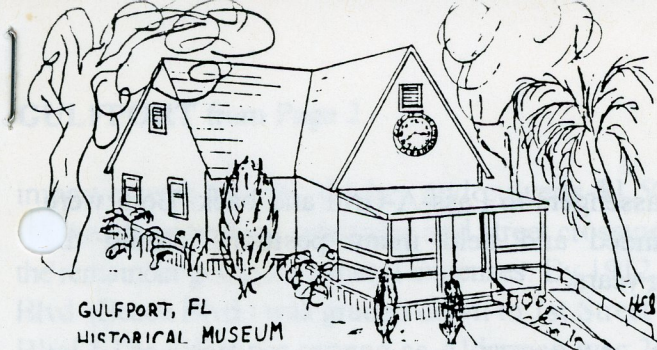




THE GULFPORT HISTORIAN

Volume 46 Official Newsletter of the Gulfport Historical Society Oct. 1994

HAPPY BIRTHDAY GULFPORT 1910 - 1994

**Come celebrate at our 84th Birthday Party
on Saturday, October 8, 1994.**

The festivities begin at 10 am. How would you like to participate? We have a lot of things underway already. The Fish Fry is being chaired by Colleen Camp and local fishermen have promised an abundance of fish. Colleen is in need of helpers and servers. Elsie Crimaldi will be the auctioneer for our fantastic auction in Scout Hall with the assistance of Lisa Apple. Donate your items and help out the Museum treasury.

The days events will also include Live Entertainment, Cub Scout Carnival, Open House in the Museum, Bake Sale, Hot Dogs, Arts and Crafts, Birthday Cake, Shuffle Board Tournaments and a very special Boat Ride.

You can participate by calling Mary at 343-4398; Judy at 343-9614; or Cathy at 345-1001. If you can help collect donations for the auction; bake bean or items for the bake sale; assist at the Fish Fry; serving the Birthday Cake; selling Hot Dogs, etc.

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



GULFPORT

HOW IT CAME TO BE

On August 30, 1910, a notice ran in the *St. Petersburg Independent* for 30 days to the people of Township 31 range 16, sections 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 33 and 34, that a meeting would be held on October 12, 1910 at the Gulf Casino on Boca Ciega Bay for the purpose of organizing a municipal government and election of officers under the provisions of Title X Chapter of the revised Statute of the State of Florida.

Rev. A.A. Hoyt, being the main organizer of the project, was elected Chairman and W.P. Woodworth, Secretary by 30 of the 38 registered voters who attended the meeting. The vote to incorporate was 23 for and 7 against. Rev. Hoyt, presented his design for a corporate seal, which showed vessels at anchor in port, and offered the name "Gulfport" as the new name of the incorporated area. Both were unanimously approved.

The *St. Petersburg Times* on October 14, 1910, page one, read "Largest Town in State of Florida Can Now Be Claimed for Pinellas" and "Gulfport Born and Christened". Much ado was made about the size of the territory that was incorporated that night. While it did take in most of the southern part of what is now St. Petersburg and So. Pasadena, it was still less area than originally platted by Hamilton Disston and filed with the State of Florida as "Disston City" back in 1884. Disston City covered 12,000 acres with plans for 50,000 residence to travel about on 100 ft. wide streets.

Elections were held on the night of incorporation with Elmer Wintersgill elected Mayor. Elected Aldermen (council) were A.L. Stefanski, Lester Wintersgill, Joshua White, Henry Slaughter and Henry Weathers. Samuel Webb was elected Town Clerk and John C. White as Town Marshall. Who were these men elected to be the founders of our new town?

Elmer and Lester Wintersgill were late comers compared to the rest, having arrived here in 1907 from Jacksonville. They were ship builders by trade, but expanded into real estate and opened a Yacht Club in 1908. They were part owners of the Mary Boat Company

taking passengers to Pass-A-Grill and back. Both were civic minded and held many positions during the following years.

A.L. Stefanski cannot be reported on at this time as there were two men, one A.L. Stefanski and one A.L. Stevanski with spellings interchanged in the same papers. So it cannot be determine at this time which one served the community.

Joshua White was born in 1852 in Virginia. His parents were John Cash White and Ann Bellemey White of South Carolina. They moved here in the late 1880's were Joshua married Laura Barnett the youngest daughter of James and Rebecca Barnett. He operated grocery stores, and together with his father, built and operated boats. He was active in civil affairs until his death in 1918.

Elisha Henry Weathers was born and raised in Augusta, Georgia where he ran away to join the circus becoming a tightrope walker and magician. He served in Cuba as a soldier in the Spanish American War. He settled in Disston City in 1901. He became a millwright and carpenter under Alex Leonardy a builder of many area homes including Pass-A-Grill and married Viola Leonardy, the daughter of Alex and Martha Slaughter Leonardy. (His mother-in-law, was the sister of Henry Slaughter and Laura Barnett White the wife of Joshua White - I wonder if he called them "Uncle" at council meetings?)

