

A large group photograph of the 1964-1965 Yearbook Staff. The group consists of approximately 60 students, both male and female, posed in about eight rows. Many of the students are wearing name tags. The background is a wall covered with various posters, including one that says "CALIFORNIA" and another that says "GEORGE". The students are dressed in casual attire typical of the mid-1960s, such as t-shirts, button-down shirts, and sweaters. The overall tone of the photograph is warm and nostalgic.

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

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The Historical Society's mission is to serve as the gateway for community engagement, education, and inspiration by preserving and sharing Central Florida's continually unfolding story.

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Unless otherwise noted, all archival images in this issue are from the Historical Society's collection at the History Center.



Sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture.



The History Center is accessible with elevators on every floor.



A BIG YEAR FOR HISTORY

I still remember the day we opened the History Center. It was Friday, September 29, 2000, the culmination of five years of work to refurbish the 1927 courthouse building into the new Orange County Regional History Center.

I remember a year later, when our director, Sara Van Arsdell, opened a bottle of champagne at the end of the day to celebrate our one-year anniversary. There were those who didn't think that a history museum would be successful in downtown Orlando. We were all happy to prove them wrong.

As I write this, the institution has 20 years of history behind it. We've hosted countless exhibits, hundreds of events, tens of thousands of schoolchildren, and well over one million visitors. We are accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, an honor that only about 3 percent of all museums in the country achieve. We've received an IMLS National Medal for Museum Service in 2019, the highest honor any museum can win.

But all of the exhibits and events, all of the awards and institutional recognition, are nothing compared with the important service that we provide to the Central Florida community. We collect

and preserve our history, so that future generations can discover the history of this community. Our incredible collection of artifacts, papers, and oral histories tell a compelling story of our history. We do what no other institution in the world can do. We tell the story of Central Florida.

This journal, *Reflections*, is an important part of that storytelling. For the past 16 years it has brought to light hundreds of stories of Central Florida people, places, and events that have shaped our history in countless ways. It is an important piece of the work we do, and with countless stories still untold, it should remain an important part of our storytelling for years to come.

I write all of this with some melancholy. After serious consideration, I have decided to retire in January of 2021. I believe the time is right not only for my family but for the institution. I've written previously about the museum's plans for exhibit redesign and refurbishment and am proud of all the work we've accomplished to prepare for those changes, which will take the museum into its next decades. The path has been well prepared for a new director to see the projects to completion.

It has been a privilege to serve as the director of the Historical Society and the History Center for the past six years, and to serve as curator of exhibits for the previous 20 years – five of them at the museum's Loch Haven Park location. The staff is dedicated, hard-working, and award-winning. The past is always the important story in these pages, but the future is also bright for the History Center and its mission.

– *Michael Perkins, Executive Director
Historical Society of Central Florida, Inc.*

IN THIS ISSUE

THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS	4
ORANGE COUNTY REGIONAL HISTORY CENTER: A 20-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE MICHAEL PERKINS	5
LEGALLY RIGHT, MORALLY WRONG MELISSA PROCKO	8
"FROM DA BACK OF DA BUS . . . WHERE THE ORANGE BLOSSOMS GROW" SAMUEL AUGUSTUS JENNINGS	11
TALES FROM LAKE LUCY: BUILDING SILVER STAR ROAD PEGGY SIAS LANTZ	13
ALMOST MAGIC: LEESBURG'S FORGOTTEN FLOATING ISLANDS RICK KILBY	16
COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT: THE EXECUTION TICKET OF TOM THOMAS WHITNEY BROADAWAY	20
FROM THE COLLECTION	22
CONTRIBUTORS	22
HISTORIC HAPPENINGS	23

UPCOMING EVENTS

ORANGE COUNTY REGIONAL HISTORY CENTER

DOWNTOWN ORLANDO



YESTERDAY THIS WAS HOME PROGRAMS

To promote safe distancing, we have implemented new ticketing procedures for the special exhibition *Yesterday This Was Home: The Ocoee Massacre of 1920*. Visit TheHistoryCenter.org/visit/tickets for details.

- **Celebrating Black Culture: Evolution of Music**
Thursday, October 15, 2020
- **The Legacy of Ocoee: A Panel Discussion**
Thursday, October 29, 2020
- **The Destruction of Rosewood**
Sunday, November 15, 2020
- **Family Days: Growing a Better Tomorrow**
Saturday, November 21, 2020
Saturday, February 6, 2021
- **Celebrating Black Culture: Storytelling & Poetry**
Thursday, February 11, 2021

Programming supported by



FAMILY FUN

- **Discovery Day Camp: Weird Florida**
Friday, October 30
- **Thanksgiving Break Camp: Cosmic Historians**
Monday, November 23 – Wednesday, November 25



VIRTUAL TRICK OR TREAT SAFE ZONE PROGRAMS

- **Halloween Hullabaloo (Pre-K)**
Monday, October 26, and Friday, October 30
- **Spooky History Storytellers (Grades K-5)**
Tuesday, October 27
- **Creepy Artifact Showcase (Grades 5-8)**
Wednesday, October 28



LUNCHTIME PROGRAMS

- **Early Roads, Aviation, and Tourism**
Wednesday, October 14
- **Interstates and Airports**
Wednesday, November 11

FOR MORE EVENTS, VISIT THEHISTORYCENTER.ORG

(All events are subject to change.)

Cover: Camp Wingmann, Avon Park, FL, is the summer camp for the Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida (formerly South Florida). In the summer of 1954, the landmark Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled the segregation of public schools unconstitutional. Camp Wingmann was not a public school, but it promptly integrated the very next summer. To put it in perspective, Orange County would not fully integrate for another 20 years. This group photo was taken around 1956 inside the Mess Hall, now called Yates Hall, which the camp still uses for weekly line dances. In the rafters, the room still bears the signatures of early campers. Image courtesy Camp Wingmann.



THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS

From the photo archives of the Historical Society of Central Florida

If you have photos you would like to donate to our collection, please contact our collections manager and photo archivist, Whitney Broadway, at 407-836-8587 or Whitney.Broadway@ocfl.net.



On Nov. 1, 1935, this photo appeared on the front of the *Orlando Sentinel Star* with the caption: "Frances Langford and her Leesburg friends (left to right) Mrs. Beverly Grizzard, Mr. Grizzard, and Miss Alma Langford, cousin and secretary to the star." Langford knew Beverly Grizzard from her Lakeland high school days, an accompanying article noted. (For more on Grizzard, see pages 17-19 in this issue.)



“Frances Langford Born in Our City Beautiful”

Few Central Floridians have had a meteoric rise to fame comparable to Frances Langford’s ascent to stardom. When she returned to Lakeland from Hollywood for a vacation in 1935 at the age of 21, it was front-page news.

Langford was born in Orlando and attended first grade at Hillcrest Elementary before her family moved to Polk County, the *Orlando Sentinel Star* reported in 1935. Her voice had changed from soprano to contralto after a tonsillectomy in 1930, and by high school she was singing on a Tampa radio station. Band leader Rudy Vallée discovered her while he was touring Florida and signed her to appear on his radio program.

In 1935 (the same year as the photograph), Langford performed what would become her signature number, “I’m in the Mood for Love,” in the motion picture *Every Night at Eight*, starring George Raft and Alice Faye. She would go on to perform in many other films, including *Yankee Doodle Dandy* with Jimmy Cagney and *The Glenn Miller Story* with Jimmy Stewart and Louis Armstrong. She even appeared with fellow Orlandoan Buddy Ebsen in the 1936 film *Born to Dance*.

In addition to her film career, Langford created a radio comedy-sketch series with Don Ameche called *The Bickersons*, about an argumentative married couple. For all her accomplishments, she once said the “greatest thing in her life” was performing alongside Bob Hope on USO tours during World War II and both the Korean and Vietnam wars. She was inducted into the Florida Women’s Hall of Fame in 2002.

Although the 1935 *Sentinel* article hints at a romance with University of Florida football player Billy Chase of Lakeland, Langford was married three times, including to actor Jon Hall and Ralph Evinrude, president of the Outboard Marine Corp. It was with Hall that she returned to Florida, settling in Jensen Beach, where she performed at her nightclub, the Outrigger Resort. In 1994, she married Harold C. Stuart, who had served as an assistant secretary for the U.S. Air Force under President Truman.

She died in Florida in 2005, leaving behind a marvelous archive of recordings and movie performances as well as many philanthropic contributions. ■

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGIONAL HISTORY CENTER

A 20-Year Retrospective

By Michael Perkins, Executive Director, Historical Society of Central Florida, Inc.

It's been two decades since the History Center opened in September 2000. As director for the past six years and chief exhibition curator for the 15 years before that, I take pride in how much the museum has accomplished in serving the community and in telling Central Florida's story. We've educated tens of thousands of students about our fascinating past, hosted a number of significant exhibitions, and entertained many thousands through our fun and educational programs.

As the only History Center employee for the entirety of our 20 years downtown, I have many memories of the exhibitions and events that have shaped the museum's own history.

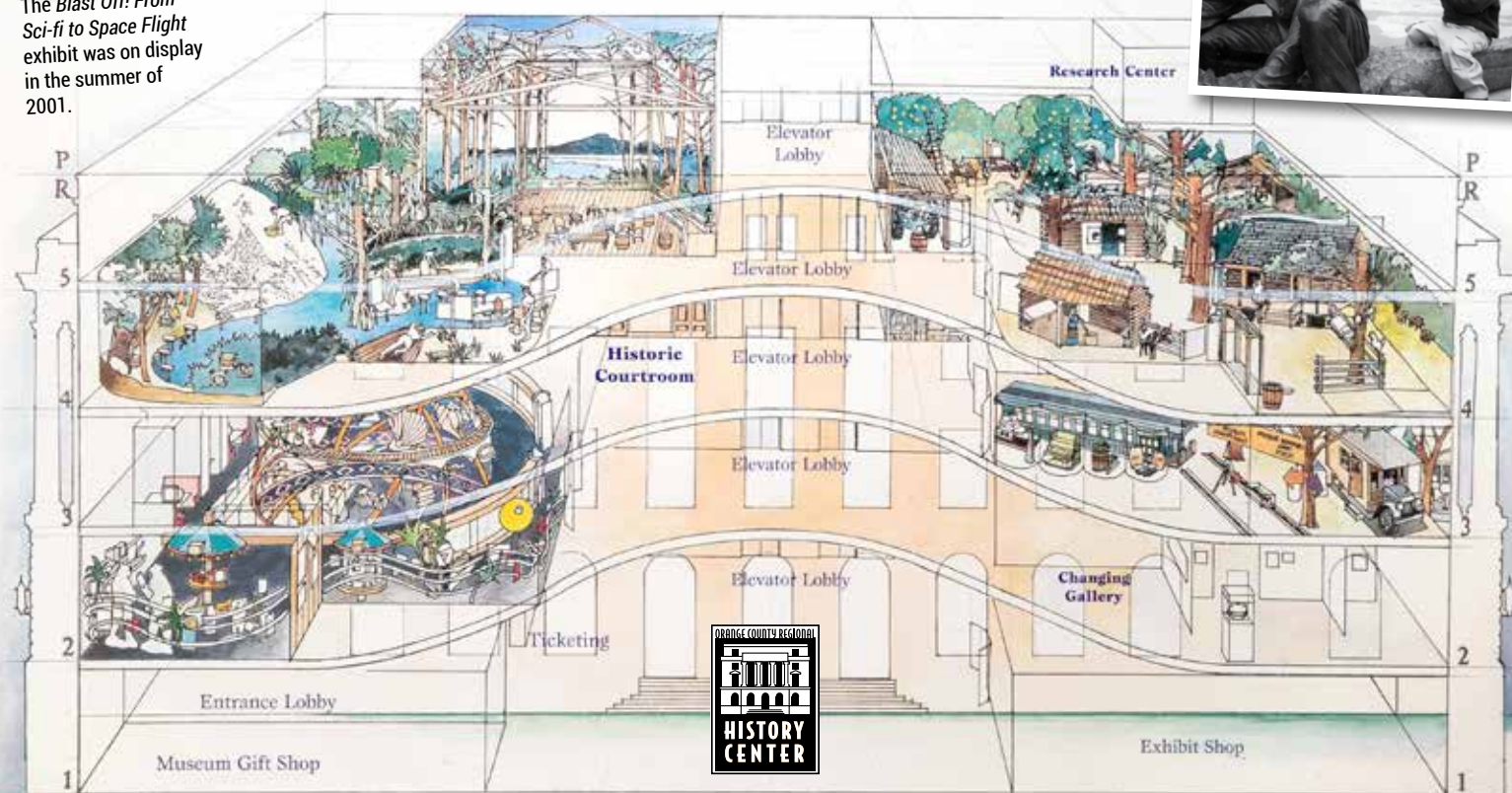
We've told the story of how the History Center came to reside in Orange County's 1927 courthouse previously in *Reflections*. This building served as the courthouse until 1997, when it was replaced with the new, high-rise courthouse



