



The Historical Society of Orange Park

February 2023 Newsletter

Welcome to February! This month features our first member meeting of the year. On Monday, February 6 at 5:30 PM, we will host a meeting at the Orange Park Library. The meeting will feature a presentation on the Patriot Rebellion. Please join us next Monday, February 6th, as we share the story of the rebellion and its effect on life in colonial Florida. Bring a friend!

If you have not yet done so, it is now time to renew your annual membership in the Historical Society. Membership renewal letters were sent out last month. We are grateful for your support and participation that have provided us the opportunity to serve the community for 20 years. Please help us continue preserve and share the history of Orange Park and the story of why our town a great place to live. Dues can be submitted either at our upcoming meeting on February 6, via mail or online via our website at [Store \(ophistory.org\)](https://Store.ophistory.org)

Please remember that the Clarke House will be open for tours this month on Sunday, February 12, from 2 PM to 4 PM. Stop by and share local history with a friend.

Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
February 6, 2023	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM	Member Meeting	Orange Park Library
February 12, 2023	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
March 3, 2023	5:30 PM – 8:30 PM	20 th Anniversary Gathering	Clarke House
March 4, 2023	1:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Carrie Clarke Day	Clarke House Park
March 12, 2023	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House

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

February Member Meeting

The Historical Society will host a member meeting, 5:30 PM, Monday, February 6 at the Orange Park Library. The meeting will feature a discussion on the Patriot Rebellion, researched and compiled by Van Hogan, as well as a discussion of its impact on our area. This conflict between the United States, Spain, Patriot forces and Native Americans resulted in tragic consequences for many and changed the political fortunes of Florida. In 1812, American citizens, aided by US troops, invaded Spanish East Florida with the intent of wresting control from Spain and making it an American territory. The invaders were convinced that many Spanish citizens of East



Florida would prefer to align with the United States. This conflict, largely overshadowed by the War of 1812, featured aspects of American expansionism, economic concerns and territorial sovereignty. However, as with many conflicts, this one involved miscalculation, unintended consequences and long-term impacts that changed the direction of Florida. The discussion will focus on the causes of the conflict, its effects on North Florida and its aftermath.

Our 20th Anniversary is coming in March!

March 3, 2023, will mark the twentieth anniversary of the Historical Society of Orange Park! Plans are currently being made to recognize this milestone with a get-together at the Clarke House, starting at 5:30 PM. All members are invited and we hope to get founding members as well as new ones together to share stories of the town over the years.



Founding Members of the Historical Society of Orange Park, March 2003

Front Row: Carolyn Clark, Art Hall, Sarah Bedsole, Cindy Clark

Middle Row: Evelyn Hall, Marge Fachko, Carol Hogan, Faye Irvin, Sandy Townsley, Carol McConnell, Juanita Hargrove

Back Row: Mary Ann Study, Ken Study, Mary Webb, Billie Weaver, Claude Bass, Earl Harrington, June Nelson, John Nelson

We want to have a special commemoration night to recognize our 20th anniversary as a Society. In the spirit of Clarke hospitality, we are asking folks to bring a covered dish. It would be fun to have dishes that might have a family story to go with them, they will make for charming memories shared!

To help us prepare, we are asking that those planning to come might answer a few simple questions for us (info@ophistory.org or HSOP, P. O. Box 08, Orange Park, 32067)...

1. How many are coming with you?
2. What dish are you planning to bring?
3. Is there a story to share that goes with the dish?

If you have a written recipe for your dish and would like to share it, send it with your responses and we will make copies to share.

In addition to the food and fellowship we will have a couple of fun activities to mark the occasion. We don't want to give too much away, but let's just say the more you know about the town's history, the more fun you will have....



The Clarke House: 2003 to Today

To continue the commemoration, we are holding Carrie Clarke Day the next day, Saturday, March 4th. This event is still in the planning phase and all suggestions are welcome. If you have not visited the park in a while, please know that there is a spillover parking area now at the rear of the park for your convenience.

To share the anniversary with the wider world, the Society will post monthly Facebook messages throughout 2023 to highlight different historical events of the town. Look for these on the 3rd day of each



month. If you would like to suggest a posting topic for this, please send your ideas to info@ophistory.org.

It's a good time to reconnect with our old friends. We have accomplished a lot together and there is still so much we can do to keep the stories of our history alive in Orange Park. Happy anniversary!

Daughters of the American Revolution Contribute to the Veterans Memorial

On Tuesday, January 12 the Historical Society of Orange Park was invited to attend a meeting of the Sophia Fleming Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). Cindy Cheatwood, President and Carolyn Day of the Veterans Memorial Committee represented the Society.

During the meeting, they were called by Regent Barbara Voi to receive a donation to the Veterans Memorial of Orange Park refurbishment fund. Their contribution of \$1,500 was a surprise and very much appreciated in helping the Society to fund the cost of the refurbishment project.

