



Dave Sigler/The Chronicle

Geraldine Williams passes some time in the sun on a gentle spring day fishing for her supper and visiting with other cane pole enthusiasts on King's Bay in Crystal River.

# 121 days of toil pays the taxes

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE — The average Floridian would have to work 17 days past Thursday's federal tax deadline to pay all federal, state and local taxes due this year, a watchdog group said Wednesday.

Florida's "Tax Freedom Day" is May 2 this year, said Dominic Calabro, president of the Florida TaxWatch research group.

"This is the day citizens can begin to keep the money that they earn," Calabro said.

Adjusted for taxes and inflation, the average Florida household's effective buying power is expected to sag 0.1 percent in 1993, after a 2.7 percent decline in 1992 when incomes were lower and inflation was higher, Calabro said.

The average Floridian will work 121 days of this year to pay taxes, two days more than last year, he said.

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Calculated as a portion of an 8-hour work day, taxes would take 2 hours and 40 minutes of each day's wages, four minutes more than last year, Calabro said.

That's the largest expense for the average citizen, comparing with 1 hour and 22 minutes of each 8-hour day to earn money for housing and utilities, and 54 minutes for food, he said.

The Tax Foundation in Washington, D.C., releases "Tax Freedom" dates

Thursday for all the states.

Florida ranked 37th in last year's listing. First was New York, where residents worked 140 days to pay taxes. Alaska and the District of Columbia tied for second at 137 days. South Dakota and Mississippi tied for least days worked for taxes at 108.

"As bad as it seems for Floridians, it's considerably worse for other states," Calabro said.

The average Floridian's tax burden this year is \$6,641, up 7.5 percent from last year. Taxes rose only 2 percent in each of the previous two years, Calabro said.

Of the total, \$938 goes to local governments, \$1,322 to the state and \$4,381 to the federal government.

Statewide, Floridians will pay an estimated \$90.2 billion in taxes, more than one third of the state's \$265 billion in personal income, Calabro said.

# AFRICAN AMERICAN'S -- IN FLORIDA HISTORY

# A place in time

## History of blacks in county extends through centuries

STEVE ARTHUR  
sarthur@chronicleonline.com  
*Chronicle*

Like that first precious bursting-to-the-surface burning gasp of glorious air after being submerged too long under water, freedom must surely have been as sweet as life itself to slaves just escaped from their bonds.

Kidnapped from their homes, sold into slavery on another continent, now running through the forests and swamps, leaving their Carolina plantations far behind, escaping their lives of servitude, fearful and joyful — they were free at last.

When we think of Emancipation,

we often think of Abraham Lincoln's proclamation during the Civil War, but historians tell us that long before that time there were already free black people living in Florida and in Citrus County.

Although this county's black population is less than 3 percent today, at the turn of the 19th century, there was

### LEARN ABOUT IT

■ Dr. Darcie MacMahon, exhibits coordinator for the Florida Museum of Natural History, will present "Fort Mose: Free Black Town on the Spanish Frontier" at 2 p.m. Tuesday at the Old



Courthouse  
Heritage  
Museum.

■ This program is free and open to the public.

■ Visit the Library System's Web site at [www.cclib.org](http://www.cclib.org) or call the Old Courthouse Heritage Museum at 341-6429.

more than people than white in the mines and turpentine workings across the county.

Long before those laboring people came here, even before the Civil War and the first European whites, there were the Black Seminoles, former slaves integrated into the American

Indian tribes.

During the Second Seminole War between 1835 and 1842, there were Black Seminoles in Citrus County, living and fighting alongside the American Indians, fighting to keep their freedom.

Black History Month, which begins today, has a special significance in this county because a good number of former slaves eventually came to find refuge with their indigenous brothers and sisters in the cove of the Withlacoochee. The cove extends from Hernando to Floral City along the sweep of the Withlacoochee River and its backwaters down what is now State Road 48 to Wahoo toward Bushnell, but long before there were roads.

Kathy Turner Thompson, director of the Citrus County Historical Resources Office, said the influ-



CARL STEELFOX/Chronicle illustration

**By 1738, some 100 African fugitives from slavery found freedom in the Spanish Florida fortress town of St. Augustine. These first African-Americans settled in their own community called Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, or Fort Mose, (pronounced Mo-say) about two miles north of St. Augustine. They built a wooden church, lived in palm-thatched dwellings and worked as craftsmen, laborers and farmers. Artifacts, maps, drawings and documents concerning Fort Mose are currently on display at the Old Courthouse Heritage Museum in Inverness as part of Black History Month.**

ence of the Black Seminoles is a fascinating subject for historians.

"The significance of the many historical events of national importance," she said, "occurred right here in our area. Everybody knows about the Alamo, but few know of places like Abraham's Town in the Wahoo Swamp, where an important Black Seminole chief of the Second Seminole War lived."

In the late 17th century, black slave runaways from the plantations of South Carolina and Georgia escaped their masters, and while some found freedom in Spanish-controlled Florida in the St. Augustine area, others came to

live with and around Native American tribal groups.

Historians say that at the same time, the former slaves were establishing themselves at Fort Mose, just north of St. Augustine (see illustration and box), bands of Creeks were splitting off from the main body of their tribe and drifting southward into northern Florida. They were called the Seminole.

Seminoles regularly enslaved other Indians captured in battle in order to replace members who had been killed, and they also acquired black people, either by purchase or as gifts to chiefs by the British, who

by 1763 acquired Florida from the Spanish.

Many of these blacks lived apart from, but near to, their Indian owners, where they farmed, owned livestock and were allowed to arm themselves. These slaves eventually became integrated into Seminole tribes, and became known as Black Seminoles.

By the early 19th century, the blacks and Seminoles had banded together to fight side by side, defending their land and their freedom. Their adversaries were the Americans, who wanted to



Photos from Tampa Bay History Center

Buffalo Soldiers pose alongside their horses as they prepare to board ship at Port Tampa in 1898.

## Buffalo Soldiers in Tampa

By LELAND HAWES  
Tribune Staff Writer

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These views of black Army cavalymen, veterans of the Indian wars in the West, en route to more battles in Cuba, have been seldom seen.

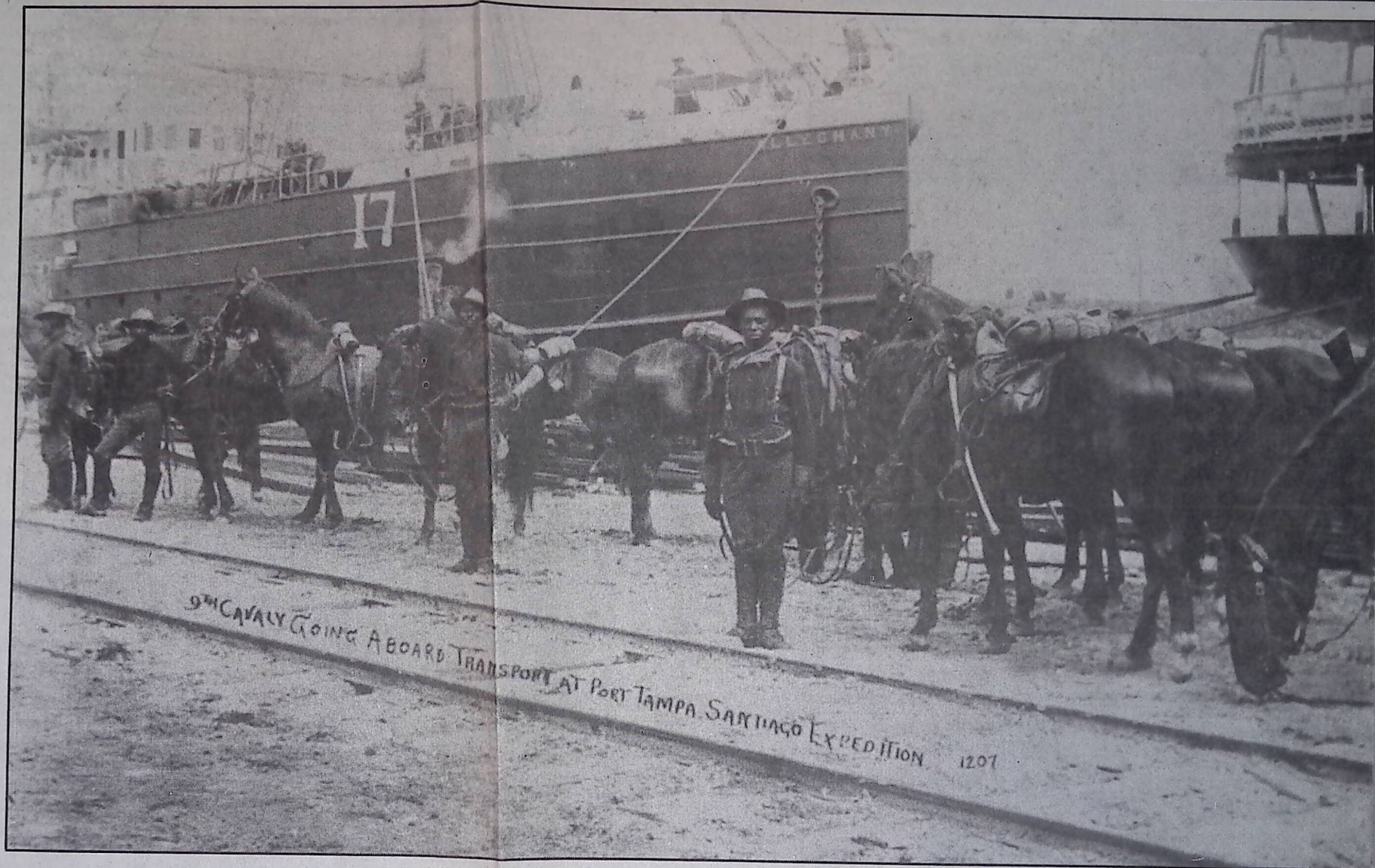
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History center executive director Byron A. Johnson noted that valuable historical materials, such as these photographs and other artifacts, now can be "housed in perpetuity" with the establishment of a museum.

Johnson emphasized the Lesley collection's value and importance. Much of it was assembled by a deceased cousin, county historian Theodore Lesley. An exhibit is planned later this summer, he said.

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Censorship blocked details, but 27 black soldiers and "several" whites with serious injuries were transferred to a Georgia hospital afterward.

In his 1971 book, "Smoked Yankees," Gatewood wrote: "Despite the prejudice which they encountered in Florida, or perhaps because of it, the black troops acquitted themselves with distinction on the battlefields of Cuba, particularly at Las Guasimas, El Caney and San Juan Hill."

The photographer caught the black cavalrymen going through their paces, above, and in a more relaxed camp setting, at right, where a barber is shaving one of the men.





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# For Tampa's blacks, avenue was Central

By LELAND HAWES  
Tribune Staff Writer

TAMPA — For James Marshall, memories of Central Avenue involve movies, snow cones and sausage sandwiches.

Although he was living in West Tampa as a teenager in the 1940s, he and his buddies walked across the Fortune Street bridge to the Central Avenue area for the treats and activities there.

The reason was simple: Central Avenue was at its peak as a center of black life in Tampa's segregated society at that time.

But the Central Avenue district is gone, a victim of changing times and urban redevelopment. Mostly open space — the Perry Harvey Sr. Park and streets leading to an interstate ramp — replaced the once-thriving section.

On Saturday, "Central Avenue Legacies," a festival of entertainment, exhibits and a community forum, will commemorate the area that had its beginnings as a black residential and business enclave more than a century ago.

The festival will combine the efforts and expertise of a group of University of South Florida faculty members and students with those of the Tampa Bay History Center and the city of Tampa.

Susan Greenbaum, chairwoman of USF's anthropology department, says the day's events will be aimed at "making the public aware of this lost chapter in Tampa's history."

Robert W. Saunders, who will be a participant, believes "it's good to do that." He first learned a lot about Central Avenue

Life Insurance and the Florida Sentinel-Bulletin, started out in the Central Avenue district.

USF's Greenbaum said interviews had turned up the names of other well-known entertainers — Ray Charles, James Brown, B.B. King, Bobby Bland, Nat and Cannonball Adderley — who appeared on Central early in their careers.

## King of Soul for a quarter

In the late 1940s, James Brown sang to nightly audiences who paid 25 cents each to hear him, the anthropology professor noted.

Research for the "Legacies" project has traced the growth of Central Avenue as a center of black dwellings at least to the 1870s. Tampa's oldest black churches, Mount Sinai A.M.E. Zion and Beulah Baptist, had their first buildings there.

Central Avenue bordered on the Scrub, which had a large black population living in the area between Tampa and Ybor City. As Greenbaum wrote, "In the 1890s, [the Scrub] was an undeveloped buffer between Latinos and Anglos."

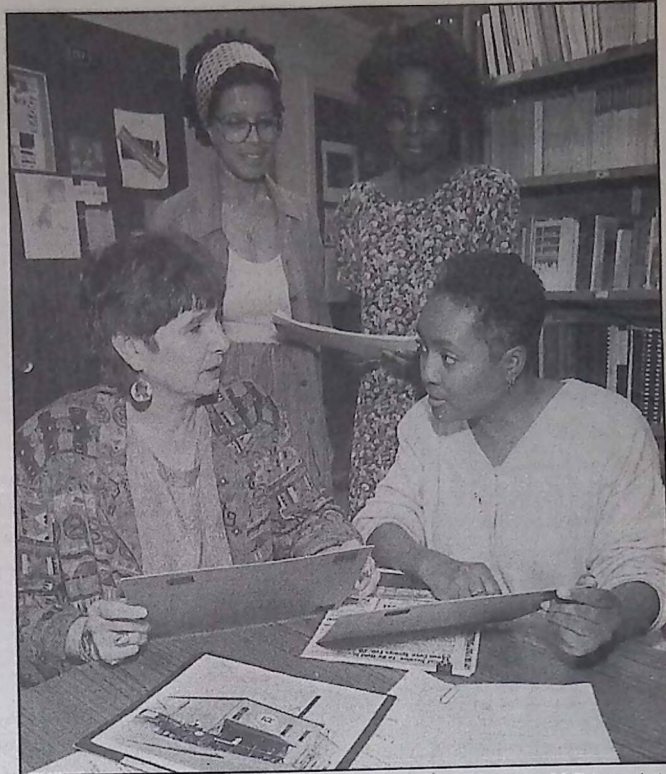
While the Scrub grew up as a tangle of shacks and cottages, the Central Avenue district to the west had more substantial housing, some of which was owned by the black residents.

Occupations in the Central Avenue neighborhood ranged from domestics and laborers to professionals and tradespeople, Greenbaum learned.

The pattern of business locations seemed to shift in the 1880s and 1890s, census records indicated. Black barbers, seamstresses and boot makers had shops downtown in the 1880s, with a white clientele. But black-owned businesses began to gravitate to Central Avenue in the 1890s.

Greenbaum asserts that when Jim Crow laws went into effect, "segregation largely denied black artisans access to white patrons; barbers were especially affected. In response, black enterprise mainly served an African American market."

In 1893, she said, there were only five black-



GARY RINGS/Tribune photo

USF anthropology chairwoman Susan Greenbaum, seated at left, confers with Cheryl Rodriguez, assistant professor of African studies, about the "Central Avenue Legacies" festival. Behind them are USF graduate students Ginger Baber, left, and Ericka Burroughs.

## Central Avenue festival includes past and present

Funded by a grant from the Florida Council for the Humanities, the "Central Avenue Legacies" festival will begin at noon Saturday at

Arthenia Joyner, attorney and chairwoman of the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority.

Cheryl Rodriguez, whose late fa-

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## USF anthropology chairwoman

He also got to know a lot of people as a doorman at the Central Theater, then the only cinema open to blacks in the area. (In the 1960s he saw it picketed as a symbol of the segregation era.)

In young adulthood, Saunders savored the big-name entertainers who played at the Apollo dance hall — Erskine Hawkins and Earl Hines' bands, Ella Fitzgerald singing with Chick Webb's band and Hazel Scott playing the piano with Andy Kirk and his "Clouds of Joy."

After World War II, when the civil rights struggle was gearing up, Saunders came back to Central Avenue to work for the NAACP as its state field secretary. He often consulted attorney Francisco Rodriguez, counsel for the organization, who had his first office on Central.

For Saunders' and Marshall's generations, memories of Central Avenue are still vivid. But for younger Tampa residents who have grown up since 1974, when the wrecking balls and bulldozers cleared it away, Central Avenue means little.

Although Tampa's black population always was dispersed into pockets in a number of neighborhoods, the Central Avenue district seemed to be the closest thing to a downtown for the community.

Marshall used the Harlem branch of the Tampa Public Library, and Saunders recalls the doctors, dentists, beer gardens, barber shops and pool halls.

As a youngster, he said, he went with his mother to shop at Jenkins' grocery store, run by a black man who lived on Scott Street. "It was almost like a supermarket — a big thing," he said.

There also were churches, lodges, drug stores, insurance companies, a hotel and, in the early years of the century, a small bank or two.

Some substantial enterprises, such as Central

ter school in J.D. O'Kelly's shoe repair shop as a 13- or 14-year-old teenager in the 1930s.

## Business, civic leaders

"Throughout the Jim Crow era, shops, clubs and churches ... were a haven from the unpleasantness of segregation," Greenbaum says.

"Dozens of social clubs, fraternal and burial societies, church groups, literary organizations, parent groups and civic-minded individuals worked together and created libraries, recreation, health care, day care, scholarships and school improvements."

The Negro Board of Trade began at a meeting in the Odd Fellows Hall at the corner of Scott and Central. Druggist William Armwood was a founder, as was M.J. Anderson, a physician who owned an office building on Central.

"The concentration of activity on Central Avenue brought people together and provided a common focus for shared concerns, particularly the struggle against segregation," Greenbaum writes.

Leaders such as Thurgood Marshall appeared at St. Paul AME Church, a few blocks west of Central, and Francisco Rodriguez's law firm took the legal initiative locally in behalf of the NAACP.

After the lunch counter sit-ins in downtown Tampa in 1960, racial barriers came down in public accommodations. Customers of black-owned businesses on Central Avenue had new choices, and that meant lost income, Greenbaum says. With many housed in aging structures, owners found remodeling loans impossible to obtain.

A riot in 1967 led to the burning and vandalizing of a number of Central Avenue buildings. In the years following, with little or no promise of a comeback, demolition plans were announced.

In June 1973, Mayor Dick Greco said a \$4.7 million federal grant would enable the razing of the Central Avenue business district and the building of a park. By the fall of 1974, it was done.

owned businesses in and around Central Avenue. By 1898 there were 28, and by 1918 "there were more than 80 African American-owned shops, stores and professional offices."

It will feature a walking tour of historic sites in the district, which was settled by freed slaves after the Civil War. It became the major business and entertainment center for Tampa's black community.

Some of the sites include the locations where once stood the Pyramid Hotel, the Rogers Dining Room, the Lincoln Theater, Watts Sander-son's Blue Room, the Palace Drug Store and the Harlem Colored Branch of the Tampa Public Library.

There will be exhibits set up in Harvey Park depicting some of the achievements of black entrepreneurs and entertainers in the years prior to the razing of the Central Avenue district in 1974.

Buster Cooper's quartet will play in the early afternoon, funded by the Hillsborough County Arts Council. Cooper is a trombonist who played on Central Avenue and with the Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton and Benny Goodman orchestras.

At 3 p.m., a community forum will take place at the Kid Mason Center, including as panelists:

■ Robert W. Saunders, former field secretary for the Florida NAACP.

■ Essie Mae Reed, president of the Central Park Village residents council.

■ Alton White, real estate agent and former director of the Metropolitan Development Agency.

■ Rhonne Sanderson, a psychologist and minister.

Cheryl Rodriguez, whose late father Francisco Rodriguez served as NAACP counsel, will lead the panel. She is now an assistant professor of Africana studies at the University of South Florida.

Miriam Stamps, professor of marketing at USF, will conclude the forum with a talk about problems and prospects for black businesses.

The forum is intended to focus on remembrances of Central Avenue and on the lessons to be learned for the problems that now confront Tampa.

The photo exhibits, prepared in collaboration with the Tampa Bay History Center, later will be reassembled for display at the History Center gallery on Harbour Island.

Tampa's Recreation Department and its Archives and Records Department also have been involved in the festival, which grew out of an effort by Susan Greenbaum, chairwoman of USF's anthropology department, and Jack Moore, professor of English at USF, to set up a research archive on Tampa's black community.

With a grant from the USF President's Council, they began to assemble research materials and collected information to fill the gaps.

Included in the material are transcripts of more than 70 taped interviews overseen by Otis Anthony, former assistant to the mayor, in a 1978 project.

Four USF graduate students have participated in the project: Geoffrey Mohlman, Ericka Burroughs, Ginger Baber and Jennifer Paul.

— LELAND HAWES

# "POLK COUNTY'S AFRICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE"

by Canter Brown, Jr.

This year, many Polk Countians are supporting a pioneering effort aimed at fostering close looks at race relations in our communities — past, present, and future. The results may well offer a model for locales throughout Florida.

Centered initially on Bartow and called "Ebony and Ivory: Making Beautiful Music Together," the initiative is sponsored cooperatively by the Neighborhood Improvement Corporation of Bartow and the Polk County Historical Association. The Florida Humanities Council has supplied funding under its "Curious Coalition" program.

Polk Countians can take pride that our county serves as home for this effort; historically speaking, though, few others are better situated. Relations between white and black residents have been evolving here for well over one-and-one-half centuries. The tale has encompassed pain and tragedy. It also has involved friendship and sacrifice across racial lines, as well as important events of regional and national significance.

Permit me to offer a quick glimpse of the early days of that rich story.

Start by casting back 181 years to 1818. Andrew Jackson has invaded Spanish Florida in what we call the First Seminole War. He has chased his mortal enemies, the Upper Creek Indians under their chief Peter McQueen, through the Florida panhandle. Escaping across the Suwanee River, the fierce warriors and their families flee for safety into the peninsula.

The Creeks find refuge on Peace River's headwaters. McQueen settles at an old Seminole hunting town, Talakchopco (modern Fort Meade). McQueen's ally, Oponay, opts for a site a few miles north of today's Bartow, on Lake Hancock's west side just above its Saddle Creek outlet.

With Oponay came several dozen black men, women, and children. Although referred to as slaves, anthropologists today would describe them more accurately as vassals. They lived

apart from Oponay on Saddle Creek's east side around Lake Hancock's southeastern shore. They called their village Minatti.

Three years after the Creeks and blacks sunk roots in the local soil, Minatti's numbers grew. Indian allies of Jackson's attacked a free-black enclave at modern Bradenton. Some survivors—perhaps 100 or 200—fled to the protection of the Creek and black settlements at Peace River.

While the years would see Minatti's population rise and fall, it remained thereafter one of Florida's principal free-black refuges. The fact would carry major repercussions.

The subsequent train of events began in 1828, when Andrew Jackson achieved election as president. He soon pressed for a law effectively forcing

eastern Indians to new homes west of the Mississippi. Several Seminole chiefs agreed to removal from Florida in 1832, but the Peace River bands chose to resist. With them were free-black warriors from throughout the peninsula.

Events proceeded, and by 1835, area war leaders were attempting to force a war that would compel the Seminoles to fight with them. McQueen's nephew, Osceola, led Talakchopco's Creeks, while Minatti's black warriors followed their great chief Harry.

The plans forged by Osceola and Harry met with success. By December, the upper Florida peninsula flamed, as slaves fled plantations to join the fighting. This second Seminole War, planned and instigated in great part from today's Polk County, would endure for seven years. In the process, it would



This map formed from the survey maps by John Westcott in March 1850 shows (1) Old Indian Towns on the west side of Lake Hancock, (2) Indian Fields south and west of the lake, (3) Fort Frazer, (4) the Causeway built by Zachary Taylor and (5) the homestead of Rollinson (thus on map; correctly Raulerson), (6) Indian Mound. The dotted lines indicating roads and trails. The one passing the fort is labeled (7) Road from Fort Frazer to Fort Meade on the extension of the map. There was nothing shown at the location that would become (8) Bartow. A note on one of Westcott's map indicates that he surveyed 83 miles and was paid \$4 a mile.

At a meeting of the electors residing within the limits and bounds of the Territory hereinafter described, held at the Court House in the Town of Bartow, Florida, on the 22nd day of July, 1882, the following persons were present, all of whom are duly qualified voters, viz: Hugh F. Farrell, Arthur L. Moore, James Newman, Prince Johnson, Tony Tucker, J. M. Seward, J. C. Gattin, the following residents of the territory to be incorporated were at said meeting and did not vote, though duly qualified voters of the County, viz: Patrick L. H. Parker, W. J. Hamilton, James Hamilton, & C. Weston and W. D. Sholly, making in all present and absent twenty eight legal voters; Charles C. Bruce, W. P. Farrell and Thomas Newman were absent.

The first page of the "Town of Bartow Charter" recorded July 22nd 1882 lists the twenty-eight legal voters necessary to incorporate the first city in Polk County. Among them are four African-Americans, Patrick Moore, Squire Newman, Prince Johnson and Tony Tucker.

represent the largest slave revolt in United States history.

Recognizing the home grounds of its fiercest foes, army officials early on ordered destruction of the Peace River settlements. South Carolina volunteers accomplished the task in April 1836. Eventually, most of Minatti's blacks would accept relocation in return for guarantees of their freedom.

Having served from 1818 to 1836 as a beacon of freedom for blacks, Polk County would not again see an African-American presence until the late 1840s when a few white settlers began to establish homes in the vicinity. One man, Rigdon Brown, brought two slaves with him in 1849 when he claimed land near the ruins of Oponay's old plantation. When Harriet, the eighteen-year-old woman, gave birth in 1849 and again in 1850, she likely gave the county its first native-born children of the modern era.

Most of Polk's pioneer white families

were too poor to own slaves, but the numbers of bondsmen increased slowly with time. At Bartow in October 1851, for example, a dozen slaves arrived from the Lake City area with the Reading Blount colony. Among them were Stepney Dixon, his wife, Sarah Washington, and Charles and Jackson Dixon. Sixteen years later Stepney Dixon would serve the county as its first black public official when he agreed to serve as a voter registrar.

As the 1850s passed, Polk's residents — white and black — began to create a few institutions of more civilized life. When the Baptist Church of Christ at Peas Creek coalesced in 1854, for instance, the slave Jim Seward stood among its members. Tradition suggests that, within a few years, some or all of the congregation's black members chose to worship separately. Today, we recognize First Providence Missionary Baptist Church of Bartow as the institutional legacy of that act.

The Civil War actually worked to increase Polk County's 1860 African-American population of about 140. Several owners moved their slaves into the isolated region to protect against their seizure by United States troops. Among them, William Joel Watkins of Virginia transported sixteen individuals from Virginia to Bartow in 1862. They included Royal, Laurina, and Sarah Reed, Andy Moore, Tanner Reed Moore, and their sons, Jack, Samuel, James, and Henry; Solomon Carrington, Buck Jones, and Nathaniel Trammel.

The war's conclusion saw owners treating their emancipated slaves in starkly different ways. Watkins simply left his former bondsmen to fend for themselves. The owner's daughter recalled, "I remember when word came that Lincoln had freed the slaves, my father dolefully shook his head as he said, 'Poor Andy, with five children to feed.'"

A number of whites proved more considerate. Jacob Summerlin, to name one, provided employment for his one-time bondsman, Prince Johnson, assisting him in learning well digging, citrus growing, and farming. Others aided applicants to obtain government homesteads.

Sometimes whites possessed very personal reasons for supporting former family slaves. A number of Polk County's slave owners sired children with female

slaves. Doubtlessly, some of the women suffered through being forced into such relationships. Cattleman John Parker's conduct toward slave Rachel Davis appears more consensual, though. Parker helped establish their six children, including sons Corrie, Sam, and Lloyd, in prosperous lives.

Even for the lucky freedmen who enjoyed some support, making a go of life in still-frontier Polk County posed tremendous challenges, as it also did for most whites. Yet, many families thrived, helping to pioneer citrus growing and innovative agricultural techniques. "One of the best places within a mile of Bartow is that owned by a negro named Andy Moore," recorded one newspaper in 1881. "He has some 30 bearing trees, makes some 400 or 500 bushels of corn, raises his own meat, and is independent generally."

As was true of any frontier community, tough conditions required cooperation across racial bounds and mutual interdependence. Thus, African-Americans would play key roles along with whites in the opening up of Polk County through railroad construction, the development of phosphate mining, and the expansion of citrus, marine stores, cattle, and other industries.

At times the cooperation extended to political involvement. Prince Johnson led a group of four African-American men whose votes permitted approval of Bartow's incorporation in 1882. In the same decade, whites at Homeland armed blacks living there when their voting rights were challenged. The community advertised that it would stand together to protect all of its members.

These few points provide only a beginning glimpse of Polk County's remarkable heritage in the area of race relations. They suggest, though, an enduring truth. This county, loved by so many of its residents, could not have come to be as it has without the interlocking contributions over a long period of time of men and women of both races. It is a shared heritage that makes our life here possible, and one that can help point us toward an even-more-meaningful future.

For more information, see Canter Brown, Jr.'s *Florida Peace River Frontier* (Orlando, 1991) and *African Americans on the Tampa Bay Frontier* (Tampa, 1997).

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# Polk County Historical Quarterly

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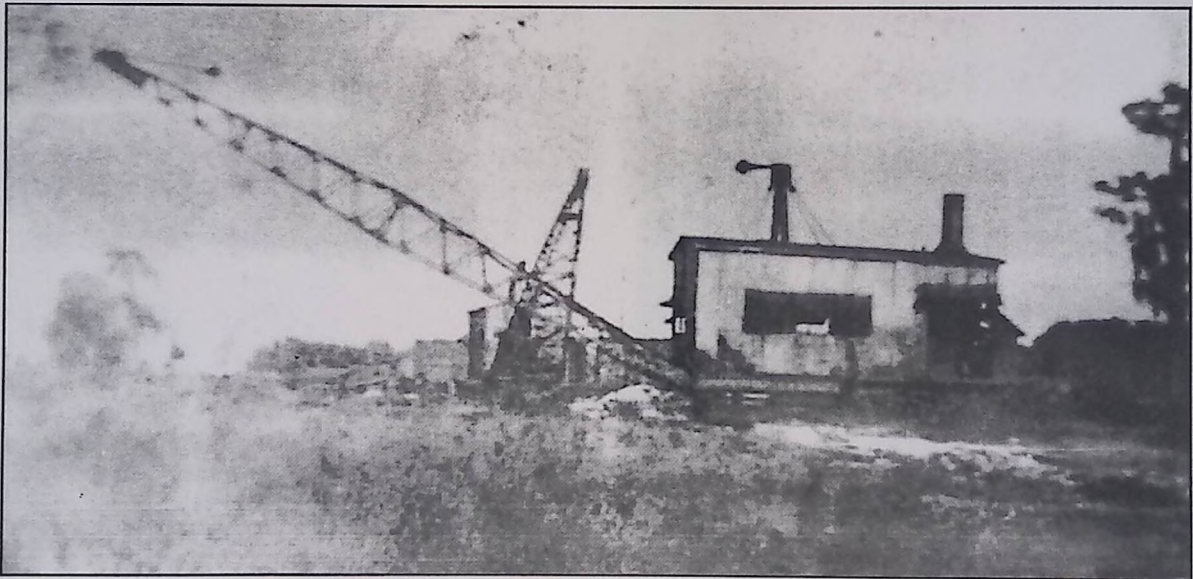
VOLUME 26

MARCH, 2000

NUMBER 4

## INTRODUCTION OF THE DRAGLINE EXCAVATOR IN LAND PEBBLE PHOSPHATE MINING

by O. H. Wright



The two draglines at the Armour Mine. Those familiar with the mining dragline over the years will recognize that these are at an earlier stage of development than those which became the industry standard in the 1920s. Photo courtesy of Mr. Kenneth Laurent, son of J. F. Laurent, manager of the Armour Mine.

