



THE GULFPORT HISTORIAN

Volume 47

Official Newsletter of The Gulfport Historical Society

January 1995

HAPPY BIRTHDAY GULFPORT 1910 - 1995

Join us throughout 1995 in celebrating:

The 150th Anniversary of the State of Florida

The 130th Anniversary of the settling of what became Gulfport

The 85th Anniversary of the Incorporation of the City of Gulfport

The 60th Anniversary of the current Gulfport Casino

***PLEASE LET US KNOW WHERE YOU CAN HELP
YOU ARE WELCOME AND NEEDED.***

A Tribute to our Founder and President

CATHERINE HICKMAN

The Gulfport Historical Society has lost its founder and President, Catherine Hickman. "Cathy" as she was known by all, first came to this area in 1943 from her native New York. She was a graduate of Florida State University and did graduate work at Duke University and the University of Mexico in Mexico City. In 1950, she was president of the Modern Language Teachers Association of Florida. She taught Spanish for three years at St. Petersburg High School and a year at Boca Ciega High School. Cathy then went on to teach in Idaho where she met her husband, Keith Hickman.

After their marriage, they moved to Gulfport where Cathy started her civic life in earnest. In 1967 she served as a Den Mother for Pack 315; in 1969 she was Chairperson of the Women's Auxiliary for Little League. Seeing a need for girls to have their own league, she founded the Girls Softball League of Gulfport and coached a team. During this time she began to sponsor teams, having opened Hickman Realty, and continued to sponsor teams in all Gulfport Leagues until she retired from real estate in the late 1980's.

During her college years, Cathy had developed a love for live theater. So in 1980 she founded the Gulfport Community Players to bring live theater to the people of Gulfport. While she did not intend for this to be a teaching organization it did turn out that way. Many of the better known performers in local theater, two in theater in New York and one at Universal Studios can trace their beginnings to working with the Gulfport Community Players and Catherine Hickman. This organization continues to be the last true "community" theater in the area. No one is ever paid for directing, performing or working with the Players.

Having gotten the Gulfport Community Players off and running, in the spring of 1981, she turned her attention to the history of her adopted home town. With her desire to preserve what had created this unique small town atmosphere surrounded by so much urbanization,

she founded the Gulfport Historical Society. She had two main goals in mind. One, write the history for posterity and two, establish a museum for the preservation of that history.

For the first goal, she assembled a group of people to go forth and interview the older members of the original families. As a result, over 90 tape recordings were made from which were gleaned the stories that go to make up "Our Story of Gulfport, Florida" published in 1985, in time for the 75th Anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Gulfport.

As for the second goal, Cathy had worked long and hard with the Scout groups and others, to save Scout Hall and the GEMS building from demolition. When the City opened the Multi-Purpose Senior Center vacating the GEMS building, Cathy approached City Council and requested that the Society be allowed to use it as a museum. Under her persistent and tireless direction and with the help of many volunteers, the building was repaired and cleaned in time to officially be open as a museum in 1984.

At the time of her passing, Cathy was serving once again as President of the Gulfport Historical Society. She was a life member of the Friends of the Library, Gulfport Community Players, Gulfport Historical Society, the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation and the Gulfport Chamber of Commerce. Cathy was appointed as a member of the Historic Preservation Committee for the City of Gulfport, and served until forced to resign due to ill health.

Cathy had a way of drawing out the very best in people from all walks of life. She could see their potential and would help and guide them to achieve. She felt very strongly that everyone should give back to the community in which they lived and worked. This, true citizen of the community will be missed by family and friends alike.

As for me personally, I lost the most influential woman in my life after my mother. Good-by dear friend and mentor.

Judy Ryerson, President

MUSEUM REPORT

The Museum has had a steadily growing stream of visitors on Wednesdays and Saturdays. More and more people are learning about us and coming in for a visit. On February 13th, we are holding an open house the City of Gulfport Employees, on Feb. 25th we will be visited by the children of Gulfport Elementary School. We have also had more visitors wanting to use a research materials.

