



# The Historical Society of Orange Park

## March 2022 Newsletter

March is here and with it comes spring, warmer weather and lots of pollen. This month we celebrate the life and contributions of Mrs. Carrie Clarke. Mrs. Clarke's former home is now the centerpiece of Clarke House Park, which brings joy to so many people. Please stop by to celebrate with us on March 13. You can read more about Carrie Clarke Day below.

### Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
March 13, 2022	1:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Carrie Clarke Day	Clarke House Park
April 10, 2022	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
April 23-24, 2022	10:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Kids' Fest	Town Hall Park
May 8, 2022	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
May 9, 2022	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM	General Meeting	Orange Park Library

Additional information on these events can be found below.

### Carrie Clarke Day



The Society's Annual Carrie Clarke Day event will be held Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup> from 1 PM until 5 PM, back this year in person after two years of lockdown challenges! The historic Clarke House will be open for tours for the full four hours. The Clarke family were early residents of Orange Park and made significant contributions to community life. Mrs. Clarke, along with her husband, William, contributed to the social, political and business life of the community. Their contributions will be shared with all who visit. The book, *Images of America: Orange Park*, will be on sale, along with Clarke House and Veterans Memorial ornaments.

We will also have a gardening activity for the younger set. The Art Guild of Orange Park will help children decorate small flowerpots into which they will plant flowers provided by the Hummingbird Circle of the Garden Club of Orange Park, something that surely would have made Mrs. Clarke's heart sing. The Clarke Park playground will be open and a good time can be had by all.

Volunteers are needed to host the house tours and make visitors feel welcome. Please contact [info@ophistory.org](mailto:info@ophistory.org) for more information or to sign up to assist.

## **February Meeting – Orange Park Normal School**

After two years of dealing with the Covid challenges, we held a general meeting on February 7 at the Orange Park Library. It was good to be together again as a group to discuss local history. The topic of our meeting was familiar to many, the Orange Park Normal and Industrial School. After a brief review of the Normal School's story we focused on the family of Stephen Butcher. The Butcher family, Stephen, his wife, Sybil, and their daughter, Alice, lived in Orange Park from 1900 - 1904. Stephen served as Director of Normal School and Sybil worked with the students in various capacities. The Butchers owned a small Brownie camera and took a number of photographs during their time in Orange Park. Most of the photographs were taken at the school but some were taken at locations around Orange Park. The Butchers also kept written records of their experiences in Florida in the form of journals and letters. We were fortunate to receive copies of their photographs and journal through a generous donation from



**The Butcher Family. From L to R: Stephen, Alice, John and Sybil Butcher**

the Butcher's great-granddaughter, Ms. Charity Monroe. Ms. Monroe was kind enough to reach out to us via social media with an offer to share this information. We gratefully accepted her offer. The information provided a window into life at the school, described challenges of life in the south, showed student activities and helped us to understand the layout of the various buildings that made up the campus. Life at the school was difficult in the early 1900's. Most of the transplanted northern residents that encouraged the American Missionary Association to build the school in Orange Park had left the area after their citrus crops were wiped out by the devastating freezes of the mid-1890's. The remaining residents of the town struggled to make a living. The difficult economic times combined with segregation left the school somewhat isolated. Health care was also a concern. Town residents and students alike suffered from diseases such as malaria, whooping cough and smallpox with the Butcher family losing two infant sons to disease despite the best efforts of medical care at the time. Despite the hardships, the Butchers saw success at the school. Their students received a quality education and went on to successful careers. We appreciate the contributions made by the Butcher family to our community. In addition to improving the lives of many through education, their photographs and observations continue to enlighten us today and provide insight into our past.

