



The Historical Society of Orange Park

March 2026 Newsletter

Spring is here and we are ready for a few weeks of beautiful weather. This month, we celebrate Carrie Clarke Day on Sunday March 8. This is a day we highlight the contributions of the Clarke family, and Carrie Clarke in particular. The Clarke family contributed a great deal to the life of this community. We are grateful that we still have their family home and grounds for use in our town. Please see the newsletter for more details about this fun annual event.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter!

Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
March 8, 2026	2:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Carrie Clarke Day	Clarke House
April 12, 2026	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
May 7, 2026	10:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Member Tea Party	Clarke House
May 10, 2026	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House

Black History Month Events

Sharing is Caring: Stories of Orange Park's Black History

On February 7th, the birthday of Theresa Caldwell Miller, local family representatives came together to tell the stories of Orange Park's long-standing Black families. The room was filled with friendship and fond memories as Betty Demmons called upon various speakers, all with charming tales to tell. Family photographs and artifacts were displayed and a birthday cake was shared to honor Ms. Miller's 116th birthday.

Among those who shared stories were Desiree Allen, Wilbert Gregory, Henry Jones, Michael Walker, Barbara Walker Garner, and Ron Flowers, all of whom attended TC Miller Elementary School. Betty guided the conversation to focus on The Moutry, Walker, Fletcher, Allen, Fillmore, and McDowers families in addition to Theresa Miller.

Betty concluded the program by announcing that the event would be repeated on February 6, 2027, with more families to be shared. She challenged the families to carry the event into the future so that the stories always stay with us.

Thank you, Keith Bartholomew, for the wonderful photographs! These were shared on the Society's Facebook page. The links below allow you to see video recordings of the speakers. These are a bit rough as the Society does not have a real videographer, but they contain priceless memories that deserve to be preserved and shared.

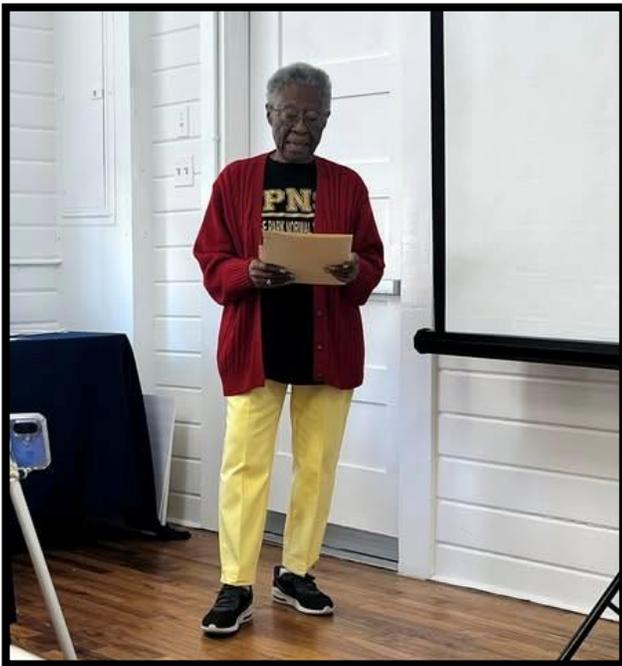
<https://youtu.be/U7lfDvQLUs4> - Part 1 of 2

<https://youtu.be/JPalPzy81no> - Part 2 of 2

Thank you, Betty Demmons, for bringing the community together to hear family stories that spanned Orange Park's history.



Henry Jones



Betty Demmons



Michael Walker

Black History Walks through Magnolia Cemetery - 2026

On February 28th, the Society offered free guided walks through Magnolia Cemetery with a special focus on the African America families represented there. Guides Van Hogan, Sandra DiGiovanni, Shauntai Arrington, Bob Scallan and Cindy Cheatwood shared stories of the town and some of its prominent African American residents as they guided visitors through the cemetery.

At the entry to the cemetery, historical panels and artifacts were displayed and visitors were greeted by Society volunteers Susana Thompson, Wynette Sandlin, and Barry DiGiovanni. Throughout the cemetery signs were placed with images to complement the stories being told. We appreciate Bob Scallan preparing those signs and the parking sign for the front entrance.



Betty Demmons shares the story of Darnella Moultry



Joy and Wilbert Gregory speak about George W Allen

Betty Demmons was on hand to share the story of her neighbors, Theodis and Darnella Moutry, highlighting their church activities and friendly nature.

