraballo.



## 2017

- **Chair:** Jolien Caraballo (Jan 31-Apr. 25, 2017); Dennis Grabhorn (from Apr. 25, 2017)
- **Vice chair:** Dianne Aguiar (Jan. 31-Feb. 28); Dennis Grabhorn (Feb. 28-Apr. 25, 2017); Patricia Christensen (from May 30, 2017)
- **Secretary:** Mary Dodge
- **Treasurer:** Christine Williams

Growth was the goal for 2017 as the Society looked forward to movement of two historical ranch buildings to the Westmoreland property for use as a museum.

Two organizational meetings were held in February, following the resignation of long-time board member and chair Richard McAfoos. His seat on the board was filled by Society co-founder Paula Lewis, former City Councilwoman and St. Lucie County Commissioner.

Among the decisions at the organization meetings was to hold additional board meetings in June and August, to lower the price of the Society's history book to \$29.95 and to move the meeting location to the Community Center across from City Hall. It was also decided to appoint a bylaws committee to update the organization's documents. By the end of the year, amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws were approved and a Policy and Procedures document was under discussion.

The proposed movement of two historic Peacock Ranch buildings from the city's McCarthy Ranch property to the Westmoreland site occupied the attention of board members throughout the year and updates were received regularly.

The lease for the society's office in the County Building on Walton Road was renewed by the St. Lucie County Commission for three years, until October 2020.



Through the efforts of McAfoos, the Society received a deed/gift in January of 35 +/- nature and ranching photographs by rancher Bud Adams and his son.

In January, we said good-bye to longtime member Beth Gessner (*shown, l to r, Rosemary Grabhorn, Christine Williams, Beth, Dennis Grabhorn*) who moved to The Villages to be closer to her daughter. Beth, a school teacher, and her husband Dave, recreation director for GDC, were responsible for much of the activity that centered around the Northport Marina in the early days.

PSL Historical Society members again served as judges for the St. Lucie School

District's History Fair and Project Citizen Day in February. Three history books were given to the Annery Abreau, Jesurajh Kavinaash and Freedom Scholes of Port St. Lucie High School, who chosen for the society's special History Fair award.

Grabhorn and Dodge were invited to tell the PSL Historical Society story to the PSL Rotary Club in April. In May, Williams and Dodge videotaped a segment of the city's *PSL Living* YouTube series with Mayor Gregory Oravec.

April was also the kick-off of what has become a regular event for the society: River Nights. A beautiful night on the edge of an historic section of the North Fork of the St. Lucie River was the setting for the city Park & Recreation Department's celebration on the site of the Westmoreland Project. We were delighted to have a spot to share the stories about the people and places that make this one of the most historic locations in Port St. Lucie -- a perfect location for a museum. This is now a monthly event during most of the year, featuring local bands and the city has provided us a booth to tell the story of the site and our organization.



The participation in River Nights was the catalyst for the redesign of the Society's informational brochure, which includes a membership application.

The first gathering of 2017 was in March at the home of City Councilman John Carvelli and his wife Karol. At the May gathering at Rick's Diner, Caraballo updated the group on progress towards the museum planned for the Westmoreland property. The annual holiday gathering was in December at Ricks's. The board has agreed since to set gathering dates as the third Wednesdays of February, April, June, October and December.



# 2018



- Chair: Dennis Grabhorn
- Vice chair: Patricia Christensen
- Secretary: Mary Dodge
- Treasurer: Christine Williams

The year 2018 was on the edge of being very exciting for the Port St. Lucie Historical Society as it moved toward having a permanent home, but very, very slowly. It was a year of discussions with city officials about what can and would be done, and these continue.

The excitement came from seeing two historic buildings from the Peacock Ranch be moved from their waiting spot on the city's McCarty Ranch site to their new home on Westmoreland Boulevard



next to the Botanical Gardens. At year's end they had not yet been set on their final foundations.



While we realize it will be a while before the buildings are ready for occupancy, we plan to continue to work on agreements toward this goal in 2019. As in the past, membership gatherings were held through the year to share tales of early life in PSL and before. Speakers in 2018 included Ted Burrows, retired long-time editorial writer for the Port St. Lucie News; Carol and Gregg Wyatt (*shown*), owners of the first radio station registered to the city, WPSL; and Tracey Steele, who shared stories of growing up in Port St. Lucie.