The Blast Off! From Sci-fi to Space Flight exhibit was on display in the summer of 2001.



Below: The History Center's inaugural limited-run exhibition debuted on January 2001 and was titled *Pirates!* Bottom: An artist's rendering shows the History Center's permanent exhibits in 2000, when it opened.





Top row (from left): The History Center's grand opening on Sept. 29, 2000; Channel 13 anchor Scott Harris interviews Capt. John Young, 2006; Mary and Joel Fears at the History Center's 2009 runway show of 1860s fashions; *Out of This World* fashion show, 2010. Center (from left): A young museum enthusiast in 2001; school kids at World War II exhibition, 2005; an exhibition of Norman Rockwell paintings in 2005 brought spectacular crowds; Florida Highwaymen at our 2002 exhibition included Rodney Dumps, Roy McLendon, Hezekiah Baker, Robert Lewis, Willie Reagan, Mary Ann Carroll, and Sam Newton. Bottom (from left): 9/11 commemoration in Heritage Square, 2002; U.S. Sen. Paula Hawkins and former Historical Society executive director Sara Van Arsdel, 2006; Galactic Encounter Day, 2006.

located just to the north on Orange Avenue. When county leaders made the decision to build the new courthouse, a committee of public and private citizens agreed that the best use for the distinguished 1927 building would be to transform it into the History Center.

Design began in 1995, followed by construction in 1997. One of my earliest memories of the transformation is standing on the fifth floor and being able to look out all the windows at the downtown skyline. The entire inside of the building was demolished to the outside walls to make way for the History Center's exhibition galleries and offices.

We opened on September 29, 2000, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Heritage Square. As we opened the doors and people streamed into the building after the ceremony, we had to prevent them from walking into

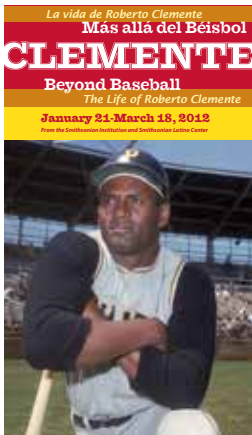
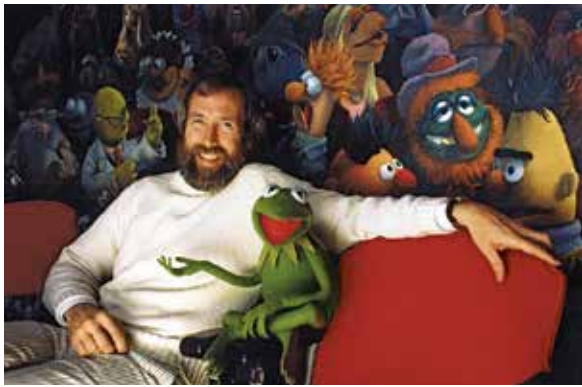
our "backstage" areas. We had not put up any wayfinding signage and had to guide the crowds to use the elevators to enjoy the new exhibition galleries.

Highlights from the History Center's earliest years included our opening events, followed by a string of very successful exhibitions. One, titled *Pirates!*, came to us in 2001 from the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum in Key West. It showcased millions of dollars' worth of gold bullion from Spanish galleons lost near the Keys and found by Fisher's team of aquanauts, while an armed guard stood watch in the exhibition gallery at all times. The next year, 2002, we hosted a spring exhibition about the history of rock 'n' roll in Florida, accompanied by programming that included a Heritage Square concert by the legendary Bo Diddley.

In July that same year, 2002, we

presented a pathbreaking exhibition about the Florida Highwaymen. These African American artists, who traveled the east coast of Florida to sell their artwork in the 1950s and 1960s, had nearly been forgotten until they were "discovered" in the late 1990s. We were the first museum in Central Florida to showcase their work and tell their incredible story. The exhibition was a huge success and propelled the History Center into the regional conversation of culturally significant institutions.

