

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

Vol. 38 No. 2

Spring 2020

Many events highlight busy SLHS winter season

The winter season just ending along Florida's Treasure Coast has been an especially busy one for St. Lucie Historical Society members. We had numerous opportunities to introduce many of our neighbors and seasonal visitors to the society and its work.

We participated as usual in Fort Pierce's annual Christmas parade early in December, always a festive start to the season. SLHS members **Robyn Hutchinson** and **Victoria Bush** represented our society, riding in **Jim Hatfield's** convertible.

Next, our society co-sponsored the annual History Fair in mid-January, along Second Street in Fort Pierce. Hundreds of residents and tourists gathered outside the Sunrise Theatre, and inside the theatre's black-box venue for history talks and exhibits. Again this year, Second Seminole War military re-enactors set up an encampment and marched along the street. The **Summerlin** family also presented their always popular fish fry.

The SLHS was well represented at the history fair. **Lucille Rights** presided over a table of artifacts,



Lucille Rights explains historic artifacts

which she explained to passersby. **Jean Ellen Wilson** and **Jim Moses** prepared a display of photos from the Bud Adams Gallery of Vintage Photographs. **Nancy Bennett, Katy Purcell, John Honea, Mason Murphy, Terry Howard** and other helpers greeted visitors, sold books and handed out brochures about the museum and society membership.

Again this year the society had an exhibit at the St. Lucie County Fair in late February and early March. Volunteers took turns greeting fairgoers and showing the display of artifacts prepared by **Harry Quatraro**. We invited many people to visit the museum and even sold a few more books.

On several Saturdays during the winter, Jean Ellen Wilson, accompanied by **Susan Enns Stans**, had a table at the downtown farmers' market promoting the Bud Adams photo exhibit in the nearby Cobb building.

The winter season is the busiest time of each year for our society, highlighted also by a fine array of dinner meeting speakers organized by Robyn Hutchinson. The enthusiastic participation of our members is appreciated and reflects the society's importance in the community. Δ

SLHS will benefit from Peterson's bequest

O.C. "Pete" Peterson, our longtime historical society friend who died last October at age 100, again is contributing to this organization's work.

In a recent letter to St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc., local attorney **Frank H. Fee, III** states, "I am pleased to transmit to you a check in the amount of \$1,000 representing a gift I was instructed to make from the funds of O.C. "Pete" Peterson upon his death. ... We all know that Mr. Peterson was a true friend of the Historical Society. Please see to it that the beneficence of his gift is made known to the membership."

Our members have many good memories of Pete Peterson's decades of service. His bequest is welcome and much appreciated. Δ

Welcome - New Members

Sue Favorite, Membership Chairman

Ann & Ed Cali-Hanrahan • Doc & Bess McKinney
Debra Farmer • Ken & Judy Roberts • Justin Beard
Jean & Michael Badger • Janis R. Brown • Karen Palmieri
Jerry & Kristi James • Kurt & Marilyn Wallach
David & Melanie Jasa • Willie & Sharon Ortiz
Kimberly & Jack Liddell • Plythe Freedman

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

Another winter is gone and spring is here. April 19-25 is National Volunteers' Week and a perfect time to thank all our volunteers who make it possible to keep our museum open and to participate in community events.

In December, we were able to participate in the Christmas parade thanks to **Jim Hatfield, Robyn Hutchinson, and Victoria Bush**. In January we participated in the History Festival in downtown Ft. Pierce. Thank you to **Lucille Rights, John Honea, Mason Murphy, Ted Burrows, Katy Purcell, Patricia Brewer, Terry Howard, and Jean Ellen Wilson**. Your help that Saturday was really appreciated!

The St. Lucie County Fair provided a great opportunity to introduce our museum to people from the surrounding communities. The following people made this possible by volunteering their time: **Ted Burrows, Bob Davis, Ginger Shoun, Carolyn Dodge, Richard Coffman, Marianne Coffman, Joanne Schmidt, Dave Schmidt, Sue Favorite, Mary Schrader, Sally Williams, Pat Brewer, Katy Purcell, Patsy Nelson, Norma McGuire, Deb McGraw, Todd Strasser, Deb Billis, Maggie Summerlin, Ann Healy, Roger Miller, Adele Lowe, Ellen Lynch, Fred Ebner, Bonnie Ludlum, John Honea, Beverly Traub, and Terry Howard**. Again we want to thank all of our great volunteers for all they do! Δ

