



The Historical Society of Orange Park

September 2021 Newsletter

Good News!! The new playground at Clarke Park has been completed! The Town of Orange Park is hosting a ribbon cutting ceremony to re-open the park at 3 PM, Friday, September 3. The new playground is approximately 20,000 square feet with state-of-the-art play equipment and includes play equipment for ages 2 to 12 years, shade sails and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements. This playground boasts 21 climbing features, 6 musical elements, nearly 90 feet of swings, 7 slides and much more!

In addition to the playground, the Town also installed a sidewalk connecting the parking lot, playground and bathrooms, new sod near the playground, repaved the parking lot and replaced the roof on the historic Clarke House.



The new playground and the re-opening of Clarke Park has been a long time in coming but it will be worth the wait. With the park open once again, the Clarke House will be open the second Sunday of each month for tours. This month, the house will be open on Sunday, September 12 from 2 PM to 4 PM.

In addition to the changes at Clarke Park, we have also updated our website. Please stop by for a visit at Historical Society of Orange Park (ophistory.org). There you will find information on upcoming events and activities.

Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
September 3, 2021	3 PM	Grand Opening of Clarke Park Playground	Clarke Park
September 12, 2021	2 PM – 4 PM	Open House	Clarke House
September 18-19, 2021	9 AM – 4:30 PM	Window Restoration Workshop	Clarke Park
October 10, 2021	2 PM – 4 PM	Open House	Clarke House
October 16-17, 2021	10 AM – 5 PM	Orange Park Fall Festival	Town Hall Park
October 23, 2021	4 PM – 6 PM	Moonlight on Magnolia	Magnolia Cemetery
November 11, 2021	11 AM	Veterans Day Ceremony	Veterans Memorial at Magnolia Cemetery

Additional information on these events can be found below.

October Events

October is fast approaching and will be here before we know it. This October, the Society will participate in the Town of Orange Park's Fall Festival, which will be held Saturday, October 16 and Sunday, October 17 at Town Hall Park. This festival draws thousands of visitors each year with its mix of food, entertainment, activities and crafts. It is a big event in the life of our town. The Society will be hosting a booth at the festival and volunteers will be needed to share information about the history of Orange Park and our Society. Please consider spending a few hours at the festival and support your Society at the same time.



Also, on Saturday, October 23, the Society will host Moonlight on Magnolia at Magnolia Cemetery. This event has always been popular and a fun, family event. Volunteers will be needed to lead tours, tell the stories of former residents of Orange Park and welcome visitors to Magnolia Cemetery. Tours will start at 4 PM and the last tour will start at 6 PM. Please consider investing a few hours of your time at this event.



Veterans Day Ceremony 2021

November 11, 2021 is the day America will celebrate Veterans Day this year with ceremonies stretching across our great country. The Historical Society of Orange Park, in cooperation with the Town of Orange Park, will once again host its Veterans Day Ceremony at the Veterans Memorial located inside the main gates at Magnolia Cemetery, located at 1040 Kingsley Avenue, directly across from Clarke Park. The ceremony will begin promptly at 11 AM.

It will have been 10 years since the official Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Memorial on November 11, 2011. Planning for the Veterans Memorial had begun well before that. It all began at a monthly meeting of the HSOP when the Guest Speaker, Mrs. Joan Jones, spoke of the process that took place to build the recently completed Veterans Memorial in Keystone Heights. Upon hearing her presentation, the Board of the HSOP decided to create a committee to explore the possibility of building a Veterans Memorial in the Town of Orange Park.

After several months of research, it was determined that a publicly accessible Veterans Memorial in the Town of Orange Park did not exist and that the best location to build one would be on the Town of Orange Park's property at the entrance to Magnolia Cemetery.

The HSOP then went to multiple Town Council meetings to present their plans and ideas on how a Memorial could be built. Over several months the HSOP Memorial Committee developed several renderings of what the Veterans Memorial might look like. As we prepare to celebrate our Veterans this year, we thought you might be interested in seeing the evolution of the artistic renderings created by Committee member Carolyn Day as the HSOP Memorial Committee continued to work with the Town Council to make this dream a reality.



Original Conceptions for a Veterans Memorial Walk



Conceptual Drawings for the Veterans Memorial



The Veterans Memorial at Magnolia Cemetery



Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Veterans Memorial at Magnolia Cemetery
L to R: Van Hogan, Carolyn Day, Pat Meeks, Danny Tarrant, Scott Westerveldt (Lt. Col., USMC, Ret.) and Pete Morgan

Calling all Young Writers! Honor our Veterans!

The Historical Society of Orange Park, in recognition of Veterans Day, will, once again, sponsor an essay contest for students in Clay County. The purpose of the contest is to give young people the opportunity to explain the importance of celebrating veterans and Veterans Day. Students, using their own words and creativity, are invited to tell a personal story about how veterans have made an impact in their life, neighborhood, or town.

