

The Historical Quarterly of The St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.

Vol. 36 No. 2

Spring 2018



SLHS members and guests line up for barbecue at the Adams Ranch

SLHS celebrates 65 years with festive Adams Ranch event

by Ted Burrows

The St. Lucie Historical Society's Pioneer Festival March 3 drew a crowd estimated at 200 or more to the Adams Ranch west of Fort Pierce. The event celebrated the 65th anniversary of the society's founding. Attendees enjoyed history talks by local experts, entertainment and a barbecue lunch. The weather was sunny and mild.

Inside the rustic museum and meeting hall, host **Mike Adams** discussed the ranch's development through several generations of family members, particularly noting the work of his late father, **Alto "Bud" Adams Jr.** Local historian and author Rick Crary explained some of the encounters between Indian leader **Coacoochee** and the young army **Lt. William Tecumseh Sherman** during the Second Seminole War. Also, longtime historical society leader and researcher **Lucille Rights** recounted the life of Seminole matriarch **Polly Parker**, who lived much of her life in St. Lucie County.

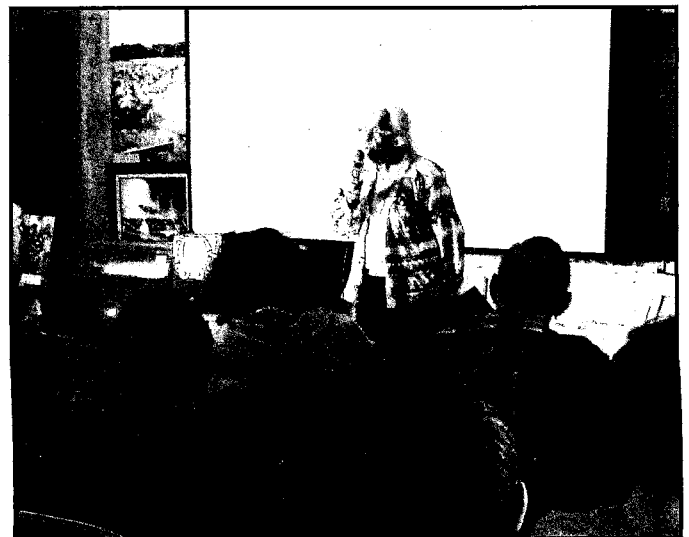
Entertainment was provided by the Blue Cypress Bluegrass Band and the Wild Roses line dance team. The barbecue was catered by Carter's Grocery.

The St. Lucie Historical Society is now well into its 65th year of service, dating from its first official meeting Nov. 18, 1952. It grew out of the St. Lucie County Library Association (now known as the Friends of the Library) which that year formed

a historical committee comprising **E.C. Collins, Jo Humphries, Verne Kretchmer, Ora S. Burney, L.W. Halbe, W.I. Fee, Helen DeFriest, Clare Register, Emma Saunders, Pearl Chew, Dewey Crawford** and **Betty Summerlin**. This group did the initial planning.

At the organizational meeting of the Historical Society Nov. 18, dues were set at \$1 per year and records indicate that **Will Fee** was the first to pay.

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*Lucille Rights tells about
Seminole Polly Parker*

Welcome - New Members

Sue Favorite, Membership Chairman

Sonja Gates • Sandra VanVorst • Arvilla Boyd • Jean Spivey
 Maureen & Gaylon Ware • Tom Bailey • Vickie Cowles
 Katie Enns • Frances Harcus • Joe King
 Grace & Greg Mazzatta • Anne & Fred Kern
 Carolyn Armstrong • Helen Sebeny
 Kim & Patti Heffelfinger • Sid Joiner

Contributions

Memorials

Catherine Browning Memorial

Mr. & Mrs. Terry Howard • Anne Burford • Pam Correll
 Cindy & Derek Rohn • Charlene Koblegard
 Robert & Peggy Allen • Marsha Mark
 Mr. & Mrs. Floyd Henschel • Ronald Lyman
 Mose Sanders • Nancy Bennett • Debbie Billis
 Kathleen Kirshtein • Katrina Johnson • Linda Greary

Carl Sisson

Mose Sanders

Matthew Schneider Memorial

Robert Lloyd

General Fund

Jack & Sally Chapman • FPHS Class of 1946

The Society is a Florida Corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in Section 501(c)(3). The Society is also classified as a public charity under 509(a)(2).