The festive Holiday Gathering was a buffet and open bar at the Santa Lucia River Club at Ballantrae with door prizes and loads of good conversation. It was held, with the help of club manager and PSLHS board member Maria Bordonaro.



A special event was held in June to honor former local journalist Nina Baranski (*right, in photo to left*), who was in town for a brief visit. Tales were swapped, wine was sipped and cheeses were nibbled at the "meet and greet" social for the author of the city's history book, *PORT ST. LUCIE AT 50: A City for All People*. Many were friends from her days as PSL *Mirror* reporter and editor, and as the architect of city's

Communications Department.

The society was on hand at all but one of the city-sponsored River Nights on the shores of the North Fork of the St. Lucie Boulevard to share a bit of history with those attending the events featuring local bands. The historic site will be the home of the two historic.



Board Members got to spread the word a bit wider on Saturday,



January 13,

when they took part in the Treasure Coast History Fair in Fort Pierce. Displays lined 2nd Avenue, while speakers held court in the Black Box Theater of the Lyric. Here Dennis Grabhorn and Christine Williams trade tales with one of many who visited our booth. Board members Dianne Aguiar, Patricia Christensen, Mary Dodge and Paula Lewis also participated.

Members of the PSL Historical Society were among the volunteers judging the St. Lucie County high and middle school students' submissions in the Feb. 20, 2018, History Fair on the campus of Indian River State College in Fort Pierce. This is the fourth year the society has provided judges. Students presented exhibits, web sites, documentaries or performances on the theme "Conflict and Compromise." Volunteers were Deb Mock, Secretary Mary Dodge and Chair Dennis Grabhorn, shown here with judging teammate Stephanie Morgan, City Councilwoman.



Lexus Guthrie, a Port St. Lucie High School junior, was the winner of the Port St. Lucie Historical Society's Special Award for her exhibit on "Fly Girls in World War II" in the St. Lucie County Schools History Fair in late February.



Thanks to the Friends of the Savannas Preserve State Park, we joined the

exhibitors at Pioneer Day Saturday, March 31, 2018. Visitors were of all ages, but most were families with young children who learned the joys of using a washboard or making a cornhusk doll. Hikes, hay rides, live music and other events made it a fun day. We had a spot inside which gave us a chance to premiere our digital slideshow.



Shown are PSL Historical Society chair Dennis Grabhorn and member Rachel Heid. Also on hand were Mary Dodge and Dianne Aguiar.

Native American hunting grounds, the riverside community of Spruce Bluff and the fables and foibles of fishing guide Burt Pruitt were among the bits of history that we shared with Sandpiper Bay Community members in late June. The community contains some of the most historic spots in the city.

It was the maiden voyage of our new slide projector. Mary Dodge and Patricia Christensen made the presentation. Dennis Grabhorn and Christine Williams manned the table selling books and DVDs. Most of the members were relatively new residents, post-2000, and seemed to enjoy the look into the past.

We expect 2019 to an even busier year.

## 2019

- Chair: Patricia Christensen
- Vice chair: Dennis Grabhorn
- Secretary: Mary Dodge
- Treasurer: Christine Williams

Two thousand nineteen was a year of growth and waiting. Our membership grew to more than 100 people, partly because we had a museum at Westmoreland Park in our sights.

Our goals seemed so near and yet so far in 2019 as the historic houses were moved to Westmoreland Park and settled on foundations in 2018. We were able to briefly tour the enclosed houses in July. The year ended, however, with no solid agreement with the City of Port St. Lucie that would allow us to use them.



Our efforts in soliciting members, selling books and DVDs, maintaining a website and Facebook Page continued throughout the year. The association secured its own email address (@pslhistory.org) in May. Meetings were held throughout the year with city officials discussing the historic houses.



We started January by manning a booth at River Nights at the Botanical Gardens to recruit members and share information with those attending, especially those who were curious about the two historic buildings that had been moved there the previous year. We appeared at River Nights throughout the year.

We took our story to the Treasure Coast History Fair in Fort Pierce on January 12, where we participated for the second year in a row. Our thanks to the sponsor, *Indian River Magazine*.

