



# The Historical Society of Orange Park

## November 2024 Newsletter

Fall continues to be a busy time of the year. This month, we celebrate Veterans Day and Thanksgiving, two occasions to express our gratitude. On November 11, we will thank our veterans for their service with our annual Veterans Day Ceremony at the Veterans Memorial in Magnolia Cemetery. On November 28, we celebrate Thanksgiving, a day set aside to thank our Lord and Creator for the blessings of living in northeast Florida and enjoying the love of family and friends. In this season of thanksgiving, we want to thank you, our members, for your support and friendship over these past 20+ years. We cannot continue our service to the community without you.

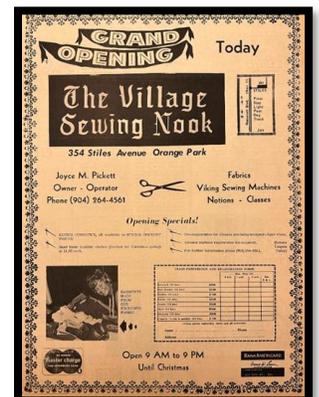
Please note that we will host our Quarterly Member Meeting and Annual Meeting on November 18 at the Orange Park Library. This will be our last meeting of the year and will feature the election of officers for 2025. We look forward to seeing you there. Additional information on this and other upcoming events can be found further along in this newsletter.

### Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
November 10, 2024	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
November 11, 2024	11:00 AM – 12 Noon	Veterans Day Ceremony	Veterans Memorial
November 18, 2024	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM	Quarterly Member Meeting	Orange Park Library
December 6 & 7, 2024	5:00 PM – 9:00 PM	Hometown Holiday	Clarke House Park
December 14, 2024	11:45 AM – 1:00 PM	Wreaths Across America	Veterans Memorial
December 14, 2024	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	HSOP Christmas Gathering	Clarke House
January 12, 2025	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House

### Orange Park Memories

Many long-time residents will remember The Village Sewing Nook. It served the community for 50 years. As you can see, it was located on Stiles Avenue, which at that time, was “the first stop light after the dog track”. Each 1st day of the month during 2024, the Historical Society of Orange Park has been sharing vintage newspaper items, clipped from *The Breeze* newspaper (1959 to 1971). This month’s selection was in the November 12, 1970 edition of the paper.



## **Veterans Day Ceremony**

The Historical Society of Orange Park and the Town of Orange Park invite you to join us at 11 AM, Monday, November 11 for our annual Veterans Day Ceremony to be held at the Orange Park Veterans Memorial, which is located just inside the gates of the town's historic Magnolia Cemetery, 1040 Kingsley Avenue.

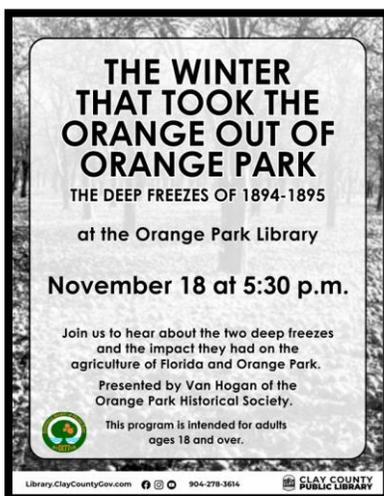
We welcome all to be a part of this moving, patriotic ceremony that pays tribute to those who bravely served our country.

The program for this year's recognition will include a presentation of the colors by the Orange Park High School NJROTC Color Guard, and musical performances by Kiley Taylor and the First Coast Highlanders. The program features inspiring words from Winette Sandlin, Vice Mayor of the Town of Orange Park, Judy Sweep with the Daughters of the American Revolution, and keynote speaker Kimberly Anding, USAF, Ret., Honor Flight Program Director. Also featured will be local students who will present the winning essays in the 2024 Veterans Day Essay Contest, participation by the American Legion Post #250 Riders and a flyover by the Dreamland Squadron from Haller Airfield.



Seating is limited so attendees are encouraged to bring their own chairs. There will be NO parking in the cemetery. Parking is available in the First Baptist Church lot one block west of the cemetery at 1140 Kingsley Avenue. Refreshments will be provided following the ceremony.

## **Quarterly Member Meeting and Annual Meeting:**



Please join us at 5:50 PM, Monday, November 18 at the Orange Park Library for our November Quarterly Meeting. This meeting will feature a presentation entitled: **The Winter that Took the Orange Out of Orange Park**. The devastating freezes of the winter of 1894-1895 brought agriculture to a standstill in Florida. The frigid weather drove citrus farming from North Florida, negatively affected the livelihoods of many and forced residents out of Orange Park. The impact of this winter was felt in this area for years.

