



The Historical Society of Orange Park

February 2025 Newsletter

February is Black History Month. To celebrate, we are conducting walks through Magnolia Cemetery that will feature the stories of African Americans and their contributions to life in Orange Park. In March, we will also be hosting our annual Carrie Clarke Day event at Clarke House Park. Both events provide a wonderful opportunity to get outside, enjoy our Florida weather and learn more about our community.

We would like to invite you to renew your membership if you have not done so already. You can renew your membership via our website's online store or you can download a renewal form and renew by mail. Please know that we greatly appreciate your support and participation.

Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
February 9, 2025	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
February 15 & 22, 2025	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Black History Tours	Magnolia Cemetery
March 8, 2025	11:00 AM – 4:00 PM	Carrie Clarke Day	Clarke House Park
March 9, 2025	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
March 18, 2025	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM	Quarterly Member Meeting	Orange Park Library

Black History Walks through Magnolia Cemetery

Feb. 15th and 22nd, 2 -4 PM



Join us on Saturday February 15 or Saturday, February 22, for our inaugural Black History Walks at Magnolia Cemetery. These tours, similar to the popular *Moonlight on Magnolia* tours done in October, will focus exclusively on the fascinating African American history of the town. Tours begin on the hour, 2 pm and 3 pm.

Family members and/or acquaintances of several of those highlighted will be on hand to tell their stories.

The stroll through Magnolia Cemetery will highlight the men and women from Orange Park's past who helped create the town we have today. All can benefit from knowing their stories and honor their memory at the same time. Bring family and friends. There is no admission fee!

Carrie Clarke Day is March 8th!

All hands on deck! March 8th is Carrie Clarke Day, our annual opportunity to let the community know just how special Mrs. Clarke was. We need all able-bodied members (and their guests) to help make the event special.

Activities being planned by the Society include historical house tours, tool demonstrations in the shed, old fashioned games, art demonstrations by the Art Guild, selfies with historic hats, the annual *Pea*-can vs *Puh*-can name contest and more. The Lions Club will be grilling hamburgers and hot dogs for the first time in several years! The Garden Club of Orange Park will decorate the Clarke House with a not-to-be-missed collection of fresh floral arrangements.



Help is needed leading tours, sharing Society information, and helping with the activities above. It takes a team! The event will be open to the public from 11AM-4 PM. Help setting up and clearing away would also be helpful. Please email us at info@ophistory.org if you would like to volunteer.



Quarterly Member Meeting

Please join us at 5:30 PM, Tuesday, March 18 at the Orange Park Library for our next Quarterly Member Meeting. Bob Scallan will present "Heroes, Legends, Histories, and Mysteries". Bob will delve into the lesser-known aspects of Clay County's history, presenting intriguing narratives that highlight obscure events and figures. Bob will explore a range of topics, including the enigmatic Humanzee, unsolved sheriff murders, the historical significance of covered bridges, the contributions of Washington Gano Benedict, the founder of Orange Park, and the mysteries surrounding unmarked graves in Magnolia Cemetery. His examination will reveal compelling stories from the community that may be unfamiliar to many residents, inviting them to discover the rich and hidden history of their surroundings. We hope you will join us.



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 turpentine camps and Hicks' Icehouse.

The area around Railroad Ave as well as the area around Doctor's Lake in Orange Park have had a long history of turpentine production. As old as the town itself, generations of men, mostly African American, hired on to work long hard hours in turpentine camps. There is evidence that a sizable number of Clay County men started up their own turpentine distilleries to produce naval stores from Florida's trees.

Lawrence Hicks was a self-employed African American businessman- he was Orange Park's "Ice Man" in the 1940s. He had a small structure on McIntosh Ave., (near the TC Miller Center) to store the ice he sold and delivered around town. In those days, before modern refrigerators, everyone had an "ice box" with a handy tray at the bottom for collecting the water as the ice melted. Hicks' Icehouse structure is still there though it's not quite recognizable as an icehouse today.



Turpentine Still



Hick's Icehouse

Orange Park History on Channel 4 on February 4th

As reported in the January newsletter, Channel 4 will be featuring Orange Park in their local newscasts on February 4. Reporters will be broadcasting live from Orange Park between 7 AM - 9 AM and again between 4 PM - 6 PM.

To tell Orange Park's story, Channel 4 reached out to the Society about the town's history. They have visited several sites in and around Orange Park and recorded several interviews to discuss various aspects of Orange Park's history. Presumably, clips from the pre-recorded interviews with Cindy



**Cindy Cheatwood and
Amanda Devoes**



Eddie Henley, Amada Devoes and
Connie Thomas

Cheatwood, Connie Thomas and Eddie Henley will be integrated into the live shows. Channel 4 used a lot of on-air and behind the camera personnel to put Orange Park’s history together.

