



# The Historical Society of Orange Park

## June 2023 Newsletter

It's time for trips to the beach, warm summer breezes and walks around the park! Summer has arrived!

This month's newsletter includes information on our next quarterly meeting, scheduled for June 6 at the Clarke House and important information pertaining to the Veterans Memorial. Also included is an article on the Patriot War of 1812-1814. This article was derived from a presentation given at our February quarterly meeting and provides an overview of the conflict.

We regret to announce that our monthly open house at the Clarke House, initially scheduled for Sunday, June 11, from 2 PM to 4 PM, has been cancelled. Our next open house will be Sunday, July 9. We invite you to join us then for a visit. Come in, look around, peruse a copy of Images of America – Orange Park and soak up some local history.

### Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
June 6, 2023	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM	HSOP Quarterly Meeting	Clarke House
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

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

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

Our next Quarterly Meeting will be held this month, 5:30 PM, Tuesday, June 6 at the Clarke House located at 1039 Kingsley Avenue. Our featured speaker will be Mr. Eugene Nix. Eugene will share his recollections of growing up in Orange Park in the 1960's. The 1960's were a time of transition for Orange Park. In many ways it was still a small town where children could roam freely and traffic



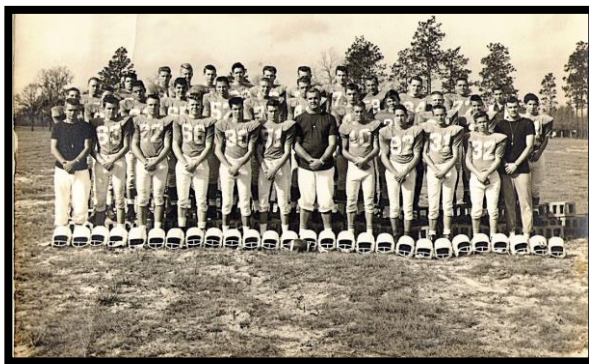
was not an issue but outside forces were driving growth in the area, changing the character of the town in the process. We look forward to seeing you on June 6.

### **Facebook Post: June: 1960s**

To celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Historical Society of Orange Park is highlighting the town's history, decade by decade. This month we look at the 1960s.

The town got a new library in the 1960s, on the site of the old Normal School. The first graduating class of Orange Park High School was celebrated in 1962. The following year, the Orange Park Athletic Association was created offering generations of our town's kids a chance to play ball. The Garden Club installed a Blue Star Memorial on Highway 17 (now located near the Veterans Memorial) and the Monkey Farm operations moved to Atlanta's Emory University. Regular passenger railroad service with a stop in Orange Park ended. Caleb and Fricka Massee, bought *Mira Rio* and converted it into *Club Continental*. The Orange Park Lions Club started in 1966.

In the late 1960's, Navy Cmdr. Michael Hoff brought his wife, Mary and five children to live in Orange Park while he served in Vietnam. He never returned but Mary's POW flag made history on his behalf. In 1969, the Rotary Club of Orange Park started. By the end of the decade growth in the town took the population over 2,600.



**Orange Park High School Football Team**



**Yerkes Laboratories of Primate Biology  
(The Monkey Farm)**



Blue Star Memorial

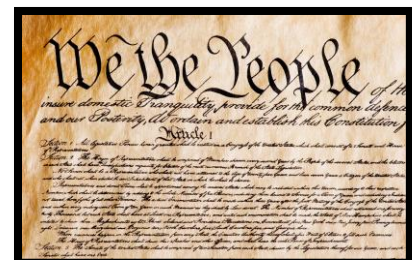


Lion's Club

### **Sophia Fleming Chapter, DAR Promoting Constitution Week**

September 17<sup>th</sup> 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](http://ophistory.org).



### **Veterans Memorial New Paver Orders**

As we have written in several prior newsletters, the process of engraved paver ordering has changed with our new paver provider. Because of minimum order sizes, the HSOP will plan to

[www.ophistory.org](http://www.ophistory.org)

place our single 2023 purchase order on **July 30, 2023**. This allows time for the purchase, engraving, and shipping from the vendor. It also ensures our local installer team has sufficient time to install the newly acquired pavers prior to November 11, 2023, for our Annual Veterans Day Ceremony.