While many of the Butcher's photographs were shown at our February meeting, we thought it would be good to share a few of their photos with you here. Following are a few of the photographs taken by the Butcher family:



**Student Gathering at the Front of Hildreth Hall**



**Kingsley Avenue**



**Picnic on the Ground**



**Normal School Buildings. From L to R: Congregationalist Church, Girl's Dorm, Hildreth Hall and Boy's Dorm**

## **Kids Fest Has Moved to April!**



The Society will once again participate in Kids Fest with the Town of Orange Park. We will be sharing old photos and artifacts from Orange Park's past with the newer generation. Because we are "fans" of Orange Park, we will also assist students in creating accordion-style orange-shaped fans to enjoy during the event.

Volunteers are needed to help at our booth! Hours are 10 AM - 4PM both Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> and Sunday, April 24<sup>th</sup>. We will set up the booth at 9 AM each morning and start closing it down at about 3:45 each afternoon. We would appreciate two volunteers at a time in 2-3 shifts per day. You don't have to be crafty and the historical points will be written out for you to share.

This is a good venue for us to expose people to the Society. *The Images of America: Orange Park* book will be sold and membership information will be available. Every time we have a booth like this we meet new people who want to tell us their OP history stories. Lots of good connections have been made.

If you would like to help, please contact Cindy (904.707.0822) at [ckcheatwood@hotmail.com](mailto:ckcheatwood@hotmail.com) or Van at [info@ophistory.org](mailto:info@ophistory.org).

## **General Meeting - Harriet Beecher Stowe's Visit to Laurel Grove**

In late winter 1866, the famous author, Harriett Beecher Stowe, disembarked from a sailboat and walked ashore at Laurel Grove Plantation, the future site of the Town of Orange Park. Mrs. Stowe wrote of her visit to the area, sharing her observations about the condition of the old plantation, the state of the people that lived and worked there and her reflections on a local area resident. Mrs. Stowe's words capture some of the societal changes of the times and how people were adapting as the pace of change increased. Please join us at 5:30 PM, May 9, at the Orange Park

Library for a discussion of Mrs. Stowe's visit to Laurel Grove, how she came to be there and how it affected her future.

### **Middleburg Museum**

The Middleburg Museum is open Sundays from 2 PM to 4 PM.

The Middleburg Historical Society will be having their regular member meeting of the Middleburg Museum on Thursday, March 3 at 6:30 PM. Dr. Cynthia Stone will present a program about the historic Post Offices of Middleburg. Dr. Stone will also share information about President's Month.



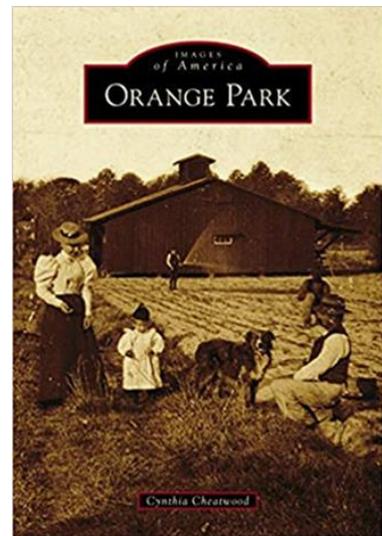
The Middleburg Historical Society will also be participating in Middleburg's Spring Festival on Saturday, March 19 from 11:00 AM until 3:00 PM. Dr. Stone will be speaking on "What's in a Name."

### **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](mailto: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**



This month, our usual day for open house tours of the Clarke House coincides with our celebration of Carrie Clarke Day. The house will be open Sunday, March 13 from 1 PM to 5 PM. Additional information on Carrie Clarke Day can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. Bring the family and enjoy a day at Clarke House Park and learn more about the Clarke family's, and particularly Mrs. Clarke's, contributions to the community.

### **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.

### **It's Membership Renewal Time!**

Annual memberships in the Historical Society of Orange Park are now due for renewal. For those of you that have not recently visited our website, we are happy to announce that we have upgraded our website's capabilities so that you can now renew your membership online at [www.ophistory.org](http://www.ophistory.org). Membership forms can also be downloaded from our website for those that prefer to renew via mail. We sincerely appreciate your support and hope to see everyone at a future meeting.

