



# The Historical Society of Orange Park

## April 2023 Newsletter

Welcome April! As we move into the second quarter of the year, we wish to thank everyone that has renewed their membership or become a new member of the Society. We appreciate your support and participation.

Please note that the Clarke House will not be open on the second Sunday of April due to the Easter holiday. The Clarke House will be open for tours this month on Sunday, April 16, from 2 PM to 4 PM. We invite you to stop by for a visit. Consider bringing friend to enjoy a quiet afternoon.

This month's issue of the Society's newsletter features information on our upcoming quarterly member meeting on May 8 and information on past events. We are also happy to note that Winn Dixie has selected the Society as the April beneficiary of its Community Bag program. This is a great way to help the Society while you shop.

### Calendar of Events

| Date           | Time              | Event             | Location            |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| April 16, 2023 | 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM | Open House        | Clarke House        |
| May 8, 2023    | 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM | Quarterly Meeting | Orange Park Library |
| May 14, 2023   | 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM | Open House        | Clarke House        |
| June 11, 2023  | 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM | Open House        | Clarke House        |

Read on for additional information on these events and other activities.

### **May Member Meeting – Orange Park Memories, The 1960's**

Please join us at the Orange Park Library at 5:30, Monday, May 8 for our next quarterly member meeting. Our featured speaker will be Mr. Eugene Nix. Eugene will share his recollections of growing up in Orange Park in the 1960's. The 1960's were a time of transition for Orange Park. In many ways it was still a small town where children could roam freely and traffic was not an issue but outside forces



were driving growth in the area, changing the character of the town in the process. We look forward to seeing you on May 8.

### **Historical Society of Orange Park Celebrates 20 Years**

On Friday, March 3, the Society celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a covered dish supper at the Clarke House. We were particularly pleased that two of our original officers, President Carolyn Clark and Secretary Sarah Bedsole were able to join us in celebrating this milestone. Attendees were able to play a unique bingo game, devised by our own Cindy Cheatwood, that featured notable people and places from Orange Park's history. It proved to be an excellent way to have fun, test our local knowledge and share our town's history. We also read the minutes of the first meeting of the Society, which was held at Town Hall on March



1, 2003. That meeting saw the official name of the Society established, officers elected, dues determined and monthly meeting times set. The twenty people who gathered that day set the course for the organization and provided a framework to not only preserve and share the Town's history but to also help preserve a tangible link to the Town's past by providing a purpose for the Clarke House. We are grateful for the vision and dedication of our founding members. Their investment in time and resources benefit not only us but those yet to come.

### **Carrie Clarke Day**

On March 4, we celebrated Carrie Clarke Day at Clarke House Park. The event started at 11 AM and all was ready. The Clarke House was open for tours and Randy Harris was onsite to host a display of antique tools. The Art Guild of Orange Park had set up tables so that children could decorate small flowerpots and take photos to commemorate the day. The Garden Club of Orange Park had furnished seedlings and soil to allow children to place their own plant in their newly decorated flowerpots. Unfortunately, as soon as the event began, the first significant rain in weeks also began. Rain continued off and on throughout the day. We were fortunate to have one interlude with no rain that allowed a group of children to prepare flowerpots and plant their seedlings but rain quickly returned, forcing a halt to outdoor operations. Visitors to the park were able to tour the Clarke House. We are grateful to our friends at the Art Guild of Orange Park, the



Garden Club of Orange Park and Mr. Randy Harris for their participation and willingness to serve the community despite the inclement weather. We will look forward to better times next year.





### **American Legion Post 250 Riders Recognized for Community Service**

At the Carrie Clarke Day event on March 4, The Historical Society of Orange Park recognized a very special and dedicated group of volunteers with the Earl Harrington Community Service Award. The American Legion Post 250 Riders have had a longstanding relationship with the Society and the Veterans Memorial of Orange Park.

The Post 250 Riders have been both promoting and fundraising for the Veterans Memorial since it was a watercolor rendering on a piece of paper. They began fundraising for the Veterans Memorial by selling hamburgers and hot dogs at Adamec's Harley Davidson on Wells Road and continued doing that for years to help procure the funds necessary to break ground on the Veterans Memorial. They have donated funds from their activities for years and most recently supported the maintenance project of paver replacement with a donation from their membership of \$2,000!

Their commitment to this project is evidenced by the fact that the Post 250 Rider's team has been a part of every single Veterans Day activity beginning with the groundbreaking ceremony on November 11, 2011, the dedication ceremony in 2012 and every Veterans Day ceremony since then. Their dedication to the Veterans Memorial and Orange Park community is worthy of the spirit and intent of the Earl Harrington Community Service Award.