For one of our most significant exhibitions, *The Civil War: America Divided*, staff members worked with museums from various communities to bring in a collection of artifacts of national scope. The 2007 exhibition included the table and chairs that Generals Lee and Grant used at the surrender signing at Appomattox,



Top row (from left): Photo from *Jim Henson's Fantastic World*, 2009; "tiny house" at the History Center during the *Plastics Unwrapped* exhibition, 2017; citrus bird from our lobby display; Cheney Award winner Father Nelson Pinder with Orlando City Comm. Patty Sheehan, 2015. Center (from left): Logo for Civil War exhibition, 2007; children's choir at holiday event in Heritage Square, 2010; a History Center staff member documents Pulse items left at Orlando Health, 2016. Bottom (from left): Roberto Clemente exhibition from the Smithsonian, 2012; Rebecca Talbert, Joy Dickinson, and Patty Sheehan at the dedication of architect Isabel Roberts' gravestone, 2017; Summer Camp fun, 2013; trick-or-treater, 2016; Retro Game Night, 2009; visitors at *Leaving Vietnam* exhibition, 2017.

as well as original uniforms from the period and a rare copy of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by President Lincoln. The History Center enjoyed great attendance thanks to the incredible artifacts displayed.

In 2009 we were fortunate to host *Jim Henson's Fantastic World*, a traveling exhibition from the Smithsonian Institution that contained hundreds of original Henson drawings and of course showcased a variety of his Muppet characters, including Kermit, Miss Piggy, and Fozzie Bear. Coincidentally, Jim Henson's daughter Heather lived in Central Florida and supported various programming opportunities showcasing original Henson films and other content. *Jim Henson's Fantastic World* opened to rave reviews and drew our largest attendance ever for a limited-run exhibition. Many local residents still

remember visiting the History Center to see it.

Our world changed on June 12, 2016, with the mass shooting at the Pulse nightclub. Since then, our institution has become a leader in the field of contemporary collecting and the collection of oral histories. Each year we host an exhibition commemorating the Pulse tragedy. It is a meaningful time for the History Center as we work with the community to try to comprehend its impact.

During the past few years, the History Center has received the highest honors available to a museum in the United States, including a Gold Medal from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in Washington, D.C., and the History in Progress Award from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). We

have continued to showcase quality limited-run exhibitions, and our plans for the future are exciting. The long-anticipated redesign of our permanent exhibition galleries will begin again in early 2021. Look for new outdoor patios and a fresh design for our entrance atrium early in 2021.

In the meantime, we are dealing with a pandemic, and nationally we are witnessing social unrest not seen since the 1960s. Every day seems to prove that we are destined to repeat our history, at least to some degree. As we salute our first 20 years and continue to plan for our future, rest assured that we are committed to providing meaningful historical content through our exhibitions and programming. We will always be here to tell the story of Central Florida's continually unfolding history. ■

LEGALLY RIGHT, MORALLY WRONG

By
**MELISSA
PROCKO,**
*Research
Librarian*

Injustice Under the Law

This fall and winter, the History Center will present a landmark exhibition, *Yesterday, This Was Home: The Ocoee Massacre of 1920*, which marks the 100-year remembrance of this horrific event in our nation's history. The exhibition explores themes of racial injustice throughout Central Florida's history from enslavement to the Black Lives Matter movement today.

The Ocoee Massacre was not an isolated event. Understanding what happened in Ocoee starts with exploring the social and political climate and the decades of injustice leading up to Election Day 1920. Even after the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution freed the men, women, and children who were enslaved across the country, racial discrimination persisted through

prejudiced mindsets that were often legitimized by racist legislation. The ratification of various amendments guaranteeing equal rights were followed by laws filled with loopholes intended to discriminate against Black Americans. Legislation was sometimes worded without any language regarding race, making it appear as if it was meant to equally apply to every individual, but these laws affected Black and white citizens very differently.

The Reconstruction Amendments

Collectively known as the **RECONSTRUCTION AMENDMENTS**, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution were intended to guarantee freedom to those who had been formerly enslaved. But these amendments wouldn't put an end to racial discrimination.

The Thirteenth Amendment (1865) formally abolished slavery, **EXCEPT** as punishment for a crime.

The Fourteenth Amendment (1868) granted citizenship to all persons born in the United States and guaranteed all citizens "equal protection of the laws."

The Fifteenth Amendment (1870) prohibited the federal government and states from denying an individual the right to vote based on "race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

YET

it didn't prevent racial segregation and became the basis for the "separate but equal" doctrine.

