

The Front Porch

Where The Tea is Sweet and the Talks Are Long

July/August 2024

**MADISON
COUNTY**

FLORIDA

RETREAT TO

Vintage

FLORIDA

Page 12

The Day Heritage Center

Perserving a Town's Stories

Page 32

Eleanor Hawkins

Recollections with the
Clerk of Court

Page 48


**GREENE
PUBLISHING,
INC.**



***We can Fix it
or Build it***



Team Gumbati focuses on the smallest of details in order to make sure your project is designed to meet your needs. We never forget how valuable your home is to you, and promise to deliver quality work, on time and within your budget!



Gumbati
Handyman & Plumbing
Services LLC

**Licensed Florida Plumbing Contractor
CFC1426759**

**Licensed Florida General Contractor
CGC1518029**



Follow Us

(850)519-0025

contactus@gumbatihandymanagementservices.com

www.gumbatihandymanagementservices.com



*Summer is here...
Badcock can help!*

Badcock
HOME FURNITURE
&more
SINCE 1904

Owner Andy Johnston

Branford
903 Suwannee Ave NW,
Branford FL 32008
(386) 935-3324
Manager Stephen Wells

Madison
464 Duval St,
Madison FL 32340
(850) 973-6000
Manager Mandy Whitaker

Monticello
405 S Jefferson St,
Monticello FL 32344
(850) 997-4323
Manager Rafiel Young

www.badcock.com

Walt's



Trucks



Fifth Generation (1967–1972)



Sixth Generation (1973–1979)



Seventh Generation (1980–1986)



Eighth Generation (1987–1991)



Ninth Generation (1992–1996)



Tenth Generation (1997–2003)



Eleventh Generation (2004–2008)



Twelfth Generation (2009–2014)



Thirteenth Generation (2015–2020)



2024 F-150

Walt's
— LIVE OAK FORD —

US Hwy 129 North, Live Oak, Fl.
(386) 362-1112
www.waltsliveoakford.com

contents

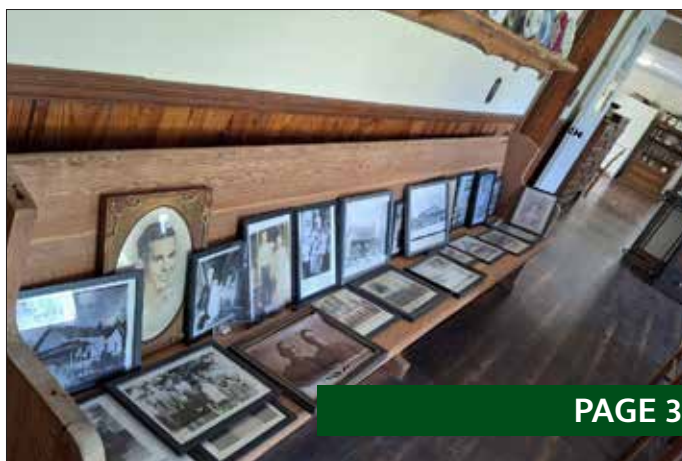
The Front Porch | July/Aug 2024



PAGE 12



PAGE 23



PAGE 32



PAGE 48

8 **SITTIN' ON THE PORCH**
Ed Gifford

Features

12 **COVER STORY**
Madison County Florida
Retreat to Vintage Florida

19 **What's Happening**
July/August 2024 Events

23 **Hampton Springs Hotel**
Happy Days

28 **David & Merry Ann Frisby**
Serving the Monticello Community

32 **The Day Heritage Center**
Preserving a Town's Stories

38 **Judge Aikens**
Honored to Serve

43 **Eric Muskgrove**
Sharing history through the Ages

48 **Eleanor Hawkins**
Recollections with the Clerk of Court

54 **Vernell Williams**
Golf passion Leads to Hall of Fame

The Front Porch

Where the tea is sweet and the talks are long

Established 2019
Vol. 5 Issue 6 • July/Aug 2024

The Front Porch
is published every other month at
1695 South SR 53
Madison, Fla. 32340

Published by



Publisher
Emerald Greene

General Manager
Cheltzie Holbrook

Editor
Laura Young

Staff Writers
Heather Ainsley
Hailey Heseltine
Kenzie James
Mickey Starling

Sales Representatives
Tiffany Ottey
Lauren Moser

Advertisement Design
Mark Estefan

Advertising & Subscriptions
(850) 973-4141

On the Web
www.greenepublishing.com
www.ecbpublishing.com
www.riverbendnews.org

Member of
Florida Press Association
Florida Magazine Association
and
Florida Newspaper Advertising and
Marketing Executives



Subscribe Today



Published six times a year *(every other month)*

* **\$25** *

Per year

Mail checks or money orders to:
Greene Publishing, Inc.
P.O. Drawer 772
Madison, Fla. 32341

For all credit card payments, call:
(850) 973-4141

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

Please note: If you are a subscriber to the
Madison County Carrier, Madison Enterprise-Recorder, Monticello News, Jefferson County Journal,
or Riverbend News, and you live in Madison, Jefferson, Taylor, Suwannee, Hamilton or Lafayette County,
you will automatically receive the magazine when published.

The Front Porch

Meet Our Staff



Emerald Greene
Publisher



Cheltsie Holbrook
General Manager



Laura Young
Editor



Mickey Starling
Staff Writer



Heather Ainsley
Staff Writer



Hailey Heseltine
Staff Writer



Kenzie James
Staff Writer



Mark Estefan
Graphic Designer



Lauren Moser
Sales Representative



Tiffany Ottey
Sales Representative

Ed Gifford

Story and Photography by Laura Young

For Ed Gifford, the military has provided a steadying cord throughout his life from day one to the present. He dubs himself an Air Force brat, born while his father was stationed in France in 1954. Because his mother is French, Gifford maintained a dual citizenship until he became a military man himself.

Mostly, he grew up in and around Akron, Ohio, where his family moved when he was less than a year old. As a youth, Gifford imagined himself following his father's footsteps into the Air Force, but due to eyesight requirements he turned to the Army instead. At the University of Akron, he received a Regular Army Commission in the Infantry through the ROTC program, earned a bachelor's degree in Marketing and met his wife Cheryl.

His eighteen years of active duty took them around the world, with peacetime postings to Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Germany, Qatar, Kuwait and Afghanistan as well as deployments to Panama, Honduras and Bahrain. During this time, he also earned a master's degree in Management, was an ROTC instructor at Penn State and attained the rank of Major. After the Berlin Wall came down and the Cold War ended, the United States military downsized its forces significantly, and this affected Gifford's career plans. Officers in his year group were given several voluntary separation incentive (VSI) options, and in 1992 Gifford made his choice, but he was really not ready to go.

For most of the next 13 years his resume reflects the difficulty that he, like many veterans, had finding satisfying civilian work and pay sufficient to support his family, which now included two young sons, James and John. In America's Rust Belt, the automotive and rubber industries were struggling through globalization, and times were hard. Gifford sold insurance for a time, managed a Taco Bell and then a Pizza Hut, and even held the position of Dean of Academics at a private technical college. He was a foreman for Delphi Packard Electrical and worked a stint at Coca Cola. Gifford says what got him through these turbulent, admittedly depressing, times was being a member of the U. S. Army Reserves, teaching in the Command and General Staff

College. Having this connection to the military gave him a continuity of purpose, ongoing training, camaraderie and the opportunity to rise to the rank of Lt. Colonel.

As Gifford's retirement from the reserves approached in 2007, he took a job at Crown Cork and Seal – the worldwide packaging giant – where he found work good enough all around to see him to civilian retirement in 2017. As James and John grew up and began their own lines of work, events were aligning to bring Ed and Cheryl down to North Florida. When James, who had become a highly specialized mechanic, took a job in Tallahassee, they liked what they saw on a visit and before long found a home for their retirement in Lloyd.

Nowadays you can find the Giffords enjoying life down a winding dirt road. Helpful arrows point the way at each fork in the oak-shaded lane, and neighbors' cows peer over the fence from their green pastures. In the Gifford's yard, Cheryl's 50 rose bushes stand bright with summer blooms, and their two dogs keep a watchful eye on everything. Through the porch lies a comfortable home filled with furniture that Ed has made in his wood shop.

He learned carpentry as a teenager when he started making picture frames for his dad, who had by that time become a full-time artist. With his grandmother and wife also artists, Ed has a well developed aesthetic sensibility that he expresses through woodworking. Planks of fine lumber lie stacked inside the edges of the Gifford's carport, ready to be shaped with care into strong, useful and beautiful belongings. Ed's last project was a cedar-lined chest for the master bedroom, which also has a headboard and dresser set crafted by him. Now he's working on a rifle rack, a link going back to his infantry days.

In other ways, too, Ed has kept connections with the military. Since moving to Jefferson County, he's become active in American Legion Post #49, and in 2022 was selected by the members to become their Commander. His years as a military officer and then in civilian management roles have made command second nature to him. Yet he's a relatively soft-spoken man, direct without being pushy, given to quiet hobbies. He dwells in a peaceful place and is happy, still, to be serving his community and his fellow veterans. ■



THANK YOU, FRIENDS, FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



PAID BY ALLISON TANT, DEMOCRAT, FOR STATE HOUSE, DISTRICT 9



- 60-bed Skilled Nursing Facility
- Private and Semi-Private rooms
- Homelike atmosphere
- Wi-Fi for wireless access
- Cable TV
- Salon Services

Designated outdoor smoking area
Courtyard with gazebo & gardening area

- Fishing pond with dock
- Menu selection for meals
- Daily individual & group activities indoor, outdoor & off-campus
- Courtesy transportation to & from medically necessary appointments

- Elegant Dining
- Chaplin & worship services

**2481 West US Hwy. 90
Madison, Fla. 32340
(850) 973-4880
www.madisonhealthandrehab.com**



Madison Health and Rehabilitation Center is a 60-bed skilled nursing facility with private and semi-private rooms. We are centrally located in the heart of Madison County and have provided quality care since 1985. Our dedicated teams of highly trained professionals focus solely on the needs of our residents. Each resident at our facility receives a well-defined individualized plan of care that caters to their needs. Short term or long term, our well trained therapists are here to assist the residents in achieving their goals. Our facility also offers outpatient therapy. The residents may enjoy visiting the beauty salon, spending the day fishing at our pond, relaxing at the gazebo in the beautiful, enclosed courtyard and much more. With quality care in a friendly and safe environment, our residents are able to enjoy themselves, while receiving the care they need.



Quality Focused Care, One Resident at a Time!



- Close to family & Friends
- Physician visits as needed
- Nursing: RN, LPN, CNA's
- Staffed above requirements with warm, friendly staff
- Plan of care meeting within 72 hours with resident and family (includes discharge planning)
- Registered Therapist for evaluation & treatments
- Restorative Nursing Program
- Wound Prevention Precautions
- Podiatry & mental health services provided on-site
- Resident council
- Medicaid application assistance
- Personal provider of choice

Serving Madison, South Georgia, Perry, Live Oak, Monticello and Tallahassee.

**Come visit our
Hardware Store!**
See our Complete Inventory for ALL
Your HUNTING & FISHING needs!

WAUKEENAH Fertilizer & Farm SUPPLY INC.