This will be a great opportunity for Channel 4’s audience to get to know Orange Park and learn about its unique history. We hope the finished product might be something we could link to our website for the future.

History Book Fair Monday, February 17 10 AM – 4 PM

JOIN US FOR A HISTORY BOOK FAIR
Monday – President’s Day - FEB. 17, 2025
10 A.M. – 4 P.M.

Meet authors like **Jeff Davies** (*Florida: A History in Pictures*), **Johnathan Rich** (*Spires in the Sun*), **Cindy Cheatwood** (*Orange Park: Images of America*), **Linda Schilling Mitchell** (*My Color-Full Florida*) **Randy Harris** (*Turpentown*) and many others.

**CLERK OF COURT AND COMPTROLLER
CLAY COUNTY**

**CLAY COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

- MUSEUM TOURS
- SCAVENGER HUNTS
- BOOK SIGNINGS
- REENACTMENTS
- DIGITAL PRESENTATIONS

This event is free and open to the public
Presented by the Clerk of Court’s
Historical Archives Division
and Clay County Historical Society
Location – 915 Walnut St.
(the Historic Triangle)
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043
ClayCountyHistoricalSociety.org
Info@ClayCountyHistoricalSociety.org

Lawrence Hicks, Orange Park's Ice Man

By Cindy Cheatwood

As the town's old-timers leave us, they often take their stories with them. There are, however, some charmers whose stories bear repeating. One of those is Lawrence Hicks, known to many as "The Ice Man."

When Lawrence Hicks was interviewed in 1977, he said this about his birthday, "Our papers were burned years ago, but my aunt told me I was born March 28, 1888." That would have been in Yukon, Florida, a small rural town that was forced to close by the Navy in 1963 due to safety concerns once NAS Jax was built on its eastern border. His father, Nathaniel, was a rural Duval County farmer who, with wife, Rachael, raised nine children.

Nathaniel Hicks had a grist mill made of two big stones about four feet across. It took two people to operate it. He also had a sailboat, called the *Ollie*, that was used to take the farm goods to market. Hicks recalled that in 1901 they were on the *Ollie*, returning home when they saw the Jacksonville in flames, burning, said Hicks, "from Ocean to Main Streets", an image he never forgot.

For school, Lawrence remembered having to "cross streams via foot logs." He could only go to school for 2 years, first and second grade, before he was needed to help work on the farm. In the 1977 interview that was his only comment that showed regret.

Lawrence worked as a laborer in Jacksonville after leaving the family farm. In the 1930s he did some farming of his own, living on Old State Road 13. Sometime before 1940, he moved to Orange Park and started an ice business, collecting blocks of ice packed in sawdust from northern climes, storing them in his Icehouse and delivering them throughout Orange Park and beyond.

In 1944 he married Effie Pollard Hicks. The Pollard family has a long history in Orange Park. She had two sons and a daughter who took Hicks' name. They lived at 520 McIntosh Ave. and his business's special ice storage shed is still on the property today.

Lawrence Hicks became a regular face around town, walking right into homes all over town, like a member of the family, with his heavy blocks of ice. Lawrence was a real talker, according to local businesswoman Mary Fillmore. "He stayed and talked with folks, oftentimes standing there with the ice "just dripping away" as he spoke," she remembered. As an African American entrepreneur, Hicks created something of a buzz in the Black community of the town. Mary, a Black businesswoman herself, was his first Black customer and she was happy to let folks know it.

Hicks delivered ice all around the county. Annie Keyes remembered him delivering ice to her house in Middleburg in the 1940's. She recalled waiting anxiously for him so that she could have ice-cold water in the summertime. She also remembered that he was a member of a secret service organization called the Good Samaritans, similar to the Masons, and that he performed a handkerchief snapping ritual at the funerals of other Good Samaritans.

Local resident Gwen Chojnacki, part owner of the Sisters' Tea Room in Orange Park, remembered Mr. Hicks fondly after his death in 1982. She related the story from her childhood explaining that since air conditioning was not yet in average homes, the boys her age would slip into the Icehouse where Mr. Hicks stored his ice, knowing they could cool down there in hot Florida summers. She named Herman Card, Elrod Eulenfeld, Sidney Smith, Bo Glisson and Tommy Gurr as the boys who helped themselves to the cold. "Mr. Hicks was very nice," said Gwen, so "he told them to just close the door when they left." For Gwen it was a real treat to get Mr. Hick's ice so she could make ice cream.

