



The Historical Society of Orange Park

May 2025 Newsletter

May is here and we are looking forward to another beautiful month. This month we are hosting a “members only” tea on May 8 as well as our regular Open House on May 11. Plans are also in the works for our next quarterly meeting on June 24. You can read about our upcoming events below.

We also note an honor bestowed on our president, Cindy Cheatwood. Her article, ***World War I Remembered in Orange Park, Florida***, was reprinted by the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution in the May-June issue of their newsletter, ***National Defender***. We appreciate the NSDAR sharing Cindy’s work with their members and we hope they enjoy learning more about the contributions made by citizens of Orange Park in World War I.

This month we are happy to honor our moms on Mother’s Day and our veterans, past and present, as we observe Memorial Day.

Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Event	Location
May 8, 2025	10:00 AM - Noon	Members Only Tea	Clarke House
May 11, 2025	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
June 8, 2025	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House
June 24, 2025	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM	Quarterly Member Meeting	Orange Park Library
July 13, 2025	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Open House	Clarke House

June Quarterly Meeting: Celebrating Clay County Scout Camps

Please join us at our next Quarterly Meeting on June 24, 2025, 5:30 PM at the Orange Park Branch Library, 2054 Plainfield Ave in Orange Park. Historical Society of Orange Park President, Cynthia Cheatwood, will present the history of our local Boy Scout camp, Camp Echockotee, and our local Girl Scout camp, Camp Chowenwaw, using vintage photos and personal narratives that span decades. These two camps hosted multiple generations of scouts and left them with lifelong memories. Start your summer with memories of camp.



Were you a scout? Please bring any special memories or scout souvenirs that you would like to share. Bring a friend. The program is free and open to the public.

Orange Park Memories

The Society is highlighting Orange Park businesses each first-of-the-month throughout 2025, one from the town's early days and one which will be recognizable to many locals. This month we feature Carnes Fish Camp and Freeman's Bike Shop.

Carnes Fish House started in 1893 at the end of Kingsley Avenue but moved to Doctor's Lake in 1914. They packed and shipped fish all along the east coast. The fish were caught by seine nets, hoop nets, gill nets, wire traps and trot lines, processing thousands of pounds each day. They dressed the catfish, but the bream and speckled perch were shipped in barrels utilizing alternating layers of fish and chipped ice. Then they were shipped out by boats and trains. This business was vital to Orange Park in the Great Depression.

In July 1969, Orange Park got a mini-golf course thanks to Ralph Freeman who ran a bike shop on Mound Street, where the La Sabrosa store is today. The shop sold bikes of all sizes, minibikes and pedal cars and offered bicycle repairs for all makes and sizes. Mr. Freeman repaired bikes for residents of Orange Park, Moosehaven and Penney Farms. The shop, located right next to the mini golf course, was a very popular hangout for kids with a pinball machine upstairs and a basketball court in back.



Carnes Fish House on Doctors Lake



Freeman's Bike Shop

Celebrate Clay

On Tuesday, April 22, the Paul & Klare Reinhold Foundation hosted their annual Celebrate Clay breakfast at the Thrasher-Horne Conference Center. The purpose of Celebrate Clay is to recognize, reward and encourage community service in Clay County. Both non-profit organizations and individuals were honored for their outstanding work in a variety of fields including Arts & Culture, Civic Service, Educations, Health and Human Services, Aid to Seniors, and Services to Youth and Families. Cash awards totaling \$100,000 were presented to 47 deserving organizations and individuals. Sandra DiGiovanni and Van Hogan represented the Society at the Celebrate Clay breakfast and, although we did not receive an award this year, we were honored and humbled to be in the company of a group of wonderful, selfless people that make such a positive difference in the lives of so many Clay County residents. We are grateful to the Reinhold Foundation for allowing us to participate in this year's event and for their steadfast support of community service in Clay County.

Lawrence Hicks Headstone Dedication Ceremony- A Joyful Day

It was a beautiful day for a ceremony inside Magnolia Cemetery. For years, the Historical Society has told and retold the story of Lawrence Hicks, Orange Park's only Iceman. For the last five years an effort has been underway to find his resting place, raise awareness of the fact that no stone was ever there for him and provide one that he and his wife could share. Effie Pollard Hicks' name, one etched on a plaque on her concrete grave cover, was worn away by time, leaving only the small tin label placed there in 1967.

With the help of John Shipley and Jacksonville Memory Gardens, the stone was designed, quarried, delivered and installed. Bob Scallan was instrumental in this relationship. The marble marker bears the phrase, "Orange Park's Beloved Iceman" and will bring the story to folks for years to come.

A gathering of family members, historical society members and friends were on hand to dedicate the headstone. Delightful stories were told by grandnieces and nephews of the Hicks' family, bringing the gathering back to simpler times in Orange Park.