Wilbert and Joy Gregory spoke about his father, George W. Allen, a man who was a friend to so many in Orange Park's Black community for decades. Allen worked in the turpentine industry, drove trucks, hauled ice and always helped his neighbors. Chad Hester and his mom, Betty Gregory Grubbs contributed to the conversation. Chad proudly spoke about his great-grandparents, the Kohns, buried near the Moosehaven section.

The Society was delighted to welcome the Floyd family. Five members of the family, Tanica Alexander, Lamont, Gonzalo, Henry III, and Lance Floyd, came to speak about and honor William “Shorty” Floyd. They explained his service as the first black fire fighter in the town and proudly related his building his own home in Orange Park with his own hands before he was 30 years old. That structure still stands but Shorty died at the early age of 36.



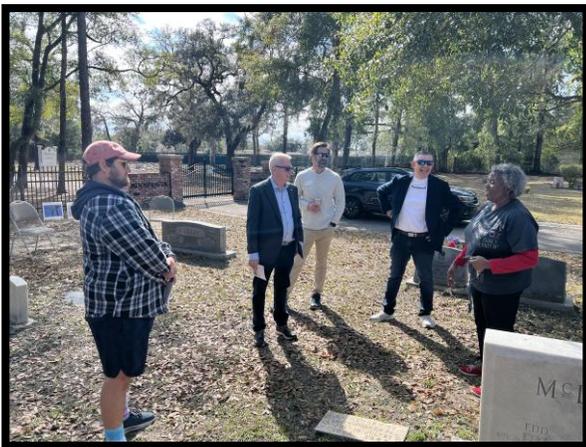
Chad Hester speaks about his great grandparents, the Kohn’s



The Floyd family shares information about William “Shorty” Floyd

Desiree Allen joined the event though busily working at the Scottish Games event at the Clay County Fairgrounds the same day. She told the story of her father and the heroism he showed in the US Army in Vietnam.

Guest speakers included Bernard Fennell and Helen Lee who spoke about the Fennell family line, joined by Cheryl and Mr. and Mrs. Dean Mosley Sr. They took the family from SC, to Yukon, to Orange Park and tied the Fennell line to the Filmore line, also very prominent in the cemetery.



Desiree Allen shares stories of the McDowers, Annie Keyes and her family



Bernard Fennell and Helen Lee spoke about the Fennell family

Between stops, the guides shared the stories of Lawrence Hicks, Annie Keyes, Tan and Annie McDower, Mary Filmore, and others. Hearing the stories of pride and connection left visitors with a feeling of community and small-town kinship.

Carrie Clarke Day - March 8th

Each year the Society remembers Carrie Clarke for the contributions she made to Orange Park's community. This year we will have live music, performed by Eugene Nix, Wanda Dillaberry and Steve Ferguson on the front lawn. Historical displays will be presented, free guided tours of the Clarke House will be conducted, books will be available for sale and more. The activities will begin at 2 PM and conclude at 5 PM. Come learn about this amazing Orange Park citizen and enjoy the charm of her home, made especially charming with the addition of fresh arrangements throughout provided by the Orange Park Garden Club. Follow our Facebook page for more about Miss Carrie.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF ORANGE PARK PROUDLY PRESENTS

FREE ENTRY

CARRIE CLARKE DAY

SUNDAY 2-5PM

MARCH 8, 2026

1039 KINGSLEY AVE.

CLARKE HOUSE PARK

HISTORICAL TOURS | ACTIVITIES | FOOD

LIVE MUSIC | MUCH MORE

info@ophistory.org

Save the Date- May 7, 2026- Members Tea Party

As a perk of membership, the Society is hosting a tea party for its members. Starting at 10 AM on Thursday, May 7th, members will enjoy tea and conversation with a few games along the way. An RSVP will be sent to the membership in April. This event was a big hit last year and we hope it will be even better this year!



Orange Park Memories

The Historical Society is highlighting Orange Park's historic houses each month of 2026. This month we feature the Clarke House, established in 1912.

In 1910, William Clarke purchased 30 acres in Orange Park to establish a Pecan Grove and family farm. In 1912 the home at 1039 Kingsley Ave was built and, over time, several outbuildings were added. Of these, three structures remain-the wagon shed, the garage and one two-bedroom worker cabin. When Mr. Clarke passed in 1943, Mrs. Clarke covered the walls of the house and three worker cabins with asbestos siding so that, as is recorded in the property rolls at the Clay County Archives, she would "never have to paint again". The worker cabins provided rental income to Mrs. Clarke for the rest of her life after the Pecan Grove closed.

