



# The Historical Society of Orange Park

## April 2025 Newsletter

Spring is in full bloom and we once again get to enjoy Mother Nature’s finest colorful displays here in Orange Park. We are fortunate to live in such a nice area! We hope you have many opportunities to get outside and enjoy our outstanding spring weather. We also wish each and every one of you a Happy Easter!

### Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
April 12, 2025	10:00 AM – 11:00 AM	Hicks Marker Dedication	Magnolia Cemetery
April 13, 2025	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
May 11, 2025	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
June 8, 2025	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
June 24, 2025	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM	Quarterly Member Meeting	Orange Park Library

### Carrie Clarke Day 2025

Our annual Carrie Clarke Day Celebration was held Saturday, March 8. Visitors to Clarke House Park were treated to a variety of activities. As always, the Clarke House was open and available for tours. There was also a station that allowed children to dress in gowns and hats for selfies on the screened porch. Randy Harris demonstrated the use of antique tools in the shed behind the house. The Art Guild of Orange Park was also on hand to provide hands-on, interactive art demonstrations. The Lion’s Club of Orange Park provided hamburgers, hot dogs and other concessions to hungry visitors. There were also a variety of games for children located around the park. Toni Sewell was also on hand to share the history of First Baptist Church. Carrie Clarke would have been pleased with Toni’s presence as Carrie was instrumental in getting the church started here in Orange Park. The event also featured the always hotly debated “pea-can” vs. “puh-kahn” Pecan Booth. Visitors voted on their preferred pronunciation of this local favorite, which was also a featured crop of the Clarke family farm. This year, “pea-can” received 49 votes to only 33 votes for “puh-kahn” to win the contest.



We are grateful to the Art Guild of Orange Park and the Lion's Club of Orange Park for their participation in this year's event. We thank the Garden Club of Orange Park for providing the beautiful floral arrangements that brought so much spring color to the Clarke House and for tending the front flower bed. We also thank our teen volunteers for spending their Saturday with us to oversee the old-fashioned kids' games around the park. Our thanks to Emma Goslee for helping at Clarke Day and for recruiting David Truong, Alivia Grissom, Cooper Crawford, and Asher Coleman from Orange Park High School. We also thank Khayden Coleman of Orange Park Junior High's National Junior Honor Society for helping. All the students did a great job!



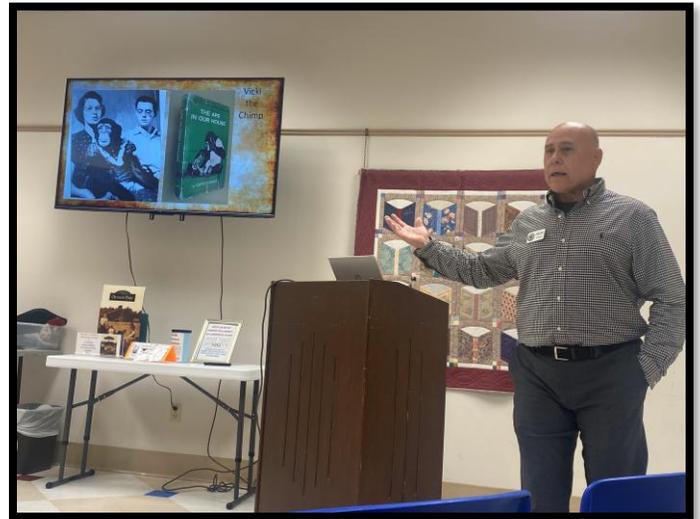
### **Quarterly Member Meeting**

The presentation titled "Heroes, Legends, Histories, and Mysteries of Clay County" by Bob Scallan at the March 18th meeting was an engaging journey through the annals of Clay County's past. It's fascinating to learn how historical figures like Washington Gano Benedict have shaped the community through their actions and endeavors, such as founding Orange Park and contributing to its development.

The discussion on Sheriff Josephus Peeler and his unfortunate encounter with a mysterious assailant added a layer of intrigue to the local history. The story of Frederick Stowe, son of the famous abolitionist and author Harriet Beecher Stowe, was also intriguing as it connected Clay County to the broader narrative of the abolitionist movement in the United States.

Lawrence Hicks, known as the "Ice Man," offered a glimpse into the everyday life and challenges faced by individuals in the past. His story exemplifies the resilience and industrious spirit that has often characterized the residents of the area.

