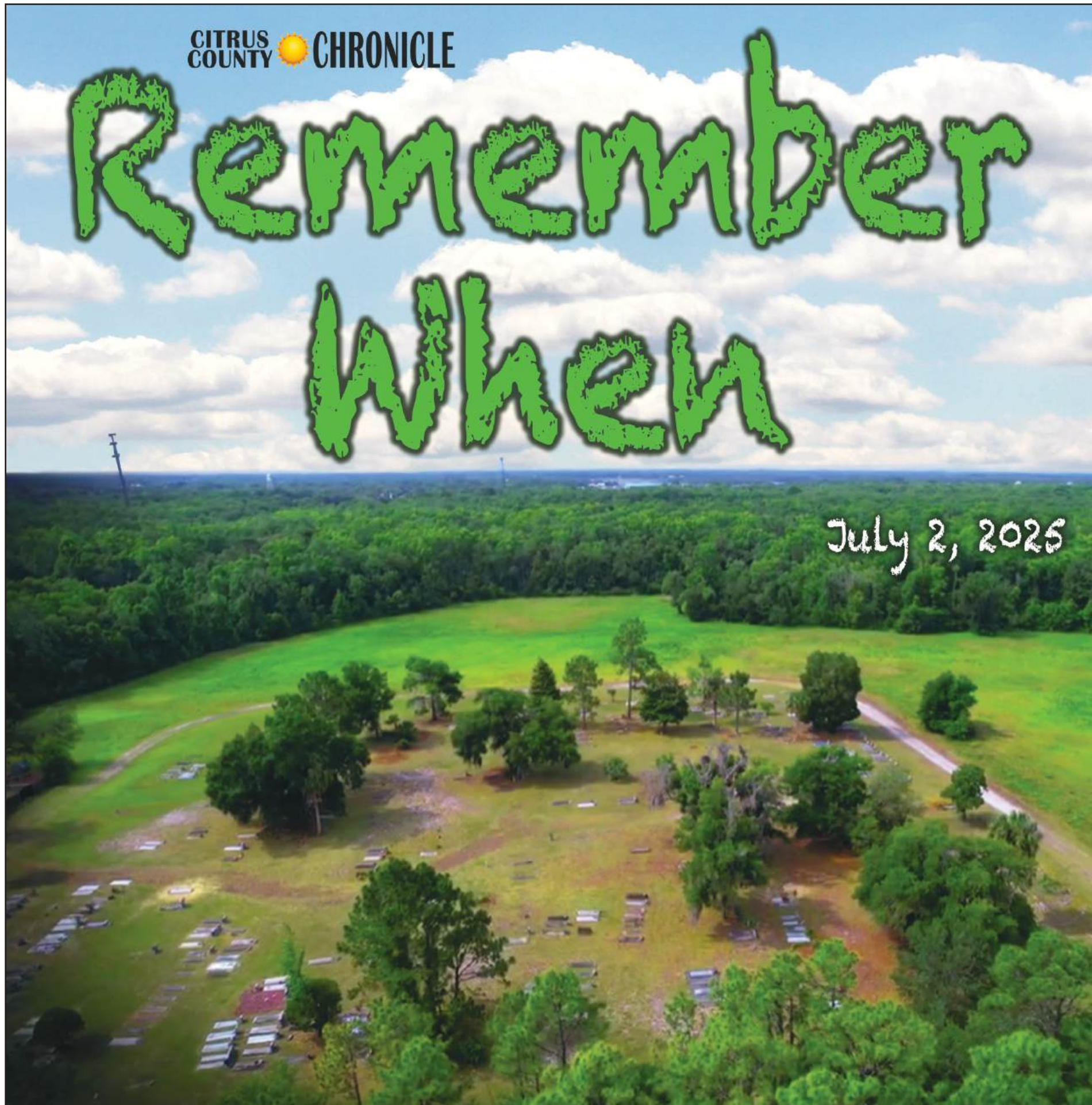


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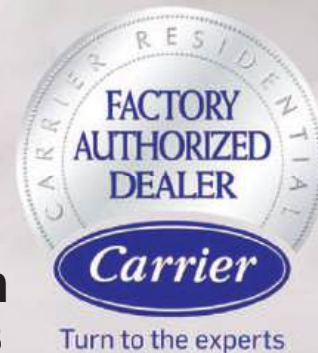
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What's Inside

Hidden in plain sight G6

Notable Military Personnel G9

Beneath the soil: A tapestry of lives at Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery..... G10

Education G10

Community..... G10

Business..... G11

Healthcare G12

Government G12

Funeral programs for Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery..... G13

Reviving sacred ground: Community efforts underway to restore Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery..... G23



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Hidden in plain sight

By **CINDY CONNOLLY**

Just outside Crystal River city limits, off Citrus Avenue, lies a Black cemetery rich in history with stories and lessons just waiting to be unearthed. Because of segregation, cemeteries were divided racially, and Blacks were not authorized to be buried within the city limits. Crystal Memorial Gardens is still an active cemetery and continues to serve as a final place of rest.

Many of Citrus County’s founding family members, instrumental in its early development as well as those who fought for equal rights, the right to vote and access to education, are

buried in Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Citrus County experienced a significant population increase. This increase was due to the phosphate boom and impacted the lives of Black Americans offering opportunities as well as challenges within a racially segregated society. For nearly 100 years, Citrus County was made up of less than 7,000 people and a quarter to a third of them were Black. Currently, the Black population in Citrus County is just over 3 percent.

Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church in Crystal River was founded on Oct. 4, 1884, recognized as the oldest Black church in Crystal River

and the second oldest church in Citrus County. The church originally owned Crystal Memorial Gardens, a cemetery serving the community. The church deeded the cemetery to the community in 1976, and a community-based board of directors was established to operate it and is still in place today.

Mrs. Annie M. McCray was born Jan. 22, 1922, in Crystal River to the late Ella and Reuben Jackson. She graduated high school from Howard Academy in Ocala because there was no Black high school in Citrus County. Her mother washed laundry for \$1

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HIDDEN

From page G6

per basket to send her there. After high school, she worked for the Fermans (of Ferman Chevrolet) as a domestic.

McCray had her own home built when she was just 18, which was unheard of at that time. At the age of 22, she was awarded the Amos Lewis Scholarship which enabled her to attend and graduate from Florida A&M University in Tallahassee with a bachelor's degree in sociology, summa cum laude. She later earned a master's degree in education from Stetson University. After graduating, she returned to Crystal River and began teaching at George Washington Carver School, the local school for Blacks

during the times of segregation. She taught there until integration, where she worked at the newly integrated Crystal River Primary School from 1969-95.

McCray was a lifelong member of Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church and was the clerk of the church for over 50 years. Because there was no written history of Black Americans in Citrus County, she produced and saved many funeral programs of people interred at Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery as an official record of their lives. When McCray died Jan. 31, 2010, her granddaughter, Andrea K. McCray took the reins and became the "keeper of the records."

