



The Historical Society of Orange Park

July 2023 Newsletter

July is here and with it comes Independence Day, a day to celebrate this great country of ours with family, cookouts and fireworks! While we certainly have the right to celebrate our freedom how we see fit, we need to remember that with rights come responsibilities. A few years ago, CWO Phil Burt, spoke at our annual Veterans Day Ceremony. Phil spoke about how military service develops certain characteristics in people that, when combined with the places they have been, the poverty and corruption they have seen, give them a real appreciation for this country, the opportunities it provides and a desire to serve their communities. We

pride ourselves on self-government but self-government does not mean abdicating our responsibilities to our elected leaders. We first need to govern ourselves, serve others, contribute to our communities and hold our elected leaders accountable so that we can make this nation stronger and continue to celebrate our freedom for many years to come.



This month's newsletter includes information on our August quarterly meeting and various happenings in our area. In particular, we want to bring your attention to two items:

- The deadline to order a memorial paver for a veteran so that it can be manufactured and installed at the Veterans Memorial prior to this year's Veterans Day Ceremony is fast approaching. **The deadline to order a paver is July 31.** Orders for new pavers are placed annually and orders for pavers received after July 31 will be installed in 2024.
- The July outing to the Florida Agricultural Museum in Flagler County, originally scheduled for Saturday, July 8, has been postponed. The outing will be rescheduled for later this year, which will have the added benefit of cooler weather. For those of you that had planned to join us on July 8, please check future issues of our newsletter or check our website for updates on the outing.

Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
July 9, 2023	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
August 7, 2023	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM	HSOP Quarterly Meeting	Orange Park Library
August 13, 2023	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House

Facebook Post: June: 1970s

This month The Historical Society of Orange Park looks at the 1970s. Every 3rd of the month in 2023, we are posting Facebook messages to highlight the town's history, decade by decade. The 70's saw great population growth in Orange Park, reaching 5,000 residents. The Buckman Bridge opening surely was part of the reason.

In 1972, Governor Reuben Askew cut the dedication ribbon for the Park Central Shopping Center on Hwy 17 with its brand new A&P grocery store. All the progress brought public outcries to keep the speed limit at 30 mph through the town. In 1973 LCDR John McCain and Colonel Carl Crumpler received a heroes' welcome at Orange Park Elementary, having returned from serving over five years as prisoners of war in Vietnam.

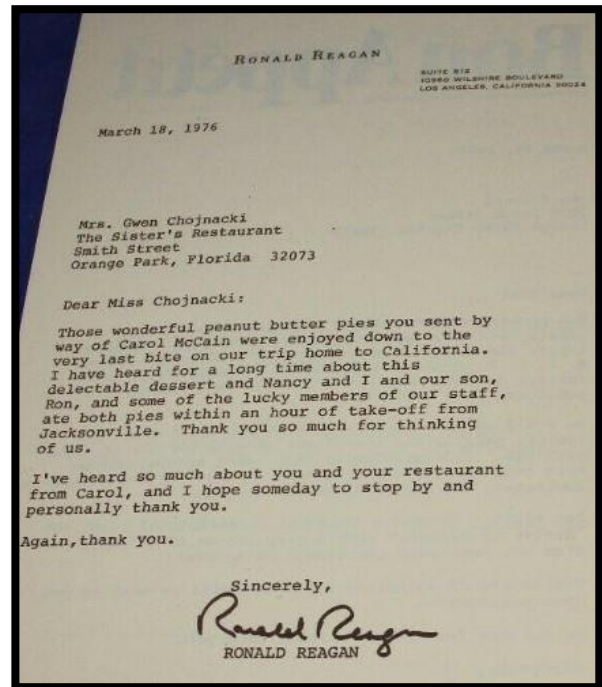
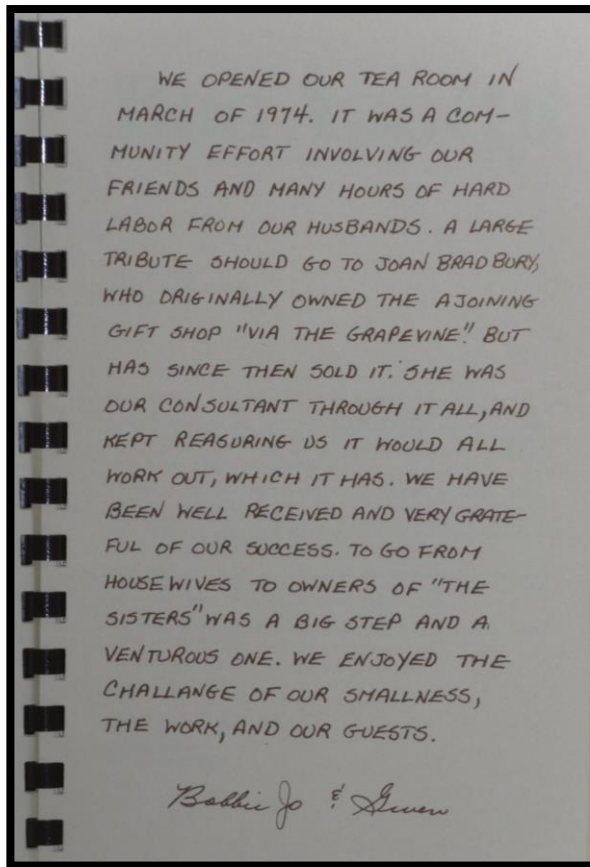
In the 1970s the Woman's Club of Orange Park was busy with a day camp for handicapped kids and hospital auxiliary duties. The Sisters Tea Room opened on Park Ave, serving guests for 30 years. Frica Massee rescued and bought River House and added it to the Club Continental property. The Orange Park Mall opened. In 1973, the Art Guild of Orange Park was started, Buck Murphy opened his tire company and sadly, in 1979, we said goodbye to Carrie Clarke, who was such an important part of Orange Park.