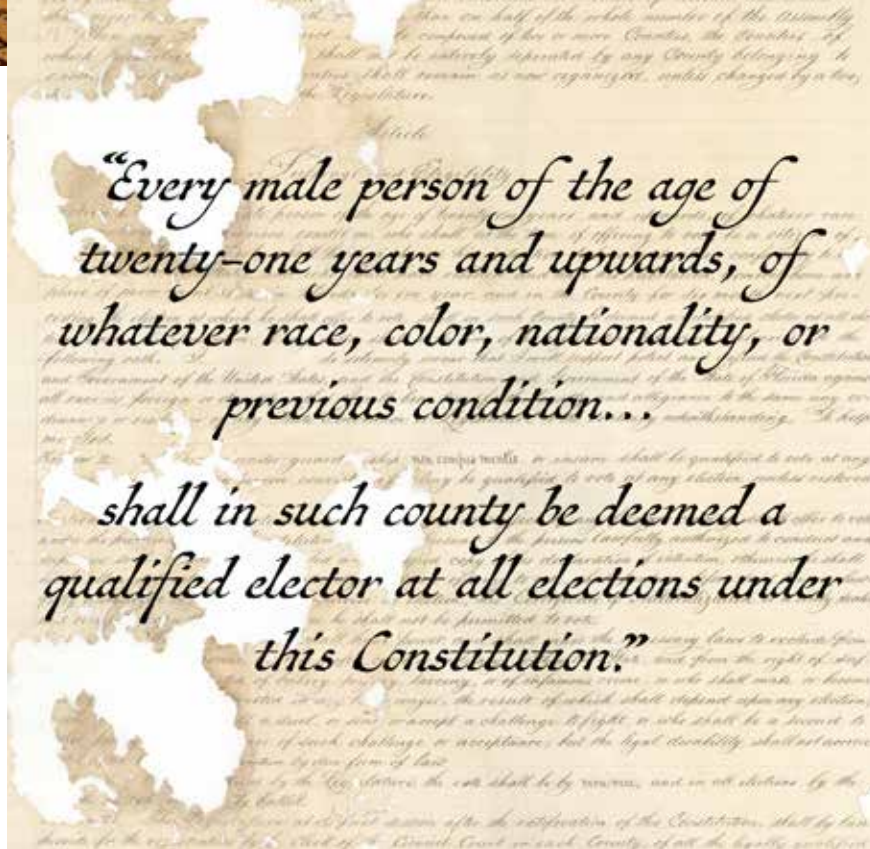
BUT

didn't stop states from adopting other methods of voter discrimination, such as poll taxes and literacy tests.

FLORIDA'S 1868 CONSTITUTION

Following the Civil War, Florida officials drafted a constitution in 1865 in order for the state to be reestablished as a part of the United States. Congress rejected that document because it limited suffrage to white male citizens, and the state was placed under military rule.

After nearly two years of martial law, Florida elected 46 delegates to the Florida Constitutional Convention to create a new state constitution. While Florida's 1868 Constitution may have officially enfranchised Black men on paper and readmitted Florida to the union, it also reapportioned the state in a way that heavily favored sparsely populated white counties. It granted each county at least one state legislative representative, plus an additional delegate for every 1,000 voters. But a county could not elect more than four delegates, which disenfranchised densely populated Black counties while favoring sparsely populated white ones.



Florida Constitution of 1868, Article Suffrage and Eligibility, Section I

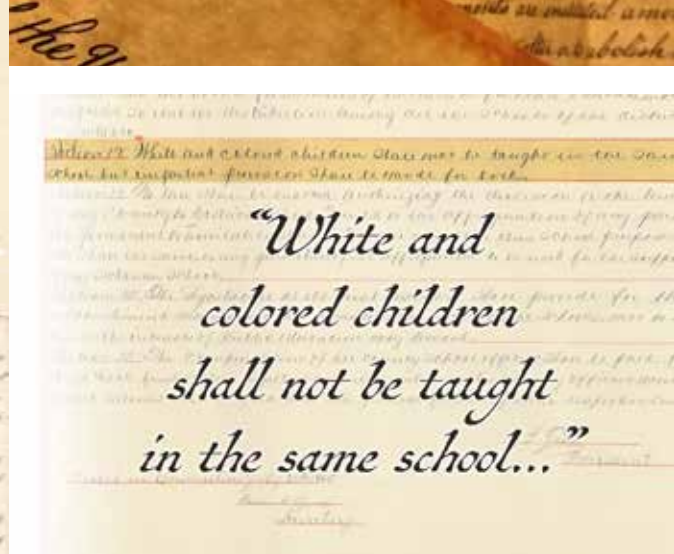
THE 1885 CONSTITUTION

Nearly 20 years after the Florida Constitution of 1868 officially enfranchised Black men, delegates gathered again to revise the state's constitution in 1885. The Florida Constitution of 1885 contained a number of discriminatory articles and provisions, including validating the use of poll taxes as a requirement to vote, prohibiting Black and white children from being taught in the same school, and banning interracial marriages.

WHITE PRIMARIES

Voter disenfranchisement took a number of forms across the South, from poll taxes to literacy tests, but the white primary system was one of the most blatant forms of racial voter discrimination. In 1897, the Florida Legislature granted county executive committees the power to control voter participation in primary elections, allowing the disqualification of voters based on race and permitting

counties to hold white-only primary elections. The state later extended that power to state executive committees, and the Democratic State Committee restricted its first state-wide primary in 1902 to white voters only. For much of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Democratic Party



Florida Constitution of 1868, Article XII, Section 12

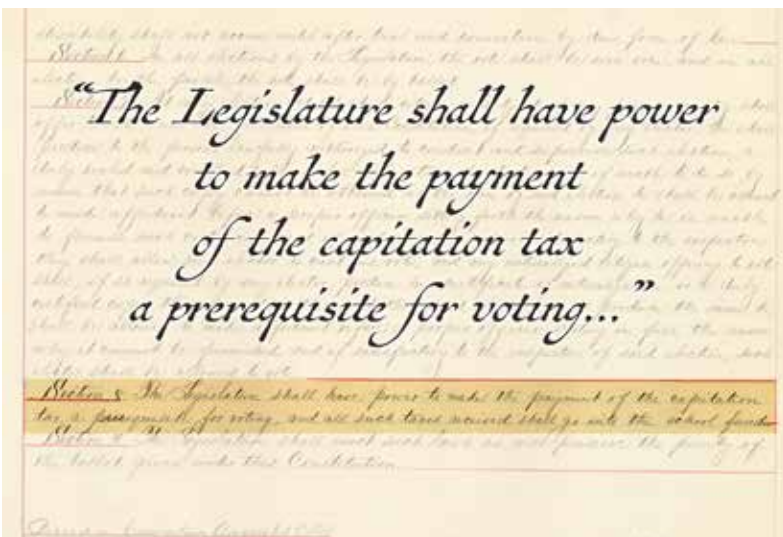
"White and colored children shall not be taught in the same school..."

