



THE GULFPORT HISTORIAN

Volume

Official Newsletter of the Gulfport Historical Society

May 1995

SELECTED ARE ELECTED

On April 11th the G.H.S. held it's Annual meeting with the election of officers. Elected were the following It is our privilege to have Judy Ryerson retained as our President, remaining in the position she has held for the balance of the term left vacant by the untimely death of Catherine Hickman. The next selection was Cora Kent as Vice President, Cora brings her experience and knowledge to our organization. We welcome Roni Masse, quite a capable candidate, to fill the position of Secretary. Meanwhile, the ever competent Margaret Brooks moved from Secretary to Treasurer. Our former Treasurer, Inez Foley, chose not to run again as she is taking a sabbatical and tossing some commitments to the four winds. Go for it Inez, you deserve it!

NOSTALGIA DAY '95

The Annual Nostalgia Day held a host of events that were shared by the Methodist Church's Springfest giving the visitors a choice of activities.

The flag raising was beautifully performed by Gulfport's American Legion Post # 125. Many thanks to the Post. The National Anthem was sung elegantly by the voice of Sid Todsén. This patriotic event makes you proud to be an American.

Strolling through our historic Chase Park you could find a variety of entertainment. You could hear from the "One More Time" orchestra, providing music for dancing inside Scout Hall playing the oldies but goodies, and the "Lyp Singers", yielding their vocal rendition of many old and familiar songs. It just made you want to sing along which joyfully some of you did.

If you missed the "Trolley Ride" and Gulfport tour, hosted and narrated by our President Judy Ryerson, you missed one of the main attractions. Our Trolley Tour gives you a historical outline of old Gulfport as you ride along and leave the driving to us.

The Methodist Men served their flavorful hot dogs with that good old cooked outdoors flavor. Then from under the trees east of the Museum, Laura Pieper and husband

provided the Sloppy Joes that were chin dripping delicious. Meanwhile, Keith Hickman and Mike Foley were busy scooping up the ever popular 10 cent ice cream cones with the assistance of Boy Scout Troop # 315.

Fortunately the rain came to a halt before the event began, preventing a social disaster, as you visited with the Gulfport Quilters in Scout Hall. Inside the Museum, Curator Claudette Renney-Dean and her staff were there to accommodate all the visitors and answer their questions. Due to the threat of rain, coffee and cake was served inside the building creating an indoor traffic jam.

We extend our appreciation to Mary Atkinson who chaired the event and her helpers and to all who participated in the development and planning for this festive occasion. Hope to see you there next year and with the help of Mother Nature, good weather will again prevail for our Annual Nostalgia Day.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

So far this has been a very busy year and it's not over yet! Starting in March the Society began its participation in the year long celebration of the **State of Florida's Sesquicentennial**, the **85th Anniversary of the City of Gulfport** and the **Historical Society Museum**, as well as the **Casino's 60th Anniversary!** (Remember, the Museum was originally the Methodist Church built in 1910).

Nostalgia Day was a great success even if the weather was threatening. On April 15th, we participated in the 1st Annual City-wide Spring Festival by holding open house and setting up a table at the Chamber of Commerce Show Case in the Casino. We are happy to report there were substantial sales of books, pins, key chains and calendars. Keith Hickman, Mary Atkinson and yours truly manned the table and had a good time telling people about our society and museum.

STILL TO COME:

July 4th - we will be participating in the City-wide celebration with a "float" in the big parade. Be sure to watch for the announcement of a **WATER BASEBALL** game to be held at the beach and sponsored by the Society.

October 7th, 10 am - 3 pm, mark your calendar now! We will be holding a final big Birthday bash for the City of Gulfport and our Museum. Some of the events include: Civil War Re-enactors, SPIFFTS food tasting and dancers, Fire Department fish fry, petting

zoo, horse drawn carriage rides, giant birthday cake, and much much more. That is just during the day! Also on **October 7th, 7:30 pm**, we will host a **MILITARY BALL** at the Casino. The time frame is the Civil War through World War II. For even more fun, come in the period dress of your choice. On this occasion we will be marking the **CASINO'S 60th Anniversary**. Come join the party.

AND DON'T FORGET:

June 17th, 10:30 am, program at the museum on Cecil's Diary "The Charting of Tampa Bay 1757".

Sept. 19th, 10:30 am, program at the museum on Watson's Diary 1861 "Gulfport in the Civil War".

Sept. 23rd, open house at Stetson University for Society members.

For more information on these activities or to offer your assistance, please contact our Curator and Sesquicentennial coordinator Claudette Renney-Dean 576-7478.

Judy Ryerson, President

PAINTING RESTORATION

We recognize the importance in protecting and preserving paintings depicting the artists of Gulfport's past. The paintings in question were created by Richard Gray for the Casino. They were removed from the Casino in the early 50's and after being passed around to different locations over the next 40 years, they ended up in storage at the St. Petersburg Historical Society warehouse. Earlier this year, through the dedicated efforts

of Claudette Renney-Dean, the paintings were retrieved. With the help of the City they were returned to the Casino in time for its 60th Anniversary. A special thank you to Johnny Green, Casino Manager who has rehung the paintings as close as possible to their original locations, for his interest and desire to properly display these very large, historical paintings.