Fertilizer in Bag and Bulk
Custom Blending Liquid Nitrogen
Feed • Seed • Chemicals
Fencing Materials
Veterinary Supplies



9643 Waukeelah Hwy • Monticello, Fla. 32344

850-997-4460 • 850-997-4480

**100% CUSTOMER SATISFACTION
IS OUR GOAL!**

DUNHAM BODY SHOP

FOREIGN & DOMESTIC

Body & Paint Work

Frame Straightening

~ **FREE ESTIMATES** ~

INSURANCE WORK WELCOME

**11615 U.S. Hwy. 319 N.
Thomasville, Ga. 31757**

(Past Walmart, across the street from
Stallings Dodge Chrysler Jeep)

(229) 226-2077



Gulf Coast Lumber & Supply, Inc



Monticello

1400 S. Jefferson Street

Monticello, FL 32344

Phone: 850-997-2519

gulfcoastlumbermonticello@gmail.com

M-F 7AM-6PM

SAT: 7AM-5PM

Crawfordville

3361 Crawfordville Hwy,

Crawfordville, FL 32327

Phone: 850-926-5559

gulfcoastlumber@gmail.com

M-F 7AM-6PM

SAT 7:30AM-5PM

Woodville

9141 Woodville Hwy

Woodville, FL 32362

Phone: 850-421-5295

gulfcoastlumber@hotmail.com

M-F 6AM-6PM

SAT 6AM-5PM

Locally Owned & Operated for Over 45 Years!

MADISON COUNTY FLORIDA



Sponsored Content
Story by Heather Ainsley
and the Madison County Tourist
Development Council

Photographs Courtesy of Madison TDC
Madison County is often described as “one of Florida's best kept secrets,” as its rural location hides its attractive scenery and vibrant recreational venues from the outside world. There is much to see and do in Madison, and its quiet, small-town demeanor can make spending the day in this historic city feel like a nostalgic trip down memory lane.

A few miles off the interstate lies a detour to another era, one with a more relaxed pace and state of mind. Here, scenic, less-traveled country roads lead to small town Main Streets, crystal clear springs and serene, dreamy rivers. Pulling into Madison, Fla., it first appears you’ve reached a place that time has left alone. A celebrated courthouse surrounded by palms and moss-draped, oak-lined streets creates a picture-perfect image harkening back to



those collectible postcards of 70 years ago.

Unsurprisingly, you find yourself reminiscing about carefree vacations; when piling into the family station wagon meant heading to a place with ample time to relax, play and connect. This was the age before theme parks, when road trips were adventures in themselves filled with natural roadside attractions, local diners and

campgrounds featuring all sorts of laidback fun. Recreational pursuits included swimming, fishing, canoeing, biking, hiking, boating, water skiing and exploring unique historic sites along the way. Simple pleasures ruled and time wasn’t measured by how long you had to stand in line for the latest ride, but how long you stayed up on water skis or how many fish you caught in an afternoon. Those with an appreciation for this nostalgic time – and longing to recapture the charm, culture, memories and essence of a bygone era – will find a lot to love in Madison County.

Though it may not be the typical Florida vacation destination, Madison County’s unspoiled beauty, attractions and distinctive personality make it special in its own way. Its natural assets, historic significance and rural charm offer visitors a different glimpse and side of Florida that can’t be found in popular beach towns along the coast and conjures images of a time and place rarely found today. From its ancient



Statue of Ray Charles in Greenville

cypress trees and quiet parks to its abundance of freshwater fun, Madison County represents a stark, authentically charming contrast with Florida's more bustling urban areas. This truly is vintage Florida at its best.

Madison's historic downtown and neighborhood districts filled with Greek Revival, Federal-style and Victorian homes and buildings appear virtually untouched for more than a hundred years. Main Street's sophisticated antique stores, trendy boutiques, quaint shops and local cafés belie its small-town size. Nearby Four Freedoms Park is filled with compelling stories as an important player in our nation's history, and Lake Francis offers an inviting respite for kicking back a few blocks off the main square.

A few miles down the road in Greenville you'll find the birthplace and childhood home of soul music pioneer and icon, Ray Charles. Venturing north will bring you to Cherry Lake, a destination for water sports ranging

from fishing and boating to tubing and water skiing. Three campgrounds offering outdoor recreational activities, from swimming and golfing to family campfires, mean there's something to keep everyone entertained.

Follow rural backroads to a genuine, old-fashioned swimming hole, rated America's best, at Madison Blue Spring State Park, a first magnitude crystal-clear spring worthy of a trip itself. The Four Freedoms Trail, a rails-to-trails corridor lined with ancient oaks and pine, as well as the county's 100-Mile Loop Trail, offer cyclists some of the best scenic backdrops and views in the state. Additionally, the county's rolling fields and lush forests are a hunter's paradise.

This is truly the kind of place where you don't need a vacation to recover from your vacation. A visit to this unpretentious, unchanged part of Florida where the Withlacoochee and Suwannee rivers meet genuinely recaptures the nostalgia of vintage

Florida, a Florida many still long to experience. Fortunately, they can in Madison County.

When choosing a Florida destination, Madison County may not be an immediate choice for an uncertain vacationer. Many of the factors that come into play when choosing a relaxing location to visit are amenities, scenery, entertainment and the unique experiences offered there. These factors play a critical role in how effective a trip will be in helping to recharge and relax someone who is traveling. But if you've never visited a particular city or town before, how do you know what interesting features they offer? Well, that is where the Tourist Development Council (TDC) comes in. In Madison, the TDC is comprised of nine members, each a resident of Madison County. Each member serves a four year term, and can be re-appointed. All members are appointed by the local Board of County Commissioners, and work together



Ragans Family Campground

returning visitors to the area. The TDC is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the spending of that money in ways that encourage and promote tourism.

The Madison Chamber of Commerce works side by side with the TDC to promote local businesses within the community. While these two organizations are separate entities, they frequently work hand-in-hand with providing access to valuable resources, discounts and relationships to local businesses. This partnership also helps to increase tourism and revenue to Madison County.

The Tourist Development Council takes that relationship one step further, and advertises local entities to areas outside of the Chamber's reach, enticing visitors from out of county and even out of state to travel to those local, small-town businesses. This influx of tourism can do wonders to boost a local economy, as traveling visitors from out of the area often visit not just one business, but several local businesses during their stay, dining at restaurants and sometimes even patronizing local hotels and hospitality venues as well. This is largely beneficial to a rural community, as this helps to bring in revenue from outside of the county, boosting the local economy and helping to preserve the prosperity of

to carry out administrative functions involved with tourist development.

When you visit a small, rural town, and stay a night at the local bed and breakfast or go camping in the local campground, your payment to that facility is taxed, like with all monetary exchanges. That tax, often referred to as the "Heads in Beds" tax, is collected and reported to the state. The state then gives that tax money back to the county that it was collected in, with the stipulation that the money will be designated towards furthering tourism and continuing the cycle of bringing new visitors and



Madison RV and Golf Resort



Madison RV and Golf Resort

family-owned stores, boutiques, shops and more, enabling them to flourish.

This type of community enrichment isn't just all about business and making money, however. By increasing revenue to the county and by participating in successful community events, residents develop a deep connection to their community. By building memories and relationships that can be counted on year after year, the community grows strong. Children grow up and put down roots of their own, rather than moving away as soon as they get the chance. Having generations of families that have participated in local events and have frequented local businesses helps to develop a strong culture of togetherness within the community.

There are countless reasons to visit Madison County. Its rural location and small-town charm offer a significantly different pace than other Florida tourist destinations. The city of Madison is home to just under 3,000 residents, and the entire county is home to just over 18,000 residents that live in an area that is over 700 square miles in size. That may seem like a lot of people, but not when compared to Orlando, the home of popular tourist destinations like Disney and Universal Studios, which is home to more than 300,000 residents in the city alone.



Grumpy's Diner on Main

This means that Madison is a far less crowded destination than other popular cities in central Florida. And while it may not be home to giant, corporate resorts, Madison County has a lot of wholesome, down-to-earth attractions that make for a unique and relaxing destination. The best part is that visitors can enjoy a fun day out and about without competing for elbow space while walking down the sidewalk!

The Madison County Tourist Development Council has been serving the Madison community since its



Ragans Family Campground



Madison County Courthouse



The Manor House



C & E Market Place

establishment in 1996. Since then, it has grown; the expected income from the tourist development tax was estimated to be about \$28,800 in the first year. Today, the expected annual income is nearly \$300,000. Since 2010, the county has received around \$1.6 million in tourist tax revenue.

TDC isn't planning to stop there, however. Over the last year, their team has undertaken an entire brand overhaul, and are excited to share what they have been doing with the community and surrounding areas. For starters, the TDC now has a new address, and is set up at 228 S.W. Range in Madison. The new building will serve as the welcome center for visitors and residents alike.

The goal of the Tourist Development Council is to promote all of the amazing amenities that exist within Madison County, not just to tourists but to locals as well. The TDC defines tourism as, "the attraction of visitors through the



Madison Antiques Market & Interiors



Daisy and Dukes Boutique

promotion of local assets and experiences for recreational, leisure or business purposes that stimulate economic growth for Madison County.”

By promoting local amenities and locations, they hope not only to entice newcomers to enjoy Madison, but also to showcase the incredible wealth of recreational opportunities that even some locals may be under-utilizing or unaware of. While tourists bring new economic development into the community, there are plenty of residents who live, work and play right in town that can benefit greatly by being familiar and connected with all that their county has to offer. The TDC's new motto, “Retreat to Vintage Florida,” exemplifies the down-to-earth and unpretentious nature of Madison County, where the waters are rich and full of life, the buildings are old and full of history, and the people are friendly and full of southern hospitality. ▪



Madison Coffee Co.



Madison RV and Golf Resort



Down Home Days Festival



Cherry Lake



**TOGETHER...
WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN!**

Financial Services

- Retirement Planning
- Income Planning
- Financial Reviews
- Estate Planning
- **Investment Services & Products**
- Mutual Funds
- Stocks & Bonds
- Annuities
- Life Insurance



J. Byron Poore II

*LPL Financial Planner
Investment Manager*

301 E. Base St. | Madison, FL

byronpoore@mccbflorida.com
Office 850.973.2400

Call me today for more information .



Securities and advisory services are offered through LPL Financial (LPL), a registered investment advisor and broker/dealer (member FINRA/SIPC). Insurance products are offered through LPL or its licensed affiliates. Madison County Community Bank and Wealth E&P located at Madison County Community Bank are not registered as a broker/dealer or investment advisor. Registered representatives of LPL offer products and services using the name Wealth E&P located at Madison County Community Bank, and may also be employees of Madison County Community Bank. These products and services are being offered through LPL or its affiliates, which are separate entities from and not affiliates of Madison County Community Bank or Wealth E&P located at Madison County Community Bank. Securities and insurance offered through LPL or its affiliates are:

Not Insured by FDIC or Any Other Government Agency	Not Bank Guaranteed	Not Bank Deposits or Obligations	May Lose Value
---	---------------------	-------------------------------------	----------------

WHAT'S HAPPENING



Fourth of July Celebrations

Branford

Join the Town of Branford for the **Branford River Reunion's Fourth of July Celebration**. Find a spot on the Suwannee River Greenway (directly behind Town Hall at 502 S.W. Suwannee Ave.) to watch one of the largest duck races in the area, show off your hot-rod in the car show or just settle down in the shade for some good ole American jams. Of course, you won't want to miss the fireworks. Admission is free.

