



GULFPORT HISTORIAN

June, 1996

Newsletter of the Gulfport Historical Society

GHS OFFICERS

President

Judy Ryerson

Vice President

Cora Kent

Secretary

Roni Masse

Treasurer

Margaret Brooks

Board Members

Tim McCarthy

Chris Brown

Louise Love

Priscilla Hoon

Mary Atkinson

Museum Curator

Claudette Renney Dean

ARE YOUR DUES DUE?

Look closely at your mailing label at the date listed after your name. The date is the year/month that you last paid your dues. Dues are payable annually and we have enclosed a form to facilitate your renewal. If you are a LIFE MEMBER, or are all paid up, please pass the form along to a relative or friend who would be interested in joining and supporting the Gulfport Historical Society. Membership dues are a major contributing factor in the annual operating budget of the Museum and the Society.

MUSEUM REPORT

First, let me thank everyone for their support this year which has been very busy, productive and interesting. We have met some wonderful people who have become members, including Mr. Sam Johnson, who not only brought in some wonderful donations, but also tours of delightful new visitors to our museum.

We are currently working on family histories of the area and urge you to give us a hand with YOURS. Our video player is now operational thanks, to Ernie. We have a black and white TV to view them on. If anyone has a color TV they would like to donate, we would be more than happy to receive it. Our library of videos, both historic and living histories, is growing. Perhaps you would prefer to send us a living history on video instead of a written one. Make TAPES of the senior members of your family now, telling how it was and who was who in your family and send us a copy. (We're sure you will want to keep a copy for your own family to enjoy in the future).

We can always use more helpers in the museum. Remember, it is your Historical Museum, come be a part of the action.

Claudette Renney Dean, Curator

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING LOCATION CHANGED

In case you are not aware, the Museum has become full to overflowing with displays. We have tried to continue to hold our general meetings in the building, but the time has come when we had to look for an alternative meeting place, at least until we can get our addition built. After checking with the Library, the Community Center and the Senior Center, it was determined that none would have space available for our use on the nights we would need it. Therefore, effective Sept. 10, 1996, please respond to the **GULFPORT FIRE STATION** at 5312 23 Ave. So. for our next general membership meeting. (Just don't block the large garage doors with your car, as it might get run over by a fire truck). To answer your next question; yes, they have a very nice, large meeting room complete with all the amenities.

MUSEUM LIBRARY

A library and research division is being set up at our Museum by volunteers Marilyn and Frank Skeith. They are busy cataloging, stamping and placing items in the library for reference. While there is already quite a bit of information to work with, we would appreciate hearing from residents who have old books, papers, pictures, letters, etc, which they think would be of interest. Your donations will help expand the museum library and do a great service to the community.

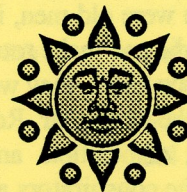
WISH LIST

The Museum is very much in need of the following items:

MODERN REFRIGERATOR (one built after 1948). If we get a newer one, the one we have in use now can be put on display as a museum piece.

Working table top **COPY MACHINE** - (We know the one we want but its \$700 new).

Small **color TV** to show our video's on.



OUR "RAY OF SUNSHINE"

Recently the St. Petersburg Hilton Hotel held its 1st Annual *Ray of Sunshine* awards luncheon. They had requested the names of deserving volunteers through-out the area from various agencies and organizations. When the request was received by our Curator, Claudette, she promptly nominated Margaret Brooks. Margaret serves as our Treasurer, Museum Docent and general assistant doing what ever is needed to help the Society and the Museum. Congratulations Margaret for a well deserved award and recognition.

"LOST AT SEA"

Lost at sea is an entry found in many of the early family histories, but one that I have always found very disturbing. It only raises the question where or why. Well this week while doing research on Pirates of the West Indies, one of these "why's" was answered. It also answers a question for the ROBERTS family of old Gulfport.

The trial was that of Charles Gibbs otherwise known as James D. Jeffers an atrocious villain and a native of Rhode Island, along with Thomas I. Wansley, a young black man from Delaware. From the legally taken evidence the following information emerged:

The ship was the "VINEYARD", William Thornby the Master, with William ROBERTS the Mate, (and the subject of this story). The crew was seven men, Charles Gibbs, John Brownrigg, Robert Dawes, Henry Atwell, James Talbot, A. Church, and Thomas I. Wansley.

Five days at sea, the ships Master made the error of informing the crew that there was fifty thousand dollars in specie (coin) on board. Many conversations took place on how the crew could get the money into their hands. Finally it was resolved that as the Master and Mate were old men, it was time they should die and make room for the rising generation. Also, they were of the opinion that the Mate, Mr. Roberts was of peevish disposition and he deserved death. The conspirators agreed to commit the crime of murder and piracy. The murder of the Master was assigned to Gibbs and Wansley, that of the Mate to Atwell and Church. The ship was bound for Philadelphia, and the decision was made the crime was to be committed off Cape Hatteras.