The Sophia Fleming Chapter of the DAR has been an active supporter and charter member of the Veterans Memorial project since its inception in 2011. They were a significant contributor and their support was essential in helping the Society to get the financial backing to proceed with the building of the Veterans Memorial. The Society would like to thank all the members of the Sophia Fleming Chapter of the DAR for their continued support.

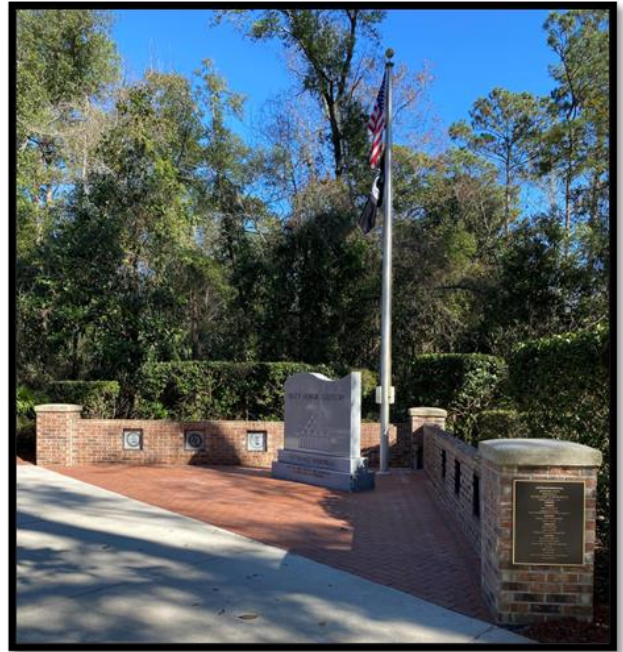


L to R: Barbara Voi, Cindy Cheatwood and Carolyn Day

Veterans Memorial Update

As we reported in last month's newsletter, the new engraved pavers are now installed and we hope everyone has an opportunity to visit the Veterans Memorial to see what a difference it has made. It also begs the question "what happened to all those old pavers that were taken up?"

During the time when we were planning the renovation, a conversation with the members of the American Legion Post 250 Riders uncovered a problem that they were hoping to solve. It seems that the access to their Veterans Memorial had no walkway and during wet times you had to literally walk thru wet grass and mud to get to their Memorial. There was no handicap access as well. Learning that, we proposed that the Post 250 Riders take the old pavers and utilize them to create a walkway from their parking lot to their Memorial.



The Post 250 Riders sponsor a Boy Scout Troop at their Post. One of those Scouts was looking for a project to earn his Eagle Scout promotion. Installing a paver walkway seemed like a great project. The old pavers were hauled away by the Post 250 Riders in trucks and trailers. The Eagle Scout is now planning how best to utilize them to create a walkway.

So, the Orange Park Veterans Memorial has been refurbished and all can now clearly see the engraved names. Post 250, who has been a supporter of the Veterans Memorial since the very beginning, received the old pavers to solve a serious problem with access to their Memorial, and an Eagle Scout has the pavers he needs to do the project that will gain his Eagle Scout promotion!

Don't you just love it when a plan comes together!



Happy 100th Anniversary, Moosehaven!

By Cindy Cheatwood

In 1922, the Loyal Order of Moose came to Orange Park to create a "City of Contentment" which was later called *Moosehaven*. The Loyal Order of the Moose needed a place for their elderly fraternity members and their spouses to spend the golden years of their lives. Starting in 1918, the Moose scouted many locations before settling on Orange Park. In 1921 they purchased the old Hotel Marion and eight acres of land.

Moosehaven records give details of the lease-purchase agreement with local developer Charles Brown that stipulated a deposit of \$4,000, rent of \$150 a month for two years with the option to purchase for \$30,000 during that time. On October 3, 1922, Moosehaven was officially dedicated. By 1922 there were 21 residents living in the old hotel, renamed "Brandon Hall" in honor of the Moose Supreme Secretary, Rodney H. Brandon who had arranged its purchase. By the end of that year the land area had grown to 26 acres of land and included several cottages. New residents planted gardens and raised chickens. In 1924 a farm was established.

In 1924, Orange Park was struggling to bring electricity and phone services to town. This became the focus of the Orange Park's Woman's Club and other local citizens. In order to qualify for the service there had to be a minimum number of subscribers. Moosehaven, with their growth, had the numbers needed. They guaranteed one half of the pre-subscriptions required to bring the services from Jacksonville. An excited Orange Park celebrated with the help of the ladies of the Woman's Club who appointed



a trio of Mrs. Anna Allen, Mrs. Carrie Clarke and J.V. Mrs. Carnes to organize a turning-on-the-lights event on Feb. 28, 1928. The town's longest resident, Mrs. Anna R. Marson, 82, flipped the switch in the community center and a grand party ensued.

