



THE GULFPORT HISTORIAN

Vol. 5 - - - Newsletter of the Gulfport Historical Society - - - March 1984

MEETING NOTICES

Everyone interested is invited, and urged, to attend our meetings. You do not have to be a member of the Society.

NO meetings in March and April.

March 10th (Sat.) and March 11th (Sun.) are workdays at the Gems Building.

March 24th (Sat.) and March 25th (Sun.) are also workdays at the Gems Building.

April 14th (Sat.) Combined Nostalgia Day and Disston City Day.

May meeting - A program to be announced later.

June meeting - Bi-annual election of officers.

At our Feb. meeting our guest speaker was Ms. Diane Marcov, instructor of creative writing, S.P.J.C. Her talk was informative and stimulated many questions from the members present. Thanks to Vice-President, Genevieve Smith for introducing Ms. Marcov.

Dear Friends:

Ruby Walker, as Sec. and I signed the lease for the Gems Bldg. Jan 26, 1984. The building is ours for 10 years with option to renew. We will have work days March 10th and 11th and March 24th and 25th. We need to scrape and paint the building, replace tile in one bathroom. Donations of white paint or money would be appreciated.

Please try to be there to help clean and paint. If this physical labor is not possible for you, perhaps you would bring food or drink for the work-

ers. Please let me know.

April 14, 1984 will be our Nostalgia Day which we will call Disston City Day. In 1884 Hamilton Disston platted the city with 100 ft. wide streets and named it Disston City. I would like to have a display in the Museum on any material we can turn up on H. Disston.

If you know anyone who was born or lived in Disston City please let me know. We would like to interview them, if we have not already done so.

I want to thank Bill Simonds for his work on our first newsletters. He did a fantastic job. I also want to thank Ed Maloney for assuming this job. It is sincerely appreciated.

If anyone has any ideas concerning money making projects, please contact me or Coleen Camp.

Catherine Hickman

From the Editor:

My name is Ed. Maloney and I am the new Editor of the "Gulfport Historian". I have been a resident of Gulfport for the past 15 years. I wish to thank my predecessor, Mr. Willard B. Simonds, the original Editor for his cooperation and invaluable assistance to me. Future plans for the Historian are to publish Four issues each year, March, June, Sept., and December. The Historian welcomes input and suggestions from Members and Friends. Your comment, praise and criticism will all be equally welcome.

We invite other Clubs and Organizations to have a table at Chase Park April 14, 1984 during Disston City Day.

THE GULFPORT HISTORIAN

Official Newsletter of the Gulfport Historical Society. Distributed free to Society Members, Gulfport City Officials and all others interested.

Editor: Edward J. Maloney

3102 57th St. So. (343-7498)
Gulfport, Fl., 33707

Gulfport Historical Society

A voluntary, non-profit, educational organization whose purposes are to collect, preserve, and to publish the history of Gulfport and the surrounding area. Dues are: Individual, \$5 per year; Family \$10 per year; Life \$50.-

Officers (terms expire June 30, 1985)

President, Catherine A. Hickman

Vice-President, Genevieve Smith

Secretary, Ruby Walker

Treasurer, Doris Brown

Directors: (terms expire June 30, 1984)

Nathan White

Mary Atkinson

Judith Ryerson

Address of the Society

3006 Beach Blvd. S., (321-7095)
Gulfport, Fl., 33707

Special thanks to Jack Lefton and Betty Cleveland for the countless hours they have spent transcribing tapes.

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

We had the distinct advantage of meeting with the Executive Board January 25, for mutual discussions of goals and attainments to date. Ten of us apparently agreed that from many discussions we have decided our special tasks shall be to:

1. try to set standards of writing and content suitable for our "hoped-for" readership,
2. avoid, if possible, including any statements that might now or in the future, harm people or memories of them,
3. establish and continuously update a production schedule,
4. help define specific tasks for other groups whose findings could be channelled into our minds,
5. work harmoniously with one another and with all we contact, mindful that our work is designed to give our community a factual, readable story of its

development from earliest available heresay and/or written words up till a "recent date" which we shall determine, and further, we agreed that we shall accept all the help we can get and be grateful for it!

Many long time residents have been interviewed on tape by Helen Ross, several have typed these and now, others are reviewing and indexing them for specific use in the many areas to be covered. Genevieve Smith read her beautifully written history of schools - our first "ready for the printer" chapter; and Bill Simonds shared his vivid description of railroads servicing Disston City. Agnes Conron has abstracted Minutes of City Council to the mid '30s noting items of concern to other writers; and she plans to study the development of businesses in our community. Letters, clippings and calls continuously increase our growing inventory of data on which hours have been spent by a "collecting group" headed by Mary Atkinson. Local organizations are being asked to send brief resumes of their origin, major functions and present concerns in service, civic and social activities - with a deadline for inclusion in the book of March first! January 1985 is not far off - when we hope to be ready for drafts and total readings! We repeat our request for help - typists, writers and especially, for those with information that others will want to know. Can anyone tell us about the FISH and GAME CLUB - - the beginnings of the COMMUNITY CLUB? Local churches have given us their reports, many have brought in family memorabilia and we anticipate lots of response now before summer hits us again.

