



The Historical Society of Orange Park

November 2023 Newsletter

Welcome November! This is the month we celebrate Veterans Day and Thanksgiving. These two holidays give us an opportunity to pause, reflect and express our gratitude. Veterans Day allows us to publicly acknowledge and thank our veterans for their contributions and service to this great nation. Thanksgiving Day also gives us an opportunity to give our thanks to God for our families, homes and the bounty with which he has blessed us. Both holidays inspire us to be humble and grateful for all that we have. May we share our appreciation and gratitude with others.

November brings another active month for the Historical Society. On November 6th, we will host our quarterly member meeting at the Orange Park Library. We will also conduct our Annual Meeting in conjunction with our member meeting. We will take nominations and elect officers for 2024. We need active members to serve as officers to further the mission of the Society. Please plan to attend and make your voice heard.



The following Saturday, November 11, we will host our annual Veterans Day Ceremony. Last year's event had to be cancelled due to the untimely arrival of Hurricane Nicole but all is ready for this year's event.

You can learn more about each of these events below.

Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
November 6, 2023	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM	Quarterly Member Meeting	Orange Park Library
November 11, 2023	11:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Veterans Day Ceremony	Veterans Memorial
December 8 & 9, 2023	5:00 PM – 9:00 PM	Hometown Holiday	Clarke House Park
December 16, 2023	12:00 PM – 1:00 PM	Wreaths Across America	Veterans Memorial
February 5, 2024	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM	Quarterly Member Meeting	Orange Park Library

November Member Meeting

Join us on Monday, November 6th at the Orange Park branch library as we remember the Yale Laboratories for Primate Biology, locally known as the “Monkey Farm”. This scientific research center was begun by psychobiologist, [Dr. Robert M. Yerkes](#) in 1930. It was renamed the Yerkes Laboratory of Primate Biology upon Dr. Yerkes’ retirement in 1941. Emory University bought it in 1961 and in 1965 it was transferred to their Atlanta, GA campus. Many locals have fond memories of the Monkey Farm. Do you? Come share your own story if you have one! We will start at 5:30 pm in the library’s meeting room.



Veterans Day Ceremony

The Historical Society of Orange Park and the Town of Orange Park invite you to join us for the town’s much beloved Veterans Day Ceremony to be held at the Orange Park Veterans Memorial on November 11, 2023, at 11 AM. The Memorial is located just inside the gates of the town’s historic Magnolia Cemetery, 1040 Kingsley Avenue, directly across the street from Clarke House Park.

As part of this national holiday, this solemn ceremony honors America’s veterans. As we gather on this date, set aside each year, we thank the men and women of our Armed Forces for their service.

The program for this year’s recognition will include a presentation of the colors by the Orange Park High School NJROTC Color Guard, and a performance by the First Coast Highlanders. The Keynote Speaker this year will be Capt. Ed Turner, Executive Director of the National POW/MIA Memorial and Museum at Cecil Field. Also included will be local students who have written winning essays in the 2023 Veterans Day Essay Contest, along with participation by the American Legion Post #250 Riders and the Sofia Fleming Chapter of the DAR, a wreath-laying ceremony conducted by Capt. Turner and Vice Mayor Susana Thompson as well as a flyover by the Dreamland Squadron from Haller Airfield. Wanda Dillaberry will perform the National Anthem and God Bless the USA.



This year's ceremony promises to be well attended. Because there will be limited seating available, it is recommended that visitors bring folding chairs. We will do our best to accommodate anyone with mobility issues. Parking for the ceremony is available at the First Baptist Church of Orange Park at 1140 Kingsley Avenue, a very short walk from the memorial. The ceremony will begin promptly at 11 AM and last about an hour. At the conclusion of the ceremony, all participants and guests are invited to share refreshments at the historic Clarke House.

Thanks to our Veterans Day Chaplains



A heartfelt "Thank You" to Robert "Chappie" Lucas and Pat "Mama Chappie" Lucas. Chappie was the Chaplain of American Legion Post 250 and Mama Chappie was the Chaplain of the Post 250 Auxiliary. Chappie is a Korean War Veteran and met his wife while serving in the United States Navy. They recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. Chappie joined the American Legion and has been the Chaplain at Post 250 for almost 20 years. For the past 13 years these two chaplains have conducted the invocation and convocation prayers for every Veterans Day Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Veterans Memorial of Orange Park. Pat always managed to put a meaningful message into poetry, and Bob always closed the ceremony with a powerful prayer for our Veterans. Health has forced them to retire from their duties and move to South Carolina to live with their children. The Historical Society of Orange Park will install an engraved paver in their honor at the Veterans Memorial.

Hometown Holiday in the Park

Join us for the 11th annual Hometown Holiday at Clarke House Park on Friday, December 8 and Saturday, December 9. The event will run from 5 PM to 9 PM each evening. This is always a great family event with something for everyone and every age.