On July 13, 1927, the Moose, needing more accommodations, bought three old dormitory buildings that had been part of the Orange Park Normal School complex. The organization applied a stone covering to all surfaces, similar to the brick structures in their parent complex, Moosehart, Illinois. By this time there were around 150 Moose living in Orange Park, performing all their own work, operating a successful dairy and farm.

By 1930 more buildings dotted the Moosehaven grounds. These included a commissary, shoe shop, laundry and general workshop. Growth continued even during the Great Depression. Two rooms inside Brandon Hall served as a hospital until growing need led to a free-standing hospital annex. In the 1960s, the \$2 million Paul P. Schmitz Health Center would be built to meet the needs of up 500 residents.

In 1933, the Philadelphia Building was added for several purposes. Among those was an area functioning through the Women of the Moose where new residents could join a sewing circle and become more comfortable in the community. All this prosperity, in the midst of so much need, set nerves on end with local residents. The Moose, as a charitable institution, were tax exempt. That too bothered local taxpayers.

By 1940, the economic climate of the country and Moosehaven was changing. The introduction of the social security system led to reconsideration of financial arrangements. Residents were no longer admitted on a "pay" basis. Over half the residents were now in need of medical care which would require hiring more staff. A system was begun in which retirees turn over everything they own when joining and are guaranteed lifetime care.



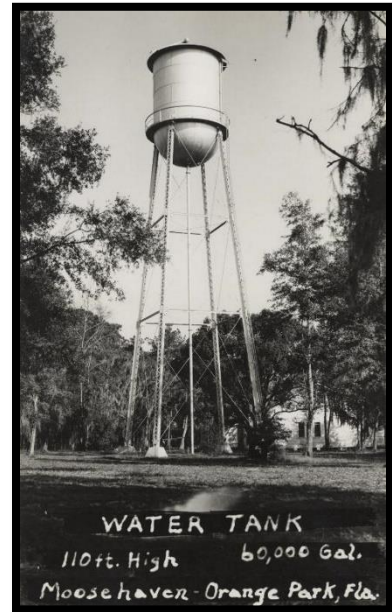
In the 1940's, Orange Park residents, fewer in number than their elderly Moose neighbors, became alarmed when seeing postcards printed with the words, "Moosehaven, Florida" printed on them. Panic ensued that the town's name might be replaced. Conflicts grew even worse after World War Two because local land prices were rising at alarming rates and Moosehaven by 1949, had over \$2 million invested in Orange Park's best land.

Town commissioners sued Moosehaven for taxes, in spite of their charity-status. The dispute was settled out of court with Moosehaven agreeing to donate \$1000 per year to the town in place of taxes. They agreed that their residents wouldn't be part of local elections. Also, when they built a new complex for themselves, they gave the town part of the original normal school buildings they had bought in 1927.

By the 1960s most of the people of Orange Park saw the Moose as an integral part of their community. The grounds of Moosehaven became useful for residents once the farming initiative changed for the retired Moose. The first attempt at organized baseball for boys in Orange Park was played on the open grounds that had once been farmed fields.

Moosehaven is an important part of the Town of Orange Park's story, past and present. The old water tower was an icon for decades, demolished in 2016 to make room for more residences, was recognizable to generations, even if they never went through the Moose gates. Today the Town depends on the parking space provided by the Moose for big Town events. Community breakfasts and social activities invite residents to enjoy the beautiful grounds and river view that Moosehaven maintains. So, it is a good time to say, "Thank You" and "Happy Anniversary" to our good neighbors, the Moose.

This history in this article is adapted from the Moosehaven chapter of Images of America: Orange Park, by Cynthia Cheatwood.



Clarke House Tours



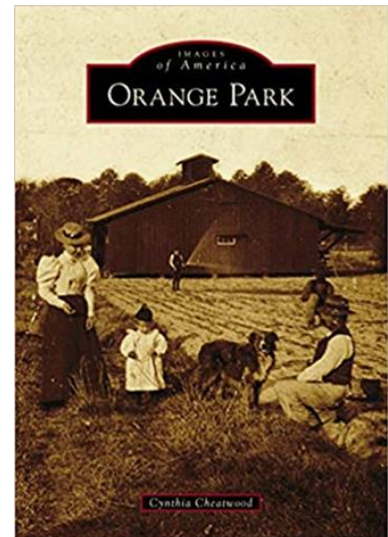
The Clarke House is open for tours on the second Sunday of each month. This month, the house will be open Sunday, February 12 from 2 PM to 4 PM. If you have not yet visited the house or, if it has just been a while, we invite you to stop by to look around. The slower pace of a Sunday afternoon provides 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. 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, 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](#)