The most visible machine of Polk County's phosphate mining industry is the large mining dragline with its long boom sticking up in the air at an angle. Today these all-purpose machines are used to strip overburden (waste overlying the mineral-bearing layer), then to dig out that layer, called "matrix." These machines were introduced into the industry many years ago.

In A. F. Blakey's book *The Florida Phosphate Industry: A History ...*, he states that the first dragline was used in 1920 by the W. F. Carey Co. However, he also publishes a table of wages for the industry taken from *The Tampa Tribune* of June 1, 1919, which lists both dragline operator's and dragline firemen's wages, showing that the use of these machines was well established by that date. The 1920 date is in error.

Phosphate rock, an important fertilizer material, was first found in Central Florida in 1881 in the Peace River south of Fort Meade

by a government survey party planning a canal across the state to the St. Johns River. The leader of the survey party, Francis LeBaron, recognized that he had found phosphate, but was never able to promote a mining operation. Other parties soon discovered the mineral, and by 1888 one commercial mine was producing phosphate rock by dredging, quickly followed by a number of other mines. Because its source was the riverbed, the gravel sized product was called "river pebble." River pebble was mined by 17 different companies from 1891 to 1908, when production ceased because of competition from the higher quality land pebble.

Obviously the phosphate in the river had washed in from the land, and prospectors soon began looking for the source. Extensive horizontal beds, covered by sand overburden, were

(continued on page 2)

## Introduction of the Dragline Excavator

*(continued from page 1)*

found in DeSoto, Hardee, Hillsborough and Polk Counties, and in other areas of Florida, too. These deposits were called "land pebble."

The first three land pebble mines opened in 1890. One, the Florida Phosphate Company at Phosphoria, began mining by using a dipper dredge, much as was the practice in mining river pebble. The Pharr Phosphate Company, on the south edge of present-day Bartow, began mining by hand loading into small rail cars, but this would have been prohibitively expensive compared to the competitor's dredge. It is likely that they and the other new company, the Land Pebble Phosphate Company at Pebledale, soon used other methods.

Dredge mining was not ideal because it made stripping the overburden difficult. There are a few locations with little or no overburden, but most beds have 15-40 feet of cover above the mineral layer, called "matrix." Soon the mines began using hydraulic methods for both stripping and mining or, in some cases, railroad steam shovels for stripping and hydraulically mining the matrix. These were the standard methods of mining by about 1900. The Panama Canal was opened in 1914, but the heavy excavation was completed a year or two earlier and many steam shovels and associated equipment became cheap surplus and were brought to the Polk County mines. Steam shovels were used in eight or more different mines.

The chief disadvantage of these mining methods was that the workers and all of the mining equipment, including the two railroad tracks necessary for the steam shovels and the haulage locomotives, or the steam-driven hydraulic pumps with their boilers, had to be in the bottom of the mine pit which was always wet and soft. My father told me once of seeing, about 1910, a large pit flooded after a hurricane with just the tip of the steam shovel booms visible above the water.

The first use of mining draglines almost certainly was at a mine owned and operated by Armour & Company. This mine was located immediately west of the Swift & Company mine at Agricola, about 9 miles south of Bartow. The large meat packing companies became phosphate miners because they had developed uses and markets for the bones from their slaughterhouse operations. Phosphate rock has a chemical composition very close to bones, and can be substituted for them, especially in making agricultural fertilizers. These two companies, together with the Morris Meat Packing Company, had early phosphate mining operations in Polk County. The Armour and Morris mines were closed about 1921; Armour merged with Morris some time later and after World War II Armour opened a new mine at the Morris location, just west of Bartow.

Dragline mining at the first Armour Mine began about

1910. The procedure was unique for the time. Two small, steam-powered draglines were used, one to strip the overburden and one to mine the matrix. The matrix was loaded into small railroad cars hauled by an endless-rope haulage system, the same system used for the famous San Francisco cable cars. A cable loop continuously moved between the rails, and when loaded with matrix by the dragline, the car was clamped to the cable and hauled away. The car was hauled to the top of the phosphate washer (processing plant), automatically dumped, then returned to the mining location to wait for a new load. About ten or fifteen cars were used. In the 1920s and 1930s one other mine used a dragline to load rail cars hauled by a steam locomotive.

The Armour Mine was closed in 1921. When the author was a boy, his family lived in the Swift mine village of Agricola, and the two Armour draglines were parked about a mile from his home. He and friends often played and climbed on them. The haulage cars were parked in a neat row nearby. The two draglines mined about 150 acres, which today remains in the same condition as it was left after mining, except it has become heavily overgrown with trees and brush.

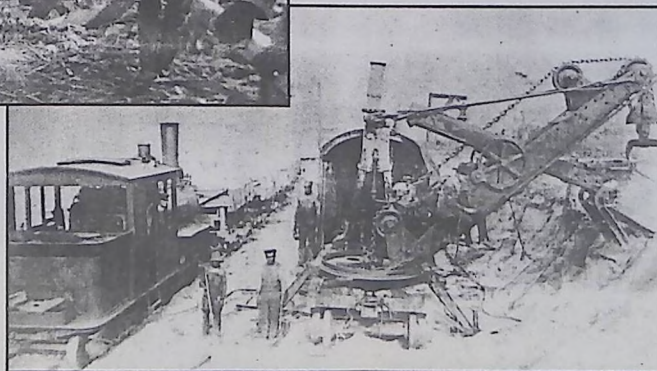
The second use of a dragline in the land pebble phosphate industry may well have been at the Alafia Mine of Swift & Company in Hillsborough County. A four-yard, steam powered dragline was put to use stripping about 1919-1920. This machine had previously been used to dig a drainage canal in the Chicago area, near Swift's headquarters. My father, a mining engineer, was employed in the Swift headquarters at about this time, but I do not know if he had any part in selecting this equipment.

*NOTE: The area mined at the first Armour Mine can be viewed by taking the Agricola Mine Road, which runs west from County Road 555 about halfway between roads 630 and 640, then going west one and one-half miles. This section of the road is very crooked, perhaps because the first mile follows the route of the Seminole War military wagon road from Fort Alafia (Hillsborough County) to Fort Meade. When the road makes a sharp curve to the left and there is a railroad on the right, the mined area is to the left, and the small piles of overburden can be viewed from the road shoulder.*

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**Workers moving hydraulic mining pipe in the mine pit. Note condition of pit bottom. Photo from the author's collection.**



**Railroad-type steam shovel and overburden haulage train. Note that two tracks are required in the bottom of the pit. The shovel cannot dig much below its own level. Photo from the author's collection.**

## CHAPTER XVII

# THE GOOD BLACK PEOPLE OF TAMPA

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**M**OST PEOPLE of the northern and eastern states have an entirely erroneous and unfair conception of the relations existing between the "good" white people and the "good" black people of the south before, during and following the Civil War. True, it is admitted, there were brutal and vicious men among both races—but they were the exception and not the rule.

I have discussed white men and women outstanding in the religious, fraternal, professional, business and political fields in those days in previous articles in this series, and made occasional reference to Negroes who were noted for loyalty, industry and general good citizenship—I used the word loyalty because I knew Negro men and women who paid little heed to President Lincoln's emancipation proclamation and remained with their former owners long after the Civil War ended. Many of these old Negro families had definite place in the esteem and confidence of the community, won by upright living, by industry, by their sincere religious activities, and by their determined and self-sacrificing efforts to give their children educational advantages which had not been available to them. So I deem it appropriate that these fine old Negroes have a place in these chronicles of the pioneer period in the village of Tampa.

First on the list—influenced, I confess, by my affection for her—I place "Aunt" Sarah Clarke, my mother's "mammy" when she was a baby and mine, too, when I came on the scene and until I was about seven years old, when she passed on to her reward. If I could not believe that my old "mammy" is with my mother in Heaven my faith in the goodness and justice of the Father who sits in judgment would be shaken. A daughter of "Aunt" Sarah, Tillie Jackson, is still living here with a daughter and grown grandchildren at 2807 Banza street. She says last July 4 was her 86th birthday anniversary, but it is my belief that she is past 90—and she is denied assistance by the welfare organization. She lost a son and a grandson in the two world wars.

"Aunt" Sarah died after a long illness. She was nearly 80 years old, and she was just worn out. I recall vividly the long days and nights spent in her small but scrupulously clean cabin on the east shore of Dorcas Pond. My mother stayed at her bedside feeding her, giving her medicine, making her bed comfortable, and giving her spiritual comfort as well—singing her favorite hymns and reading her favorite passages in the Scriptures. And when she died her funeral was attended by many white people, all of whom respected her, and many of whom had a sincere affection for her.

Among the Negro men of those early days who had the esteem of the community, conspicuous was Isaac Howard. His honesty would be vouched for by any man who knew him. He was a militant church man and was the "boss" of the largest Negro church in the city. Frequently he would invite large parties of his white friends to his church to hear the choir sing spirituals, and if any male member of the choir did not sing to his satisfaction he would be rapped with a heavy hickory stick which Howard always carried. When the present city hall was completed I appointed



Howard head janitor and he held the job until he died. Then I gave the job to his oldest son, who still holds it.

Henry Brumick was a shoemaker probably as early as 1875, and continued in business until early in the present century. He was a fine workman, specializing in ladies' shoes. He gave his children good educations as is evidenced by the fact that two of his daughters taught in public schools, Iola for 38 years and Mamie for 35 years, when they retired on the advice of a physician. Three of his children are still living here. Henry left them valuable real estate, but they have lost most of it and are now in straitened circumstances—and they, too, are denied help by the welfare board, although all are past 80 years old.

Another Negro I recall as liked and trusted by the white people was Bill Duncan. When freedom was granted the Negroes, Bill stayed in the service of the Walls, by whom he had been owned—and he always voted the Democratic ticket. The late Thomas E. Jackson, shortly before his death, told me an interesting story in which Capt. James McKay, Sr., and Bill Duncan figured. He said when the news of General Grant's election as president reached Tampa the few white Republicans and most of the Negroes celebrated by getting drunk. A group of the Negroes caught Bill Duncan at the intersection of Franklin and Washington streets and mobbed him. Captain McKay, just landed from a trip to Cuba, saw the crowd and on being told that old Bill was in danger of being killed by the mob, he pushed his way in, pulled several off the prostrate man and struck one who was choking Bill, killing him with the single blow of his fist.

Dorcas Walker lived at the north end and Dorcas Bryant at the south end of Dorcas Pond—near where the Union Railway Station now stands. Dorcas Walker, a very black woman weighing about 250 pounds, had many children and the majority of them were almost white. Her oldest son, Dan, was a splendid specimen of manhood physically. He was lighter in color than the average mulatto, he had straight hair and an enormous moustache. For years Dan operated the town's principal barbershop, on Franklin street near Lafayette. Her second son Bill was as black as his mother. I aided him to get a pension three or four years ago. Dorcas Bryant's children were all black and she raised one son, Peter, who was a credit to his race. He went to Key West when a boy, gained the friendship of Judge J. W. Locke, who educated him, and he became a lawyer of some ability. He served several years in the customs service in that city.

One of the best men of the Negro race who ever lived in Tampa died very recently—John Hall. He was a leader of his people and had real ability in heavy construction. He was employed as a foreman on the Polk street railroad and the Lafayette street bridges when they were being erected.

Sam Fagin was a shiftless old Negro who was never known to work, but had about 20 children. I mention him because I recall a funny story about him. When the late Clarke Knight had just graduated from law school he walked into the police station one morning looking for business. He saw old Sam in a cell and asked why. Sam said he was accused of stealing chickens. Clarke volunteered to represent him. The next morning when Sam was arraigned before Judge Harry Peeples the judge glared at him and evidently unnerved him. Told to plead to the charge Sam whispered, "Jedge, when you looks at me lak dat it seems lak you looks right through me. I ain's gwine lie to you, Jedge—I's guilty." Clarke was on his feet instantly to protest: "Judge Peeples, you frightened this poor old man so badly with your fierce expression that he doesn't know what he is saying. I am his lawyer, and I tell you he is not guilty." Whereupon the honorable court delivered himself of this gem: "Sam Fagin, stand up! I'll have you to know that I came from South Ca'lina, and I was taught to always take the word of a white in preference to the word of a Negro. You say you are guilty—your lawyer says you are not guilty. I prefer to believe your lawyer. Case dismissed."

Charlie Foster was a witty old rascal with positive genius for improvising rhymes.

He was drunk most of the time. I saw him drink a pint of whiskey without taking the bottle from his lips to win a bet. He never wore shoes. It was a treat to watch him pull an oar—his stroke and the perfection with which he would “feather” the blade were as accurate as a machine could have been. He had a good voice and was always ready to sing for a drink of liquor. His favorites were John Bingen On The Rhine—very profane—and Balmoral Ladies, both composed by himself. I remember one verse of the latter:

“White man smell like a sweet scented soap,  
Black man smell like a damn ram goat.”

Other old-timers of the Negro race that I recall include John Matthews, who owned a tract on the east bank of the river north of the Fortune street bridge; “Aunt” Fortune, who owned property adjoining the Matthews tract on the south, and for whom Fortune street was named; Isham Bell, operator of the Jackson street ferry; Jim Mills, Miller & Henderson’s drayman; Louis Henderson, who was my “guardian” for several years after “Aunt” Sarah died; Tom McKnight, political leader of his race; Frank Jones, Henry Crum and Walter Holden, who for many years were the motive power operating the Campbell Drum cylinder press in the old Weekly Tribune office, and who stayed with me when I operated the paper alone during a yellow fever epidemic which lasted three months—owners and all other employees fled to the country and to other towns; and old Israel, who looked like a gorilla and growled like that fierce beast—he was used to frighten disobedient children; and Aggie Halloman, who lived in Simmons Hammock and looked like an Indian squaw—she was alleged to have taken a mule (owned by a family with whom she had a feud) to a thick jungle, tied it to a tree and cut its throat; Solomon Sally, a sober and respected man; Sam Timmons and his pretty octoroon wife, Grace, both of them under five feet tall; the tall yellow man, “Steward” Jackson, who operated a restaurant for white people on Franklin street near Judge Campbell’s store and had a nice home on Franklin street near Harrison; the Crews family, who lived many years in a ramshackle old building which stood on the water street side of the Knight & Wall block near Jackson street; Joe Wright, the hunter, who lived near Ballast Point and killed many deer in the peninsula before it became thickly populated; Tom Clarke, whose chief purpose seemed to be to create strife between the whites and blacks; Isaac H. N. Smith, the tailor—and a good one, too; Levin Armwood, who died not many years ago at a ripe old age, and who was a member of the police force for a number of years with a creditable record—if my memory is not at fault, the first Negro to be given a place on the force. Armwood had a daughter, Blanche, who attained considerable distinction as an educator, civic worker and orator, being used as a speaker by the Republican national organization in several campaigns.

This record would be conspicuously incomplete if I did not include the name of Clara Frye, the good woman who gave the Negroes of Tampa their first hospital and whose kind heart kept her constantly in financial difficulties. Appropriately, the modern city hospital for Negroes bears her name as a memorial. And I would be criticized by many white friends if I failed to mention another fine old Negro woman—Amanda Threadcraft. For many years she baked the cakes for weddings in the old families and was very efficient in the sickroom.

The old-time Negroes willingly subjected themselves to sacrifices and gave generously of their time and their slender resources to erect places of worship and school buildings. Iola Brumick recently sent me a paper discussing these strivings, from which I quote:

“According to my best information, the first school building for colored children was erected in 1868. It was located on Harrison street between Morgan and Marion. The little building had become dilapidated and unsanitary. It was 35 x 75, one room with no partitions and few windows—but it was very dear to the



colored people, as many had learned the alphabet there. A meeting was held in the old building many years ago at which it was determined to appeal to the county superintendent and the school board for a better building. Thomas McKnight, Peter Bryant, Henry Brumick and Isaac Howard were appointed a committee to present our appeal to the authorities. Clubs were organized among the women present to co-operate by soliciting funds. The committee met the school board, were given patient hearing, but were informed that the board had no money available for such a purpose at the time. The members of the board, however, made personal contributions to the fund being raised—Superintendent Buchholz, Col. W. B. Henderson and Dr. G. H. Symmes each gave \$25. The women's committees obtained letters from the superintendent authorizing them to solicit funds, and by October, 1886, they had raised \$383.75. My father, Henry Brumick, was treasurer for the clubs. But all activities were suspended by a yellow fever epidemic. Everyone qualified had to give their time to nursing the sick.

"Finally the scourge was conquered and conditions became normal again. Our committees resumed their canvass for funds, and in the fall of 1889 we had erected Harlem Academy, a two-story frame building with eight classrooms. But we had the use of this building barely three years—some unspeakably despicable scoundrel set it on fire and it was completely destroyed in three hours. We watched our achievement representing years of hard work and self-denial go up in flame and smoke, and our hearts were heavy indeed. A new term was at hand and we had no building available. But the ministers of the Negro churches came to the rescue—they tendered the use of the church buildings, and the offer was accepted by the school board. This arrangement continued three years, until funds had been raised and a new building was erected. We raised \$2,500 for this building and the school board sold some property and added \$1,600 to the fund. Our organization also raised money for the erection of the first Negro hospital, and we aided in the building of several churches."

The old colored people of the county have an organization—they call it the Old Settlers' Club (colored) of Tampa and Hillsborough County. William J. Walker, grandson of "Aunt" Dorcas Walker, is president, and A. I. Dudley is secretary. Following is a list of the members: Ed Larry, Morris Williams, Julia Harbin, W. A. Harbin, Warren Vester, Felicia M. Larkins, Thomas Larkins, Anna Costa, Minnie Williams, Annie McCall, Pearl Walker, W. J. Walker, Eli Witherspoon, Lula Jones, Elizabeth Odom, Ida Brown, Isaac Thornton, Hanna Thornton, Florida Walker, Gussie Bailey, A. I. Dudley, Idella Street, J. Bailey, Isaac Howard, Agnes Howard, Martha Johnson, Sophia Thomas, Rosa Giles, Viola Artis, Hester Allen, Elizabeth Flowers, Ella Prince, Solomon Tanner, Ella Mae Jackson, Francis Owens, Jannie Whitfield, H. W. Joseph, Mary Williams, Irene Dukes, Daisy McDonald, Wade Perrin, Carrie Perrin, Carrie Fields, Estelle Jenkin, Riner Williams, Iola Brumick and Mamie Maddocks. There are hundreds more eligible, and a campaign should be launched to bring them into the club. The Negroes of Tampa—the old-timers and their descendants—have much in their history that is well worth preserving.

#### "The first Negro arrived in Florida in 1528 . . ."

Who was the first Negro to land in Florida? It did not require a long cruise through books to discover the answer to this question. It was Estaban, a native of Azamor, which was a fortified outpost of Portugal in 1508 in the Kingdom of Morocco. When did he reach Florida? He reached Florida in 1528, with the Narvaez expedition. This Negro in company with Cabeza de Vaca and Castillo reached Mexico after nine years of heroic struggles with hunger, sickness and Indians.

Was Estaban the first Negro to reach the Western Hemisphere? He was not the first. There were Negroes in Hispaniola (San Domingo) 17 years before Estaban

landed near Tampa. Evidence of this is found in a letter written by the King of Spain to a Spaniard in San Domingo, by the name of Sampier. The king wrote as follows: "No entiendo como se han nuerto tantos Negros; cuidad los muchos." Which means: "I do not understand how so many Negroes have died; take much care of them." This royal letter was written in Seville and dated June 21, 1511.

Attorney Kelsey Blanton of Blountstown tells of an interesting experience of his boyhood, when he was a resident of Hillsborough County:

"In the closing years of the last century it was my opportunity and privilege—rare at that late period—to know and talk with a man who had engaged in the African slave trade. He was a Mr. Zullner, whose home was on the south bank, and I mean on the bank, of the Little Manatee river, a very lovely site where the river was expanding for its entrance into Tampa Bay, and I suppose two miles above its mouth. There must be others living who knew him, perhaps you, yourself.

"Mr. Zullner was a native of Denmark. In his young manhood he made one or more trips to Africa in that trade while in the service of others. Then he and another person of similar experience formed a partnership and made an expedition for themselves. They procured their cargo of slaves and crossed the Atlantic, but when off shore one of the Bahama Islands, a hurricane struck them, drove their vessel on a reef and broke it up beyond hope of refloating and repairing it for the continuance of their voyage. Their position was most precarious, hazardous. Slavery was still lawful in Cuba, as it was in the States, but the importation of slaves was outlawed and ships of the United States and England scoured the high seas for smugglers. As the storm was abating, a tramp steamer called by to investigate their difficulties. They offered the skipper \$600 to take and land their cargo in Cuba, but he was unwilling to take the risk.

"There being nothing better they could do, they let the slaves plunge into the sea and swim ashore as free men, the distance being such as could be made by a fair swimmer. He said they sank and rose to the surface blowing like porpoises. A small Negro to whom they had taken a liking, and had clothed as they themselves were dressed, remained on the wrecked vessel with them. They found no way of escape before a patrolling vessel came along and took them in custody, their little colored friend being charged with them until the truth of their story of him could be established. Nature having exacted a heavy penalty of them, I think the court dealt with them lightly.

"Mrs. Zullner was a motherly soul, reared principally in Key West, but was born and as a child lived in what is now East Hillsborough, and as I learned had gone to school with some of my people, the Wilders. Her father, a Turner, had operated the Rice Old Mill on the Hatchie Pocsassa, which I may write of some time. At the time I knew them, they had a daughter, Lovie, who was taking piano lessons in Tampa. I hope she is living."

The common belief that the skulls of Negroes are thicker and harder than those of any other human species may have originated from this incident reported by the Florida Peninsular September 5, 1857: "A Negro servant of Captain Parkhill was returning to Tampa with him when his horse became frightened and threw him. The Negro's head hit the right hind leg of Parkhill's horse and broke it, glanced off and hit a tree and peeled off the bark for several feet. The Negro was just stupefied for a few minutes."

Ever hear of a Negro slave-owner? Hillsborough County had one before the Civil War, which freed all slaves in the United States. He was known as Samson, a giant Negro who had once been a slave himself, owned by a Seminole Indian. He was freed by General Zachary Taylor, commander of the troops stationed at Fort Brooke during one of the several campaigns against the Indians. After being given his freedom, Samson obtained possession of a large tract in Simmons Hammock and de-



veloped a fine farm. The late S. E. Sparkman, tax assessor of the county for many terms, told me that he was with a hunting party who camped at Samson's farm one night and that he saw a number of slaves on the place—house servants and farm hands.

General Taylor freed a large number of Negroes who had been held as slaves by the Indians, acting under authority of an order of the commander-in-chief directing him to grant freedom to all slaves of the Seminoles who appealed to him.

#### "Some bits of Negro philosophy . . ."

The late Federal Judge Ackerman of Orlando, who also presided at sessions of his court held in Tampa, was a great wit and philosopher. His intimates here counted on a new batch of stories on every visit, and never were disappointed. I remember this gem:

"An aged Negro was being interviewed by a group of friends on his 104th birthday anniversary as to the secret of his long life, and he replied, 'When I work I work hard, when I rest I rest easy, and when I worry I go to sleep.'"

Talking with Morgan Holloman, member of a pioneer East Hillsborough Negro family, he made use of a peculiar expression. He lives alone and his only income is his old age pension of \$35 a month—occasionally white friends help out a little. Morgan is 75 years old and has never married. Asked why, he said: "Good many years ago I almost got the bridle on a young widow woman. She agreed to deed me two acres of land, but she sold the land and I backed out of the bargain." His only companions now are two hounds, but he seems well content with his lot. His cabin is on Hillsborough avenue, about a mile north of Seffner.

A quarter of a mile west is the home of Joe Smalley, who says he will be 105 years old October 12, Joe has a neat and well improved place—10 acres, a comfortable cottage, a barn and other outbuildings, an orange grove, ornamental shrubbery and flowers and a flock of chickens. Joe says on account of his age he only works enough to keep his joints "soople." He is a native of Georgia but has lived in Hillsborough County 50 years. He is a regular attendant at the old-timers' picnics and always wins the prize as the oldest Negro resident. Joe proudly proclaims that his name never has been entered in the "book of crimes," meaning he has never been arrested for any cause.

A lady in a nearby town has a cook—an excellent cook—who has been with her 33 years. She has such a reputation for her culinary artistry that whenever the bishop of the lady's church visits the town he invites himself to dinner at her house—he so enjoys the old cook's wonderful concoctions. If that lady would make public the method by which she holds a good cook so long she would win high fame and widespread gratitude. My guess is that the old cook is held by more than her wages—she has affection for her employer.

The lady refers to the old Negress as "my boss." Which, very likely, indicates their status. Recently they were gossiping. The lady asked the cook, "What is the name of that smart-looking brown girl I see working at the clinic?" The cook had difficulty with the name, but finally she brought it out—"Ophelia, but I don't remember the family name." "Couldn't be Shakespeare, or could it?" asked the lady. "Yas'm, dat's it," said the old cook, beaming with admiration at her employer's perspicacity. "How come you know it?"

Recently the lady read the cook my story about my Great Grandfather Simmons, the pioneer Baptist circuit rider. "Yassum, dat's dem!" exclaimed the old woman, explaining that her grandmother was owned by my mother's forebears. She also related that her people (owners) were the Duvals, and that when freedom was proclaimed the old folks walked from Jacksonville to Lake City "totin' de chilluns on dey backs."

"This paper say it do . . ."

Reconstruction was a difficult time for both the white and Negro people of Florida. Some of the latter helped the "carpetbaggers" in the looting of the state, but many Negroes stayed loyal to their white people as Hon. John W. Davis, of Lecanto, tells in the following story; recently my daughter Helen and her husband John K. Martin spent an afternoon with the old gentleman. They were accompanied by Judge E. C. May of Inverness, longtime friend of Mr. Davis, who has contributed to this page in the past many thrilling stories related to him by Mr. Davis. They used a tape recorder, and brought back a story which requires two hours for recital and covers many subjects. All of the material could not be used in one issue—it would fill the page. So I will present stories culled from the recording from time to time.

Mr. Davis first told how his father came here on Christmas Day in 1867. He was one of the pioneer settlers of Old Middleground, that was the name of the place in those days, called so because it was the halfway point, with a little water on it, between the river and the old stage stand where they changed horses, and dispatch riders in the old Indian days had stopped overnight, if they needed to. The old stage stand was near what is now the cemetery at Homosassa. There were three trails that came together at the old stage stand from different blockhouses or stockades, along the river and the Suwannee river and the Withlacoochee. One from Fort Fanning on the Suwannee, one from Camp Izzard, 12 miles north of here, and then old Horn's bridge, where Stoke's Ferry is now located. These trails all converged on Hales' stage stand at Homosassa.

"My father had been here before—but he had a plantation on Newman's Lake at Gainesville long before the Civil War, and he had a free-nigger farm in 1866 in Madison County. He had lots of trouble with the Negroes, they had just been freed and they didn't know what to do with it. So my mother said she had spent the most miserable year of her life there, and 'I have a place of my own in South Carolina, and if you are going to fool with free-niggers, I'll take my children and go back to South Carolina until you get through with it.' So he said, 'Well, what do you want to do?' She replied 'I want you to go where we'll never see another nigger!' My father said, 'Well, all right.' He was a man who did not talk very much. So he picked us up and brought us down here. I was quite young then, and I wouldn't have come if they had let me know what they were up against. But they promised me a good long ride and that went a long way with a kid—I wasn't but a year old. This has been my home ever since. I haven't always stayed here, but I've always come back to vote, and I'm still here."

Discussing hardships and impositions under carpetbag rule, during what was called the reconstruction period following the Civil War, he said, "Our people did not suffer as many indignities and injustices as did the people of adjoining southern states, but we had many exasperating experiences." Illustrating, he told this story: Peter Law, progenitor of the prominent Hernando County family, farmed on an extensive scale in the fertile Annuttaliga Hammock near Brooksville. He raised a great crop of cotton after the war, and as it was being gathered the tax collector appeared. Taxes had been imposed which amounted to virtual confiscation. But Mr. Law had anticipated the scheme to rob him by making a bill of sale for the crop to Henry Harper, a faithful old Negro who had been raised on the plantation. Henry was very proud of that.

Inspectors would make trips out there hoping to catch the old Negro off guard and trip him up. One of them, a Jew by the name of Brent, said, "Old nigger, you know you don't own this stuff—it's Law's cotton." Henry showed him the paper, and Brent said, "Oh, I know about that and I hope you hold it, but you and I know it don't belong to you." Old Henry said, "This paper say it do." As it was the policy of the carpetbag government to exempt the freedmen from taxation, hoping thereby to



win their political support, the collector was stumped. But he argued, "Henry, you know you don't own this cotton." "This paper says I do," replied Henry, again presenting the bill of sale. And under the bill of sale he disposed of the cotton—and delivered every cent of the money he received for it to his former owner.

Henry Harper afterwards carried the mail from Brooksville to Crystal River, about the time of the settlement of old Mansfield in 1887. It was a pretty hard run and he was old. He, incidentally, was very proud of his preacher's license. He was a minister, as most of them are. He was always carrying little extra packages for the people along the route, going to the trouble of buying at their request, whatever they needed in Crystal River or Brooksville.

An old fellow named Masterson, who had been the captain of a Negro company in Indiana during the war, was now postmaster at Mansfield. Although he had Henry make many purchases for him, he never tipped Uncle Henry as the others had; finally Henry said he thought the postmaster ought to give him a little something for his trouble. Well, Masterson had never thought of it that way, so he said, "Why you ought to be glad to do things for me. I helped to free you." Old Henry was one-eyed and he always looked over his glasses, so he adjusted his spectacles and said—"You ain't done me no favor, sah! I was a hang sight freer when I belongs to Peter Law than I ever been since I belongs to Harper."