The mention of the Yerkes Primate Biological Laboratories and the potential training of chimpanzees for space flight, as well as the controversial topic of a humanzee, brought a mix of scientific curiosity and ethical questions to the forefront. These mysteries not only entertain but also serve as reminders of the lesser-known aspects of our shared past.



Bob Scallan presents "Heroes, Legends, Histories, and Mysteries of Clay County"

Understanding the distinction between historical facts and embellished legends is crucial in preserving the authenticity of our community's heritage. The covered bridge in Middleburg likely has a practical origin, but the reasons behind its construction and existence may have been obscured by time and evolving local lore.

Overall, the event seems to have been a successful exploration of the interplay between history, legend, and the human tendency to mythologize the past. Such presentations are valuable in keeping the community informed about its roots and fostering a sense of pride in the unique tapestry of its collective experiences. It also encourages further research and inquiry into the truths that lie beneath the surface of well-known tales.



Carol Hogan, Van Hogan and Carolyn Clark

### **Earl Harrington Community Service Award**

The Earl Harrington Award for Community Service is awarded each year to an individual that exemplifies the community spirit of Earl Harrington, life-long resident of Orange Park who served five terms as mayor of the town and was a founding member of our Historical Society.

The winner of this year's Earl Harrington Award proved that love of community runs in the family! We were proud to present this year's award to Carol Hogan, Earl's younger sister. The presentation was made by Toni Harrington Sewell, Earl's daughter, at our March Quarterly Meeting.



Van Hogan, Carol Hogan and Toni Sewell

Carol was born in Orange Park, the daughter of Allan and Mary Harrington, both of whom served the community for years, publicly and privately.

Carol had always been involved with community service. She served with the Garden Club, Woman's Club and was also a member of Eastern Star. All these organizations exist to improve, serve and beautify communities through their volunteer efforts.

Carol has always had a heart for children. She volunteered for a time with the Lighthouse Learning Center. After her two sons were raised, Carol served for several years with Guardian ad Litem. She served as an advocate for children in legal cases and helped the courts determine what actions were in a child's best interests when their parents were unable or unwilling to do so.

Carol was especially proud of her service with Clay County Women for Education. A group of ladies from Clay County banded together to raise money to provide college scholarships to deserving young adults in Clay County. Fundraising efforts included organizing semi-annual concerts by the Clay County Community Band, yard sales and gift-wrapping at Barnes & Noble. All these efforts paid off when they were able to identify and present a check to a hard-working student that needed assistance. It made all the hard work worthwhile.

Living in and around Orange Park her whole life made Carol a natural local historian. In 2003, Carol joined with other local residents to prevent the demolition of the Clarke House. They successfully raised public awareness and lobbied the Town Council to prevent the irreplaceable loss of a home that resided in the memories of so many of the Town's long-time residents. In doing so, they saved a local landmark. The efforts of this group led to the creation of the Historical Society of Orange Park, now in its 22<sup>nd</sup> year.

One of her most recent volunteer efforts was with BASCA. She had a heart for the individuals that worked there who faced more than their share of life's challenges. She loved to see them succeed.

Through her many endeavors, Carol positively affected the lives of many individuals. Whether helping to provide needed school supplies, beautifying the community, advocating for a child in desperate need of a champion, providing sorely needed funds to needy students or preserving the life, heart and story of our community, Carol exemplified service to others. We were pleased to present her with the Earl Harrington Award for Community service and thank her for her contributions.

## **Orange Park Memories**

The Historical Society is highlighting Orange Park businesses each month of 2025. We are sharing stories each month that feature one very old and one more familiar business in the town. This month we feature the Florida Driving Club and Orange Park Kennel Club. Both can be seen in the 1953 aerial photo shown below.

The Florida Driving Club, established just after World War Two, welcomed locals to surrey racing, stabling, horseback races, etc. It included a clubhouse and entertainment. It was in operation about a decade.

The Orange Park Kennel Club predates the Driving Club but has the status of still operating. Its first race, albeit illegal, was in 1926 when it was known as Seminole Kennel Club. In December 1931, Florida legalized gambling and the Orange Park Kennel Club opened properly. It was seasonal at first, closed during the war years and then returned to a full schedule. Although greyhound racing is no longer permitted in Florida, the venue is still in operation. Please share your memories of these two facilities with us at [info@ophistory.org](mailto:info@ophistory.org).



