



The Historical Quarterly

of The St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.

Vol. 41 No. 2

Spring 2023

SLHS member describes cattle ranching life to new History Club at Fort Pierce Central High School



History Club members and other Fort Pierce Central High School students joined teacher Sharon Ortiz and St. Lucie Historical Society board member Rick Modine for a program on early Florida cattle ranching. Photo courtesy of Lisa Kate Modine.

The St. Lucie Historical Society is supporting a recently formed student organization, the History Club at Fort Pierce Central High School. This project had its origin last year in discussions between F.P. Central teacher Sharon Ortiz and SLHS board member Jon Bell.

Based on enthusiastic student interest, the new school group recently hosted a talk by SLHS board member Rick Modine on this area's pioneer cattle industry. Rick, a member of the prominent Carlton cattle ranching family, addressed more than two dozen Central students on Feb. 23.

He displayed some ranching tools and artifacts, and explained how this area's early ranchers went about their work. Rick said he counted 31 students who attended the program. "They were a diverse group and listened very intently. They asked questions and they were intelligent questions."

Planning is under way for another program before the end of the school years, and for future programs on a variety of topics. In addition to visiting our museum on Seaway Drive in Fort Pierce, club members want to tour other museums and historic sites in this area.

At its April 10 meeting, the SLHS board discussed the potential sharing of educational materials with the Central High School History Club members, also how the club might help in our society's future projects. The historical society also could award occasional grants of funds to help the school club's educational activities.

Our historical society's mission includes an educational component, as we seek to increase knowledge of this area's history among young people. Support of student history clubs could become one of our most important projects. Δ



Rick Modine speaks and displays visual aids depicting life on this area's early cattle ranches. Photo courtesy of Lisa Kate Modine

Welcome - New or Returning Members

Sue Favorite, Membership Chairman

Megan Norvell • Pamela Williams • Nick Atos
 Patricia & Rusty Durham • Michael & Fran Greene
 Lisa & Jonathan Price • Charles Wilson • Peggy Murphy
 Rev. Edward & Jacquelyn Fischer • Kiri Johnson • Billy Johnson
 Jim & Debbie Tedder • Diane Hobbey-Burney

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).

The Historical Quarterly

of The St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.

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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

This is a very busy time for our historical society. The pace of activity has picked up steadily since January when we participated as a co-sponsor of Fort Pierce's annual downtown history festival originated by Indian River Magazine. After that successful event, we're now in early stages of planning for the 2024 history festival, which we expect will be at our museum on Seaway Drive.

In late February and early March there was the annual St. Lucie County Fair, always an exciting event. Again this year we had a display booth featuring artifacts from local history. Our hearty appreciation goes to Harry Quatraro who arranged our exhibit in an informative and artistic way.

Volunteers at the SLHS booth included **Robyn Hutchinson, Wendy Kastner, Ernie Merrill, Judy Merrill, Elizabeth Knapp, Holly Theuns, Jon Bell, Katy Purcell, Beverly Traub, Crystal Matthew, Richard Coffman, Marianne Coffman, Betty Jo Starke, Deb Billis, Rick Modine, Lisa Kate Modine, Sue Favorite, Maggie Summerlin, Bob Burdge, Vanessa Parker, Carolyn Dodge, Terry Howard, Ellen Lynch, Richard Lynch, Ann Healy, David Campbell, John Honea.**

There's much more to be done in the coming months and we invite everyone to share the excitement.c

Bulletin Boosters

Help support 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. Please give your \$10 donation to Treasurer Bob Burdge. Many thanks. Names of current bulletin Boosters are listed below (with expiration month and year).

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SLHS salutes Fort Pierce Police for century of service to city

The St. Lucie Historical Society recently hosted a festive salute to the Fort Pierce Police Department for a full century of service to the city and its people. The event drew a large crowd, including local dignitaries, to the SLHS dinner meeting on March 16 at the Elks Lodge.

Program presenters included retired Lieutenant **James Tedder** and retired



Fort Pierce Mayor Linda Hudson and Police Chief Diane Hobley-Burney at the St. Lucie Historical Society dinner meeting saluting the police department's 100 years of service.



At the SLHS March 16 dinner meeting, sharing memories of local police work in past decades were (from left) retired Lt. James Tedder, Officer Damian Spotts, and retired Sgt. Antonio Hurtado.

Sergeant **Antonio Hurtado**, who shared memories of local law enforcement in past decades. They were introduced by Police Officer **Damian Spotts**.

Also present for the event were Fort Pierce Mayor **Linda Hudson** and Police Chief **Diane Hobley-Burney**.

The city formed its police department in 1923 as the growing community faced increasing challenges amid the Prohibition era rise in liquor smuggling and other lawbreaking. In addition, local traffic laws had to be updated and enforced because of the increasing number of motor vehicles on city streets. The first chief was **Joseph Howard Richards** and a city jail was established along Avenue A.

Recent events by other local organizations also have celebrated the Fort Pierce Police Department's 100 years of service and progress in public safety. The public's praise and thanks are well deserved. Δ

SLHS to host history festival next January at museum

The St. Lucie Historical Society's board of directors has voted to host next year's annual history festival at the St. Lucie County Regional History Center on Seaway Drive. The event is set for Saturday January 13.