Many of them felt this way. For instance, when they were after old man Morrison and old Jim Miller for hanging a Negro at Crystal River, they sent a Negro deputy from Brooksville to arrest them. He didn't know them, so he went to old Jerry Robinson, one of Jim Allen's slaves, and asked him if he knew them. "Yassah, suh, I knows 'em." "Will you point 'em out to me?" "Nossah! I ain't p'inting out nuttin' to you!" replied Jerry. "Dey's ouah friends and dat nigger needed hangin'." And he said, "I'll tell you, niggah, ef you want to see Brooksville again, you better start back there now. You try to carry them men an' you'll never get there!" So the Negro deputy hurried back to Brooksville empty-handed.

"That's the way the old Negroes felt about it. Of course there were lots of them that didn't see it that way, and they were the ones that gave us trouble. Another little instance—there was an old man named Christy, who lived at Crystal River, by the way, it was his nigger that Morrison and Miller hung. The carpetbag government sent a man to get John MacMillan, whose story I will tell you some day. You see, John was a pleasant young fellow, whose father—an overseer of a plantation—had been killed by the Negroes under him. Young John swore to kill 1,000 Negroes in retribution and was working at it industriously—however, the country people in this area liked young John, sympathizing with him and befriending him whenever they could.

"The carpetbaggers heard John was in the neighborhood of Christy's so they sent an old renegade deputy sheriff from Bronson in Levy County (a southern man) to Crystal River to look for him. He went to Christy's to look for him. Now Christy was one of these fellows who made everyone welcome until they started to leave, and if he didn't want to see them any more he told them so. He took old Tyre in, and Tyre told him who he was looking for. Old Christy, who never opened his mouth that he didn't swear a little, said: 'Well, we'll look around a little later, you're in no hurry.' They went to Crystal River and Tyre got drunk.

"They finally started back. Now, that part of the flat woods country is pitted with natural wells hidden by a thick growth of trees growing in them and surrounding them. There was one of them along the road, and Tyre was drunk enough that he didn't see things as he would have if he was sober. As they drew near the hidden well, Christy said, 'Now you've been looking for John MacMillan. He's right in that thicket there—but you'll have to move fast if you want to get him.' Well, Tyre made a run and fell into the well—it was a good big place, large as

this room, with steep sides, but a hard bottom and it caught him alright. Christy drove right on home, and left Tyre there all night, and the sandflies and mosquitoes did a thorough job of sobering him up.

"Next morning Christy went back and got Tyre, took him to his house and gave him a breakfast of black coffee, etc. When Tyre got ready to leave, Christy went outside with him, and said, 'Well, I've treated you fairly. I'm sorry that I forgot to go back and get you out of the hole last night, but everything's all right now. But I want to tell you something before you go—when we need your services down here we'll let you know. Be damned sure you don't come back till we send for you.' So, much to his chagrin, the renegade had to return empty-handed to Bronson."

### "John was a whiz-bang at catching gophers . . ."

Probably the most famous, or notorious, Negro in Florida history was "Gopher John." He was one of a half dozen Negroes who played prominent roles in the Seminole War, acting with the Indians or whites as occasion served. John finally went west with the Seminoles, killed the great chief Coacoochee, and was reportedly hanged for his offense. The following story, however, is of John's youthful days, and came to the Pioneer Florida page via the kind hand of Major Keenan:

Shortly after General Taylor's battle with the Indians at Okeechobee on Christmas day, 1837, a strange character showed up at Fort Brooke. He said his name was John. He spoke good English, and stated that he also knew the languages spoken by the Florida Indians, and that he was a Seminole Negro. Now a Seminole Negro is one who was born among the Indians or had lived among them as their slave or a free Negro who threw in his lot among them. At that time interpreters were much in demand by the army and while John's knowledge of English made his claim very doubtful, it was not the policy to inquire very closely into the genealogy of such a valuable asset as John might be. He certainly did not learn English among the Indians, and it later developed John had been at Fort Brooke 10 years earlier. There was, of course, considerable discussion among the personnel of the post as to why John sought the asylum, and it was decided that John 'loved his stomach' and thought it would be better treated by the army than by the Indians. John's personal appearance is best described by an eye witness, Lieut. Thomas Wilhelm, in his History Of The Eighth Infantry, U.S.A.:

"Whether he had dropped from a black thundercloud just before passing or arisen out of a gopher hole no one knew, but from his looks it seemed most likely that he had never been nearer to the angels than terra firma or the top of a cabbage palmetto and might be a spawn of the devil—six feet two in his bare feet, broad-shouldered and as straight as a gun wiper; but with all these advantages he was not a beauty. He wore a spangled cotton velvet vest, two sizes too small for his portly breast, and highly varnished with grease, which had evidently not been cut out by his own tailor; a rimless old stovepipe hat that must have gone through many vicissitudes before reaching such a godless apex of wool as that on which it was then perched. These, if we except his ragged breechcloth, constituted his stock in wearing apparel. Whether or not charcoal would have made a white mark upon him we are not prepared to say, but if it ever did upon any Negro, it would have done so on any outward part of Gopher John, saving his teeth and eyes, which were ivory and snowballs.

"The first proposition was to hang him—that came from an Irishman of course; the second to boil him for soap fat—this from one of the camp women; the third to put him through a course of cleaning and fumigation, then throw him to the alligators, but there was some expression of sympathy for the alligators. None of these, however, seemed to meet the general approval, so as he declined leaving, under any circumstances, he was permitted to hang around and enjoy the blessing



of free institutions and such scraps as he could inveigle or entice through charity or fellow feeling from the other camp dogs."

But Gopher John's main claim to fame (or ill fame) at that time, and from which he acquired his name Gopher, was due to his business ability. In spite of a pronounced desire among the personnel of Fort Brooke to attend his demise, they were doomed to disappointment, because John lived to accompany Coacoochee (Wildcat) to Arkansas and down into Mexico. There, during a difference of opinion, and after emptying a bottle of palm-nut juice that had stood in the sun a few days, Gopher John conked Wildcat over the head with the empty bottle, which ended the illustrious career of Wildcat—after which John played the part of a tassel on the end of a rope on the salubrious south bank of the Rio Grande. History doesn't make plain the cause of the difference of opinion between the gentlemen, but evidence seems to indicate 'cherchez la femme.'

But getting back to Gopher John's business ability. It seems that Colonel Brooke, who was in command of the 1826 garrison, true to his Maryland heritage, was especially fond of terrapin. The colonel, so the accounts read, and this not being Maryland and no terrapin available, had discovered that the Florida land turtle or gopher, was equal if not superior to terrapin, and tracked them down to their burrows, over which he placed a guard, and when the animal came forth it was captured and put in a turtle pen for fattening to the colonel's fastidious taste. In the meantime, so the story was told, the colonel even dreamed and at times talked in his sleep about the feast to be. It was reported to the colonel by one of his men that John was an expert gopher catcher which news brought him close to the colonel's heart and he was forthwith engaged on that mission. Thus, being sort of a ward of the colonel's, he was entitled to special privileges. To compensate John for his duty and to stimulate his interest in the undertaking, an agreement was entered into between him and the colonel in which John was to be paid two bits a gopher, regardless of size or condition—sort of a run of the mill commission.

Early on the morning after the completion of the business arrangement, John appeared before the colonel with a beautiful specimen, in the colonel's judgment, weighing about 10 pounds. He was instructed to feed him well on the most succulent grass and tender leaves from the garden. The officer of the day was further told to make the pen a military post and put a guard over it. There was to be no stone left unturned to protect that gopher. Next morning and for the next several mornings John appeared bright and early with a prime specimen and received his pay plus an expression of appreciation, and on at least one visit received an extra half bit ( $12\frac{1}{2}c$  in our money) plus a compliment for gathering in so many gophers, all about the same size and in such excellent condition. John was a whiz-bang at catching gophers. It so happened at that time an increase in force was expected for the garrison at Fort Brooke, and the colonel was kept so busy with arrangements for housing and other facilities he was too busy to visit his turtle run. But why worry, didn't he have enough to welcome the officers with a banquet the like of which they never before enjoyed?

Full of anticipation early on the morning of the day set for the evening banquet, the colonel and his three servants, which the generous government allowed one of his rank, were up and bestirring. The colonel took himself out through the garden path to the pen. After returning the salute of the guard he leaned over the fence, but only one gopher was to be seen.

'Where,' demanded the colonel, 'are the others?'

'Sure now, general,' answered Patrick Aloysius O'Flynn, a raw recruit from Boston, 'there bay but one.'

'Tut, tut, man,' exclaimed the colonel, somewhat impatiently, 'I've sent a turtle here each morning for over a week. Where are they?'

'By the sacred name, sar, it's after being on guard here for a wake, there never's bane but one.'

'Damn it, man, do you expect me to believe that? You've been neglecting your duty. Answer me quick, where are the others or I'll have you court-martialed,' said the colonel, getting red in the face as he scented disaster.

'But if it plazes the general . . .'

'Colonel!' shouted the colonel.

'But if it plazes the general colonel, there ain't never bane but one. That stinkin' nagar is after coming ach mornin' 'n takin' the slimy baste to show the general how fat he bay getting,' said Pat O'Flynn.

With that the colonel took off his hat, swung his arms in front of his face and bellowed 'Oh! For the tranquillity of hell! Captain of the guard,' he yelled at the top of his voice, 'where is that nigger?'

But 'that nigger' was far gone into the woods.

### "Aunt Aggie's bone yard . . ."

From the pen of a talented Lake City lady—May Vinzant Perkins, member of a prominent pioneer family, comes a brochure based on a bizarre historic story of a queer old Negress, an ex-slave, who had a peculiar hobby. The title of the little book, Aunt Aggie's Bone Yard, suggests a gruesome tale, though it is anything but that. It is the well-authenticated recital of the history of what was 65 or 70 years ago a principal point of interest in the Lake City section, attracting visitors from great distance. Picture post cards of the garden and its owners—Aunt Aggie and her husband, Jenkins Jones—are treasured souvenirs in many homes. Many of these cards were printed not only in this country but in England and Germany in colortone. They are all that remains today as a tangible reminder of the enchanting old garden and its grotesque "adornments."

The story, in brief, is that the old Negro couple acquired a small tract of land in the outskirts of Lake City soon after the Civil War and built a home on it. Both had experience in floriculture and they engaged in that business. But Aunt Aggie had ideas beyond an ordinary floral business—ideas to attract business. She collected bones of animals and these she ingeniously wired together to form fences, hedges and arches, surmounting the arches with the skulls of animals. Many visitors inscribed their name and address on flat surfaces of bones. And the plantings flourished and the business grew. The old woman developed a wonderful rose, which was given her name, the Aunt Aggie. They also grew a fine orchard of fruit trees—pears, peaches, plums, persimmons and figs.

The house was as unique as the garden. In the front room was a vast collection of curios—snakes and other reptiles preserved in alcohol, the skeleton of a huge alligator, and even a human skeleton, thought to have been excavated from one of the Indian mounds in the vicinity. Quoting Mrs. Perkins:

"Included among a rare assemblage of jewelry, old lace, bric-a-brac and other heirlooms and treasure trove were tomahawks, bows and arrows, a crown of feathers, pottery and numerous other Indian relics. A couple of old-fashioned dolls, a marble-topped table and a silver coffee pot—gifts from her former mistress—were Aunt Aggie's most cherished possessions. Many of these articles, the accumulation of a lifetime, were of historical value.

"Aunt Aggie and her husband, kindly and courteous, had served as house servants during slave days. They were typical ante bellum darkies and welcomed visitors into the their home with inbred southern hospitality. During the latter years the house was opened chiefly to white visitors who came from far and near to view Aunt Aggie's unique garden and to see the fascinating old house with its many curios and relics. Everybody that came was welcomed by Aunt Aggie. And



when the inspection tour of the house and garden was completed she stood at the entrance and presented each visitor with a bouquet of flowers. A tourist was given an especially nice bouquet—for a larger tip was expected. But everybody that came was welcome, and received flowers, too, whether they gave a tip or not." Aunt Aggie and her bone yard garden are now only an intriguing tradition.

"Faithful to the end."

Robert W. Davis, of Palatka, member of congress for several terms, known throughout the state as "Our Bob," was a talented writer and a frequent contributor to the press. This interesting story written by Mr. Davis was found in an old copy of the Tampa Weekly Tribune:

"When Jefferson Davis lay dying in his home in Beauvoir and the news spread that the end was near, there hurried from Orlando, Fla., to that beloved Mississippi home an aged Negro man, a former body servant of the dying chief of the Lost Cause, with the hope of seeing his former master before death had closed his eyes. But the faithful white-haired old slave was too late.

"The incident inspired Columbus Drew, state comptroller during the reconstruction period, to write a touching poem, which he called The Prayer Of Milo Cooper, picturing the scene of a faithful Negro fervently praying in the death chamber of his beloved old master. It not only paints a pathetic scene but throws light on the relations existing between master and slave in the old days."



*Crisis: St. Augustine, Florida*,  
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## 20 The African-American Experience in Twentieth-Century Florida

*Maxine D. Jones*



On 31 March 1994, nineteen African-American legislators in Florida utilized black political clout, perhaps for the first time in the twentieth century. Sensing that a bill to compensate victim families of the Rosewood massacre in 1923 might be defeated in the House of Representatives, the Black Caucus decided to play hardball by putting pressure on Governor Lawton Chiles. Even though Chiles supported the measure, the Black Caucus believed that he should use his influence more actively to secure votes for passage. They threatened to withdraw their support for the governor's health-care package unless he lobbied more vigorously for their piece of legislation.

The House passed the Rosewood Compensation Bill on 4 April 1994 by thirty-one votes, and four days later the Senate voted twenty-four to sixteen in its favor. The Black Caucus's shrewd tactical move guaranteed the passage of a measure that had come to represent to thousands of black Floridians an acknowledgment for past wrongs and hope for the future of race relations. It also symbolized the distance traveled and the political strength African Americans had gained since the turn of the century. In 1900, the 230,730 African Americans in Florida were politically impotent and voiceless. During Reconstruction and for a brief time afterward, black males had joined the Republican Party and had actively participated in politics by both voting and holding office. White Floridians, however, curtailed the black vote, first through violence and economic intimidation and later through legislative means. A

Threats and intimidation directed against them sometimes backfired. The Ku Klux Klan in Miami paraded through the black section of the city, burned crosses, and hanged an effigy of a black man in May 1939 in its efforts to keep blacks from the polls. Those threats, however, had the opposite effect as more blacks than ever before turned out to cast their votes in Miami. African-American women, who had secured the right to vote in 1920, joined their men in exercising their limited rights to participate in the electoral process. Eartha White gave encouragement and served cool refreshments to the long line of black women waiting to register to vote in 1920 in Jacksonville. She also directed the Negro Republican Women Voters in 1920 and served as state chairperson of the National League of Republican Colored Women in 1928.

It was not until the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed the white primary in *Smith v. Allwright* (1944) that blacks in Florida and across the South could register as Democrats and vote in state primary elections. Black voter registration significantly increased in the following years. Before 1944 few blacks were permitted to register as Democrats in Florida, but 106,420 were registered as such by 1950. Conversely, the number of black registered Republican voters decreased from an estimated 20,000 in 1944 to only 9,725 in 1950. Although no longer hampered by the poll tax or the white primary, only 37.5 percent of the state's adult blacks were registered to vote by 1956. Racism and social customs still prevented many blacks from exercising their rights.

As late as 1952 several Florida counties with a majority black population had few registered voters. For example, even though they represented almost 50 percent of the population, no blacks were registered to vote in Madison County. But 586 African Americans bravely marched to the Madison County courthouse in 1954 where they were finally allowed to register. Five hundred and fifty-eight of them registered as Democrats. Similar conditions existed in other counties, including Gadsden, Flagler, and Jefferson.

A strong belief that placing the right people in office could improve conditions for African Americans encouraged organizations and individuals to work incessantly to increase the number of blacks voters. Voting leagues were organized across the state, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) actively sought to convince African Americans of the importance of voting. Black Floridian Harry T. Moore, of the NAACP and the Progressive Voters League, played a major role in augmenting the number of black registered voters. From his base in Brevard County, Moore canvassed the county and the state. By 1950 over 50 percent of the blacks in Bre-

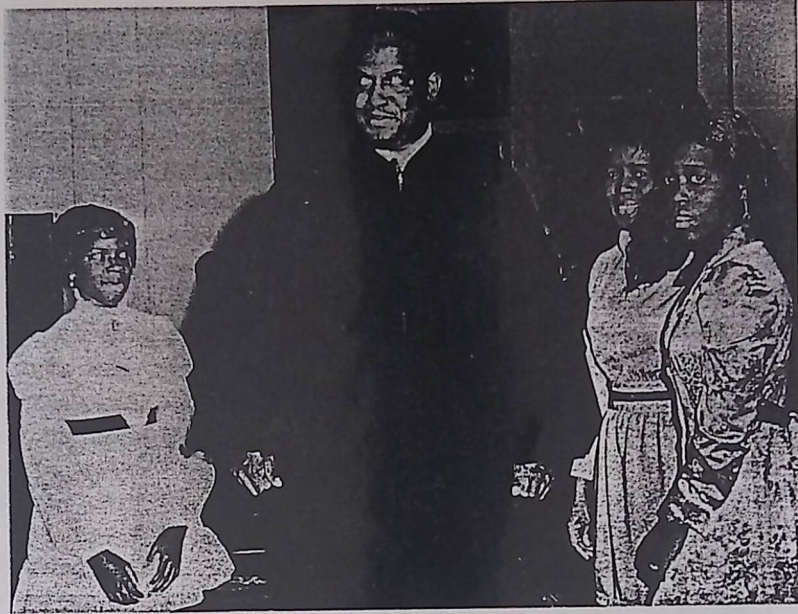
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Florida's first African-American Supreme Court justice, Joseph W. Hatchett, of Pinellas County, poses with his family prior to taking the bench for the first time, 2 September 1975. Hatchett resigned from the Court four years later in order to accept an appointment to the Federal Court of Appeals.

1992, a total of 521,328 registered black voters gave voice to the views of more than 1.5 million African Americans in Florida.<sup>2</sup> Aided by redistricting and an unprecedented numbers of blacks going to the polls, black Floridians were now represented at all levels of government. In 1968, Joe Lang Kershaw became the first black elected to the state legislature since Reconstruction and Gwendolyn Sawyer Cherry the first African-American female in 1970. Carrie P. Meek and Mary Littlejohn Singleton followed in Cherry's footsteps. In 1982, Meek became the first African-American woman elected to the Florida Senate. In 1992, Meek, Corrine Brown, and Alcee Hastings became the first African Americans since Reconstruction to represent Florida in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Blacks have also been appointed and elected to high nonlegislative offices. Governor Reubin Askew appointed Jesse J. McCrary secretary of state in 1978, and in 1994 Governor Chiles named former legislator Doug Jamerson to be Commissioner of Education. Two African Americans have served on the state Supreme Court. Governor Askew appointed Joseph Hatchett to the high court in 1975 and Governor Bob

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laborers. These figures do not include unpaid family workers or those who managed or owned farms. African Americans sixteen years and older earning their living as farm laborers numbered 17,673 men and 10,108 women in 1970, and approximately 21,676 men and 3,747 women worked as farm workers and in related occupations in 1990.

Not all black men worked on the land. More than 6,000 in 1910 and 9,219 in 1930 worked in saw and planing mills. Substantial numbers also labored on steam railroads, and as lumbermen, craftsmen, wood choppers, porters, and servants. There were 1,530 African Americans employed in 1910 as longshoremen and stevedores, 1,882 in 1930, and 1,155 as late as 1970. Between 1940 and 1990 the bulk of black men found employment as truck drivers and in construction, manufacturing, transportation, communication, and other public utilities.

Few women remained in agriculture as more and more found work as domestics, personal servants, and service workers. More than half of the gainfully employed black women in Florida worked as personal or domestic servants in 1930. Almost 60,000 out of 97,994 black women fourteen years old and above were employed as private household or service workers in 1950. The trend between 1960 and 1990 varied only slightly, as black women continued to dominate service occupations. While classifications changed and the percentages declined, according to the 1990 census an estimated 115,614 black females were employed in service occupations. More than 10,000 worked in private households, 23,595 in food service occupations. Another 29,610 women in 1990 earned their livelihood by cleaning offices and buildings.

While the majority of African Americans labored in unskilled jobs, there was always a black professional class and significant gains were made in the size of this group after the turn of the century. There were eighty-three African-American physicians and surgeons in Florida in 1910, ninety-six in 1930, but only eighty-eight in 1940 (eighty-five male and three female). Several African Americans practiced medicine in Ocala (Marion County) in 1935, among them R. S. Hughes, W. P. Wilson, and N. H. Jonus. Carrie E. Mitchell Hampton also had a medical degree and her husband, L. R. Hampton, was one of at least two African-American dentists in Ocala in 1935. The black community in Jacksonville was served by five dentists, one chiropractor, and ten physicians in the late 1950s. Between 1940 and 1970, the number of African-American doctors in the state grew by only twenty-seven, but a significant increase took place between 1970 and 1980. In 1980 there were 323 black male and 152 female physicians in Florida. Ten years later, more than 1,200 blacks were identified as health diagnosticians,

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Table 5. Negro Population in Florida  
1900-1990

Year	Male	Female	Total
1900	120,199	110,531	230,730
1910	161,362	147,307	308,669
1920	167,156	162,331	329,487
1930	215,148	216,680	431,828
1940	252,799	261,399	514,198
1950	293,137	309,964	603,101
1960	432,107	448,079	880,186
1970	498,695	542,956	1,041,651
1980	636,961	705,727	1,342,688
1990	839,189	920,345	1,759,534

which included doctors, dentists, veterinarians, optometrists, and podiatrists. Pharmacists, lawyers, dentists, nurses, accountants, chemists, drafters, engineers, and photographers were and remained a part of Florida's black professional class, but teachers have traditionally made up its majority. From the 916 employed in 1910 to the more than 22,000 in 1980 and 47,321 in 1990, they have been the backbone of the middle class.

Business owners also contributed to the development of a strong and diverse middle class. Thriving black business districts existed in several Florida cities, including Jacksonville, Tampa, Miami, and West Palm Beach, and proprietors across the state organized Negro Business Leagues. If nothing else, the practice of segregation guaranteed black business owners a clientele and several businesses prospered. Blacks owned and operated funeral homes, florist shops, rooming houses, restaurants, insurance companies, and newspapers. The *Tampa Bulletin*, owned and edited by Mr. and Mrs. M. D. Potter, was one of several African-American newspapers in Florida. Others included the *Florida Star* and the *Tattler*, both located in Jacksonville, the *Tampa Florida Sentinel*, and the *Miami Times*, edited by H.E.S. Reeves. Newspapers serving the African-American community in 1994 included the *Miami Times*, the Jacksonville *Sentinel*, the Tallahassee *Capitol Outlook*, and the St. Petersburg *Weekly Challenger*.

In 1958, Jacksonville boasted numerous black-owned businesses, including two photography studios, twelve nightclubs, five realty companies, fourteen restaurants, and more than 100 beauty shops. Abrams L. Lewis provided insurance to thousands of black Floridians as one of the founders and later president of the Afro-American Insurance

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Even though the education provided to blacks in Florida at the turn of the century was inadequate and remained so for decades, blacks took every opportunity afforded them. The disparities between black and white schools were myriad, in facilities, supplies, student load per teacher, expenditures per student, length of school year, and teacher salaries. For example, in 1901 the average student load per white teacher was thirty-nine; it was seventy-nine per black teacher. The average salary for black teachers in Gainesville in 1935 was \$562, for white teachers \$970. The assistant supervisor of schools in Duval County in the 1940s complained that black schools were overcrowded, lacked equipment, had half-day sessions, and occupied buildings in disrepair. He deemed many schoolhouses unfit for their intended use. While its intent was not really to equalize black and white schools, the adoption of the Minimum Foundation Program by the Florida legislature in 1947 resulted in making education and teacher salaries more equitable. According to J. Irving Scott, the Minimum Foundation law "accomplished more for the Negro, within the framework of segregation, than any other education legislative act in the state."<sup>3</sup>

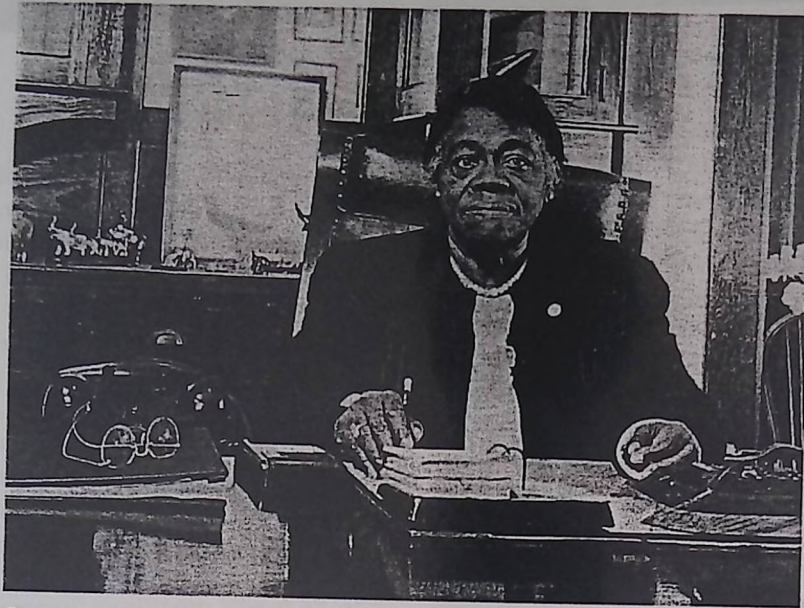
This measure improved conditions but not enough, so community leaders, teachers, and parents challenged the inequities. Teachers filed salary inequity suits during the 1940s in Escambia, Duval, Brevard, Palm Beach, and Hillsborough counties. With African-American attorneys such as S.D. McGill representing them, and with the support of the NAACP and the Florida State Teachers Association, they met with some success. Teachers and parents confronted school boards in St. Johns, Palm Beach, Marion, Broward, Dade, and Hillsborough counties over allowing black schools to close so that students could harvest vegetables and fruits. In some of these areas students attended school for three months, left to pick vegetables for a couple of months, and then returned for three more months of school. Black students attended school for only four months in some counties. Noting that white schools were not closed during the vegetable harvesting season, the Palm Beach County Teachers Association successfully challenged the custom. Opposition from parents and community leaders helped end the so-called Strawberry Schools by the late 1950s. Many of the apparent educational disparities disappeared with school desegregation in the 1960s and 1970s, but white flight and the disintegration of inner cities resulted in widespread inequities in many public schools.

Until 1958 the only institutions in the state open to blacks seeking higher education were Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), Bethune-Cookman College, Florida Memorial, and Edward

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Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, president of Bethune Cookman College in Daytona Beach, is shown at her desk in this photograph by Gordon Parks in February 1943. Daughter of former slaves in South Carolina, Dr. Bethune founded the Daytona Literary and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in 1904, which merged with the Cookman Institute of Jacksonville in 1923. Until her death in 1955, she was Florida's best-known African-American educator.

state and district courts as well as in the U.S. Supreme Court. Finally, on 18 June 1958, federal district court Judge Dozier De Vane ordered the University of Florida graduate schools opened to qualified blacks. The university, however, determined that Hawkins did not meet its admissions requirements and refused to admit him. Even though Hawkins did not personally benefit from his struggle, other African Americans did. The University of Florida Law School admitted African American George H. Starke for the fall semester 1958.

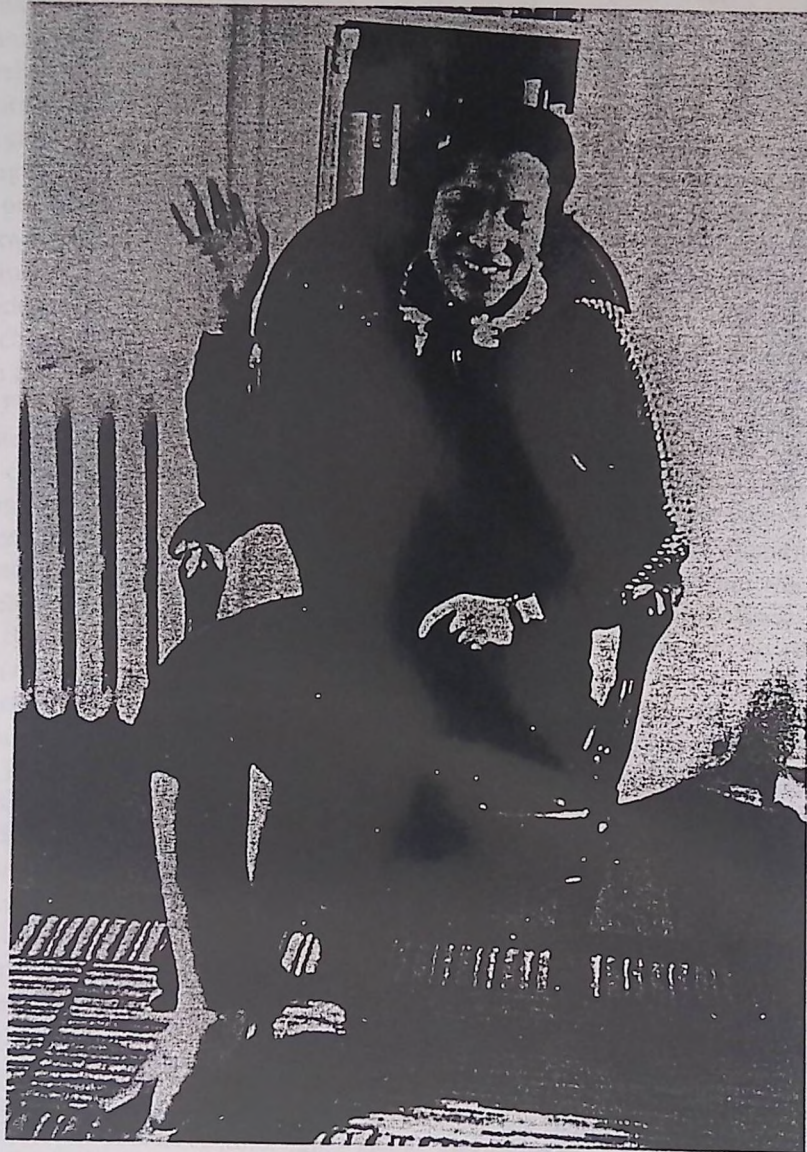
In black communities the only institution that was considered more important than the school was the church. The church provided refuge from a cold, racist, and indifferent world. It was probably the only institution where blacks could seek solace, occupy leadership roles, make decisions, and maintain organizational control without interference from whites. There were 2,882 black churches in Florida in 1926, ranging in denominations from Seventh Day Adventist to Roman Catholic. A majority of African Americans were members of the Baptist and the African Methodist Episcopal churches. Traditionally, the church of-

ferred spiritual guidance in unusual circumstances. Many congregations received well as for welfare. She always exerted great influence.