Live Oak

Live Oak's Freedom Festival features live music, bounce houses, plenty of vendors, and an assortment of activities – a little bit of something for everyone, adults and children alike. The evening of camaraderie will end with a bang (literally!) at 9 p.m. with a spectacular fireworks show. This free event is held at Millennium Park (corner of Pine Avenue Southwest and West Howard Street).

Jasper

Hamilton County's Independence Day Celebration will be held at the county's park (4525 S.W. 107th Ave., in Jasper). This free event includes live music, bounce houses, waterslides, plenty of vendors and, of course, an explosive fireworks display.

Madison

The Madison Lions Club hosts their annual God and Country July 4th celebration on the banks of Lake Francis, in Madison. The festivities begin at 5 p.m. and will continue until 9 p.m., capped off with a dazzling fireworks display. For more information, email mymadisonlionsclub@gmail.com.

Mayo

Get fired up for freedom with the Lafayette County Chamber of Commerce's Annual Fourth of July Celebration. Held each year in Mayo at the Edward Perry Sports Complex (840 N.E. CR 400), young and old are able to enjoy fun games, good food and vibrant fireworks with this free event.

WHAT'S HAPPENING



June 30 - July 2

Fourth of July Weekend at Ragans

Three days of patriotic fun for all ages! For reservations, call (850) 773-8269, email info@ragansfamilycampground.com or visit ragansfamilycampground.com.



Now - September 15

A Year in Review at Starling Musings

This exhibit features the acrylic paintings of Monticello artist Heather Ainsley. Starling Musings, 220 W. Washington St., is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. For more information, call (850) 347-5759 or email starlingmusings@gmail.com.



July 7 - 8

Wet 'n Wild Weekend at Ragans

Beat the summer heat with tons of water fun! For reservations, call (850) 773-8269, email info@ragansfamilycampground.com or visit ragansfamilycampground.com.

Now - August 31

The Joys of Summer at JAG

This exhibit is JAG's annual member show, featuring the creative work of local artists in a variety of mediums. Jefferson Arts Gallery, 575 W. Washington St., Monticello, Fla., is open Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and by appointment by calling (850) 997-3311.



July 14 - 15

Ragans Campground Goes Hawaiian

Dreaming of a tropical paradise? Sandy beaches are closer than you think! Enjoy tropical games. For reservations, call (850) 773-8269, email info@ragansfamilycampground.com or visit ragansfamilycampground.com.

WHAT'S HAPPENING



July 21 - 22

BBQ Cook-Off Weekend at Ragans

Who has what it takes to earn the right to be pit master of the campground? Entry fee is \$5 and one lucky winner will receive a free night of camping. For reservations, call (850) 773-8269, email info@ragansfamilycampground.com or visit ragansfamilycampground.com.

July 28 - 29

Chocolate Lovers Weekend at Ragans

There's chocolate, chocolate and more chocolate at one of the campground's most popular weekends! Bring old clothes. For reservations, call (850) 773-8269, email info@ragansfamilycampground.com or visit ragansfamilycampground.com.



August 8 - 11

Ain't Misbehavin' at MOH

The Monticello Opera House presents *Ain't Misbehavin'*, a sassy sultry musical celebration of legendary jazz great, Thomas "Fats" Waller. Enjoy one of the most popular, well-crafted revues of all time, and winner of the 1978 Tony Award for Best Musical. For showtimes and ticket information, call the Monticello Opera House at (850) 997-4242 or visit www.monticellooperahouse.org.



August 22-25 and 29-31

The Hallelujah Girls

Theatre Guild Valdosta presents this comedy by Jones Hope Wooten, a rollicking Southern comedy that takes place in SPA-DEE-DAH!, the abandoned church-turned-day-spa where a group of friends gathers every Friday afternoon. All performances take place in the historic 'Dosta Playhouse, 122 N. Ashley St., in Valdosta, Ga. For showtimes and reservations, visit www.theatreguildvaldosta.com or call (229) 24-STAGE (247-8243).



State Farm™

Tommy Surles Insurance Agency, Inc.
Tommy Surles, Agent

250 S. Jefferson St.
Monticello, Fla. 32344



**CALL OR VISIT ME
TODAY
(850) 997-8282**

Like a Good Neighbor,
State Farm Is There

tommy.surles.bw9i@statefarm.com



Create a tribute as unique as the life you're remembering.

Funeral Directors

Steve Green, Tommy Murrow, Rusty Newsome, Mark Kalinowski, Joe Rodgers, and Jaclyn Mulvaney

Joe P. Burns Funeral Home of Madison

323 SE Lakeshore Dr., Madison, Fla. 32340 (850) 973-1337

Joe P. Burns Funeral Home of Perry

1400 N Johnson Stripling Rd., Perry, Fla. 32347 (850) 584-4149

Joe P. Burns Funeral Home of Mayo

440 SW Monroe Ave., Mayo, Fla. 32066 (386) 294-2658

www.joepburnsfuneralhomes.com



Becoming a nurse has always been my dream. NFC made it possible.



DISCOVER.NFC.EDU

NFC has helped thousands of students just like you chase their dreams to earn certificates and degrees.

Start Today



"We love The Pet Nanny!"

Relax while you're away. Leave your pets and home in the caring hands of The Pet Nanny!



- Puppies and Kittens, Seniors, Non-Traditional Pets, Small Farm Pets, Special Needs Pets



Contact The Pet Nanny: Linda Wren 509-539-5858 https://www.rover.com/sit/lindaw128



Hampton Springs was advertised as a health resort to treat various illnesses. This 12-page booklet included prices for the services and testimonials of happy customers.

Happy days at the Hampton Springs Hotel

Story by Hailey Heseltine

Photographs from Florida Memory

For as long as people have lived in Florida, they have been enjoying the abundant natural resources the state has to offer. Not only have our lakes, rivers and springs been a source of joy for Florida residents, but they also have been a significant source of tourism. Historically, visitors would come to Florida to enjoy the mild winters, and they would come during the summer to visit our natural springs, rivers and other waterways.

People were particularly drawn to sulfur springs. A belief held for centuries was that sulfur springs offered a cure-

all treatment for many kinds of health conditions, both minor and serious.

Trips to sulfur springs were even often prescribed as treatment by doctors.

Luckily, Florida is home to many sulfur springs, and they became key destinations in the tourism industry, as they attracted not only the usual crowd of the wealthy vacationers, but also those suffering from health conditions and those simply hoping to maintain their good health.

One such large vacation spot, which reached its peak during the early 20th century, was the Hampton Springs Hotel, a defining landmark of Taylor County for nearly fifty years until its destruction.

The hotel's beginning is rooted in local folklore. Supposedly, a settler was directed by a Native American man to a spring a few miles west of Perry called Rocky Creek Mineral Spring as a cure for his wife's rheumatism. Bathing in the spring worked wonders for her health, so they immediately realized this was a place others needed to access. As the story goes, they purchased the land in 1857 and made plans for building a bathhouse and, later, a hotel. However, sources conflict on the date of the purchase, and who it was conducted by. The story is a rumor, passed along mostly through word-of-mouth. How accurate it may or may not be



The Madison-Taylor Camp in June 1922 at Hampton Springs had plenty of opportunities for adventurous children.

is unknown. Perhaps pieces of it are true, or it is entirely fiction. A more verifiable story seems to be that the 40-acre parcel of land was purchased by Benjamin and Joseph Hampton from the Carlton family of Madison County in 1879, and the dream of the resort was carried through the generations until it was realized in the early 20th century. Either way, the hotel certainly became a reality in the end.

According to the Taylor County Historical Society, by the time construction on the building began, there had already been a smaller building present there for a

few years; it was integrated into the bigger building during construction. Perhaps there was already a small hotel in operation at the location. Sources are mixed on when exactly the hotel was built. The large building's construction undoubtedly spanned several years. Most likely the hotel was completed in 1908, as that is the date the historic marker indicates; however, personal testimony of a man who worked on the construction indicated that it had been constructed during 1910-1912. It may be possible he was referring to expansion work on the hotel,



Hampton Springs' famous bathhouse, which Florida Memory identifies as being built in 1906, preceded the hotel's main building by a few years. There, guests could go and bathe in the sulfur water, which was believed to have healing properties.

which happened sometime around 1915. Regardless, it can be said that it was in the early years of the 20th century, during 1908-1915, that the hotel was completed and expanded promptly afterward.

The hotel was lavish, and an extraordinary tourist draw to the nearby town of Perry, even titling itself "The National Health Resort." The impressive site boasted a two-story main building with more than 70 rooms, a breezy front porch with wicker chairs, a steam heating system, gardens, fountains, a large bathhouse with a pool into which spring water bubbled, and miles and miles of grounds that offered natural resources and activities such as fishing and hiking to the guests. How did such a grand resort get the funds to operate in its rural locale?

Allegedly, the Hampton family was able to secure funds by creating a corporation with local shareholders in Taylor County. In its early years, however, the hotel was not exactly a booming business. Being miles out of town and far from the nearest railroad, it was a little more out-of-the-way than some folks liked. The story goes that it remained that way until a wealthy businessman, J. W. Oglesby of Adel, Ga., saw its potential during a stay and decided to invest in the resort. Since he worked in the railroad industry, he also managed to have his railroad extended to run through Perry, which allowed easier access for those who wished to visit the resort. His plan was a success, and business went on a quick incline from there on, as Taylor County also boomed due to the business railroads brought.

Primarily, Hampton Springs was a health destination. A small plant bottled and sold mineral water from the springs for visitors to take home and consume. An advertisement postcard for the hotel claimed the water was a guaranteed cure for conditions such as rheumatism, indigestion, dyspepsia, stomach, kidney, bladder troubles and skin diseases. Bottles of the mineral water could even be ordered and shipped to people's homes to be used as a kind of medicine. This popular service sent Hampton Springs water not only to neighboring cities, but nationwide.

In addition to the health aspect,

outdoor activities on the property – such as hunting, horseback riding, fishing, tennis, golfing, hiking, dancing, boating and simply exploring nature – appealed to the more adventurous visitors. The hotel also had a ballroom inside the hotel and a dancing pavilion outdoors. A separate casino and private lodge were dedicated to their lucrative fishing and hunting activities.

At its peak the resort was supposedly so active that a nearby boarding house had to help accommodate overflow visitors. The hotel had its own power plant and post office. The neighboring land was also home to a prolific lumber company. Hampton Springs was regarded as a community, if not even a little town, in of itself. It was certainly a financial force to be reckoned with.

The hotel and its grounds also drew plenty of educational tours and offered activities for children. For instance, during June 1922, it held summer camps for boys and girls of Madison and Taylor counties, called the Madison-Taylor camps. There, they enjoyed outdoor activities, such as fishing. Over the years, the hotel hosted activities of clubs, other camps and field trips for schoolchildren.