This meeting will also serve as the Annual Meeting of our corporation. Officers for 2025 will be elected. Nominations are still open for those interested in leading the organization.

## **Hometown Holiday**

Join us for the 12th annual Hometown Holiday at Clarke House Park on Friday, December 6 and Saturday, December 7. The event will run from 5 PM to 9 PM each evening. This is always a great family event with something for everyone and every age.

The Clarke House will be decorated for the holidays and open to visitors. Members of the Society will be on hand to answer questions and provide information about the Clarke family and our town's history.

Other activities will include live musical entertainment, food vendors, pictures with Santa, a Christmas village where you can shop for unique gifts, holiday movies on a large, outdoor screen and trail rides through the trees on a trail decorated with holiday lights.

This old-fashioned holiday celebration is a great way for your family to start the Christmas season!

Parking is available across the street from Clarke House Park at the First Baptist Church of Orange Park. Orange Park Police Officers will be on-site to help everyone safely cross Kingsley Ave. Limited handicap parking is available within the park.

We will again be collecting non-perishable food items to donate to those in need this holiday season. Food items will be collected at the Clarke House. All donations will be delivered to the Clothes Closet for distribution in the Orange Park area.



## **Holiday Gathering**

On the evening of December 14<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM, there will be a Christmas Gathering and General Meeting of the Historical Society at the Clarke House, 1039 Kingsley Avenue in Clarke House Park. This meeting is open to members and friends of the Society as well as those interested in joining the Society. We look forward to seeing everyone. Come join us for music, news and fellowship as we celebrate the season and share good times. We will be collecting non-perishable food items to donate to those in need this holiday season. All donations will be delivered to the Clothes Closet for distribution in the Orange Park area. \*Please bring a dessert to share with others if you are able.\*



## **Moonlight on Magnolia**

It was a beautiful October afternoon as the Society presented the annual *Moonlight on Magnolia* historical walks through Magnolia Cemetery. Around 200 folks came out for the experience. Presentations of familiar characters were spiced up with new ones. We welcomed Pat Meeks, who explained her parents' contributions to the town, as well as Lisa Scallan who made Nellie Morgan come back to life. Around the cemetery there were videos accessible with QR codes and cell phones- stories that were told at last year's event. A few World War One veterans were also included in a QR access system.

We had some faithful friends on hand. Chuck Hall told the charming story of Confederate Jackson Hall, John Bowles shared the story of Leonidas Wade, one time owner of Wadesboro Springs in Orange Park. Jana Kinder was with us again as well, to tell the story of storeowner/trapeze artist Pauline Wiley. Two young charmers, Teagan Power and Ivy Carroll told the story of Ruthie Temple and Virginia Lee so tragically lost at the Point.

Sandra DiGiovanni coordinated efforts at the entrance for the tours. This somewhat thankless job is vital and it was a great comfort for the guides to know Sandra was there to keep things organized. Van Hogan, Cindy Cheatwood, Bob Scallan, Allyson Christy, Maryam Owen and Tiffany Bazemore served as guides, all taking at least two different groups around the tour. They were joined by a young guide, Daniel Truong who bravely acted solo even though he is still in junior high!

Volunteers Kenny Radwanski, Zachary Power, Alyson Bumagat, Rose Michael, Khaydon Cole and her mother helped at the gate and front table and acted as runners. Barry DiGiovanni helped load and transport the tables and chairs needed for the event.

Moonlight on Magnolia has become something of a town tradition. It takes many people to make it work. Thank you, everyone who assisted in the process, what you have given the community weaves memories and an interest in local history. Please consider helping again next time!





## **Town of Orange Park Fall Festival**

The Town of Orange Park's 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fall Festival was a great success! The event was blessed with two days of great weather and large crowds. Visitors came from all around the area to enjoy music, live entertainment, food, fun, and crafts!

Friends, old and new, stopped by the Society's booth behind Town Hall to try their luck at historical trivia, check out our offerings or just talk a while. We were happy to receive a visit from Carolyn Clark, one of our founding members, who stopped by on Sunday afternoon. It was good to see her.

Our thanks to volunteers Cindy Cheatwood, Bob Scallan, Sandra and Barry DiGiovanni, Kathleen Colter and Van Hogan for staffing the booth. We look forward to next year's event.