Because of segregation, the institution that provided education for African Americans was the church and district churches. Eventually black organizations, which communicated with parents, such as Alpha Phi Alpha, a college educated women's and civic organization. The Civic Club was a Matrons Club. Her table work and Women's Clubs. Purely social clubs.

Masonry gained a foothold in Florida, especially in Jacksonville, established in 1840. By 1900 of Broad and Duval. Fraternal and social organizations, the Star, the Daughters of the Protection, and the Protective Association.

Recreational and restricted grounds so that officials refuse to allow Perkins, Sr., to allow them to do so. Play in a city YMCA and the YMCA. Scouting in Florida's generally off-limits on Amelia Island. Company, became



Zora Neale Hurston left the all-black town of Eatonville, near Orlando, where she was born, to pursue an education and a writing career in New York City. With books such as *Mules and Men* (1935), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), and *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942), she became a luminary of the Harlem Renaissance group of writers and dramatists in 1930s. Though her last years were spent in poverty as a domestic servant in Fort Pierce, where she was buried in an unmarked grave in 1960, her name and books have since achieved international fame.

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perceived threat to white domination, served as a constant source of political concern.

What Key failed to appreciate fully was the political fragmentation created by the massive population growth in Florida, and the impact it would have on the development of a two-party political system. In the post-Reconstruction era, most Floridians lived within fifty miles of the Georgia border, and this region of the state was able to capitalize on its population majority to dominate the state legislature and to establish an apportionment system that ensured its control until the late 1960s. North Florida's dominance was aided, ironically, by the massive flow of newcomers into the state beginning in the 1940s. With an average of nearly 1.8 million people arriving each decade from 1940 to 1990, and most of them settling in south Florida, the region south of Ocala quickly came to have a majority of the state's inhabitants. The concerns of the newcomers focused chiefly on local matters and not on securing and holding statewide political control. Moreover, these new residents were not unified in their own political values and aspirations. For example, many from the Northeast had been lifelong Democrats, and they felt reasonably comfortable, at least initially, within Florida's Democratic Party.

In 1990, U.S. Senator Bob Graham, a native of Miami, described what he called the "Cincinnati factor" in state politics. In Graham's view, these folks had moved to Florida but remained Cincinnatians for all practical purposes. For example, they returned to Cincinnati at least once a year to visit family and friends; often sent their children to colleges in Ohio; subscribed to a Cincinnati newspaper; voted only to oppose new taxes, which they had resented when they lived in Cincinnati; and, at the end of their lives, had their remains shipped to Cincinnati for burial.

The consequence was that the culturally and economically homogeneous north Florida was able to maintain direction of the state Democratic Party and through it control of state politics. Key saw this fragmentation taking place even in the 1930s, but he underestimated its long-term consequences for the Democratic Party and Florida politics.

As Florida entered the twentieth century, its politics remained little different from those of the nineteenth century. The racial and cultural traditions of the antebellum era and the events of the Civil War and Reconstruction defined the mental outlook and social relations of most of its citizens and ensured the loyalty of white Floridians to the Democratic Party. Racial tensions in Florida remained at or near the surface during the post-Reconstruction era as native whites reasserted local

rule and blacks attempted to secure equality. The rise of the Farmers Alliance movement in Florida, the secret affiliation between white and black farmers in the 1890s, and Florida's leadership in the national Populist crusade would seal the fate of black Floridians but not in quite the manner they had hoped or envisioned. Democratic fears about an alliance between white and black farmers led to a ferocious backlash in which traditional Democratic leaders enacted a poll tax, grandfather clause, and multiple-ballot law to prevent blacks and whites from ever joining forces again at the polls. These same Democrats then adopted a series of segregation ordinances in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that prevented whites and blacks from being educated or socializing together, so that racial understanding and cooperation could not continue or develop further.<sup>3</sup>

The Democratic counterattack against Populism was devastating; it not only destroyed the movement in the state, but it also constructed a racial caste system in which blacks were denied their rights of citizenship and equality. The poll tax had a profound impact as well on the ability of white farmers to participate in Florida's electoral process. The \$2 tax was often more cash than white or black farmers in the state had in a week (in some cases a month), a sum that few could afford. The poll tax not only decimated the ranks of black voters, it also did much the same for poor white voters. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Democratic Party had fallen securely into the hands of social and economic elites who strengthened their political position when needed by paying the poll taxes of those who agreed to support them.

The party and indeed state politics were heavily influenced by these north Florida elites, most of whom were very conservative on issues of race, social matters, and economic reform. While this group dominated state politics, they would not always control it. Religion, class, and race were three factors that, in combination, would occasionally challenge their leadership.

By 1901, without the threat of black voters or the independence of rural, white voters, the Democratic Party thoroughly dominated state politics, but this dominance made it difficult for the party to keep personal ambitions within the traditional party structure. In 1901, party leaders opted to abandon the nominating convention and party platform as a vehicle for controlling the selection of candidates for particular offices. This change persuaded most politically ambitious Floridians to stay within the Democratic Party by allowing as many as were interested to campaign for various state offices through the new Demo-

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At the beginni fluence of the p role in national I of forces that sou and concerns of national progress the administrati Napoleon Bonap progressives to lir terests in the stat development and the Everglades, b the aims of railro

cratic primary system. Once Democratic voters had cast their ballots in the primary, then all Democrats would rally around a particular candidate in the general election against the Republican opponent.<sup>4</sup>

This structural change worked well in preventing the creation of a multiplicity of parties, but it did not prevent the Democratic Party from splintering into a variety of factions that allied with certain individuals or machines. Little unity existed within the party other than a commitment to the racial caste system and to economic development. Those who were sympathetic to the policies of Republican President Theodore Roosevelt (1901–9) or with the probusiness, conservative Republican leadership in the U.S. Senate kept their views to themselves and ran as Democrats if they wanted to win political office in Florida. The Democratic Party in Florida thus represented a broad mix of political and economic views, which further promoted factionalism.

Throughout the period from 1900 to 1940, state politics were dominated by a few central issues. National developments, especially those that occurred within the Democratic Party, occasionally impacted on state politics in significant ways throughout this era from the age of progressivism to the New Deal. Race was never far from the forefront of state politics and played a particularly prominent role throughout the era from 1900 to 1924 and from the post-World War II era to 1970. Last, economic development dominated the concerns of state politicians and Floridians generally. They did not always agree on how that development should occur and various strategies for economic growth would divide them, but Florida Democrats were committed to developing their state so that rural poverty would not continue to define its future and theirs.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Florida politics felt the influence of the progressive movement that came to play a prominent role in national Democratic and Republican parties. Shaped by a variety of forces that sought to make government more responsive to the needs and concerns of voters, especially white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, the national progressive movement took many different forms. In Florida, the administrations of Governors William Jennings (1901–5) and Napoleon Bonaparte Broward (1905–9) adopted the rhetoric of the progressives to limit the influence of the railroad and corporate land interests in the state's development. Both men were committed to state development and to a state-planned and -directed drainage program for the Everglades, but both also emphasized the needs of Floridians over the aims of railroad owners and land developers.

and expansion of the population. Florida's flirtation with progressivism was thus a short-lived affair, and by 1912 political power had fallen into the hands of probusiness spokesmen. World War I sealed the fate of progressivism in Florida, as it did in the rest of the nation, focusing attention on events overseas and on domestic affairs related to the war.

Race constituted the second major feature of progressivism in Florida. Like their southern neighbors, white Floridians saw no contradiction in their efforts to strengthen democracy and to deny equal rights to African Americans. The progressive movement in Florida was a white man's movement, and it sought to protect their rights against the power of railroads and land developers and also against the black man. White Floridians easily carried two banners, one for progressive reform and the other for segregation. Black Floridians resisted these efforts, but with limited resources and few allies they gradually succumbed to the pressures of segregation. Florida adopted most of its statewide segregation ordinances in the early twentieth century, and the local laws were firmly in place by 1910.<sup>6</sup>

The election of southern-born Woodrow Wilson as president in 1912 and the onset of World War I had a twofold impact on Florida and on the South generally. First, with Wilson's election, the South felt that it had been redeemed, and its sense of regional alienation began to diminish. Second, the gradual involvement in the war effort and the social dislocation that resulted from mobilization caused considerable consternation in the South over race relations. Having recently imposed segregation, white southerners by 1914 were in no mood to have this system altered. By contrast, black southerners viewed the war as an opportunity to cast off the oppressive blanket of segregation by demonstrating their patriotism.

Whites in Florida had mixed feelings about black participation in the war effort. Grove owners, lumber and turpentine interests, and those businessmen generally dependent on a large supply of cheap, black labor did not want blacks going off to war. But others worried that if only whites were conscripted, black men would greatly outnumber the remaining white men and thus constitute, in their minds, a major threat to the security of white women.

Not surprisingly, in this context the war years had a tumultuous effect on Florida's race relations, so much so that whites resorted to legal and extralegal violence during those years and the immediate postwar period to maintain prewar racial patterns. Black soldiers who had experienced the liberating effects of living and training in many northern communities and in Europe, where they found they could

move around with much more freedom than in the South, looked forward to the postwar period and the freedom and opportunity they felt they had earned.

Racial patterns in the South were additionally complicated by the massive migration of African Americans to the Midwest and Northeast beginning around 1910 to escape the oppression of segregation and the economic havoc created by the boll weevil's devastation of the cotton crop. They were also drawn to the North by the promise of economic opportunity and greater freedom. Over 40,000 black Floridians joined 283,000 African Americans from other southern states in the migration to Chicago and other midwestern and northeastern cities where a shortage of labor had created great demand for workers. Labor agents from northern industries and railroads descended on the South in search of black workers. The Pennsylvania Railroad, for example, brought 12,000 to work in its yards and on its tracks, all but 2,000 of whom came from Florida and Georgia.<sup>7</sup>

The response of Florida's whites to the massive departure of black residents was mixed. Initially, whites ignored or expressed satisfaction with this exodus. Up to the turn of the twentieth century, white Floridians had seriously discussed sending local blacks to a foreign country or to a western region of the United States. During his term as governor, Napoleon Broward proposed that Congress purchase territory, either foreign or domestic, and transport blacks there where they could live separate lives and govern themselves.

As the massive exodus of African Americans continued from the northern counties of Florida during the war years, Governor Park Trammell (1913-17) and his successor, Sidney J. Catts (1917-21), essentially ignored it. Trammell, no friend of black Floridians, had disregarded the lynching of twenty-nine blacks when he was the state's attorney general and twenty-one lynchings during his governorship. Catts had been elected on an anti-Catholic and antiblack platform. Once in office, he publicly labeled black residents as part of "an inferior race," and he refused to condemn two lynchings in 1919. When the NAACP complained about these lynchings, Catts denounced the organization and blacks generally, declaring, "Your Race is always harping on the disgrace it brings to the state by a concourse of white people taking revenge for the dishonoring of a white woman; when if you would . . . [teach] your people not to kill our white officers and disgrace our white women, you would keep down a thousand times greater disgrace."<sup>8</sup>

Catts changed his tune when white business leaders, especially in the

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lumber and turpentine industries, began to complain that the continued outmigration of blacks was having a devastating effect on labor availability and labor costs in Florida. Suddenly Catts began to urge blacks to stay in Florida and called for unity and harmony among the races. Few black citizens listened to him or were intimidated by threats of violence. The migration continued to escalate as a quiet protest against racial conditions in the South.

During the early 1920s, white Florida gradually suppressed the aspirations of its remaining black population. Its governors played a willing hand in this process. They defended their actions by asserting the inferiority and dependence of the black race and received ample encouragement from the writings of anthropologists and popular authors who claimed that scientific evidence documented black inferiority. Black citizens, however, resisted efforts to reimpose segregation by whatever means were at their disposal. In Ocoee, black residents marched to the polls in an effort to vote, only to be physically assaulted and to have their homes and property seriously damaged.<sup>9</sup>

The white commitment to maintaining segregation knew few bounds, however. In Perry and Rosewood, blacks were killed and their property destroyed following alleged assaults upon white women. When blacks in Rosewood tried to defend themselves against a white mob, their public buildings, churches, and homes were burned to the ground, six were reported murdered, and all were chased from the community in January 1923, never to return.<sup>10</sup> The promise of the war years and the great migration had been completely snuffed out in Florida by 1924, and state leaders were willing accessories in this process.

Although governor of Florida during this era, Catts was more than just another conservative white Democrat. He was a political maverick who had stepped down from the pulpit to capture the governorship in 1916 on a platform that denounced the Catholic church, corporations, and alcoholism. He broke the cycle of Democratic governors who had risen through the party ranks or who had family connections with prominent Democratic leaders. Catts was neither, and he played upon white concerns about ethnic, racial, and religious differences and hostility to corporate power to mobilize a large political following. With support from many Floridians of modest means, Catts took steps to protect the interests of white farmers and workers and to improve public education. His challenge to traditional Democratic leadership in the state was unwelcomed, and the party acted to avoid his like again by passing a resolution that blocked any person from voting in the

most states did for assistance. With nearly 30 percent of the population unemployed and state governors offering little hope or vision, voters in 1932 embraced the Democratic candidate for president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, with a sense of desperation, hoping that his election would provide Florida with much-needed federal assistance.

Roosevelt's election and his New Deal programs provided the lifeline that kept Florida afloat during the 1930s. The Agricultural Adjustment Act, in particular, provided crucial assistance for financially desperate farmers and grove owners. Roosevelt's buoyant attitude and his ties to the South through his home in Warm Springs, Georgia, gave encouragement to the region and to Florida in particular. Governor David Sholtz cast the fate of his administration entirely with the New Deal and his personal relationship with Roosevelt. The results secured Florida a safety net that halted the downward spiral of state and personal finances. Despite Roosevelt's leadership and aid from the federal government, however, Florida continued to suffer greatly during the depression, and as late as 1939 no end seemed in sight.<sup>14</sup>

By the beginning of World War II, Florida had seen its population expand to 1.5 million, but much of the state was sparsely settled. Orlando, for example, was a town of fewer than 40,000 people, and much of the southwest coast of Florida stood relatively undeveloped. Ft. Myers had a population of only 10,600. Despite the brief boom of the 1920s, Florida had changed remarkably little from 1900. The Democratic Party still had a hammerlock on state politics, and representatives from north Florida controlled both houses of the legislature. Black Floridians still suffered under the oppression of segregation, and the depression had taken a devastating toll on black family life. Only the small assistance that flowed from New Deal agencies and passed through the hands of white farmers and citrus owners eventually found its way into their pockets and kept them from being completely impoverished. The state still depended on agriculture and the lumber business for most of its economic vitality, much the same as it had in the first decade of the century. Florida's political and economic leaders sought growth under nearly any conditions, especially after more than a decade of depression. The state remained predominantly rural throughout this period, although Miami had expanded to rival Jacksonville as the largest city in the state, with a population of just over 100,000. By the end of the 1930s, Floridians still saw themselves as a rural, agricultural people with conservative political and social views. The depression had curtailed their optimism about the future of their state and confidence in state political leadership. Much of this was about to change, however,

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sued the legislature to adopt a Minimum Foundation Program for the public schools. Such legislation was common in the South in the postwar period and had two purposes. One, quite legitimate, was to strengthen the educational system in the region through increased funding so that southern states would be more competitive in recruiting new business and its native population would have more economic opportunities than had been available to them. The other aim, however, was to upgrade the black schools in the region so that the federal courts could not charge that public education in Florida was unequal. This ploy required a very substantial investment from southern states because black schools had fallen into such disrepair from lack of funding during the depression, but southern states, and Florida particularly, were willing to do so in order to avoid integration.<sup>15</sup>

In the postwar era, local leaders and law enforcement officials, often in cooperation with white militants, also took steps to make sure that segregation barriers remained intact. County sheriffs assisted grove owners and lumber and agricultural interests in seeing that black veterans shed their uniforms and returned to work in the groves and fields. Deputies often disciplined blacks who expressed dissatisfaction with wages and working conditions. They also systematically repressed black desires for equality and greater freedom. When black residents persisted in their protests, they were arrested and placed in county jail, where they were beaten until they agreed to return to work or to conform to segregation customs. As an example to others in Florida, Klan leaders and allies in Orange County murdered Harry T. Moore, state leader of the NAACP, and his wife in their homes on Christmas Eve 1950 for conducting a statewide campaign to register blacks to vote in Florida during 1949 and 1950. Governor Caldwell and Attorney General J. Tom Watson generally ignored acts of violence and intimidation against black citizens and against those involved in NAACP activities. The FBI led the inquiry into Moore's death and found that there was a widespread network of local officials, police, and militant whites operating throughout central Florida to suppress the rights of blacks.<sup>16</sup>

The efforts of political leaders in the state to control racial developments were undermined not only by the federal courts but also by their own efforts to diversify the state's economy and increase its population. Business leaders and residents came predominantly from the Northeast and Midwest and had no intention of having their interests jeopardized by a commitment to a long dead southern past. Businessmen and tourist officials insisted that their operations be conducted in a stable environment. All this worked against the efforts by the rural, north

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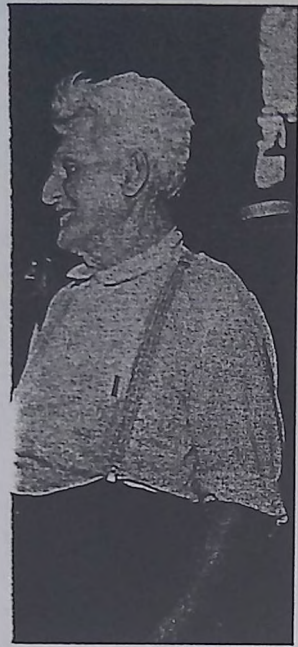
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Collins also found that he had strong allies for his moderate approach in the business community and among south Floridians generally. Few among these recent arrivals had a serious commitment to segregated schools and a segregated society. It was this attitude that made north Floridians all the more determined to block reapportionment, maintain control of the legislature, and ensure that Florida would perpetuate segregation. A special legislative committee, created in 1956 and chaired by former governor Charley Johns (1953–55), not only investigated the NAACP as an alleged “communist organization” but also sought to ensure conformity of thought in the state’s public schools and universities.<sup>20</sup>

The efforts by north Floridians to continue to hold on to the reins of power in the state took on a note of desperation in the 1960s. Without the political skill of a LeRoy Collins in the governor’s chair and with Florida continuing to be a seedbed of change as a result of massive population growth, a burgeoning tourist economy, and an expanding civil rights movement, Governors Farris Bryant (1961–65) and Haydon Burns (1965–67), both of Jacksonville, together with rural, north Florida legislators, pursued efforts to maintain the status quo. Attempts to stymie desegregation took on a harder edge, and both Bryant and Burns used the state police and the National Guard to preserve segregation against local civil rights protests and the national campaign conducted by the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., in St. Augustine. Florida’s reputation for racial moderation slipped badly during the first half of the 1960s.<sup>21</sup>

Ironically, as Burns fought to block school desegregation, he led a statewide effort in 1965 to bring the Walt Disney Corporation to Florida. Disney and the other tourist operations that opted to follow Disney’s new theme park in Orlando would further undermine racial extremism and the social instability that accompanied it. Above all, these businesses insisted on a secure environment in which to conduct their operations.

Although the state’s economic development program steadily eroded its commitment to a segregated past, there was no clear sign that political leaders were prepared to abandon Florida’s racial heritage until the federal government intervened. Washington removed the civil rights issue from state control by adopting the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The Federal District Court followed in 1967 by ordering the implementation of the principle of one person, one vote in Florida and dismantling opposition to reapportionment with one stroke of the pen. The world of the Pork Choppers had collapsed,



stituents in the 1940s. A vigor brought many millions of ir years. In his last years, as a ne the nation’s staunchest ad-

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ere designed to preserve ial extremism. His plans gislators, who countered desegregation occurred, terposition resolution to ollins, however, was able

Florida gained a reputa- esidents, and new busi- ough Florida was only one ion by 1960, the national sive state because of the ounterparts in Arkansas, licies.<sup>19</sup>

2-1-05

# Residents reflect on Black History Month

**CRISTY LOFTIS**  
cloftis@chronicleonline.com  
*Chronicle*

It's a history of achievement, struggle and perseverance.

February is national Black History Month, but for the Rev. Doug Alexander, February is simply another month to strive for unification and acceptance of all people.

"I believe divided we fall, united we stand," Alexander said.

Historian Carter G. Woodson, the second black man to earn a doctorate degree from Harvard University, founded Black History Month, according to the U.S. National Archives Web site.

While studying American history, Woodson was disturbed to find the black American population was largely ignored in history

books. Woodson tried to rectify this by founding the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, the Journal of Negro History, and the Negro History Bulletin.

In 1926, Woodson began Negro History Week during the second week in February to celebrate the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass.

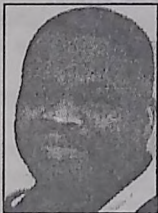
In the 1960s, it became Black History Month.

Now almost 80 years later, Alexander believes people need to direct their focus toward the unification of all people.

"Let's talk about how we can make it better," Alexander said. "We cannot focus so much on the past, but on the future."

Alexander has put this idea into action by creating the

Please see **HISTORY/Page 5A**



**Doug  
Alexander**

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Florida Community College  
and Withlacoochee Technical  
Institute, everyone has an  
opportunity for a better life.

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Alexander believes that in  
order for things to change, peo-  
ple should not just study  
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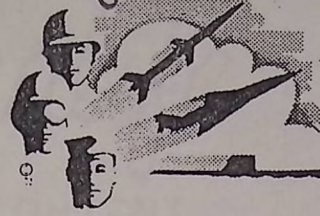
the decision to love and accept  
all people.

“Let’s not talk about it,”  
Alexander said. “Let’s do it.”

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# County ONICLE

May 11, 1965



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TWO SECTION 48 PAGES

TEN CENTS

## Citrus County

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8 p.m., at the new Point O' Woods Country Club. The public is invited to attend the class and to register for a Landscaping course to be offered early in 1966.

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### HOUSING COMMISSION

A housing commission has been organized in the county to fill the need of new families moving into the area. Assistance in finding homes may be obtained through the Suncoast Chamber of Commerce at Crystal River, R. Hac Teague at Homosassa Springs and Mrs. Frances Ryan at Beverly Hills.

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### SEEK ACTION

The Kiwanis of Inverness have forwarded a club resolution to the Governor of Florida, Haydon Burns, the district road board members, area legislators, the county commission, and other interested groups protesting the failure of Governor Burns' \$3,000,000 road building program to include the four-laning of U.S. 41, which passes from north to south through the lake region of Citrus County.

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### HOSPITAL WEEK

A proclamation, signed by Inverness Mayor Elfred Lassinder, has officially put Inverness on record in appreciation of the excellent work accomplished by the Citrus Memorial Hospital and the Nation's hospitals. The county hospital is continuing an open house program daily through the end of the week, and a Saturday from two to four in the afternoon.

## New Desegregation Policy: Choice In Grades 1,7,9,12

Desegregation of Citrus County School commences with the beginning of the fall term in kindergarten and the first, seventh, ninth and twelfth grades.

The Citrus County Board of Public Instruction, following a hasty trip to the nation's capital earlier this week, revised the previously established desegregation policy of the county to comply with minimum federal poli-

cies in the matter.

The first plan, adopted in March, called for the desegregation of kindergarten, the first and second grades through a "freedom of choice" plan. In this plan the parent of a child entering one of these grades in the fall, could, if he or she wished, request that the child attend any school in the system offering the child's grade level.

The board reserved the right to accept or reject the request, pledging that rejection would not be based on color.

This plan, not dissimilar to plans adopted by counties through Florida, was rejected by the agency administering recent civil rights legislation. So were the plans of over 40 other counties.

On learning of the plan's rejection, the board, with superintendent of public instruction James McCall and board attorney William Edwards, made the trip to Washington to meet with officials of the Equal Education Opportunities Division of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare Monday.

There they learned that the county's plan is basically sound, and with several changes, would be acceptable to the agency.

The changes are these:

The desegregation of classes must occur in the so-called transitional grades. These are the grades in which the student enters a new phase of school life. The senior year is one desired by the agency so that graduates will have had an opportunity to experience desegregated public facilities.

The new policy is to be changed to read that every parent, acting in behalf of the child, must make a statement as to

## County May Seek Huge Bonded Indebtedness

Citrus County Commissioners, meeting in special session Friday evening, agreed to seek legislative approval for the borrowing of nearly \$1.25 million for county-wide improvements. The bond issue, if gone into, would require the pledging of approximately \$91 thousand in race track revenue

annually for a period of 20 years.

Several representatives of municipal bond brokerages discussed the proposed issue with the Commissioners, including Kyle Lockeby, representing Leedy, Wheeler and Alleman of Orlando, and Don Burke, representing Goodbody and Company of St. Petersburg. Lockeby's firm is presently handling the bond sale for the Homosassa Water District and is being considered by the Citrus County Board of Public Instruction to undertake a similar bond program in which race track revenues are pledged. Burke's firm is in charge of the bond

## Bank Begins Facility Expansion

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to include noon, for visitors to tour the facility. \*\*\*\*\*

**ALLIGATORS**

The Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission will remove any alligator found damaging or constituting a threat to your personal property.

**CLASS**

Quentin Medlin class in land- beginning at

# New Idea Citrus Co.

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Puerto Rico, where some 100 condominiums have been built at a value of \$90 millions.

At least 80 percent of these structures have been financed by the First Federal Savings & Loan Association. For Puerto Rico, the condominium has been the one big answer to home ownership.

Nearly every state has now passed legislation clearing the legal path for condominiums. The boom has already side-swiped Hawaii, where luxury projects of this type have reached the point of saturation.

It is generally conceded that no housing legislation has come out of Congress in recent years more intriguing than the condominium, and even hard-crusted bankers are now willing to agree that the new concept of private living is here to stay.

The tallest building in Florida will be a 40-story condominium at Fort Lauderdale on an eight acre tract that juts out into the sea. Costing \$27,500,000, the huge building will be constructed by General Builders.

## Sports Cars To Thrill Track Fans

Ed Davis' fleet and fast Ford will be the feature and two pre-

A major remodeling of the Inverness Bank got underway Wednesday.

Included in the program is the utilization of a second floor area for bookkeeping and the enlargement of the lobby and the installation of a passenger elevator, the first in Inverness.

To make way for the bank's expansion, a number of businesses with offices in the building had to be relocated, some temporarily, some permanently.

The Hager-Brannen Insurance office, which occupied a ground floor suite, has been temporarily moved across Main Street (U.S. 41) to offices next to Ritz Realty.

The offices of the American Oil Company distribution dealership has moved from the second floor of the bank building to new quarters at the bulk plant on north Apopka Ave. Louis Connell's office, formerly on the second floor, is now located in the Seaboard Airline Railway building on North Apopka. Attorney Lovick Williams, also on the second floor of the building, is temporarily located in the basement of the courthouse. New offices owned by the attorney will be constructed at the corner of Seminole and Tompkins soon.

Undisturbed by the remodeling program are the offices of Attornies D.J. Bradshaw and William Edwards, which are on the second floor of the bank building.

## Electric Co-op To Hold Annual Dist. Meeting

Members of the Sumter Electric Cooperative, Inc., receiving service in the 5th district, which includes Citrus County, will hold their district meeting Friday at 8 p.m. in the Inverness High School Auditorium.

At this meeting a trustee will be nominated from the district to be presented at the annual membership meeting for elec-

issue for the Crystal River sewer expansion program.

While the board accepted the offer of Lockeby to provide an "enabling act" for passage by the legislature, the work was to be done without obligation to the board. The board then called another special meeting for Thursday evening at 7:30 to hear from representatives of other municipal bond brokerages.

In other action, the board agreed to table further action on the issuance of garbage pick-up franchises until some later date, yet undetermined.

## Area Students Receive Diplomas From CFJC

Nine area students were expected to receive diplomas from Central Florida Junior College in Ocala May 11.

Graduating from Inverness are Thomas Ray Bessa, Patricia Ann Kelly, and Ida Kay Louk; from Crystal River, David Strom Carr; from Dunnellon, Sherry Sue Allison, Glenn Austin Nicholson, and Jack Alan Strutzenberg; from Yankeetown, Susan Watts Harper; and from Hernando, Henry Allen Roberts.

## Another Bellot Owns Shop

If it isn't exclusive, it's most certainly must be unique to have three barber shops in a row all owned by the same family.

Such is the case in Citrus County and neighboring Dunnellon. Driving north on U.S.



41, a fellow in need of a clipping can play multiple choice if he wants the job done by a Bellot. In Floral City it would be the shop owned and operated by Mrs. Alene S. Bellot. In Inverness, it's Mrs. Bellot's son, Frank, who last week purchased his shop from Floyd Yandle who retires after many years of barbering. Finally, on north, in Dunnellon, it's Mrs. Bellot's second son, Bob, whose shop, like his mother's and brother's, faces U.S. 41.

Frank's ownership of a shop is the most recent of the three. He has been barbering in the Yandle shop for the past three years while gaining the experience necessary for a master barber's rating and the right to own a shop of his own.

There is a need for urgency, commented Superintendent McCall, noting the nearness of the end of the present school term and the little time remaining to contact each child's parents for their choice of school. Forms have been prepared and are in the process of being distributed through the schools. The "freedom of choice" form must be filled out by each child's parents before the child can be promoted according to the board's new policy.

The Board meets Friday afternoon at 4:30 in special session to complete the policy statement to be forwarded to the federal agency for approval.

10-26-05  
Famous

# civil rights icon dies

*Citrus residents  
praise Rosa Parks*

**DAVE PIEKLIK**

[dpieklik@chronicleonline.com](mailto:dpieklik@chronicleonline.com)

*Chronicle*

The death of civil rights icon Rosa Parks, like her single gesture of defiance almost 50 years ago, did not pass unnoticed by some who remember her as an inspiration to the country.

■ For Rosa Parks' obituary, see

**PAGE 6A**

■ For more about Rosa Parks, see

**PAGE 13A**

Parks, who refused to give up her bus seat to a white man on Dec. 1, 1955, and thus sparked the national civil rights movement, died Monday at her Detroit home. She was 92.

Please see **PARKS/Page 5A**

# PARKS

Continued from Page 1A

Alida Langley, domestic violence coordinator at the Citrus County Courthouse in Inverness, said Tuesday that news of Parks' death was "heartbreaking." To her, Parks became a symbol of staying firm in one's beliefs.

"She paved the way and stood up for a lot of people," Langley said.

After Parks was arrested, a 1956 Supreme Court ruling made it illegal for segregated transportation. Langley said, since then, the country has come a long way in improving equality, but that there's still a way to go.

"Basically, it's the reality that everybody is a human, regardless of color, regardless of race," she said. "If we (believed) that, I think life would be a lot easier for everyone."