During the 1910s and 20s, the Clarkes became significant citizens of the town. William Clarke was mayor of Orange Park from 1925-1929. Mrs. Clarke started a Sunday school for children on her spacious porch. This evolved into the First Baptist Church of Orange Park. Mrs. Clarke was encouraged to bid on a piece of land near the Kingsley Ave. wharf and much to her surprise, won the property with a bid of just one dollar. The church's first building was built there and when the congregation outgrew that, a new church was built right across the street from Mrs. Clarke's house.

The Clarke home with its open-concept ground floor and welcoming porches, served well for community meetings and gatherings of the First Baptist Church, the Orange Park Woman's Club, the Garden Club of Orange Park and more. A prominent feature then, as it is now, was Mrs. Clarke's piano, which is still playable, in the parlor.

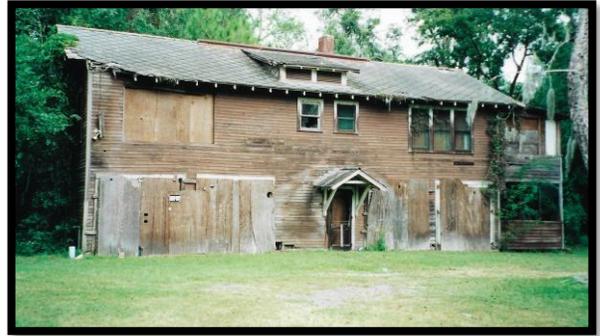
One fireplace downstairs and a wood-burning stove upstairs were the only heat sources while Mr. Clarke was alive. Electricity came to town in 1924 and the original fuse box, still in place, was erected on the outside of the house, in the back porch area that was later enclosed. The original fuses are still there to see. There are three bathrooms in the structure, unheard of in 1912, but only natural for Mr. Clarke, who was a professional plumber in addition to his Pecan Grove work. The charming farm-style kitchen sink was specifically arranged to accommodate Mrs. Clarke's short stature.

Every room of the Clarke House is filled with sunshine. The windows are strategically placed to capture any breeze that might cool a Florida home. The windows on the well-covered porch allowed the breeze to come into the home even if it was pouring rain around all the other windows. That L-shaped porch also

served as a summer sleeping area for the Clarkes, the only family to live there. Mrs. Clarke lived in the home until her death in 1979. Today, the home is owned and maintained by the Town of Orange Park and safeguarded by the Historical Society, as a significant part of local history. Free guided tours are offered every second Sunday of the month from 2-4 PM and on certain special occasions for visitors to enjoy. The Society also offers private tours for fewer than 20 people. These can be arranged by contacting info@ophistory.org.



Clarke House



**The site of these rental apartments
is now a parking lot**



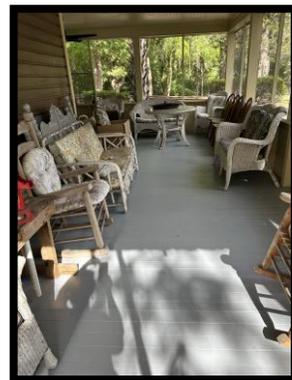
Upstairs Bedroom



Staircase and Family Piano



Clarke Pecan Grove Sign



Side Porch

Veterans' Corner – Clarence T. Marshall

This month we are going to go back in time to one of our earlier veterans. His name is Clarence T. Marshall.



C.T. Marshall served in the U.S. Navy from 1899 until he was discharged in 1904. During his service in the Navy, C.T. was stationed in the Philippines on several ships including the Isla Da Luzon, the Richmoud, Alliance & the Constellation.

After his service he returned to Utica, New York where his family was located. He was a farm capitalist but he and his wife soon became winter visitors to Orange Park. By 1910 he and his wife were spending most of their time in Orange Park.

In March 1912 he was elected Mayor of Orange Park. A position he held until 1919. In 1913 he and his wife moved into their new home on the riverfront.

During his time as Mayor, C.T. became proprietor of the Marion Hotel. He served in that capacity until May of 1915. Not one to let any “grass grow under his feet,” he also served as Vice President of the Island View Company. This company purchased 284 acres from the Eldridge Sugar Mill to sell in acreage rather than lots. The company wanted to take advantage of the soon to be opened highway between Jacksonville and Orange Park. These lots were in both Clay and Duval County on the St. Johns River.

During his time as Mayor, he also celebrated the completion of the highway from Jacksonville to Orange Park in November of 1912.



C.T. also faced other less pleasant circumstances. During 1914, three of the Town's Commissioners wanted to oust another commissioner by having a special election. At the time Orange Park had what is called Commission Municipal Government, which is characterized by elected commissioners who oversee specific departments.