Henry Slaughter (Slauter) was born in Madison, Florida in 1858 and moved to Tampa in 1861. He came to our shores with his mother, sisters and step-father James Barnett in 1867. He married Mary Nash and was a farmer. He had spent most of his early life as a boatman. By this time in history, he was a grandfather many times over and had a deep interest in the future of the town.

So what did this first Council do? The first 6 months were spent organizing the needs of the community and on April 11, 1911, they voted to purchase 12 lots for town use for \$1,200. The next month they voted to issue bonds in the amount of \$4,000 to build a town hall, but this was abandoned for one in the amount of \$10,000. The \$10,000 was to be used to build a town hall and jail - \$1,500, road

improvements-\$4,400, ditches and culverts-\$1,500 and each for bridges, sidewalks and street crossings with the remainder going for general expenses. By 1912, Davis Blvd. (Beach Blvd.) was graded down to 1st Street (Shore Blvd.) The salary for serving as Alderman was 25 cents per meeting and they were charged 50 cents if not in attendance.

In January 1914, the new town hall was completed and served until 1953. The first council's term was up and they passed the gauntlet to our second and enlarged town government: Mayor, John H. Parks; Aldermen, M. McRoberts, President, Dr. L.G. Grey, William Renney, J.T. Rietchey, Benj Sands, Al Schleudecker and C.C. Sayer; Marshal L.D. Renney; Town Clerk H.E. Wendell; Treasure, L.A. DeGrasse; Tax Collector and Supervisor, H.E. Wendell; Tax Assessor, A.F. Leonardy.

And so the dye was cast for the future of this unique little city we so proudly call GULFPORT.

HAPPY 84th BIRTHDAY GULFPORT

JOIN
US!



REMEMBERING A FRIEND

About 5 years ago, **Anita J. Morton**, moved into her mother's home in Gulfport and shortly thereafter, visited our Museum and offered to help. We became very fond of her and deeply admired her many skills which she most generously shared with us. **Anita** delighted in taking notes from donors as they described their gifts and by the next "duty time", she would have made appropriated entries into the permanent records. Her second joy was in working in the yard, watering, fertilizing and otherwise giving attention to the outside appearance of our precious building. Her gifts inside were very special items from her own home. She also helped with program meetings and more. **Anita**, passed away August 5th in the Gulfport Health Care and Rehabilitation Center where she had been since June 29th. Each of us misses **Anita** very much. We are thankful we had the wonderful friendship of this fine lady.

Frances Purdy
Past President

MUSEUM REPORT

Your Museum Committee took a well needed rest this summer. Although we were closed to the public we did special openings for groups. One of these was for the State of Florida Juvenile Division. This was a two day trip to the Museum and we were very surprised at the interest shown in history by the boys. After the tours we had a nice jam session on Florida history and refreshments. The counselors were so pleased, they asked if they could put us on their list for regular visits.

We are starting off this year with tours and stories with classes from Gulfport Elementary School. The students will be studying the subject of local history this year. It is so refreshing to see the young people really enjoying learning about history.

We are still growing and there is still much to be done. If you want to help out, stop by and see us. We can use many talents.

Claudett Renney Dean
Museum Curator

GREETINGS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

Welcome to the Society year 1994-95. We begin by celebrating the 84th Birthday of our city with a Birthday Party on Saturday, October 8th. At our regular program, on October 11th, **Hermann Trautmann**, will share with us some of his knowledge of the history of this area. He always has a delightful presentation, that I know you will enjoy. Be sure to invite your friends. In November, on the 8th, **Laura Pieper**, will show us how to make our own greeting cards for all occasions. Watch the *Gulfport Gabber* for materials you can bring to make your own cards. With the holidays coming up that should make a very timely program. In December, we will have our Holiday Party. Don't miss any of these great meetings.

Historical calendars will be available at the October meeting.

Catherine Hickman
President

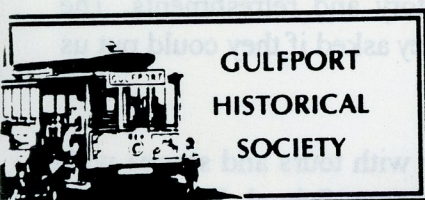
HISTORIC SUNSET BOAT RIDE

By special arrangement with the Shell Key Shuttle and Sunset Cruise Line, a special Birthday boat trip has been scheduled aboard the "Albion" for Saturday evening, October 8th. So relax after the festivities and take a cruise back through history on this narrated trip on Boca Ciega Bay. The boat will leave the Gulfport Municipal Marina at 6:30 pm and return at 8:00 pm. The area to be covered includes the Sunshine Skyway Bridge, Isla Del Sole, and Pass-A-Grille. Did you know parts of this area was involved in "rum running"? Find out about this and much more.

Cost, including tax, is \$10.70 for adults and \$5.35 for children 12 and under.

MAXIMUM CAPACITY - 50

Call **Margaret Brooks, 321-1948** for tickets and information. All tickets **MUST** be paid for in advance. Order yours today, don't be left standing on the dock!



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