This popular festival was originated by Indian River Magazine and in recent years was held in and around the Sunrise Theatre in downtown Fort Pierce. This year the historical society co-sponsored the event.

Preliminary planning is under way. The festival is expected to include special exhibits and activities inside the museum and around its grounds, entertainment, speakers and discussions on local topics, historical re-enactors and more. A fish fry by the Summerlin family also is planned.

The SLHS board is seeking exhibitors and vendors for the event, plus volunteers to help with essential tasks. Δ

Visitor activity remains brisk, students, tourists enjoy museum



Photo by Terry Howard

Students, teachers and parents listen as Nancy Bennett explains artifacts in the replica of Peter Cobb's general store during an April visit to the museum. The re-created store display is among many exhibits depicting various eras in the history of our part of Florida. Knowledgeable SLHS volunteers act as tour guides.

Visitor traffic through the St. Lucie County Regional History Center maintained a brisk pace through the spring. SLHS President **Nancy Bennett** reported at the board's April 10 meeting that tour groups from area schools continued to increase recently. There had been a substantial downturn during the COVID pandemic.

"We had over 100 students last week," Nancy told board members, with another 40-member class scheduled for a tour in the next few days.

In addition, she said, the museum continues to be

a popular attraction among out-of-state visitors, and even among tourists from overseas.

Interestingly, many longtime local residents express surprise that the museum even exists, based on comments made at the historical society's county fair exhibit. Many locals still have never heard about it. Yet increasingly, foreign tourists learn about the museum and arrive here eager to see it. Perhaps locals tend to overlook points of interest close to home. Meanwhile, foreign tourists often seek information on interesting attractions while planning trips to this area. Δ

Florida Facts

On Oct. 13, 1947 Weeki Wachee Springs opened as a tourist attraction in Hernando County. It featured young women dressed as mermaids, breathing through underwater air hoses. The natural spring also offered boat rides, swimming and other activities. Weeki Wachee was among Florida's most

popular attractions during the 1950s but in more recent decades lost visitors to Orlando-area theme parks. Weeki Wachee is now a state park. Its spring is 407 feet deep, the deepest freshwater cave system in the continental United States. Δ

Remembrances

Alto Lee Adams III

Prominent rancher and civic benefactor **Alto Lee Adams III** died Jan. 1 at age 72. He was born Oct. 23, 1950, grew up in St. Lucie County and spent most of his life residing at the Adams family ranch west of Fort Pierce. He was vice president of the family corporation, which also included ranch properties near Kenansville and Madison.

He was a longtime member of the Florida Cattlemen's Association and was an advocate for land and wildlife conservation. His family generously supported many worthy causes.

He is predeceased by his parents, **Alto Lee Adams Jr.** and **Dorothy Snively Adams**. Surviving him are his wife, **Cynthia Carreno Adams**, five children and six grandchildren, plus two brothers, **Michael Adams** and **Robert Adams**.

Ronald B. Waites

St. Lucie Historical Society member **Ronald Bryan "Ron" Waites** died Jan. 26 at age 80. An Alabama native, he came to Fort Pierce as a child with his parents **Bryan** and **Ruth Waites** and was a 1960 graduate of Dan McCarty High School.

After graduating from Barry University, Ron Waites spent most of his business career in Miami before relocating to Stuart in retirement. He was a familiar presence at SLHS dinner meetings.

He is survived by his wife, **Margaret "Maggie" Waites**, three daughters, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by his parents and by a brother, **Michael Waites**.

Patricia Sue Carroll Priest

St. Lucie Historical Society member **Patricia "Patsy" Priest** died Feb. 24 at age 84. She was a fifth-generation native Floridian, born to **Aaron Dennis Carroll** and **Lucille Bass Carroll**. She was a 1956 graduate of Boone High School in Orlando. The family lived in various Florida localities before coming to Fort Pierce.

She spent most of her career as an elementary school teacher in St. Lucie County and had a strong interest in genealogy and Florida history.

She is survived by four sons, **Jeffrey, Roger, Bradley** and **Gary Priest**; also two brothers and one sister, plus six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Δ

Feedback

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

Gary Smogolski, Chicago, IL: *"Excellent insight and humor by a longtime docent!"*

Todd & Gloria Ash, Noblesville, IN: *"Great museum!"*

Mike & Joyce Deren, Ann Arbor, MI: *"More than expected."*

Anthony DelGreco, Hollywood, FL: *"Amazing history, wonderfully helpful staff."*

Steve & Judy Stephens, Bettendorf, IA: *"Really enjoyed the museum again!"*

Felipe Quinones, Bogota, Colombia: *"Amazing history!"*

Michael & Marjorie Barry, Clam Gulch, Alaska: *"Impressive - great book choices!"*

Chuck & Karen Reedy, Millersport, OH: *"Fascinating history - loved it!"*

Valerie Niewierski, Fort Pierce: *"Absolutely wonderful. The historical society has done a great job with presentation."*

Tim & Terry Johnson, Alaska: *"Lots of great history."*
Δ

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

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St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.

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

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Membership is from September through August.

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St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc
P O Box 578

Fort Pierce, Florida 34954-0578

For Information telephone: (772) 461-8020

General Meetings 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 \$14.00 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.