Langley said there needs to be more people like Rosa Parks in the

world even now, adding, "You need more voices to be heard." And, she said, people of all races and backgrounds should be educated about history.

"They need to be taught constantly," she said, "to promote more, instead of discriminate."

Patrick Thomas, staff support for the Citrus County Supervisor of Elections, agreed. At his office Tuesday, the 37-year-old reflected on how Parks' act "opened the door" for people like him.

"For me, as a young, black citizen," he said, "it was for her to show that kind of strength and courage."

He said Parks simply did what she felt was right, something she continued to do throughout her life. He said she never tried to gain wealth from her recognition.

"She did what she did for everybody," Thomas said.

There were local personal connections to the "mother of the civil rights movement." Parks worked for years as a staff member to U.S. Rep. John

Conyers Jr. of Michigan. Thomas also worked for former U.S. Rep. Karen Thurman, a friend of Conyers'.

More than anything, Thomas remembers Parks as a "butterfly with the force of a 747 jet" and somebody he hopes to emulate.

"When the time comes, I'll never be a Rosa Parks," Thomas said, but he hopes one day somebody might say, "I was feeling down, and I came across Patrick Thomas, and he said one, or two words that turned my life around, and I'll never forget it."

# HERITAGE

*continued from Page 1A*

When she first arrived in Crystal River a few weeks ago, Ms. Dixon said she didn't see any black people for a week.

Then she met Eleanor Copeland, whose father's family members are long-time Citrus County citizens and have been active in black community affairs.

"If the black community has been here for so long and they're not visible, where are they and where do they come from?" Ms. Dixon said she wondered to herself.

That was enough impetus to spur her to begin exploring the community's history.

The first sign of the black community was found in a newspaper clipping from the Civil War era that discussed the Battle of Shell Island, where a black soldier was hung, Ms. Dixon said.

Since then, she has discovered long-time residents such as Fred Copeland and W.T. Watkins, whose stories link the present to the past and the old southern-style homes in Knight's Addition of Crystal River. She said she has also discovered the community's black churches, whose congregations are still active.

Most of Citrus County's black history has only been kept in the minds of its citizens, Ms. Dixon said. She has had difficulty finding photographs or any recorded events or writings of those who established the black community.

"If we don't preserve our heritage, we lose our identity as a people," Ms. Dixon said.

That identity is important to any culture, whether it's German, Swedish or Italian, she said, especially in a society that is growing consistently more homogeneous.

"I don't think you should meld people together because what works for one culture doesn't work for another," she said, adding that racism isn't an issue among cultures that understand one another.



**Field slaves working on a sugar plantation somewhere in the South. Photograph from *The Slave Community* by John W. Blassingame.**

had no mental or physical defects. Slaves, either individually or in groups, were used as collateral for loans. When a slaveowner encountered bad economic times, a forced sale at public auction was often the result. Deaths of slaveowners also caused sales of slaves.<sup>5</sup>

The articles and advertisements related to slavery in the *Florida Peninsular* fall into a number of categories and can be separated as follows:

- A. Sales of slaves
- B. Renting of slaves
- C. Runaway slaves
- D. Slave crimes and punishment
- E. The defense of slavery.

#### A. SALES OF SLAVES

The advertisements in the *Peninsular* dealt frequently with the sale of slaves, either through a sale by the sheriff or through an estate sale. The reader can imagine the real-life drama that took place behind the advertisements. Because of the unique nature of the advertisements, what follows is a verbatim reproduction of most of them from the years 1855-60.

#### SHERIFF'S SALE

BY VIRTUE of a fi. fa. issued out of the Circuit Court for the Southern Circuit of the State of Florida. I have levied on and will expose to public sale, on the first Monday in May next, the following described property to wit: Dick, Van, Peter, Robert,

This painting was one of Gibson's works that was up for sale during the event. Gibson also signed the backs of paintings that he sold that day and that people had bought beforehand.



# Brush with beauty



Carroll brought along some of her work during the meet and greet for visitors to purchase. Carroll used a lot of pastel colors while painting and used images that she remembered as she traveled around Florida.



Mary Ann Carroll posed with one of her paintings that were for sale. Carroll was the only female Highwayman.

*Artwork from the Highwaymen brought thousands to the Old Courthouse Museum.*

Carroll brought along some of her work during the meet and greet for visitors to purchase. Carroll used a lot of pastel colors while painting and used images that she remembered as she traveled around Florida.

## *Artwork from the Highwaymen brought thousands to the Old Courthouse Museum.*

**By Stephanie Belden**  
Pioneer Editor

When Mary Ann Carroll paints, she relies on her memories. Carroll and fellow painters James Gibson and Roy McLendon made a visit the Old Courthouse Heritage Museum on Saturday, Jan. 29.

The artists were part of a meet and greet at the museum to celebrate the start of "The Highwaymen" exhibit.

Over 1,000 people visited the museum to have a chance to meet Carroll, Gibson and McLendon.

Visitors were also able to buy paintings, get autographs and photos with the artist.

Carroll told guests about life as the only female Highwayman. McLendon spoke about how he got inspiration for his paintings and Gibson talked about how some of his paintings are hung in Governor Jeb Bush's office.

The exhibit is being sponsored by Progress Energy and will run until April 27. The Old Courthouse Heritage Museum is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday. For more information, please call Laurie Diestler at 341-6429.

*Photos by  
Stephanie  
Belden*

County Commissioner Vicki Phillips was just one of the many visitors that came to the museum throughout the day. Phillips spoke to artist James Gibson for a few moments.



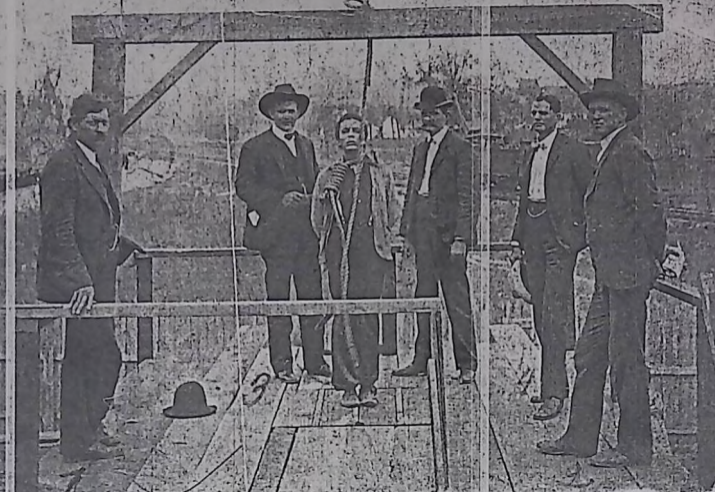
Mary Ann Carroll posed with one of her paintings that were for sale. Carroll was the only female Highwayman.



This painting by James Gibson was featured in the movie "Catch Me If You Can." Gibson also has paintings that hang in Governor Jeb Bush's office.



Roy McLendon brought a few of his paintings to the meet and greet. McLendon, Gibson and Carroll all traveled from Ft. Pierce to attend the event.





Steve Eaton/The Chronicle

"Tuma" Whaley sits outside his Crystal River home watching the world go by and enjoying his leisure years. Whaley worked for the county clearing most of the major roadways of trees as the county grew in the last few decades.

# A pioneer talks about

always been generous. When times were hard and folks short of cash, he did me many a favor and wouldn't take any pay."

The picture of contentment, Whaley sits on the front patio of his little Crystal River house, watching the world go by.

"I'm not hard to find," he says, grinning his welcome. "I tell everyone just look for two deer statues out front. That's me."

Whaley is proud of those figures

**"I helped build  
U.S. 19. And  
when the road to  
Ozello was put  
in, I and another  
guy mostly laid it**

around boxin' the trees and bringing up the turpentine. He liked to play the guitar and folks would sing and dance." Whaley chuckles, "The girls would get to lookin' at Daddy and my mother didn't like that."

Whaley recalls how he and his brother used to ride free on the train from Wilcox Junction near Suwannee River to Crystal River then on to Homosassa. "Me and Henry'd supply a rack of wood to the fireman," he recalled.

# early Citrus

By Esther Duncan  
Chronicle writer

One of Citrus County's most unusual seniors has to be Tuna Whaley, an 80-year-old native with a head of curly, white hair above an open face beaming with good will.

"Everybody's always called me 'Tuna,' he explains. 'A man give me this name a long time ago and it stuck. Nobody's ever called me nothin' else.'"

A descendant of one of the early families of Crystal River, Irene Buntz Sutton, recently spoke of Whaley's longstanding reputation as a man with a heart of gold. "I've known him a long time and he's

one of two deer on his lawn — one standing, one lying down on the edge of a flower bed. In fact, Whaley is proud of a lot of things.

A widower for the last year, he leaps up, moving like a man half his age as he leads the way to his small, ever-so-neat living room. Once his guests are seated, he digs in a small box on an end table.

"I had some old photos, but I think one of my daughters got into 'em," he says cheerfully. "My wife, Sarah, and I raised 11 children — one drowned — and saw to it they all got a 12th grade education."

Whaley adds matter-of-factly, "I never went to school a day in my life, being mostly raised out in the

## out 'cause we knew the waterways so well."

### Tuna Whaley

turpentine camps where my Daddy worked, though he did a little farming too."

"Young folks today don't have no idea what it was like in this county back in the early 1900s," Whaley says. "I followed my Daddy

Williams' son. 'And also for Mr. Dumas,' he adds proudly. "Tuna Dumas, he'd call me."

At times, Whaley shucked oysters for L.C. Yoemans who owned a fish house in Crystal River.

A lot of folks knew Whaley, both black and white, it seems. Whaley pauses, then describes how he used to go out to Old Town, as old Homosassa was known, taking his oxen by barge to an island, then hauling logs to the water's edge days at a time.

Whaley was proud that locals like the fisherman, Johnnie Head, and the prominent immigrant Scotch storekeeper, MacRae, would come out to his camp to see if he needed anything. "They'd bring me fishin' stuff mostly."

"I knew all those early families," Whaley says. "I was raised with the Waddingtons and the DeBusks and Browns and such folks."

"If they didn't think much of you, white folks would say, 'He's not so good.' But I was a choicery," he repeats with much satisfaction.

"Back in the early days," Whaley explains, "a lot of folks weren't to be trusted, black or white. Folks had to prove themselves, specially blacks."

Many who worked in the turpentine camps were fresh from jail, according to Whaley. They were told that they'd be kept out of jail if they'd agree to work in the camps where they were housed and fed. "It was a rough life," Whaley observes.

But Whaley's thoughts turned to humorous events. Chuckling, he recalled a Halloween joke. "I remember Ralph Rooks and his friends pushed a blind horse and an old cow up a stairs between Hood's Grocery and Barco's Hardware Store and tied 'em to the bal-

Shale went to work at an early age, settling into being the head of the family at 12 following his father's death.

"I broke oxen for A.D. Williams," he says. "And I drove 'em gettin' out cedar for the mill here in Crystal River."

It was Whaley's job to teach the young, bulls to pull on command. To "gee" and "haw" — turn left or right. After the animal had a wood collar slipped over its neck, the bull was hitched to a log or stump.

"At first he didn't understand

Please see TUNA, Page 3C

His reminiscing turns to early county roads. U.S. Highway 19 was just a narrow limestone road for years. According to him, anyone can still see small stretches of it by looking behind the Oldsmobile and Chevrolet dealerships, or behind the bowling alley in Homosassa Springs.

"I helped build U.S. 19," he says. "And when the road to Ozello was put in, I and another guy mostly laid it out 'cause we knew the waterways so well."

One of Whaley's jobs that he's most proud of is being the first bell boy at the fancy Homosassa Springs Hotel in the 1920s. "That was when Dazzy Vance owned it," he explains.

Another West Citrus job he's proud of being in charge of was "clearing up" 22 acres of Three Sisters Spring. "That was in 1961 so they could build the canals out there," Whaley says.

He brings out a photograph of himself standing erectly between two men obviously celebrating a special event. "That's me in the middle," Whaley says. "That was when Holiday Inn was bought by a Hungarian. I did a lot of caretaker work around there those days," he says. "They thought of me as their gardener."

Among Whaley's treasured memorabilia are several outstanding floral prints grouped over the davenport. His voice filled with pride, Whaley identifies them. "They're all from the former Magnolia Lodge located near Fort Paradise. Folks is beginning to forget about that lodge."

"It's the truth," he nods. "Our young folks don't know much about our early history."

continued from Page 1C

what he was supposed to do," Whaley admits, "but I carried a bottle of ammonia with me and I'd stick it under his nose. Boy, would he move."

And if the ox tried to run away, Whaley had his own way of stopping him. "I carried a long, heavy chain fastened to his neck, and all I had to do was wrap it around a tree, jerking the ox to a halt. He learned fast."

Whaley says he had some mighty nice animals. He can't remember all their names, but Broady, who was black and white, was a favorite. And he got along just fine with Dan, "kinda off-white."

One of the dangers when working in the wilderness, Whaley admits, was looking out for countless rattlers, as many of them made their homes around the big stumps his oxen pulled out for cedar oil.

"You can smell a rattlesnake, you know," Whaley explains. "It's kind of like the smell of a goat. I always knew when one was close by and if you're careful to give him space to get free, he'll leave you alone. I never had no trouble with any of 'em."

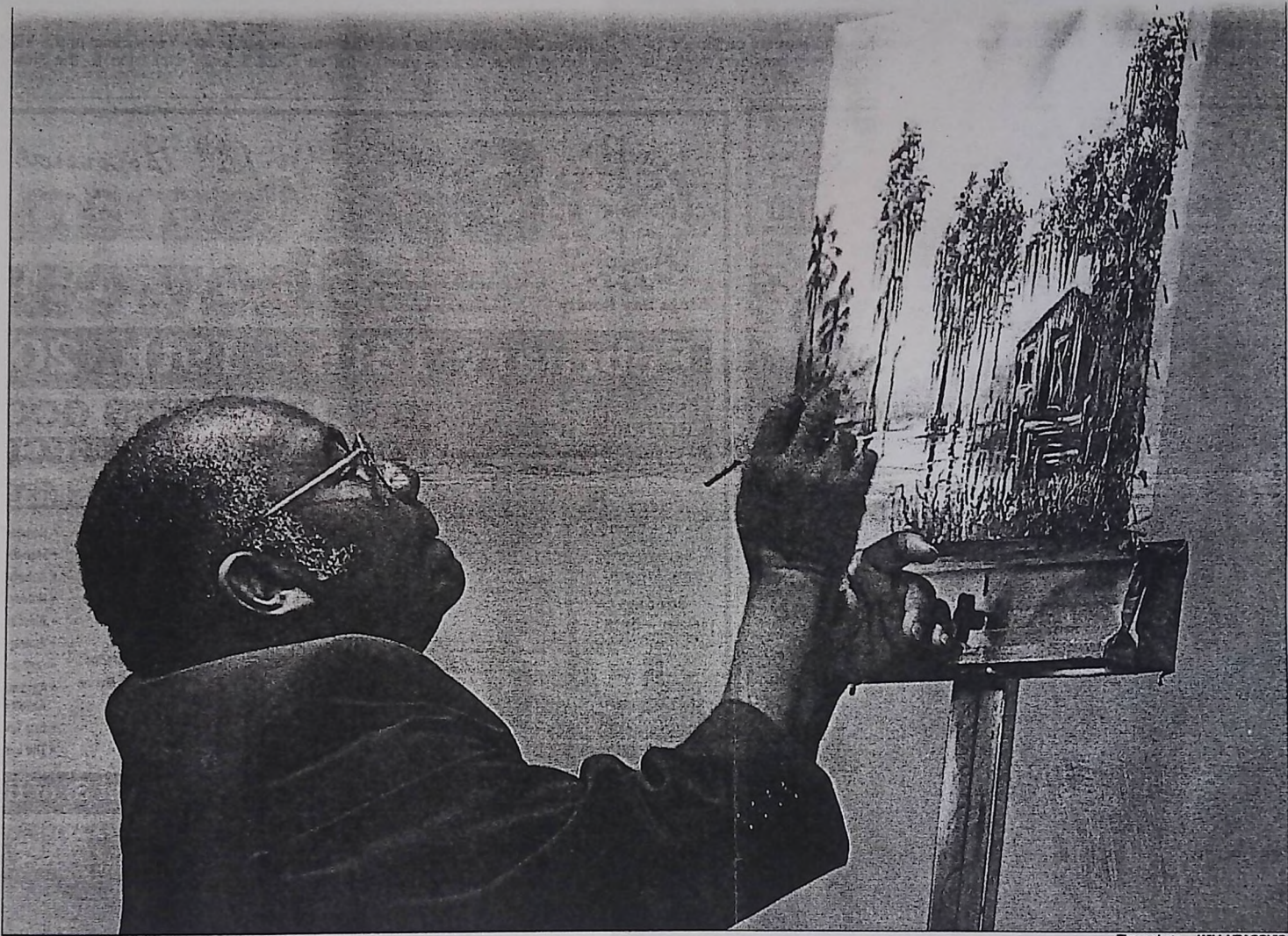
Whaley talks of the long period he worked for Williams.

"Williams was good to us," Whaley says. "I still remember the birthday party he gave for me."

"I was a choicery," Whaley asserts. "I worked for Williams 18 years and wasn't allowed to come in the back door."

Williams himself made that plain, according to Whaley.

"Tuna," Mr. Williams says to me, "you're never to come in the



Times photo — WILL VRAGOVIC

Robert L. Lewis puts the finishing touches on the painting he created at the Historic Courthouse in Inverness as part of Citrus County's Black History Month celebration Sunday. Lewis is one of the 20 original Highwaymen painters who are still alive. The Highwaymen were black artists who traveled the state selling their artwork from the trunks of their cars to offices, motels and individuals. The paintings are considered valuable and respected in the art world.

AFRICAN AMERICAN'S IN CITRUS COUNTY  
HISTORY

contest.

The Atlantic Coast Line has asked permission of city council in Tampa to construct an addition to its freight terminal warehouse. This is a sure indication of progress, and it is particularly interesting to note that the depot was built only six years ago and was then expected to accommodate the business increase for years to come.—Ocala Banner.

O. D. Bailey has resigned his position with the West-Reaves Co., and is succeeded by Mr. Eason of Terrell. Mr. Bailey is a young man of ability, thoroughly posted in clerical work, and wherever he goes will meet with success. He stands high in the social circles of Inverness, and if he leaves the town, will be greatly missed.

Joe Greene, a printer well known throughout the state, who formerly worked in Live Oak and Bartow, but of late employed in the job department of the Sun at Gainesville, has gone to his old home in Georgia, taking with him his motherless daughter, Lillian. They are old friends of this editor, and we hate to see them go so far away. Joe is an excellent printer, and can hold down most any job he wishes to in that line.

Mr. J. E. Johnson is back from a trip to Homosassa and Dunnellon. He says that Mr. Harry Peter got tangled up with a big tarpon at Homosassa, and it took him more than two hours to land this, the gamest of fishes. When his "kingship" finally surrendered, Harry was completely exhausted. The fish weighed one hundred and fifty pounds and measured six and a half feet in length.—Ocala Banner.

The Woodmen's picnic at Lecanto on the Fourth, was largely attended, a great many going from here. Col. Scofield delivered the oration, and it was pronounced by all to be a grand effort. The ladies of that vicinity had a spread on the grounds that was greatly enjoyed, and if any person went away hungry it was his or her fault. Altogether it was a safe and sane celebration of the 4th. of July, of which the Lecantofites have a right to be proud.

J. T. Carmichael, a stock buyer, possesses enormous strength, and Tuesday, on a wager, lifted the hind axle of Buie's Ford car. When he let go, however, he found that he had severely wrenched his back, and was unable to straighten himself up. He was at once carried to Dr. Miller's office, where his injury was treated. Mr. Carmichael is badly hurt, but there is no immediate cause for alarm, and the probabilities are that he will soon be up and around. He is probably more scared than hurt, although he is badly hurt.

ness, and the family take the pup once alive with workmen are nearly deserted, and soon will be entirely so. Buttgenbach kept his mines running, but cut wages to 10 cents per car, and the result is the negroes claim they cannot earn enough to admit of remaining, and will soon leave. The Camps are still paying 14 cents, but the employees are very much dissatisfied.

The old court house was sold by the commissioners Tuesday. Bob Hicks was given the building for one-half that could be made out of it. F. M. Dampier purchased the clerk's office, and this will be moved to a lot between Mr. Carlson's and the old Potter livery stable. The price paid was \$300, of which Mr. Hicks gets \$150 and the county \$150. The remaining part of the building will be torn down at once and moved away, and will probably be converted into a dwelling, or, perhaps, two dwellings, which will be for rent. The deal meets with the sanction of nearly every citizen, and is considered a good one for the county.

Willie F. Nettles, son of W. M. Nettles of near Hernando, has left his home for the third time, and the latter has issued the following card, dated July 7th: "To Whom It May Concern: This is to certify that I forbid anyone from hiring or harboring Willie F. Nettles: Any one doing so after this date will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. The above party is a minor, and I forbid anyone hiring or harboring him." The probabilities are if parties continue harboring Willie Nettles, they will get into trouble.

Mrs. Dunn, a sister of J. C. Angelly, expects to return to her home in Cordele, Ga., tomorrow. Mrs. Dunn is a most excellent lady, and one of Georgia's young matrons who is admired by all for her many womanly qualities, chief among which is her love of home. It is to be regretted that she cannot longer remain here, for she is making admiring friends every day, and she is also infatuated with Inverness. She has been here not quite two weeks, and has made many warm friends in that time, who will deeply regret her departure.

J. M. Allen left here some time ago to attend the funeral of his brother, who had been killed accidentally in Chattanooga. His wife and other friends heard from him soon after, but of late no trace of him can be found. Mrs. Walker, who called at our office Tuesday, informed us that an account of the death of Mr. Allen's brother, and the cause, was written relatives here by another party, which

They keep the little dog hid to keep us from taking her, but we assure them that we feel the canine could not be in better hands than she now is, and would not move her. However, we will forgive Jack if he will meet us some time at the depot in Croom and take us out to his home that we may see our pet. What say you, Jack?

Saturday night, T. P. Allen, deputy sheriff, went to Etna, accompanied by Messrs. Oaks, Bule, Davis and others, having received information that a skin game was going on there, and that several negroes were on a big drunk. They succeeded in arresting 13 gamblers and 7 drunks, and brought them here and lodged them in jail. They were tried by Judge deMuro Monday morning, and all but two plead guilty and were sentenced to pay a fine of \$5 and costs. They liquidated and were released from custody. Among the prisoners were three women, who were undoubtedly tough enough to do almost anything. The two remaining ones had their cases continued.

The people of Hernando and vicinity enjoyed a barbecue and picnic on the shores of the lake half mile east of town on the Fourth. There was an abundance of nicely barbecued meats and a bountiful supply of other eatables too numerous to mention. Quite a number of persons were present from Inverness and everyone said that they had an excellent time. The people of Hernando are not only patriotic, but hospitable as well, and an entertainment of any public nature given there is certain to draw a big crowd from adjoining towns. Their hospitality knows no bounds, and one cannot help but feel entirely at home while with them. This occasion was no exception.

Editors of newspapers are often accused of leaving out certain items of news purposely because of a dislike of the person to be mentioned, or from prejudice or other causes. This is all bosh, says the Lakeland News. The editor has something like a hundred different things to think about in connection with the issue of one paper, and it is not surprising if he misses an item occasionally or sometimes forgets one which has been called to his attention. Nine out of ten people you ask for news items will tell you they can't think of any. But in most cases they expect the editor to think of them all and criticize him if he fails in a single item. The best way is to give the editor credit for what he does find and mentions and for some things that the finds and doesn't mention.

7/11/13

the May boys have been there for a month and are delighted with the place. All will wish Roy good luck in his new location.

Prof. B. L. Turner, county superintendent of Citrus county, Mr. Dick and Mr. Graham, of Floral City, arrived in the city Wednesday morning. They spent several hours here, during which time they were booming the candidacy of Col. Scofield for state attorney for this district. Superintendent Turner has filled the office of county superintendent of his county for a number of years, during which time he has improved Citrus county's school system. Citrus is one of the few counties in Florida operating the free book system.—Brooksville Argus.

Uncle Alf Tompkins returned from his trip to Leesburg, Lockloosa and other points Friday accompanied by his sister, Mrs. McGiven, and his nieces, Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Caldwell, who will assist Mrs. Tompkins in getting ready for a trip to Green Springs, and perhaps Mrs. Jones will accompany them, as she is in bad health. Uncle Alf looks well after his trip, and there is no doubt but what he was greatly benefited thereby. He also, with his wife, is now making ready for an extended visit to Green Springs, as stated above.

Mr. Edwin Spencer, Jr., is not having a clear field in his race for the office of state attorney of the fifth circuit, to succeed Mr. Davis. Judge J. C. B. Koonce, of Sumter county, and Mr. George W. Scofield, of Citrus, are after the plum. Both are good men and have strong backing. Marion county people, of course, prefer to see the office go to their talented young representative. The Star is informed that Governor Trammell declines to be bound by recommendations from the bar of any town or county.—Ocala Star.

Bishop Gray preached a highly interesting sermon at the Cumberland Presbyterian church Monday night. He was assisted by Rev. Ticknor. While the congregation was not a large one, much interest was manifested, which will be aroused to a much greater extent. The Cumberland Presbyterians are to be praised for the use of their church so willingly given. The Episcopalians are not strong numerically here, but they are faithful and persistent, and the prospects are good for the erection of a church

W. R. Dorman, of Live Oak, was today confirmed by the senate to be postmaster at that place. For the past six weeks Congressman Frank Clark has made a hard fight for Mr. Dorman, not only to secure his nomination, but also to see that he was confirmed. When Mr. Dorman's name was first mentioned charges were brought against him, but upon investigation these were found to be without foundation. Mr. Dorman is a brother-in-law of Mrs. E. A. Smith, of this place, and is pretty well known here. His appointment and confirmation clearly shows that Frank Clark is an influential member of congress from Florida, and that some others can do nothing but "kick."

Edwin W. Davis, of Ocala, has formed a law partnership with LeRoy B. Giles and will shortly become a permanent resident of Orlando and engage actively in the practice of his profession. Mr. Davis is known as one of the best criminal lawyers of the state and is now prosecuting attorney of his circuit. Mr. Giles is one of Orlando's young attorneys, but has been eminently successful and now fills the office of city attorney of Orlando. The combination of talent will create one of the strongest law firms in this section of the state. Mr. Davis has a wife and two children, and as soon as he is located here, which will be a couple of weeks, he will secure a residence and bring his family. Orlando is glad to welcome such substantial business and professional men as Mr. Davis.—Florida Sentinel.

Frank Graham, the colored barber, has purchased the old court house, with the exception of the clerk's office, sold to F. M. Dampier. Graham paid \$1,250 for the building, which is to be moved to a lot owned by him near the railroad, and brick pillars placed under it. By this manner of dealing with Mr. Hicks the county receives more money for the structure than has heretofore been offered for it. Graham will move the building to a lot adjoining his residence and thus enlarge his boarding house. The court room will be used for the colored people to dance in and have other entertainments in. Frank is a hustler and being frugal in his habits, and knowing and keeping his place as a negro, has accumulated considerable property, and is considered well off, and respected by all.

PROBABLY FROM  
CHRONICLE 1913

PER ROBERT CROFT

7/8/13

# Longtime community leader Annie Johnson, 82, dies

By Mike Wright  
Staff writer

Annie W. Johnson, a woman of grace and compassion whose name adorns a senior center in Dunnellon, died Monday, Aug. 21. She was 82.

Mrs. Johnson, who founded the elderly outreach program that services seniors in Citrus and south Marion counties, was a retired kindergarten teacher who spent the last 25 years helping those less fortunate.

"She was always working for her people and her community," said Dot Zipperer, director of support services for Citrus County. "She sure fought for her community."

Mrs. Johnson taught reading at a small

voting precinct in south Dunnellon. As the program grew, people brought lunches and it became a social event.

Sensing a need to help area senior citizens, Mrs. Johnson spearheaded a drive to fix and clean up the old Second Bethel Baptist Church, built in 1888. Once completed, the building became a center for senior citizens to meet and socialize.

Before long, volunteers began to serve hot meals there. Funding came from donations, fund-raisers and the United Way.

Mrs. Johnson was involved in a host of community organizations. She and Zipperer were charter members of Citrus United



Annie Johnson

Please see ANNIE, Page 4A

Citrus County (FL) Chronicle Tuesday, August 22, 2000

## ANNIE

continued from Page 1A

Basket in 1977.

"Annie Johnson was probably one of the leaders in the county even back then," Zipperer said. "Annie was a busy lady."

Last year, Mrs. Johnson was selected as an Eckerd 100 Woman for her community involvement. Her other awards include Citrus County Citizen of the Year in 1991, Service Above Self Award from the Dunnellon Chamber of Commerce and Service to Mankind Award from the Dunnellon Sertoma Club.

Zipperer said Mrs. Johnson held in high esteem service to others.

"Annie was just that kind of person. Annie loved the people in this county," she said. "Annie knew if you worked hard enough you could make things happen."

Mrs. Johnson's husband, Reuben, died in January 1999.

Services are 11 a.m. Saturday at the First Bethel Baptist Church in Dunnellon. Viewing is 7 to 8 p.m. Friday at the church, and one hour prior to services. There will be no viewing after the eulogy. Burial will follow at Memorial Gardens in Dunnellon.

O.B. Samuel Funeral Home in Williston is in charge of arrangements.

Information from *The Riverland News*, a Citrus Publishing newspaper, was used in this report.

# Remembering Leroy Bellamy

*Family, friends recall the reverend's positive influence on the community*

**NANCY KENNEDY**  
nkennedy@  
chronicleonline.com  
*Chronicle*

Part family reunion, part church service, part oral history celebration, the friends and family of the late Rev. Leroy Bellamy filled the upstairs courtroom in the Old Courthouse Saturday for the Reverend Leroy Bellamy Remembrance.

Hosted by the Citrus County Historical Society, the event was part of Black History Month.

"Leroy Bellamy was one of Citrus County's greatest citizens," said Mary Sue Rife, board member of the historical society. "He did so much for this community. I think he was a real healing force."

The event opened with a prayer given by the Rev. Larry McReynolds, pastor of Grace Temple Church of the Living God, the Floral City church that Bellamy built. The church choir also sang a cappella some of Bellamy's favorite songs: "Turn It Over to Jesus" and "All the Time."

Keynote speaker, the Rev. Babb Adams, said the only word to describe his longtime friend is "unique."

"Someone said recently that Reverend Leroy Bellamy is Citrus County's Martin Luther King," Adams said. "But I said no, he was more than that. Despite Dr. King being a man of peace, violence followed him.

"That's not true with Leroy Bellamy. He had a way about him that he could tell a fellow to go to the devil and make him think he'd enjoy the trip,"

of Leroy Bellamy," saying his father was, among many things, the backbone of the family, caring, a family man, honest, jovial, passionate, trustworthy, wise and wonderful and zealous to the end.