The Clarke House will be decorated for the holidays and open for visitors. Members of the Society will be on hand to answer questions and provide information about the Clarke family and our town's history.

Other activities will include live musical entertainment, food vendors, pictures with Santa, a Christmas village where you can shop for unique gifts, holiday movies on a large, outdoor screen and trail rides through the trees on a trail decorated with holiday lights.

This old-fashioned holiday celebration is a great way for your family to start the Christmas season!



Parking is available across the street from Clarke House Park at the First Baptist Church of Orange Park. Orange Park Police Officers will be on-site to help everyone safely cross Kingsley Ave. Limited handicap parking is available within the park.

We will again be collecting non-perishable food items to donate to those in need this holiday season. Food items will be collected at the Clarke House. All donations will be delivered to the Clothes Closet for distribution in the Orange Park area.

Holiday Gathering

On the evening of December 11th at 6 PM, there will be a Christmas Gathering and General Meeting of the Historical Society at the Clarke House, 1039 Kingsley Avenue in Clarke House Park. This meeting is open to members and friends of the Society as well as those interested in joining the Society. We look forward to seeing everyone. Come join us for music, news and fellowship as we celebrate the season and share good times. We will be collecting non-perishable food items to donate to those in need this holiday season. All donations will be delivered to the



Clothes Closet for distribution in the Orange Park area. *Please bring a dessert to share with others if you are able.*

Wreaths Across America

The Wreaths Across America began in humble circumstances. In 1992, the Worcester Wreath Company of Harington, Maine, made the decision to place their surplus Christmas wreaths on the graves of veterans in Arlington National Cemetery to remember them and honor their service. Word of their generosity spread and volunteers lined up to help. Over the years, the program continued to grow. In 2007, Wreaths Across America was started to better incorporate the generosity of donors and volunteers. Last year, the Wreaths Across America program placed over 2.7 millions wreaths at 3,702 locations. Again this year, Magnolia Cemetery and Moosehaven Cemetery in Orange Park will be participating in the National Wreaths Across America Day on December 16, 2023.

Our local ceremony will begin at noon at the Veterans Memorial in Magnolia Cemetery, 1040 Kingsley Avenue. This is a wonderful way to honor our veterans so please plan to attend. To donate, volunteer or learn more about the program, please visit the Wreaths Across America website at www.wreathsassamerica.org.

Orange Park Memories: October: 2010s

Every month in 2023, the Historical Society of Orange Park is highlighting the town's history, decade by decade. This month we look at Orange Park in the 2010s.

With a population of just over 8,000, a new focus on what the good old days offered became an objective. An Historic Preservation Board was created and over this decade, the first two state historical markers were installed at Town Hall. A marker for town history was created in 2014 and one for the Orange Park Normal School was added in 2018. At Clarke House Park, preservation efforts were undertaken for both the shed and the garage.

Both KidsFest and the Christmas celebration of Hometown Holiday in the Park both began. A point of great pride for the Society was the installation and dedication of the Veterans Memorial of Orange Park at Magnolia Cemetery. In conjunction with the Town of Orange Park, we have hosted annual Veterans Day ceremonies at the memorial since 2011. These events bring the community together for all the right reasons.



**Dedication of the historical marker for the
Town of Orange Park, 2014**



**Dedication of the historical marker for the
Orange Park Normal School, 2018**



Clarke House Shed Renovation, 2011



Hometown Holiday in the Park



Groundbreaking for the Veterans Memorial, 2011



Veterans Day Ceremony

Town of Orange Park Fall Festival

The Town of Orange Park hosted the 41st Annual Orange Park Fall Festival on Saturday, October 21 and Sunday, October 22. The weather was outstanding both days of the event. Attendance was exceptional and visitors enjoyed non-stop entertainment, food and a large variety of crafts and activities. There was something for everyone!

The Society hosted a number of visitors at our booth. They looked over our displays, purchased books and ornaments and shared stories about local history. It was a great way to spend a weekend!



Moonlight on Magnolia

October 28th was a beautiful day for a stroll through history. This year's event was rich in family stories. From young Annabelle Power telling the story of her great-great-grandparents to Melanie Tharp's rich family history with Jackson Hall, the hometown spirit of Orange Park shown through. An added surprise was the participation of George Allen, son of military hero, George

CD Allen, who told his father's story with affection and enthusiasm. We were fortunate to have a perfect depiction of long-time Orange Park mayor, Walter Odum, played deftly by Giles Tompkins. Julia Cramer's depiction of Carrie Clarke presented the warm charm of our Society's favorite lady with grace and wit. Jana Kinder brought Pauline Wiley back to life again this year, generating the community feeling that her character so represented.