### **American Legion Post 250 Riders**



Front Row (L to R): Pat Lucas, "Chappy" Lucas and HSOP Member Carolyn Day  
Back Row (L to R): HSOP President Cindy Cheatwood, Dick Rowe, Cindy Anderson, Teri Tarrant, "Doc" Tarrant

### **Facebook Post: April: 1940s**

The Historical Society of Orange Park is celebrating 20 years of history in our town! To share the anniversary, the Society is posting monthly messages on Facebook throughout 2023 to highlight the town's history, decade by decade. Look for these each 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the month. Following is this month's post:

Orange Park, in 1940's, saw a lot of changes come to the town. With the start of World War II, the town's population started to explode going from around 700 to over 1500 by 1953. The Mira Rio property at the base of Kingsley Avenue welcomed pilots training at nearby bases. Accommodations there took the name Azaleana Manor during the war years and offered the young officers a more comfortable housing option for rent. Also, during the 1940's, the Florida Driving Club opened a horse racing track off Wells Road and, following the war, the Orange Park Kennel Club got a new burst of life allowing dog racing to become a popular pastime. The Boy Scout's Camp Echokotee off Doctor's Lake Drive also came into full operations during the decade. Not far away, the new community of Holly Point was established on the waterfront.



### **Winn Dixie Community Bag Program**

The Historical Society of Orange Park has been selected as a beneficiary of the Winn-Dixie Community Bag Program for the month of April.

The Winn-Dixie Community Bag Program, which launched in February 2019, is a reusable bag program that facilitates community support with the goal to make a difference in the communities where shoppers live and work.

The Historical Society of Orange Park was selected as the April beneficiary of the program by store leadership at the **Winn-Dixie located at 1900-1 Park Avenue in Orange Park**. The Historical Society will receive a \$1 donation every time the \$2.99 reusable Community Bag is purchased at this location during April, unless otherwise directed by the customer through the Giving Tag attached to the bag.



The Historical Society of Orange Park is most appreciative to be selected as a beneficiary of the Winn-Dixie Community Bag Program. We are grateful for Winn Dixie's investment in our community and their support of our efforts to preserve and share the town's history.

For more information on the Winn-Dixie Community Bag Program, visit [seg.2givelocal.com](http://seg.2givelocal.com).



### **Town of Orange Park Completes Clarke House Repairs**

We are happy to report that the Town of Orange Park has completed some long-needed exterior repairs to the Clarke House. The old house is now 111 years old and needs occasional maintenance to keep it looking good. In many places the paint had begun to peel and rain had damaged the wood siding and trim. Some of the siding had deteriorated to the point that it had become soft was starting to decompose. Recently, the Town engaged a contractor to replace all the damaged siding and trim with new wood. Other small exterior repairs were completed as well. Once that work was completed, the entire exterior of the house was repainted. A new irrigation system was also installed. This will make a big difference to the plantings around the house. The Garden Club of Orange Park has been faithful in tending and updating the flower bed in front of the house but keeping those flowers adequately watered, particularly in the hot summer months, has always been a challenge. The new irrigation system will keep the flowers strong and healthy.

With the completion of the exterior work and the new metal roof that was installed last year, the Clarke House is now looking great. The recent care and attention do make a difference. We are grateful to the Town of Orange Park for their continued investment in the Clarke House. The



house and adjacent property are a direct link to Orange Park's past that is available to all residents. The Clarke family contributed a great deal to community life in their time and we are thankful that their home still welcomes visitors today. Thanks again to the Town of Orange Park for repairing and protecting so that it can welcome visitors for years to come.

#### **Areas of Concern Prior to Repairs**





### Repairs in Progress



### Completed Project







### **Clarke House Tours**



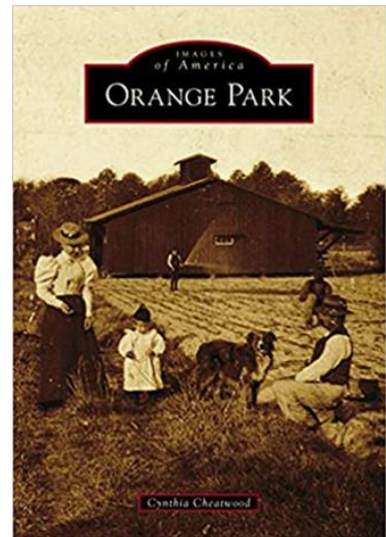
The Clarke House is typically open for tours on the second Sunday of each month. This month, due to the Easter holiday, the house will be open on the third Sunday, April 16 from 2 PM to 4 PM. If you have not yet visited the house or, if it has just been a while, we invite you to stop by to look around. The slower pace of a Sunday afternoon provides an opportunity to tour the entire house, both upstairs and down. We hope to see you there!

### **Images of America - Orange Park**

Would you like to learn more about the history of Orange Park? If so, please consider purchasing a copy of Images of America – Orange Park. This book, written by Society President, Cynthia Cheatwood, shares the history of our town through archival photographs and stories collected from a variety of sources.

The Historical Society of Orange Park has copies for sale. Copies can be purchased through the Society for \$20 each (\$15 each for Society members). *This book is also available on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, CVS or various other outlets online.*

For more information, please email us at [info@ophistory.org](mailto:info@ophistory.org). All author royalties for the sale of this book will go toward historical preservation in Orange Park.



### **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](#)
- [The Middleburg Museum](#)
- [Historical Society of Penny Farms](#)
- [Mandarin Museum and Historical Society](#)