Paver order forms are available:

- On the HSOP website at: [www.ophistory.org](http://www.ophistory.org),
- Via the HSOP Facebook page,
- At the Orange Park Veterans Memorial
- At the Clarke House during any open meetings and tours.

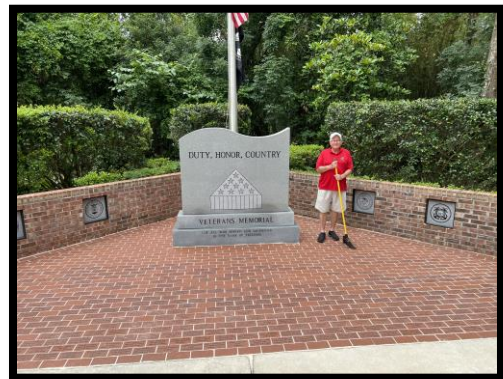
The cost of an engraved paver is \$100.00.

The paver order form can be printed and mailed with check to:

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

The new engraved pavers look great! Last month, members of the Society placed additional sand in the joints between the pavers. This small, but important, task helps to keep the memorial looking good for our veterans and visitors alike.

So, if you have been considering dedicating a paver to a family member or friend, please keep this date in mind.



### **2023 Veterans Day Ceremony**

It is never too early to remind everyone that the Annual Veterans Day Ceremony will be held on Saturday, November 11, 2023, at 11 AM at the Veterans Memorial of Orange Park. As always, we will be working on a great agenda for the event. While the storm cancelled area events in 2022, we ask everyone to pray for sunny weather this year. So please go ahead and put this important event on your calendar and remember to invite your family, friends and neighbors.

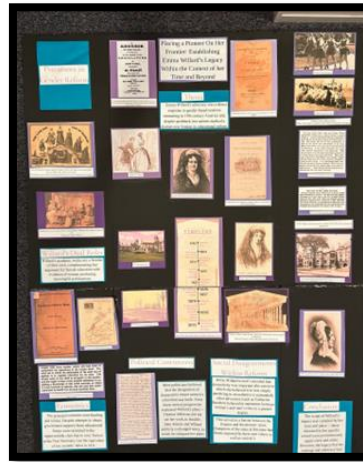
### **Clay History Day Success!**

History Day is a rigorous academic research project that examines a different theme each year. Our Society has proudly supported this event as judges and sponsors since 2007.

This year, we are happy to share great news from Florida History Day. Two Clay County students won the privilege of representing Clay County and the state of Florida at National History Day! Cathleen Kivett-Smith and Sarah Kirk (shown on their graduation day) won second place in Sr.



Group Exhibit for their project on founding era women's educator, Emma Willard. They travel to National History Day in June with Cathleen's mom, Mary Kivett (seen here) to represent the state as well as the county and school.



We celebrate these two Ridgeview IB program scholars for their faithfulness to excellence.

### **July Historical Society Outing**

Summer is here and that means another fun and informative Historical Society road trip! On July 8th we will visit the Florida Agricultural Museum to take a tour led by an educated, energetic tour guide through buildings dating from 1880 to 1920 which all have been relocated to the Museum from areas across the state. The buildings include a fully stocked 1800's general store, five buildings from a citrus complex, a 1920's dairy barn and a brief wagon ride to an authentic Florida Cracker Homestead built in 1880. Along the tour you will encounter several, including rare heritage Florida Cracker Livestock.



The tour is about 1.5 hours and costs \$12. After our tour we will find a good lunch spot and enjoy good conversation.

We will gather in the parking lot of Town Hall at 9:30 am to carpool or you can meet us there.

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

Save the date! On August 7<sup>th</sup> 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.

## **Florida Memory**

### **The Patriot War**

By Van Hogan

The Patriot War of 1812 – 1814 was a particularly contentious time in Florida's history. The clash between Spain and the United States had a profound impact on the future of Florida.