For his whole life, Hicks raised his own food. He took great pride that he had never been in trouble and never had a traffic accident. Everyone in town knew Lawrence Hicks who "was always able to get along with everybody, both black and white." He joined the Church when he was seventeen years old and never left it. For many years he served in various leadership positions at the St. James A.M.E. Church in Orange Park. He died November 11, 1982, in Clay County. The only marker he ever received at his gravesite was a small metal plate that did not have his whole name or correct birth year on it; this after living in Orange Park for over 40 years.

All we have to indicate he was here is the abandoned icehouse and the few recorded memories of mid-century Orange Parkers. The Historical Society of Orange Park wants to hold onto the memory of our Iceman who charmed folks with a servant's heart. With help from John Shipley of Jax Memory Gardens, a headstone is being provided for Lawrence and Effie. It will be installed in the spring. So, here's to you Lawrence Hicks, thanks for helping make Orange Park cool!

Electricity Comes to Orange Park

By Bob Scallan

Orange Park has always faced its challenges but each challenge has been eclipsed by a historic triumph as our community has persevered. In the wake of the struggles following the big freeze of 1894—a calamity that left orchards barren, put livelihoods in jeopardy, and sowed seeds of despair—this cooperative effort breathed new life into the town. The bitter chill that had gripped the region back in the 19th century fostered resilience in its inhabitants, teaching them the value of unity in the face of adversity.

One Hundred years ago in 1924, in a remarkable display of community spirit, the quaint town of Orange Park found itself facing a significant hurdle: the utility company in Jacksonville had firmly declined to extend electricity lines due to the insufficient population count. With the vibrant community feeling the strain of limited resources, a beacon of hope emerged from an unexpected source—Moosehaven.

The residents of Moosehaven rallied to lend a helping hand. Recognizing the importance of stable electricity for their neighbors in Orange Park, they collectively decided to register as part of the population count. This selfless act not only showcased the unity of these senior citizens but also tipped the scales over the minimum requirement set by the utility company.

Thanks to the camaraderie and generosity of Moosehaven residents, Orange Park was on the path to illumination. With the promise of electricity on the horizon, the town looked forward to activities long taken for granted—a warm light in homes during cool evenings, the hum of appliances making life just a bit easier, and, most importantly, a sense of progression and shared victory.

As the sun set on the horizon, casting a golden glow over the town, the grateful residents of Orange Park echoed a heartfelt "Thank you, Moosehaven!" Your kindness has not only helped illuminate our streets but also brightened our hearts with the reminder that, together, we can overcome any obstacle.

The quaint town of Orange Park saw another remarkable transformation 100 years ago with the introduction of telephones, which unlocked a new era of communication for its residents. No longer confined to the limitations of in-person conversations or exchanges, the residents soon found that picking up a receiver could bridge distances with ease. Gossip flowed more freely than ever, as the ever-vigilant switchboard operator, Mrs. Cordi Eulenfeld, became an unwitting keeper of secrets, privy to the chatter of her neighbors.

The switchboard, nestled within the Eulenfeld house—a structure that proudly marks its place in history at 211 Kingsley Avenue—buzzed with activity, reflecting the vibrant community spirit of the time. Conversations danced between the lines, weaving stories of love, laughter, and the occasional scandal. Mrs. Eulenfeld, with her diligent fingers expertly maneuvering the plug-ins and earphones, held the key to myriad stories that encapsulated the very essence of life in Orange Park.

While we can't change history, we certainly can shape our futures.

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](#), 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.***

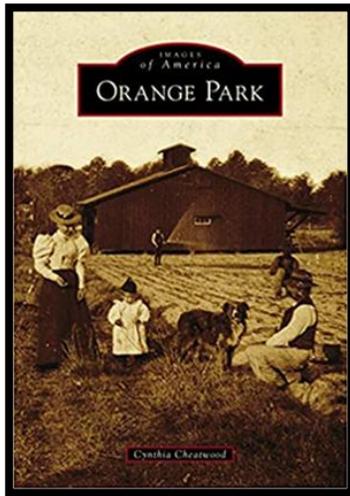
To access the tour visit, download the Explore Clay mobile app from the Explore Clay website or by clicking: [Clay County - Mobile App](#). Once you have the app downloaded, search for the tour then dive into the rich history of Orange Park.

Look For Us Online

Look for the Historical Society of Orange Park online via our website, www.ophistory.org, 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

The Clarke House will be open to the public for tours on Sunday afternoon, February 9 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.



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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