Bulletin Boosters

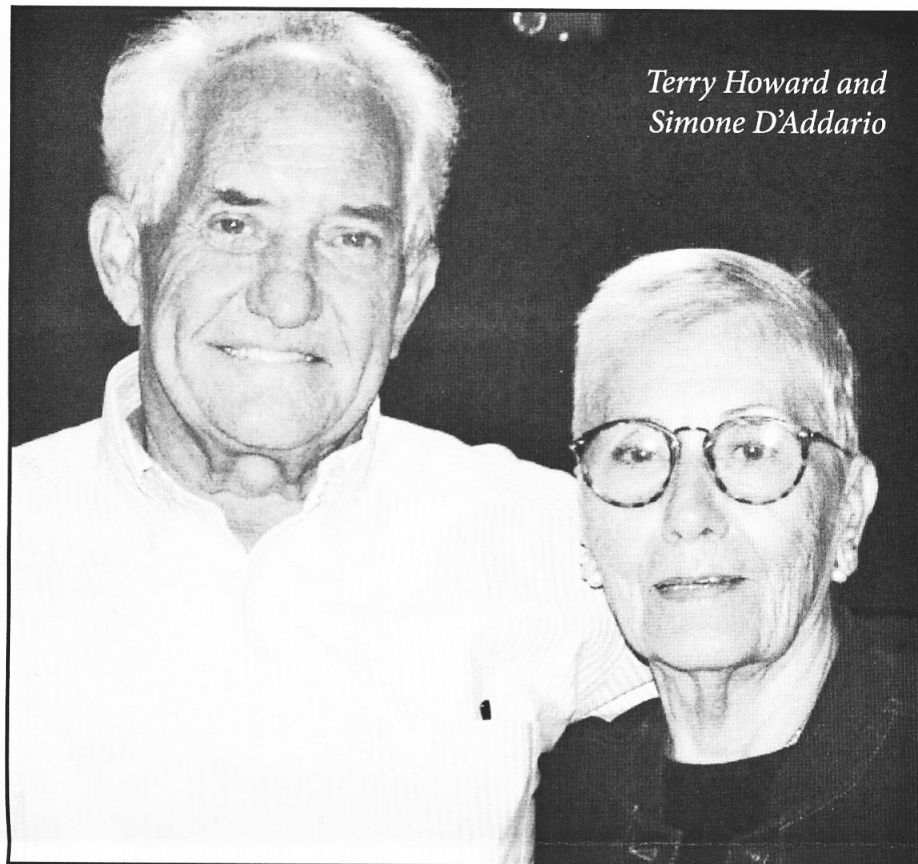
Help support production of a lively and useful SLHS Historical Quarterly. A \$10 donation will add your name to the Bulletin Boosters roster for a full year of Quarterly editions. Give your \$10 donations to Treasurer **Bob Burdge**. Many thanks! Names of current Bulletin Boosters are listed below (with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

Harold & Mae Holtsberg	10/20	Robert W. Summerhays	7/20	Bob Burdge	1/21
Cynthia Putnam	10/22	Mr. & Mrs. Robert J. Essay	7/31	Robyn Hutchinson	1/21
Ed & Jackie Fischer	10/20	Deborah & Stephen Billis	4/21	Richard & Marianne Coffman	1/21
Lynn Williams Novel	10/20	Joyce Moody-McGraw	4/21	Bob Davis	1/21
Betty Hutchinson	10/20	Jack & Sue Favorite	4/21	Ted Burrows	1/21
Bonnie Reynolds	10/20	Margaret Lloyd	4/20	Richard & Nancy Sheets	4/21
Jan Zahrlly	10/20	Jerry & Carolyn McNeil	4/21	Linda Chastain	4/21
Paul & Joann Berg	10/20	Beverly L. Traub	4/21	Pommie Hardie	4/21
Ella & Jonathan Pruitt	10/20	Simone D'Addario	4/20	Craig & Pat Brewer	4/21
Gail Hope-Henchel	7/20	Ron & Maggie Waites	4/20	Holly Theuns	4/21
Tish Taylor Chapman	7/20	J. Michael Brennan	4/21	James Midelis	4/21
James Hatfield	7/20	Jim Turner, Apple Machine	4/20	Noah & Bonnie Ludlum	4/21
Michelle Franklin	7/21	Buck & Mary Ann Bryan	4/20	Victoria Bush	4/21
Charlene & Rupert Koblegard III	7/20	Grace Ann Scott	1/21	Ann Procino Healy	4/21
Sally Frey	1/21	William & Fran Slat	1/21		
Lelaine B. Rice	1/21	Ernie & Judy Merrill	1/21		

SLHS volunteer's wartime childhood profiled in new book

by Terry Howard

Editor's note: Two of our society's devoted volunteers have collaborated on an important new book, titled "Simone, Memoir of a French Child of WWII." How this book came to be written is an equally fascinating story.



