

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

Vol. 37 No. 1

Winter 2019

St. Lucie Historical Society salutes O.C. Peterson at 100



More than 100 admirers surrounded O.C. Peterson at his birthday party.

More than 100 friends packed the Fort Pierce Elks Lodge meeting room Nov. 15 to congratulate **O.C. "Pete" Peterson** on reaching the century mark. The St. Lucie Historical Society's monthly dinner was a birthday party honoring one of this area's most admired residents.

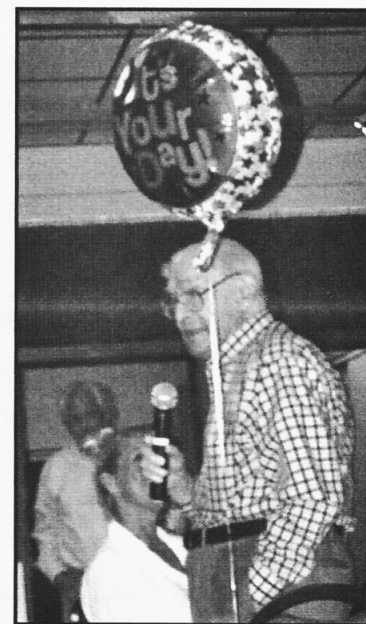
He and his late wife, **Olive Dame Forkner Peterson**, were charter members of the Historical Society when it was founded in 1952. Peterson (whose actual birthday was Dec. 1) has been a steadfast contributor through the years and still volunteers regularly at the St. Lucie County Regional History Center.

Some of Peterson's longtime friends and admirers spoke glowingly of his devotion to worthy community causes. **Sally Putnam Chapman**, attending with her husband **Jack Chapman**, offered complimentary remarks. Also speaking were **Jean Ellen Wilson**, **Frank "Speedy" Fee**, **Dr. Shamsher**

Singh and **Harold Holtsberg**. Historical Society President **Nancy Bennett** praised Peterson as "one of our best volunteers – we really can't do without him."

Also attending was **Elaine Adams Harrison** and her son **Peter Harrison**. She is the sister of the late rancher **Alto "Bud" Adams Jr.** "Bud Adams always said Pete was his best friend," remarked **Harold Holtsberg**.

Peterson first visited Fort Pierce in the early 1940s, while an Army Air Corps navigator. He soon came back to marry and make a permanent home.



Peterson acknowledges praise from friends.

Welcome - New Members

Sue Favorite, Membership Chairman

Kristi Turner
 Sheila & Bob Small
 Douglas "Dak" Knoll
 Herb & Judith Bopp
 Elaine & Michael Brennan
 Richard & Cleo Stern
 Elaine B Rice
 Matt Baum
 Anthony & Joan Westbury
 Sherry Brown
 Joanne & Joseph Blandford
 Janice Hancock

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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

I want to wish all of you a happy and prosperous new year. I hope everyone had pleasant fall and holiday seasons.

Thank you to **Rev. Allardyce Hamill** for donating the postcard collection to the history center. Our visitors have found the postcards very interesting.

The Indian River Lagoon Science Festival held on Oct. 27, 2018, inspired many young and older visitors alike. Thanks to **Robyn Hutchinson** and **Katy Purcell** for volunteering to work at it. We really need to recruit more volunteers for the museum and for special events. Contact me, and we will put you to work.

On Oct. 31, we held a Halloween event that was enjoyed by the youngsters almost as much as by our volunteers, **Richard** and **Ellen Lynch**, **Wendy Frieder**, and the perpetually young-at-heart **Fred Ebner**.

I want to thank **Keith Erickson** for the use of his red 2018 BMW convertible for the Christmas parade. Thanks to **Ernie** and **Judith Merrill** for representing the Historical Society in the parade.

Remember, the museum is now open Tuesday through Saturday. Bring your friends and families to visit! Δ

O.C. PETERSON ... continued from page 1

Through the decades Peterson has been one of the area's most active and productive residents. He has served on the School Board, the Sandy Shoes Festival committee, and in many other civic projects. He also continued serving in the Air Force Reserve, eventually retiring as a lieutenant-colonel.

Amid the festive banners and balloons, Peterson modestly acknowledged the praise, and the crowd rose to sing "Happy Birthday." Δ

As time goes by...

Items from past editions of the society's *Historical Quarterly*.

From the September 1987 edition:

On July 10 an act of Legislature was signed by Gov. Bob Martinez. The act relates to the location and identification of the state's first Florida Cracker Trail. The trail follows a route that is locally acknowledged as State Road 68, or Orange Avenue, and proceeds over the state to Bradenton.