## **Veterans Memorial Update**

We are happy to report that this year's new, inscribed pavers have been installed at the Veterans Memorial. Eddie Ragland, with Ragland and Son Landscaping, stopped by last week to install the new pavers and they look great! Eddie has been a good friend of our Society for years and always makes time in his busy schedule to stop by and install our pavers each year. We are pleased to have the new pavers installed before this year's Veterans Day ceremony and see our veterans honored at the memorial.



We also offer our thanks to Honeywell's Pest Control. During a recent visit to the memorial, we noticed an infestation of bull ants.

As these ants burrow, they create voids below the pavers, which can lead to uneven settlement. Honeywell Pest Control donated their services to spray the memorial and eliminate the bull ant problem. We appreciate their support and generosity.

## **Wreaths Across America**



The Magnolia Cemetery Board, Town of Orange Park and Moosehaven are proud to again sponsor the Wreaths Across America at Magnolia and Moosehaven Cemeteries for 2024.

A ceremony at the Veteran's Memorial at Magnolia Cemetery will begin at 11:45 AM on December 14, 2024. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Mayor Randy Anderson will place the first wreath honoring a veteran selected by the Historical Society of Orange Park. After the first wreath is placed, volunteers will place additional 224 wreaths in Magnolia Cemetery and 50 wreaths honoring the veterans in Moosehaven Cemetery.

Again, this year volunteers are from the following groups:

Boy Scout Troop 25

Cub Scout Pack 25

Girl Scout Troop 31020

Black Creek Young Marines

American Legion 250 Riders

Orange Park Rotary Club- Sunrise

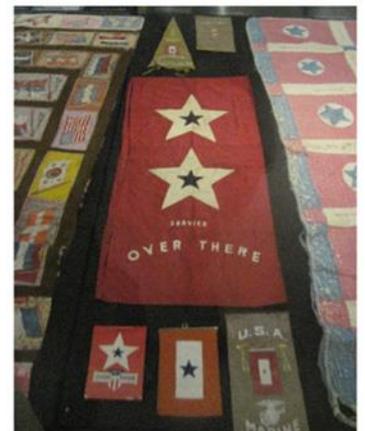
We are proud to be a part of Wreaths Across America. In 2023, over 3 million wreaths were placed at over 4000 locations nationwide and abroad.

If you would like to participate by placing wreaths, please feel free to volunteer on our website: [www.wreathsarossaamerica.org/FL1000](http://www.wreathsarossaamerica.org/FL1000)

## **World War One Remembered in Orange Park**

This year marks the 110th anniversary of the start of World War One. The Veterans Day holiday calls us to remember United States veterans, including those who served in the Great War that spawned the national holiday. The further we get from World War One the less we discuss it, and so, the less we appreciate just how challenging it was.

An effort is underway in Orange Park to reawaken the experience of those who left small towns to travel overseas to make the world safe for democracy. In Orange Park's Magnolia Cemetery there are 30 veterans who served in this mission. They came from ten different states and a couple of European countries to represent the United States Army, Balloon Corps, US Guards, and Navy, including Naval Reserves. The majority served in France.



Learning about these individual veterans provides a snapshot of World War One. They were infantrymen, engineers, machine gunners, artillerymen, transport corps workers and members of tank and depot brigades. Some held unique positions. There is one bugler, one balloonist, as well as one member of a Field Remount squadron, a unit that procured and conditioned horses for battle. World War I was the last major conflict in which the US Army used horses and mules in significant numbers.

Among these veterans was one submarine chaser and one radioman, Leo Bowles, who served in that role before and during the war as well as during World War Two, all in San Juan, Puerto Rico. This station was one of the first wireless telegraph stations and was essential for maintaining communication with ships at sea. Another soldier, Robert Martin, also repeated service during World War Two, even though he had been sent home with a battlefield injury during the First World War.

There are two female World War One veterans in Magnolia Cemetery. Both served in the Army but in very different capacities. One was Mary Eva Morrison, an Army nurse who served sixteen months in France. She was awarded the bronze victory button despite never having been assigned an official rank due to her gender.

British born Kathleen McKee, with an excellent European education, likewise had no rank. She immigrated to America, enlisted in the Army Signal Corps and was trained as a telephone switchboard operator due to her fluency in French. She was quickly transported to Le Harve, north of Paris, and the command headquarters of General "Black Jack" Pershing. For 18 months, McKee personally witnessed the military and diplomatic details of the war as she routed calls from its major players through her switchboard. When she returned, she became a naturalized US citizen. Her group of telephone operators, called the *Hello Girls*, had to wait for recognition of their military service until 2009, when they were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. Sadly, McKee had died nineteen years before.