This year, instead of having three different topics for the contest, one winner will be chosen in each of the 3 grade levels (Elementary, Middle and High School) that addresses the topic: Why Do We Honor Veterans? Students should research Veterans Day and speak with veterans and family members about what our military veterans have done that deserves recognition.

Entry forms for the contest are available on the website of the Historical Society of Orange Park, [Veterans Memorial \(ophistory.org\)](http://www.ophistory.org). Odds of winning will be determined by the number of entries received. Essays will be measured for: Expression of the theme (50%) Content of writing (25%) and Creativity of writing (25%). Judges will be members of the Historical Society of Orange Park. The contest is divided into the following categories:

<u>Grade level:</u>	<u>Word limit:</u>	<u>Prize Offered:</u>
4th –6 th	300 -500	\$50
7th –8 th	400-700	\$75
9th -12 th	500-1000	\$100

All essay entries must be received by September 30, 2021. These can be sent via electronic submission using our email address: info@ophistory.org or mailed to: The Historical Society of Orange Park, P. O. Box 08, Orange Park, Florida, 32073. The Grand Prize winners will be notified by October 22, 2021

In Memorium

We are sad to announce the passing of another good friend of our Society, Mr. Steve Howard. Steve was a native of Kokomo, Indiana. He later moved to Georgia and earned a degree in Civil Engineering. He served as Vice President of a heavy and highway contractor in Albany, Georgia and served as Vice President and Director of Corporate Purchasing for Florida Rock Industries. Steve's business and life experience was put to good use in Orange Park. He served the citizens of this town for nine years as a member of the Town Council, including a term as Mayor. No detail to improve life in Orange Park was too small to escape Steve's attention. He would often stop to pick up trash because he appreciated the beauty of the Town. Steve was also a Master Gardener who worked diligently to establish a garden in Clarke Park for the enjoyment of the park's visitors. Steve was a member of the Historical Society. He was strong supporter of our mission and was very supportive of our efforts to construct the Veterans Memorial and host the annual Veterans Day Ceremony. Last December, the Society was proud to award Steve its Earl Harrington Award for Community Service for his many contributions to this town. Communities thrive or decline based on the contributions of its citizens. Steve gave of his time and skills to improve life in Orange Park. He will be missed.



Steve Howard delivers Veterans Day remarks as Mayor of Orange Park



Steve Howard (L) receives Earl Harrington Community Service Award

Window Restoration Workshop for Historic Structures

Do you have a historic home in need of a little work? Do you need expert advice?

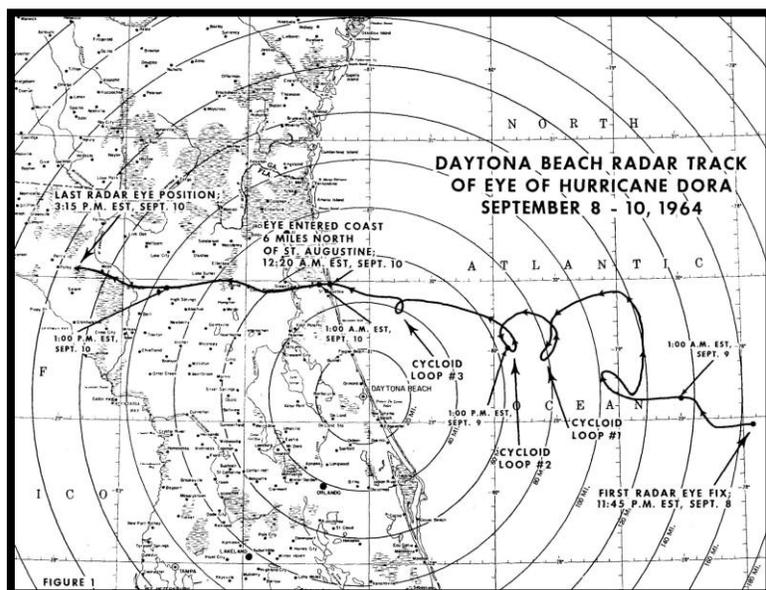
The Town of Orange Park's Historic Home Workshop will conduct a two-day Window Restoration Workshop, Saturday, September 18 and Sunday, September 19, at Clarke Park. This workshop is open to property owners, contractors or those interested in historical preservation. The workshop will be led by Angel Corrales, Chairman of the Historical Preservation Board, and an expert in the preservation of historical structures. This workshop will be the first of a series of workshops on historical preservation hosted by Mr. Corrales.



For more information on the hands-on workshop, please visit the Town of Orange Park's website, [Window Restoration Workshop • Town of Orange Park](#).

Orange Park Memories – Hurricane Dora

As we approach the height of Hurricane Season this month, we have been reminded of the devastation these storms can bring. Hurricane Ida, with winds approaching 150 mph tore through Louisiana this past weekend bringing with it death, flooding and destruction. Damage assessments are still underway, and it will take some time for many communities to get back to normal. Fortunately, Northeast Florida has been spared a direct hit from a storm like Ida however, we have had our share of tropical storms including recent brushes with Hurricanes Matthew and Irma. While these storms always bring rain and wind damage, Irma brought flooding at levels not seen in over 50 years. The last storm to cause such flooding was Hurricane Dora, the only hurricane to have a direct hit on this area in well over 100 years. Hurricane Dora came ashore just north of St. Augustine in the early morning hours of September 10, 1964. Its winds caused a great deal of damage, followed by extensive power outages, and its onshore winds filled the St. Johns River and its tributaries with water, which overflowed its banks.