The conflict had its origins in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. When Spain regained possession of Florida after the American Revolutionary War, the colony was sparsely populated. Life under Spanish rule was prosperous but some citizens were concerned about Spain's ability to effectively govern the colony due to their struggles with France and growing unrest in their Central and South American colonies.

By the 1810's, Spanish Florida posed several problems for the United States. Relations between the United States and Great Britain were deteriorating. In the event of war, there were concerns that Great Britain, an ally of Spain, would use Florida as a base for their ships, posing a threat to the United States. Also, Florida had also long been a haven for runaway slaves. The Spanish government was not inclined to return runaway slaves to their American owners. The Spanish government also employed armed black soldiers. Slaveowners in the southern United States lived in fear that these armed black soldiers would infiltrate the United States and initiate an armed insurrection among their slaves.



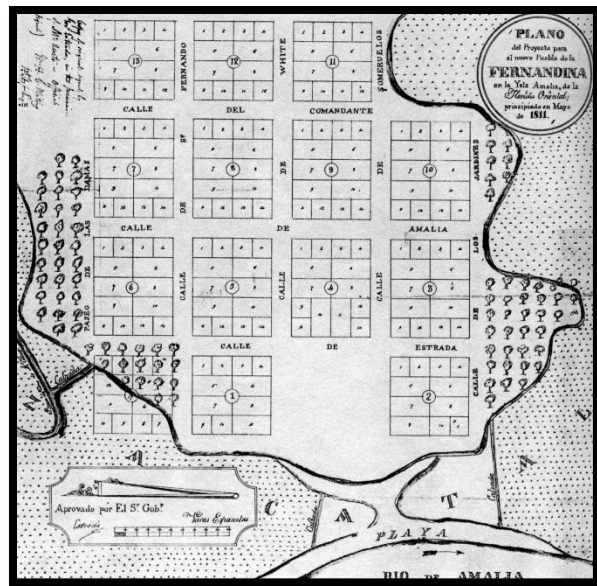
The United States saw opportunities in the acquisition of Florida. Such an acquisition would eliminate the potential presence of British warships, eliminate a haven for runaway slaves and eliminate the presence of armed black troops on its southern border. Also, the population of the United States was growing rapidly. Land was needed to sustain families and settlers were pushing west and south into new territories. Spain had encouraged US citizens to settle in Florida to populate the colony but, as Spain's power began to ebb, these settlers began to look to the United States for protection and security.

On January 15, 1811, the United States Congress passed a secret act for the acquisition of Florida. The act allowed the temporary occupation of all or part of Florida by US troops if agreed to by local authorities or if an incursion by a foreign nation was imminent. To that end, George Matthews, a veteran of the American Revolutionary War and a former governor of Georgia, was appointed as commissioner to represent the United States in relations with Spanish Florida. President Madison ordered US troops and gunboats to accompany Matthews and assume control of any territory ceded to the United States.

Matthews, a Georgia resident, was convinced that many landowners in Florida would prefer to be US citizens and would be amenable to overthrowing Spanish rule. His desire to acquire Florida for the United States led him to a loose interpretation of the law. In lieu of negotiation, Matthews's plan to effect change in Florida was to recruit an army of Patriots from Florida and Georgia. He offered 50 acres of land per man as an inducement to join his cause. Once established, the Patriot army would enter Florida and confront the Spanish authorities, forcing them to cede control of the territory to the Patriots. Once the Patriots had control, they would, in effect, become the local authorities whereupon they would cede control to the United States.

Matthews was able to recruit a number of Patriot volunteers in Georgia with the promise of land but, due to the booming economy in Florida, recruiting citizens of Spanish Florida proved to be more difficult than expected. He was, however, able to recruit prominent landowner, John Houston McIntosh, to serve as leader of the Patriot force. McIntosh, a wealthy planter with plantations in Florida and Georgia, felt he and his holdings would be better off under US rule.