Due to their long storage, the condition of the oils have begun to deteriorate some. During the April meeting, members passed a hat and dug into their own pockets to start raising funds for the restoration work. The total cost of the project will be about \$300.00 for the materials and equipment that must be used. Lynn S. Brown, a talented local artist, is volunteering her time, talent and services for this project to restore the artistry of Richard Gray's paintings. As of this writing, the Gulfport Community Players generously donated \$100.00 toward the restoration, but approximately \$150.00 is still needed to begin the work. We reach out to you, our members and friends, asking for contributions to be applied to this artistic project.

For those that never knew Richard "Dick" Gray, many old timers remember him as "The Gulfport Artist". He painted many murals in homes and on buildings around the area as well as free hanging works. His wife, Mary Lou Gray was the principal of Gulfport Elementary School for 25 years.

Some of Mr. Gray's oil paintings were featured during the months of February and March in the Museum as part the display "Artist of the Past, Present, and Future".

WE ARE GRATEFUL

On April 28th and 29th the Gulfport Senior Players presented a production at the Senior Center and donated \$130.00 of their gate receipts to the Historical Society Museum operating budget. It takes about \$1,700.00 annually to operate the Museum.

LUNCHEON AT THE DON

Invited guests attended a luncheon hosted by the Pinellas County Historical Society that included a guided tour of the "Pink Palace of Pass-A-Grille", narrated by a lovely young woman as she gave an account of the colorful history of the hotel that went back to its opening in 1928.

In the dining room, located on the fifth floor, luncheon tables were adorned with fresh magnolias that gave the atmosphere a southern charm.

After the luncheon guests were invited to tour the Gulf Beaches Historical Museum. Their curator, Barbara Smith greeted everyone when they entered and Donna Yoder was extremely helpful with some research on World War II. Visitors were impressed by their progress as they are only two years old. The time spent was well worth the jaunt. This occasion was a splendid way to give other Historical Society members a chance to become acquainted with their Museum Committee and exchange ideas.

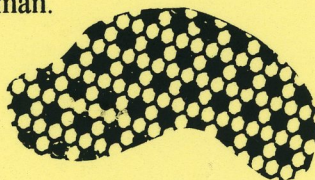
A FRIEND

There's no friend like an old friend
Who has shared our morning days,
No greeting like their welcome
No homage like their praise
Fame is like a senseless flower,
With gaudy crown of gold.
Friendship is the breathing rose,
With sweets in every fold.

Author Ralph Waldo Emerson

XERISCAPING UPDATE

Check out our garden plot on the east side of the stairway as you enter the museum and you will notice the plants are surviving during this dry spell. Our drought tolerant vegetation is kept under the watchful eye of Susan Silva, our volunteer gardener. Susan also cares for the cedar tree planted by the Museum Committee in memory of our late founder Catherine Hickman.



CREATING A HISTORIC PATIO

In the year 1928, Gulfport installed an electric fire siren. Through the years it could not only be heard by the residents of Gulfport, but its sound waves were so audible, it could be heard for many miles on the southern shores of the Gulf Beaches. Its main function was to beckon volunteer Firefighters. The siren sounded at noon, six days a week, but never on Sundays.

In the early 1940's the City purchased a new air raid siren, placing it next to the original on the water tower, keeping the vigilant old siren for a backup. In the 40's, the siren was blown nightly at 9 pm, to alert the children under 18, that they should be in their own yards. In 1988, the City decided to dismantle the water tower and to retire the sirens from active duty.

Retired Fire Chief, Nathan L. White negotiated with the City and got the original siren donated to the Historical Society. It now rests in front of the museum on a concrete stand made by Roy Thompson and son Jaimie. Thank you gentlemen.

The Museum Committee is making an appeal for the donation of octagonal blocks to create a patio around the siren, in front of the building. This would greatly enhance the appearance of the grounds and show off our vigilant servant. Many of you have one or two blocks lying around your property ... due to their historical significance in depicting our public walkways, it seems appropriate to use them for this project.

The Historical Society will gratefully accept any donations of these blocks. Phone 327-0505 and leave a message if you are unable to deliver. A member will make arrangements to transport them to the museum. We would also be pleased to accept any street paving bricks to create a border for the patio.

Watch for a VERY important announcement about the museum!

STANDING COMMITTEE'S

The Gulfport Historical Society has 7 standing committee's that have not been fully utilized the past few years. The time has come to get as many members involved as possible in these committee's. Please contact the Society at 327-0505 and leave a message telling us your name and which committee you are interested in.

1. Editorial/Publications Committee Prepares and/or edits manuscripts for publication.

2. Membership Committee Encourage citizens to participate and join the Society.

3. Museum Committee Assist the Curator in cataloging, etc and to work as docents.

4. Newsletter Committee Preparation of the GULFPORT HISTORIAN quarterly.

5. Program Committee Help select programs for general meetings.

6. Publicity/Public Relations Committee Responsible for new released to the media

7. Ways and Means Committee Devise methods of raising fund for the Society and Museum.

GIVE US A CALL AT 327-0505

LOOK AT YOUR ADDRESS LABEL

If there is a RED DOT by your name, your member-ship dues have not been paid for 1995!

Due to the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, we will be forced to purge our mailing list before the next edition. **Don't miss out!** Mail your renewal today to:

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

Annual membership fees are:
Individual \$5.00
Family \$10.00
Business/Club \$25.00
Life Membership is \$50.00.

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