Leroy Bellamy Jr. remembered him as a sports fan, cheering for whatever team was winning at the time. Daughter Lucille Bellamy White recalled her father's sayings, such as "To have friends you have to show yourself friendly."

Son Lonnie noted his father's distinctive laugh and recalled the days his father owned a store and gave away half the groceries and things in the store.

"It wasn't about the store making money," he said, "but about building a community."

James Bellamy remembered his dad as being fair, especially when he was in trouble. "From my dad I learned you can always trust the man who trusts in God," he said.

Bruce Bellamy said he will always cherish the memories of listening to his dad and uncle "sharing knowledge" with each other on the porch.

Of all his accomplishments, Leroy Bellamy considered the little church on Old Floral City Road to be his greatest.

"Against obstacles, challenges and problems, at almost 90 years old, he built his church," Adams said, "and in doing so, brought a community together, black and white."

He went on to say that if all the people Bellamy touched during his lifetime were there that morning, the courthouse wouldn't be able to fit them all

# Annie Johnson funeral joyful

By Steve Arthur  
Chronicle columnist

The life of Annie Williams Johnson was celebrated Saturday in tears, laughter and song, in recognition of a remarkable life of humble service to those in need, especially children and the elderly.

Those who spoke of her life during the morning ceremony at First Bethel Missionary Baptist Church in Dunnellon described her life as the attainment of happiness.

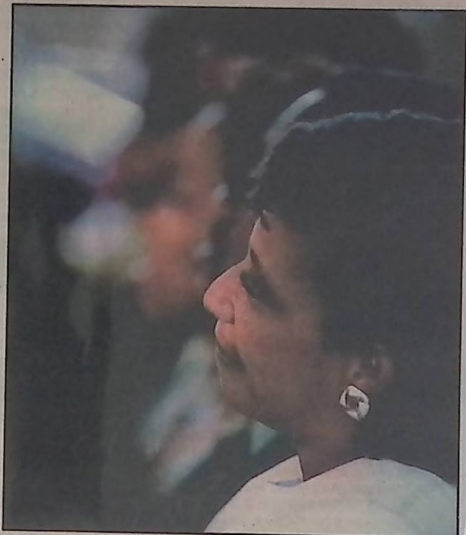
A sign on her office wall said it all: "You can't pursue happiness and catch it. Happiness comes to you unawares while you are



Annie Johnson

helping others."

Annie Johnson, a retired elementary school teacher, was not only the founder of the Annie Johnson Senior Service Center in South



Travis Long/Chronicle photo

Tanya Brooks, daughter of Annie Johnson, listens to her mother's eulogy given by the Rev. Michael D. Warren Saturday at First Bethel Missionary Baptist Church in Dunnellon. Longtime community leader and retired elementary school teacher Annie Johnson died Aug. 20 shortly after undergoing heart surgery. She was 82.

Please see **JOYFUL**, Page 4A

# JOYFUL

continued from Page 1A

Dunnellon, but also an active member of several charitable organizations, including the Citrus United Basket.

She died Aug. 20, at age 82, four days after undergoing heart surgery.

Virtually all her life was spent in Florida, mostly in Dunnellon. She was born there to the late Joe and Olivia Pelham Williams. She was the oldest of three children and the last to survive.

She was educated in Dunnellon too, attending both the Hard Rock School and Booker T. Washington High School. Then she went to St. Augustine to attend Florida Normal College, and later she left Florida to earn a master's degree at Columbia University in New York.

For 33 years thereafter, she devoted her life to teaching children in Citrus, Marion and Sumter counties.

At retirement, at a point where

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*Among her accomplishments was the establishment  
of the Annie W. Johnson Senior Services Center  
and thrift shop, and a congregate kitchen.*

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most people look for rest and the enjoyment of their accomplishments and hobbies, Mrs. Johnson looked around her. She saw that there were needy children. Lonely elderly folk who needed food. Poor people needing clothing and shelter. She saw adults who could not read.

Seeing such needs, and being a deeply religious woman, she set out to meet the needs of the needy. With persistence and faith, during more than 25 years of devotion to those in need, she was tremendously successful.

"When I need guidance," she once said, "I speak to the Lord."

Among her accomplishments was the establishment of the Annie W. Johnson Senior Services Center and thrift shop, and a congregate kitchen that serves more than 300 hot meals monthly and

another 600 meals to the homebound in addition to 200 food baskets she delivered personally for many years. She also taught reading to the illiterate.

"I like people," she said once. "What I do for others makes me happy and gives me much satisfaction and joy."

Those who knew Mrs. Johnson thought she would have enjoyed the funeral service at the church — built in 1888 and restored largely due to her efforts — which was one of the focal points of her life.

The church was packed with her friends and family — black and white and many children — who were brought through a gamut of emotions by music and words.

Backed by a chorus and some thrilling solos by Doretha Griffin, the bereaved were transported by

the music from grief to surges of toe-tapping joy that had most in the pews swaying to the harmonies.

The Rev. Michael D. Warren offered wisdom, humor, instruction and hope in a rhetorically varied and energetically spirited eulogy that culminated in a stirring chant sung and bellowed in staccato four- and five-word stanzas, each line followed by "amen" and "yes" yelled from the pews.

His delivery was an emotional experience that lifted some of the mourners from their grief and on to their feet to call out and wave their arms as the Rev. Warren reminded them that Sister Annie Johnson was in a far better place and was accepting her reward for a life of devoted service. And, furthermore, that redemption was at hand for all.

Annie Johnson's many friends and family members filed out of the church with tears staining their cheeks but with smiles and laughter in their hearts.

Those who knew her said she would have liked that very much.

**BLACK PIONEER FAMILIES OF CITRUS COUNTY**

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

# Johnson leaves long legacy of good works

**A**NNIE JOHNSON WAS 82 when she died Monday. She was an amazing, wonderful woman, beloved by all whose lives were touched by her caring goodness.

Her long life of service is testimony that one person can do much with a life devoted to giving, a devotion to make the lives of others better.

Hers is a legacy of service that will linger for a good long time beyond the end of her mortal life, in the lives and memories of the many who have been helped by this good woman.

Annie Johnson was a good woman. A kind and gentle woman, she proved to us all that the power of love can overcome great obstacles.

She was a kindergarten teacher during her working years, with a special love for the children whom she nurtured long after they left her classroom.

The community of Dunnellon is filled with men and women and families who have been touched by her goodness, and her determination.

After she retired from teaching, her work began in earnest. She spent the next quarter century of her life working for her community.

She had a dream and she saw it through. The old Second Bethel Baptist Church, built in 1888, was falling to wrack and ruin, but she saw a possibility in that building. She saw what it could become.

Following that dream, she spearhead-

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## The issue:

*The passing of Annie Johnson.*

## Our opinion:

*She proved that one person can make a difference.*

---

ed a community effort to restore the church and when it was in shape, she established a senior service center for the elderly in Citrus and south Marion counties, a place for the old folk to meet and socialize.

It soon became a place for the elderly to have mid-day meals too, and besides that, a center for other outreach efforts, too. That center now carries her name, but more importantly it carries the spirit of what one person with a dream can do.

Her dedication to helping the needy in this part of Florida was as wide and giving as the manifold needs of the community.

Although she was honored by many organizations — by the Eckerd 100 Women organization for her community involvement, by the Citrus County Chronicle as Citrus County Citizen of the Year in 1991, by the Dunnellon Chamber of Commerce for the Service Above Self Award, and by the Dunnellon Sertoma Club for its Service to Mankind Award — her real reward was in the love that her community returned to her every day of her life.

She will be missed, but not forgotten.

Thursday, August 24, 2000 Citrus County (FL) Chronicle

Council.

There were between 75 and 100 cars at the KKK rally. A reporter's check indicated most of the cars were from outside the county.

### A HOSPITAL FOR CITRUS COUNTIANS

A happier note in the news: An editorial in the *Chronicle* on July 11 brought the good tidings, "This is a day to be remembered in Citrus County — the day we dedicated our new hospital."

Paul W. and Eleanore Ramsey were publishers of the newspaper and their editorial continued: "It is a solid community achievement. Any vigorous people have their differences, and we have ours, but we venture to say that there was more unanimity among us in the undertaking and accomplishment of this project than any heretofore..."

"We think the Inverness Kiwanis Club is due great credit for initiating the project..."

"New lives will begin there, the sick will be made well, and a haven will be waiting for the victims of sudden accidents. It is reassuring to know these things."

"Yes, this is certainly a day to be remembered."

The \$400,000 project, Citrus Memorial Hospital, was dedicated that day to the better health and welfare of the people of Citrus County.

A brief dedicatory program included speeches by Autha Forehand, a director of the Hospital Division, Florida Development Commission, and Dr. R. C. Cumming of Ocala, one of five Florida physicians who act as advisors to the Hospital Division.

From the start, the facility was being cited as one of the finest small hospitals in the country, both in construction and in equipment. The hospital had 17,000 square feet of floor space and there were 16 rooms for patients, four of them private.

Citrus Memorial Hospital had its genesis in the county's need for resident physicians.

Some doctors had left the county because there were no facilities for hospitalizing their patients. Others had come here, looked over the situation, and went on to areas where they could have access to hospitals.

A dozen years before, after another physician left the county, the matter was discussed at the Inverness Kiwanis Club at the insistence of George H. Brannen, who was to become Chairman of the Citrus County Hospital Board. A committee was appointed to look for a physician. And this committee found that doctors wanted hospital facilities, saying they needed them to do their work right.

Someone suggested that the old Seaboard Railroad station here might be purchased and converted into a hospital. The railroad agreed to sell it for a fraction of its worth.

Six local men, the late Frank Morris, Benjamin W. Jones, E. C. May, James E. Culpepper, Sam Rouse and Brannen, each put up \$125 to buy the old depot.

Much later they decided the building was not suitable for conversion into a hospital and the group sold it for \$5,000. This sum was later used by the Hospital Board to purchase the site where Citrus Memorial stands.

About eight or nine years earlier, Hugh C. Barco, County Tax Assessor, had a talk with Brannen, and suggested that the way to get a hospital was to start collecting taxes for that purpose.

The Kiwanis Club got George W. Scofield to draw up a bill levying a three-mill tax and creating a Hospital Board whose members would be appointed by the Governor. The bill was passed by Rep. L. C. Yeomans and the tax started in 1949.

Original members of the board were the late W. F. Himes, Benjamin W. Jones, John H. Williams, Elmo Reed and William L. Spivey. George H. Brannen was appointed to the board after Himes' death. Himes did a great amount of work — without pay — in preparing the paper work preliminary to the floating of a bond issue. In 1954 freeholders voted by a lopsided

# Groups try to save school founded by former slave from demolition

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE BEACH — Time is running out for local and national preservation groups trying to save an elementary school founded by an ex-slave from the wrecking ball.

The old school in this beachside community doesn't look like much — just a small four-room brick building dwarfed by the new modern two-story structure.

But to thousands of students, the school once known as the Jacksonville Beach Colored School represents part of their heritage and a link to the history of blacks in north Florida.

The school, built in 1938 and occupied in 1939, served for decades as the elementary school for blacks from Mayport, Atlantic Beach and Pablo Beach, which is now named Jacksonville Beach.

The four-room brick building came within days of being torn down earlier this year to clear the way for the new school's parking lot. It was removed from the Duval County School Board's

agenda just hours before the board was to consider approving the school's demolition.

"We want to look at what's possible," said Susan Wilkinson, the school board member representing the beach communities.

But time is growing short. The school board set a Monday deadline for the local preservation group to come up with the funding and plans to move the building.

"We are working up to the last minute to try to find some land. We are hoping someone comes forward at the last-minute and helps us out," said

Janet Cousnard, chairwoman of the Jacksonville Beach Elementary School Preservation Committee.

The school was built after Mother Rhoda Martin, who was born a slave in 1832, founded the Jacksonville Beach School for Colored People in her home, teaching generations of young blacks. As it grew, the school moved into the four-room brick building in 1939.

## ON THE NET

[www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org)

# Twin views of Hernando history

*Siblings mark  
75th birthday*

**NANCY KENNEDY**  
nkennedy@  
chronicleonline.com  
*Chronicle*

**W**hen the Smith twins, Russell Smith and Ruth (Smith) Twiggs, get together, there's a whole lot of laughing going on.

He's as quiet as she is talkative. He's the elder of the two by 8 minutes.

She's the one who finished school, but he's the smart one, she said.

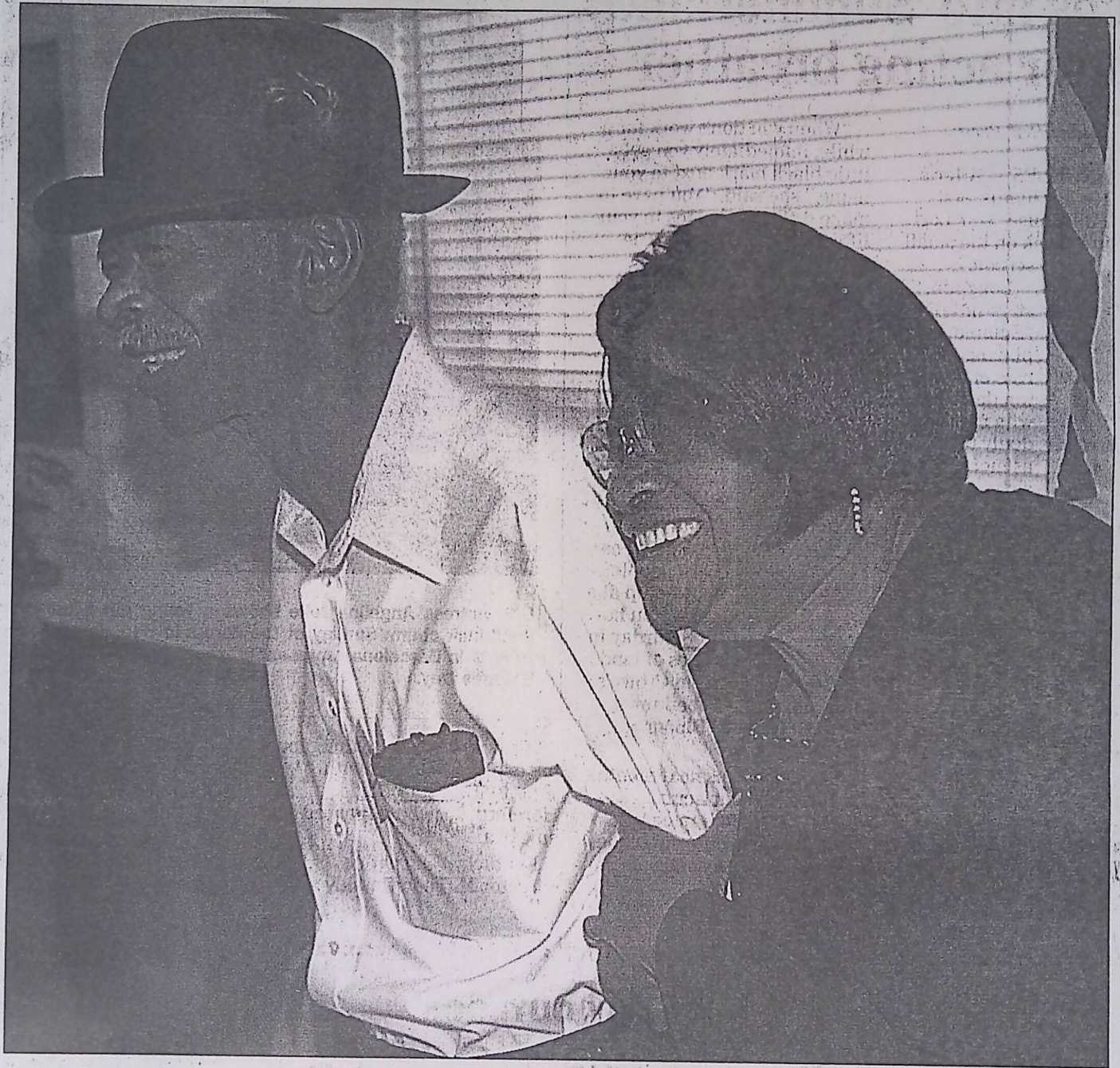
On Saturday, the siblings celebrated their 75th birthday; recently, the two sat down to talk about Hernando, the town where they grew up and have loved all their years — and their devotion to each other.

"Our mama was Alberta Smith and our father was Alzo, but they called him 'Kid,'" Twiggs began.

"We were his second family," Smith said. "He had two families; the first one was a lot older than we were." Alzo died March 4, 1954, in a car wreck in Holder. Twiggs said Alzo divorced his first wife, but no one really talked about that.

There were 10 Smith children in their family, six girls and four boys. Alberta had another set of twins, but they died.

Alzo worked for the



**Russell Smith and Ruth Smith Twiggs celebrated their 75th birthday Saturday evening at the Hernando Community Center. The twins were born in Hernando and have lived and raised their families in the community. The brother and sister have many memories about growing up in rural Citrus County.**

DAVE SIGLER/Chronicle

Mrs. Helen P. Larson, Inverness; and a son, E. S., Jr., Inverness.

Another death occurring in 1956 was that of Mrs. Dorinda Georgiana Levins, 82, of Crystal River, on Oct. 6. She was born in Lafayette County, but had lived in Citrus County for more than 70 years.

When 1957 swung around, Inverness Coca-Cola Bottling Co. was offering Eddie Fisher's Souvenir Record from "Coke Time" for 25 cents. The tunes featured were "I'm Walking Behind You," "Lady of Spain," "Down-Hearted," "Wish You Were Here," "Outside of Heaven" and "I'll Hold You in My Heart."

Postmaster W. Owen Kennedy of Inverness announced that rural delivery of mail to an additional 100 families would begin. A new route was established along Turner's Camp Road and other sections. The carrier named for the new route was Henry Burkhalter.

County leaders tried mightily to prove there were more than 9,000 persons in the county in 1957. The 1950 Census put the county at a little more than 6,100, and the 1956 population was 6,200, according to the estimate prepared by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research of the University of Florida.

Postmaster W. Owen Kennedy testified before the Population Commission, Fifth Judicial Circuit, on Feb. 25, that receipts at the Inverness Post Office were up 50 per cent in the past seven years.

County Tax Collector E. Van Anderson said homesteads exempted from taxation as of Jan. 1, 1950, were 1,400 and on Jan. 1, 1957, they numbered 1,800. Auto tag sales jumped from 2,681 in 1950 to 4,132 in the seven-year period.

Supervisor of Registration E. C. Johnston said the number of registered voters on April 1, 1950 was 2,808 as compared with 4,879 on Dec. 31, 1956.

County Judge O. Frank Scofield said 2,195 drivers' licenses were issued in 1950, as compared with 4,164 in 1956.

B. T. Keating of Floral City told the Commission the population of that area had doubled in the last seven years.

(When the 1960 official Census was taken, it showed Citrus County's population was 9,268).

Meantime, a recent census sponsored by the Inverness City Council showed a population of 1,655, according to Kenneth Corbin of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, who counted names turned in by volunteer workers. To get mail delivery to homes, a city would have to have a population of 2,500.

An indication of growth in the county was an upsurge in telephones. Florida Telephone Co. reported in July that telephones in Citrus County increased from 437 on May 1, 1950, to 1,408 on May 1, 1957 or better than 322 per cent. Phones in the Crystal River exchange increased during the same period from 157 to 612, or about 389 per cent, and in the Inverness exchange from 280 to 796, or about 284 per cent.

Radical John Kasper, who ranted against integration of the races in a speech at a Ku Klux Klan rally near Inverness on Saturday night, March 9, 1957, admitted Monday, March 11, that he had danced with Black girls at mixed parties in New York City.

Kasper told a Legislative Committee in Tallahassee that Blacks were his "closest friends" at a time when he was operating a bookstore in New York's Greenwich Village. The committee was investigating the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and white supremacy groups. Kasper was chief speaker at the KKK rally in Crawford Bellamy's City pasture near Cooper Lake south of Inverness. Crosses burned to the left and right on the platform.

Bill Hendrix, who claimed to head the KKK in Florida (and who ran for Governor in 1952), introduced Kasper.

The Inverness P.T.A. had protested Kasper's appearance to Mayor Doug Stephens and City

# TWIN

Continued from Page 1A

Dunnellon phosphate mine and was also a blacksmith. Back then, the area was open range, Smith said. They lived out by the mine, about 2½ miles from Hernando, and walked to school every day.

"But we never had a 'real' school," Twiggs said. "We went to school in the Methodist church in Hernando, and there was only one teacher for all eight grades, for just black children.

"We never had a new book; we had hand-me-down books. And we never had a desk. You went to school with a book in your lap," she said.

Smith stopped attending school in the seventh grade and went to work to help support the family. He worked in the Van Ness groves and in the

phosphate mine. He broke mules.

"He went to work so we could go to school," Twiggs said. "And he's smarter than all of us, and I still can't understand that!"

Smith had already been doing farm work at age 10. "I didn't make but 75 cents for nine hours of work," he said. "If I made \$2 a day, that was big money — \$10 a week and I was 'rich.'"

It cost 10 cents to go to the movies at the Valerie Theater all the way in Inverness.

"Children (today) don't believe this, but when we went to the movies, we sat upstairs, and they didn't have a bathroom for us," Twiggs said. "We had to go out and go around the building."

She said there were a lot of places they weren't welcome, but it didn't bother her; that was just the way things were back then.

took an old house, tore it down and built it over. Every two weeks when Twiggs got paid, Smith would buy more lumber.

When he was finished, Twiggs didn't owe a dime.

"He's a good brother," Twiggs said. "I'd do anything in the world for him."

The house still stands, but Twiggs doesn't live in it anymore. She lives over near Mt. Carmel Baptist Church where she's a member.

“ Growing up was good for us, and it was fun. ... We had plenty to eat, tables to eat it on and beds to sleep in, and we thought that was good. ”

Ruth Smith Twiggs  
speaking about growing up in Hernando.

"You knew that you weren't wanted, so you didn't go. But if you dwell on it, it's going to take over your whole life. That's why most of the time we didn't eat out."

After eighth grade, Twiggs continued on to high school, but she had to travel to Dunnellon because there wasn't a high school for African-Americans. At 14, she and one of her sisters would pay 25 cents to ride the Trailways bus, then live in a rented room in Dunnellon Monday through

Friday, then pay 25 cents to ride back home for the weekend.

Growing up, Twiggs and Smith stayed close — until Smith started courting. "That's when Mama told him, 'You better stop taking her everywhere or you'll never get a girlfriend if she's with you all the time!'" Twiggs said.

Twiggs worked at Citrus Memorial Hospital as a manager for 30 years. When she needed a house, her brother built her one, a little bit at a time. He

Smith also drew up the plans and helped build the Church of the Living God in Hernando.

"Growing up was good for us, and it was fun," Twiggs said. "If we had a hard time, we didn't have sense enough to know it. Nobody had anything, but everybody helped each other and everybody's friendly.

"We had plenty to eat, tables to eat it on and beds to sleep in," she said, "and we thought that was good."

# FREEMAN

Continued from Page 1A

mother, Hazel Hopkins, Freeman started collecting stories about Citrus County's black residents.

She searched through county records to find information. Some of the stories she discovered were new.

Others confirmed things her father had told her, such as the story of Dr. Bentley.

"I did research at the Old Courthouse. I sat down in all that dusty dust, pulling books out and looking through things," Freeman said.

She learned about Amos Beasley, who

owned two boarding houses in the 1940s in Crystal River, where many laborers employed at the local fish market, cedar mill and crate factory lived.

Around the same time, Annie Lee Smith worked as a midwife in Crystal River.

"She delivered a lot of children in this community," Freeman said, "and it seems like everybody forgot about her."

Freeman collected photographs and assembled stories about Citrus County's black community.

She copied the stories down by hand, and a friend typed some of them for her.

For several years, Freeman said she presented a Citrus County black history program, but she stopped in 1997 after she had heart surgery.

This year, Freeman's collection will be on display for a discussion program for the Citrus County Historical Society's

Black History Celebration.

"The Way We Were" will start at noon today at The Old Courthouse Heritage Museum in downtown Inverness. Freeman will be on hand to answer questions.

Freeman, 66, now has stories of her own.

At age 21, she moved to New York City and remained there until 1987, when she returned to Crystal River.

Soon after she moved north, she said she started working at a department store but didn't enjoy it so she became a nanny

— a career that suited her better. Freeman still works as a nanny.

She lives with her son, Ernest "Chuck" Freeman. She has four

grandchildren.

Freeman was born in Georgia and raised in Crystal River.

She recalled what life was like when she was a girl.

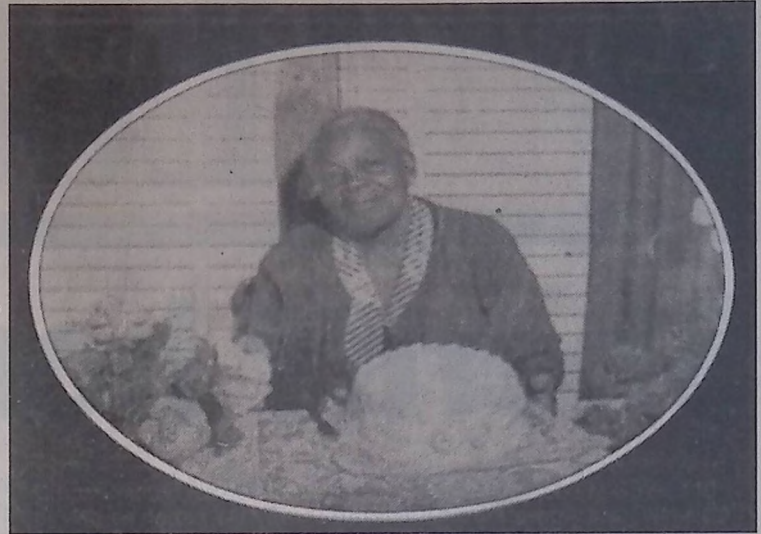
Freeman said a black sugar cane grower, Sylvester Wooten, used to sell his sugar cane syrup at a roadside stand on U.S. 19.

"That was the best syrup you could put on a biscuit," Freeman said.

When Wooten cooked the syrup to a thicker consistency, Freeman said she and her friends would sometimes pull it into taffy, then roll it in roasted peanuts.

Her favorite memory is of the annual May 20 celebration.

Freeman explained that May 20 was a holiday for the black community celebrating the day that news of the Emancipation Proclamation reached Citrus County.



Submitted photo

Anna Copeland Russell started teaching at age 13 at Horn's Still in Marion County. She also taught in Sumter, Suwannee and Citrus counties.



Mr. and Mrs. Morris Smith attend a 1926 baseball game.



Frederick Copeland is shown here sitting on the lap of his father, Julius Copeland. Frederick Copeland was born July 2, 1917.

President Abraham Lincoln issued the proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863.

On May 20, children stayed home from school and everyone gathered for a big picnic, complete with ball games and plenty of food.

Freeman spoke affectionately of a fish fry feast, with loads

of rice, greens and other treats, such as white sweet potato pie.

She said before the festivities started, the picnic began with a song and a prayer.

"It was just simply beautiful. I wish the kids now could experience that," Freeman said. "My grandchildren will never know anything about that."

# Gentle Giant

Monte Irvin's  
Giant baseball  
career began  
in the Negro  
National  
Leagues



**F**inancially unstable, Monte Irvin was looking for a way to help his family.

He turned to the one sport that he loved and he knew could help bring in money during a time of need.

Irvin returned to Orange, N.J., during the 1939 season after spending a year and a half at Lincoln University to help financially support his family. He signed with the Newark Eagles of the Negro National Leagues.

Irvin received \$125 per month and only played for Newark on road games, which held its spring training in Daytona Beach.

"I would not play at home because I didn't want to lose my amateur status," said Irvin, who used the alias of Jimmy Nelson. "I used a false name so I could play. A lot of players were doing this. Jim Thorpe did it. It was a common practice."

Irvin did this so he had

Please see **GENTLE/Page 5B**

# Irvin treated with tribute

## Baseball great honored

RYAN O'CONNOR  
roconnor@chronicleonline.com  
Chronicle

Monte Irvin was once again the center of attention.

In front of more than 200 people, Irvin was honored by family and friends Thursday night at the West Elks Lodge in Homosassa.

The event, which raised money for the Key Training Center, lasted for more than four hours with several former teammates and old friends telling stories and praising Irvin for his accomplishments on the diamond.

"Ladies and gentlemen, you

are looking at a very happy person," Irvin said.

Joe Morgan, a Hall of Fame second basemen and current baseball analyst for ESPN, served as the Master of Ceremony for the Monte Irvin Tribute Dinner.

"I don't do a lot of these things. I have a habit in the winter of staying home with my family," said Morgan, who lives in the Oakland, Calif. area. "But I have a lot of respect for him and that is why I am here."

The night began with fans being able to meet Irvin and the other former players, which was followed by dinner.

Following the meal, the Tribute, or what some referred to as a roast, began.

Morgan opened the Ceremony with a couple of stories and a few laughs before turning over the microphone to other players and friends of Irvin.

Morgan introduced the players and then they gave a few comments, with some being serious and others, well, not so serious.

Earl Battey was the first one to speak and chose to take a serious approach and thanked and congratulated Irvin for his success.

Dom DiMaggio followed with more serious comments.

"I have followed him and his career and his life style," said the "Little Professor", who

Please see IRVIN/Page 5B

For more coverage on the Monte Irvin tribute

PAGE 5B

## IRVIN

Continued from Page 1B

called Irvin Mr. 7-11. "He has been a wonderful ambassador to baseball."

But things got a little less serious when Gene Hermanski took the microphone. The former Brooklyn Dodger told a couple of jokes to get the crowd rolling and started a trend.

Robin Roberts, who is a Hall of Famer for the Philadelphia Phillies, compared Irvin to a football player and New York Yankees bench coach Don Zimmer was wondering who would attend the Tribute due to the location.

"I received my invitation

over the summer and saw it was going to be in Homosassa Springs I was wondering who in the hell would come to the event," Zimmer said jokingly. "I looked at my calendar and hoped I had an open date so I would see how many people would actually show up."

The statement left people laughing hysterically.

Dr. James Parker, who was a college friend of Irvin's, Hal Lanier and Hal McRae also gave a few remarks to Irvin.

"Thank you for paving the way," said McRae, who works for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays.

Buck Leonard's daughter, Rose, also said a few kind words to Irvin. Leonard was a great Negro League player who was inducted into the Hall

of Fame in 1972.

"Buck respected no one more than you, Monte," Rose said.

But then it was Irvin's turn.

When the Homosassa resident stood in front of the audience, everyone in attendance gave Irvin a standing ovation.

Following the ovation, Irvin was given a bat with his photo and baseball statistics engraved on it. He was also given a Giants uniform with a painting of Irvin on front from his playing days.