As time went on, sulfur water cures were no longer as credible as they once had been, and the hotel changed its approach in the late 1920s onward. Around this time, many other health-spring-related hotels closed their doors, but Hampton Springs survived the following decades because they willingly adapted and worked with the other abundant resources the resort had to offer. It still advertised some health benefits in its pamphlets and postcards, but the focus shifted to the other activities, such as the hunting lodge and casino, to attract guests. In 1927, Arnold Joerns leased Oglesby's interest and formed an exclusive spa membership called the Hampton Springs Club, which further overshadowed the attraction of the springs for health purposes.

The hotel continued operations as a luxury resort in the decades to follow. It managed to survive the Great Depression in the 1930s and World War II in the 1940s.

Many considered the 1950s to be a time of peace, a move into the “modern.” It was by no means a perfect time – there were unresolved tensions from the war, and issues such as segregation and discrimination continued to persist and thrive during the decade. Still, the 1950s was a time of big economical and technological strides, when the stereotypical image of The American Dream especially took root. During the '50s, the Hampton Springs Hotel continued operating as a resort, undoubtedly benefitting from the economic boom and uptick in vacationers. There was no end to the hotel's operations in sight.

It all came suddenly crashing down early in the morning of Sept. 23, 1954. Fire broke out in the main building, and it spread too quickly to fend off. The Hampton Springs Hotel could not be saved, and it was reduced to ruins in a matter of hours.

No effort to rebuild the hotel was made, and what remained of the grounds quickly became vacant. The bathhouse, which has since fallen to time, was also included in the losses, as well as the other buildings, such as the hunting lodge. A single incident brought the property from a glorious, thriving resort to nonexistent.

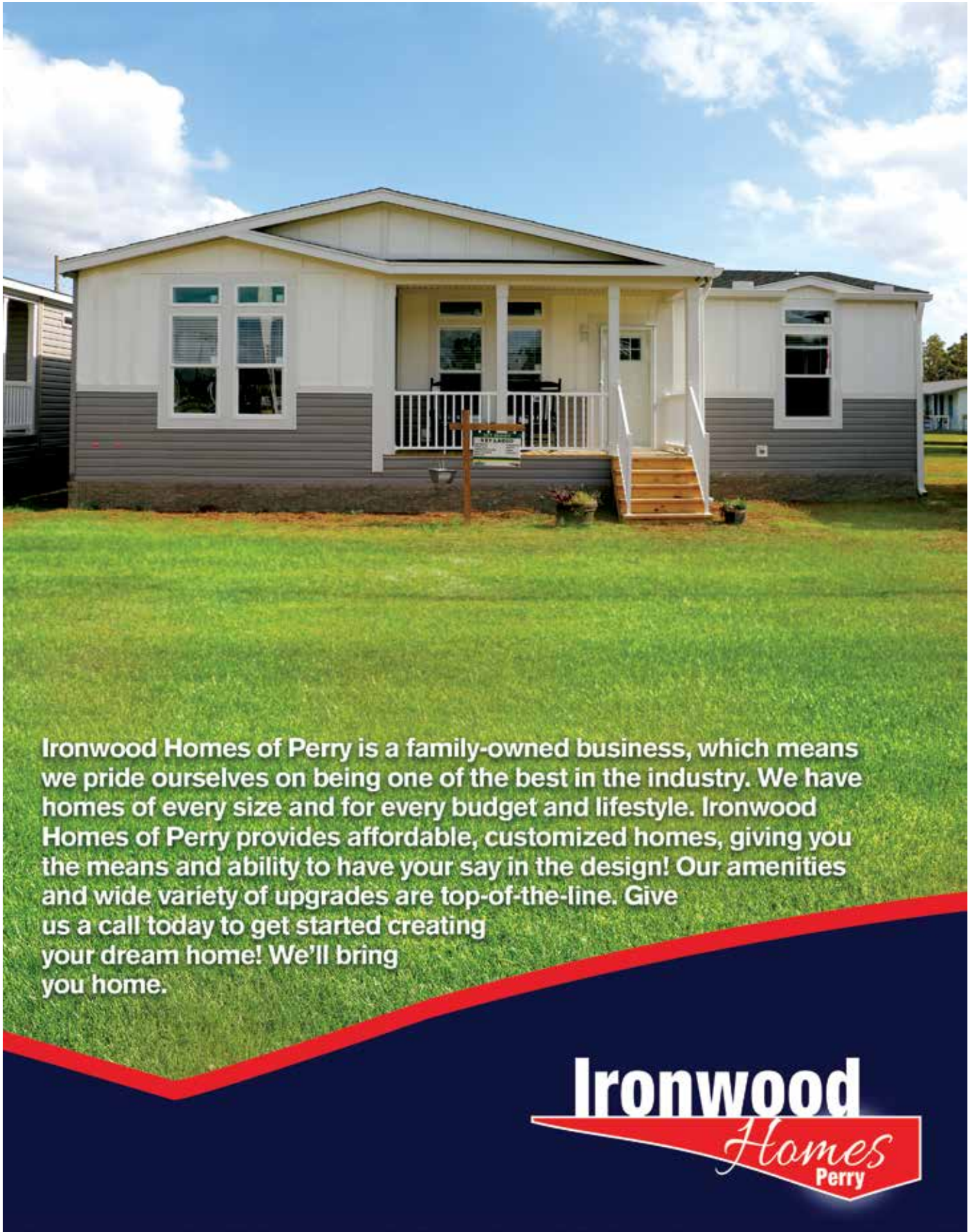
Today, all that remains of the resort are pieces of the foundation.

However, Hampton Springs is unique

in its situation, because it has not been completely lost to time like so many other historical sites. The ruins of the hotel and some of the outbuildings were excavated and became a park, which can still be visited today. A historic marker, which was placed in 2007, accompanies the site, informing visitors of the long-gone hotel's history and legacy. Even the fountain out front, albeit damaged, still stands. One of the most well-preserved sections is the foundation of the bathhouse and the area surrounding it, which includes multiple pools, both large and small. A large pool was filled in by the county for insurance reasons only a few years ago, but the decision was met with controversy and was quickly reversed. A fence was installed instead, allowing the pool to be viewed from a safe distance.

Though the happy days of Hampton Springs Hotel have come to an end, its history continues to live. Documentation, such as photos and artifacts retrieved from the site, serve as a testament to its history. The Taylor County Historical Society and some other passionate individuals have compiled information about the site for others to enjoy. These include recorded memories of some visitors' personal experiences of the hotel. As long as there are people willing to share information, and others willing to learn, the Hampton Springs Hotel will never give up its place in Taylor County's rich history. ■





Ironwood Homes of Perry is a family-owned business, which means we pride ourselves on being one of the best in the industry. We have homes of every size and for every budget and lifestyle. Ironwood Homes of Perry provides affordable, customized homes, giving you the means and ability to have your say in the design! Our amenities and wide variety of upgrades are top-of-the-line. Give us a call today to get started creating your dream home! We'll bring you home.

Ironwood
Homes
Perry

Ironwood Homes of Perry



(850) 838-9090
ironwoodperry@gmail.com
3483 South Byron Butler Parkway
Perry, FL 32348
www.ironwoodhomesofperry.com



David and Merry Ann Frisby:



David and Merry Ann Frisby with their children, grandchildren, and all of their family at their 40th anniversary celebration.

Serving the Monticello Community

Story by Kenzie James

Photographs Courtesy of David Frisby

David and Merry Ann Frisby have served the Monticello community in many ways in the last 28 years, from their careers in law enforcement to numerous boards they served on and their extracurricular activities in retirement.

Merry Ann was the first woman law enforcement officer in Leon County, sworn into the Sheriff's Office in 1977. She started her career as a graduate student at Florida State University (FSU) and concentrated on forensic anthropology. Merry Ann said one day at FSU, the sheriff from Dixie County brought her a bag of bones and asked her to identify the

person.

"I called him back and I said, 'This is an over 50-year-old black man who smokes pipe,'" Merry Ann said. The sheriff knew who the deceased was, and Merry Ann told him to let the FSU anthropology students excavate in the future because there were important bones missing from the ones she analyzed. The FSU students were called shortly after to do a bone analysis for another sheriff. Merry Ann said someone suggested that she attend the Law Enforcement Academy to be able to testify as a law enforcement officer, even though there were no women on that force at the time.

"Some brave woman sued the TPD

[Tallahassee Police Department] because they wouldn't hire a woman, and she won," Merry Ann said. "The rest of the law enforcement agencies kind of knew; they could see the writing on the wall. So here I was, I had already worked with them in these couple of cases, and I was already a law enforcement officer. So the sheriff's office offered me a job and I took it, and I was the first woman in law enforcement in Leon County."

Merry Ann worked with the sheriff's office for about eight or nine years, and then was offered a job at the public defender's office in the Second Judicial Circuit, which serves six counties. She continued to work with crime, but the job

offered more perks including set 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. hours. She worked there for the rest of her career and retired after a total of 32 years.

Although the Frisbys were both law enforcement officers and became partners for life when they married, they did not often work close together in the field. David, who worked at TPD for 24 years as a police officer, sergeant supervisor and lieutenant watch commander, recalled a case catching a shooter that they were both part of. David said he took his squad and set up road blocks to catch the man and worked with sheriff's offices from other counties. When the suspect was killed, Merry Ann came into the case for forensics and placed the order for gun analysis for the guns of the officers involved.

"One nice thing about working in crime is it's never dull," Merry Ann said. "It's always something interesting going

on and human nature is, like, shocking sometimes."

The Frisbys, who have been married for 42 years, married in 1982 and moved to Monticello in 1996 when David was elected Police Chief at the Monticello Police Department. He served for 12 years before retiring in 2008.

"In Tallahassee, there was a lot of violence, a lot of shooting,... all the jocks wanted to fight, the athletes, and you couldn't injure them. You couldn't hurt them because, you know FSU makes money off that, the city off FSU, so you always had to be so careful," David said. "But this, Monticello is sweet."

"It's a felony to be rude here. Nobody's rude, everybody's pleasant," Merry Ann said.

Retirement offered the Frisbys the opportunity to be involved in the Monticello community in a different aspect. David served as chair and vice

chair of the Republican party and a member of the Hospice board. Merry Ann served on the Monticello Opera House Board, the City Planning Council and as the Chairman of the Firemen's Pension Fund. She also wrote for the *Tallahassee Democrat* for 10 years and also wrote for the *Monticello News*. Her columns covered a variety of topics, including kids, the school board, gun violence, law enforcement, drugs and birds.

The Frisbys are also members of Christ Episcopal Church, which has provided other outlets for them to plug into the Monticello community. Merry Ann started a food pantry at the church 25 or 30 years ago and ran it for about 20 years before passing it to one of her daughters. The food pantry created a connection between Second Harvest and the Monticello community, buying food from the food bank to stock the pantry. Merry Ann said other community members have given



David and Merry Ann Frisby



David Frisby as an officer for the Tallahassee Police Department in 1996.



David Frisby white-water rafting with his children.

back to the food pantry, including a man who buys the day-old pastries from a Thomasville bakery and donates them to the pantry. Merry Ann is currently involved with Shepherd's Hands, a free medical clinic for people who are poor.

"The Shepherd's Hands came out of our diocese. Our diocese goes from Jacksonville to the Apalachicola River, Gainesville, big triangle, and they started it and we're just one station," Merry Ann said. "There's a medical trailer that is pulled from Live Oak to Madison to Monticello, and then back again. In that trailer is all the medical equipment and stuff."

