



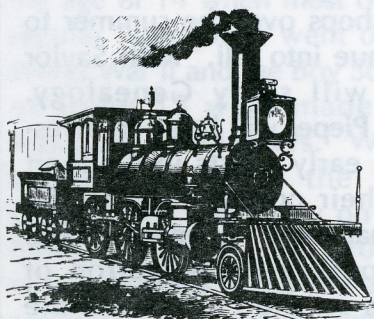
THE GULFPORT HISTORIAN

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May 1994

A Tribute To Bill Our First Historian



It was a happy day for Gulfport in 1947 when Florida Power employed as Associate Engineer one Willard B. Simonds. His career there took him all the way up to Special Assistant to the Vice President in 1967. Aside from progress made in his career, Mr. Simond's interest in history led him to become one of the nine people who in 1981 formed the nucleus for what is now the Gulfport Historical Society. He became its first treasurer and editor of the *Gulfport Historian*. Our charter/constitution was written by Mr. Simonds (known to our members as Bill). He was on the editorial committee for *Our Story of Gulfport, Florida* and he retrieved and made copies of Gulfport's first newspaper, *The Sea Breeze*. Bill

would have been extremely pleased with the excellent exhibits on display at the museum which he helped establish ten years ago.

His interests and abilities were not confined to the GHS. As a member of the Lions Club he was cashier for their bingo games. He was scorekeeper and president to the local Little League when his son, Don, was on one of the teams. He had a lifetime interest in railroading and was preparing a book on the railroads of Florida at the time of his death.

Since her husband's death in 1987, Mrs. Simonds (Anita) has continued to live in their home on Tenth Avenue, South. She will attend graduation ceremonies at the University of Texas in Austin when their son, Donald, receives his master's degree in education.

Background information:

Graduated from Watertown High School, Watertown, MA, and attended its 50th reunion.

Graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1934.

Employed by Raytheon and IBM and chose Florida Power in St. Petersburg over Tampa Electric.

A 40-year resident of Florida; resident of Gulfport 1953-1987.

By Inez Foley

People Remember Bill

When we were organizing the Gulfport Historical Society I met Bill and Anita Simonds. Often I have recalled Bill's words as we were identifying writers for our story of Gulfport. "Frances, I'd like to do the chapters about utilities and transportation." That he did in a most practical fashion. He also wrote the chapter on the Lions Club. Bill's other major undertaking for the society was preparation of copies of the first local newspaper, the *Sea Breeze*, recently made for sale again. Bill was a giant mentally and generous in sharing his talents. During the thirty-four years Bill and Anita lived in the Stetson area, he made a fine contribution to his community. - Frances Purdy

A brilliant, talented man who stepped into Cathy's office and who seemed to enjoy helping to get the Historical Society running smoothly-in tune with those trains he enjoyed so very much.

- Ruby C. Walker

I met Bill at Little League and found him to be a dedicated man always willing to serve his community. *Continued on p. 2*

Where We've Been

The following are a few items excerpted from minutes by secretary Margaret Brooks.

Remember the new showcases delivered to the museum in December of '92 with the help of city crews, Judy Ryerson, Walter Brooks and Nathan White. They made it possible for us to make so many changes to the museum, when we assumed responsibility in May of '93.

That year we celebrated July 4th by holding the museum open. In October we introduced the new officers and committee chairmen to the society and announced plans for the upcoming year. New calendars were sold and distributed in November. We admired the new changes in our museum shown by our curator staff.

In December the city joined us in our old fashioned holiday. In January of '94, Susan Silva and her son Adam were recog-

nized for their contribution of time, talent and donation. A World War II display included artifacts and newspapers with uniforms of Walter Brooks and later Tim McCarthy's. Keith Hickman presented a program on bugs and plants of Florida.

In February, Claudette Renney Dean gave a report on Glen Oak Cemetery and the 4 year uphill battle to preserve same.

Ruth Saylor Huff, Nostalgia Day Chairperson, reported plans are coming along for our 10th Annual Celebration. Laura Pieper, a local artist, color-coded a map for research purposes. The Sunflower School came Feb. 23 and had many displays for past and present happenings and was enjoyed by all who visited us that day.

In March we added 6 regular members and 1 life member. The society decided to buy a brick for the new walkway for the library. Guest speakers were Paul Williams and Mike Taylor on Historic Preservation and redevelopment.

April 2, 1994, our 10th

Nostalgia Day was a huge success with Nathan White as our MC. Many native Gulfportians were in attendance including Florence Fussell and Bert Williams who were our King and Queen for the day.

Where Do We Go From Here

The Board of Directors is addressing the question of some division of activities, realizing it is not possible for everyone to do everything.