"All marriages between a white person and a negro, or... a person of negro descent to the fourth generation, inclusive, are hereby forever prohibited."

Florida Constitution of 1868, Article XVI, Section 24

controlled state and local politics. Whoever won the Democratic primary would often go on to win the general election. By controlling who could participate in the primary election, the Democratic Party effectively maintained their one-party rule throughout the state.

Because white primaries were considered to be party rule, not state legislation, they initially weren't considered to be a violation of the 15th Amendment. Florida white primaries continued until 1945, when the Florida Supreme Court declared they were unconstitutional in *Davis v. Cromwell*. But the White Voters Executive Committee controlled Orlando's primary elections until 1950. C.T. Williams, Moses Ridley, James Rogers, and Vernell Simmons, four Black Orlando residents, filed a lawsuit against the committee,



Florida Constitution of 1885, Article VI, Section 8

This Receipt is furnished under Section 11, Chapter 5596, Laws of Florida.

ERNEST AMOS, Comptroller,
August, 1918.

CAPITATION OR POLL TAX FOR 1918—STATE OF FLORIDA, ORANGE COUNTY

No. 77

Orlando, Fla., Nov 27, 1918

Received of C. J. Woodward the sum of ONE DOLLAR,
in payment of his Capitation or Poll Tax for the year A. D. Nineteen Hundred and Eighteen (1918).

Color W Age No. Election District 4

N. E. Martin
Tax Collector, Orange County

Mayor William Beardall, and other city officials, eventually leading to the White Voters Executive Committee relinquishing control of the primary election to the city. Black men and women were finally eligible to participate in Orlando's primary election for the first time on October 3, 1950.

POLL TAXES

Shortly after the 1885 Florida Constitution legitimized the use of poll taxes as a prerequisite to vote, the Florida Legislature implemented a measure making payment of such a tax a requirement across the state. To be eligible to vote, one had to have paid their poll tax for two years before an election. The 1889 implementation of the \$1 poll tax, which translates to \$28 today, as a requirement to vote effectively disenfranchised those who were unable to pay. In 1909, the legislature made payment of a poll tax on someone else's behalf illegal and punishable by six months in a county jail or a \$500 fine.

NINETEENTH AMENDMENT

The Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was officially adopted on August 26, 1920, granting women the right to vote and marking a pivotal moment in the women's suffrage movement. But the fight for equal voting rights didn't end there. Instead of guaranteeing the right to vote in the upcoming presidential election, the Nineteenth Amendment guaranteed Black women the right to face the same voter disenfranchisement strategies that had targeted Black men.

White southern Democrats were so threatened by the notion of the Black franchise that local newspapers printed articles to "awaken the Democratic women of Orange County" to "fight against the negro ballot," as the registration of Black women outnumbered white women 10 to 1. Yet, of the 2,089 names listed on Orlando District One's final voter registration list, only 277 were Black women. In another attempt to disenfranchise Black voters leading up to the election, white women were told they didn't need to provide their ages to register, but Black women would be arrested for perjury if they provided their birth years incorrectly.

A CONVERGENCE IN 1920

In Florida and elsewhere throughout the country, racial injustice was prolonged and legally justified through constitutional and other legal authority. Racial tensions were heightened leading up to the 1920 presidential election, which brought a convergence of the first national election since World War I, when Black veterans who fought for democracy abroad sought to participate in democracy at home, and the potential for nearly doubling the Black franchise with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.

Determined to keep their oppressive systems in place, white supremacists intimidated Black voters with threats and acts of violence. You can learn more in our latest limited-run exhibition, *Yesterday, This Was Home: The Ocoee Massacre of 1920*, on display through February 14, 2021. ■

OFFICIAL BALLOT

No. _____

OFFICIAL BALLOT

No. _____

WHITE VOTERS' PRIMARY
ELECTION BALLOT
OCTOBER 30, 1928
FOR CITY OF ORLANDO

Instruction: To vote for any candidate, make a cross (X) in the square at the right of his name.

MAYOR
Vote for one.

JAS. L. GILES	
L. B. MATTHEWS	

COMMISSIONERS
District No. 1
Vote for one.

JOHN M. COOK	
GEO. S. NASH	

District No. 2
Vote for one.

GEO. F. BRASS	
S. J. JOHNSTON	

District No. 3
Vote for one.

CHAS. M. BRYANT	
GEORGE B. PATTERSON	

2

Top of page: Orange County, Florida, poll tax receipt, 1918. Above: City of Orlando, White Voters' Primary Election Ballot, 1928.

"From da back of da bus . . . where the orange blossoms grow"

By Samuel Augustus Jennings

*I love to wake up in the morning
where the orange blossoms grow,
where the sun comes peeping into where I'm sleeping
and the songbirds say hello.
I love the fresh air and the sunshine
that's so good for us, you know,
so I'll make my home in Florida
where the orange blossoms grow.*

Florida folk song derived from Richard Whiting's
"Where the Morning Glories Grow"(1917)



COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

The author, Samuel Augustus Jennings, about 1956.

1956: Greyhound Memories

**"COLORED SEATING FROM
REAR FORWARD, WHITE SEAT-
ING FROM FRONT TO REAR"**

I looked up at the overhead sign and headed straight to the back of the bus. These annoying "apartheid" signs were posted on all busses running through the South to make sure everybody knew their place. Whites always boarded first to ensure they got a seat.