At the annual meeting, January 29, City Councilwoman Jolien Caraballo resigned and was thanked for her service. At the regular meeting that day, it was agreed to change the by-laws to include ex-officio officers and that Caraballo would be the first appointed to that post. Chair Patricia Christensen, Vice Chair Dennis Grabhorn and Paula Lewis agreed to serve four-terms. Remaining board members were Dianne Aguiar, Maria Bordonaro, Secretary Mary Dodge, Jack Kelly and Treasurer Christine Williams. At the regular board meeting that followed, Terissa Aronson was approved to fill the vacant seat for a four-year term.

Perched across the pond from the newly moved historic houses, we had a booth at the Port St. Lucie Botanica Plant Sale at the Gardens on February 9 and 10. We recruited 13 new members.



The first Gathering of the year was February 20 at Linda's Too where members were updated on plans for the museum. Board members were encouraged at the time that some progress appeared to have been made with the City.

As we have in the past, the Port St. Lucie Historical Society volunteered to judge the at the St. Lucie Schools History Day. The number of entries at the February 26 event at Indian River Community College were down from previous years. Nevertheless, it is always rewarding to see high school students excited about history.

The saga of colorful fishing guide Burt Pruitt was the subject of the April 17 Gathering at the Santa Lucia River Club at Ballentrae. The speaker was local historian and Jensen Beach native Rachel Heid, a PSL Historical Society Member, who shared tales of her journey learning more about her great-grandfather. He was known not just for his skills, recognized locally and by many rich and famous fishers, but for the wild

parties, bootlegging and other questionable behavior at his fish camp on the North Fork. By the time he sold the last of his property to GDC in 1970, he was considered a local environmentalist.

The board of directors got a new place to meet starting with their May meeting after an agreement was signed with the Botanical Gardens.

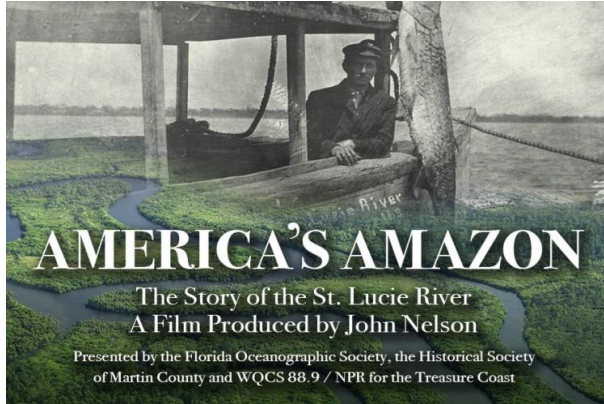
History was the subject of the day July 23 at Port St. Lucie Rotary Club's luncheon at the 19th Hole on the Sandpiper Bay Saints Golf Course. Society Secretary Mary Dodge outlined how the Society started and provided some background information on the historic homes moved from the Peacock Ranch to the Westmoreland Boulevard site.

We were back at Ballentrae for the October 16 Gathering and the speaker was Assistant City Manager Patricia Robling, who spoke on the history of the recently opened Crosstown Parkway.

Archiving got off to a slow start in 2019 as a new desktop computer had to be ordered as the original 2006 model had crashed irreparably. It slowed down further when St. Lucie County notified us they had plans sublease the second floor of the Dorothy Conrad building on Walton Road and we were asked to leave our small office by October.

Thanks to Dennis Grabhorn and his helpers, we made deadline. By late November we were back in business in interior rooms at the Shell Bazaar on U.S. 1. These are roomier and more convenient than the previous office. Eventually, it is hoped the archives will be housed in the historic lodge in Westmoreland Park. Two volunteers, Corrine Belanger and Cindy Vivolo, are being trained as archivists.

In November, the Society published its first newsletter in recent history, the work of Christensen. Plans are for it to publish at least quarterly.



Thanks to member donation in November, the Society will be listed as Guardian Sponsor of *America's Amazon: The Story of the St. Lucie River*, an environmental film presented by WQCS/NPR, the Florida Oceanographic Society and the Historical Society of Martin County.

After some rescheduling by the City, we presented a business plan for a proposed museum at the Nov. 25, 2019, City Council meeting. The Society requested an agreement equal to the one between the City and the

Botanical Gardens.

Council members Jolien Caraballo and Stephanie Morgan were supportive, Mayor Gregory Oravec and Shannon Martin had more questions. Councilman John Carvelli wanted the buildings used for commercial purposes. With no commitment from the city, the board felt limited in making concrete plans for a museum.