The ceremony began with prayer by Desiree Allen who also closed it with a benediction. A short biography of Lawrence Hicks was shared from research gathered by the Society. The mystery of how there was no stone for this family who served the community for 40 years was solved with the grandniece's explanation that a remarriage in his later years, after Effie had passed, led to estrangement from his family. Mr. Hicks' family had not even known where the couple rested until news of the ceremony made it to them.



In Recognition of Jacksonville Memory Gardens

The article above describes the recent ceremony when the Hicks headstone was unveiled giving Effie Pollard and Lawrence Hicks the recognition they deserve. What is not shared is how the headstone was acquired. When the board members first formulated the idea, they reached out to John Shipley, owner of Jacksonville Memorial Gardens. John has been a friend of the historical society through the years which goes back to his donation of the marble benches that sit in front of the Veterans Memorial. When the Hicks project was presented to John, again he agreed to assist. Also integral to this project was Mike Cunningham, Superintendent of Jacksonville Memory Gardens. Last fall, Mike assisted with the sprucing up of the Veterans Memorial by repainting the engraved portions of the medallions commemorating the various branches of the

service. We knew he would be an asset to the Hicks project and he was quickly brought onboard. Mike visited the burial site several times to plan the best way to lay the headstone. John placed the order for the headstone with his vendor in Georgia and picked it up. Mike then prepared the burial site by doing some groundwork and laying a concrete slab to ensure a secure and level placement. The installation was flawless and the marker looks great.

The Historical Society greatly appreciated the generosity of these two men and Jacksonville Memory Gardens.

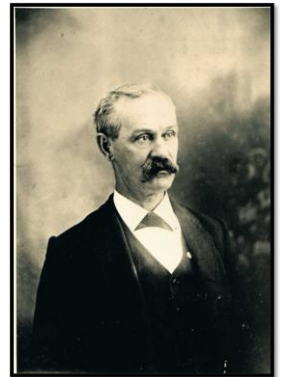
Orange Park's Military Veteran Mayors

As many of you know, Society Vice President, Sandra DiGiovanni, also has a leading role in the Wreaths Across America program that endeavors to place a wreath on the grave of each veteran buried in Magnolia Cemetery each December. As part of her efforts to make this event successful, Sandra has conducted extensive research to identify and locate each veteran buried in Magnolia Cemetery. Her research helped her to identify several veterans that also served the Town of Orange Park as mayor. Each of these individuals valued service over self and gladly gave of their time to make our nation and this community a better place. These individuals are as follows:

Manley S. Harris

6/11/1839 – 2/22/1924

Manley Harris was born in Portland, New York in 1839. On September 28, 1861, he joined the Union Army and served in Company A of Minnesota 2nd Voluntary Infantry. He was wounded at the Battle of Chickamauga and was discharged from the army on June 27, 1864. After the war, Mr. Harris returned to life in New York. By 1900, he was living in Orange Park with his wife, Laura. He worked as a conductor on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and was a member of the Order of Railroad Conductors. He also served as postmaster and Justice of the Peace in Orange Park for years. He was actively engaged in the interests of Orange Park and was beloved and respected by all the community. Mr. Harris served as mayor of the Town of Orange Park from 1904 until 1907.



Clarence Thomas Marshall

4/20/1855 – 10/27/1930

Clarence Marshall was born in Warren, New York. He served in the US Navy from 1899 until 1904, serving in the Philippines as well on the following ships: USS Richmond (training ship), USS Constellation, USS Scindia (Naval cargo ship) USS Hancock. He lived in Orange Park and served as Mayor of the Town of Orange Park in 1912.



Sparks Jones

6/10/1888 – 4/9/1970

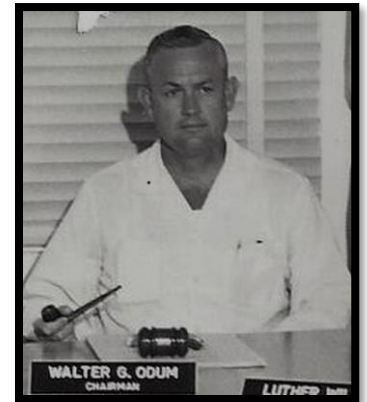
Spark Jones was born in Pratt, Alabama. He enlisted in the Alabama National Guard in January 1910 as a private in Company "L" 4th Regiment. He was later commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in Company "I" 4th Regiment on May 26, 1911. By 1917, Mr. Jones lived in the area and later owned a business in Orange Park. He served as Mayor of the Town of Orange Park in 1940.