The landmark on the east coast has been designated as the Peter P. Cobb General Merchandise Store. The Department of Transportation has been directed to erect signs along the route [and] to highlight the route on the new State of Florida maps, which are currently being printed. ...

If the Cracker Trail raises the historical consciousness of the community, then it has already justified its existence. If one motorist notices one

road sign and asks 'What is a Florida Cracker?' then it is a success.

The Florida Cracker Trail is one of many small items that will help make downtown Fort Pierce come alive again. Δ

Florida Facts

The University of Miami awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree to former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on Feb. 26, 1946, before an audience of more than 17,500 at the Orange Bowl stadium.

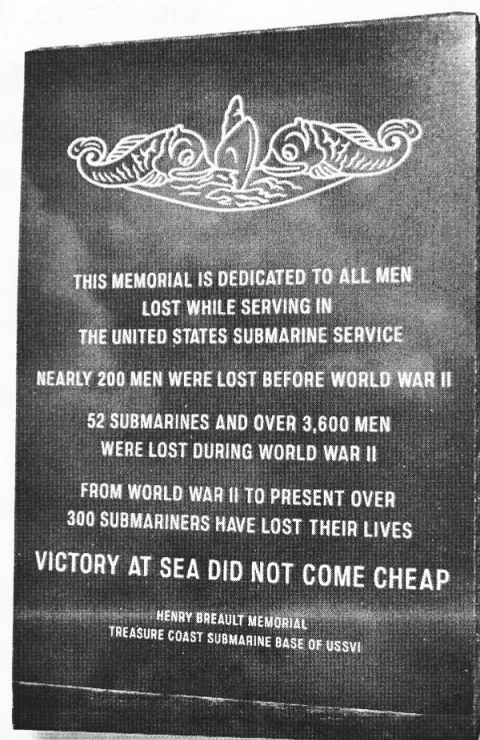


The first cigar factory in the United States was established at Key West in 1831. By 1900 most of Florida's cigarmaking industry had moved to the Ybor City neighborhood of Tampa.

New historical marker salutes lost U.S. submariners

The latest historical marker at Veterans Memorial Park, by the Indian River in Fort Pierce, is a tribute "to all men lost while serving in the United States submarine service." Those words are engraved on the monument dedicated in a Veterans Day ceremony Nov. 11. The submarine service is among the most hazardous of military occupations. At least 65 U.S. Navy submarines have sunk – most in wartime, some in peacetime accidents – beginning with the USS Skate in 1913.

At least 100 U.S. Navy submarine veterans live in this area and more than 40 are members of the *Treasure Coast Submarine Veterans Base*, part of a nationwide organization. The local group's leader, **Joseph Alice**, in his remarks at the dedication, noted the steady development of the submarine service since the Navy commissioned its first primitive sub in October 1900. Alice said more than 50 U.S. submarines, with



more than 3,500 crew members, were lost during World War Two. The most recent American submarine loss was in 1968 – USS Scorpion, in which 99 crew members died.

Among American submariners lost at sea over the years are two brothers from Fort Pierce. Master Chief Electrician's Mate **Benjamin Nathan Shafer** and Senior Chief Electrician's Mate **John Davis Shafer** both perished when their vessel, USS Thresher, sank with a loss of all 129 aboard while conducting deep-dive tests in the Atlantic east of Cape Cod on April 10, 1963.

America's lost submariners are regarded as being "on eternal patrol." SLHS member and museum volunteer **Fred Ebner**, also a Navy submarine veteran, coordinated the sub vets' project to create the monument and place it in the park. Δ

Museum sets new schedule ... *volunteers always welcome*

The Regional History Center on Seaway Drive now has a new schedule – open Tuesday through Saturday, but closed on Sunday. This replaces the former Wednesday through Sunday schedule. The SLHS board of directors, at its November meeting, adopted the change. It took effect in December. The hope is that it will be easier to find volunteers for another weekday than for the Sunday shift.

New volunteers are always welcome, says SLHS board member Ernie Merrill. “We really need volunteers at the history center, open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Work shifts are 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. If you can help us, it would be greatly appreciated,” Merrill said.

Prospective volunteers may contact SLHS President Nancy Bennett at the museum; phone 772-462-1795. All who serve as museum docents are given training and guidance by the experienced staff members. Other volunteers are needed for special events in which our society participates, such as Fort Pierce’s downtown history festival in January, then the St. Lucie County Fair in late February. Δ

Feedback

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

Jen and Rich Eisenman, Vero Beach: “Wonderful displays, informative staff; thank you.”