Ugly sweaters, holiday finery and lots of smiles were seen at the Port St. Lucie Historical Society Holiday Gathering on Wednesday, December 18, at the Santa Lucia River Club at Ballantrae. Both the buffet table and raffle table were groaning with offerings. Winner of the ugly sweater contest was Maria Bordonaro. Lee Hicks got the gift card for recruiting the most new members and she was still at it at the party. The 50-50 drawing went to Bob Post, who kindly donated his winnings back to the society.



... AND NOW, ON TO 2020!

---

# 2020

- Chair: Patricia Christensen
- Vice chair: Dennis Grabhorn
- Secretary: Cynthia Barnes-Bustin, seceded by Terissa Aronson
- Treasurer: Christine Williams

In 2020, the Port St. Lucie Historical Society took one of its biggest steps since its founding in 1996. After years of planning and discussions, a lease for the use of the two historic houses in Pioneer Park on Westmoreland was approved unanimously by the City Council on Sept. 14. Planning for an historical museum for the city kicked into high gear shortly after the city's move.

Below are some edited excerpts from that council action:

***Title: Ordinance 20-48, Public Hearing, Authorizing the Lease Agreement between the City of Port St. Lucie and the Port St. Lucie Historical Society, moved by Councilwoman Jolien Caraballo and seconded by Vice Mayor Shannon M. Martin.***

*Mayor Oravec opened the Public Hearing, and asked staff if there was a presentation. Jennifer Davis, CRA Project Manager, presented the lease agreement between the City of Port St. Lucie and the Port St. Lucie Historical Society. She reported they were able to utilize the Botanical Gardens Agreement, as a template and explained that they would have a year of utility abatement and after that the City would receive \$200/month for utilities. Ms. Davis added that the lease agreement was for both structures even though they were only renovating the lodge and depending on grant funding they would move forward with the house renovations.*

*Councilwoman Caraballo stated that she was excited for the different opportunities and exhibits that would educate students. She stated that she supported the lease agreement and looked forward to visiting in the future. Patricia Christensen, Port St. Lucie Historical Society Chair, stated that she had received many donations for the historical homes, along with a piano from Councilwoman Morgan's mother. She said the lodge would be used as a meeting space and education center.*

*Mayor Oravec asked if they were going to sell a city history book, to which Ms. Christensen responded that they were going to have a small gift shop along with fundraising functions. She stated that they had a large archived video history, which would be part of the education center.*

*The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote. (Mayor Gregory Oravec, Vice Mayor Shannon Martin, Council members Jolien Caraballo and Stephanie Morgan. Council Member John Carvelli was absent.*



The world-wide COVID-19 pandemic slowed events planned by the society later in the year, but members continued to man an informational booth at the city's monthly River Nights on the Westmoreland site, starting January (*shown: Patricia Christensen, Dennis Grabhorn and Cynthia Bustin*). Crowds were large in the beginning of the year, and since it was an outdoor venue, remained so for the spring and fall seasons.

In May, board meetings were moved to Zoom. Later in the year back to the Botanical Gardens meeting room.



Pre-pandemic events included:



### **OLIVE TREE PLANTED FOR ARBOR DAY**

Thanks to GL Homes, the Port St. Lucie Botanical Gardens was able to plant an ancient olive tree, time-honored symbol of peace, for Arbor Day 2020 on Friday, Jan. 17. The tree is planted in honor of former Mayor Bob Minsky, who died last year. The PSL Historical Society and Downtown Lions Club are the major donors for a marker to signify the memorial.

*Left to right are Society Secretary Mary Dodge, Director Jack Kelly, City Councilor Stephanie Morgan and Mayor Greg Oravec*



### **WE WELCOMED NEW MEMBERS AT OUR BOOTH AT BOTANICA**

The Botanical Gardens of Port St. Lucie gave us a great booth at the entrance to Botanica, their popular annual plant sale, Feb. 7 and 8, to help our membership drive. Gardeners and would-be gardeners strolled by on their way to and from the many plant and other booths. The weather cooperated, with the exception of some gusty breezes. Our booth was assembled by Vice chair Dennis Grabhorn.





**CITY KICKSTARTS WESTMORELAND SITE IMPROVEMENTS**

City officials, Port St. Lucie Historical members and lots of PSL neighbors were at the Kick-Start Park Party at River Nights for the Westmoreland site on Thursday, February 13, 2020. The evening was to mark the city’s commitment to the Riverwalk Board Walk extension, waterfront restaurant, historic homes renovation, playground planning and overall site improvements. The large crowd was entertained by the band Burnt Biscuit.