In early March 1812, approximately 70 Patriots gathered at Rose's Bluff, a few miles west of Fernandina on the Florida side of the St. Marys River. On March 17, this group of Patriots sailed the tidal rivers and landed in Fernandina to confront the local Spanish government. Fernandina was very lightly defended. The Patriots were accompanied by 8 US gunboats positioned in the Amelia and St Marys Rivers. The US gunboats were simply accompanying the Patriot force and had no intent to attack. However, they were an intimidating presence. The leader of the Spanish forces in Fernandina, not knowing the purpose of the gunboats but seeing the overwhelming firepower of the Americans, surrendered Fernandina to the Patriot forces without a shot being fired. The very next day, March 18, John Houston McIntosh, as leader of the Patriots, turned Fernandina and Amelia Island over to US troops beginning the American occupation.



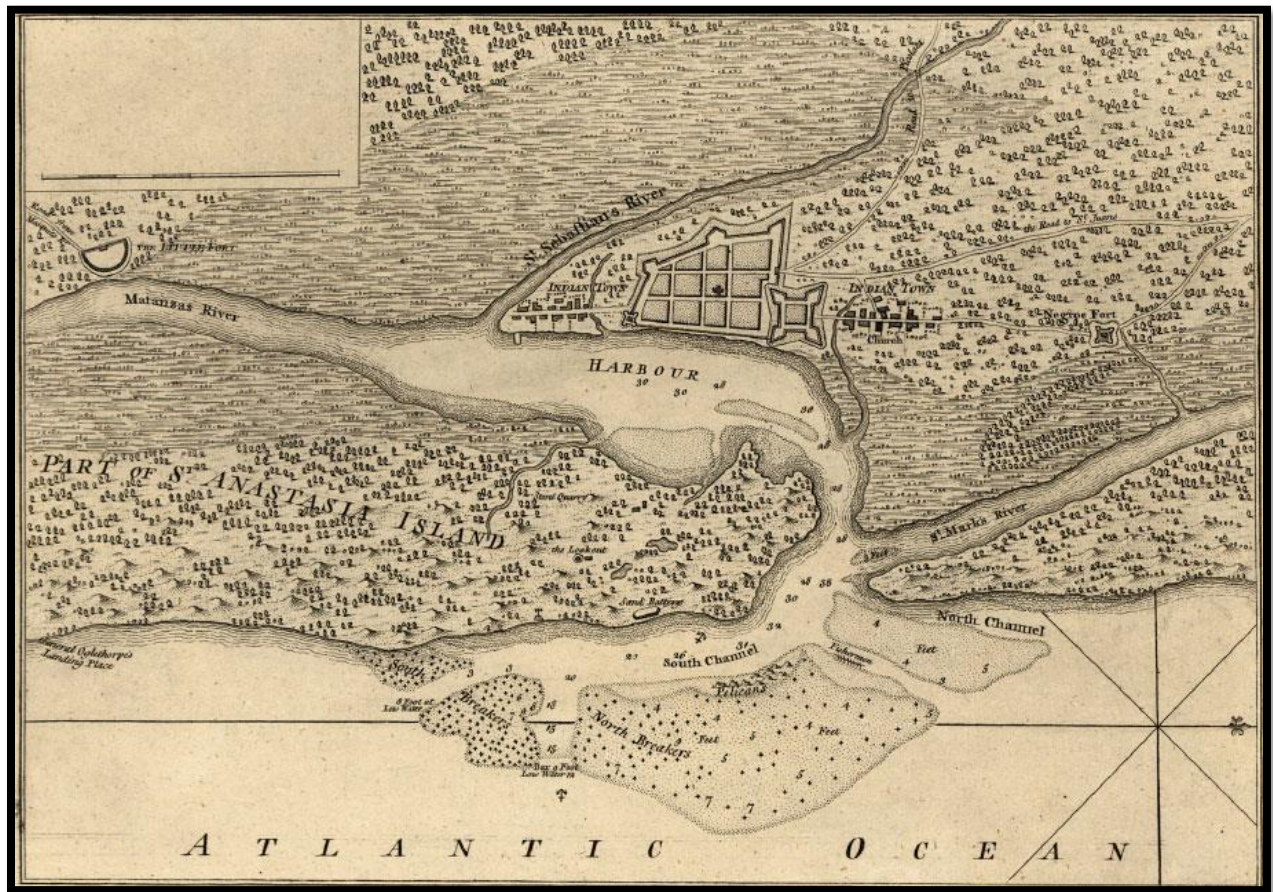
Map of Fernandina

With the turnover of Fernandina complete, Patriot forces quickly moved south toward the capitol of St. Augustine. Along the way, the Patriots began coercing reluctant local landowners to join their cause. Landowners were given the choice to either join the Patriot movement or leave the colony and forfeit their lands. One such person was Zephaniah Kingsley, owner of Laurel Grove Plantation. Kingsley was arrested on March 21, and taken to a plantation near the present site of downtown Jacksonville, where he was held prisoner and forced to either join the Patriot cause



or see Laurel Grove, his property on Drayton Island and his wife, Anna's, property in Mandarin ruined. Kingsley, being a very practical person, decided to join the Patriot cause.

Patriot forces reached St. Augustine on March 25 and established a camp at Ft. Mose, the former home of a community of escaped slaves seeking freedom in Spanish Florida, which was located approximately two miles north of the city. US troops soon followed and set up their own camp in the area. A siege of the city was begun. The Patriots and US troops soon discovered that they did not have enough personnel or artillery to successfully attack St. Augustine. The Spanish also soon realized that they did not have enough troops to rout the Americans and drive them back to Georgia. A stalemate ensued.



