



The Historical Society of Orange Park

May 2022 Newsletter

It's difficult to believe we are already four months into the year. By all accounts, the Clay County Fair and Orange Park Kids' Fest were successful and enjoyed by everyone that attended. We have also enjoyed a run of very good weather. It's a great time of year to enjoy the outdoors. On Monday, May 9, we will host another general meeting at the Orange Park Library and discuss a visit made by Harriett Beecher Stowe to Laurel Grove Plantation not long after the Civil War. At the end of May, we will observe Memorial Day and honor the sacrifices of those who lost their lives in the service of our nation. We hope you can find the time to step back, enjoy our weather, be of service to our community and appreciate the blessings provided by those that have served us.

Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
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
June 12, 2022	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
July 10, 2022	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House

Additional information on these events can be found below.

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

In late winter 1867, the world-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, 2054 Plainfield Avenue in Orange Park for a discussion of Mrs. Stowe's visit to Laurel Grove, learn more about her life, why she came to Laurel Grove and how it affected not only her future but the future of Florida.

Veterans Memorial Update

While it may seem like just yesterday, the Veterans Memorial at Magnolia Cemetery was dedicated on November 11, 2011. That's right, it was just over 10 years ago that the first of many ceremonies have been held at the Veterans Memorial. Unfortunately, time and weather have been hard on the Memorial granite and pavers.

Recently we have noticed several maintenance related issues at the Memorial. The Florida sun and wet weather have created a fading of the lettering on benches and the Memorial itself. Further, many of the pavers have been deteriorating. The HSOP has formed a committee to review these problems, evaluate the issues and identify solutions to these issues. We want the Memorial area to be in the best condition possible. We also want to be sure to keep all our members and the public aware of what steps are being taken to address this.

The first area of concern is the fading lettering on the granite benches and the Memorial itself. We received a proposal from Jacksonville Memory Gardens to re-letter the granite benches and Memorial. Jacksonville Memory Gardens originally provided all the Granite fixtures for the Memorial site. Further, the Shipley Family has been a major supporter and contributor to the Veterans Memorial project from its inception through the construction phase. Mr. Michael Cunningham, their Maintenance Director, who has been involved with the Memorial project since its inception has now personally completed the re-lettering on the Memorial and all benches. We think you will notice immediately the expert job he has done.



The second area of concern is that many of the inscribed pavers have begun to deteriorate. The lettering on many engraved pavers is at the point where it is almost unreadable. Certainly not what we anticipated, but a problem that must be dealt with.



During Phase 1 for this issue, a search was begun to identify a new provider for the pavers that would hold up better in our temperature and moisture conditions. We have received sample engraved pavers that we believe will be better suited for the exposure that we have to expect. We are now in Phase 2 of resolving this issue. The committee must individually review the installed pavers to determine which have to be replaced and then contract with the manufacturer to provide these engraved pavers.

Phase 3 will be to contract with Ragland and Sons Landscaping Co. who will do the removal/replacement of the pavers. They have been working with the HSOP installing engraved pavers as additional requests for pavers were received over the years since its initial construction.

Phase 4 of this project is to implement an annual sealing and maintenance plan as recommended by the manufacturer. We, in partnership with the Town of Orange Park, will work to ensure that the maintenance plan that is developed will be the solution we need to keep the Memorial area at its best for many years to come.

The HSOP is committed to the ongoing care of this wonderful Memorial area.

Kids Fest

This year, Kids' Fest, which is typically held in June, was moved to the weekend of April 23 – 24. June thunderstorms have disrupted the festival the last couple of years, particularly last year's cloudburst, and the move to April was made with the hope of better weather. It turned out to be a great move. Mother Nature did not disappoint. The weather was perfect all weekend with good crowds both days of the festival. The festival ran very smoothly and everyone had a good time.

The Society hosted a booth this year. Our display included toys of yesteryear such as marbles, Tinkertoys and Lincoln Logs. Every child that stopped by had a great time playing with the toys. Some parents and most grandparents brightened when they saw the old toys as they brought back many good memories.



We also shared small fans with the children. The fans were constructed of pleated, orange paper topped with a small, green paper leaf, which resembled an orange when completed. It was a nice way to celebrate Orange Park and served as a small memento of the day.

We met several visitors that were new to the area and curious about the history of the town. We were happy to share our information with them and encourage them to learn more.



Our thanks to Kenny Radwanski and Zachary Power for volunteering their time and efforts to support the Society at this year's festival. We also thank Emily Dockery and the hard working staff of the Town of Orange Park for organizing and managing a smooth, well-run event.

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.

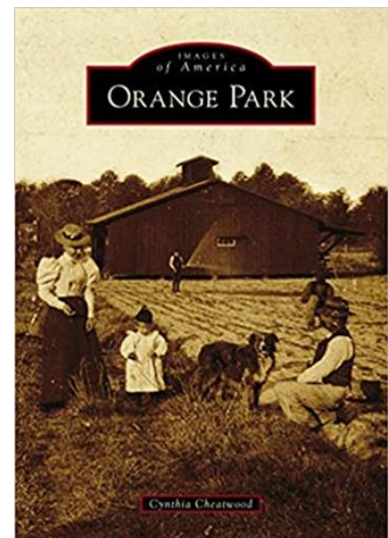


Images of America - Orange Park

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.



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, May 8 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.

Middleburg Museum



The Middleburg Museum is open Sundays from 2 PM to 4 PM. The spring weather has been good to us all. The recent Middleburg Spring Festival enjoyed a great number of participants and attendees with many people touring and showing interest in the Museum.

The Museum will conduct its monthly member meeting on Thursday, May 5 at 6:30 PM. Dr. Cynthia Stone will be speaking about Sam Saunders who played an integral part in our Clay County history. Hope to see you there!

To learn more about the Middleburg Museum, please visit their Facebook Page ([The Middleburg Museum - Home | Facebook](#)). The Middleburg Museum is located at 3912 Section Street in Middleburg.

Mandarin Museum and Historical Society

The popular Third Thursday Lecture Series will return to live presentations this month, 7 PM, May 19th at the Mandarin Community Club. The speaker will be Scott Matthews, professor of history at FSCJ. The City of Jacksonville will celebrate its Bicentennial this June. Dr. Matthews will discuss the area's history and how it has shaped the city. The Third Thursday Lectures are held quarterly and are jointly sponsored by the Mandarin Museum and Historical Society and Mandarin Community Club. The Mandarin Community Club is located at 12447 Mandarin Road. For more information, please visit [Third Thursday Lecture \(mandarinmuseum.net\)](#).



Memorial Day



Memorial Day is May 30. Please remember the men and women that have died in the service of this great nation. They helped to preserve the freedoms we enjoy through their service and sacrifice. May we always remember that freedom is not free.

Look For Us on Online

Look for the Historical Society of Orange Park online via our website, www.ophistory.org, or the next time you visit Facebook. Check for updates on society news and activities.