**TALES OF GROWING UP IN PSL TOLD AT GATHERING**

We got one spring gathering in before the pandemic took hold. PSL’s Deputy Public Works Director John Dunton recalled his days as a youth in PSL as well as some of the challenges of serving the city for 30 years at the Feb. 26 gathering. The talk came after a social hour and buffet dinner at the Santa Lucia River Club at Ballantrae. Certificates of appreciation were awarded to former board members Dianne Aguiar and Mary Dodge who had chosen not to serve further terms. The evening ended with drawings for a variety of gifts . Members also had a chance to sign up for the fundraising PSL

Premiere of America’s Amazon: The Story of the St. Lucie River documentary film to be shown March 25.

Chair Patricia Christensen and PSL’s Deputy Public Works Director John Dunton



## **CELEBRATING PSL BOTANICAL GARDENS 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

The City threw a party Saturday, March 2, 2020, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Port St. Lucie Botanical Gardens, the proposed museum's neighbor, with honors, food and music. Both individuals and groups, including the active Friends of the Botanical Gardens volunteers, were cited as

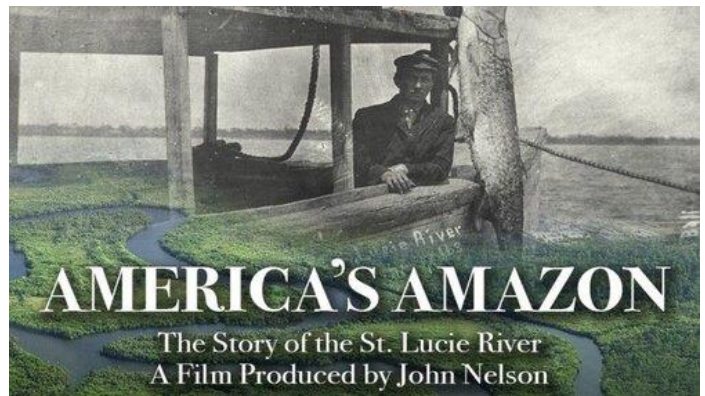
integral reasons for the gardens' growth.

Especially honored was former City Councilman Chris Cooper, who is credited with his "vision, dynamic leadership, and dedicated service toward the establishment" of the gardens and the Friends volunteer group.

Among those lauded for their early contributions to the Gardens were two former Historical Society board members, Chair Richard McAfoos and Dianne Aguiar.

## **AMERICA'S AMAZON FUND RAISER PLAYS TO REDUCED CROWD**

The St. Lucie River is one of the integral parts of our city. In January, we were proud, with the help of a private donor, to be a Guardian Sponsor of an amazing film about the history and ecological issues of this magnificent natural resource, *America's Amazon: The Story of the St. Lucie River*. This involved a cash donation following the production and before the release of the film.



Ticket sales were heating up in March, just as the public was being made aware of the health crisis on the horizon. The event was rescheduled twice. Filmmaker John Nelson, audio-visual tech Mark Stocker (Memories by Mark) and River Club Manager Maria Bordonaro, a PSL Historical Society board member, cooperated all along the way. Originally, we were on our way to 200 or more attendees.

About 50 persons showed but many, including those who elected not to attend (about half of the ticket holders), donated their admission fees to the PSL Historical Society. Thanks to you all.

It was a unique year in all our lives, but we're moving on and hope to have much news and many events as we grow into 2021.

# 2021

- **Chair:** Patricia Christensen
- **Vice chair:** Dennis Grabhorn
- **Secretary:** Barbara Ann Smith
- **Treasurer:** Christine Williams
- **Membership Chair:** Linda Bagley
- **Board Members:** Terissa Aronson, Maria Bordonaro, Jack Kelly, Paula Lewis, Travis Walker, Wade Willnow

COVID 19 still affected much of life in 2021, but work, often behind the scenes, continued toward the formation of an Historical Museum for the City of Port St. Lucie at the site of The Port on Westmoreland Boulevard.

As the city moved ahead with making the former Peacock family “hunting lodge” ready for the museum, the Society began taking [applications for engraved bricks](#) to go between the museum and nearby Peacock ranch house. The money raised will be used to set up and maintain the museum.

