



The Historical Society of Orange Park

January 2022 Newsletter

Happy New Year!

The holidays are behind us and the new year is here! With the new year comes new possibilities. One of the possibilities we plan to explore is the resumption of regular meetings. While meetings have typically been held at the Clarke House, the high utilization of the facilities at Clarke House Park have impacted access to the park. If you have recently visited Clarke House Park, you have probably noticed the lack of available parking spaces. This makes it challenging to host a Society meeting at the Clarke House. The tremendous success of Clarke House Park since its re-opening in late summer has been fun to watch. It's great to see so many people enjoying the park. The popularity of the park has resulted in some visitors parking along the access road through the park as well as other non-traditional areas. The Town of Orange Park is in the process of making more space available for parking. In an effort to resume regular meetings and make them accessible for our members, we are investigating alternate sites. To get things started, we have scheduled a meeting for 5:30 PM, February 7 at the Orange Park Library. The topic of the meeting will be the presentation of rare photographs of the Orange Park Normal School and its students. More information can be found in this newsletter. We hope you can join us.

Also, with the coming of the new year, it is now time to renew your annual membership in the Society. Membership renewal forms will be arriving in the mail soon. Membership forms can also be downloaded from our website, www.ophistory.org. We sincerely appreciate your support and hope to see everyone in the coming months.

Historical Society of Orange Park Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
January 9, 2022	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
February 7, 2022	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM	General Meeting	Orange Park Library
February 13, 2022	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House

Additional information on these events can be found below.

Message From the President

Dear Friends of Orange Park History,

January, being the start of a fresh new year, is a time to examine priorities, conduct a little self-examination and reflect, to look at ourselves and at the examples of those who came before us. Lessons learned in our childhood deserve revisiting and, in some cases, regeneration. This January I am remembering the correspondence I did from about age ten, with my grandmother who lived in North Carolina. She was a simple woman who never lived beyond twenty miles of her birthplace of Belhaven, NC. Her education was modest, and her letters were part cypher, part dialect, and full of charm. I have saved some of those and just holding their envelope brings her back to me. She wrote one long sentence, without punctuation in most cases, for three pages, every six weeks or so, for years. She tells of the goings-on in her very small town and about the vegetable garden which she maintained well into her eighties. She did not preach or lecture, but instead, conveyed in those treasured lines, a message of pure acceptance, pure love, and a reminder to me that she cared and thought about me.

This January I will start a new tradition with my own granddaughter, now turning seven years old, to exchange similar letters (though I will add punctuation). I will be open, not preachy or judging. I will send her those feelings of connectedness that my grandmother gave me. I challenge you to follow suit. Letter-writing is a dying art that can be resurrected. We don't have to have technology to communicate. Letters saved over the decades are treasures far more valuable than emails or texts.

As we in the Historical Society look for a new beginning, let us also appreciate what we have been able to accomplish, against the odds, during this past year. While we have not been able to host general meetings due to park closures, we have still conducted a successful *Moonlight on Magnolia* event, fantastic live Veterans Day program and a *Hometown Holiday* open house enjoyed by hundreds. We have assisted with Clay History Day, held some monthly open houses (when the park was open), and helped organize Orange Park materials in the Clay County Archives. We participated in the recognition of Mary Hoff, assisted the Art Guild with their historic art program, and increased our presence on Facebook. Our outstanding newsletter was faithfully generated, and our website was restructured and made into something of which we can all be proud. We had everything ready for a live Carrie Clarke Day just to have plans cancelled at the last minute due to a Covid surge. Likewise, a public introduction to our rare Orange Park Normal School photos was arranged to be given at the Orange Park branch library but was cancelled by another surge. We lost some special members of the Society, though none to Covid. We said goodbye to Mary Jo McTammany, Faye Irvin, Steve Howard and Walter Clarke. They will be missed. These setbacks are not stopping us, any more than my grandmother would let her limitations slow her. We are ending our year in good financial condition and anticipate membership renewals to put us in a good position to start a strong new year.

This January let's look toward the future while we look back at the past. There are rewards in both. The Society is planning for in-person gatherings starting in February with the long-

postponed public Orange Park Normal School program. We plan to have a Carrie Clarke Day open house from 1:00-5:00 PM on March 13th to tell park visitors all about Mrs. Clarke and her family's role in town history. We will use our Facebook connection to tell parts of that story each day of the week leading up to the event. You can look for those and share them on to increase our delivery scope. We will modernize our website to include payment capability for membership renewals, donations, and sales of books and other merchandise. The board is consolidating records and examining new partnerships to further our mission. We are gathering stories to publish in the town's community insert and are planning on once again acting as History Day judges. We will be working with the Town to continue preservation efforts for the Green House cottage with a likelihood of funding coming soon from the state. A Boy Scout Eagle project is currently underway for the cottage porch. There are a lot of exciting possibilities ahead.

In closing, I send everyone my warmest wishes for a happy, healthy 2022, and end this with my grandmother's favorite closing... *Love to all,*

Cindy Cheatwood
President

Hometown Holiday

On Friday evening, December 10 and Saturday evening, December 11, the Town of Orange Park hosted Hometown Holiday at Clarke House Park. Once again, both nights of this event were very well attended. The weather was pleasant and it was nice to see families out enjoying the park and the holiday season. The lines were long to visit Santa and take rides along the trails decorated with Christmas lights. The food vendors kept everyone well-fed while the craft vendors provided numerous options for Christmas shoppers. Of course, the live music helped to put everyone in the holiday spirit. The Society hosted a steady stream of visitors to the Clarke House. Guests enjoyed the house's Christmas decorations as well as learning more about the house and the Clarke family.





