



The Historical Society of Orange Park

April 2024 Newsletter

April showers might bring May flowers, but April also means Global Volunteer Month. The Historical Society depends on our volunteers in everything we do. We appreciate each and every one of our volunteers. Global Volunteer Month encourages all of us to contribute where we can. Each act of service you perform connects us to our neighbors and strengthens our community. Please find an opportunity to offer your time and talents to a worthy cause and encourage others to do the same.

April 1 marked the 160th anniversary of the sinking of the Maple Leaf during the Civil War. The Maple Leaf, a side-wheel steamboat, had left Palatka the night of March 31, 1864, transporting soldiers and cargo to Jacksonville. About 4 AM the morning of April 1, it struck a Confederate torpedo, known today as a mine, just off Mandarin Point. The torpedo had been placed in the river by Confederate soldiers working from a base along Doctors Lake. The ship sank quickly in relatively shallow water leaving it partially submerged. The wreck was partially cleared for navigational purposes then almost forgotten until the 1980's when Dr. Keith Holland rediscovered the location of the wreck and began salvage operations. Dr. Holland used the property of John and June Nelson, the current site of Rob Bradley Conservation Park, as a staging area for his salvage operations. The hold of the ship was below the mudline so its cargo was very well preserved. The items retrieved by Dr. Holland and his team provided a window into the lives to lives of the Union soldiers of the time. Some of these artifacts can be seen at the Museum of Science and Health in Jacksonville and at the Mandarin Museum.

Calendar of Events

| Date | Time | Event | Location |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| April 14, 2024 | 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM | Open House | Clarke House |
| May 6, 2024 | 5:30 PM – 7:00 PM | Quarterly Member Meeting | Orange Park Library |
| May 19, 2024 | 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM | Open House | Clarke House |

Carrie Clarke Day

On Saturday, March 9, members of the Historical Society and a host of volunteers were on hand to welcome visitors to Clarke House Park for Carrie Clarke Day. The day honors Carrie Clarke, who for many years made her home in the house that bears her name. Carrie was very active in community life. She was involved in a variety of civic organizations including the Orange Park Woman's Club and the Garden Club of Orange Park. She was also instrumental in starting the

First Baptist Church in Orange Park. Carrie was a friend to all and devoted herself to making Orange Park a better place to live.

To celebrate the day, the Clarke House was open for tours. There was also an opportunity for visitors to wear a variety of stylish hats and take photos to remember the day. Members of the Garden Club of Orange Park and the Art Guild of Orange Park were on hand to help young visitors decorate flowerpots then plant flowers in their new pots. Randy Harris hosted a display of antique tools and provided demonstrations on how they were used. We also hosted a popular booth, created by HSOP member, Melanie Tharp, that invited visitors to vote on the preferred pronunciation of “pecan”. The spelling of this tree nut, so prominent in Orange Park’s history and so popular in candies, cakes and pies invites two different pronunciations, “puh-cahn” and “pee-can”. Webster’s Dictionary states that both pronunciations are acceptable. Visitors were asked to vote for their preferred pronunciation. The result of the election was a tie! So, no matter how you say it, you are in good company.

Our sincere thanks to the members of the Garden Club of Orange Park and the Art Guild of Orange Park who volunteered their time and energy to join us in celebrating Carrie Clarke Day and serving the community. We also wish to thank the student volunteers that spent a good part of their Saturday helping with various activities to serve the community as well as Randy Harris for his time and his passion for sharing history with others. Finally, we also thank the members of the Orange Park Garden Club for providing the beautiful flower arrangements placed in the Clarke House and for their loving care of the flower bed in front of the Clarke House. Carrie Clarke Day would not happen without your help.



The weather was perfect and the azaleas were in bloom for Carrie Clarke Day 2024.



One of the many beautiful flower arrangements in the Clarke House.



Two young visitors pose for photos.



The Great Pecan Debate.



Members of the Art Guild of Orange Park help young visitors decorate flowerpots.



Members of the Garden Club of Orange Park help visitors fill their new pots with a plant.



Randy Haris demonstrates a grinding wheel.



The Clarke House was looking good for her big day.