The Society also continues to solicit and encourage other gifts and grants from individuals and organizations. For example, the Saint Lucie River Chapter of the National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution (FL3107) has stepped forward and is assisting in soliciting a grant from its national organization.



Despite challenges due to the pandemic restrictions, we continued to give support to events held on the grounds of The Port. With the historic houses in the background, we (*Dennis Grabhorn and Christine William, shown here*) put on our masks in early January and manned a booth at the Botanical Gardens’ Art Show, where we told the buildings’ story and recruited new members.

Our usual February Gathering was cancelled due to the pandemic. However, some members braved the rain on the Valentine’s Day weekend to tell our story at another

Gardens event. We also had a booth at River Nights at The Port until they stopped for the summer.



Members of the Port St. Lucie Historical Society joined Council Members at City Hall the evening of April 26, when Mayor Gregory Oravec (*left*) read the proclamation honoring the city's history and future on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the City's founding.



Hundreds of PSL residents and friends came out to celebrate the City's 60th birthday at a party at the Mid-Life Event Center. The state declared Port St. Lucie a city on April 27, 1961, and the event was a chance to celebrate its growth and achievements by getting together with friends, dancing to music by the The Authentics and visiting the booths. The Port St. Lucie Historical Society was delighted to have been a part of the celebration. Longtime member Lee Hicks is shown at our booth.

Before taking a summer break, we held a Gathering May 19 at the



Santa Lucia River Club in Ballantrae. Building Official Joel Dramis sketched the growth of Port St. Lucie's Building Department. Now the department head, he came to the city in 1979 and not long after joined the fledging department.

The event was also a chance to honor the Miller family who have donated many pieces of antique furniture collected by their mother. Harold and Josephine Miller, moved to the Sunshine Avenue home in Sandpiper Bay with their family in 1979. It is hoped the furniture will be used in the Peacock Ranch house in the second phase of the restoration.



*Left to right, Jim and Janet (Miller) Rudd, Scott and Dana Miller. Scott gave the group a brief history of the home and their family's life there.*

Other donations for the house included a piano and a sewing machine from the period given by Geraldine "Jerry" Ellsworth and her daughter Councilwoman Stephanie Morgan. Susan and John Auld have donated chairs, china and additional items.

After a summer recess, the October 20th Gathering at the Santa Lucia Club at Ballantrae. kicked off the season for the Society. Chair Patricia Christensen reported that work on the buildings in The Port complex on Westmoreland Boulevard has been contracted to start in November and the society could have access as early as July 2022, which was later altered to October.

Councilwoman Jolien Caraballo talked to the group about the Dec. 7 vote to re-authorize the city to abate property taxes for firms planning major commercial developments in the city. that are job-producing. The referendum passed.

Throughout the year, meetings were held, plans were made, society business continued behind the scenes.



About 35 members and guests gathered on Wednesday, December 15, 2021, at the Santa Lucia Club to celebrate the end of a challenging year for the Port St. Lucie Historical Society.

There was holiday cheer and optimism for the New Year despite more than 20 months living under the shadow of a pandemic. Robert Deery and Barbara Ann Smith tied in the Ugly Sweater Contest. A buffet with several choices of entrée was seasoned with brief talks by two City Council members (David Pickett and newly elected Anthony Bonna), door prize drawings, and old and new friendships.



# 2022

- **Chair:** Wade Willnow
- **Vice chair:** Dennis Grabhorn
- **Secretary:** Barbara Ann Smith
- **Treasurer:** Terissa Aronson
- **Membership Chair:** Linda Bagley
- **Board Members:** Maria Bordonaro, Patricia Christensen, Mary Dodge, Jack Kelly, Paula Lewis (*retired in February*), Rochella Riordan, Ashley Tuccio (*February-September*), Travis Walker, Christine Williams.



The Port St. Lucie Historical Society's big news for 2022 was the start of construction on renovations for the historic Peacock family's historic "hunting lodge," which will house the museum of the city's history. When completed the Museum and the nearby historic Peacock Ranch house will be part of The Port District recreational site on Westmoreland Avenue.