From January 25th through February 25th we will be featuring the early artists of Gulfport. Many of their works will be on display with as much information as we can gather about each artist.

A new feature for our general meetings is "Guess What It Is". There are several very strange looking items on display and if you can guess how or what the featured item was used for there will be a prize.

Claudette Renney-Dean
Museum Curator

READING MATERIAL

The reference librarian has provided us with a list of recommended books available in our fabulously expanded Gulfport Library. Give yourself a treat and go for a visit if you have not been in since the reopening.

Victorian Florida : America's last frontier
Rinhart, Floyd, FLORIDA 975.9 RINH

St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream, 1888-1950
Arsenault, Raymond FLORIDA 975.963 AR

Florida Historical Markers & Sites :
a guide to more than 700 historic sites : includes the complete text of each marker
Boone, Floyd E. FLORIDA 975.9 BOO

The Florida Reader :
visions of paradise, from 1530 to the present
Edited by Maurice O'Sullivan, Jr., and Jack C. Lane

Gulfport City Chronicles
Pacheco, Ferdie FLORIDA 975.965 PACHECO

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON HER WAY TO THE MUSEUM (with apologies to Zero Mostel and the Forum)

At St. Petersburg Beach in the early fall of 1979 and not being much of a beach person, the Sunday St. Petersburg Times was consulted for "Things to Do". A slide lecture was advertised. The location was found on the city hall map - - Gulfport? The name of the organization was rather strange, Konglomerati? The subject might not have appealed to everyone -- William Morris? Aha, here was a name recognized from a British TV program on the "pre-Raphaelites" so enjoyed while living in England from 1974-77.

The trek from St. Pete Beach to Gulfport was made one evening when her spouse was at a chorus rehearsal. The guest book was signed; the slide lecture was excellent as presented by Dr. Richard Mathews, now on the faculty of the University of Tampa.

On the return for the winter (79080) a newsletter from Konglomerati was received. And, lo and behold, there was a plea for volunteers. That seemed intriguing and could be a break from the seagulls. So off she went to volunteer in this Konglomerati place where she found very talented and caring people, Richard Mathews, Barbara Russ-Cho and Ruth Pettis. Richard and Barbara were the co-directors and Ruth had an art studio in the building located around the corner from St. Vincent's Thrift Shop. The people and the work were stimulating and pleasant so the volunteering went on for the next eight winters.

Meanwhile, after four winters on the Gulf, the couple left for the calmer waters of the Bay, having discovered Town Shores when buying fish at the Town Shores Plaza. By this time Konglomerati was relocated and finally dissolved (or she might be there yet). But guess what? Gulfport had a historical society which had a museum(!) that needed a volunteer to inventory its contents. Naturally, this was a challenge not to be missed.

And this is how she found her way to the museum -- and became the current treasurer and membership chairperson of the Gulfport Historical Society.

NOTE: Volunteers are needed now, give it a try. Call 345-8680 anytime.

Inez Foley, Treasurer

**GULFPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEETING SCHEDULE
1995**

Feb. 14
March 14
April 1 Nostalgia Day
April 11
Oct. 7 Birthday Celebration
Oct. 10
Nov. 14
Dec. 12

Information regarding meetings, programs and special events will be placed in the Gulfport Gabber.

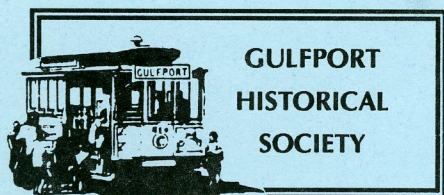
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President	Judy Ryerson
Vice President	Vacant
Secretary	Margaret Brooks
Treasurer	Inez Foley

Board Members:	Ruth Sayor-Huff
	Mary Atkinson
	L. T. McCarthy

Museum Curator	Claudette Renney-Dean
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