Orange Park Memories

The Historical Society of Orange Park is celebrating the warm, rich, charming and sometimes quirky history of our town. Each month during 2024 we will post a vintage newspaper clip from *The Breeze* newspaper, which was published from 1959 to 1971. Check this newsletter each month for a flashback to earlier days. This month we remember the charm of full-page ads in oversized sheets. Check out the prices, but don't overlook the bonus savings stamp offer. For the uninformed, after 1995 "ice milk" became "light ice cream". Does anyone still remember Orange Park's A&P? It was originally located in the shopping center on Park Avenue between

Stowe Avenue and Milwaukee Avenue. It later moved north to the "new" shopping center on Park Avenue just south of Stiles Avenue where the Clay County Tax Assessor's Office is now located.

Veterans Memorial Update

In an effort to keep everyone informed about current Veterans Memorial activities, we are very pleased to let you know that we received a \$500 donation from the Macquarie Company Veterans Organization. We thank them for their generous contribution!

We have also made progress on the selection and process for the two new medallions to be installed on the wall surrounding the Veterans Memorial. As we have indicated, it is time to install a Space Force service emblem as well as a POW/MIA emblem.

We have reached out to John Shipley at the Jacksonville Memory Gardens to assist us with obtaining the sawn granite emblems. He has been in touch with the quarry in Georgia and has received an initial estimate. After reviewing the artwork for the POW/MIA emblem, John suggested a round emblem which we feel is a better fit than just the rectangular flag. So we are now waiting for a quote and artist proof which we have to sign off on and approve. John has been a significant partner in getting this right.

We hope to get this work completed in the next few weeks. Once signed and approved, it will take 3-4 months to receive the completed emblems. They are shown here so that you can see the final design submission. The goal remains to have them installed prior to Veterans Day, November 11, 2024.



*Inscribed pavers are still available for purchase. All pavers ordered by July 31, 2024, will be installed prior to this year's Veterans Day Ceremony in November. Paver order forms can be found on our website, www.ophistory.org. What a wonderful way to honor those who have served!

Notable Women in Orange Park's History, Part 2:

March was Women's History Month. We asked you to identify the role these ladies played in Orange Park's story. Here are the answers!

Mary Berry- Founding member of the Orange Park Woman's Club. Mrs. Berry led the organization starting in 1910, to improve the quality of life for everyone in the town.

Carrie Clarke- Orange Park's gregarious community servant. With her husband William, she worked the family farm on Kingsley Ave, part of Clarke's Pecan Grove, starting in 1912. Mrs. Clarke was involved in service of all kinds for decades in the town.

Barbara Davidson- Dubbed, "Honorary Town Councilwoman", she has been a town advocate and consistent voice for good government at countless town council and committee meetings for decades. Her no-nonsense views cut through the static as common fiscal sense and community values remain her cause.

Edna Griffith Greenewalt-The first woman on the Orange Park Town Council in 1992, and the town's first woman mayor from 1994-1995. She was a driving force in getting the sidewalks placed along River Road.

Karrie Johnson- Daughter of B. J. Johnson of Johnson's Soap Co. She came to Orange Park as a child, sick with tuberculosis. She recovered and the family continued spending winters here. Karrie married and with her husband, bought the lovely white house on the river. They named it Winterbourne and Club Continental developed from that start.

Anna Kingsley- African-born wife of Zephaiah Kingsley who came to Laurel Grove Plantation (now Orange Park) in 1803. She was responsible for the running of the plantation when her husband traveled, which was often.

Teresa Miller- African-American teacher of the segregated Pear Grove School in Orange Park and later the Orange Park Negro Elementary School. The TC Miller Center on McIntosh Avenue is named in her honor.

Madeline Moore- Founder of the Clothes Closet and Food Pantry. She started by sharing clothes out of the trunk of her Nash Rambler.

Rebecca Pengree- Wife of William Pengree. Together they started Laurel Grove Plantation and developed into the enterprise that attracted Zephaniah Kingsley to the area.

Pauline Wylie- Store owner who came to Florida in 1912. She and James had been in Vaudeville but were ready to settle down. They ran the general store which included a post office and library.

Clarke House Tours



The monthly open house at the historic Clarke House will be held on Sunday, April 14, 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 on April 14 and make some memories of your own and feel free to share recollections that the house inspires.

*Please note that the May Open House will be held on Sunday, May 19, so that we may celebrate Mother's Day with our families.

Look For Us on 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.

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](#)