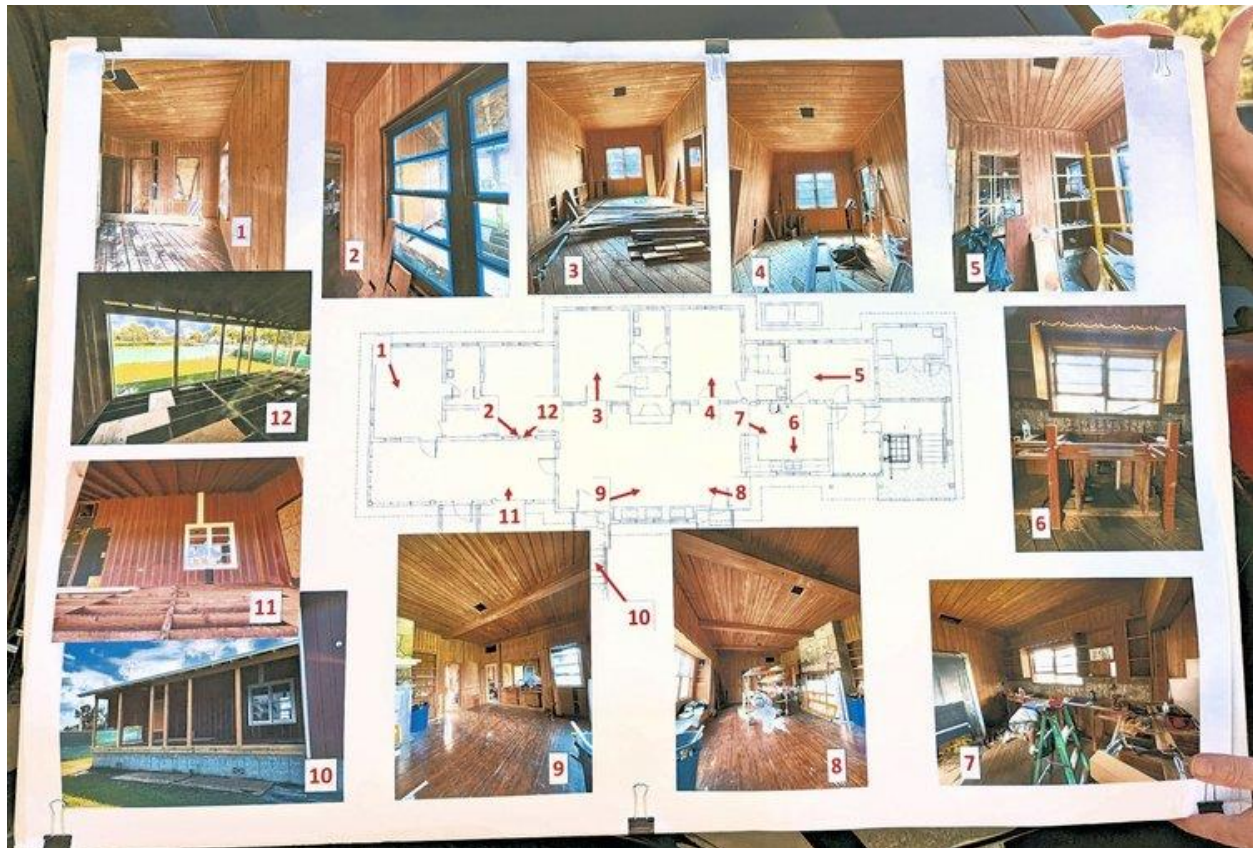
---

From the city's July 1 press release:

*Located near Port St. Lucie's Botanical Gardens at the southern end of The Port District, the 1952 Peacock Lodge and adjacent 1917 Peacock House bring quite a bit of history to the area. The City of Port St. Lucie awarded a contract to New World Builders of DeLand for the refurbishment of the Historic Peacock Lodge ,and work began this week.*

*With assistance of a grant from the Florida Department of Historical Resources, the two historic structures were relocated to the property near the North Fork of the St. Lucie River from western Port St. Lucie in 2018. Once moved, each building received updates, including securing and modifying access to the structures, updating the foundations, installing new shingle roofs and a fresh coat of exterior paint.*

*New World Builders will work on more updates to bring the lodge back to its original luster. The Peacock Lodge will feature a museum and gift shop, run by the Port St. Lucie Historical Society, and provide for meeting space and office space. Future renovations to the 1917 Peacock House are planned in the City's Capital Improvement Program as well.*



Shown above is a display of the progress on the future Port St. Lucie Historical Museum as presented by Jennifer Davis, Community Redevelopment Agency Project Manager for the city, at the Gathering October 19. The society was expected to get entry to the renovated museum in the late spring of 2023, but it now appears it will be later in the year. Work on the nearby Peacock House is expected to begin in two or three years. It will be furnished with period furniture.

