



The Historical Society of Orange Park

January 2024 Newsletter

Welcome to 2024! The future has become the present.

After a very busy holiday season, we have reached the New Year. It's now time to catch our collective breath and get started on our resolutions – at least for a few weeks.

January brings a slower pace for Society activities as we enter 2024. Our monthly open house at the Clarke House resumes this month on January 14. Our next quarterly member meeting will be held Monday, February 5 at the Orange Park Library.

With the beginning of the new year, it is time for us to renew our annual memberships in the Society. We depend on you, our members, to help preserve and share the history of Orange Park as well as your contributions of time and service for our various events and activities. Your memberships also go a long way toward supporting this organization. We appreciate every new and renewing member. At the end of this newsletter, you will find a membership form. Please complete it and return it to us, along with your dues, by the end of January.

Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
January 14, 2024	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
February 5, 2024	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM	Quarterly Member Meeting	Orange Park Library
February 11, 2024	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House

February Quarterly Meeting

Since the time the Town of Orange Park was incorporated in 1877, there has been a vital African American presence in the town. From the notable housing projects of Joseph Green in the 1880s to the Normal and Industrial School in the 1910s to the railroad and turpentine industries, a consistent Black population has contributed to the economy, vitality and culture of the community. On Monday, February 5th, join us at the Orange Park Library as we pay tribute to Black History in Orange Park. We invite local voices to bring stories of earlier days along with our visual exploration of the topic through the decades.



Students, family and friends gather on the grounds of the Orange Park Normal and Industrial School for a picnic, c.1902

Hometown Holiday in the Park

The 11th annual Hometown Holiday at Clarke House Park, held Friday, December 8 and Saturday, December 9, was a rousing success. Families came to the park in large numbers to join the festivities and share in the holiday spirit.

Visitors were treated to an array of crafts and food options. There was always something to see and do. Not even a light rain on Friday night could slow down the crowds. The park was busy both nights. Two activities consistently had long lines both nights. The always popular train ride through the holiday-decorated forest and an opportunity to visit and take a photo with Santa captivated visitors. More squeals of delight were heard everytime a miniature snow storm occurred in front of the Clarke House. Happy faces were the order of each evening.

The Clarke House, decorated for Christmas, provided a warm, welcome respite to visitors. Well over 1,000 people came through the house to look around, share stories and learn about the Clarke family along with our town's history. Members of the Society were on hand to act as hosts and answer questions.

Hometown Holiday was once again a great way to spend time with family and friends and celebrate the joys of the season!



Scenes from Hometown Holiday

HSOP Holiday Gathering

On the evening of Monday, December 11, members of the Society gathered at the Clarke House to celebrate the season and have fun. A variety of sweet treats were available to share as friends relaxed and caught up on conversation. Later in the evening, teams formed and competed in a trivia contest featuring Orange Park history as its subject. There was laughter all around and everyone learned a thing or two about Orange Park before the night was over. Congratulations to Team Rudolf on their winning performance and a special “thank you” to Cindy Cheatwood for preparing the trivia contest and Bob Scallan for providing the prizes for the competition.

The Society also collected a large box of food, which was delivered to the Clothes Closet to be distributed to those in need this holiday season.



HSOP Holiday Gathering

Orange Park Memories

The Historical Society of Orange Park will be celebrating the warm, rich, charming and sometimes quirky history of our town. Each month of 2024 we will post a vintage newspaper clip from *The Breeze* newspaper, which ran from 1959 to 1971. Check this newsletter each month for a flashback to earlier days.



The Front Page of the First Edition of "The Breeze", October 1, 1959

Veterans Memorial Update

National Service Animals

On several occasions, members of the HSOP Board have been asked if there was a tribute paver for national service animals installed at the Veterans Memorial of Orange Park. The short answer is “not until now.” Members researched the subject and learned that the National Service Animal Memorial Bill was passed and signed on December 23, 2022, and that it will enable the construction of a National Service Animal Memorial to be installed in Washington, DC. There is an active national fundraising campaign to solicit public and private funds to build it. The HSOP board has decided on 2 courses of action: to place an honorary paver honoring service animals at the Veterans Memorial of Orange Park, and further, to donate \$50 to the national fundraiser. You can see an artist rendering for this memorial at: www.nationalserviceanimalsmemorial.org.



Space Force Medallion

We are currently looking at finding the most effective method of adding the Space Force Medallion to the Veterans Memorial Wall. As you all know, the Memorial was designed and constructed many years before the inception of the Space Force. That implies a reconfiguration of the current wall and we are in the early stages of soliciting input on how best to accomplish this renovation. If you have any input, please let us know. Our approach at this time would be to evaluate alternatives, come up with the best solution, fund it, and then begin construction. Our timeline would be to have the modifications completed in time for the next Veterans Day Ceremony on November 11, 2024.



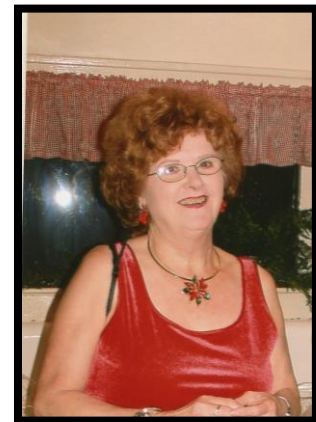
Keystone Heights Heritage Commission

On Saturday, December 2, members of the Historical Society of Orange Park attended a reception hosted by the Keystone Heights Heritage Commission at the Pavilion on Lake Geneva in Keystone Heights. The purpose of the reception was to meet with other local historical societies to enhance communication and cooperation. Keystone Heights, like many municipalities, is facing growth accompanied by new construction. New construction often comes with change, sometimes at the expense of existing historical structures. The question is always how to accommodate the new growth while preserving the historical treasures and character of a community that make it a desirable place to live in the first place. We look forward to collaborating with the members of the Keystone Heights Heritage Commission at our upcoming Clay County Historical Roundtable as we share concerns, ideas, solutions and work together to preserve our history and what makes Clay County a wonderful place to live and work.



In Memorium – Marge Fachko

We are saddened to acknowledge the passing of Marge Fachko. Marge was a founding member and Past President of our historical society. Marge was a friendly and caring person. She loved people and cherished her family and friends. Marge saw our historical society as more than a repository for information and artifacts. She recognized that it was important for community cohesion. Our town's unique history, shared and created by all residents, strengthened the ties that bind us to one another. Marge enjoyed bringing people together. We will miss Marge's effervescent personality and the joy she brought to every gathering.



Clarke House Tours



The monthly open house at the historic Clarke House will resume on Sunday, January 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 for a visit on January 14 and make memories of your own and feel free to share recollections that the house inspires.

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](#)





Historical Society of Orange Park, Inc.

P.O. Box 08
Orange Park, FL 32067

2024 Membership Enrollment Form

Member Renewal

New Member

Name (s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number</u>		<u>Dues</u>	<u>Total</u>
Individual	_____	X	\$20	_____
Family	_____	X	\$35	_____
Senior (65 and over)	_____	X	\$10	_____
Student	_____	X	\$10	_____
Corporate	_____	X	\$50	_____
Additional Donation				_____
Total				_____

Dues can be paid either in person at the monthly meetings, online via our website, <https://ophistory.org/store>, or by mail. Please make checks payable to the **Historical Society of Orange Park** and send to:

Historical Society of Orange Park
P.O. Box 08
Orange Park, FL 32067

We appreciate your support!