The Henry Holland Buckman Bridge opened in 1970



Cmdr. John McCain's Homecoming, 1973



The Sister's Tea Room



The River House



Carrie Clarke

June Member Meeting – Orange Park Memories, The 1960's

On June 6, we returned to the Clarke House for our Quarterly Member Meeting. Our featured speaker was Mr. Eugene Nix, a long-time resident of Orange Park, who shared his recollections of growing up in Orange Park during the 1960's. Eugene described his school days at Orange Park

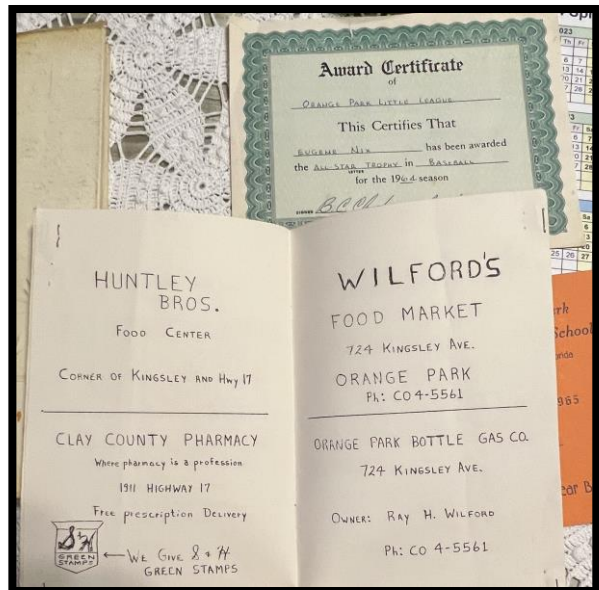
Elementary School and Orange Park Junior-Senior High School, teen dances at the Lion's Club, playing baseball in the early days of the Orange Park Athletic Association and how his interest in music grew after hearing up and coming local bands, such as Lynyrd Skynyrd. Eugene also shared some memorabilia from his personal collection such as photos and sports items for our members to review. Our members had an enjoyable evening sharing memories of Orange Park. Our thanks to Eugene for sharing his memories and memorabilia with us.



Scenes from the St. Johns River after Hurricane Dora



Inlet Marine after Hurricane Dora



Sports Memorabilia

August Member Meeting – The History of Our Local Non-Profit Organizations

On August 7th at 5:30 PM we will gather at the Orange Park branch library to celebrate the many altruistic organizations. From its earliest days, Orange Park has been buoyed by citizens who worked together to make the town safer, healthier and more connected. Join us as we present the story of groups like the Orange Park Woman's Club, the Rotary of Orange Park, the Art Guild, the Garden Club, Senior Center, Shepherd's Center, the James Boys, the Clothes Closet and more. Service and citizenship- these values remain hallmarks of small-town community. We hope you leave this presentation empowered and inspired by the examples you will see.