The cemetery consists of two parcels of land which total over five acres. There are over 540 known gravesites and 20 of them are currently sunken. The oldest headstone is Charlie Horn Watkins (29 July 1828 – 27 April 1890). The oldest dated headstone in the cemetery is Luy Horton (1818 – 1919). A section of the cemetery houses the Brooks family.

Clarence Brooks (1916 – 2002) handcrafted several headstones in his shed for his family members. These headstones have a unique cement and pebble look and are hand-etched with names. At least two Civil War veterans were laid to rest in this cemetery, Wash Dock (1848 – 1928) and Charles Wayes (1836 – 1921).

In April 2023, a nonprofit organization, Friends of Crystal Gardens Inc., was created to preserve and maintain the cemetery. Andrea K. McCray is the president of that organization and is dedicated to educating the community about the people buried there.

"It all starts with the community. This cemetery is filled with peace, hope, grace, and love. I want the legacy to live forever," said McCray. Their mission is "to preserve, beautify, and advocate for the historic Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery, located in Crystal River, Florida. We also work to restore dignity and honor to those in-

terred there who were forgotten and ensure a peaceful resting place that memorializes the departed and honors their families in our community for generations to come."

There are volunteers that come out and clean the cemetery grounds. Mowing, trimming and general weeding are just a small part of the big picture. The cemetery has many challenges, including floodwater mitigation. Less than two years ago, Hurricane Idalia hit the community hard, and a body was lifted from its grave in the floodwaters. Those remains have been buried in another area of the cemetery that is better elevated.

Some of the upcoming projects the Friends of Crystal Gardens have identified are:

- Cemetery land grading (flood mitigation)
- Ground penetrating radar and software to document sunken/unmarked grave sites
- Document gravesites and create a cemetery plot map
- Headstone repair/restoration process
- Florida historical marker installation

■ National historical market installation

■ Map/locator directory area with walkway/patio

■ Cemetery arch restoration

■ Perimeter fence and security gate

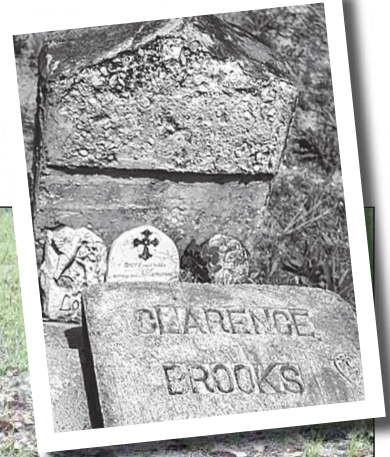
■ Pave roads (all around perimeter)

■ Mounted benches with cement foundation (powder-coated aluminum that withstands repeated use year-round)

The Friends of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery Inc. is dedicated to restoring dignity and honor to those interred while providing a glimpse into the lives of early residents. They strive to preserve memories of the community and ensure the stories live on for generations. They are currently in the process of obtaining a Florida Historical Marker for the cemetery which will designate it as a historical cemetery.



ANNIE M. MCCRAY




Volunteers took a break while excavating a gravesite which was discovered after probing the ground at the Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery.


Cindy Connolly

Notable Military Personnel

Two Civil War Veterans

- Wash Dock (1848 - 1928)
- Charles Wayes (1836 - 1921)





Carl Henry Joyner

Vietnam War Gold Star Veteran

- Birthplace: Crystal River, Florida
- Birth Date: 13 January 1943
- Casualty Date: 24 March 1966
- War: Vietnam War
- Service Branch: Army
- Rank: Sergeant
- Specialty: Light Weapons Infantry
- Unit: 1st Infantry Division 1st Battalion 26th Infantry, A Company
- Casualty Type: Died through hostile action small arms fire
- Location: South Vietnam, Quang Ngai province
- Notable Awards: Purple Heart

Carl is honored on the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington DC. His name is inscribed at VVM Wall, Panel 06e, Line 44



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Beneath the soil: A tapestry of lives at Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery

By CINDY CONNOLLY

Hidden down a narrow limerock road just outside the Crystal River city limits, Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery maintains a permanent spot in the community's history. This cemetery, once known as the Crystal River African American Memorial Gardens, is the final resting place of some notable members of the Black community, most of whom lived during a time of segregation – overcoming diversity to achieve the greater good.

EDUCATION:

Anna Copeland Russell

May 1, 1877 – March 4, 1970

Anna Copeland Russell was born to slave parents and began teaching in Marion County at the age of thirteen. She was committed to educating children in her community. She took a 3.5-mile horse and buggy ride to Crystal River and a six-mile walk, one way, almost daily to Rock Crusher to teach children in her care.

Russell's descendants are the deeply rooted Copelands of Crystal River. Her son, Frederick Copeland (deceased) has a public park in Crystal River named in his honor. Copeland's wife, Marjorie, was the first Black city council woman in the City of Crystal River. She was a descendant of the McKinnon family of Crystal River.

Annie M. Jackson McCray

Jan. 20, 1922 – Jan. 31, 2010

Annie M. Jackson McCray graduated from Howard Academy in Ocala. Five years after high school, she received an Amos Lewis Scholarship that paved her way to study at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee. She also earned a master's degree from Stetson University. She returned to Citrus County to teach at George Washington Carver School, the local

school for Black Americans during segregation. She was one of the first teachers to integrate public schools in Citrus County. She taught for 44 consecutive years. By the time she retired, it was said that she had taught a third of the children on the west side of the county.

William Levy Robinson Jr.

March 4, 1933 – Jan. 1, 2022

William Levy Robinson, or Junior as he was affectionately called, was born in Webster. He attended All-Black Mills High School, graduating as a salutatorian in this class in 1951. He went on to study agriculture at Florida A&M University. His education was interrupted by a two-year tour of duty in the US Army from 1954 to 1956. Upon his discharge from the service, he continued his college education and received his Bachelor of Science Degree from FAMU (Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University). Pursuing graduate studies at both FAMU and the University of Florida, he received his Master of Education Degree in administration and supervision.

Robinson held many administration and teaching positions throughout his career. He was principal of the Florida School for Boys, Okeechobee, 1958 – 1960; county extension agent for Jackson County, Marianna, 1960 – 1964; principal of George Washington Carver Junior High School, Crystal River, 1964 – 1969; county extension agent for Leon County, Tallahassee, 1969 – 1970; teacher of science and vocational agriculture at Citrus High School, Inverness, 1970 – 1971; supervisor of Instruction for Citrus County School Board, Inverness, 1971 – 1985; and director of personnel for the Citrus County School Board, 1985 – 1995.

Hazel Lee Balloon Sanders

Dec. 9, 1933 – Aug. 1, 1989

Mrs. Hazel Balloon Sanders was part of

the Balloon family of Balloon Street off Turkey Oak in Crystal River. Their homestead was part of "The Backwoods". She had three sons and a daughter. She was a schoolteacher at Inverness Primary School.