Keith Boyd, Dallas Texas: “Been coming here for 20 years – first time here [museum]. Very interesting.”

Priscilla and Jim Faulkner, Jacksonville: Lots of great history. What a treat.”

Amarily Norton, Manassas, Va.: “Love it! Great history! Great place to come.”

Junko Clements, Sneads Ferry, N.C.: “We learned lots of things, especially about native Floridians.”

Charlie Hayek, Fort Pierce: “A wonderful stroll back in time.”

Trask Family, Christmas: “Great museum. Great volunteers!”

Charlie and Alma Cantu, Temple Texas: “Very interesting, thank you – everyone very nice.”

Sarah Waller and Jenny Means, Lithia: “Great! Learned a lot. We need to teach more in school on Florida history.” Δ

Be a Bulletin Booster!

Help support production of a lively and useful SLHS Historical Quarterly. A \$10 donation will add your name to the Bulletin Boosters roster for a full year of Quarterly editions. Give your \$10 donations to Treasurer **Bob Burdge**. Many thanks! Names of current Bulletin Boosters are listed below (with expiration month).

Rick Modine	1/20
Pat Modine	1/20
Ernie and Judy Merrill	1/20
Bob Burdge	1/20
Robyn Hutchinson	1/20
Linda Hudson	1/20
Roger Miller	1/20

Jean Ellen Wilson	1/20
Norma McGuire	1/20
Betty Jo Starke	1/20
Tom Bailey	1/20
Edward and Jacquelyn Fischer	1/20
Richard Coffman	1/20
Ted Burrows	1/20
Ann Healy	1/20

As time goes by...

Items from past editions of the society's Historical Quarterly.

From June 1992 edition:

This has been a very busy year for our society. At long last we are beginning to do some of the things we have been talking about for a long time. The memorial garden in front of the museum and the Gardner house was the result of last year's plans being accomplished. Before that, the renovation of the interior of the museum.

It should be very gratifying to all the members that we can accomplish such things.

Fort Pierce lost one of its finest in November 1991 when Maurice "Buddy" Gardner was taken by death. Buddy was a life member of the Historical Society, and he and his family donated the Gardner house to the museum.

He came to Fort Pierce in 1923. This is where he met and married his childhood sweetheart, Bertha Boese. They were married for 57 years. ... They owned the Gardner house for 50 years, living in it for 47 years. ...

Buddy will be missed a lot, but every time any of us look at the Gardner house, we can think about Buddy and his family and all the happy hours they spent there. Δ

SLHS library available for members' research

The St. Lucie Historical Society's library, located in a room near the rear of the museum (the double doors are under the McCrory's sign) is available to members who wish to do research on a Florida history topic. The collection includes numerous books and other materials relating to Florida and the Treasure Coast area. A project is under way to reorganize and catalog the society's collection so it is more readily accessible.

Members' research should be done on-site as far as possible. This is not a typical lending library. Limited borrowing may be done, by permission of an on-duty museum volunteer, using a sign-out/sign-in sheet on the library worktable.

Library reorganization continues, and SLHS members will be updated periodically on the progress. Δ

Florida Facts

On May 9, 1980 the freighter Summit Venture crashed into the Sunshine Skyway Bridge spanning Tampa Bay, causing a 1,200-foot section to collapse. A bus and several other vehicles fell into the bay, killing 35 people.



The American Revolution's "last battle" is reported to have been fought at sea east of Cape Canaveral, March 10, 1783. The Continental frigate Alliance and a French vessel were carrying gold lent by France to the new American government when they encountered three British warships. Alliance damaged one British ship in an exchange of cannon fire, enabling Alliance and the French ship to escape and complete their mission. This occurred about a year and a half after Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, and three months after a provisional peace treaty was signed at Paris. In 1986 the Legislature passed a resolution honoring the event as the "Battle of Florida." (*The Florida Handbook*)



Florida's first newspaper, the East Florida Gazette, was founded in St. Augustine in 1783. (*The Florida Handbook*)



Educators and civil-rights activists Harry T. and Harriett V. Moore were killed on Christmas Day 1951 when a bomb exploded under their house in the Brevard County community of Mims. No one was ever charged with the murders. A re-investigation by the state in 2006 identified four Ku Klux Klan members as those responsible.



Singer Ray Charles began developing his musical talents while a student during the mid-1940s at the state's School for the Deaf and Blind in St. Augustine.

St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.
P O Box 578
Fort Pierce, Florida 34954

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Or Current Resident

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 Information 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:

Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.