**Florida Driving Club**



**Orange Park Kennel Club**



### **1953 Aerial Photo**

Both racetracks were located at the north end of Orange Park. The Florida Driving Club track is shown on the left, near the present-day location of the Holiday Inn Express, and the Orange Park Kennel Club track is shown on the right, where it is still currently located.

### **The Hicks Marker is ready to be Installed!**

The Society has been working with Jacksonville Memory Gardens to provide a headstone for Lawrence Hicks, Orange Park's "Iceman," and his wife Effie in Magnolia Cemetery. The marker has been completed and is here in Orange Park. We will hold a short dedication/recognition ceremony at the gravesite in Magnolia Cemetery, 1040 Kingsley Avenue, on Saturday, April 12 at 10 AM. The gravesite is located at a cedar tree at the back of the cemetery, near the Moosehaven mausoleum. Details are still being arranged. Please join us as we give the Iceman the recognition he deserves.



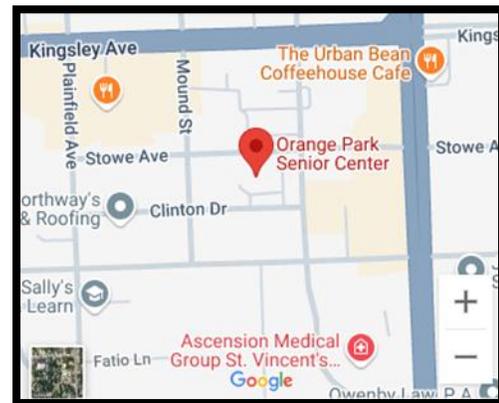
Orange Park's  
Icehouse

### **Veterans Memorial**

Each year, we place one order for inscribed pavers to be installed at the Veterans Memorial. The final day to place an order for an inscribed paver this year is July 31. All pavers ordered by this date will be installed at the Veterans Memorial prior to this year's Veterans Day Ceremony in November. Paver order forms can be found on our website, [www.ophistory.org](http://www.ophistory.org), and at the Veterans Memorial. The gift of an inscribed paver is a wonderful way to honor those who have served and share their service with the community!

### **The Society is starting a cooperation with the Senior Center of Orange Park**

Join Cindy Cheatwood on April 15<sup>th</sup> at 9AM at the Orange Park Senior Center, 414 Stowe Avenue, for our introductory presentation of the *History of Orange Park*. Bingo follows the presentation.



### **Orange Park Historic Driving Tour**



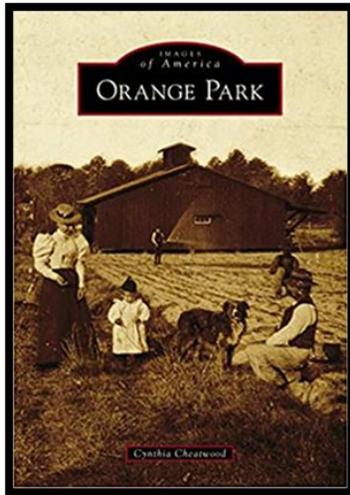
Looking for somewhere to explore or something to do in Clay County? Visit the Explore Clay website, [Explore Clay County - Small Towns, Big Passions](http://Explore Clay County - Small Towns, Big Passions), for plenty of suggestions.

One of the activities is a tour of historic buildings in Orange Park. This driving tour takes you to 23 historical structures that hold positions of prominence in Orange Park's history and continue to serve today. *Please remember most locations are private residences and should be viewed from the street.*

To access the tour visit, download the Explore Clay mobile app from the Explore Clay website or by clicking: [Clay County - Mobile App](#). Once you have the app downloaded, search for the tour then dive into the rich history of Orange Park.

### **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**

The Clarke House will be open to the public for tours on Sunday afternoon, April 13 from 2 PM to 4 PM. The Clarke House, built in 1912, served as the family home for William and Carrie Clarke for many years. It features hardwood floors, plastered 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. Stop by for a visit and make some memories of your own and feel free to share recollections that the house inspires.



### **Look For Us Online**

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

### **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](#)

**Please support our Corporate Sponsors**



Dairy Queen, 610 Kingsley Avenue, Orange Park



McDonald's, 428 Park Avenue & 372 Blanding Blvd., Orange Park



[Home | Orange Park Histor 1 \(orangeparkhistorytours.com\)](http://orangeparkhistorytours.com)