The sale of bricks to go in the walkways around the museum and historic house was slow as we awaited information on progress. Proposals made to companies and groups concerning large displays in the bricked area were met with positive response and are still in the works.

While waiting for the City to prepare our museum, the archiving office and a video studio moved into an attractive new site off the parking lot at the Shell Bazaar on U.S. 1. We previously had an interior room at the same location, but this made it much nicer for volunteers to help enter items into our database, similar to that used by libraries. The move is thanks to Vice Chair Dennis Grabhorn, shown below left, and his assistant Chris. The video studio was taken over later in the year to accommodate a new restaurant planned adjacent to the Shell Bazaar.





Founding member and long-time Port St. Lucie Historical Society Director Paula Lewis, right, retired from the Board in February. Paula brought a broad knowledge of both the city and the county's history to the society having served on the governing boards of both. She was a City Council member in the 1980s, going on to become a County Commissioner for many years. Ashley Tuccio, of Spherion Staffing, a Florida native and a four-year resident of Port St. Lucie, was appointed to fill the vacancy. She resigned later in the year due to demands of a new job.



Four members of the Port St. Lucie Historical Museum traveled Saturday, Feb. 19, 2022, to Okeechobee for an open house of the Okeechobee Historical Museum. With cooperation from the city and county of Okeechobee, that organization has restored or is restoring several buildings marked for historical preservation. Our guide was historian and Okeechobee Mayor Dowling Watford, shown above with PSLHS directors Christine Williams and Rochella Riordan. Also on the excursion were Director Mary Dodge and her husband Jack.



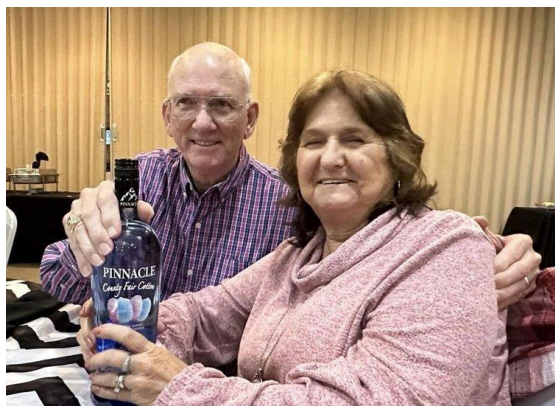
Researching Port St. Lucie’s history got a boost in May when newspapers.com, an online repository of the nation’s newspapers, added editions of the *St. Lucie News Tribune* from 1952 to 2022 and *The Stuart News* from 1995 to 2022. This will be a huge help in researching our history as they are now part of the largest available online depository of news stories. The Port St. Lucie versions of either paper have not been added, but the major events would have appeared in both of the other editions. One find was this portion of the Mackle Brothers advertising is from the Oct. 26, 1958, *Fort Pierce Tribune*. It appears to be the first local announcement of a new community named “Port St. Lucie.”

As life started to come back to somewhat normal following the Covid 19 restrictions, plans were made for the Society’s 2022 Gatherings. Building Official Joel Dramis, *shown here with longtime member Lee Hicks*, made a return visit at our February 16th Gathering at the Santa Lucia Club at Ballantrae with an update on development in the city. About 40 guests attended.



Sisters Jean Wilson, *left*, and Fort Pierce Mayor Linda Hudson share their

memories of growing up in St. Lucie County during WWII and beyond at the final Gathering of the season on Wednesday, May 18, at Santa Lucia River Club



At the Oct. 19 meeting, Dewey Hudman, shown here with his wife Lillian, was the main speaker and recalled early days of his 50-plus years in the city. He worked with Florida Power and Light and set up the city’s active Little League, which he has been a part of for many years. He was one of the winners of a bottle of wine in the drawing that followed his talk.

With its Christmas Gathering at the Santa Lucia River Club at Ballantrae on Wednesday, Dec. 14, the Port St. Lucie Historical Society ended its 2022 social year with good food and lots of prizes. The table settings were especially festive, and the conversations were lively. In a first for a gathering, member Jack Dodge, *shown here feigning disappointment*, held three of the prize tickets drawn but returned the last two for redrawing.



---

The Port St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to encouraging the study and preservation of the history and artifacts of the region.

***\*These members are now deceased.***

---