**St. Augustine and Ft. Mose**

Spain decided to pursue diplomacy and public opinion to force the American troops from Florida. Word of Matthews' unfair use of Patriots and US troops to force the turnover of Fernandina became public and soon became an embarrassment for President Madison. On April 4, 1812, Matthews' commission was quickly rescinded and David Mitchell, the governor of Georgia, was soon appointed to take his place. However, even though the United States had never formally declared hostile intentions against Spain, both Madison and Mitchell saw the value of keeping



US troops in Florida. War with Great Britain was imminent and Madison felt the presence of US troops would be a deterrent to the harboring of British ships in Florida. Mitchell, for his part, was very concerned about reprisals by Spain against the citizens of Georgia, particularly reprisals involving the use of armed, black troops. Madison told Mitchell to keep the US troops in position and stall for time before negotiating any withdrawal. The stalemate continued.

With active conflict with Spain at a standstill and Spanish forces confined to St. Augustine, northeast Florida became a “no man’s land”. The Patriots used the lull in activity to organize a government. In June 1812, they established the Territory of East Florida, drafted a constitution and elected John Houston McIntosh as Director. The new government held their first meeting at Laurel Grove Plantation.

On June 18, the US declared war on Great Britain, absorbing most of the attention of the US government as military action was focused on Canada. In Florida, the stalemate continued while Mitchell drug out negotiations with the Spanish government, boredom set in among the Patriots and US troops. Patriot forces began raiding nearby plantations to steal food and livestock as well as destroying homes and crops.