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Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of The St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc., P O Box 578, Fort Pierce, Fl. 34954, Telephone (772) 461-8020, stluciehistoricalsociety.net

The President's Message

by Nancy Bennett

We have had a great winter season starting with a very successful History Festival in downtown Fort Pierce in January. We had a booth in the old St. Lucie County Bank building. A lot of old and new friends stopped by and visited. **Roger Miller, O.C. Peterson** and **Robyn Hutchinson** helped out with a booth outside. Lucille Rights and her daughter **Roberta Murray** also worked a booth for the festival. **Rick Modine** was there with his cow camp exhibit and **Terry Howard** had an Authors' Alley table with his books.

We all had a great Pioneer Festival out at the Adams Ranch on March 3. Speakers, music, dancers and great food contributed to a wonderful anniversary celebration. I want to thank all of the volunteers who helped out: **Roger Miller, Robyn Hutchinson, Sue Favorite, Jean Ellen Wilson, Deborah Billis, Richard Coffman, Ernest Merrill, O. C. Peterson, Katy Purcell, Norma McGuire** and **Terry Howard**.

If you missed the St. Lucie County Fair, we had a great time meeting people and introducing them to the museum. I want to thank all of the volunteers who manned the society's booth at the fair from February 23 through March 3. They are listed below:

Danny Bell, Jon Bell, Pat Brewer, Ted Burrows, Marianne Coffman, Richard Coffman, Jamie Colborn, Simone D'Addario, Bob Davis, Fred Ebner, Jack Favorite, Sue Favorite, JoAnne Holman, Martha Hornsby, Robyn Hutchinson, Jim Jacques, Bonnie Ludlum, Ellen Lynch, Deb McGraw, Roger Miller, Katy Purcell, Mose Sanders, Sandra Sanders, Dave Schmidt, Joanne Schmidt, Mary Schrader, Betty Jo Starke, Todd Strasser, Maggie Summerlin, Beverly Traub, Mary Wilks and Sally Williams.

Again, we send a big thank-you from the entire Historical Society and me. We couldn't do it without you. Δ

Florida Fact

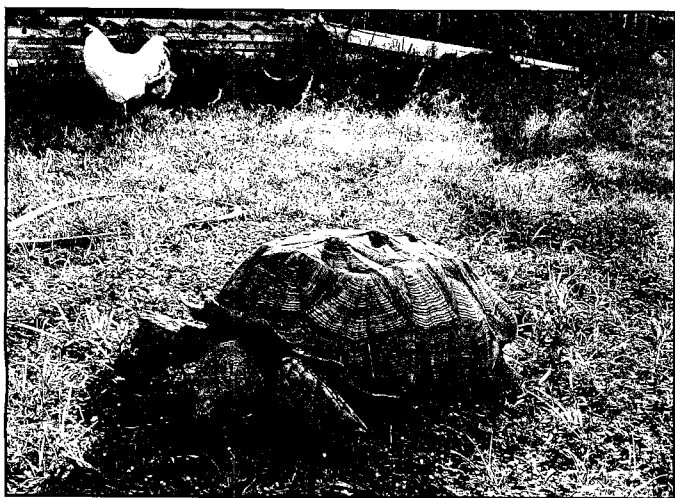
Cape Canaveral is the oldest continuously used place name on the American Atlantic Coast. (*The Florida Handbook*)

Spot, the wandering tortoise, enjoys an adventure

By Terry Howard

Everyone has thought of leaving home on a spur-of-the-moment adventure at some time in their life. Few ever really do. Spot did.

Spot is a 19-year-old 70-pound male African Sulcatta Tortoise that lives in an idyllic spacious setting with loving friends and the chickens. He resides in the large backyard of John Wesley Davis Jr. and Katie Davis, along with their children Isabelle, 8, and Paisley, 4, on Old Dixie Highway, Fort Pierce. Spot's favorite toy is a purple bowling ball that he



Spot and his grazing friends.

pushes around the yard for fun. He grazes on grass and an occasional head of romaine lettuce fed to him as a special treat by the family. Katie Davis says that when she leaves the house with a handful of lettuce Spot comes bounding, tortoiselike, from wherever he is grazing with the chickens or playing with his bowling ball. He even comes when he hears her voice as she talks on her phone outside the house. The chickens follow Spot everywhere and are his loyal friends and companions. He has a wonderful life.

Spot recently left home, to the consternation of his family. He pushed through the backyard fence and was off to see the world.

According to Winnie Burns, of Creature Safe Place in Fort Pierce, tortoises are very strong and if they can see outside their enclosure they will dig or push or do whatever they can to get through and be free. Ms. Burns says they are nomadic by nature and wander the world in search of food and a mate.

Spot pushed until he broke the wire mesh on

the Davis fence and skedaddled. The family was heartbroken.