Commissioner S.D. Morgan was able to sue the mayor and got a judge to restrain the commissioners from holding said election. The lawsuit was finally settled in 1917.

After his term as mayor, C.T. served for many years as Street Commissioner, Tax Collector, Director of Public Works and in other commissioner positions. His service to the town encompassed all his 20 years of residence in Orange Park. He is buried beside his first wife Anna and his son John L. Marshall.

Little Library Dedicated at Orange Park Woman's Club

The Women's Club of Orange Park, founded in 1910, began as a small service organization guided by a simple but powerful belief: *"If everyone did a little, a lot would get done."* More than a century later, that spirit is still very much alive.

On February 5, the community had an opportunity to return the generosity the club has shown for 116 years. After years of weather exposure, the club's little free library had deteriorated and was in need of replacement. In a wonderful show of cooperation, the Historical Society of Orange Park partnered with Lowe's, Home Depot, and local craftsman Ken Eberlein to install a brand-new library in front of the clubhouse.



The Historical Society extends heartfelt thanks to Lowe's for donating \$275 in building materials and to Home Depot for contributing a \$50 voucher. A special note of gratitude goes to Ken—who recently celebrated his 86th birthday—for dedicating countless hours to crafting a beautiful replica of the clubhouse itself. Thanks to many people giving a little, a great deal was accomplished.

Whether awarding scholarships, assisting families in need, or supporting children with special needs, the Women's Club of Orange Park has long been a cornerstone of the community. Their ongoing

commitment ensures that their legacy of service, compassion, and civic pride continues to shape Orange Park for generations to come.



Community Appreciation

Society Vice President, Bob Scallan, recently delivered a presentation on the history of the Woman's Club of Orange Park. As mentioned in the previous article, the members of the Woman's Club embraced the belief that *"if many do a little, a lot can be done."* The Historical Society of Orange Park has similarly recognized the effectiveness of this guiding principle.

Throughout the year, we take on numerous projects, many of which would be impossible without the support of our community, local businesses, public agencies, and dedicated individuals. The list of partners is far too long to name, and we would surely overlook someone if we tried.

However, we want to extend a heartfelt *thank you* to everyone who helps the Historical Society achieve meaningful progress year after year. Your generosity, cooperation, and community spirit are deeply appreciated.

Got pics?

The Society is looking for photographs to add to our resources. If you have long-time-ago images of people and/or places in Orange Park, please share them. In this increasingly visual world, there is a lot to learn from these glimpses of our past. You can share them through email at info@ophistory.org or through mail at P. O. Box 08, Orange Park, 32067. Originals will be returned after the Society makes a scan.

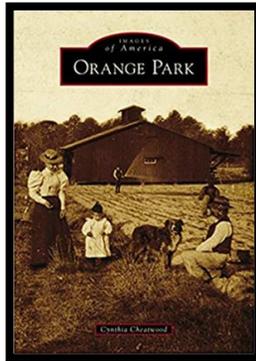


Look For Us Online

Look for the Historical Society of Orange Park online via our website, www.ophistory.org, our [Instagram](#) page or our [Facebook](#) page. Both sources provide updates on society news and activities.

Images of America: Orange Park

Images of America: Orange Park, authored by Historical Society President, Cynthia Cheatwood, is a wonderful way to learn about the history of Orange Park. This book shares the history of our town through archival photographs and stories collected from a variety of sources. The cost of the book is \$20 for members of our Society, \$25 for non-members and \$27 for online orders.



Clarke House Tours

Please join us Sunday, March 8, from 2 PM to 5 PM to tour the Clarke House and celebrate Carrie Clarke Day. The Clarke House, built in 1912, served as the family home for William and Carrie Clarke for many years. It features hardwood floors, plaster walls and ceilings and large, spacious rooms with many windows for good ventilation. It was a comfortable home and the Clarke family shared many happy memories there.



Links to Local History

For more events and activities related to local history, please visit the following:

- [Clay County Historical Society](#)
- [Middleburg Museum](#)
- [Historical Society of Penny Farms](#)
- [Mandarin Museum and Historical Society](#)
- [Keystone Heights Heritage Commission](#)
- [Clay County Archives](#)

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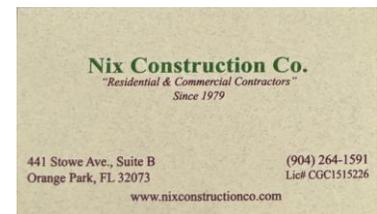
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