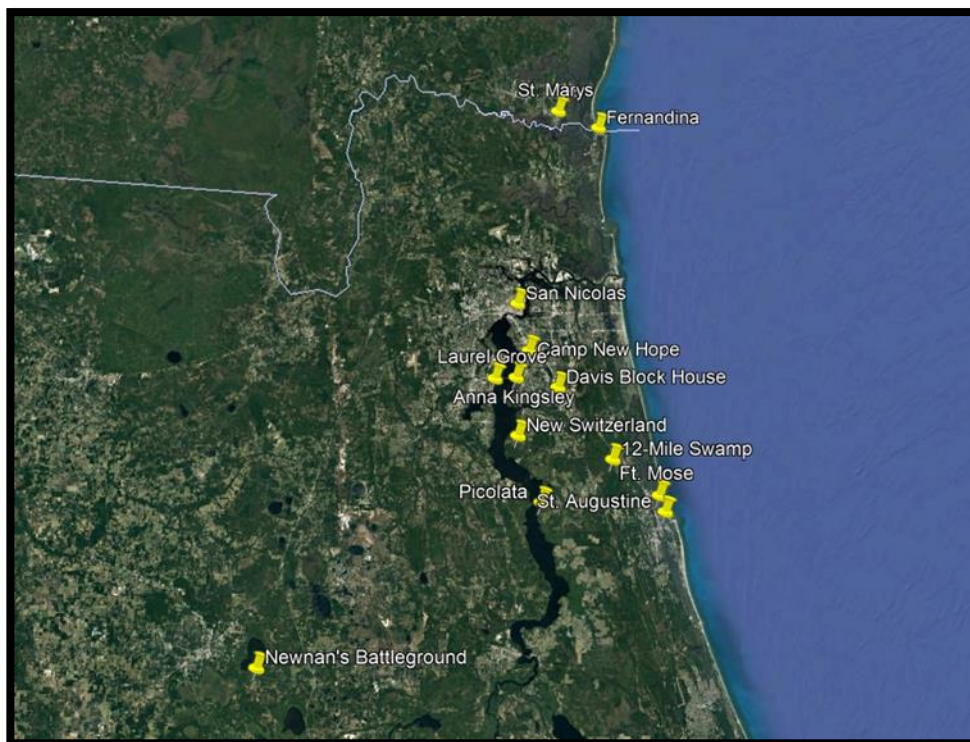
The Spanish government, increasingly angry with the continued presence of US and Patriot forces in Florida, responded by enlisting the Seminoles to fight against the invaders. Spain supplied the Seminoles and encouraged them to keep the spoils of war. The Seminoles began a terror campaign of ambushes against the Americans. Troops were attacked. Slaves and supplies were stolen away. Military couriers and suppliers were often attacked and killed along the roads with their bodies mutilated and left in plain sight as a warning to others.

Landowners that were allied with the Patriot cause were also attacked. Laurel Grove, Kingsley’s plantation, was attacked on July 25. As a result of the attack, three of Kingsley slaves were killed and another 41 were taken away. The plantation’s crops were destroyed, the livestock stolen and all the outbuildings were burned to the ground. The only structure left standing was the family home, which was protected by a timber stockade.

The Seminole raids, combined with the lack of support by the US government, put US forces in a terrible position. Life in the marshes and palmetto thickets north of St. Augustine over the course of a long, hot summer took its toll. Many men became ill, their uniforms were reduced to tatters and they grew very low on supplies. By mid-September, the situation of the US troops was desperate. A detachment of Marines was sent to retrieve supplies from a depot near present-day Bayard. The detachment was ambushed by Seminoles in 12-Mile Swamp with several men killed and wounded. The loss of the Marines and the failure of the mission to procure supplies was too much for the US troops at Ft. Mose to bear. They broke camp, ending the siege of St. Augustine. They traveled north to Camp New Hope, a small fortification located along the east bank of the St. Johns River just north of Goodby’s Creek. There they found badly needed supplies and a safe place to rest and recover.

In late September 1812, in response to the attack on the Marines and the other atrocities committed by the Seminoles, Daniel Newnan, leader of the Georgia Volunteers, led an expedition into present day Alachua County, to attack the Seminole villages there and force an end to their terror campaign. Newnan's forces encountered the Seminoles between present-day Gainesville and Hawthorne just south of the lake that bears the name of the Patriot leader, Lake Newnan. The fighting between the two groups was very intense. Seminoles killed and scalped Patriots while Patriots killed and scalped Seminoles. Newnan's forces were pinned down by the Seminoles for a week. By this point, they were out of food and had no choice but to affect a fighting retreat. As they fought their way back east, the Seminoles pressed the attack and were on the verge of surrounding them when US troops arrived to offer relief. Newnan's men were able to march back to the St. Johns River, with many ending up at Laurel Grove Plantation to recover from their ordeal. The Seminole scalps they brought with them were nailed to the wall of Kingsley's home.

Although the Seminoles had driven Newnan out of their territory, Newnan had taken the fight out of the Seminoles. They decided to end their attacks on Patriot forces and landowners. They abandoned their villages in the Alachua area and moved farther south.