It was 1956, and I had just recently left Camp Wingmann in Avon Park, Florida, with a smile on my face.

The lakeside summer camp – run by the Episcopal Diocese of South Florida – had given me the opportunity to interact and socialize with white boys for the first time in my totally segregated Sunshine State. There were only two Black boys in the whole camp. My

friend Jamie Boy from Clermont was the other token.

I had made a few new friends, won a boxing match, doo-wopped with a mixed quartet and even exchanged letters with my buddy Rocky from West Palm Beach for a while after we parted company. I envied him because he had ridden the Silver Meteor to the Seaboard station in nearby Sebring.



COURTESY OF CAMP WINGMANN

Teenagers at Camp Wingman about 1956.

There were no trains running between Orlando and Avon Park/Sebring or even Miami, as there are now.

I am 11 years old and riding high on a Greyhound bus later that same summer, on my way to pump gas at our family friend Marion's Phillips 66 gas station in Ft. Pierce, where my mother had grown up. The old blue-and-white relic, which had no air-conditioning, had rolled out of the Orlando bus station half empty, and now we were roaring down the highway with open windows filling the air with delicious diesel fumes.

After transferring to an air-conditioned streamline-moderne silver coach in Titusville, I sat four rows from the rear because all seats behind me were occupied by Black passengers. As the bus revved up to leave, I was suddenly startled out of my reverie when the driver yelled, "Nigger, git up outta dat seat and git back where you belong!"

I looked up into the rearview mirror framing a red-hot face exploding with anger and hate . . . and looking straight at me. I turned around to face wide-eye-open-mouth fear gripping stone black faces behind me. I waited for someone to speak up or challenge the driver, but no one responded to my silent scream for help.

I felt totally humiliated, defeated, and afraid as I struggled to wedge myself between fat Black bodies on the overcrowded back bench of the

bus as a white woman with an inbred sense of entitlement nonchalantly and unapologetically took my window seat. She could have taken the aisle seat beside me, but remember I was only three-fifths human according to the original United States Constitution – and she was a white woman.

A Greyhound dog surely would have fared better than a Black boy on a Greyhound bus in the 1950s. Was I more angry at the colored people who lacked the courage to defend me or the ignorant redneck driver who really didn't know any better?

I even wondered if the chorus in the back of the bus was snickering, "He shoulda knowed better."

Feeling all alone in my fear, anger and pain, Uppity Negro began to emerge and secretly vowed to never let this happen again. The seeds of rebellion were planted deep within my soul and would blossom during the turbulent 1960s.

In 1957, I refused to budge as "Crackers" filed by carrying my old grudge.

1957: The Defiant One

In 1957 I boarded another bus, headed for Detroit, at Orlando's segregated Greyhound bus station. Again I sat four rows from the back, where I had drawn the battle line the

year before after being forced to give up my seat for a white woman. I was now 12 years old and defiant.

I wanted a front-seat view, but it was a compromise I could live with because I knew from experience that I had no backup or support. Here I would hold the line or die trying.

In Winter Park an older black teenage girl got on the bus and sat down beside me. She was also going to Detroit, so I quickly schooled her, "We are traveling in interstate commerce, which means we can sit anywhere we want. So don't move if the driver orders us to give up our seats for white people."

Sure enough when the bus arrived in Jacksonville at dusk the young driver came back and practically begged us to move as he whined, "I've got some white people getting on who need these seats. Would y'all pleeeeeeze move to the back?"

I pressed down on my mate's arm to prevent her from rising, then looked up at him and replied, "We are traveling in interstate commerce. The Interstate Commerce Commission has ruled we have a right to sit here."

The befuddled driver left, and we prepared for the worst. Remember, beatings and lynching were still common in those days, and white people were rarely prosecuted for crimes against Black people – so I was plenty scared, but I couldn't show fear or back down.

He soon returned apologizing profusely to the boarding white passengers as he led them past us to seats in the rear.

I felt vindicated, empowered, and afraid as images of the dead, bloated face of 14-year-old Emmett Till floated in my head, but I learned I could stand up for my rights and survive.

That small triumph planted the seed of rebellion in this "Defiant One" – a seed that blossomed during the turbulent 1960s, when I stepped out as a teen leader of the civil rights movement in Orlando. I have been on the front line of the civil rights struggle for equality – for all – ever since. ■



Greyhound bus at Orlando's Livingston Street bus station in the 1950s or 1960s.

TALES FROM LAKE LUCY: BUILDING SILVER STAR ROAD

BY PEGGY SIAS LANTZ



A crew clears the right-of-way for what would become Hiawassee and Silver Star roads.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

The year was 1915. The small, hand-built house on the shore of a beautiful lake west of Orlando was the home of David Purdy Sias and his family. It was the first house on that lake and only the second house in the area. D.P. Sias was my grandfather, and his son Ralph was my father.

The lake was surrounded by longleaf pines of all sizes, from grass-stage seedlings and bottlebrush-size saplings to huge, 60-foot-tall old-growth trees. Cattle wandered freely through the woods among the stumps left by lumber cutters and the pines slashed by turpentine companies.

The only roads were deep sand ruts made by cattle and logging wagons winding westward through the trees toward Ocoee and Minorville. Quite a number of people owned cars by this time, but only a horse, bearing a rider or pulling a wagon, could travel the sandy roads in west Orange County. The boards for the Sias' house were hauled about 9 miles by horse and wagon from J.C. Paul's lumber mill in Windermere and a mill in Beulah, south of Winter Garden. The wagon had an extendable bed to accommodate the length of the boards.