We asked our members, who were here for Dora's visit, to provide their recollections of that time. Their responses follow.

Kathleen Colter

I was 6 years old, but I still remember the wind noise to this day and why I don't like to stay during storms now. I remember thinking it went on for a week but know it was not that long. I remember a huge oak tree falling and the mess it made. I remember seeing all the docks destroyed on River Road.

Barney Clark

I was living on Creighton Road when Dora came ashore. Many trees were knocked over by the storm. Most of the area along Creighton Road was flooded by the storm. My brother-in-law, Jessie Quigley, lived on Creighton Road adjacent to Doctors Lake. He and I had tied up his boats before the storm. Jessie went to bed as the storm approached. He woke up in the middle of the night and heard water lapping. His first thought was that Doctors Lake had risen and was lapping up against the side of his house. He got out of bed only to realize that his home was flooded, and water was lapping against the side of his bed. The wind-driven tide submerged one of his cars and half-submerged his truck. Electricity in the area was out for about a week. We were fortunate to have an artesian well in the area so we could get drinking water. Doctors Lake returned to normal levels as the tide turned and the winds subsided however, there was a lot of standing water. Most of the area remained wet and soggy with large puddles for days after the storm.



Damage to River Road in Orange Park

Carolyn Clark

I lived in Orange Park on Claire Lane. As the storm approached, the women and children of the Johnson family that lived on Smith Street, came to stay with us. Large trees overhung their home and there was a concern those trees might fall on the house during the storm. The men of our families went to the fire station to serve as volunteers in case someone needed assistance. At one point during the storm, just before daylight, we heard heavy weather was moving down the St. Johns River toward Orange Park. We were very concerned about the approaching storm but then relieved to learn it had abated and we were no longer in danger. We were all grateful. After the storm we had to find ways to deal with the lack of electricity. We cooked meals on our carport using camp stoves. We also stayed with other family members in the Meadowbrook area during the day to conserve resources and assist each other.

Toni Sewell

As a young child, I remember there was a lot of water and flooding. Water came in our house on Clinton Drive. Our home was surrounded by ditches and all the roads were still dirt. Dr. Bergh's house on Doctor's Lake was badly flooded.

Carol Hogan

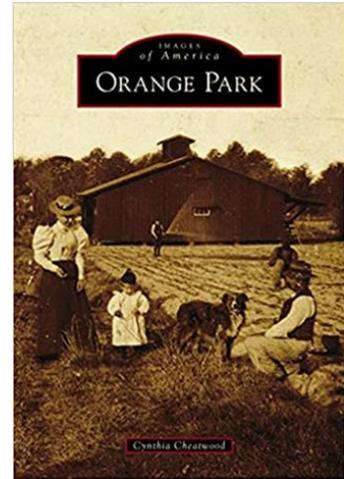
I remember the disruptions the storm caused. At the time Dora hit, my youngest son was a toddler still in diapers and we had a Doberman puppy. Those were the days before disposable diapers. I vividly remember the challenge of washing cloth diapers and hanging them to dry in our house while trying to keep up with a frightened puppy that could not go outside and kept having accidents in the house. Also at this time, my husband and I were preparing to build a new home at the south end of Doctors Lake. My husband went to check the property to see how it had fared. He reported back that all was good however, he did not want me to see the property, which caused me to have my suspicions. My suspicions were confirmed when I drove across the Doctors Inlet Bridge. All I could see were the tops of the houses that bordered the lake. As a result of the flooding, we brought in fill dirt to raise the elevation of our new home on the lake. Power in the area was out for over a week. We had to cook using Sterno, a flammable gel in a can. We would light the Sterno and put our pots and pans on a rack over the flame to heat our food. That method of cooking was difficult, so we visited my mother's house several times while the power was out. She had a gas stove and was as happy to feed us as we were to get a good, hot meal.

Images of America - Orange Park

Would you like to learn more about the history of Orange Park? If so, you should pick up 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



We are happy to announce that the new playground at Clarke Park has been completed. Along with other park improvements, the Town has also replaced the roof of the Clarke House. The park will reopen to the public at 3 PM on September 3. With the reopening of the park, monthly tours of the Clarke House will resume on the second Sunday of each month. This month, the house will be open Sunday, September 12 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.

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.

Membership in the Historical Society of Orange Park

We are grateful for the support our members have provided over the years through membership and participation. We ask that you continue to support our mission to preserve the history of Orange Park and share that history with the community. Ask a friend to join us as well. You can visit our website, www.ophistory.org, to download a membership form there.