The night was dark, the Master was standing on the quarter deck, Dawes had the helm. Dawes called Wansley aft to trim the light, he moved as if to obey, but coming up behind Mr. Thornby, struck him on the back of neck with the pump brake. The Master fell forward yelling "Murder, Murder". They beat

him until he was dead and threw him overboard. Mr. Roberts hearing the commotion came up the companion ladder from the cabin, Atwell and Church waiting for him at the top. One struck him a blow with a club but it did not kill him, only knocked him back down the stairs. Gibbs went down the ladder to complete the job but could not find him in the dark and returned to the deck for a light. He descended again but was unable to overcome Mr. Roberts even with the aid of Church. They finally dragged him onto the deck, beat him some more, and threw him overboard. He was not dead and swam after the ship for five to ten minutes, crying for help before he sank.

The crew proceeded to distribute the money into equal portions. Twenty miles off the South Hampton light they scuttled the brig, and went to shore in the jolly, and long boat. The jolly sank and Atwell, Church and Talbot drowned. Gibbs, Wansley, Dawes and Brownrigg landed at Pelican Island and buried the money. They then crossed to Great Barn Island where a Mr. Leonard overheard them and sent for the magistrate. They were arrested, tried and hung for their crimes.

So now we can change the notation next to Mr. William Roberts name from "lost at sea" to "killed by pirates". Some feel that perhaps it was poetic justice as his relative Captain Bartholomew Roberts (Black Bart) of the 1700's was the undisputed king of the pirates.

by Claudette Renney Dean

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

At the first organizational meeting of the new fiscal year, the Gulfport Historical Society Board of Directors determined that there was a lot of work to be done. Besides the seven standing committees, there are several select committees that needed organizing. As a result, the Board of Directors first proposed, then voted to increase the number of board members by amending the By-Laws. This increases the complete board from four officers and three board members to four officers and five board

members. This increase will not only afford more members the opportunity to serve, but will also provide for more input and guidance for the organization. At the third Board of Directors meeting held since April 1st, the two new positions were filled (by election of the board as provided in our By-Laws) by Priscilla Hoon and Mary Atkinson.

The seven Standing Committees and the member(s) working on them, as of this printing, are as follows:

Editorial/Publishing??

Membership - Cora Kent, Margaret Brooks & . . .

Museum - Claudette Renney Dean, Margaret Brooks, Keith Hickman, Tim McCarthy, Marilyn & Keith Skeith.

Newsletter - Louise Love, Judy Ryerson & . . .

Program - Margaret Brooks & . . .

Publicity/Public Relations - Cora Kent & . . .

Preservation - Mary Atkinson & . .

Ways & Means - Mary Atkinson, Muriel LaBarbara & . . .

The Select Committees, so far this year, are as follows:

'97 Calendar - Judy Ryerson, Mary Atkinson, Priscilla Hoon & . . .

Project Manager - Christine Brown, with assistance by Judy Ryerson, Ruth Huff-Saylor & . . .

City Birthday Bash (Oct. 12th) - Margaret Brooks & . . .

ANYONE wishing to serve on ANY committee, PLEASE contact me at 343-9614. Each committee needs to have at LEAST three people. If I am not home, just leave your name, phone number and the committee you are interested in, on the machine. I WILL RETURN YOUR CALL.

I would like to call your attention to the Select Committee - **PROJECT MANAGER**. This particular committee has been set up to help search for, send for and write grants for our museum. The grants we will be looking for are not only

for the restoration and preservation of the present building but for funding the proposed addition. Grants are also needed for such things as micro-filming delicate historical and research documents and a micro-film reader. Micro-filming is the only way to insure the accessibility of the information in these documents for the future. There are many grants out there available thru non-governmental organizations, business, foundations, etc. The trick is to find them. For instance, Ruth has volunteered to help research who, what, and where they may be found. The Project Manager, Christine would then work with Mike Konefal of the City to write up the necessary particulars to apply for any available funds.

During the past winter season, we were fortunate to have the assistance of Lindy Marshall as a docent at the Museum. Lindy was able to keep the Museum open on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Unfortunately for us, she is moving from the area and has had to cease her work with us. There is a real need for volunteers to keep the Museum open, even for just a few hours at a time several days a week. Many of the state funded grants depend on the NUMBER of DAYS a year we are open to the public. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Claudette at 576-7478. Because of the hot summer weather, Claudette will be training people to work starting in the fall.

Over the past year and a half, we have been actively supporting the restoration of the Largo Feed Store state grant request. Margaret Brooks and Mary Atkinson even went to Tallahassee, at their own expense, to help them in their efforts to obtain this grant. While there, they were also laying the ground work for our own attempt at a grant with the support of the Largo Area Historical Society. On Monday evening, June 9th, Margaret, Mary and myself attended a picnic outing held by the Largo Area Historical Society. They announced that the call had come that very day, the grant was theirs! They wish

to extent a big THANK YOU to all the members of our Society that had written letters, made phone calls, sent faxes, and signed petitions on their behalf.

Tony Vikrov, President of the Garden Gallery (Formerly known as the Starving Artists) is very actively trying to bring all the organizations together to help one another. Tony wrote a walking tour about charming, historic Gulfport starting from Clymer Park, thru the Museum to the art village and ending at the Historic Casino. We concur, that the more we interact and support each other, including businesses, the more we all benefit.