Euna Mable McKinnon Robinson

Nov. 16, 1933 – June 29, 2007

Euna Mable McKinnon Robinson received her public-school education in the Citrus County Schol System. After graduating high school in 1951, she attended Florida Agriculture and Mechanical College in Tallahassee and then transferred to Florida Normal and Industrial Memorial College in St. Augustine. Robinson's professional career began in Marianna, where she was an adult education teacher for the 1963 to 1964 school year. She returned to Crystal River and began a job as an elementary school teacher and primary school specialist. She retired from the Citrus County School System after 31 years of service.

in the "Backwoods" community located behind Crystal River Primary in-the-area-of Turkey Oak Drive and West Balloon Lane. She married James Bunch and they started their family of 11 children. She left a rich legacy of 61 grandchildren, 157 great-grandchildren, 53 great-great-grandchildren, and three great-great-great-grandchildren.

Beulah Brock Lockley

March 17, 1895 – March 19, 1991

Beulah Brock Lockley was born in Valdosta, GA, to John and Mary Brock. She was married to Will Lockley in 1912 and out of this union sixteen children were born. She became the neighborhood babysitter for all the working mothers and was affectionately known as "Ma Chank".

Ten children, as well as her husband all preceded her in death. Later she went on to marry Handy Jackson. She left the legacy of one son, five daughters, 39 grandchildren, 56 great-grandchildren, and three great-great-grandchildren.

Mary and Jack Wims

Mary and Jack Wims came to Crystal River from Red Level in 1943. Jack worked many jobs including gathering oysters, turpentine worker and a cedar mill worker, while Mary cleaned houses and shucked oysters. Jack learned the construction trade and in 1950 he built their first home, which still sits on the corner of NE Sixth Terrace and NE Eighth Avenue.

Jack began working for Florida Rock in Brooksville. He would haul rock to Crystal River to build Eighth Avenue, which was just a dirt path at the time. After leaving Florida Rock, he went back to construction, building more homes near his homestead. After building around 10 units, he suddenly died June 26, 1986, and Mary continued



WILLIAM LEVY ROBINSON



EUNA MABLE ROBINSON



ANNIE M. MCCRAY



MARY GRAY BUNCH



BEULAH BROCK LOCKLEY

COMMUNITY:

Mary Gray Bunch

May 5, 1886 – Oct. 5, 1987

Mary Gray Bunch was known by the community as "Grandma Bunch" or "Mamma". She is the original cake lady in Crystal River. She baked and cooked her entire life and even taught her children to cook at the tender young age of three. She lived

TAPESTRY

From page G10

to manage the homes until 1984.

Mary Frances Faison Watkins

Nov. 7, 1934 – March 23, 2023

Mary Frances Faison Watkins was the daughter of Wilbur and Henrietta Faison. She married Winzalo “Don” T. Watkins Sr., and they had three sons and three daughters. She became the first Minister of Music for the State of Florida for The Church of the Living God. She played the organ and piano for more than 50 years and also taught

MARY FRANCES WATKINS

music lessons to many students for only 50 cents. A loving and kind soul, Watkins was known for her term “kissy, kissy” or “kissy kiss”, which she would

say while she hugged and kissed you.

Winzalo Thomas “Don” Watkins Sr.

Nov. 17, 1931 – May 9, 2015

Winzalo Thomas “Don” Watkins Sr. Was one of fifteen children born to William and Ida Watkins. He attended public school in Citrus County and graduated as a salutorian from Booker T. Washington High School in Inverness. Employed by the Citrus County Board of Public Instruction, Deacon Watkins loved the Lord and gave his life to Christ.

WINZALO “DON” WATKINS

He was a faithful member of the Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church for over twenty years and was very active at the state level. A pillar in the community, Watkins helped establish and raise thousands of dollars for the building of the

George Washington Carver Community Center.

He learned the laws of the land to protect the innocent, trained in law enforcement, and became a deputy sheriff. He had the ability to diffuse tensions and served all races unconditionally. He was a father figure to many young men in the community and tried to help anyone he could.

BUSINESS:

Sylvester Wooden

April 25, 1891 – Dec. 20, 1975

Sylvester Wooden was born, one of five children, in Georgia to Wash and Alice Watson Wooden. When he was young, the family moved to Florida and took up residence in the Fairmount settlement (the area of Meadowcrest in Crystal River). He married Josephine Floyd and they had six children. After the passing of Josephine, he married Jessie Lee Ruth Wooden and they had one daughter, Willie Bea.

He was a loyal husband and father and a pioneer citizen of Crystal River who loved and honored God by living at peace with his fellowman.

Jessie Lee Ruth Wooden

June 24, 1905 – Dec. 24, 1991

Jessie Lee Ruth Wooden was married to



Sylvester Wooden and had one daughter, Willie Bea. She was the lunchroom cook at the George Washington Carver School for 16 years and drove a powder blue 1940s Studebaker. Every time she left, she would say

JESSIE LEE RUTH WOODEN

with a smile, “don’t let anyone give you a wooden nickel”.

Oscar “O.H.” Hopkins

March 11, 1921 – April 23, 2004

Oscar “O.H.” Hopkins was born in Crystal River to Oscar Hopkins, Sr. And Pinkey Mack Hopkins. He married Hazel L. Williams, and they raised nine children together. He served in the US Army with the

See TAPESTRY, page G12

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TAPESTRY

From page G11

827th Tank Destroyer Unit in Camp Hood, TX. After serving in World War II, he was honorably discharged and returned home.



OSCAR "O.H." HOPKINS

He was self-employed in many business ventures. Among those were operating a restaurant, and operating a gas station. He was also a logging contractor who cleared timber for various developments throughout the county, such as the site for Seven Rivers Community Hospital (which is now Tampa General North – Crystal River), Florida Power Nuclear Plant, and the Crystal River Mall. He discovered the now historical Indian mounds at Crystal River Archaeological State Park.

HEALTHCARE:

Annie L. Sellers Smith

Aug. 4, 1889 – March 5, 1973

Annie L. Sellers Smith was born in Jasper and was the only child of Mr. And Mrs. Mose Sellers. In 1903 she married Chamble Smith at Six Mile Still, near Dunnellon. They had 13 children and moved to Crystal River. For sixty years, she served as a midwife, and for the last 10 years of that, she was registered with the Florida State Board of Health. She left a rich legacy with 46 grandchildren, 76 great-grandchildren, and 12 great-great-grandchildren.



ANNIE L. SELLERS SMITH

Gladys Henry Nixon

April 6, 1913 – April 1, 1988

Gladys Henry Nixon, one of four children born to George F. Henry and Agnes Taylor Henry in Tampa. She attended Hillsborough Public School and Bethune Cookman College in Daytona Beach. She later established her residence in Crystal River. She worked several years as a domestic before training in practical nursing and receiving her nursing assistant certificate in Dade City. She was hired

at the Citrus County Health Department and continued there until her retirement in 1984.