Hometown Holiday 2021

Member Christmas Gathering

On the evening of December 13th, the Society held its first member meeting in almost two years. It was good to get together with old friends to celebrate the season, enjoy dessert and review the Society's activities and plans. President Cindy Cheatwood reviewed the resumption of the monthly tours of the Clarke House, the recent update of our website and discussed the status of the Green House restoration project. She also solicited ideas for a spring outing and Carrie Clarke Day. Another topic of interest was the resumption of regular member meetings. The high utilization of Clarke House Park and the related parking issues were discussed. The Society will investigate the use of venues other than the Clarke House for future meetings to allow more people to attend.



February Meeting – Orange Park Normal School

As we resume member meetings, we revisit a familiar topic – The Orange Park Normal School. The Normal School was a private school built in the early 1890's to educate black students and prepare them for teaching and industrial careers. In the days of segregation, not long after the end of Reconstruction, the school was sorely needed. The success of the school encouraged white students to attend, which attracted the wrath of the State of Florida. The ensuing attention and legal challenges weakened the school's position in the community and led to its eventual demise. While the story of the Normal School is familiar to many of us, it is a story told at a distance. Fortunately, we now have been given the means to learn about the school, and life in Orange Park, on a more personal level.



Some time ago, before Covid, we were contacted by Ms. Charity Monroe, great-granddaughter of Mr. Stephen Butcher. Mr. Butcher served as President of the Normal School from 1900 to 1904. Ms. Monroe found an old family photo album containing a number of photographs taken by the Butcher family while they lived in Orange Park as well as several journal entries and letters written by the family. Ms. Monroe graciously shared this material with the Historical Society. The photographs illustrate life in Orange Park and transform the students and faculty of the school from faceless names into individuals. The journal entries describe some of the challenges faced by the Butcher family adapting to life in the South.

Please join us at 5:30 PM, February 7 at the Orange Park Library, when we will share these photos and personal reflections with the public.

Middleburg Museum

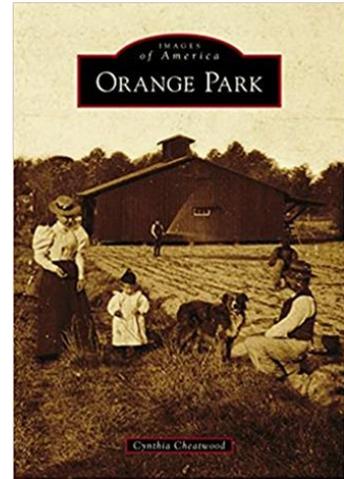


The Middleburg Museum is open Sundays from 2 PM to 4 PM. Currently, the museum is featuring a rotating display prepared by Dr. Cynthia Stone. Dr. Stone is also available to open the museum for special tours as well. She can be contacted at (904) 860-0960 to make arrangements for your group.

To learn more about the Middleburg Museum, please visit their Facebook Page ([The Middleburg Museum - Home | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/middleburgmuseum)).

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 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.

Orange Park Woman's Club

The Orange Park Woman's Club has note cards for sale to benefit the children of W.E. Cherry and Grove Park Elementary Schools. President Kay Earhart will be giving one book to each teacher in each grade to add to the children's classroom libraries. This is the President's Choice fundraiser. The notecards are \$14 for a dozen cards and envelopes and are printed on fine linen. Contact Linda Fonferek at 803-4599 to order.



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, January 9 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.

Archaeologist to Discuss Maritime Maya

The Archaeological Institute of America—Jacksonville Society will meet at 12 noon on Saturday Jan. 22, 2022, in Building 51 at the University of North Florida to hear a lecture by Dr. Jeffrey Glover, a professor at Georgia State University. His lecture is titled “The Maritime Maya and the Proyecto Costa Escondida.” Coastal communities in the Maya Lowlands played various roles in the political, economic, and social formations over the past 3000 years, yet these roles have remained along the periphery of Maya studies. Dr. Glover discusses what we know about the watercraft used by the maritime Maya and who the maritime Maya were. Using ethnohistoric accounts and iconographic data from the Classic period, he discusses the tensions present between coastal and inland populations on the Yucatan Peninsula and how this influenced the historical trajectories of coastal sites. After giving an overview of the archaeological evidence of the Maritime Maya, he will explain how the Proyecto Costa Escondida research team is beginning to reveal the challenges faced, and opportunities pursued, by these coastal peoples. The lecture is free and open to the public. After the lecture complimentary refreshments will be served in the Physical Anthropology Lab. On Saturday, parking is free and the staff/faculty/vendor spaces are open to everyone. For more information, contact Melva Price at (904) 241-0411 or aiajaxsoc@gmail.com.

Look For Us on Facebook

Look for the Historical Society of Orange Park the next time you visit Facebook. Check our page for updates on society activities and updates on the Veterans Memorial. Don’t forget to click “Like” on our page.

Membership in the Historical Society of Orange Park

Please don’t forget that annual memberships in the Historical Society of Orange Park are now due for renewal. We are grateful for the support our members have provided over the years through membership and participation. We ask that you continue to support our mission to preserve the history of Orange Park and share that history with the community. Ask a friend to join us as well. You can visit our website, www.ophistory.org, to download a membership form there.