It was fun to watch Vishi Garig's portrayal of Harry Horton's nosey neighbor again this year. What a hoot that family was! Likewise, it just wouldn't be *Moonlight on Magnolia* without John Bowles' characterization of Leonidas Wade. It is possible people left thinking they had met the man himself!

Shauntai Arrington, portraying Annie McDower, shared the African American story of the town with a mixture of grace and grit that did the family proud.

The sad story of young Ruthie Temple and Virginia Lee's drowning in the river was ably told by Zophi Sikora and Faith Tripp, students from Orange Park Junior High. Look for them in the future, folks.

The evening was most successful! The last tours ended just as darkness fell and a full moon rose over the cemetery. It was a beautiful ending to a beautiful day. The stories brought visitors into the rich history of Orange Park and reminded us all that there is a power to memories that shines through the gentle moonlight of Magnolia Cemetery.

We are grateful to our volunteers that helped to make this year's event such a success. They are as follows:

Storytellers

George CD Allen

Carrie Clarke

Jackson Hall

Harrington Family

Horton Family

McDower Family

Ruthie Temple and Virginia Lee

Walter Odom

Leonidas Wade

Pauline Wylie

George Allen

Julia Cramer

Melanie Tharp

Annabelle Power

Vishi Garig

Shauntai Arrington

Zophi Sikora and Faith Tripp

Giles Tompkins

John Bowles

Jana Kinder

Guides: Cynthia Cheatwood, James Comisky, Van Hogan, John Rose, Bob Scallan

Logistical Support: Barry and Sandra DiGiovanni, Zachary Power, Kenny Radwanski, and Runners: Emma Goslee, Sophia Pre and Amara Hassan.

Scenes from Moonlight on Magnolia



Melanie Hall with the Jackson Hall Story



John Bowles as Leonidas Wade



Vishi Garig with the Horton Family Story



Shauntai Arrington with the McDowder Family Story



Julia Kramer as Carrie Clarke



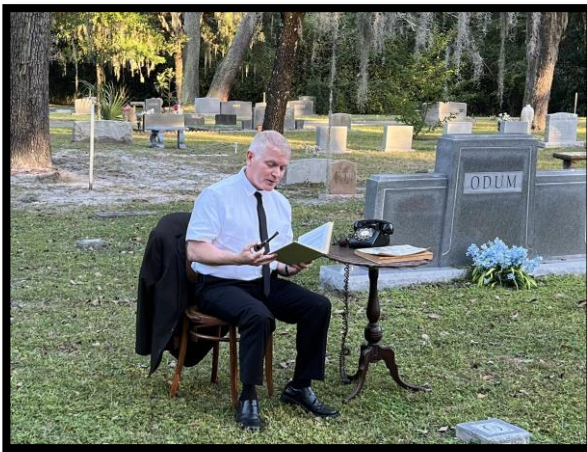
Jana Kinder as Pauline Wylie



Zophi Sikora and Faith Tripp with the Ruthie Temple and Virginia Lee Story



Anabelle Power with the Harrington Family Story



Giles Tompkins as Walter Odum



George Allen with the George CD Allen Story

Clarke House Tours



Due to the Veterans Day Ceremony on November 11 and Hometown Holiday on December 8 and 9, there will be no open house at the Clarke House in the months of November and December on the second Sunday of the month. The regularly scheduled open house at The Clarke House will resume on Sunday, January 14 from 2 PM to 4 PM. Of course, as noted above, the Clarke House will be open to guests after the Veterans Day Ceremony in November and during Hometown Holiday in December so please stop by if you can.

Historical Society of Orange Park Logo Shirts and Name Tags

Society members, show your colors! Members, you can now highlight your affiliation with the Historical Society of Orange Park with custom shirts and name tags. The shirts are grey with the Society logo on the left side. They are the perfect choice to wear when attending any HSOP event. The shirts, available in medium, large and extra-large, are priced at \$25 each. To identify yourself at community events, you can also purchase a Society name tag for \$7. Let everyone know that you are a member of the Historical Society of Orange Park and are proud to support its mission and our community.

If interested send an email to info@ophistory.org to order your shirt or name tag. We will also have a limited supply of shirts available at all HSOP events.

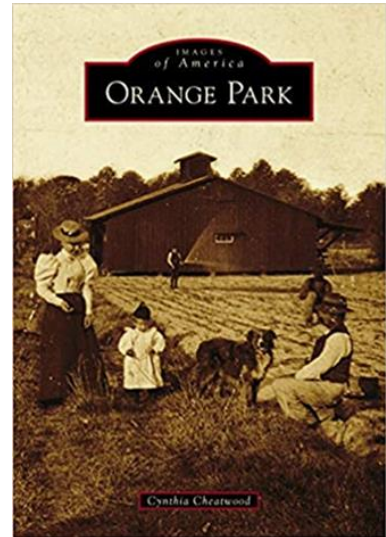


Images of America - Orange Park

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](#)