Walter Guy Odum

9/14/1915 – 9/22/1976

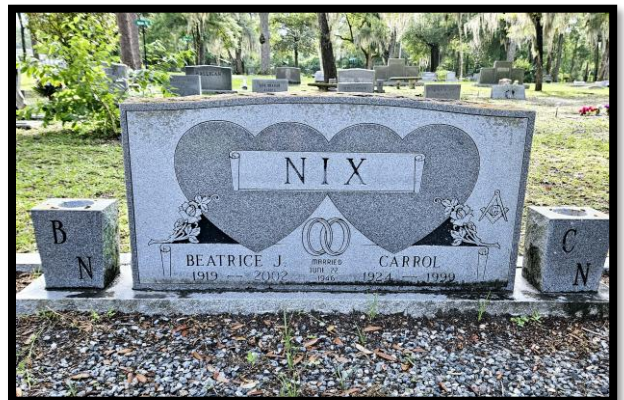
Walter Odum Was born in Glennville, Georgia. He joined the US Army in October of 1940. He moved to Florida in 1946. Once in Orange Park, he founded the Florida Soap Company and Clay Oil. He later served as President of the Bank of Orange Park. Mr. Odum served on the Orange Park Town Commission and as mayor from 1948-1966. In addition, he served almost twenty years on the Clay County Commission.



Carrol Nix

5/18/1924 – 5/12/1999

Carrol Nix was born in Milton, Georgia. He served in the United States Navy in both WWII and Korea. He enlisted in April of 1941 and was stationed on the USS Fitch during WWII. The USS Fitch participated in D-Day by cruising the waters off the coast to draw out then silence the German batteries. During his time in the navy, Carrol Nix advanced in the service to the position of Damage Control Chief. He continued his service throughout the Korean War. He served as Mayor of the Town of Orange Park from 1988-1989 and again 1990-1991.



Earl H. Harrington**1/1/1926 – 7/7/2013**

Earl Harrington was born in Orange Park. He was a lifelong resident of the town. He began his service in 1944, at age 18, in the Army Air Corps and served 2 years in the Aleutian Islands during World War II. He was discharged in 1947 and returned to Orange Park. He spent the next 34 years at NAS Jacksonville working for NADEP. Earl developed an interest in the affairs of the town. He faithfully attended Town Council meetings for years before running for office. Once elected to the Town Council, he represented the citizens of Orange Park well, serving five terms as mayor.

**Private Guided Tours of Historic Clarke House Available**

Homeschool, civic and social groups are welcome to schedule a free guided tour of the 1913 historic Clarke House. For more information, contact the Historical Society of Orange Park at info@ophistory.org. Groups will be scheduled based on the availability of guides.

**Veterans Memorial**

Each year, we place one order for inscribed pavers to be installed at the Veterans Memorial. The final day to place an order for an inscribed paver this year is July 31. All pavers ordered by this date will be installed at the Veterans Memorial prior to this year's Veterans Day Ceremony in November. Paver order forms can be found on our website, www.ophistory.org, and at the Veterans Memorial. The gift of an inscribed paver is a wonderful way to honor those who have served and share their service with the community!



Orange Park Historic Driving Tour



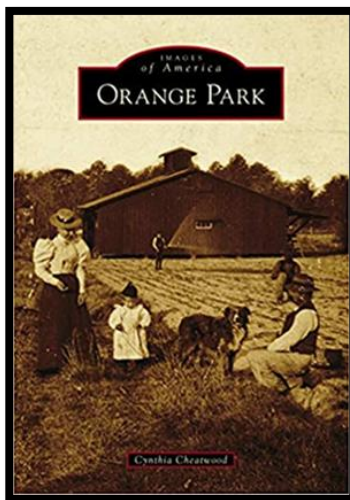
Looking for somewhere to explore or something to do in Clay County? Visit the Explore Clay website, [Explore Clay County - Small Towns, Big Passions](#), for plenty of suggestions.

One of the activities is a tour of historic buildings in Orange Park. This driving tour takes you to 23 historical structures that hold positions of prominence in Orange Park's history and continue to serve today. *Please remember most locations are private residences and should be viewed from the street.*

To access the tour visit, download the Explore Clay mobile app from the Explore Clay website or by clicking: [Clay County - Mobile App](#). Once you have the app downloaded, search for the tour then dive into the rich history of Orange Park.

Images of America: Orange Park

Images of America: Orange Park, authored by Historical Society President, Cynthia Cheatwood, is a wonderful way to learn about the history of Orange Park. This book shares the history of our town through archival photographs and stories collected from a variety of sources. The cost of the book is \$20 for members of our Society, \$25 for non-members and \$27 for online orders.



Clarke House Tours

The Clarke House will be open to the public for tours on Sunday afternoon, May 11 from 2 PM to 4 PM. The Clarke House, built in 1912, served as the family home for William and Carrie Clarke for many years. It features hardwood floors, plastered walls and ceilings and large, spacious rooms with many windows for good ventilation. It was a comfortable home and the Clarke family shared many happy memories there. Stop by for a visit and make some memories of your own and feel free to share recollections that the house inspires.



Look For Us 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](#)
- [Keystone Heights Heritage Commission](#)
- [Clay County Archives](#)

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