It has been decided by the Board that the Museum project should be done in two phases. Phase One will be the restoration and preservation of the basic, historical building. This will include returning to the "look" of the original church building with the bell cupola on top., hopefully to house a bell we can ring. The plans call for repairs to bad wood, shoring up the floor and even replacing some of the old wiring. Phase Two will be the much needed addition. We will gladly look at ANY suggestions anyone has for raising the necessary fund. While we can hope to receive grants for some of the funding, most grants require MATCHING FUNDS to be raised by us first.

1995 was a very productive year for the Society and the Museum. Let us continue our progress together in 1996.

Judy Ryerson, President

HISTORIC DESIGNATION

By the time you read this newsletter, the Historic Preservation Board of Gulfport and the City Council will have officially designated the Gulfport Historical Museum as a Historic Landmark. The Museum is only the second building so designated in the City with the Casino being the first. Being officially designated by the City is a major step in obtaining state grants.

MUSEUM SUMMER HOURS

DUE TO A SHORTAGE OF DOCENTS, AND THE HOT WEATHER, WE HAVE HAD TO CURTAIL THE MUSEUM HOURS AND DAYS FOR THE SUMMER. AS OF THIS WRITING, WE WILL BE OPEN SATURDAY MORNINGS FROM 10 AM TO 12 NOON AND THURSDAY AFTERNOONS FROM 1 PM TO 3 PM. CALL 327-0505 BEFORE GOING FOR A VISIT FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION OR TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT.

ACTIVITY CALENDAR

June 22nd	Sat. In the Art Village
July 4th	Parade/Fire Works!!
July 5th	Evening Art Walk
July/Aug.	Work on '97 Calendar
Aug. 2nd	Evening Art Walk
Sept. 10th	1st General Meeting of the fall - in the FIRE STATION
Oct. 8th	2nd General Meeting in the Fire Station and the '97 CALENDARS GO ON SALE!
Oct. 12th	CITY BIRTHDAY BASH



THE MEMORY TREE

Order your "Memory Tree" leaves (\$50) and oranges (\$100) today to ensure that the names of your loved ones will be passed on to future generations. Call Margaret Brooks at 321-1948 with your order.

The "Memory Tree" will be a **life size**, 3 dimensional Florida orange tree with engraved metal leaves and oranges on display within the new addition to the Museum.

GULFPORT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

On Wednesday, June 5th, the School Advisory Board of Gulfport Elementary met to decide whether to try and upgrade the existing building or **TEAR IT DOWN**. The school is featured for the month of September in this year's historic calendar. It was opened in 1926 and is built in the Mediterranean Revival style popular at that time. This historic structure has educated up to 5 generations of Gulfport children.

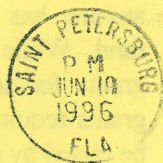
The Gulfport Historical Society has gone on record supporting the renovation of the existing building to enhance the quality of education while preserving the external appearance of the building. The Board voted to recommend the upgrading at this time. The **final** decision will be made by the Pinellas County School Board.

Please make your opinion known on this issue and tell us your history with the school, if any. Write to the

Gulfport Historical Society

P. O. Box 5152
Gulfport, FL 33737

Gulfport Historical Society
P. O. Box 5152
Gulfport, Florida 33737



Frances Purdy
Life member
3010 59 St. So.
Apt. #203
Gulfport, FL 33707

GULFPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Gulfport Historical Society is a non-profit association, dedicated to the gathering and distribution of the history of Gulfport and surrounding areas and promotes the preservation of our community. The Society operates The Historical Museum, publishes a newsletter and yearly calendar and maintains a library of information on Gulfport's past.

Our Society meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month and, beginning January 9, 1997, on the 2nd Thursday, at 7:30 pm from September to April at the GULFPORT FIRE STATION, 5312 23RD AVENUE SOUTH Gulfport. The newsletter will specify all events, including the exact date, time and location.

Each year the Society presents several programs of special interest, such as Hands Across the Bay, Gulfport's Birthday Party, Nostalgia Day, and The Annual Lantern Tour. There are many opportunities for members able to participate as committee members, museum docents, visitors, or donors. Please contact any member for more information.

This year, our society is building a fund for remodeling the Museum and expanding the space for display and meeting areas. Several fund-raising projects are currently underway and we are always asking for volunteers and project ideas. A Historic Patio is being created around the old fire siren in front of the Museum. Octagon blocks and paving bricks are needed to complete this project. A Memorial Orange Tree will be erected in the new addition as a token of gratitude for the donors of this expansion project. Leaves and oranges are available for engraving.

Membership into the Society is open to everyone in harmony with our objectives and please consider this an invitation to you to join our group. Your participation and friendship would greatly benefit our City. Yearly dues, which include a membership card and newsletter, are \$5.00 for individuals and \$10.00 for families. Lifetime memberships are \$50.00 and business or organization memberships are \$25.00.

Today's Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ I may be able to help by: _____