We hope to develop some workshops over the summer to continue into fall. Ruth Saylor Huff will study Genealogy. Laura Pieper will begin to investigate early artists in Gulfport and their contribution to the national scene. Margaret Brooks will pursue investigation of grants on the casino and the museum. This is just the beginning.

If you have ideas on other areas you would like us to study, please contact us.

Continued from page 1

He was player agent for years as well as serving in many other facets, always cheerfully and well.

- Laurence Timothy McCarthy

I served on the Little League Board when he was president and was always amazed at his organized efficiency which kept the league running smoothly. When he initiated the newsletter for the Historical Society, it was published in a very professional manner.

- Keith Hickman.

I first met Bill while he was president of Little League and worked for him on the Ways and Means Committee. I was thrilled when he came to join us at the first meeting of the Gulfport Historical Society and immediately appointed him treasurer. He was so very helpful in getting the society off to a good start. I will always be indebted to him for his wise assistance

- Catherine Hickman

OUTWITTED

He drew a circle that
shut me out-
Heretic, rebel, a thing to
flout.
But love and I had the
wit to win,
We drew a circle that
took him in!

Edwin Markham

In Memorium

On Friday, April 8, 1994 an era came to an end with the passing of Walter Mack Brooks. Walter was one of those people that tied the past to the present. As Fire Chief for the City of Gulfport he was very much in the present in his drive to bring the City the best in fire protection by keeping abreast of the ever changing technology in the field. Walter served on the Fire Department from January 28, 1942 until his passing at age 67. He started his 52 year career at the age of 14 when most of the regular Firefighters went off to World War II and the Boy Scouts of Troop 15 were made the Auxiliary Firefighters. While keeping up with the Fire Department and today on one hand, he could, and would, switch thoughts to tell you about something or someone from his memories of growing up in Gulfport. Walter had written *A Narrative of the Gulfport Fire Department* through 1983 and was working on an update at the time of his death. Hopefully in the near future, with the permission of his family, this narrative and its update will be published in book form by the Society in his memory. I can think of no more fitting tribute or insight to the man than his writings. The Narrative is perhaps one of the most humorous, warm, biting, and accurate histories I have ever read. Walter sure knew how to tell a tale. Goodbye Walter, we will miss you.

Judy Ryerson
Friend

Museum Report

This was a year of "Happenings." Renewing old friendships, making new ones and watching old and new merge with the common interest of making our museum a reflection of our unique history, instilling the well deserved pride in our community.

Thank you, to all of those involved this year, we could not have done it without your interest and generosity.

History is alive and well in Gulfport; come and be a part of it.

C.R. Dean



Just About No Rain At All!



"Good News" if you want to have a garden with flowers that attract butterflies, the garden in front of the museum is drought tolerant. Check it out!

Susan Silva



The Pinellas Trail is becoming a spot for education as well as recreation. Two landscaping projects are being installed that will promote xeriscaping, landscaping that can withstand the Florida weather without tons of water or chemicals.



Nurseries are advertising native plants and trees to fit in with xeriscaping, or drought-tolerance.



Fried Green Tomatoes



1 Medium Green Tomato (per person)

Salt

Pepper

White Cornmeal

Bacon Drippings

(Milk may be added to make batter or use hush puppy mix)

Slice tomatoes about 1/4 inch thick, season with salt and pepper and then coat both sides with cornmeal. In large skillet, heat enough bacon drippings to coat bottom of the pan and fry until lightly browned on both sides.

You'll think you've died and gone to heaven.

Note: Recipe from Fanny Flagg's book *Fried Green Tomatoes* with help from local cooks.

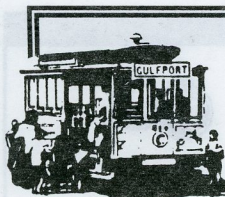
ALL ABOARD!

As everyone is aware, Nostalgia Day 1994 was a resounding success. One facet of the event was the open air trolley tour of Ole Gulfport. This year the trolley was provided by Party Bus USA and the City of Gulfport. Allen Miller, owner, operator and builder of the trolley had worked until 3:30 a.m. that morning to insure that we were not disappointed and the trolley was ready to roll on time. Carrying an average of 35 people per trip for 10 trips, for a total of 350 people, the tour proved to be very popular.

From the comments, everyone seemed to have a good time and many said they had learned more about Gulfport and its people. I must say, that by the time I finished the 10th tour, I was on the verge of losing my voice and very tired, but also very proud and happy that so many had the opportunity to enjoy the outing.

I look forward to seeing each of you there and it's All Aboard! for next year.

Judy Ryerson
Your friendly tour guide



GULFPORT
HISTORICAL
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P.O. Box 5152
Gulfport, Florida 33737

