



THE GULFPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY, 2013

This logo is from the Chamber of Commerce's First Annual Gulfport Seafood Festival, held on Gulfport Beach in March 1985

SPRING FLING DANCE PARTY TO BENEFIT THE MUSEUM

On Friday evening, March 1, from 8 to 11 p.m., there will be a dance party at the Casino, with a DJ playing music from the 60s to the present. Admission is only \$5 and it's just going to be a fun time, with a cash bar and a chance to dance as much as you want!



Kids dancing at the Casino in the 1950s

A Word from Our President

The March 1 dance at the Casino is a much-needed fundraiser for the Museum. Your support would be greatly appreciated - besides, we think it will be a great way for a group of friends to have a fun time together! Miki

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NEW EXHIBIT ON WALT AND BERT WILLIAMS

The latest in our series of special exhibits honoring the first families of Gulfport features Walter "Mr. Gulfport" Williams and his son Bert, both mayors and men of much importance to our town.

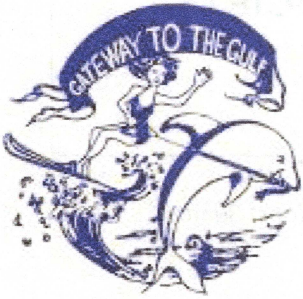
Born in North Carolina, Walt was working as a shipping hand for cargoes of lumber from Appalachicola when during one trip to Pinellas he met a group of Disston City fishermen and signed on with them. A few years later it was he who guided the Philadelphia men building the streetcar line to a site for their terminus, where the Casino would eventually be located, so it is probably true that Gulfport would not even have been here if not for Walt.



For many years Walt captained "The Don" on its trips to Pass-A-Grille and party fishing excursions (\$2 a day).

He served on the town council from 1940 to 1953, taking two terms out to be mayor. He died in 1957.

Walt's son Bert, born in 1913, served six terms on city council and was mayor from 1987 to 1991. He died in 2001.



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MYSTERY AT THE MUSEUM

Several years ago we ran a series of photos in the *Gabber*, called "Mystery at the Museum," in which we asked people to identify a few of the odd items in our collection, such as old fluters, irons, juicers, and scoops. Today we are adding a couple of new mysteries, because unlike the earlier ones, we really don't know the answers!



This "scissor-type" kitchen tool, for instance, might not really be a kitchen tool, but what else has a scoop and a loop, as our new Stetson volunteer Josh Moses describes it?



And here's Josh with a large hex block that has "Gulfport Stone Co." incised into it. The stone was recently donated by Phil Barrs, and is a complete mystery! Was there ever a Gulfport Stone Company, and if so, when and where?

Time for another excerpt from Nathan White's memoirs . . .

"In 1932 my first grade class took a field trip and visited 'Old Ironsides,' anchored off St. Pete pier. That trip is so vivid to me even now that I remember climbing down into a large round bottom open boat with wooden board seats crosswise and away we went from the pier. All excited and half scared, it was so exciting! As we rounded in towards the side of the ship approaching the gangway, the wave action between our boat and the ship splashed a lot of water up into the air and in our boat and soaked us real good.

"I remember going up the outboard ladder just a-swinging and a-swaying, but don't remember anything more about the tour of the ship or the return trip to shore. She was anchored about a half mile off the end of the pier in St. Pete, and I am certain that we were not given any life jackets at any time.

"WCW, that is weird and even more scary as I think of it now."

The U.S.S. Constitution, 'Old Ironsides,' did indeed make a grand tour, arriving in St. Petersburg in April of 1932, then traveling on to Cuba and Panama, up the west coast all the way to Washington state and back, arriving home in Boston in 1934. What a memory Nathan had!

**Coming in March – save these dates!
Details next month.**

- * Antiques in the Park, Saturday, March 16
- * Annual Easter Bonnet Tea Party with Vintage Treasures and Fashions produced by Memory Lane at the Museum, Saturday, March 23