GOVERNMENT:

Claude Brooks Sr.

April 15, 1917 – Nov. 25, 1987

Claude Brooks Sr. was born in Citronelle, one of several children born to the union of John Marshall Brooks and Isabella Joyner Brooks. He enlisted in the Army during World War II and shortly after he was dispatched overseas and promoted to corporal. After his tour, he returned to Crystal River and married Eva Mae Floyd in December 1945. They established a home and added 10 children to their family. He was employed by the Citrus County School Board as a maintenance engineer. Brooks was the first Black elected to the City Council of Crystal River, where he gave 16 years of credible service.

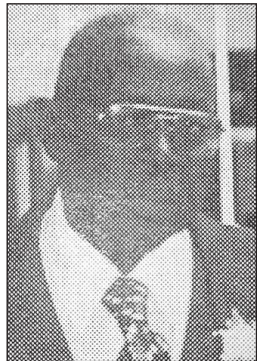


CLAUDE BROOKS SR.

William Wesley Skylark

June 10, 1912 – July 13, 1999

William Wesley Skylark was one of four children born to the union of Mr. And Mrs. William Reston Skylark in Wilcox. He was thirteen when his mother, Delia Adams established residence, along with her other children, in an area in Crystal River known as Old Mill Quarters. After serving in World War II, he returned home to Crystal River. Skylark went to a law enforcement training school in New York City. He decided to return to Crystal River for police work, thinking it would be safer in the smaller city. He was the first black police officer on the Crystal River Police Department when he joined the force in 1965. On March 27, 1968, Deacon Skylark married Ms. Irene McKinnon. Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery serves as a final resting place for momentous citizens who shaped the history of Crystal River and Citrus County. Their stories, some untold, offer insights into our history and inspire us to celebrate the impact they had on our community.



WILLIAM WESLEY SKYLARK



Cindy Connolly

Euna M. and William L. Robinson are buried side-by-side with one headstone.



Cindy Connolly

ABOVE LEFT: Mary Gray lived almost 100 years. ABOVE RIGHT: Mary H. and Jack L. Wims have side-by-side plots with separate headstones with a connecting stone in the center that bears their last name.



Winzalo Thomas and Mary Frances Watkins are buried side-by-side with one headstone. LEFT: William W. Skylark, an army vet from World War II, is interred at Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery.

Cindy Connolly


Funeral Programs for Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery

On the next few pages are some of the funeral programs that have been saved throughout the years of people interred at Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Crystal River

Funeral Services

OF THE

Late, Rev. George Freeman Lonon



TO BE HELD AT

Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church

Crystal River, Florida

Rev. G. W. Dobson, Pastor

Wednesday, December 21, 1949

1:30 P. M.

Printed By The Florida Watchman Press, Ocala

Funeral Services of the Late, Rev. George Freeman Lonon:

Wednesday, Dec. 21, 1949, at 1:30 p.m.

Active pallbearers: Rev. A. H. Howell, Rev. J. C. Bell, Rev. H. P. James, Rev. M. D. Brown, Rev. W. B. Burney, Rev. G. Cox, Rev. B. C. Clinton, Rev. I. Cox, Rev. J. C. Wiley, Rev. L. A. Latimore, Rev. A. Bell, and Rev. B. W. Griffin

Honorary pallbearers: Rev. J. Legree, Rev. C. S. Scott, Rev. R. D. Calvin, Rev. W. D. Argrett, Rev. J. W. Rhodes, Rev. W. M. Cook, Rev. R. Samuels, Rev. H. W. Lott, Rev. C. Croskey, Rev. H. Lewis, Rev. W. M. Green, Rev. R. L. Moon, Rev. J. R. Lake, Rev. H. W. Hart, Rev. S. P. Reese, and Rev. K. E. Rogers

FUNERAL SERVICES

FOR THE LATE

BROTHER ALEC MOORE

1914

1967



Sunday, December 17, 1967 at 2:00 P. M.

Mt. Olive Baptist Church

Crystal River, Florida

The Reverend James Brooks, Pastor

ELI WHITE FUNERAL HOME, Morticians

Printed By THE FLORIDA WATCHMAN, Ocala

Funeral Services for the Late Brother Alec Moore:

Sunday, Dec. 17, 1967, at 2:00 p.m.

Honorary paullbearers: Trustees of Mt. Olive Baptist Church

Active pallbearers: Brother Jack Wims and Brother Leo Cox


Survivors are: a devoted wife, Mrs. Sara Moore; a son, Daniel; two daughters, Mrs. Vernell Callahan and Miss Geneva Moore; one grandson; one sister, Mrs. Hattie Cogdell; four brothers, Henry, Frank, Lewis and Roy Moore; a mother-in-law, Mrs. Janie Bell Monroe; three brothers-in-law; four sisters-in-law; one son-in-law; several nieces and nephews; other relatives; and many sorrowing friends.

1887

1966

FUNERAL SERVICES

FOR THE LATE



BROTHER WESLEY JOHNSON

Sunday, November 27, 1966 at 1:00 P. M.

Church of The Living God

Crystal River, Florida

Elder S. Green, Pastor

Elder Jesse Williams, Officiating

ELI WHITE FUNERAL HOME, Morticians

Printed By THE FLORIDA WATCHMAN PRESS, Ocala

Funeral Services for the Late Brother Wesley Johnson:

Sunday, Nov. 27, 1966, at 1:00 p.m.

Active pallbearers: Masonic Lodge No. 156

Honorary Paullbearers: Deacon Rogers McCoy, Deacon Amos Bealyer, Brother Ernest Brown, and Mr. Sylvester Wooden




Funeral Programs for Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery

On the next few pages are some of the funeral programs that have been saved throughout the years of people interred at Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Crystal River

FUNERAL SERVICES

FOR THE LATE



SISTER DORA GAMBLE ROBINSON

Deceased — July 22, 1970

Sunday, August 2 1970 at 2:00 P. M.

Funeral To Be Held
AT

Bethel A. M. E. Church
Crystal River, Florida
Reverend Charles Brown, Pastor

ELI WHITE FUNERAL HOME — In Charge

Printed By THE FLORIDA WATCHMAN, Ocala

**Funeral Services for the late
Sister Dora Gamble Robinson:**

Sunday, Aug. 2, 1970, at 2:00 p.m.


Honorary pallbearers: Stewards and Stewardesses of Bethel A. M. E. Church

Active pallbearers: Simmie Tims, Jack Wims, William Skylark, and Louis Moore

Survivors are: two daughters, the Mrs. Florence Morgan, San Diego, California and Mrs. Earlene Simonton, Crystal River, Fla.; three granddaughters, Mrs. Alfronia Johnson, Ocala, Fla.; Mrs. Joyce James, and Mrs. Norvella; five great-great-grandchildren, and many other cousins, other relatives and friends.