Terry Howard and
Simone D'Addario

Simone Andrée Glyslaine Benoist D'Addario was born in Poitiers, France on March 30, 1937. Germany invaded France in June of 1940.

Simone is a volunteer at the St. Lucie County Regional History Center. She answers the phone, greets visitors, takes their entry fees or tickets, distributes listening devices for the displays and gives children treasure hunt cards with items to locate inside the museum. She also makes beaded necklaces, which are sold in the museum gift shop. Proceeds are donated to the Historical Society.

One afternoon in the spring of 2018, when the museum had no visitors, other volunteers and I were discussing the autocratic leader of Germany during World War II, when Simone stood and said, "You don't know. You have no idea." She then told us about Nazi atrocities committed in her town in France during the war. The things she had witnessed as a child were so horrific she could barely speak of them without crying. We were aghast and nearly in tears as she told of these horrendous occurrences. She said the stories should die with her. I suggested otherwise and Simone later agreed to share her story.

Perhaps the noblest reason for telling Simone's

story is to chronicle the evils of war in the hope they are less apt to be repeated. Also, the perspective of a child living through those times in France is unique. With each passing day, there are fewer firsthand accounts. Life in a war zone is foreign to most who have grown up in America.

However, my main reason for wanting to chronicle Simone's memoir is Simone herself. We are all tiny, temporary spots in time. Simone is a bright spot. Her "upness" and kindness are compelling and contagious. As a fellow museum volunteer, I had known and respected Simone for some time before learning of her past in France during World War II. That past, coupled with her enthusiasm, kindness and grace inspired me to want to learn about her life.

Simone's memoir delves deeply into her thoughts and insights as a child in wartime France, as well as her impressions of life in her adopted country, the United States. Simone's life has been an adventure, and her stories have been fascinating to hear. I'm proud to have a part in sharing them.

The book is Simone's words, taken from interviews conducted with her beginning in May 2018. Some editing was necessary to put the stories in sequential order and take out some repetition. Unedited audio recordings of those interviews are available from the Holocaust Survivors Oral History Project, Oral History Program, Florida Studies Center, University of South Florida, Tampa Library. Δ

COVID-19 concern cancels SLHS March dinner meeting

Concern over the nationwide spread of the Coronavirus COVID-19 illness made it necessary to cancel the SLHS March dinner meeting.

President **Nancy Bennett** explained there was a sharp decline in reservations for the event, and many SLHS members had called to express their worry over participating in a large gathering. Many local events, plus others in Florida and nationwide, have been canceled entirely or postponed to a later date because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

We hope to resume dinner meetings as soon as possible. Δ

Future looks uncertain for Yeehaw's wrecked Desert Inn



Yeehaw Junction's historic Desert Inn property has an uncertain future, due to the recent accident that wrecked the old bar-restaurant-motel complex. A tractor-trailer rig slammed into the building early on Dec. 22, 2019. Reports indicated that poor visibility caused the driver to miss the turn.

At the intersection of State Road 60 and U.S. 441, the Desert Inn was for decades a distinctive stopping place for travelers. The business was no longer operating at the time of the collision. The Osceola County Historical Society has owned the property since 2015 and its board of directors presumably will determine what is done at the site.

The Desert Inn has a fabled place in Florida lore. Many tall tales have been spun regarding the

characters frequenting the place. Supposedly the crossroads was a spot for cowhands and lumbermen to gather for alcohol-fueled revelries dating from the late 1800s. What is known is that in 1932 **Edward Price "Dad" Wilson** bought the land and built a gas station. Wilson was shot and wounded in a 1937 robbery but continued in business there until at least 1940. The property changed hands several times, with the motel supposedly functioning as a brothel for a while. Some of the wild stories likely are exaggerated. The bar and eatery had a succession of operators.

Because the Desert Inn was such a familiar sight for generations of travelers, many will surely feel a nostalgic pang as they drive past in the future. Δ

Feedback

Bob & Raymonde Samson, Long Sault, Ontario, Canada: "Superbe! Merci!"