**Patriot War Map**

By the spring of 1813, tensions had eased to the point that Spain agreed not to prosecute any Florida landowners that had supported the Patriot cause. With that agreement, US troops left Camp Good Hope and traveled back to Georgia, burning the camp and the homes of several settlers loyal to Spain on their way north.

Throughout the year of 1813, it became obvious the Spain could not adequately protect the citizens of Florida. Buckner Harris, a former general in the Georgia militia, assumed control of the Patriot forces, which crossed the border at will attacking the homes of Spanish and former Patriot landowners, who were now once again loyal to Spain.

Renegade bands of Patriots also roamed the area. In November 1813, one such band occupied Laurel Grove, using it as a base of operations. Anna Kingsley, the 20-year-old wife of Zephaniah Kingsley, was incensed that these renegades were using her home as a base for their pillaging. She took advantage of the presence of a Spanish gunboat in the area to eliminate her home as a haven. The gunboat had just shelled the area, driving the renegades into the nearby forest seeking shelter. As the shelling stopped, Anna gathered up her slaves and took them in a small boat out to the gunboat. She then went back with two men and set a small fire in her house which soon grew into a large blaze, consuming the house, its contents and two small cannons stored there. With the house destroyed, the renegade Patriots lost their protection and were forced to move elsewhere.

The Patriot movement made one more foray into the Alachua area in the winter of 1814. They began to settle and cultivate the area that had been abandoned by the Seminoles. The Patriots, led by Buckner Harris, established the Republic of East Florida and sought recognition from the United States. However, the United States refused to support the Patriot effort. The Spanish government incited the Seminoles to attack and offered a bounty for Harris' scalp. In May 1814, the Seminoles ambushed and killed Buckner Harris. The death of Harris led to the collapse of the Patriot movement and the end of the Patriot War.

By the end of the Patriot War, many local plantations were in ruins. With Spain unable to provide adequate protection, Residents of Florida continued to suffer losses and upheavals. Locally, Zephaniah Kingsley abandoned Laurel Grove Plantation and moved his operations to Ft. George Island. Over the next few years, US troops crossed the border at will to fight Native Americans and subdue renegade Americans in Florida. Spain realized it could not effectively govern Florida and ceded Florida to the United States with the signing of the Adams-Onís Treaty in 1819. The treaty was ratified in 1821 making Florida a territory of the United States.

Sources:

- The Other War of 1812, James G. Cusik
- Zephaniah Kingsley Jr. and the Atlantic World, Daniel L. Schafer
- The Early History of Clay County, Kevin Hooper
- Anna Madgigne Jai Kingsley: African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Slaveowner, Daniel L. Schafer
- United States Troops in Spanish East Florida, 1812-1813, Florida Historical Quarterly (Jul 1930, Oct 1930, Jan 1931, Apr 1931), T. Frederick Davis
- The Ambush of Captain John Williams, USMC: Failure of the East Florida Invasion, 1812-1813, Florida Historical Quarterly (Jan 1978), J. H. Alexander
- The First Spanish-American War, Florida Historical Quarterly (Jan 1926), A. H. Phinney



## Clarke House Tours



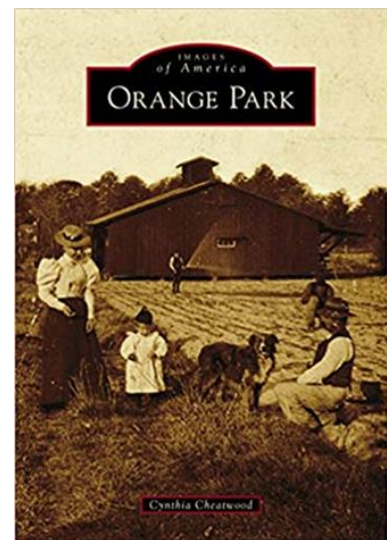
The Clarke House is open for tours on the second Sunday of each month from 2 PM to 4 PM. Unfortunately, the open house scheduled for June have had to be cancelled. Our next open house will be held, Sunday, July 9. If you have not yet visited the house or, if it has just been a while, we invite you to 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](mailto: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](http://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](#)