EULOGISTIC SERVICE

FOR THE LATE



SISTER JANIE PATTERSON

Sunday, December 26, 1971 – 11:00 A. M.

Bethel A. M. E. Church
Crystal River, Florida
Reverend Charles Brown, Pastor

WHITE'S FUNERAL HOME — Charge

Printed By THE FLORIDA WATCHMAN — Ocala


**Eulogistic Service for the late
Sister Janie Patterson:**

Sunday, Dec. 26, 1971, at 11:00 a.m.

She leaves to mourn her passing, two sons, the Reverend Wesley Patterson and Mr. Leroy Patterson; one adopted daughter, Mrs. Marietta; one stepdaughter, Mrs. Nona Chambers; one sister, Mrs. Lonzie Collins; one aunt, Mrs. Caroline Perry; one daughter-in-law, Mrs. Loretha Paterson; one son-in-law, Mr. Will Chambers; two sisters-in-law, Mrs. Mamie Lewis and Mrs. Mandy Grom; nine grandchildren, and a host of nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

FUNERAL SERVICES

FOR



SISTER RUBY DORITY

Sunday, February 13, 1972 – 3:00 P. M.

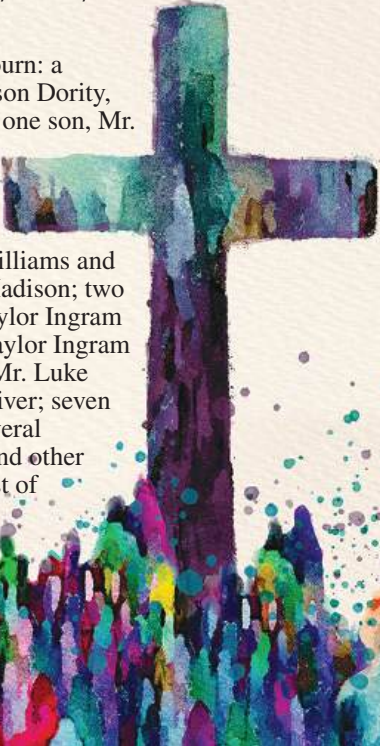
Mt. Olive Baptist Church
Crystal River, Florida
Reverend James Brooks, Pastor

Printed By THE FLORIDA WATCHMAN — Ocala

Funeral Services for Sister Ruby Dority:

**Sunday, Feb. 13, 1972,
at 3 p.m.**

She leaves to mourn: a husband, Mr. Watson Dority, Clermon, Florida; one son, Mr. Walter Edwards, Jr., St. Petersburg; two sisters, Mesdames Ducky Virginia Williams and Gertide Joseph, Madison; two brothers, Elder Taylor Ingram and wife, Sister Taylor Ingram of High Springs; Mr. Luke Ingram, Crystal River; seven grandchildren; several nieces, nephews and other relatives and a host of sorrowing friends.



Funeral Programs for Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery

On the next few pages are some of the funeral programs that have been saved throughout the years of people interred at Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Crystal River

Funeral Services for the late Sister Annie L. Smith

Sunday, March 11, 1973, at 2:30 p.m.

Survivors are: three beloved daughters, Mrs. Viney Newsome, Mrs. Annie L. Daniels of Ocala, Florida, and Mrs. Olive Hicks and husband Granville Hicks of Tarpon Springs, Florida;

five devoted sons: Mr. Jimmy Smith and wife Marie, Ocala; Rev. James Smith and wife, Sarah, Crystal River; Mr. Benjamin Smith and wife, Doretha; Mr. C. H. Smith and wife Willie Pearl, all of Ocala; and Mr. Jesse Smith and wife Helen, Crystal River; a step son, Mr. Oscar O. Jackson and wife, Mozella, Tampa; a stepdaughter, Mrs. Annie M. McCray, Crystal River; 46 grandchildren, 76 great-grandchildren; 12 great-great-grandchildren; an aunt, Mrs. Susis James, Miami; a daughter-in-law, Mrs. Emma Smith; a host of nieces and nephews and many sorrowing friends.

FUNERAL SERVICES

FOR THE LATE



SISTER ANNIE L. SMITH

Sunday, March 11, 1973 - 2:30 P. M.

Mt. Olive Baptist Church
Crystal River, Florida
Reverend James Brooks, Pastor

Interment — Crystal Memorial Gardens
Arrangements — ELI WHITE FUNERAL HOME
Printed By THE FLORIDA WATCHMAN, Ocala



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(727) 862-8571

Homosassa
8375 South Suncoast Blvd.,
Homosassa, FL 34446
(352) 587-4155

Land O' Lakes
19439 Shumard Oak Drive, #101,
Land O' Lakes, FL 34638
(813) 875-7900

Inverness
2220 Hwy 44 W,
Inverness, FL 34453
(352) 419-4949

Spring Hill
8403 Balm Street,
Spring Hill, FL 34607
(352) 340-5936

Funeral Programs for Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery

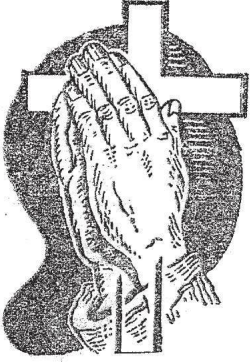
On the next few pages are some of the funeral programs that have been saved throughout the years of people interred at Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Crystal River

MEMORIAL SERVICE

FOR

OATHER T BELCHER

18931975



Sunday, September 21, 1975
11:00 A. M.

AT THE

Church of Christ Written In Heaven

Crystal River, Florida

Elder T. C. James, Pastor

Printed By THE FLORIDA WATCHMAN — Ocala


Memorial Service for Oather T. Belcher

Sunday, Sept. 21, 1975, at 11:00 a.m.

Survivors are a devoted wife, Eliza Belcher; one son-in-law, Mr. Nehemiah Jenkins, Crystal River; three brothers, Pringle and wife, Bridgeport, Conn.; R. E. and wife and Howard and wife, Camden, New Jersey; two sisters, Mrs. Florence Anthony, Detroit, Michigan and Mrs. Ethel Joyner and husband Crimson, Brooklyn, New York; nine grandchildren, 32 great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren, other relatives and friends.

FUNERAL SERVICES

FOR THE LATE



July 41882December 151973

BROTHER DOCK MOODY HALL

Bethel A. M. E. Church

Crystal River, Florida

Reverend Charles Brown, Pastor

Sunday, December 23, 1973 at 2:00 P. M.

Funeral Services for the late Brother Dock Moody Hall

Sunday, Dec. 23, 1973, at 2 p.m.

Survivors: are a loving wife, Mrs. Bessie Hall; four sons, Jesse, Moody and Ernest of Crystal River and Horace, of West Palm Beach; a daughter, Mrs. Thelma Tyson and a foster daughter, Mrs. Louise Brooks, Crystal River; three daughters-in-law, Mrs. Dorothy Hall, wife of Ernest; Mrs. Louise Hall, wife of Moody and Mrs. Edith Hall, wife of Horace; two sons-in-law, Mr. Ed Lee Tyson, Crystal River and Mr. Paris Williams, St. Petersburg; 42 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren and five great-great-grandchildren and a host of other relatives and friends.