Several days later, Spot was seen two miles from home, wandering around the St. Lucie County International Airport. In order to traverse the two miles from his home, Spot had to cross busy U.S. 1, a perilous feat even for a human pedestrian, then cross a creek. Land tortoises do not like entering water, so Spot must have somehow located the only small bridge that crosses this creek, and then pushed or dug through the airport's guarded chain-link security fence. Airport employees spotted Spot and notified St. Lucie County Animal Control, who captured the intruder and kindly turned him over to Winnie Burns at Creature Safe Space.

Ms. Burns could tell from Spot's healthy appearance that he was from a caring home. She contacted the Davis family after learning through social media that they had lost a tortoise. Spot soon was delivered safely home. The Davis family is happy to have their beloved pet back. The Davises have added a plywood barrier to the bottom of their fence so Spot can't see out. This should stifle his wander lust.

After telling the story of Spot's daring escape at her daughter's school, Mrs. Davis and the family



received from another parent a much smaller, 5-year-old African Sulcatta Tortoise to keep Spot company. The new tortoise is called Dasher. All's well that ends well. Now Spot can always cherish the memory of his excellent adventure as he grazes away in the Florida sunshine at his happy home. And, says Mrs. Davis, the chickens are especially happy to be reunited with their old grazing pal. Δ

Remembrances

William R. Dannahower

William R. Dannahower, D.D.S., who served numerous terms as Fort Pierce mayor and city commissioner, and was a tireless advocate for downtown revitalization, died Feb. 8 at age 90. He practiced dentistry in St. Lucie County for 30 years.

His record of community involvement is extensive and distinguished: Chamber of Commerce, Salvation Army, Boys and Girls Club, Work Force Development Board, Sunrise Theatre, Mustard Seed and Children's Medical Services Network, to mention only a few of the organizations and causes he supported. Dr. Dannahower also spent years advocating for a federal courthouse in Fort Pierce and lived long enough to see his efforts succeed.

He was born in 1927 on a St. Lucie County citrus grove and, apart from Army service during World War Two and dental studies in Kansas City, he was a lifelong resident of this area.

Harold S. Williams, Senior

Longtime local citrusman and St. Lucie Historical Society member **Harold S. Williams, Senior**, died Feb. 2 at age 94. He was a lifetime resident of St. Lucie County, was graduated from Bolles Military Academy and served in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War Two.

Upon returning to this area, Mr. Williams managed his family's citrus grove, and as a licensed pilot, also operated an agricultural crop-dusting business.

His late wife, Ada Coats Williams, was recognized widely for her research and writings on this area's history. She was a president of the St. Lucie Historical Society and of the statewide Florida Historical Society.

Gail McManus Svec

Gail McManus Svec, the first "theme girl" of St. Lucie County's long-running Sandy Shoes Festival, died Feb. 4 at age 78. A lifelong local resident, she was an active volunteer in community projects.

Growing up in Fort Pierce, the 17-year-old Gail McManus suggested the name Sandy Shoes as the title for the festival when it began in 1957, based on the popular saying that once you get sand in your shoes, you're sure to come back to Florida. She was the first among dozens of young women who reigned over the annual festival through the years. Δ

Historic Martin County site added to national register

Martin County's Historic Golden Gate Building recently was added to the National Register of Historic Places. The distinctive structure beside Old Dixie Highway south of Stuart has been a familiar sight to Treasure Coast residents for nearly a century. The structure, built in 1925 during the great Florida land boom, at first contained offices of the Golden Gate Development Co.

Later it served as a post office, and in the 1950s was briefly the residence of prominent landscape artist James Hutchinson and his family. According to county records, the building gradually deteriorated and was condemned in 1989 but not demolished. Martin County acquired it in 2002 and, following a lengthy restoration project, the building was added to the national register in 2017.

It is open again, renamed the Golden Gate Center for Enrichment. A local nonprofit organization offers a variety of social services and cultural activities there. Δ

Feedback

Here are some recent visitors' comments about the St. Lucie County Regional History Center, compiled from the guest book:

Mary-Lou Yuskanich, Asbury, N.J.: "Great – interesting facts to understand the area more."

Laurent and Barbara Caissie, Rogersville, N.B., Canada: "Excellent!"

Erica Pulvermacher, Fort Riley, Kan.: "Much prettier than Kansas."

Abby Anderson, Crooksville, Ohio: "Wonderful and very interesting – and great bathroom."

Carl and Evelyn Johnson, Traverse City, Mich.: "Absolutely fantastic! Great presentation!"

Leuka Kupkova, Prague, Czech Republic: "Thank you!"

Patricia Collins, Port St. Lucie: "Wonderful – could spend a few days to take it all in!"

David and Laura Bales, The Villages: "Thanks, everyone, for your hospitality."