Then the man of the hour spoke.

Irvin talked about his days in the Negro Leagues, Mexican Leagues and the Major Leagues. Then he gave thanks to all his friends and family for making the evening a special

moment for the 83-year old.

"I want to thank Joe (Morgan) for coming," Irvin said. "I want to thank the committee for making this a success and I applaud each and every one of them."

Irvin went on to thank his wife of 60 years, Dee.

"I am fortunate to have stayed married for 60 years," he said. "The reason it lasted so long was because I said yes in nine languages and I am learning two more."

The joke brought more laughter and his second standing ovation. After Irvin wrapped up his speech, the West Elks Lounge exploded with cheers as Irvin received his final of three standing ovations.

"This was a wonderful night," Irvin said.

# All-star quality

*Baseball great  
pushed envelope*

**RYAN O'CONNOR**

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chronicleonline.com

*Chronicle*

**L**eading off third base in the first inning of Game One of the 1951 World Series, New York Giants' Monte Irvin had a hunch.

The 6-foot-2½-inch left fielder saw something Yankee pitcher Allie Reynolds was doing that would allow him to steal home.

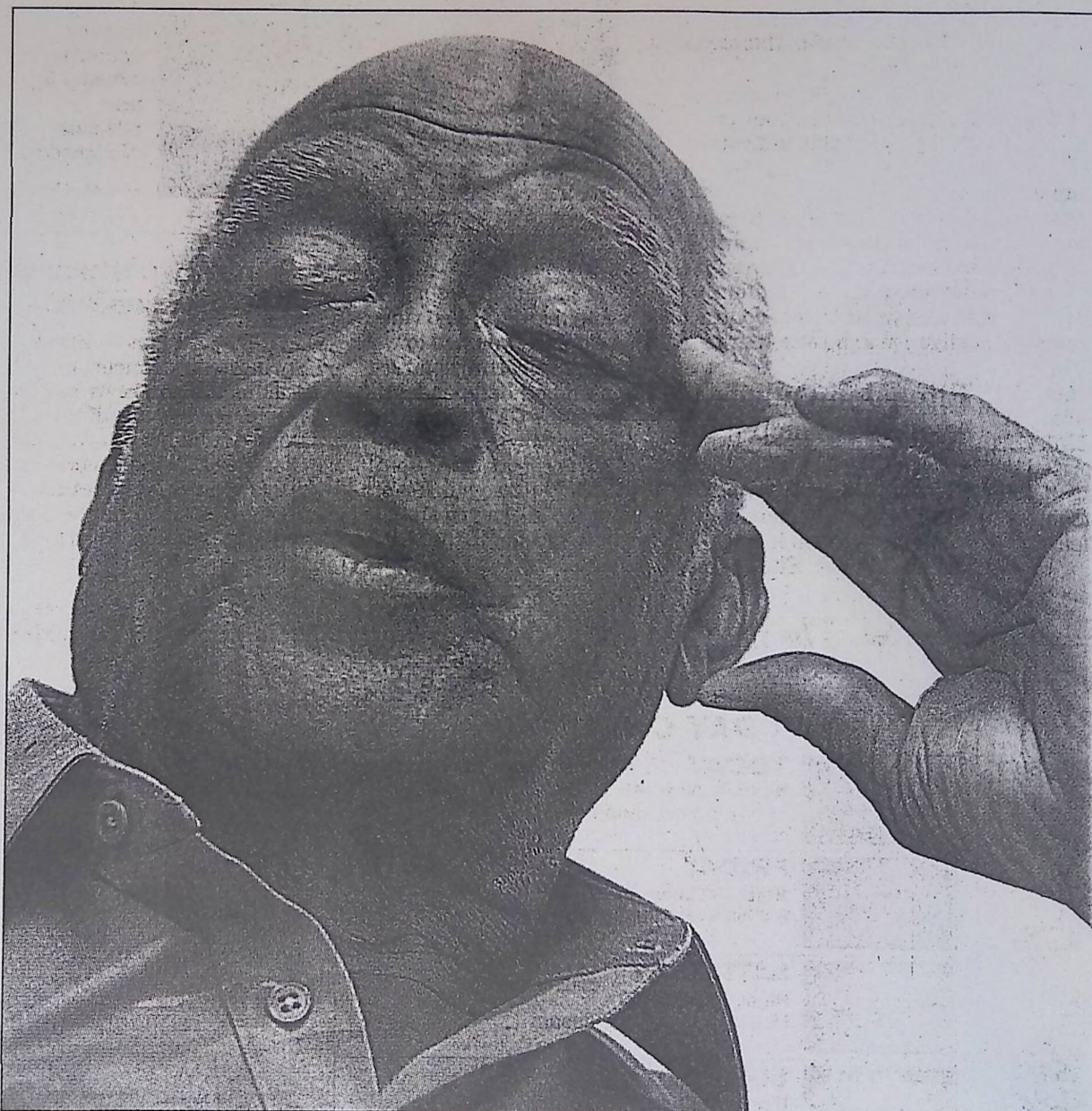
Irvin whispered to Leo Durocher, who was coaching third base, and said, "I think I can make it." Durocher gave him the nod to go.

On the next pitch, Irvin was gone.

Yogi Berra, the Yankees' catcher, received the pitch from Reynolds, quickly tagged Irvin with dust flying in the air from the slide.

Seconds later, the umpire called Irvin safe to give the Giants a run as Irvin became the first player in 23 years to successfully steal home during a World Series game.

This play, along with many others, is one reason why he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame and became one of the first African-Americans to break the color barrier in the Major Leagues.



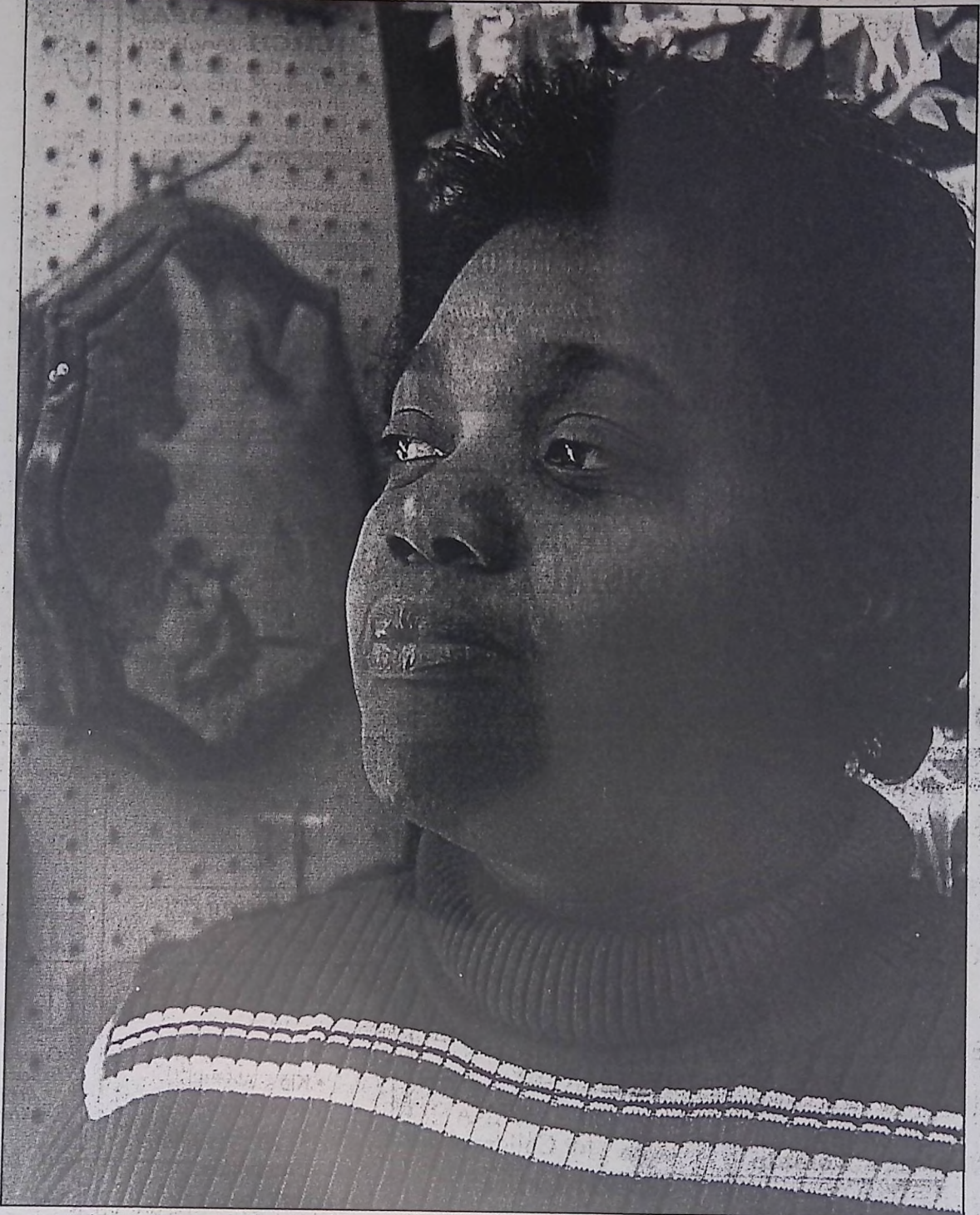
Hall of Fame baseball player Monte Irvin will be honored at 5:30 p.m. today in a tribute by friends at the We Club in Homosassa.

## COMING UP

- Monte Irvin's experiences in the Negro Leagues, Mexican League and World War II./Friday's Sports section
- Irvin's days in the Major Leagues and induction into the Hall of Fame./ Saturday's Sports section.

Please see **IRVIN/Page 5A**

2-28-04



DAVE SIGLER/Chronicle

Jennifer Clark will soon be ordained as an evangelist. She is a youth pastor, works with children, works in prison and sings on the Praise and Worship team. She was a teenage single mom, has overcome cancer, works six days a week and is married with three children.

# IRVIN

Continued from Page 1A

These accomplishments, along with his service to his country during World War II, are just the tip of the iceberg of the experiences Irvin went through during his long and exciting life. And they are very friends of the Hall of Famer are having a tribute at 5:30 p.m. today at the West Elks Club in Homosassa.

"I am really looking forward to that. It will be a good way to say hello to a lot of people I have never met and saying hello to a lot of people I already have met," he said. "It should be a great affair, and I hope to spend the rest of my remaining days right here and try to be as happy and healthy as possible right here in Sugarmill Woods in Citrus County."

Joe Morgan, who is a baseball analyst for ESPN and a Hall of Fame second basemen, will be the master of ceremonies.

"(Irvin) called me and asked if I would come and see him," Morgan said from his home in Oakland, Calif. "I don't like to travel in the off-season, especially from one coast to another. But I hold such high esteem for Monte. This will not be a hard trip."

But, could Irvin have ever thought this type of recognition was in his future as he was growing up as an African-American in the heat of civil rights turmoil in the United States?

## Life before pro baseball

Monte Merrill Irvin was born Feb. 25, 1919, in Haleburg, Ala. He was the eighth of 11 children.

When he was 8, Irvin, his parents, Cupid Alexander and Mary Eliza Henderson, along with his six brothers and four sisters, moved to Bloomfield, N.J., where his father got a job on a dairy farm.

The following year, Irvin and

his family moved to Orange, N.J.

Irvin began to play baseball at the age of 8 with his brothers during the summer season.

"I had my heroes. Believe it or not, I was a St. Louis Cardinal fan when I was a youngster," said Irvin. "I was a St. Louis Cardinals fan because my brother was a St. Louis Cardinals fan of the National League and a fan of the Philadelphia A's of the American League."

Irvin grew up watching the New York Giants, New York Yankees and the Newark Bears, a minor league team in the international league for the Yankees.

"I used to see many of the Yankee players in the International League before they played in Yankee Stadium," Irvin said. "My influence was local, but I got to see a lot of great players coming up, and even after they arrived in the majors. I had a chance to follow their careers."

At 13, Irvin attended Orange High School, where he participated in football, basketball, baseball and track.

He was unable to participate at the varsity level as a freshman, but when his time came, he proved to be one of the best all-around athletes in New Jersey.

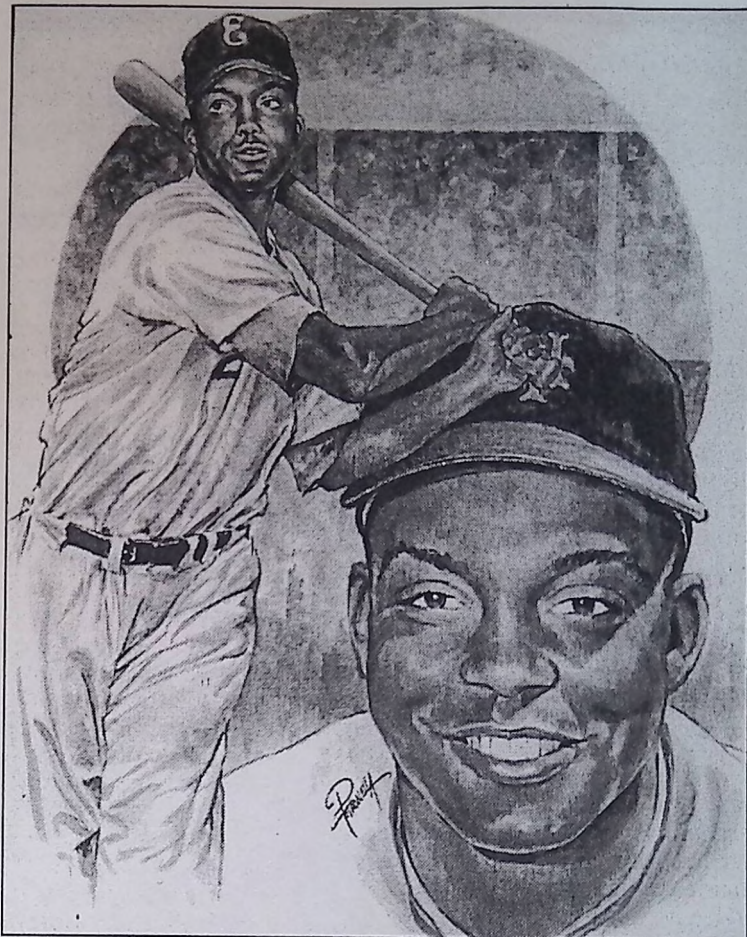
As a senior, Irvin guided Orange High to a state championship in basketball during the 1936 state tournament. As the tallest player on the team, Irvin played center.

"We were athletic and very good," Irvin said. "We had some wonderful players."

In track, Irvin ran the 100-yard dash in 10.5 seconds and won a state title and set a state record with a throw of 194 feet, 2 inches in the javelin, during the 1936 New Jersey state track meet in Montclair.

"The record lasted for a long time," Irvin said. "I was very proud of that record."

Irvin also participated in the shot put and discus, however, when it came to the state meet,



Special to the Chronicle

**A multi-talented athlete, Monte Irvin set a state high school record in the javelin and helped guide Orange High to a state championship in basketball.**

he was unable to out-throw Archie Harris of Ocean City.

"He was bigger and stronger than I was," Irvin said. "He went on to Indiana University and set records in the shot and discus and became an All-American football player. He holds records that are national records."

"In order to approach that record I would have had to put on weight, do some exercises to get stronger. I didn't want to worry about that."

Irvin turned away efforts by his track coach to get him to participate in the decathlon.

"I was 190 pounds, and my coach wanted me to think about doing the decathlon," Irvin said from his home in Sugarmill Woods. "I didn't want to practice much. I was busy with baseball. I didn't want to dedicate myself. I wanted to enjoy my life, and particularly baseball."

Irvin was a star player for Orange High in baseball and football. He played halfback, linebacker and punt returner on the football team. In baseball, Irvin started his career as a pitcher, but moved to catcher and then to shortstop.

"We had a good team. North Jersey had a great scholastic program. Wonderful athletes came from the Oranges, the Essex counties," Irvin said. "The incentive to succeed was there because you saw these great players, and you wanted to equal their ability. Baseball was king at that time. We use to play it every day."

Irvin finished his high school career with 16 letters and was named all-state his sophomore, junior and senior years in football, basketball, baseball and track.

"I look back and think of those great days, and I get a kick out of it," Irvin said. "Just thinking about it, it warms the cockles of my heart."

Following high school, Irvin went on to play football, basketball, baseball and track at Lincoln University in Oxford, Pa.

Irvin arrived on campus in September 1938, where he garnered All-Conference honors in football and track during his freshman season.

However, problems with money at home forced him to

leave school a lot earlier than expected.

"I played baseball during the period that was in the heart of the Depression," Irvin said. "I found myself broke and my folks needed money. I stopped playing and quit school to return home to help my folks out. I knew I would be back in baseball. I knew that one day African-Americans would be allowed to play in the majors."

Upon Irvin's return to Orange, he signed with the Newark Eagles of the Negro National League. He played for the Eagles until the

**“ I hold  
such high  
esteem for  
Monte. This will  
not be a hard  
trip. ”**

**Joe Morgan**

fellow Hall of Fame player who will be the host of Irvin's tribute.

1948.

The following year, Irvin got his chance to play in the Major Leagues. He, along with Hank Thompson, became the first two African-Americans to play for the New York Giants.

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*See Friday's Sports section for coverage on Irvin's climb to success and tonight's tribute to the baseball star/Citrus County resident.*

*She's had a hard life, but she's got one eye on heaven now, and the other on souls*

**DEBBIE BRADBURY**  
*For the Chronicle*

**E**vangelist, intercessor, singer and prison lay minister are only a few of the many hats Jennifer Clark of Inverness wears weekly. And even though she may look like an average lady-about-town, there is nothing average about her testimony and the lives she touches for Jesus Christ.

Born and raised in Hernando, Clark grew up with two parents, five brothers and three sisters. Although her family attended a Baptist church, her mother encouraged her to attend not one, but several different churches in order

**“ If you don't remember my name, it doesn't matter, as long as you remember Jesus Christ who sent me. ”**

**Jennifer Clark**  
about her love of ministry.

to “be a sister to everybody.” So, when she was 15 and her father accepted his first pastorate at the Mount Carmel Methodist Church in Floral City, Clark elected to remain at a Pentecostal church.

Influenced by her 84-year-old grandmother, a woman “full of the fire of the Holy Ghost,” Clark said she became passionate about the Lord at a tender age.

“When I was little, I really loved the Lord,” she said. “I can remember days of just crying because I loved him so much, and I loved being in his presence. I would sit alone and just sing songs about him all day long.”

As the years went by, however, her interest in godly things began to wane and she grew into a rebellious teenager. When she became pregnant

Please see **ETERNAL/**Page 6C

**ETERNAL OPTIMIST**

# ETERNAL

Continued from Page 1C

at 15, her mother told her, "You did it; you're going to take care of (the baby)." Clark and her baby continued to live with her parents until she met the man who would become her husband. It was then her heart began to change.

"When I was 21, I was at a bar in Ocala and somebody pulled out a gun," she said. "I said, 'God, get me out of here and I'll never come back.' I was living with my (future) husband during that time, and I remember asking my grandma, 'How am I going to get him to marry me?' She said to read Hebrews 13, which talked about whoremongers. She said to read it every night, so I did. After that, that scripture started getting in my head, and I thought, 'I can't live like this anymore,' and I told my husband. One night he asked me to marry him, and we

got married two weeks later."

She was attending her church in Hernando when she started to feel a tug in another direction. When a white minister popped in on her one day, invited her to church and told her, "We just want to love on you," Clark was skeptical but agreed to visit. She ended up staying there 10 years — the first African-American to join that church.

Because of her faith, Clark has overcome tremendous adversity: rape, miscarriages and ovarian cancer. Determined to be healed from cancer, she decided to "walk out" her faith.

"About six years ago, I was bleeding so heavily I couldn't walk," she said. "One day I said, 'God, I'm going to walk to Hernando for Your glory because I know you're going to heal me.' My heart was beating out of my chest because I was having heart trouble, as well. But when I started to walk, the blood stopped. God told me I

College and Seminary in Inverness, will speak. Call Pastor Alan Hutchens at 795-5306.

■ The Rev. Richard Champigny, O. Carm, will lead Lenten mission services Monday through Thursday at **St. Benedict Catholic Church**. Sessions include midday Masses

totally healed me. Through my walk, he made me totally put my trust in him."

One of the things she trusts God with is a prison ministry. She said she has had encouraging results from it, too.

"We get an awesome response every time we go," she said. "We have seen Muslims crying and asking about God. God's been dealing with me the last year about (telling) the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth — just give them the truth. The word of God is truth."

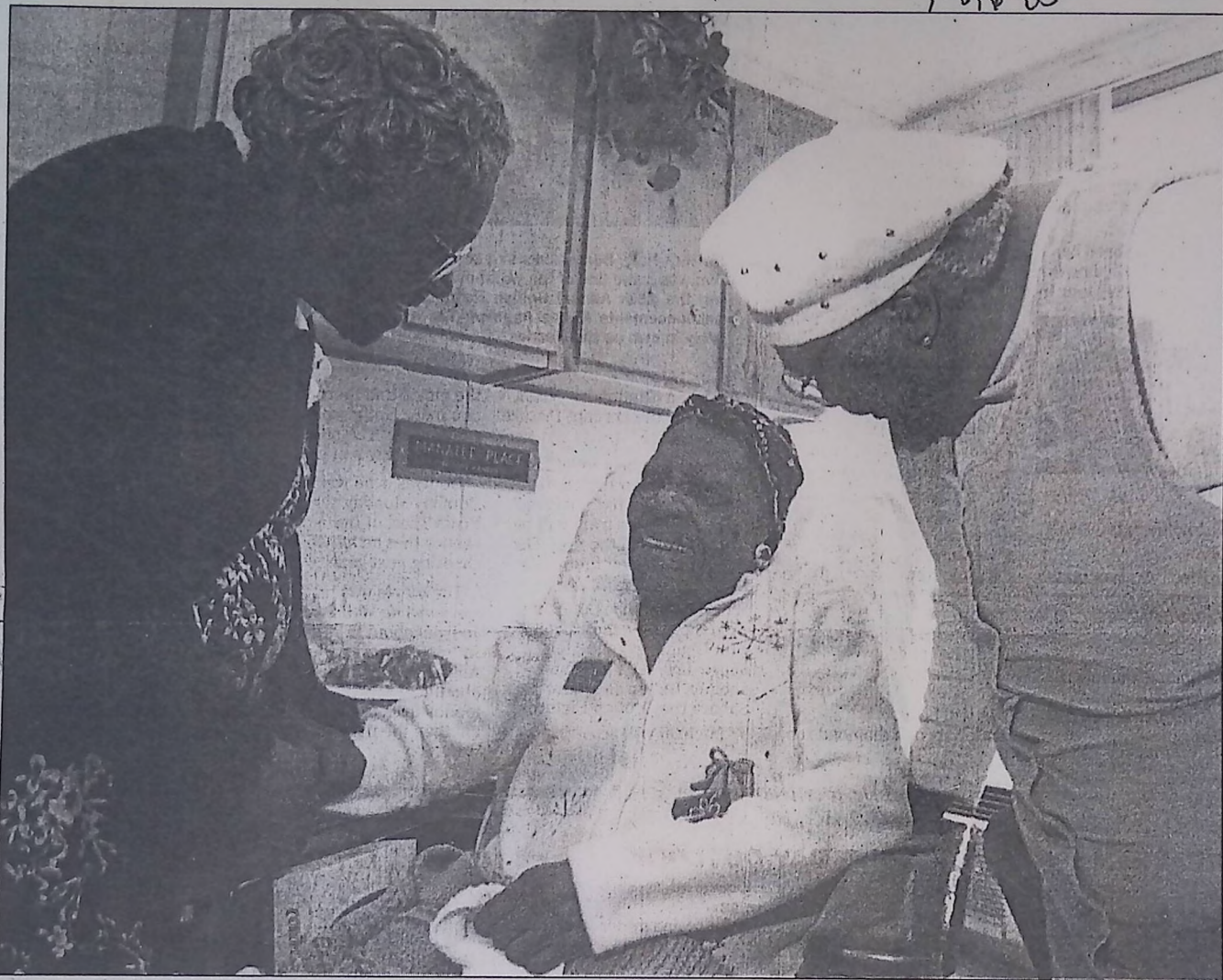
Today, in addition to raising her daughter and two sons, Clark sings in a Presbyterian praise and worship team, serves as youth pastor at her Methodist church, works in the

**Methodist Church of Inverness** will have its annual tea from noon to 2 p.m. Saturday, March 6. For tickets (\$10), call Barbara Sharpe at 637-0058, or Carol Fletcher at 860-1932.

## Men to meet

# Celebrating 'at least' a century

1-26-05



DAVE SIGLER/Chronicle

Eva Mae Smith celebrated her 101st birthday Tuesday with family and friends at Crystal River Health and Rehab. Smith's sisters, Mildred Hollis, left, and Helen Hopkins, right, visited briefly with their elder sibling, who was smiling while trying to hold back her tears of joy.

## *Crystal River's 'Miss Eva' celebrates her 101 years of full life with family, friends*

**NANCY KENNEDY**  
nkennedy@chronicleonline.com  
*Chronicle*

Back in the day, "Miss Eva" Mae Smith ran "the shop." Just a block or so away from the historic downtown area of Crystal River, the shop was

the hangout back in the 1940s and '50s and up to the 1970s for local black folk, over by the old elementary school, George W. Carver.

Her husband ran the pool hall and Miss Eva ran the restaurant.

"The people liked the way I cooked soul food," she said Tuesday

as she fixed herself up for a party in her honor at Crystal River Health and Rehab.

The party was to celebrate Miss Eva's 101st birthday, though she didn't look a day over 89.

"But I sure feel 101," she said.

"I was born before the census.

Somebody called once about me being 105 years old, but the way I figure it, I'm 101 — 100, at least."

She grew up in Trenton, and also in Georgia. "My mother carried me to Georgia when I was 6 until I was

Please see CELEBRATING/Page 9A

# Discussion to keep history alive

## Woman shares county's black history

CHERI HARRIS

charris@chronicleonline.com  
*Chronicle*

When Mildred Freeman was a child, she didn't rely on television or radio programs to keep her and her siblings entertained.

That job was left to her father, O.H. Hopkins.

"We would sit there, spell-bound, waiting for him to tell us things that happened when he was a child," Freeman said. "We learned about Crystal River through him — things that happened years ago."

Her father told them about his experiences working as a logger in western Citrus County. He told them about important members of the

black community in the past, such as Dr. Bentley, the first black physician in Citrus County.

Freeman said she was fascinated to learn that a black doctor once worked in Crystal River.

"It never dawned on me that there were black doctors, because all the doctors I saw were white," Freeman said.

Now, Freeman keeps that storytelling tradition alive.

Freeman believes it's important to preserve the history of Citrus County's black community.

"The children of Citrus County don't know of things that happened years ago. They don't know anything of their history in Citrus County, and I thought it should be told," Freeman said. "That's why I got involved. It's important to know who helped build this county."

In the 1990s, thanks to encouragement from her late



MATTHEW BECK/Chronicle

Mildred Freeman, shown with a newspaper clipping of her father, O.H. Hopkins, will display a collection of stories and photographs today at the program "The Way We Were" in The Old Courthouse Heritage Museum in Inverness.

Please see **FREEMAN**/Page 4A

# CELEBRATING

Continued from Page 1A

about 12," she said. During that time she stayed with an aunt.

"Then when Mama was pregnant with my brother Henry, she came to get me. My father was Joe Green. He was half Cherokee and he had that long hair."

Miss Eva said she remembers at age 9 walking to work down a railroad track, sweeping floors with a straw broom, cleaning people's houses, washing vegetables and greens, then walking back home.

She went to school at Miss Helen B. Cobb College, from "primer to more than seventh grade," but didn't finish. "I had to help Mama take care of children," she said, "wash on a rub board, using those old tubs made out of wooden barrels."

She remembers when cars came along, the Model T Ford. "When I started to drive, I didn't know how to back it up," she said. "So if I had to go to your house, you had to have a road all the way around it so I wouldn't have to go in reverse!"

And electricity, well, that was something else when it

came along.

"You didn't have to worry about lamps," she said. "When I married, they gave me six kerosene lamps."

Miss Eva married the first time at age 16, but a few weeks later she went home to her mother.

The second time was with Morris in 1932. They stayed married until his death in 1971.

"I didn't have children — I lost a baby with a miscarriage," she said. "But I sure raised a lot of white and black children. You go to your job, and I take care of your babies.

"Mama died when I was grown up and married and I raised my two sisters," she said. "I worked for C.M. Hunt back then, taking care of the house."

At her birthday party, Miss Eva's family had come from Tampa and Chiefland, as well as Crystal River, including her sisters Mildred and Helen.

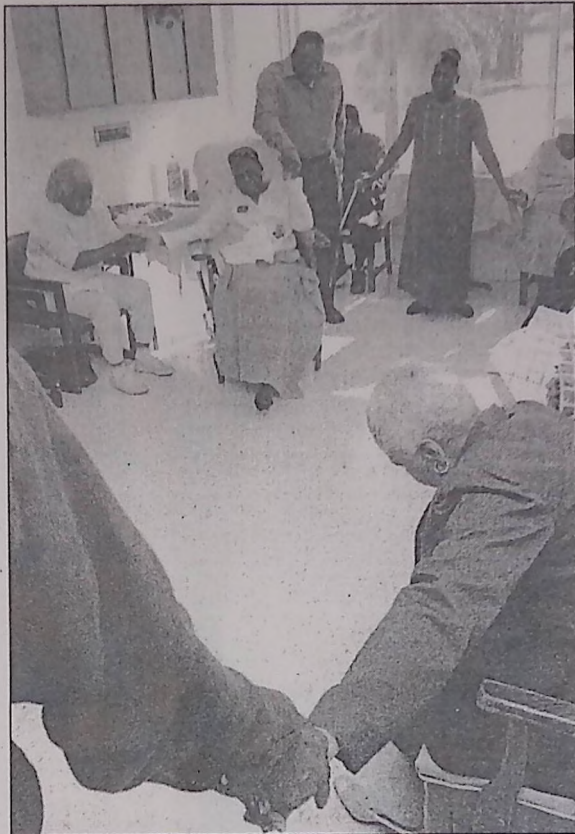
"She was a good mother to us after our mother died," Helen said.

"She always helped, always took care of the sick and people who needed help," said James Roy, one of those she helped raise. "She made the best grilled cheese sandwiches!"

The family was delighted to

“ Somebody called once about me being 105, but the way I figure it, I'm 101 — 100, at least. ”

'Miss Eva' Smith celebrated her birthday Tuesday.



DAVE SIGLER/Chronicle

Eva Mae Smith, 101, is a longtime Citrus County resident. The family prayed and sang together after the birthday wishes were offered to the family matriarch.

have this opportunity to celebrate their beloved "Miss Eva," especially since they missed her 100th birthday last year. (Someone was sick.)