The Frisbys now enjoy spending time with their grand and great-grand children, doing elder pilates classes and bird watching in their backyard. David said Monticello has become a central place for all their children who live in Tallahassee, Monticello and other nearby cities. ■



David and Merry Ann Frisby shortly after they were married in 1982.

Trademark Homes Center



**New / Used
Land • Home**

- **2024 Models Homes Arriving Weekly!**
- **In-house, on-the-spot financing, 570 and above credit score required and zero down for qualified buyers.** (Credit counseling available)
- **Top dollar paid for your Trade-in, regardless of age or condition.**

NOW OPEN SUNDAYS!

**MONDAY - FRIDAY
9 AM - 7 PM**

**SATURDAY
10 AM - 5 PM**

**SUNDAY
NOON - 4 PM**

**1700 S. Jefferson St., Monticello, FL
(850) 459-4864 - call or text anytime**



The Walls of Honor depict local soldiers that left the community of Day to serve their country.

Preserving a town's stories at the Day Heritage Center

Story and Photography by Heather Ainsley

It isn't uncommon to discover an old, forgotten family relic while moving or reorganizing a storage unit or attic space. Oftentimes, these items come with incredible stories that have been passed through a long family lineage; the precious, first-hand artifacts represent a window into times long forgotten. As time passes, these stories are inevitably lost, and these items that were once so special become nothing more than trinkets in the window of a thrift store, the lives they once touched and the memories they once encapsulated soon fade into non-existence.

This is the ordinary fate of most items – after all, every item on Earth has some form of memory attached to it. In general, it is often more important to give a gently-used item a new life by recycling it into a new use, so it may find purpose despite its history. For some, however, the preservation of history is a crucial matter of utmost urgency. This is true for some living in a small Florida community called Day Town, for example.

Day Town is likely unknown to many,



Most families in the area had at least two mules that were used for transportation and working the fields.

and even a Google search yields very little about it; its Wikipedia page harbors just three short sentences about the town, and it seems as if the community itself sits on the precipice of a forgotten era, teetering dangerously on the edge of being forgotten

for good.

Lifelong residents Elouise Smith Green and Marvin Buchanan have made it their personal mission to prevent that from happening. Nestled just off of Day Avenue is the Day Heritage Center, a facility dedicated to the preservation of the history and stories of what Green and Buchanan refer to as the Day community. The organization is a 501(c)3 charitable non-profit organization that was founded by the pair in 2016, and they rely on donations from the community to help fuel their goal.

Rather than focusing strictly on monetary donations, however, they are currently eagerly looking for physical donations – historical or antique items that have a story to contribute about the small community. The center is dedicated as a place for people to store memories and memorabilia, so that members of the community do not lose the ability to look back on the rich history of this fading town.

In its prime, Day Town was the bustling home of 15 different storefronts, two doctors' offices, a pharmacy, a general store, a grits mill, a cotton gin, a

salt house, a blacksmith and more. This thriving community of the early 1900s was fueled largely by the railroad, and was encompassed by the area known as Brewer Lake.

A young settler by the name of John Day was making his way from Alabama to Tampa, where he and his brother-in-law had heard that land was cheap. When they stopped at Brewer Lake to rest for a couple of days along their journey, they fell in love with the area. Inspired by the rural charm of the place during their stay, the two acquired land and named it Day Town. The current site of the Day Heritage Center is actually the original home of John Day and his wife, Mary Eliza Day. In the 1900s, John Day sold the house and property to a man by the name of Henry Williams, who eventually sold it to Rev. Lamar Anderson. Over the years, the property was passed down through several generations, until it was donated in part to the Day Heritage Center by Rev. Anderson's grandson in 2016.

The building is exceptionally old and tells its own stories of Day Town. Not only is the inside of the historical home full of antique artifacts of Day, but the structure itself still features original walls that were built out of local lumber by John Day himself. While several restorations have been required to keep the building in good shape, all renovations were careful to preserve as much of the original building as possible.

In recent years, Marvin Buchanan and his team have added an addition to the original Day building, using live-edge, local lumber sourced in Day. These new rooms serve to house additional artifacts that have been donated by members of the community and have enabled the center to expand its collection.

The partnership between founders Green and Buchanan has been one of collaboration and extensive planning and organization. It takes a lot of cooperation to catalogue all those stories, and keep inventory of so many artifacts, but the pair make an excellent team and jokingly boast of "no blow-up arguments to date!" It's easy to collaborate when your goals are one and the same.

"We want to recall the history of this area," says Marvin, "and preserve it for other generations."

So far, the Heritage Center is full of stories, and a simple tour through the rooms brings a visitor to the threshold of a bygone era. Enter into the kitchen and you can see heavy iron cookware donated by local families whose ancestors performed daily tasks like cooking, mending and cleaning using open fireplaces and iron tools. It is easy to be grateful when one

remembers that no air conditioning, fans or refrigerators existed back then to cool down after an afternoon of working over an open fire. Bedrooms feature traditional "plumbing facilities," ornate furniture and hand-sewn blankets made from scraps of fabric, the intricate designs making the most out of whatever fabric pieces individuals had to work with back then.

Stepping into further rooms shows historical pieces of furniture from long-lost pillars in the community; a tasteful bench was once a pew in a local church, and a stately table set was crafted from a retired railroad trestle out of Dowling Park. Along one of the walls, a donated collection of silver spoons from all over the world, passed down for generations, hangs like a map of adventures someone once had.

Photographs on the wall show the faces of the town – the men, women and children who once played, worked and lived within the very community, people who once laughed, cried and tended to the duties of their time. Pictures show old buildings that did not stand the test of time but once made up a very lively, bustling town, full of life and possibility.

One room features what is called the Walls of Honor. Upon the walls are framed photographs of local men and women who served their country in the military. Members of the community can come in and find the honored images of their family members through the ages.

"This room represents every family in this community," says Buchanan proudly. "Anyone from Day can come in and find the photo of someone they are connected with in some way. It is a way to honor them and the sacrifices they made."

Within a special display case are artifacts from Elouise's own brother, Harold Loyd Smith, who served in Korea and was significantly wounded during the Battle of Pork Chop Hill. He earned a Purple Heart

and Bronze Star from the U. S. Army after losing the use of one of his arms and an eye as a result of his injuries. He had to remain in the hospital in Korea for over a year before he was well enough to be sent home.

In a special addition to the building that Marvin Buchanan and his team built by hand, an impressive selection of railroad memorabilia and farming equipment is on display, many of the farm pieces having belonged to Buchanan's own grandfather and passed down through the family. The handles of the equipment are worn smooth from generations of use, and photographs



These retired post office boxes were salvaged from the USPS and donated to the Center.



Old farm equipment was generally pulled behind a mule that was trained to take verbal direction.

displayed nearby depict locals using similar equipment accompanied by mules.

“Back in that day,” recalls Marvin, “just about every family had a mule or two at least. You'd attach them to the tool you wanted to use, and everything was 'voice activated' – you'd just tell the mule which way to turn and he knew where to go. You'd say “haw” for left and “gee” for right, and sure enough, he'd go where you needed him. Now-a-days, everything is directed by GPS.”

It isn't just the inside of the building that is dedicated to history; displayed on the back of the building is an original beam from the local grits mill, Allen Mill/Pond Grits Mill, which used to serve countless families that would bring sacks of corn by mule to be ground down into grits. The beam, which is 40 feet long, was originally hand-hewn from a live oak tree. It once served as one of the major structural beams

that supported the mill that overlooked the spring waters of Mill Pond.

Just behind the center stands a magnificent ancient tree, which has been determined by the University of Florida to be several hundred years old, making it one of the oldest trees in North Florida. While other trees on the grounds were lost in the recent storms over the last few years, this live oak continues to stand firm. Plans are in the works to replace many of the fallen trees with crepe myrtles, as well as an installation of long leaf yellow pines, a historically significant species of tree for the area.

Around the front of the building rests a large bell that used to belong to the old schoolhouse. Marvin Buchanan actually attended school there himself, and graduated in 1960, just one year before it burned down. There are photographs of the schoolhouse that depict the school over

the years as it saw expansion before the fire. Along that display are original school desks, books and artifacts that show what the students sat in and carried with them while at school.

The center hopes to install several new additions to the grounds in the upcoming year, including a syrup/sugar furnace and a display recognizing a local turpentine distillery, Adams & Kelly, that used to reside in the town. Once the distillery shut down, a lot of the local laborers left, searching for work elsewhere.

Elouise herself has donated an incredible number of artifacts to the center, including some of her baby clothes, original letters exchanged by her parents during WWI, china sets, a series of cameras her husband had collected and a beautiful, antique vanity dresser that was gifted to her parents upon their wedding in 1921. Elouise has worked very hard to furnish the center in a way that showcases certain categories and eras within each room. At 97 years old, she maintains an impressively sharp memory, able to recall stories from her childhood as well as memories about her parents, grandparents and other pillars of the community that she has met throughout her life. Currently, she is working on expanding the center's genealogy section, with plans to have all of the individuals represented in donated photos, as well as each different artifact identified so that their stories can be told with ease.

“About 90 percent of it is already recorded,” she says of the historical collection at the center, “But I'd really like to focus on getting all the books and pictures identified, so that we have everything recorded. Even with most of the



Apothecary



This 40 foot long post was hand-hewn from a live oak tree and is the original beam from the local grits mill, Allen Mill/Pond Grits Mill. Locals would bring large sacks of corn by mule to grind down into grits for their families.

information already in inventory, there's a lot to do."

While most of the photos have names and stories on the back of the frames or pictures, Elouise says she hopes to display a story with each photo so people can walk through and read the history behind each piece. It is no small undertaking, and the center is hoping to recruit volunteers who are interested in helping preserve the historical significance.

As a non-profit, the Day Heritage Center relies on the donations of items to help build its collection of relevant stories from the community. Anyone wishing to donate an item can do so by giving the items to the center, or by loaning the items to the center for a specific period of time. The Day Heritage Center is specifically looking for stories, items, artifacts and photographs that date back to the early 1900s and are relevant to the Greater Day Area.

The center also actively seeks volunteers, as plans are in the works to take on several new projects, including an open house that will take place every Second Saturday coming soon. Volunteers can help with inventory, collect artifacts, assist with maintenance of the facility, provide ideas for how to expand the center's outreach in the community and more. The founders of the Day Heritage Center created the space as a way for the community to learn about its own history, a way for the current and future generations to connect with their past. Currently they would like to thank Sheliah Broughton, who assists with the genealogy section and gathering artifacts

for the center, as well as Kenneth Sulak, PhD., a local historian and biologist who has provided significant information about local mills and ferries along the Suwannee River. Special thanks is also extended to the group of local women who assist with the center. Anyone wishing to become a volunteer or to donate items can contact Marvin Buchanan at (386) 330-4558 or Elouise Green at (386) 854-0099.

Today, Day Town is home to a post office. That is all that remains of the bustling town that was once a thriving community at the turn of the century. While it is to be expected that the town suffered greatly when the local railroad service shut down and after the closing of the local distillery, Marvin recalls that the town had seen significant decline in the years prior to that, although he can't pinpoint an exact cause of the decline. It could be that, as America expanded and nearby cities developed, residents of Day Town began to leave, intent on finding bigger and better opportunities in larger cities, where fortune was more likely. Whatever the reason, the town of Day was left to wane out of its own era of prosperity, dwindling to but an echo of its former self.