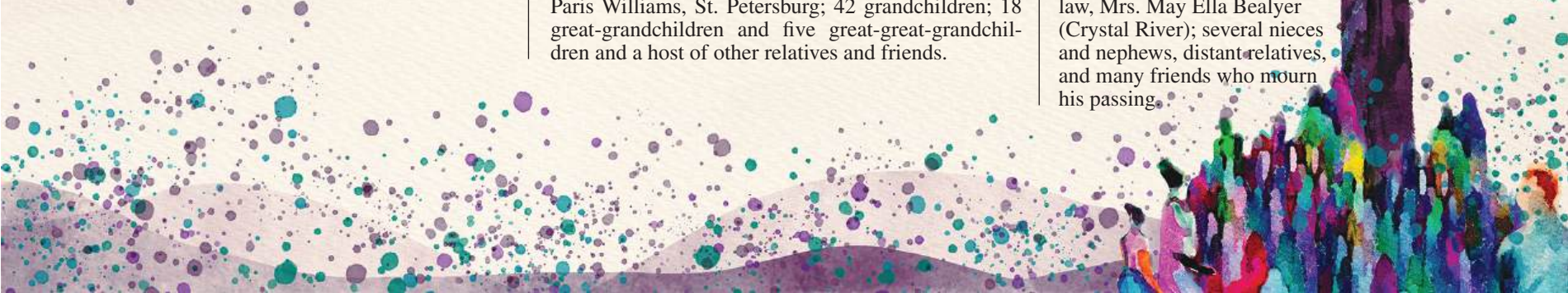
Sylvester Wooden

1891 - 1975

Funeral Services for Sylvester Wooden

Saturday, Dec. 27, 1975

Survivors are as follows: a loving and devoted wife and mother, Mrs. Jessie L. Wooden; two sons, Mr. Felix Wooden and wife Julia (Rochester, N.Y.), Mr. Sylvester Wooden and wife Delia (Jenkinsville, S.C.); three daughters, Mrs. Arvella Cotten (Ocala), Mrs. Hattie Ward and Mrs. Willie B. Gamble and husband Eugene (Brooklyn, N.Y.); nine grandchildren (two of whom preceded the deceased) and seven great-grandchildren; one aunt, Mrs. Annie Roach (Tampa); two brothers-in-law, Mr. James Ruth and wife Lenora (Rochester, N.Y.), and Mr. Willie Floyd and wife Mamie (Crystal River); one sister-in-law, Mrs. May Ella Bealyer (Crystal River); one sister-in-law, Mrs. May Ella Bealyer (Crystal River); several nieces and nephews, distant relatives, and many friends who mourn his passing.



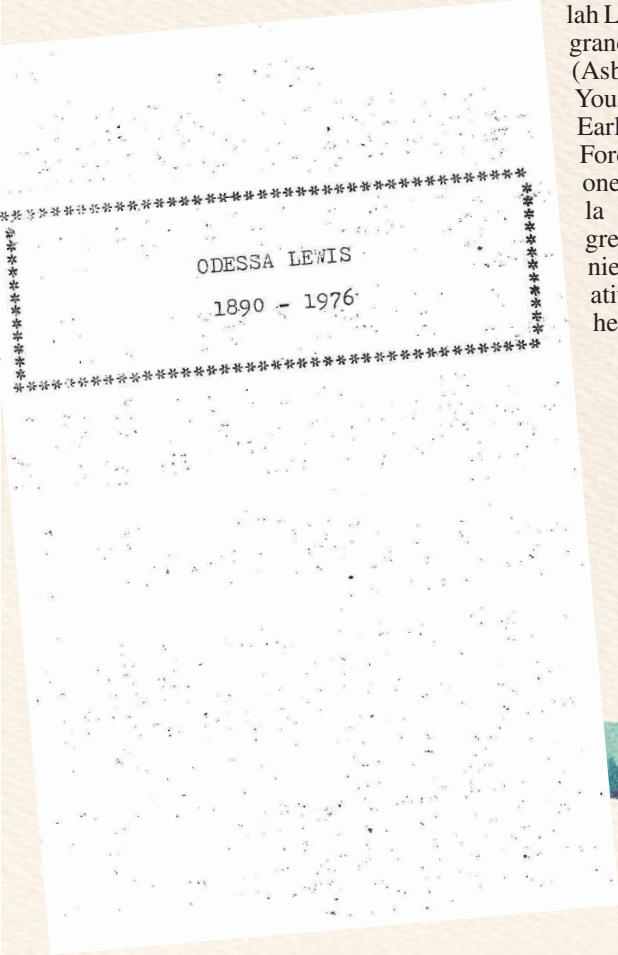
Funeral Programs for Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery

On the next few pages are some of the funeral programs that have been saved throughout the years of people interred at Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Crystal River

Funeral Services for Odessa Lewis Saturday, Jan. 24, 1976

Survivors are as follows: a loving and devoted daughter, Mrs. Ethel M. Coleman and husband, Charles (Cranbury, N.J.); four

sisters: Mrs. Lucille Dupree (Crystal River); Mrs. Annie Bradley (St. Petersburg); Mrs. Lillian Hamilton, a twin, (Lakeland), and Mrs. Beulah Lockley (Crystal River); three grandchildren; Eugene Young (Asbury Park, N.J.); Franklin Young (Hightown, N.J.); and Earl J. Coleman (Andrew Air Force Base (Washington, D.C.); one sister-in-law, Mrs. Estella Brock (Crystal River); ten great-grandchildren, several nieces, nephews and other relatives and friends who mourn her passing.



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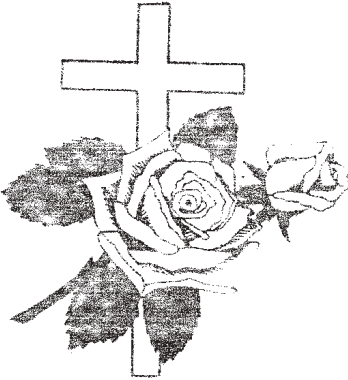


Funeral Programs for Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery

On the next few pages are some of the funeral programs that have been saved throughout the years of people interred at Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Crystal River

LOUELLA DUPREE


1884 1980



Funeral Services for Louella Dupree
Saturday, April 19, 1980, at 2 p.m.

Survivors include: three sisters, Mrs. Lillion Young, Lakland; Mrs. Annie Bradley, St. Petersburg; Mrs. Beulah Lockley, Crystal River; one brother, John Coffey, Dunnellon, and several nieces and nephews and many sorrowing friends.