Only three of Magnolia Cemetery's thirty World War One veterans remained stateside during the war. One was a Harvard-educated lawyer who worked out logistics for an ordnance company. The men who sailed for France were mostly young, working class. 80% were in the Army, most leaving farms or labor jobs to join the fight. By the end of the war, their ranks included one captain, one sergeant-major, two sergeants and six corporals. Seven were still privates when the war ended and four reached private first class. Interestingly the radioman, two cooks, and bugler listed those job titles as their rank on their military service records.

Six of Magnolia Cemetery's Great War veterans were African American. Their assignments included some of the most inglorious in the army. Many were responsible for digging trenches, removing unexploded shells from fields, clearing disabled equipment and barbed wire, and burying soldiers killed in action. Despite all the hard and essential work they provided, African Americans received unfair treatment while serving in World War I. Two of these veterans, Early Glover and Nathaniel Key, served in the same depot brigade. After the war, Glover worked as a laborer and Key worked in turpentine camps, a steady employer in Florida at the time.

The effects of war, now called PTSD, were called *shell shock* in the Great War. Records of Magnolia's veterans show long term effects of this. One veteran, Albert Hanson, came home with psychological issues that never left him. He never married, could not hold a job and wound up in VA hospitals for most of the rest of his life. Similarly, Lithuanian-born Peter Martinkus, found his way to Orange Park late in life without family, employment or choices. He squatted on the multi-acre property of World War Two veteran, John Nelson who befriended him. When Nelson found Martinkus, he got to know him, and even built a cabin on his property to house his fellow vet. At supertime the Nelson family often invited Martinkus to join them. When Martinkus died, with



*Jesse Quigley, Cook, Co. C,  
6th Division*

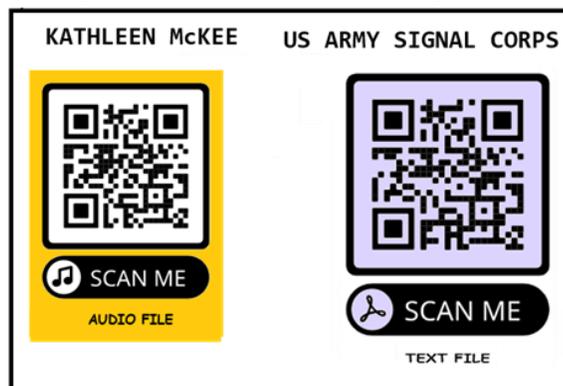
no one to arrange a funeral, Nelson made sure Martinkus was honored with a military marker. He applied for the official military headstone that marks his grave today. When a Veterans Memorial was created at Magnolia Cemetery, the Nelsons purchased an inscribed paver to recognize Martinkus's service.

Peter Martinkus, with several other Magnolia veterans, fought at the 47-day long Meuse-Argonne Offensive in 1918. At least six of the others were there, all in different units. Not all military service records for individuals list the battles in which they fought. The Meuse-Argonne was the largest military offensive in all American history, involving 1.2 million soldiers from around the world and resulting in over 26,000 Americans being killed. The gravity of this battle alone needs to be remembered.

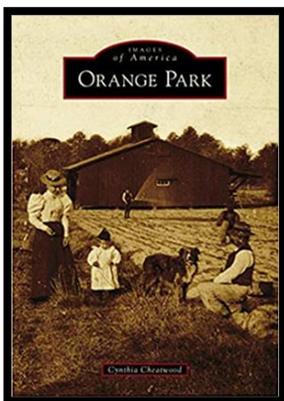
Some Magnolia Cemetery veterans had family connections that brought them to Orange Park. Others came through service at nearby Naval Air Station Jacksonville.

No doubt there are such resting places across the country where those who fought the war to end all wars now rest beneath weathered headstones. Many are near immediate family members who took their stories with them. Others are among strangers. Some led long lives and, in the end, it was this service that they chose for their epitaph. Let us not forget.

From November 8-15, 2024, the Society will have signs posted around Magnolia Cemetery like the example shown. With a cell phone, visitors can aim their camera at the QR codes on the signs to read or hear the story of the veteran in front of them. As we honor these veterans, we also get a unique view into the various duty stations, work assignments and battles they experienced.



## 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, November 10 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 on 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](#)

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