Although often antiques and old items are sold or donated to places for resale to give them new life, preserving the rare history of a small town like Day is important for keeping it on the map and connecting its current residents to the history and heritage of their home.

While its days of former liveliness may be behind it, the town of Day has some incredible roots, and the Day

Heritage Center is dedicated to preserving those roots and showcasing the narrative that belongs to the families of Day. It is the founders' hope that members of the community continue to participate in sharing and celebrating the rich history of the town, so that no matter what amazing things are to come in the future, the past is not cast aside or forgotten with time. ■



Elouise's own parents used to send letters back and forth while her father served in WWI. These letters are a personal artifact that Elouise has donated to the Center.



Women in the early 1900s would have to do much of their cooking and cleaning over an open flame. For this reason, much of the kitchen tools were made of heavy cast iron.

BRINGING LOCAL NEWS HOME

MADISON COUNTY
CARRIER
The Madison
Enterprise-Recorder
Est. 1868 • 157 Years of Serving Madison County



(850) 973-4141

MONTICELLO NEWS
221 Years of Serving the Monticello Community
Jefferson Journal
County



(850) 997-3568

Riverbend  News
Serving Suwannee, Lafayette and Hamilton Counties



(386) 364-4141

The
**Front
Porch**
Where the tea is sweet and the talks are long

(850) 973-4141

JOHNSTONS

LET US DO
THE COOKING

CATERING



Whether you have an upcoming Wedding, Family Reunion, Corporate Event, Holiday Party, Baby Shower

Retirement Party or a Luncheon, Johnston's can make it happen! We can feed up to 1000 People!

We do Plated, Buffet, Boxed lunch, & Pick-up and Drop off. We can even provide a food truck for your event.

Tracy Mertz



850-997-5622

email: CATERING@JOHNSTONSMEATMARKET.COM

**With over 40 years combined experience,
we are North Florida's preferred Caterer.**





JUDGE AIKENS FINDS IT AN HONOR TO SERVE OTHERS

Story by Mickey Starling

Photograph Courtesy of Judge Nina Ashenafi-Richardson

The old saying that grass doesn't grow under a busy wheel certainly applies to Madison native Augustus D. Aikens, Jr. Growing up in a small, rural community did little to hamper the big dreams growing within him. Spurred on by the support of his family and numerous teachers who encouraged Aikens that he could accomplish anything he desired, he did just that.

"I once thought I would have to leave Madison to be academically challenged, but I discovered that wasn't the case," said Aikens.

He spent his early years at Madison Training School, where he completed the 10th grade before graduating from Madison High School. Staying local, Aikens earned his Associate of Arts degree from North Florida Junior College, in Madison. He remembers fondly the multitude of support and encouragement given him by teachers such as Ms. Alma McKinney Wynn, Ms. Christina Vought, Ms. Opal Argenbright, Ms. Mae Hamilton and Mr. Jim Catron.

Aikens went on to complete law school at Florida State University, where he also enrolled in the ROTC program, joining the Reserve components in 1973. Part of his active duty assignments included serving in Desert Storm in 1991, for which he was awarded the Bronze Star. Aikens received more than a dozen awards for his exemplary military service. Afterwards, Aikens joined The United States Army National Guard, later transferring to the Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG) Corps. Aikens' 30-year military career ended with his retirement in 2003. He discharged at the rank of Colonel.

In 1997, Governor Lawton Chiles appointed Aikens as a county judge in Leon County, where he is set to retire in November of 2024, following a long and distinguished career as a lawyer and judge. He began practicing law in 1975, first in private practice and then in the Department of Administration (later called Department of Management Services) for 22 years, including seven years as General Counsel. Numerous recognitions again followed Aikens in his judicial career, including the Harvey Ford Award, which is the highest award given to a county judge for professionalism, ethics and service.

Of the many accomplishments Aikens has to be proud of, his work with the Veterans Treatment Court in Leon County is

one his favorites. The program develops individualized treatment plans that veterans join for periods up to 18 months or longer. Veterans courts are designed to assist justice-involved defendants with the complex treatment needs associated with substance abuse, mental health and other issues unique to the traumatic experience of war.

"The program started in 2015," said Aikens. "Thus far, the success rate has been about 95 percent."

Some might question why Aikens chose to work for so many years. As his retirement date looms, he will be 75 years old. Yet, working hard, achieving goals and serving others has always been at the core of who he is. Growing up on a farm in the rolling hills of Cherry Lake, Fla., Aikens and his siblings "rarely saw town" because they were so busy during the summer months assisting their father with the daily requirements of farm life. Being drafted into the military is described by Aikens as one of his best experiences because he was taught to be responsible and complete his assignments.

"Everything I learned worked together to benefit me in many ways," recalls Aikens.

For Aikens, serving as a judge is a perfect extension of his desire to help others.

"I enjoy the opportunity to serve people and treat them right," said Aikens, who also serves faithfully at Bethel A.M.E. Church, in Tallahassee. His pattern of service to others is no secret to

anyone who knows him, so it is fitting that, at his retirement, the Leon County Courthouse will be renamed the Judge Augustus D. Aikens Courthouse.

He takes this tribute, like all the others, with humility and gratefulness. He is more at home returning to his childhood farm, tending the azaleas and crepe myrtles planted by his mother. And, there is always time for his wife, La Grande, their five children and a host of grandchildren.

"I come home as often as possible," says Aikens, who is living proof that staying true to your roots often yields the sweetest fruit. ■

His pattern of service to others is no secret to anyone who knows him, so it is fitting that, at his retirement, the Leon County Courthouse will be renamed the Judge Augustus D. Aikens Courthouse.



Loan officers available until 8 p.m.
~ APPLY ONLINE ~

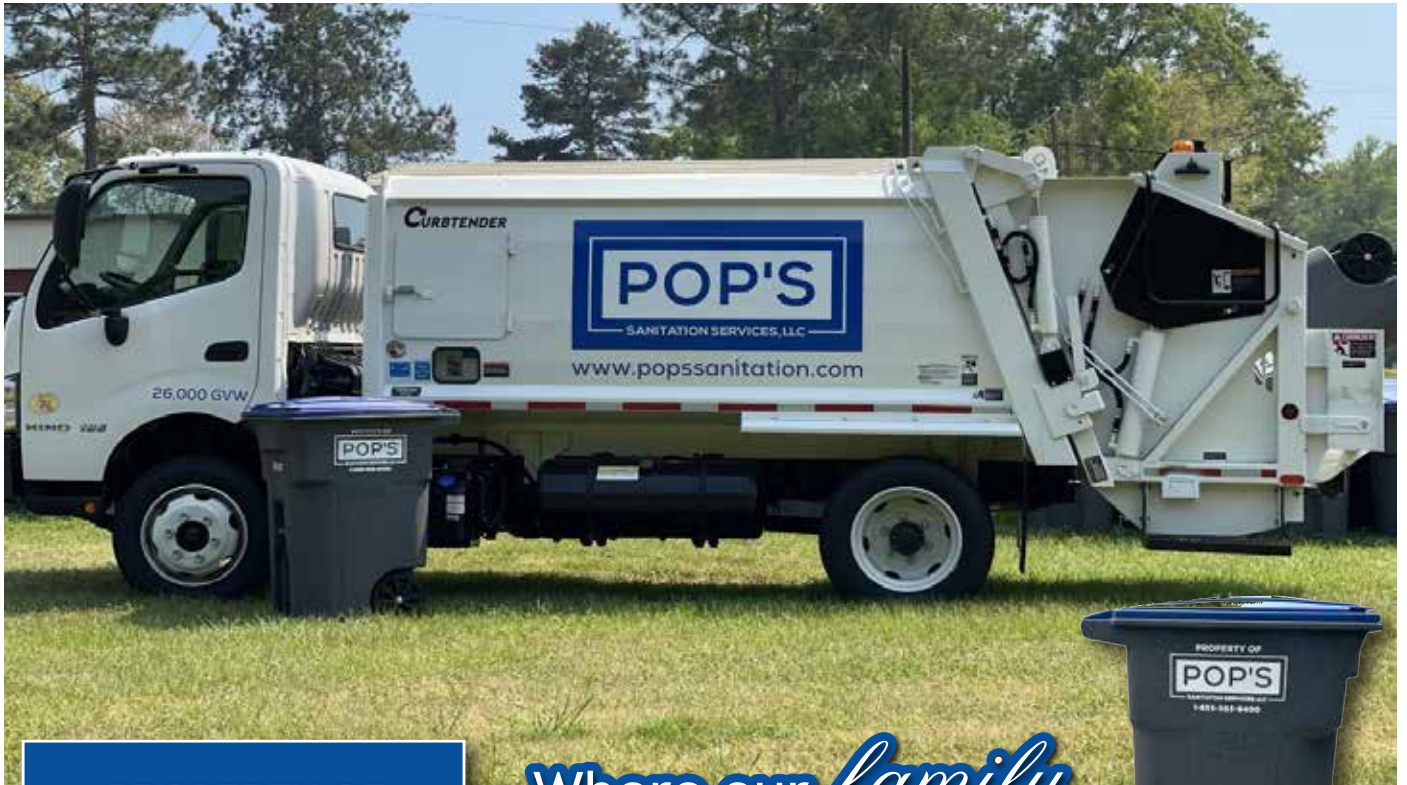
“Community Minded, Just Like You”

**424 W. Base St.
Madison, Fla. 32340
(850) 973-2600**

**1825 S. Jefferson St.
Perry, Fla. 32348**

**3003 Mahan Dr.
Tallahassee, Fla. 32308**

www.bcfcu.coop



PROPERTY OF

POP'S

SANITATION SERVICES, LLC

1-855-563-9400

Where our *family*
takes care of *Yours*



Pop's Sanitation, LLC is a family-owned, local business that provides residential trash pick-up for your home.

Churches

Sign up and get one 96-gallon FREE weekly pick up

**First Responders, Law Enforcement, Dispatchers,
Military and Nurses**

Sign up and get 3 months FREE

Providing residential trash pick-up for all of
Madison, Jefferson, Taylor, Suwannee, Hamilton,
and Lafayette Counties

(855) 563-9400
www.popssanitation.com



Eric

CLERK OF COURT

Sharing history through the ages

Story by Heather Ainsley

Photograph Courtesy of Rob Wolfe

They say that those who aren't familiar with history are doomed to repeat it. For those who have attended the presentations and lectures given by Suwannee County historian, Eric Musgrove, this is a sentiment that may be familiar from his many demonstrations.