Service of Memory




Elder
Mildred E. Milton
Who departed this life January 4, 1983

Funeral Held at
THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD,
THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH
Crystal River, Florida
SUNDAY, JANUARY 9, 1983
ELDER J. N. COLEMAN, PASTOR

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS ENTRUSTED TO
MILTON FUNERAL HOME
502 SOUTH FIFTH STREET — DADE CITY, FLORIDA 33525

**Service of Memory for
Elder Mildred E. Milton**
Sunday, Jan. 9, 1983

She leaves to mourn her passing, a devoted husband, Raleigh Milton; a son, Sherman Milton; a brother, Louis Scriven; two sisters-in-law, Ernestine Scriven and Bishop Helen M. Lewis; a brother-in-law, Luke D. Milton; four grandchildren; several nieces, nephews, cousins, and a host of other relatives and many sorrowing friends.



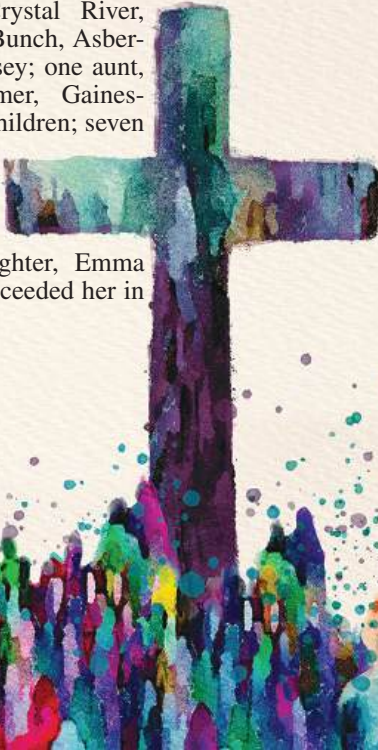
C
H
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N

DECEMBER 4 AUGUST 27
1898 1976

Funeral Services for Cherry Brown
Saturday, Sept. 4, 1976, at 2:00 p.m.

She leaves to mourn her passing: two sons, Mr. Ed-die Strappier, Crystal River, and Mr. Alonzo Bunch, Asber-ry Park, New Jersey; one aunt, Mrs. Essie Farmer, Gaines-ville; nine grandchildren; seven great-grandchil-dren; numerous other relatives and sorrowing friends; one daughter, Emma Lee Strappier, preceeded her in death.



Funeral Programs for Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery

On the next few pages are some of the funeral programs that have been saved throughout the years of people interred at Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Crystal River

Homegoing Service for Sister Rosa Hall
Sunday, July 22, 1985, at 2:00 p.m.

She leaves to mourn two sons, Charles Coleman and wife Mary, Samuel Coleman and future wife Helen Bunch, one aunt, Mrs. Lizzie Oliphant, all of Crystal River, three nieces, Mary Frances James and husband Stanley, Dora Mae Mitchell and husband R. B., of Dade City, Sandra Mobley and husband William, St. Petersburg, nephews, grandchildren, and a host of relatives and friends.

Homegoing Service
for
SISTER ROSA HALL

“AFTER GLOW”

I'd like the memory of me
to be a happy one.
I'd like to leave an afterglow
of smiles when life is done.

I'd like to leave an echo
whispering softly down the ways,
of happy times and laughing times
and bright and sunny days.

I'd like the tears of those who grieve,
to dry before the sun
of happy memories that I leave
when life is done.

Sunday, July 22, 1985
2:00 P.M.

CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD,
PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH
Crystal River, Florida
Elder John D. Watkins, Pastor

Funeral Arrangements Entrusted to: Sherman Milton
MILTON FUNERAL HOME
502 South Fifth Street - Dade City, Florida



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Funeral Programs for Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery

On the next few pages are some of the funeral programs that have been saved throughout the years of people interred at Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Crystal River

SERVICE FOR
DEACON JACK WIMS



CHURCH OF CHRIST WRITTEN IN HEAVEN
Crystal River, Florida

Sunday, June 29, 1986 at 2:00
Pastor: Elder Moses Williams

In Loving Memory
OF

Sister Gladys Henry Nixon
Sunday, April 10, 1988
2:00 P. M.
Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church
3rd Avenue & 4th Street
Crystal River, Florida
THE REVEREND JAMES BROOKS, Pastor - Officiating

In Loving Memory
of
Sister Ella Mae Savage

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1988
11:00 A.M.
MT. OLIVE MISSIONARY
BAPTIST CHURCH
3rd Avenue and 4th Street
Crystal River, Florida
THE REVEREND JAMES BROOKS,
OFFICIATING

Homegoing Serv
FOR

Sister Yura Washington Bryant
SATURDAY, MARCH 4, 1989
AT 12:00 NOON
Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church
Crystal River, Florida
3rd Avenue

Home Going for
Deacon Prother Jones Natteal Jr.

SERVICE
Saturday, June 4, 1994-1:00 p.m.
Church of the Living God
Crystal River
Minister L. Smith, Pastor
Rey J.D. Watkins, Officiating

Homegoing Services
for
BROTHER NEHEMIAH JENKINS

Saturday, May 19, 2000
11:00 A.M.
MT. OLIVE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
3rd Avenue and 4th Street
Crystal River, Florida
The Reverend Cecil Wilson, Pastor
Officiating

Homegoing Services
for
Richard "Tuna" Whaley

Homegoing Services
For

Sister Roma Jones Washington
Sunrise: 8/12/22 "Auntie" - Aunt Name Sunset: 5/5/09
Saturday, May 19, 2009 11:00 am
Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church
2105 N. Georgia Rd
Crystal River, FL
Rev. Ronald A. Sutton, Pastor
Officiating
Dr. Cecil Wilson
Eulogist
"Another New Serenity Service"

Funeral Services
for

Brother Daniel Jenkins
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1994
1:00 P.M.
BETHEL A.M.E. CHURCH
635 N.E. 3RD AVENUE
CRYSTAL RIVER, FLORIDA
THE REVEREND LOUIS LATIMER
PASTOR, OFFICIATING

Homegoing Services
for
RALEIGH MILTON

MR. LOUIE RICHARDSON
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1987
3:30 p.m.
CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD
Pillar And Ground of The Truth
Crystal River, Florida
Rev. LUKE D. MILTON, Pastor
Madam HELEN M. LEWIS, Bishop

In Loving Memory
ALPHA OMEGA
MAY 25, 1908 FEBRUARY 21, 1990



Funeral Programs for Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery

VICTORY CELEBRATION
In
MEMORIAM
Of
REVEREND
JAMES BROOKS, D.D.



*"But seek ye first the kingdom of God,
and his righteousness, and all these
things shall be added unto you."
St. Matthew 6 : 33*



"If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." (Job 14: 14)

DEACON JAMES MIZELL SR

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Funeral Programs for Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery

On the next few pages are some of the funeral programs that have been saved throughout the years of people interred at Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Crystal River

*Going Home Services
for the late
Sister Mary Gray*



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1987
11:00 A.M.

CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD
Crystal River, Florida

Reverend John D. Watkins,
Pastor


Funeral Arrangements Entrusted to: Sherman Milton
MILTON FUNERAL HOME
502 South 5th Street — Dade City, Florida 33525

Going Home Services for the late Sister Mary Gray

Saturday, Oct. 10, 1987, at 11:00 a.m.

She leaves to mourn: One son, Albert Bunch; seven daughters: Anna McKinney, Clearwater, Minnie White, Martha Brooks, Mary Brooks, Flora M. Brooks, Alberta Brooks, and Helen Bunch, all of Crystal River; two brothers: Mr. and Mrs. Edward White and Mr. and Mrs. Herbert White of Detroit, Michigan; three son-in-laws; one sister-in-law, Alberta White of San Antonio; 61 grandchildren; 157 great-grandchildren; 53 great-great grandchildren; three great-great-great grandchildren, and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and other sorrowing friends.

Homegoing Services
for



Deacon William W. Skylark

Saturday, July 17, 1999
11:00 A.M.

Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church
3rd Avenue and 4th Street
Crystal River, Florida

The Reverend Cecil Wilson, Pastor
Officiating


William W. Skylark

**Saturday, July 17,
1999, at 11:00 a.m.**

He is survived by two daughters: Mrs. Frankie J. Addison and husband, Joe, Ms. Vicky Edwards, one son, Mr. Walter Edwards and wife Jaunita, all of Crystal River; 10 grandchildren: Mrs. Wynnlyn Harper, Mrs. Minnie B. Clark, Ernest Hall, Dwane Wright, Kesia Wright, Felicia Bellamy, Lavelle Bellamy and Isaac Edward. A great number of great grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and other relatives. Also Mrs. Mayola Floyd, Crystal River, Mrs. Maggie Matthews of Ft. Lauderdale; and a dear friend, Mrs. Sarah Boles, Naples.

HOMEGOING SERVICES
FOR

MOTHER ERMA LEE FAISON



From Earth
May 11, 1909

To Heaven
June 14, 2001

Saturday, June 23, 2001
11:00 A.M.
Crystal River, Florida

The Church of the Living God
The Pillar and Ground of the Truth

Elder John Weaver, Presiding

The Home Going Celebration For




DISTRICT MOTHER
Rosa Lee Cleveland
MAY 1, 1941 - SEPTEMBER 6, 2014

Saturday, September 13, 2014
2:00PM

Unity Church of Christ Written In Heaven
319 Northeast 7th Ave.
Crystal River, Florida.

Elder Jimmy Grisley, Pastor
Elder Theodore Hopkins, Presiding

*Homegoing Celebration
Mrs. Annie M. McCray*



Sunrise:
January 20, 1922

Sunset:
January 31, 2010

Saturday, February 6, 2010
11:00 am

Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church
2105 N. Georgia Rd., Crystal River, FL

Rev. Ronald Sutton, Pastor

Homegoing Celebration Mrs. Annie M. McCray

**Saturday, February 6,
2010, at 11:00 a.m.**

Her survivors include her son, Charles W. McCray, grandchildren, Tonjia Bunch, Andrea Katrice McCray, Charles W. McCray II, Ann Marie McCray, Rachel McCray, Joshua McCray, Dwann McCray and Christopher McCray, and six great-grandchildren, Briana Washington, Ernest Jones III, Jonathan Washington, Andre Rowe, Augiana Green, and Mason Holly.



Reviving sacred ground: Community efforts underway to restore Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery

By BONNIE BUNN

At the heart of a people-powered movement lies the historic Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery, a sacred resting place, a living storybook of generations past, and now, the focus of a growing movement to preserve, protect, and honor its legacy.

Thanks to the leadership of Andrea McCray, President & CEO of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery, and the nonprofit Friends of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery, revitalization is well underway. The multi-phase project seeks not only to clean and care for the grounds but to restore dignity to those interred—especially the many whose graves have sunken or gone undocumented.

Phase I: Restoration with purpose

“Right now, we’re focused on the basics: documentation, preservation, and planning,” McCray explains. “There are no official records, so one of our first goals is to document all existing burials and create a detailed map.” To date, over 540 gravesites have been identified across the two parcels of land totaling more than five acres, including 20 sunken graves. Probing and scanning

of the burial grounds continues as volunteers work to determine the full scope of the site and the availability of usable space.

The cemetery faces serious environmental challenges. Flooding has caused crypts to shift, graves to sink, and, in some extreme cases, remains to rise from the ground.

McCray says the organization has not yet secured an engineer, but hopes to use potential state funding to hire one who can develop a plan to address the cemetery’s ongoing flood issues. A \$350,000 appropriation request is currently under consideration in the 2025-2026 budget.

In addition, Phase I plans to install a Florida Historical Marker, seek National Historic Place designation, and launch an online directory housing names, dates, obituaries, and other archival information.

Young hands, lasting impact

Much of the progress has been made possible through community engagement, including the passion and energy of local youth. Crystal River High School’s Interact and Key Clubs, along with Boy Scout Troop #457, have played a vital role in cleanups, documentation, and even the cemetery’s first official headstone cleaning project, using

an approved biological solution in October 2024.

“The students are instrumental,” McCray says. “They’ve helped lead the way in how we honor those buried here—not just by cleaning and documenting, but by showing up, learning, and caring.”

A legacy to uphold

Anyone interested in helping is encouraged to volunteer—no club membership or affiliation required. Community Clean Ups are held three to four times a year, and proceeds from the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Gala, launched in January 2024, directly supports the cemetery’s ongoing restoration. The first gala raised nearly \$10,000.

“People can donate their time, their energy, or their resources,” McCray says. “This cemetery doesn’t have a designated groundskeeper. It’s cared for by the community, and that care is what keeps it sacred.”

In recent years, Friends of Crystal River Memorial Gardens Cemetery has made significant strides: completing boundary and topographic surveys, developing a strategic maintenance plan, hosting visioning meetings, and offering Memorial Day Veterans’

Remembrance Ceremonies in partnership with the Beverly Hills VFW.

The group also collaborated with the Citrus County Historical Society to help expand and preserve African American history within the region.

More than a cemetery

Defined by its age, unique architecture, and the notable individuals buried within, Crystal Memorial Gardens qualifies as a historic cemetery under state guidelines. But to McCray and the many volunteers by her side, it’s much more than just a label.

“I am blessed and humble to share their stories of love, life, and the lessons that they can no longer share,” McCray begins. “I am one of many that they left behind to carry the legacy forward, and that is an honor in its own right.”

Through community effort, careful planning, and a deep sense of reverence, the revitalization of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery is not just restoring a burial ground, it’s ensuring that the lives buried beneath its soil are remembered, respected, and never erased.

For more information or to get involved, visit www.friendsofcmgcemetery.com

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Philippians 2:4



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