"I always try to tell people about the Lord," Miss Eva said.

"I ask Jesus to bless me and make me more stronger so I can live," she said. "And I would tell people they should honor all people. Live right. Go to church — and raise your children right."

# Recollections of integration

2-27-05



Special to the Chronicle

The Booker T. Washington School Band was only one of the many offerings that the black communities of Citrus County shared during the school's heyday. One of the ironies of integration is that, as the focus of the school changed toward integration, many of the unique benefits the school offered to the black communities in this county evaporated like the morning mist.

## Integration had its downside for area's black community

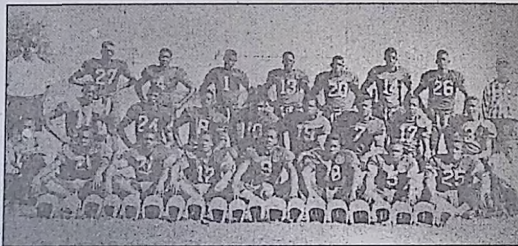
**Writer's note:** The Booker T. Washington School was not only a place for black children in this county to excel in academics, sports and extracurricular activities. Those who remember its role in connecting individual black communities within the county say that its transformation as an integrated school in 1968 helped splinter what was once a vibrant countywide community.

**STEVE ARTHUR**  
sarthur@chronicleonline.com  
*Chronicle*

**L**ifelong educators like Archie Dabney Jr. and Randolph Bellamy, who have fond memories of the Booker T. Washington School in Inverness, have mixed emotions about one aspect of the integration of black students into previously segregated public schools in Citrus County.

Dabney began teaching in this county in 1955, in the days when public facilities were segregated between two separate cultures existing side-by-side.

During his career, he became principal of Lecanto High School and Citrus Springs Elementary School and a guidance counselor at Crystal River High School, but he began his teaching career at the



Booker T. Washington School sports teams excelled in competition against other black schools in the state. From 1955 to 1968, the boys basketball team won the state championship one time and the district championship nine times. The boys football and track teams at the Booker T. Washington School won the state championships one time. Booker T. Washington School's baseball team came within one game of playing in the state championship game. The team was eliminated when losing by one run in the 12th inning.

Booker T. Washington School in Inverness, where Inverness Middle School now stands.

That school, he said, was a nexus for the black communities of South Dunnellon, Dunnellon, Holder, Hernando, Floral City and even Crystal River. Children from all those communities were bused to the Inverness school.

"We had a full band, a student

## Book records school's history

**Editor's note:** "The History of Inverness Middle School, 1949-1982" by Ronald L. Kirves has this to say about the Booker T. Washington School, compliments of Randolph Bellamy.

■■■

"In 1949 a new school opened on the property that is now known as Inverness Middle School. The name of the 1949 school was Inverness School, but in 1950 the name was changed to Booker T. Washington School. Inverness School and Booker T. Washington School were segregated schools for black students and had classes for students in grades one through twelve.

"The school facility in 1949 consisted of four portable buildings and one permanent restroom building. The four portable buildings came from four different locations and were heated by pot-bellied stoves.

"One building came from Floral City and was used as the cafeteria and band room. The building to the south of the Floral City Building came from Dunnellon ... the largest building on the school property. It

■ **WHAT:** African-American History Month, "a Month of Honor."

■ **WHO:** The Inverness Black History Club and city of Inverness.

■ **WHEN:** 4 to 6 p.m. today.

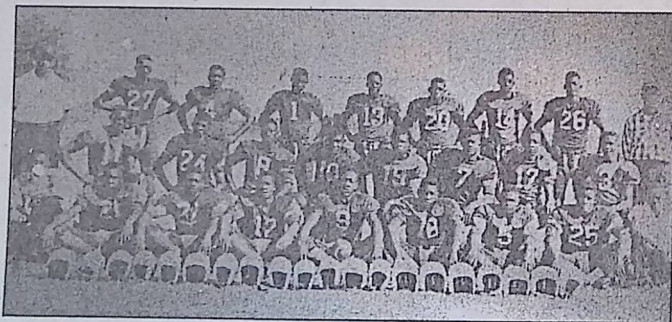
■ **WHERE:** St. James AME Church, Apopka Avenue and Dampier Street.

The Booker T. Washington School Band was only one of the many offerings that the black communities of Citrus County shared during the school's heyday. One of the ironies of integration is that, as the focus of the school changed toward integration, many of the unique benefits the school offered to the black communities in this county evaporated like the morning mist.

## Integration had its downside for area's black community

*Writer's note: The Booker T. Washington School was not only a place for black children in this county to excel in academics, sports and extracurricular activities. Those who remember its role in connecting individual black communities within the county say that its transformation as an integrated school in 1968 helped splinter what was once a vibrant countywide community.*

**STEVE ARTHUR**  
sarthur@chronicleonline.com  
*Chronicle*



Booker T. Washington School sports teams excelled in competition against other black schools in the state. From 1955 to 1968, the boys basketball team won the state championship one time and the district championship nine times. The boys football and track teams at the Booker T. Washington School won the state championships one time. Booker T. Washington School's baseball team came within one game of playing in the state championship game. The team was eliminated when losing by one run in the 12th inning.

Booker T. Washington School in Inverness, where Inverness Middle School now stands.

That school, he said, was a nexus for the black communities of South Dunnellon, Dunnellon, Holder, Hernando, Floral City and even Crystal River. Children from all those communities were bused to the Inverness school.

"We had a full band, a student

Please see RECOLLECTIONS/Page 4C

## Book records school's history

*Editor's note: "The History of Inverness Middle School, 1949-1982" by Ronald L. Kirves has this to say about the Booker T. Washington School, compliments of Randolph Bellamy.*

■ ■ ■

"In 1949 a new school opened on the property that is now known as Inverness Middle School. The name of the 1949 school was Inverness School, but in 1950 the name was changed to Booker T. Washington School. Inverness School and Booker T. Washington School were segregated schools for black students and had classes for students in grades one through twelve.

"The school facility in 1949 consisted of four portable buildings and one permanent restroom building. The four portable buildings came from four different locations and were heated by pot-bellied stoves.

"One building came from Floral City and was used as the cafeteria and band room. The building to the south of the Floral City Building came from Dunnellon ... the largest building on the school property. It

■ **WHAT:** African-American History Month, "a Month of Honor."

■ **WHO:** The Inverness Black History Club and city of Inverness.

■ **WHEN:** 4 to 6 p.m. today.

■ **WHERE:** St. James AME Church, Apopka Avenue and Dampier Street.

Please see BOOK/Page 4C

lifelong educators like Archie Dabney Jr. and Randolph Bellamy, who have fond memories of the Booker T. Washington School in Inverness, have mixed emotions about one aspect of the integration of black students into previously segregated public schools in Citrus County.

Dabney began teaching in this county in 1955, in the days when public facilities were segregated between two separate cultures existing side-by-side.

During his career, he became principal of Lecanto High School and Citrus Springs Elementary School and a guidance counselor at Crystal River High School, but he began his teaching career at the

# RECOLLECTIONS

Continued from Page 1C

council, even a full girls basketball team. We were state champs in football, basketball, boys and girls track — no, we couldn't play against the white schools, but if we could have, we would have beat them," he said. "We were good!"

But it wasn't just about the kids, he says.

"There used to be a time when everybody knew everybody in this county because the school was where everything centered," he said.

"We had a grapevine like you'd never believe," he said.

After integration, he said, the communities in each of those towns lost connection because they no longer had a school to pull them together.

This lack of cohesiveness, he said, has not only affected the small black communities in this county; our entire society now suffers

“ We never gave up on kids. ”

**Randolph Bellamy**  
longtime educator.

from an erosion of values that astounds him.

In 1968 the last class graduated from Booker T. Washington School. From August 1968 to January 1969, the school was named North Inverness Elementary School. Then, in January 1969, the school officially became Inverness Middle School.

Randolph Bellamy, who retired from the Citrus County school system after 34 years of teaching, is a former Booker T. Washington student who agrees with Dabney.

"The students all had a chance to participate in clubs and in the student council; they were able to learn valuable skills, leadership skills," he said.

"For some reason in the schools today minority children — African-American students — don't or won't participate the way they should.

"Kids believed they could do things. They had hope. We never gave up on kids, even the worst possible cases. Very few of our kids got in trouble. Few ever got locked up.

"Teachers and students, because they were from the same community, had a much closer relationship," he said.

"School was like an extension of home," he said. "When the kids got on the school ground, they had the same rules and discipline expected at their homes. It wasn't like it is now. Teachers didn't have to ask permission to discipline a child, and because of that they seldom had to use discipline," he added.

"Drugs? Nobody knew about drugs back then. Not like now."

The positive aspects of integration, he agrees, outweigh the negative aspects of segregation, but the good did not come without a heavy cost.

# BOOK

Continued from Page 1C

was used for assemblies, classrooms and on special occasions for parties and proms."

"The two-roomed Hernando Building was used for elementary students.

"The Inverness Building had three rooms and came from the area near 'Cooter Pond' (later called Sunset Lake). The high school students had classes in the Inverness Building and some of the students, that first year, called it 'Cooter Pond High School.'

"The original basketball court was built by students and teachers. They put the black-top down section by section. In the 1950s, metal walls were

built around the basketball court and heaters were put in the corners so the basketball games could be played in cold weather.

"Coaches Alfred Taylor, Ernest K. Johnson and Archie Dabney helped to produce some outstanding individuals and teams. Many of the players went on to play college sports, and some played professionally.

"From 1955 to 1968, the boys' basketball team won the state championship one time and the district championship nine times. The boys' football and track teams also won the state championships one time. Booker T. Washington baseball team came within one game of playing in the state championship game. They were eliminated when they lost by one run in the 12th inning."

## Descriptive or derogatory? Island's name in doubt

■ Citrus County planned to change the name of little-known Negro Island. But the feds want proof that the name is offensive.

By CATHERINE E. SHOICHET  
Times Staff Writer

CRYSTAL RIVER — The state thought Negro Island needed a new, less offensive name.

Citrus County complied.

The federal government? It's not sure what to do.

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names says it needs evidence that the name is derogatory and offen-

sive, "particularly to the black residents of Citrus County," before it would sanction a name change.

Negro Island is just off the Citrus coast in the Gulf of Mexico, southwest of the Progress Energy power plant.

The Citrus County Commission voted unanimously last year to change the name to Horseshoe Island.

The move came after Gov. Bush signed a law requiring local governments to remove racial, ethnic or religious slurs from Florida's maps.

Commissioners thought it was a done deal. So did state Sen. Steven Geller, D-Hallandale Beach, who sponsored the legislation.



"I don't know who this board is, but . . . it is inappropriate for them to overrule the express finding of the Florida Legislature," he said Wednesday. "I think that they

need to get some phone calls from some African-American elected officials, and I'm quite sure that they'll get them shortly, and I think they'll get their heads handed to them, and I think deservedly so."

In a letter to state officials, Roger L. Payne, the board's executive secretary, said the board also noted "that the word 'Negro' is Spanish for black and that perhaps the name is simply descriptive and a reflection of the early Spanish influence on that portion of the Florida coast."

Citrus officials said the name has never been a local issue.

"It was a state issue the way I remember it. We were told we had to change it," County Commission

Chairman Gary Bartell said.

"A lot of people didn't even know it had a name," said Gary Maidhof, the county's director of development services.

Even people who know the island's name haven't been able to pinpoint its history.

This week, Maidhof sent a copy of Payne's letter to County Administrator Richard Wesch, saying he was "hesitant" to expend more county resources without a local request for the change.

Wesch could not be reached for comment Wednesday. Maidhof said he had not yet received a reply to his memo.

"I don't intend to proceed any further unless I get direction to do

so," he said.

When the county made the change last year, local African-American leaders were silent on the issue.

Bishop Leonard Smith, pastor of the Fountain of Life Restoration Ministries, said Wednesday that he had lived in Crystal River all his life and never heard of the island.

He said he wasn't aware that commissioners had voted to change the island's name and declined to comment on whether a name change was appropriate. But he noted that the word "negro" is also part of the name of the United Negro College Fund.

"I don't view the term as derogatory or offensive," he said.

2-2-02

# Black History Month starts

## *Museum will display Tuskegee Airmen exhibition*

*Special to the Chronicle*

INVERNESS — In addition to five special programs in celebration of Black History Month, the Old Courthouse Heritage Museum presents the Tuskegee Airmen exhibition until March 31.

The programs are free and open to the public and will take place in the Old Courthouse Heritage Museum, second floor courtroom at the Old Citrus County Courthouse, One Courthouse Square, Inverness.

The public may verify times and dates by calling the Old Courthouse Heritage Museum at 341-6428 or 341-6429.

The Tuskegee Airmen exhibition portrays the story of courageous young

African-Americans who overcame obstacles at home and abroad to serve in the United States Army Air Corps during World War II. Faced with segregation and the belief that blacks were incapable of mastering the intricacies of flight, the participants in the Tuskegee Experience proved their detractors wrong. The contributions of not only the pilots, but also the mechanics, armorers, band members, nurses and others are presented.

Artwork by Harold Cade Ellison and Charles Lawrence King will be on display throughout the month of February.

The Old Courthouse Heritage Museum has worked with several individuals and organizations to bring a six-week period of programming about local black history to the museum and to the community. Working with Alida Langley and Lucille Tompkins, a series of programs have been developed that recognize the positive contributions made by people of African descent and the trials and tribulations experienced by the black community.

The Museum is pleased to recognize Florida Power Corporation as its proud

sponsor in bringing this exhibition and programming to Citrus County and west central Florida.

**Noon to 1 p.m. Saturday, Black History Month**

Citrus County Black History Discussion: "The Way We Were." Participants are encouraged to bring artifacts, pictures and books to share in this discussion. Historical Citrus County photos can be copied for the county photographic archives for future generations.

**Noon to 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 9**

Citrus County — The Next Generation. Getting it right from the youth of Citrus County. Moderator for this program is Teretta Charles.

**Noon to 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 16**

Come and join in a special program sponsored by the Booker T. Washington Alumni Association of Inverness. Guest speaker is author/consultant for the Rosewood movie, Arnett T. Doctor. Also included in the programming will be gospel singing by Citrus County gospel choirs.

Also on display in the museum will be authentic wooden carvings and masks

used in African tribal ceremonies from the collection of Jack Bregger.

**Noon to 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 23**

The Rev. Emily Gillespie will be the moderator for a program titled the Black Military Experience, "America's Old Wars."

**Noon to 1 p.m. Saturday, March 9**

The final program for Black History Month will be the Black Knights — The Tuskegee Airmen, presented by Lynn Homan and Thomas Reilly who, while conducting research for the exhibition currently on display at the Old Courthouse Heritage Museum, interviewed 10 Tuskegee Airmen.

Since doing so, three have died. Come hear what these courageous men shared with them.

This program is sponsored in part by the Florida Humanities Council.

Organizations interested in assisting with or participating in this celebration are encouraged to call local organizers.

For local information, call Kathy Turner Thompson at the Old Courthouse Heritage Museum, 341-6436, Alida Langley at 726-1989 or Lucille Tompkins at 489-6355.

# Funeral for husband of Dunnellon civic leader is today

By Jim Hunter  
Staff writer

The husband of a Dunnellon community leader died last weekend, and a family friend said the community is feeling the loss.

"His passing is a loss to our communities, both Citrus and Marion," Mary Pannell said on the recent death of Reuben Johnson.

Johnson, 86, was the husband of Annie W. Johnson, the well-known former teacher and civic leader in Dunnellon for whom the Annie W. Johnson Center is named.

Pannell, who serves on the center's board of directors with Annie Johnson, said this week many in the community were shocked and saddened by the loss.



**Reuben Johnson was the husband of Annie W. Johnson, a well-known former teacher and civic leader.**

"He was very simply a very, very fine person, a wonderful man," Pannell said. "Annie is absolutely devastated. I feel very deeply for her."

Johnson died Saturday, Jan. 9 at Seven Rivers Community Hospital. His funeral is today at 11 a.m. at the First Bethel Missionary Baptist Church in Dunnellon.

He will be buried after the services at the Dunnellon Community Cemetery.

Johnson was an Army veteran and member of the VFW.

He was a retired insurance agent for Central Life Insurance and was also a school bus driver for Citrus County.

"The children loved him when he was a bus driver," Pannell said. "We have lost a wonderful person,

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*Johnson was an Army veteran and member of the VFW.*

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*He was a retired insurance agent for Central Life Insurance*

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*and was also a school bus driver*

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*for Citrus County.*

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a real grandfatherly kind of guy."

Pannell said of what she described as his outstanding character, "He did it all the right way."

Johnson was born in Tallahassee and came to Dunnellon 60 years ago.

He was a trustee and member of the Finance Committee at First Bethel Missionary Baptist Church in Dunnellon.

"He was rather low key," Pannell said but added that he was always very supportive of his wife's civic work, which had been so important to the community.

"Annie's done a lot for this community. We could never give back to Annie what she's given to us," Pannell said.

In addition to his wife, Johnson was survived by two brothers and two sisters, all of Tallahassee; daughters, Florece Dixon and Mary Ann Green, both of Hernando; and son, Reuben Green of Dunnellon, as well as eight grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren and five great-great-grandchildren.

O.B. Samuel Funeral Home in Williston is taking care of arrangements.

1/6/99

## Museum says thanks

Members of The Old Courthouse Heritage Museum and the Citrus County Historical Society were privileged to act as hosts for the February celebration of Black History Month. The second floor of the restored old courtroom was the perfect place for the presentation of five most-interesting programs.

The last presentation highlighted the two-month "Tuskegee Airmen" exhibition in the first floor rotating gallery, so generously sponsored by Florida Power. Each Saturday event was well attended and brought to the Old Courthouse a fine new dimension to its long and distinguished history, for which we the members are grateful. A number of local residents need to be cited for their outstanding work of organization and presentation.

Our thanks to Lucille Tompkins, Alida Langley and Sherry Dean who led the way; the Mount Carmel Chorus for providing inspiring gospel music; the Booker T. Washington Alumni Association for their sponsorship of speaker Arnett T. Doctor; and to Mr. Doctor himself for a fine presentation. Rounding out the programming were moderators Teretta Charles and Emily Gillespie. Mildred Freeman provided an enlightening talk. Shalay Jackson of Citrus High School and Frederick Simmons and April Simpson, both of Lecanto High School, provided insight into growing up in Citrus County at the youth conference event. Congresswoman Karen Thurman and her staff recognized community leaders by presenting certificates of appreciation to more than 40 individuals. Patrick Thomas of Thurman's office assisted. Artwork by Charles King and Harold Ellison was on display, as well as Jack Bregger's display of African American ceremonial masks. There were many more individuals too numerous to name here, but a big thanks for all of their contributions.

Thanks also to the *Citrus County Chronicle* and the *St. Petersburg Times* who covered the events. The *Chronicle* kindly delivered chairs on loan from Citrus County Parks and Recreation; thanks to the opening exhibit committee for all the great food and patriotic decorations.

Finally, on behalf of the Citrus County Historical Society Board of Directors and the Board of Trustees of the museum, we were so very pleased to join with the local African American community in celebrating their yearly event, which hopefully will be followed up as an ongoing annual event.

We sincerely invite members of the local African American community to join us as members in our ongoing mission of preserving and interpreting the wonderful history of our home, right here in Citrus County.

Kathy Turner Thompson  
director of museum services

# Museum hosts special exhibit

## *Black residents honored*

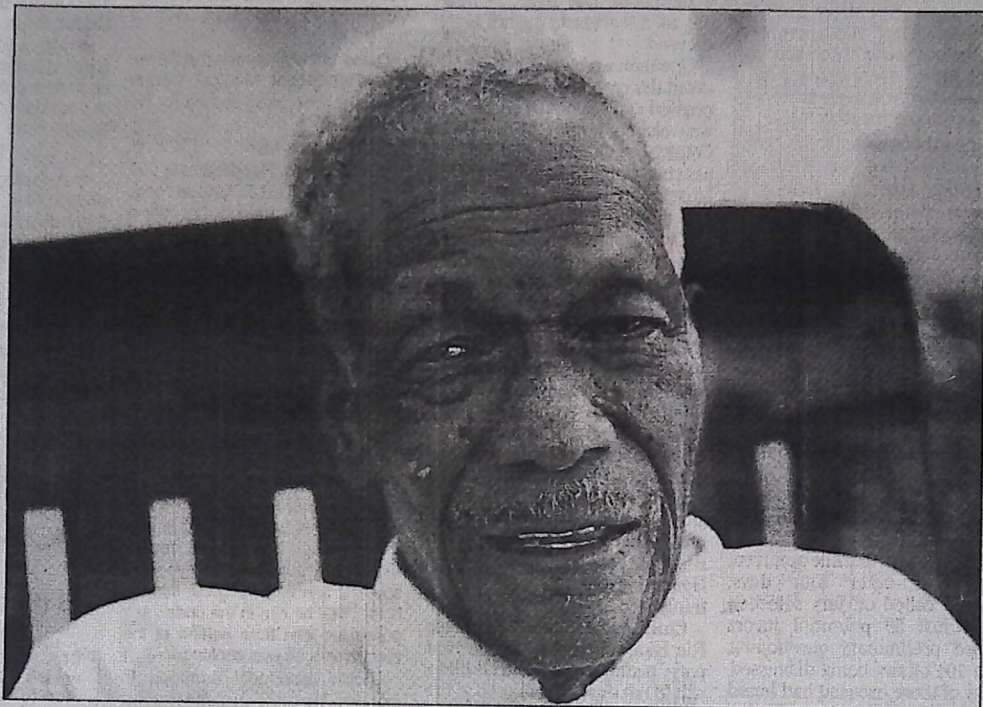
*Special to the Chronicle*

"A Tribute to Our Black Citizens" is the name of the new exhibit at the Coastal Heritage Museum in Crystal River. This exhibit is to honor the men and women who have made and are making valuable contributions to our community. They have achieved success through hard work, perseverance and dedication, often against great odds.

In this exhibit, which will run through mid-March, only a few are named, but all are honored. The scrapbook is filled with pictures and stories of our black residents, their lives and deeds.

Of special interest in this display is some of the work of Helen Matchatt Rushing of Chicago. Helen lived in Crystal River in the 1930s and saw her world through the eyes of a poet. She has generously shared her stories, recipes, and poems which depict her life in Crystal River. She has also written a very touching poem about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The Coastal Heritage Museum is in the Old City Hall in the historic district of Crystal River. Hours are 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. For information call 795-1755.

The museum is under the direction of the Crystal River Heritage Council and the Citrus County Historical Society.



DAVE SIGLER/Chronicle file photo

The Rev. Leroy Bellamy, who died more than two years ago, will be remembered Saturday during a ceremony at the Old Courthouse in Inverness as a part of Black History Month activities. The remembrance will be held from 10 to 11:30 a.m. in the upstairs courtroom.

# The face of compassion

*Saturday ceremony to honor the Rev. Leroy Bellamy*

**NANCY KENNEDY**  
nkennedy@  
chronicleonline.com  
*Chronicle*

Although the Rev. Leroy Bellamy died almost two and a half years ago, his legacy lives on in Citrus County. He was the founding pastor of Grace Temple Church of the Living God in Floral City.

When he was alive, Bellamy liked to tell the story of the time he went to the bank to see about getting money to build his church. He figured \$75,000 would be enough.

After he laid out his plans, the banker agreed to lend him the money.

That's when Bellamy looked at him and laughed. "Lend me the money? I'm an old man!" Bellamy said. "How am I goin' to pay it back?"

After that, the octogenarian minister turned to the community for help, and the community came through for him with donations and the old preacher built his church.

On Saturday, as part of Black History Month, the public is invited to honor the memory of the man who made an impact on Citrus County at The Rev. Leroy Bellamy Remembrance, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Saturday in the old courtroom in the Old Courthouse in Inverness.

The event is sponsored by the *Chronicle* and the Citrus County Historical Society.

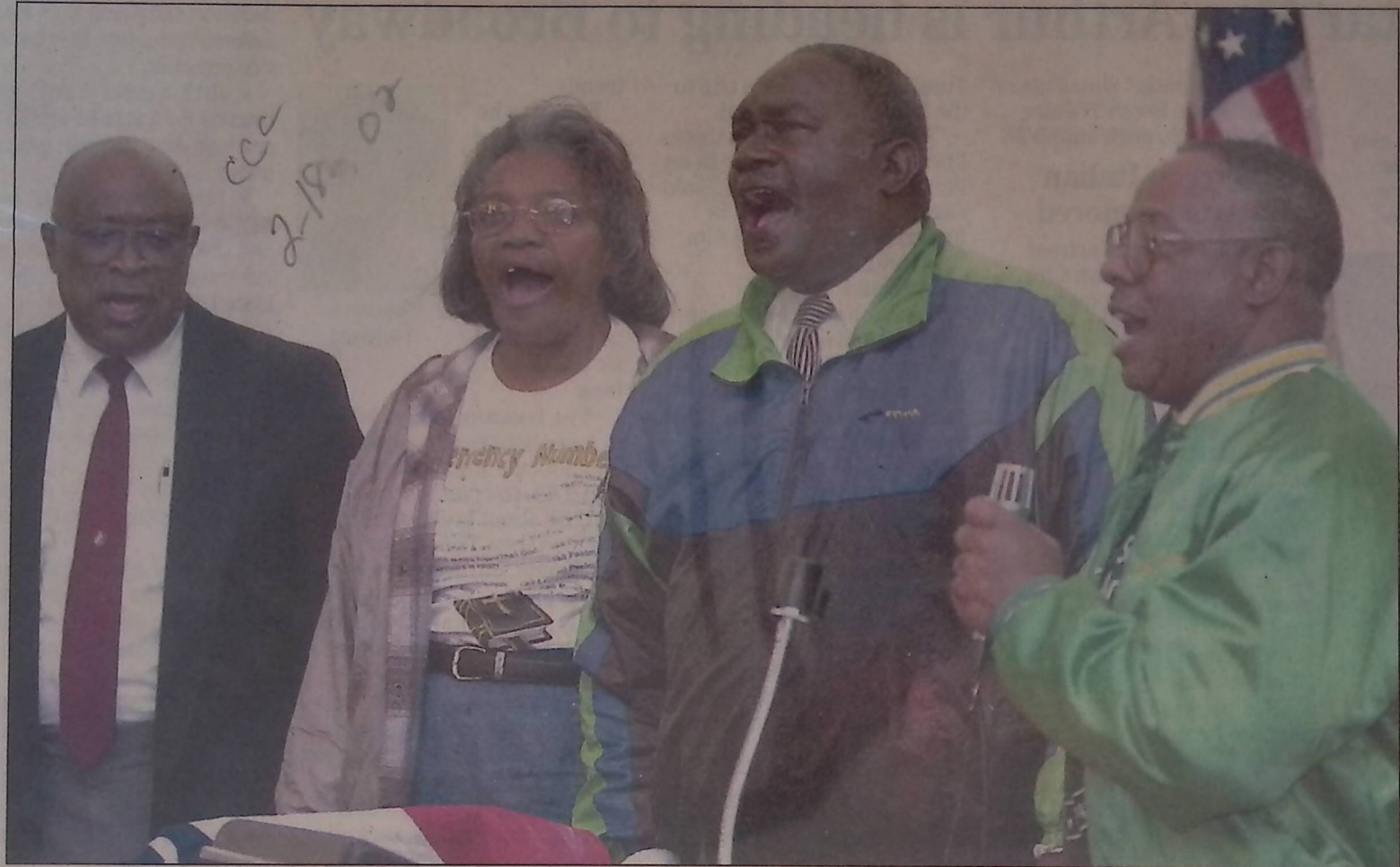
Guest speakers include the Rev. Babb Adams, longtime friend of Bellamy, as well as Bellamy's children and grandchildren, who will share stories and memories of their beloved patriarch.

The church's choir will sing a selection of Bellamy's favorite hymns and light refreshments will be served after the program.

"He was a fine man — a good man and a completely unique individual," said Mary Sue Rife, a board member of the Citrus County Historical Society. "He left a legacy of compassion and love and was a big part of the history of Citrus County. We want to be sure to honor and remember him once a year."

In November 2003, Bellamy told the *Chronicle* that he believed people from all over will one day stand and stare, amazed at what God's going to do.

"I know one thing," he said, "whatever God intends, big or small, that's what's going to be. And it's going to happen through Grace Temple. I think it will."



The "Ovations" performed during the Black History Celebration on Saturday at the Historic Citrus County Courthouse. Singing from left are William Robertson, Lettie Smith, the Rev. Davis Houston and the Rev. Robert Simmons.

DAVE SIGLER/Chronicle

CCC 2-19-02

**Oscar 'O.H.'**  
**Hopkins Jr., 83**  
CRYSTAL RIVER

Oscar "O.H." Hopkins Jr., 83, died Friday, April 24, 2004, at Bayfront Medical Center in St. Petersburg.

He was born in Crystal River and lived in St. Petersburg for the past three years.

Mr. Hopkins was a self-employed logging contractor in Citrus County for 60 years. He began working as a logger at 13, using oxen to pull the harvested timber.

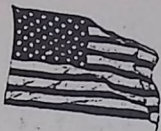
He was a World War II veteran serving with the 827th Tank Destroyer Unit in Camp Hood, Texas.

He was a member of Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Hazel Hopkins, and his parents, Oscar Hopkins Sr. and Pinkey M. Hopkins.



**Oscar Hopkins**



4-28-04

**ADDORT**

# 100-year-old home burns in Inverness

By Mike Wright

Staff writer

A wooden house in an old section of downtown Inverness was gutted Saturday night by a fire that could be seen for miles around.

Willie Horton, 48, said the house she owns at 208 E. Dampier St. was at least 100 years old and had once been a school that was attended by her 90-year-old mother.

"I was born in this house," Mrs. Horton said sadly as she stood with friends outside while firefighters battled the blaze. "My mama went to school in this house. It was a four-room schoolhouse. When my parents wanted to move here, they bought it and turned it into their home. They paid \$200 for it."

Mrs. Horton was grocery shopping when the fire broke out.

Her son, John Horton Jr. and a 4-year-old nephew were in the front living room when her husband John Sr. came into the house and told them that a fire had started in the rear of the home, said Lt. Ken Clamer of the Citrus County Fire Prevention Division.

They escaped unharmed, then tried to douse the flames with a garden hose, Clamer said.

The black wooden frame was still intact as the fire died out, but the inside of the house was gutted. Clamer said the house was insured but he couldn't give an estimate of its financial worth.

Mrs. Horton's daughter, Lorraine Horton, 19, said the inside of the house had recently been remodeled and the family had not finished paying for the work.

Lorraine Horton said she was next door visiting friends when she saw sparks coming from the rear of the house, near the fuse box.

Clamer said he doesn't know how the fire started. The investigation is continuing.