Musgrove is a lifelong history enthusiast, and as a seventh generation Suwannee County resident, his passion for history is focused primarily on his hometown. Through careful research

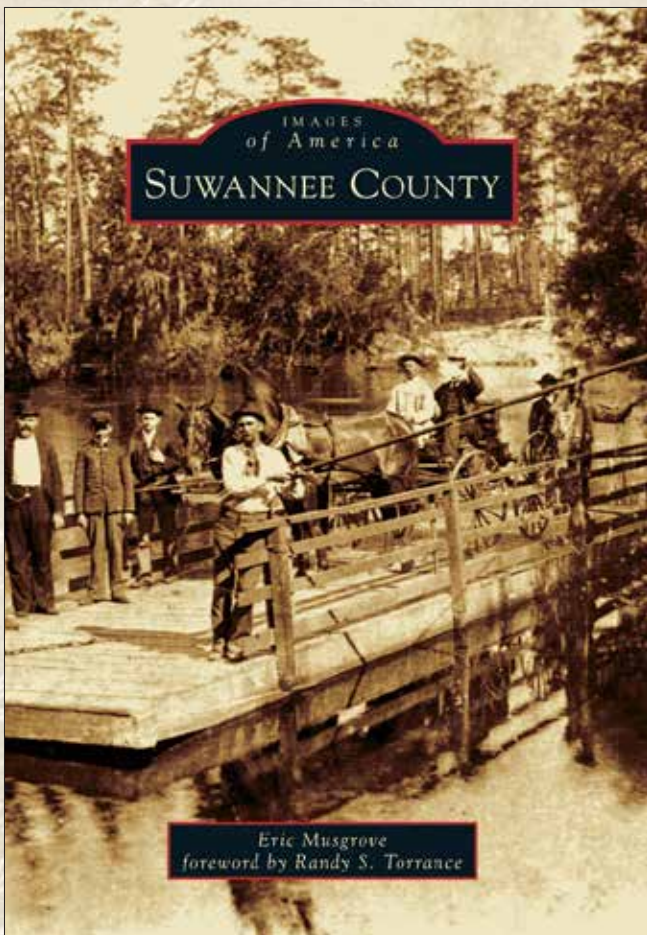
and access to extensive public records, he has been able to successfully trace his family's Live Oak lineage all the way back to the 1860s, and he says that before that period, his earlier ancestors resided in nearby Madison County.

His love for history started from a young age with a particular fascination with the military.

"I have loved history for as far back as I can remember," he says. "When I was younger, I really enjoyed learning about military history, learning about the different wars and everything, and as I

grew older, that expanded to encompass general history as well. It wasn't enough to know what happened. I loved to find out how things tie in together."

Despite his fascination with the armed forces, Musgrove soon learned that he was unable to join the military due to health issues, so he knew he would need to seek a different avenue for work. After receiving a degree in history, he began working for the Suwannee County Clerk of Courts Office, where he has been employed for an impressive 26 years. He finds the job especially rewarding,



**There Let Me
Live and Die**
Eric Musgrove



given the office's role in recording and preserving local happenings in the community.

The everyday, hum-drum events that take place may seem insignificant and relatively unimportant when considering the grand scheme of things, but over time, these events help to map out the true history of a community. Things like military records, land sales, court documents and marriage licenses help piece together the connections, events and actions of individuals who live within a community. Generations later, these records can be highly valuable in creating a clear, accurate narrative for looking back in time, even when the people who lived in that time frame are no longer alive to tell their stories.

It was his job at the clerk's office that fueled Musgrove's pursuit to learn all he could about his community. When he first started work there, he noticed that there was a surprisingly slim amount of historical narratives written about Suwannee County; just a single booklet in the prior 50 years that depicted history of the area. The Clerk of Courts Office is responsible for recording, maintaining and protecting public records, and the availability and accessibility of these records made it easy for Musgrove to begin exploring through this window into the past.

Many historical towns in North Florida have seen disasters that have impacted their Clerk offices and, by default, the city's records. Many buildings were at the mercy of devastating fires, flooding or demolition, which resulted in the filing systems of many city records being disturbed, lost or even destroyed. For this reason, it can be very difficult to get a clear and concise record of history in certain rural communities. Thankfully, Suwannee County's courthouse has seen no such major disasters, making it possible to more easily track the movements and life moments that have helped to shape Suwannee County dating back to the earliest days of the area's recorded history.

Musgrove describes himself as a lifelong learner who enjoys the process of increasing his knowledge

of his community. Eager to share this knowledge with others, he began organizing his findings and presenting them to interested members of the community. These presentations were well-received by residents, and it was requested of Musgrove to participate in writing a historical series of books specific to Suwannee County. To date, he has written five books, ranging in genre from historical to historical fiction. His latest two publications include *Lost Suwannee County* and *Images of America – Suwannee County*. Copies of his books are available through purchase online and in some bookstores, as well as in some Suwannee County locations that carry them.

Writing had been a pastime for much of his younger life, but in 2010, Musgrove began writing weekly articles for the local newspaper publication, *The Suwannee Democrat*. At first, his submissions focused primarily on religious articles, but following some of his historical presentations and book publications, he began getting requests from his readers for articles depicting historical information about the community. As an avid writer with a special interest in local history, Musgrove obliged and wrote weekly for the *Democrat* from 2013 until they closed their doors in 2020 due to COVID19.

Upon the establishment of a new Live Oak newspaper publication, *Riverbend News*, Musgrove eventually accepted an invitation to submit his historical articles once again, sharing his ever-growing knowledge with the readers in the community after a brief hiatus. Today, he not only publishes a regular column in the paper, but he also continues to host monthly scheduled presentations at two local libraries. On the first Thursday of the month, he gives a presentation at Dowling Park Library at 10 a.m., and on the second Thursday of the month, he gives a presentation at the Live Oak Library at 12 noon.

As a Chairman for the Historical Commission, he also has been known to speak during events at museums, schools, Rotary and Kiwanis meetings within the community. While his presentations

initially began small, he currently has some 40 different presentations that touch on different historical topics, each about a hour long.

For Musgrove, teaching is something he always knew he wanted to do, and it brings him great satisfaction to share his wealth of knowledge with members of the community. Despite his many years spent pouring over public records and undertaking extensive research projects, Musgrove maintains that no matter how much he learns, there is always more to learn and share with others.

"I like to share knowledge with other people," he reflects, "I have always liked learning new things and sharing what I learn – you can never learn enough, whether it is about history, the Bible, music, you name it. With my job, I get to get out of the office and work with the public; I'm not stuck behind a desk all day. Sometimes, customers come in with stories or research questions or family questions, and with access to public records, I can help them find out more. I love finding out about things no one alive knows about anymore."

Musgrove says he likes to focus on every aspect of history while he researches, and doesn't just focus on the "good things" that happened. He embraces learning about what he describes as "the good, the bad and the ugly" sides of history.

"Whether something is right or wrong, it happened and you can learn from it," he says. "A lot of people don't seem to care all that much about history until it affects them directly, but I want people to understand that history impacts all aspects of life, whether they know it or not. History is a lot more complicated than people think, and not everything is pretty. In my lectures there's a saying I like to use: 'Those who don't know the past are doomed to repeat it.'"

From Musgrove's perspective, it is important not to shy away from learning about something just because it was a bad thing that happened. By truly learning about history in a way that is honest and unbiased, it is easier to understand not just what happened, but why something happened, or how

something developed the way that it did. By understanding the connections that history has to current events, individuals can gain a deeper respect for the decisions made in the present that are connected and influenced by events and decisions made in the past, and how each of these can impact and influence the future.

When he was younger, Musgrove was diagnosed with stage 4 synovial sarcoma, a rare type of cancer that affects the soft tissue in the body. He has happily been in remission for around 18 years, but in 2021 was informed of a significant heart condition and had to have a pacemaker installed.

Despite these setbacks with his health, he is more dedicated than ever to increasing his knowledge of his own family roots, as well as the history of the community he has spent his life exploring. For Musgrove, it isn't about the challenges that arise, but about the passion and dedication to the things that are pursued.

It can be easy to see one's personal life as secluded from major history, especially for those who live in a rural community that is seemingly detached from much of the bigger cities and events of the nation. But appearances can be deceiving; through his studies, Musgrove discovered this year that just beyond his childhood home was the site of an infamous Native American massacre. He had, in fact, done research and talked extensively for years about this historical event, never dreaming he had spent the majority of his childhood just a stone's throw away from the exact location of such a huge moment in local history.

This realization is not isolated; through the years, Musgrove has discovered or taught a great many historical connections that put quiet, seemingly isolated Live Oak on the historical map in some pretty big ways. For example, a co-conspirator in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln was actually originally from Live Oak.

"There are tie-ins to international and national history for Live Oak," says Musgrove, "some are good and others aren't, but they happened. When looking

into your own family history, you hope it's a good history, but you have a legacy, either way, to either uphold or change directions with if you can."

For Musgrove, looking at the past and the ways history is interconnected is, in and of itself, a great lesson into how to look ahead to the future.

"You aren't guaranteed tomorrow," he says knowingly, "so don't waste the time God gave you."

When he isn't writing or teaching

professionally, Musgrove enjoys a private life with his wife and two surviving kids. He is active in his church, enjoys playing games with his family and uses his free time for recreational writing. Although he keeps his works-in-progress relatively exclusive, he does allude to having several projects underway, so those who enjoy his teachings, writing and demonstrations can perhaps look forward, in time, to some new developments. ■

LOST SUWANNEE COUNTY

ERIC MUSGROVE



Let Us Do The Hard Work For You



Mowing • Site Prep • Driveways
Land Clearing • Fill Dirt • Rock
Mobile Home Pads • House Pads

locally owned and operated

Cheltsie Holbrook
Owner



Pioneer Excavating & Tractor Services, Inc. (850) 464-1230



RESERVE TODAY!
(850) 973-8269
www.ragansfamilycampground.com
 1051 SW Old Saint Augustine Rd
 Madison, Florida



**CABINS • RV SITES • GROUP FACILITIES
 • SEASON & DAY PASSES •**



AMENITIES & DETAILS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. MORE INFORMATION AT RAGANSFAMILYCAMPGROUND.COM.

I-10 AT EXIT 262

RED ONION Grill

SOUTH CR 255

850-971-4240

JIMMIE'S Firestone

I-10 & Exit 258 • 1-850-973-8546
 24 Hour Service • Emergency Repairs
 24/7 • Towing
 Tires, Batteries, Lockouts



Jimmie's Autoport






I-10 & Exit 258



Upon retirement from serving as Clerk of Court, Eleanor Hawkins rode in the Watermelon Festival Parade to thank the community for their longtime support.

RECOLLECTIONS WITH *Eleanor Hawkins*

Story by Laura Young

Historic Photographs Courtesy of Eleanor Hawkins

Up grey painted wooden steps and past the potted red geraniums, a lacquered double front door presents its vintage doorbell with a brass knob to twist by hand. The ding, reminiscent of a classic bicycle bell, brings Eleanor Hawkins with a welcoming smile. A Florida native who has lived in Monticello for more than 60 years, Hawkins is most known for the 28 years she served as Jefferson County Clerk of Court, the only woman ever to hold the office, before or since. As notable as her tenure as clerk was, there's a lot more story to tell.

Born Marjorie Eleanor Betts on March 13, 1938, she sees herself as a product of the North and the Deep South. Her father, Frank Betts, had generational roots in Columbus, Miss., and served in World War I. Her mother, Marjorie Needham Betts, had graduated from the University of Michigan in 1917 and became a teacher. They met in a TB sanitarium, married and made a home in Tampa, Fla. When they were both 42, Eleanor came into the world, joining an older sister.

"Tampa was very different then," she recalls. "Our home was on Lawn Avenue, then a dirt road. I remember one hurricane season when fish were flowing in the street! The neighborhood kids were thrilled."