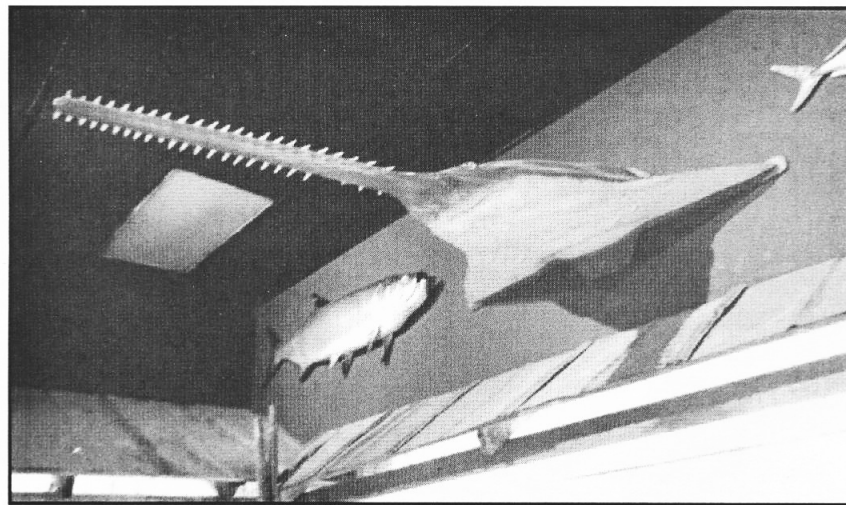
Jana & Maria Guarien, B. Axelsson, Iceland: "Excellent."

Jack Stretch, Hershey, PA: "Great people & interesting items."

Edwin H. Clairmont, Cheshire, MA: "The museum is great!! Very much information for me!"

School tour groups find museum's sawfish specimen fascinating

When local schools send tour groups to the St. Lucie County Regional History Center, the students invariably gaze upward in amazement while in the "Life on the Lagoon" exhibit depicting ways in which early settlers earned a living. They are fascinated by the big sawfish specimen high above the displays of fishing gear and other artifacts.



Sawfish are fascinating creatures, rarely encountered these days. They are now on the federal endangered species list. Many years ago they were far more plentiful. The specimen in our museum is believed to be one caught in 1954 by the bridge tender at Fort Pierce's old north bridge and several photos are on display.

Local newspaper archives move to IRSC main library

The Indian River State College main library will be the repository of more than a century's worth of newspaper archives from the Treasure Coast Newspapers (TCPalm). The collection includes past editions of the Vero Beach Press Journal, The Stuart News and St. Lucie News-Tribune, plus area papers published under other names since the early 1900s as ownerships changed.

The announcement was made in a recent News-Tribune article. It quoted IRSC's emerging technologies librarian, **Mia Tignor**, as saying, "The collection is a veritable treasure trove of local history, and will provide our students and the community with unprecedented access to the historical record of the Treasure Coast."

Most of the back issues are in large bound volumes, but they are expected to be digitally copied gradually. The newspaper archives were transferred to the college due to TCPalm's consolidation of facilities following recent changes in ownership. Δ

TCPalm's outdoors writer Ed Killer recently had an article telling of a commercial fisherman near Jacksonville who was sentenced to pay a \$2,000 fine and perform 80 hours of community service after killing a sawfish at least 12 feet long by cutting off its bill with a chain saw. Some

conservationists said the penalty was too light.

Killer explained "A sawfish will die of starvation without its bill, called a rostrum, because the fish uses it primarily to sense and hunt for prey." Sawfish reportedly used to range from the Carolinas to Texas, but now are mainly seen only in Florida waters. It is illegal to harvest them and if one is caught unintentionally it must be released. Δ

Remembrance

Hart Stephenson

A much-admired SLHS member and devoted museum volunteer, **Wilma Hart Cowles Hankins Stephenson**, died Jan. 8 in Port St. Lucie at age 80. She had suffered from a debilitating respiratory illness, similar to that which had claimed her younger brother, **Harley Cowles**, in 2016.

Hart Stephenson was a lifelong St. Lucie County resident and a graduate of Florida State University. She was a devoted teacher in local public high schools over several decades and also taught adult education courses at Indian River State College.

In recent years, until illness weakened her, Hart volunteered weekly at the museum and was a familiar presence at SLHS dinner meetings.

She is survived by her son **Michael Hankins**, plus a brother, **Dan Cowles**, and sisters **Doris Poody** and **Mollie DeHart**. Δ

St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.
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Fort Pierce, Florida 34954

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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 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.