Above all, this group is one of people involved because we are willing to share talents and a variety of backgrounds in a goal of writing an appropriate story about Gulfport. We hope the publication will be light enough in character to intrigue many readers especially those who are or who have been, residents; factual enough to help, if such there be, scholars concerned about our doings and history. We hope for enough pictures and humor to dilute the more documented reporting; and to be able to launch our production in time to help celebrate our City's 75th birthday, October 11, 1985!
March 1984 Frances Purdy

THE STETSON LAW SCHOOL BUILDING

The 1920's boom time brought growth and development in Pinellas County.

The Stetson Law School buildings were constructed during 1925-26 by Mr. and Mrs. I. M. (Jack) Taylor for use as a luxury hotel. The ROYLAT (Taylor spelled backward) was built by architect Paul Reed of Miami as a duplicate of a Spanish feudal castle or monastery of the Middle Ages. Towers, turrets, gates, massive arches and grilled windows surrounded a great patio with palms and fountains. Special features were two great towers - one with a circular room thirty feet in diameter at the top of the tower. The other one hundred and ten foot, octagonal main tower was a replica of the golden "Torre Del Oro" tower of Seville, Spain. The dining room, or Great Hall, was similar to a Spanish cathedral with its beamed high ceiling.

This magnificent hotel was acclaimed "a fragment of old Spain transplanted in to this tropical setting." It was truly one of the most beautiful hotels in the South. Its elegance and magnificance, however did not save it from the disastrous "bust" of 1928, when it was forced to close because of hard times.

Genevieve Smith

FUNDS NEEDED

The Ways and Means Committee are accepting suggestions to raise money for the purpose of paying the MONTHLY maintenance Bills for OUR meeting place, THE GEMS BUILDING

THE TAMPA BAY REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

This advisory council is composed of 20 elected officials and 10 gubernatorial appointees from Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco, Manatee and Sarasota Counties pursuant to Section 163.01 of the Florida Statutes. It serves local governments, city and county, in regional, metropolitan, county and municipal planning matters involving land use, water resources, highways, recreational areas, sewage and garbage disposal, urban redevelopment, and other matters concerning the acquisition, planning, construction, development, financing, control, use, improvement, and disposition of lands, buildings, structures, facilities in the public interest, or for public purposes involving the expenditure or public funds. This active organization is also responsible for the distribution of public monies, (grants and loans) for the betterment of the public. Gulfport, through its present representative on the Council, has been the recipient of several grants which have built our Senior Citizens Multi-Purpose Center, the Gulfport Extended Mini-Bus service, and other city-wide programs. It has been my pleasure to have served on this Council as a member of the Executive Board and as Chairman of that group for 10 years. Each Government Unit pays annual dues to belong. Our share, as a member city contributes \$2,000 a year. This has proved to be a splendid investment considering the benefits we have received. The Regional Planning also provides monies and services to support our senior citizen's programs, including congregate dining, meals on wheels, health and legal support, and other advantages. If readers have questions or comments regarding this vital and helpful program, I would be happy to try to answer them.

Frederick S. Allen
Councilman Ward 1

The word "Research" has several connotations. Often it seems to infer a dull repetitive, frustrating and even boring procedure. Not so in the case of local history. Reading the minutes of the Gulfport Town Council in the twenties and thirties has been a pleasant, even exciting experience. There is humor, of course, and mystery and a realization of how very shrewd and sensible most of those early councilmen and town officials were and how diligently they tried to do their best for their community.

It was a bit like attending the meetings twice - sometimes three or four times a month - noticing how they voted, seeing the divisions between two opposing sides, wondering what was behind their actions. They were cautious, always getting bids on work or materials, postponing action in order to get more information before taking action, getting periodic reports on work in progress, sometimes deciding to check with other localities to see how they handled a similar situation, etc.

Whatever their problems - and they had many of course, they tackled them vigorously. From chickens running loose in the streets to collection of unpaid taxes in order to meet payments, also long over-due to bond holders, all were considered thoughtfully and solved.

That they had quite a degree of success is proven by a headline in the St. Petersburg Times of Sept. 10, 1942.

ST. PETERSBURG TIMES ACCLAIMS
GULFPORT MODEL FOR ALL FLORIDA.

We'd like to thank the Gulfport Garden and Bird Club for the above quotation taken from their Scrap Book for 1942.

Agnes Conron

THANK YOU

We are sincerely grateful to the following for donating chairs :

The Red Cross
Thelma Mathews
Carl Norberg
Yvonne Johnson

Thank you to the Boca Ceiga Yacht Club for their scrapbook - -

and - - to

The Civic Assoc. for their scrapbooks.

Our THANKS to George Paine for pressure cleaning the Gems Building.

DISSTON CITY CEMETERY

The fact that Disston City did have a cemetery is proven by articles in The Sea Breeze of June 15, 1886 and of Feb. 1, 1887. One of the Tampa newspapers of the same time period had an article about it. Our first settler, James Barnett, who died on Thursday, September 23, 1886 was buried there.

QUESTIONS

- 1.) Where was the Disston City Cemetery and how big was it?
- 2.) How many burials were made in it?
- 3.) When was it discontinued?
- 4.) What happened to the bodies when it was discontinued?

If you have any information, or clues, about the Disston City Cemetery, please call Bill Simonds, 345-7938, or write him at 6218 - 10th Ave. So.

GULFPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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