Her childhood included frequent family trips to the ancestral home in Columbus, a place Eleanor fondly remembers as a beautiful old town with a rich past and impressive historic homes. At the age of eight, Eleanor lost her mother to cancer. Her aunt came to live with them until her father remarried five years later. He made schooling a priority for his daughters, influenced by difficult times during the Great Depression, which shaped his beliefs about preparing for the future.

Eleanor attended public schools in

Tampa, and because the booming town needed to make room for quickly growing numbers of students, she and many others in her class skipped the third grade. In high school, she followed a college preparatory curriculum, graduating in 1955 as a member of the National Honor Society and recipient of the Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizen award. Then it was back to Columbus, where she had relatives plus a scholarship to attend the Mississippi State College for Women.

In her junior year, however, the only grandmother she knew passed away, propelling Eleanor back home to Florida. She enrolled in the University of Florida, studied education with a minor in business and enjoyed the busy coed campus as well as membership in Kappa Delta, a social sorority. When she was a junior, however, another family loss dealt a strong blow. Her sister died, leaving a husband and three small boys.

"It was very difficult," she shares, "and the only way I made it was by having met a wonderful young man by the name of John Hawkins, from Monticello, Fla."

A month after graduating, Eleanor became Mrs. Hawkins on July 4, 1959, and Monticello became her home for the next six decades.

Building on various jobs she held since the ninth grade, Hawkins' professional life began with a post to the Florida Securities Commission. Then she became comptroller at the Jefferson County Kennel Club, which for many years was the largest local employer until its closing. Hawkins was just 30 years old and the mother of two children in 1968 when the sitting Clerk of Courts announced retirement. She decided to run for the office.

"I barely won the first primary, against three local men, and succeeded in the runoff to win the job," Hawkins recalls. "Everybody was a Democrat back then, so I had no opposition in the general election."

Hawkins beat out her challengers in the next election and went on to hold the job unopposed for the remainder of her seven terms in office. She reminisces about how busy the courthouse was during her tenure, because everything was done in person. Every year, she notes, the Florida legislature added the clerk's duties, and she marvels at the very long list of responsibilities that is now posted on the current website for the office. Her husband points out that many times she went in to work on weekends to stay on top of it all. In addition to the day-to-day interactions with citizens, Hawkins looks back on some of the big court cases that took place, particularly the trial of the bomber who killed Florida Highway Patrol Trooper Jimmy Fulford in 1992. Her job of course also involved working closely with the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners, whom she felt treated her with respect and had a cooperative spirit. She retired in 1996 at the age of 58, and reflecting on her years as a public servant, she has some advice for the politicians of today.

"Be kind, be kind, be kind with humility to everyone," she says. "Always do the very best job that you can do, regardless of what job you are doing."

Becoming a grandparent figured prominently in Hawkins' decision to retire, and she and John travel as often as possible to spend time with their daughters, Marjorie and Mary Betts. Family has always been the deepest source of joy for her.

"My happiest years were those when the children lived with us, and we followed along to watch them cheer or act in the many opportunities in a small town," she says. "We went to the beach a lot, and my saying is 'I've never met a beach I didn't like.'"

She also likes to sing, and one room in the Hawkins' home is dedicated to music.

"I cannot remember a time when I



Photograph by Laura Young, June 5, 2024

didn't sing in a choir or chorus," she says, noting that she also studied piano for ten years and then at the age of 40 learned to play the organ.

Though she downplays her musical abilities, she has played music for her church off and on for 30 years. Aging is taking a toll on her eyesight and nimbleness, but still she loves to make music for the pure pleasure of it.

Another interest has been restoring historic homes. She and John won an award from the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation for their restoration of Palmer Place, a home on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. For the past 20 years, the Hawkins have lived in their third project of this sort, a residence in downtown Monticello built in 1840 that is filled with fine antique furnishings she inherited from the old homestead in Columbus.

Though well into her 80s, community involvement remains a big part of Hawkins' life. She's active in the Chamber of Commerce, Jefferson County Historical Association, Monticello Garden Club and DAR. She enjoys attending cultural events at the Monticello Opera House and various venues in Tallahassee. She believes in staying physically active, too, helped in this by daily walks with their friendly spaniel, Beau. Everything, though, centers on her faith.

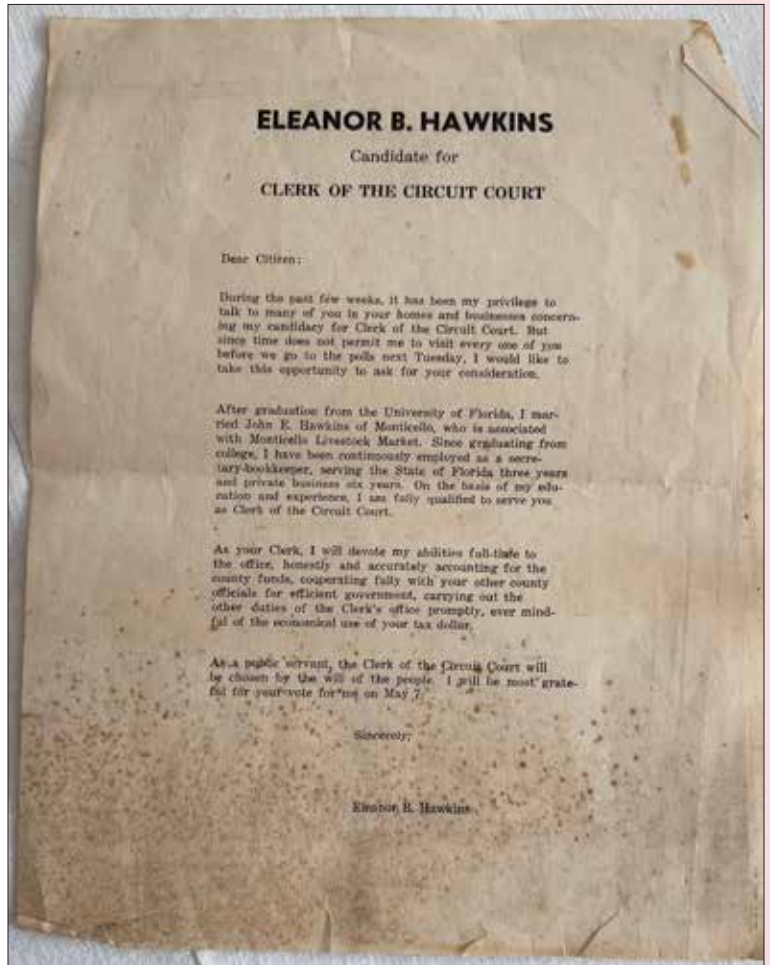
"The church is a steady moral compass in my life," she says. "I do not believe that society can function without a set of principles for good behavior, guiding us to love and respect our neighbors in all we do." ■



1974 Commission meeting



Eleanor in the clerk's office.



As clerk, Hawkins worked closely with the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners. Here she stands with commissioners Walker, Cooksey and Brown.

The Insurance You Need For The Surprise You Don't!



**Swann
Insurance**



Owned & Operated by: **Leslie Swann Anderson**

105½ N. Jefferson St., Perry, FL. 32347

(850) 584-5800

swanninsurance@fairpoint.net

**BUDGET
BLINDS**

Style and service for every budget.

We do it all with you.

Request a Free Consultation
today and learn more:

Call (850) 668-4835

budgetblinds.com/tallahassee/

2533 Greer Rd.,
Tallahassee, Fla. 32308

Blinds • Shades • Shutters
Drapes • Home Automation



© 2014 Budget Blinds, LLC. All Rights Reserved. Budget Blinds is a trademark of Budget Blinds, LLC and a Home Products Company. World Tech Hardware independently owned and operated.



Jason Shoaf

District 7

State Representative



**Proud
to be
serving
the citizens
of District 7**

Thank you for allowing me to serve you for the past five years. If I can ever be of any assistance to you, please feel free to reach out to my office.

Office Numbers

Tallahassee – (850) 717-5007

Perry – (850) 295-5680

Live Oak – (850) 295-5680



Worship – Grow – Serve – Share

Sunday Worship 10:45am

325 W. Washington St. (850) 997-2349
Pastor Sean Vickers www.fbcmonticello.org



WILLIAMS Fence Services

Contact us today for a free quote

- Privacy fences • Chain link fences
- Property fences • Repair services

(386) 590-0201

7090 161st Rd. | Live Oak, Fla. 32060
stretchwire@icloud.com





Vernell Williams: Passion for golf leads to Hall of Fame

Story by Mickey Starling

Madison resident Vernell Williams is a familiar face to many due to her 33-year career with Florida Power and Duke Energy as a customer service representative. At 71 years old, she has continued a decades-long passion for the game of golf, which began in 1992, when friends introduced her to the game in Bridgeport, Conn., at the Knickerbocker Golf Club. It took little time before Williams was hooked and began learning the skills necessary to become a “country born” (self taught) lady golfer.

She had the honor of playing with and learning from teaching professional Addie Cobb and her husband, Al, at Moody Air Force Base, in Valdosta, Ga. In May, Williams joined Cobb as a member of the African American Golfers Hall of Fame, at a ceremony held in West Palm Beach, Fla. Williams was honored with the induction because of her love of the game and her extensive efforts to mentor minority youth on and off the course. Several of her young students have placed first or second in tournaments while under her tutelage.

Since those early days, golf has continued to be a regular part of her life, often traveling with friends and family to participate in tournaments in Florida and throughout the country. Maintaining a handicap of 16, Williams is also dedicated to mentoring youth golfers to be their best athletically and academically. She has enthusiastically enjoyed playing golf in all 50 states, with her most memorable escapade occurring in 2019, when she and a group of friends embarked on a road trip to Toronto, Canada, where they traveled the Canada-Alaska Highway

to Fairbanks, Alaska, playing plenty of golf along the way, including the most northeastern course, Fairbanks Golf Course.

Williams has had the honor of meeting and playing with a number of golf legends over the years, including Lee Elder and Calvin Peete, who was the most successful black golfer in the PGA before the arrival of Tiger Woods. She has also played with Black Hall of Fame golfers Herbert Dixon and Rufus Lewis. Her impressive list of autographs includes Arnold Palmer, V.J. Singh, John Daly, Chi Chi Rodriguez and David Duval.

Many weekends, you will find Williams headed to play in another tournament, hoping to best her 200-yard drive hit in 2009. Besides her driver, Williams is especially fond of her six-iron, which she regularly chips with.

“I’ve learned to get under the ball really well with that club,” said Williams.

She has certainly found the “sweet spot” of the game, using it to teach valuable lessons to aspiring young golfers who come her way.

“The game teaches you to respect

others and to never give up,” commented Williams. “I love inspiring young people to do their best, get an education and give back to the community.”

She has been living out these words for almost thirty years, mentoring students and helping them receive college scholarships through her participation in the Rufus Lewis golf tournaments and many others. For Williams, it isn’t just about mastering the game of golf. It’s about helping others succeed in the game of life. ■



MOSS-DRAPED OAKS
CRYSTAL-CLEAR BLUE SPRINGS
HISTORIC MAIN STREETS

LOOKS LIKE

Vintage Florida

MADISON
COUNTY
FLORIDA

VISITMADISONFL.COM