Veterans Memorial of Orange Park



The Historical Society of Orange Park would again like to remind the community that **the order deadline for new laser engraved pavers for installation at the Veterans Memorial of Orange Park is July 30, 2023.** That provides sufficient time for the ordering, engraving process and shipping while also giving our installation team time to install the new pavers in time for Veterans Day. The HSOP would also invite you to mark your calendars for our next Veterans Day Ceremony to be held at the Memorial on November 11, 2023, at 11:00am.

Paver order forms can be found onsite at the Memorial, on the website at www.Ophistory.org, and on the HSOP Facebook page.

We would also like to make an appeal for contributions to the Memorial restoration project. While our fundraising efforts came very close to target, we are still about \$1,000 short of our goal. Every little bit donated helps us to complete this important mission.

Clay County Historical Roundtable

On Saturday, June 3, representatives of several historical organizations in Clay County gathered in Hibernia to discuss the successes and challenges of preserving history in Clay County. Attending were representatives of the Clay County Historical Society, Penny Farms Historical Society, Middleburg Museum, Orange Park Historical Preservation Board, the Clay County Archives, Clay County Historical Preservation Board and the Historical Society of Orange Park. The Roundtable was hosted by Ms. Leighton Tesche at the Morris Estate on Old Church Road in Hibernia. The Morris Estate is located on the grounds of the old Fleming estate on the banks of the St. Johns River. Ms. Tesche provided a tour of the grounds and the house. The beautiful family home was built in the 1950's and incorporated materials salvaged from the original Fleming home, such as heart pine flooring and triple-hung windows. The site also includes the original pool and

bathhouse that were one part of the Fleming estate. After the tour, the attendees sat down to discuss their various organizations, meeting schedules and preservation efforts. We also discussed the means and methods used to engage the public as well as the challenges posed by shortfalls in volunteers and funding. At the conclusion of the meeting, the attendees moved to Whitey's Fish Camp to continue their conversations over lunch. Overall, the meeting left everyone encouraged. Familiarity and better communication between our various organizations will benefit us all. Although we might focus on different aspects, we all have the same goal of preserving and sharing our local history. It's nice to know there are good people in Clay County working hard to do just that!



Cindy Cheatwood and April Watts look over the pool and bathhouse that were once part of the Fleming estate.



Roundtable attendees review historical artifacts at the Morris home.

The Breeze

Many long-time residents of Orange Park remember *The Breeze* newspaper. *The Breeze*, a local, weekly paper, chronicled life in Orange Park for well over a decade from the late 1950's into the 1970's. The paper was published by the Hull family, who published several other newspapers in the area. Last month, we were contacted by Mr. Michael Hull, the son of the late publisher, Warner Hull, Sr., regarding the donation of his personal collection of bound copies of *The Breeze*. Mr. Hull was kind enough to share his family's story and how *The Breeze* came to be Orange Park's newspaper.

Mr. Warner S. Hull, Sr. was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1910. He worked for Mr. McCormick at the McCormick Spice company as a young man. He came to Jacksonville in 1942 and served in the Coast Guard in World War II. He later worked at





Mr. Warner S. Hull, Sr.

Southern Drugs on State Street as a pharmacist. In 1945, a man came into the store and told Mr. Hull that he had been trying to start a newspaper with no luck. After a short talk, the man sold Mr. Hull the rights to *The Breeze* newspaper for \$1. The Breeze became the family business. The Hull family published *The Lakeshore Breeze* and *The Murray Hill Breeze* along with *The Murray Hill Shopper* and *The Edgewood Shopper*. In 1959, the family moved their publishing operation to Orange Park. They were based in an office on Park Avenue behind the old Orange Park Motors building and began publishing the *Orange Park Breeze*, which later was shortened to just *The Breeze*.