Peter and Hilary Jenkins, London, England: "Excellent!" Δ

SLHS celebrates *continued from page 1*

There were 61 original members; at least two, **Bonnie Fee Ludlum** and **O.C. Peterson**, remain active in the society today.

Omitting the word “county” from the society’s name was deliberate. Two original members, L.B. Halbe and Dewey Crawford, both attorneys, suggested that it would be limiting to call it the “St. Lucie County Historical Society” because an area-wide organization might eventually attract more members. The society received a state charter in 1955 and adopted new bylaws in 1956. Early meetings were held at the county’s library in Fort Pierce.

Through the years the society collected historical artifacts and documents, storing them at various temporary locations and exhibiting some of them in the Arcade Building. The present museum, at 414 Seaway Drive, was opened Sept. 17, 1968. The building had been the naval base motor pool facility during World War Two, then later St. Lucie County’s mosquito control center. Records indicate the museum’s first paid director was **Addie Holmes Emerson**, at \$100 per month.

Volunteers always have been important. Historical Society members have served in a variety of ways, supervised by a small paid staff of county employees. This continued until May 2010, when financial difficulties forced the county to lay off the paid staff and close the museum. By Dec. 5, 2010, the museum reopened after the Historical Society offered to staff the museum entirely with volunteers as docents and tour guides. Δ

Tell us your Florida memories!

SLHS members are welcome to submit articles for our “Florida memories” series in the Quarterly. Tell us about exciting or unusual things you remember about living in Florida. Maximum 600 words. Articles may be condensed; not all can be printed. For more information, or to submit via email attachment, send to tburrows42@att.net. Please include your phone number and/or email address in case we have questions. Δ

Florida Facts

In 1821 Gen. Andrew Jackson, military governor, created Florida’s first two counties, making the Suwannee River the dividing line. Everything to the west became Escambia County; everything east became St. Johns County. One year later the Territorial Council added two more counties – Jackson and Duval. Florida now has 67 counties. (*The Florida Handbook*)



Mapmaking oddity: An 1838 Florida map shows Dade County positioned near the Gulf coast between Alachua and Hillsborough counties. Lawmakers had created Dade County in 1836 in memory of Army Maj. Francis L. Dade, who died with most of his men in an 1835 battle with the Seminoles. The mapmaker probably assumed the new county would be around Bushnell where the battle took place. (*The Florida Handbook*)



Florida’s length, from the St. Mary’s River southward to Key West, is 447 miles. The state’s width, from the Atlantic Ocean westward to the Perdido River, is 361 miles. (*The Florida Handbook*)



Oldest permanent settlement in Florida and the entire nation is St. Augustine, founded by the Spanish in 1565 – decades before the English colonies at Jamestown (1607) or Plymouth (1620). (*The Florida Handbook*)



The United States acquired Florida Territory from Spain by treaty in 1821. Florida was admitted to the Union as the 27th state on March 3, 1845. (*The Florida Handbook*)

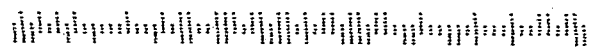


Florida’s first European colony was founded by the Spanish at Pensacola in 1559, but it was abandoned two years later. (*The Florida Handbook*)

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Membership Application
St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.

Please join us in preserving our local heritage for future generations.

Name _____
Spouse's Name _____
Names and ages of minor children: _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____
Home Telephone _____
Business Telephone _____
Cell _____
Email _____

I/We wish to join the Society at the level indicated below.
Membership is from September through August.
 New Renewal Individual (\$20.00)
 Family (\$25.00) Business (\$50.00)

Please make checks payable to:
St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc
P O Box 578
Fort Pierce, Florida 34954-0578
For Info telephone: (772) 461-8020

General Meeting are held at:
The Elks Lodge
635 South 5th Street
Fort Pierce, Florida 34950

Society General Meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of the month, from September through May. A meal is provided before the meeting at the price of \$12.00 per person. Reservations must be made for these meals no later than two days in advance of the meeting. To make reservations telephone (772) 461-8020 and leave a message. Reservations and your RSVP information by e-mail to: dinner@stluciehistoricalsociety.net. Dinner begins at 5:30 P.M. and the General Meeting Starts at 6:00 P.M.

Volunteers are Needed

If you have 3 1/2 hours that you can give once a week either in the morning or afternoon, please consider volunteering at the Museum.

Admission, to the museum, for St. Lucie Historical Society members is **FREE**. So come and take a tour.

The latest exhibit is St Lucie Families-Crafters of Local History.

The Pineapple Patch Gift Shop has a large selection of books of Florida historical value, cards, handmade Seminole Indian dolls, and baubles made by volunteers.

Museum Hours:
Wednesday-Saturday, 10 am to 4 pm. Sun^d 11-4 pm