The printing and distribution of *The Breeze* was a true family business. Warner Hull's wife, Sara, was listed as the editor and wrote several columns through the years. Her most popular column was "This and That." Sara also wrote poetry. Michael Hull started working on the newspaper at an early age first by riding with his brother, Warner, Jr., in his 1952 Plymouth and throwing rolled papers out the window as they drove through Lakeshore, Murray Hill and later, Orange Park. Later, Michael's responsibilities included addressing the papers with a stencil machine called an Addresserette.

The Hull family worked hard to make *The Breeze* successful. *The Breeze* earned numerous awards for public service during its time in Orange Park. It was awarded the US Army Certificate of Achievement for Outstanding Service, the US Navy Certificate of Merit, the Marine Corps Award, the Veterans of Foreign Wars' American Citizenship Medal and the Certificate of Journalistic Excellence presented by the University of Florida's School of Journalism.



Mrs. Sara Hull receives the United States Army Certificate of Achievement for Outstanding Service from Major George Clark



Addresserette Unit

The Hull's continued publishing the paper until the 1970's when it was sold and became Clay Today. In retirement, Warner Hull, Sr., continued to print business cards in a building in his backyard on an old manual printing press until his health gave out and he was no longer able to do so.

Michael Hull's copies of *The Breeze*, covering 13 years in the life of Orange Park, are now in the possession of the Society and we are most pleased to have them. The newspaper documented the life of our community like nothing else and we look forward to reviewing these copies to improve our knowledge of local history.

Sophia Fleming Chapter, DAR Promoting Constitution Week

September 17th is a date set aside each year to recognize the anniversary of the US Constitution, the foundation of our very identity as a nation. We in the Historical Society encourage recognition of this holiday and all it represents.

Our friends at the DAR are striving to promote the education of and appreciation for the Constitution and invite our readers to assist. They intend to provide displays in the public libraries, request a proclamation from the Clay County Board of Commissioners, provide information in the schools, and have a bell ringing ceremony at 4 PM at the Orange Park Library on Sunday, September 17.



In addition to these things, they are asking local businesses to place Constitution Week dates on their digital signs. If you are affiliated with such a business or organization, they would like you to assist in promoting this effort. Also, if you are someone who dresses in period clothing and speaks to local groups, they would love to enlist you for this cause. Finally, if you have ideas about how our organization could assist the DAR Chapter to promote Constitution Week, please share those with us at ophistory.org.



Clarke House Garden Surprise

We often take for granted that the gardens at Clarke House are maintained by the Town of Orange Park as part of their normal routine. However, that is not always the case. The Garden Club of Orange Park volunteers to maintain these gardens, and does a truly wonderful job, especially for the times there are major activities. Recently, one of our HSOP members noticed that the gardens needed a little extra help. I think we all lost plants during that hard freeze last winter so you know what we are talking about.

So, Michelle Hord decided to take action and do something about it. Dodging the rains last month, she went to Ace Hardware, purchased flowers, and planted new flower arrangements to change the appearance of the garden from drab to beautiful! Thanks to Michelle, the recently painted Clarke House looks even better.



Clarke House Tours



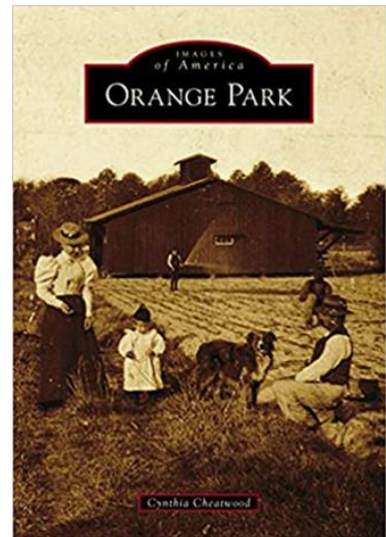
The Clarke House is open for tours on the second Sunday of each month from 2 PM to 4 PM. Our next open house will be held, Sunday, July 9. If you have not yet visited the house or, if it has just been a while, we invite you to stop by to look around. The slower pace of a Sunday afternoon provides an opportunity to tour the entire house, both upstairs and down. We hope to see you there!

Images of America - Orange Park

If you would like to learn more about the history of Orange Park, 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](#)
- [Middleburg Museum](#)
- [Historical Society of Penny Farms](#)
- [Mandarin Museum and Historical Society](#)
- [Clay County Archives](#)