GOING WEST TO GO EAST

Anyone wanting to go to Orlando to the east had first to go west to Ocoee and Minorville to get to the Winter Garden brick road that would take them to town. My grandfather wanted to be able to drive a car to Orlando without first having to go west, scraping by a forest of trees, and getting stuck in the sand. He attended several meetings of the Orange County commissioners, chaired by M.O. Overstreet, and asked them to clear a road. The commissioners offered him the job and gave him a contract, and he agreed to clear an 8-mile stretch, 30 feet wide, that would go past his house

on Lake Lucy and take him on a new route to the brick road. The contract specified that he would be paid \$100 a mile, if he would wait for his money until the county collected it.

D.P. Sias' sons, Ralph and Dick, helped their father and the county surveyor, John Otto Fries, survey and mark a route through the woods. It began at the brick-paved Winter Garden Road (now called Old Winter Garden Road) and went north on what is now Hiawassee Road, then west on what is now Silver Star Road. My grandfather hired a crew of Black men and assembled the tools to begin clearing the brush and pine trees.

Mailman next to carriage marked "U.S. Mail, R.F.D. No. 2, Orlando." R.F.D. means "Rural Free Delivery."





PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Clearing trees near Lake Lucy, 1914.

DYNAMITE AND MACHETES

Ralph, my father, was 10 years old at the time; many years later, when I was middle-aged, he told me how the road-building was done. One of the Black workers drilled a hole at the base of each big tree with a brace and bit, making a hole 2 inches in diameter. Then he poked in a stick of dynamite and packed it with sand, leaving the fuse hanging out. When he lit the fuse, he would have about 20 seconds to get away. He would yell “Tree blowin’!” and run back toward the crew.

When the dynamite blew, the entire tree jumped about a foot in the air, then slowly fell over. Branches and pine needles flew in all directions when it crashed to the ground. The crew then leaped into action, lopping the branches off the fallen tree with axes and hauling the trimmings to a huge pile. Two men stood on opposite sides

of the tree trunk and used a long saw with handles at both ends (called a two-man cross-cut saw) to saw the pine into lengths that two men could carry to the pile. Other men sawed or chopped down the smaller trees across a wide swath. Machetes cut out the brush.

At lunch time, the men took a break, and the boys, Ralph and Dick, rode a horse named Jim to take their dad his bagged lunch. After work the crew slept in a wagon near the site of the road clearing and were back at work again each day. The workers were paid \$1.25 day; their foreman was paid \$2.00 a day.

It took 28 days for the trees to be cleared from a 30-foot-wide right of way that was 8 miles long. The brush and stumps were burned in huge bonfires that glowed in the night. Then the county brought a steam tractor with 4-foot-high spiked steel wheels and dragged a blade behind it to level and grade the road.

There is no record to indicate how long my grandfather had to wait for his pay. But he had his road so he could drive his new car to Orlando.

By the end of the 1920s, Silver Star Road was extended beyond Hiawassee Road east to Fairvilla and Orange Blossom Trail. I don’t know when Hiawassee Road got its name, but the banked curve from Hiawassee to Silver Star going west remained until 50 years later when Hiawassee was paved north of Silver Star.

Silver Star was clay during our



The building at 7500 W. Silver Star Road was the Central Florida Tuberculosis Hospital, the Sunland Training Center for Retarded Children, and the Sunland Hospital of Orlando. The building was dedicated in January 1938 and destroyed in 1999 after years of disuse following the closing of the Sunland hospitals of Florida in the mid-1980s.

1940s trips to Orlando to visit family. My father said in the early days it was scraped almost daily by a mule-drawn blade to keep it smooth, but I remember it as a “wash-board” road with jarring ripples.

On those trips, my brother and I used the lighted star on the top of the sanitarium on West Silver Star Road to know when we were nearing our grandparents’ home, and we thought that the road was named for it. But my father said it was named when the rural mail route began. Mail was taken by a private carrier between post offices, and letters were delivered to the houses at Lake Lucy and other rural areas by the carrier as he traveled from one post office to another. These routes between post offices were called star routes and designated by an asterisk in postal publications.

LIFE AT LAKE LUCY

This account is from tales that my father told me, years after he helped survey the new road when he was only 10. He also told stories of milking the cows, encounters with rattlesnakes and alligators, and of his adventures climbing the tall pine trees, of swimming in the lake, and of driving the two-rut dirt road to school in Orlando and having to pump up all four tires on the car every morning first.

There were no power lines for electricity. The family used kerosene



lamps for light, wood fires for cooking at first, and later a kerosene stove. The iceman brought 50-pound blocks of ice for the icebox. The water in the lake was clear and clean and was used

for washing, cooking, and drinking. The boys fished, and the family ate what they caught. They had a garden. An outhouse in the woods served as a toilet. They built fences to keep the free-roaming cattle from getting in the garden and in the yard. Ralph and Dick wore knickers or bib overalls, and their mother wore long dresses that she sewed for herself and their sister.

When other people, who were mostly friends and relatives from Iowa,

built houses on Lake Lucy, Ralph and Dick maintained paths from house to house. Ralph strung telephone wire to each house, too. The telephones were battery operated, with bells to ring the phones, but ringing a bell drained the batteries too fast, so the bells were replaced with a large tin horn at each house to blow when they wanted someone to answer the phone. Each family had a different signal. There also were signals for help, to call the children home, or to come play tennis.

When I was a child, visiting my grandparents at Lake Lucy was always a very special time. The two-rut sandy roads, the kerosene lamps, and the hand-pump for water were still there. The iceman still came to fill the icebox, and I and my brother would get the ice chips to suck.

And the calls of the Chuck-will's-widow and the frog chorus sang me to sleep at night. Lake Lucy is still a very special place. ■



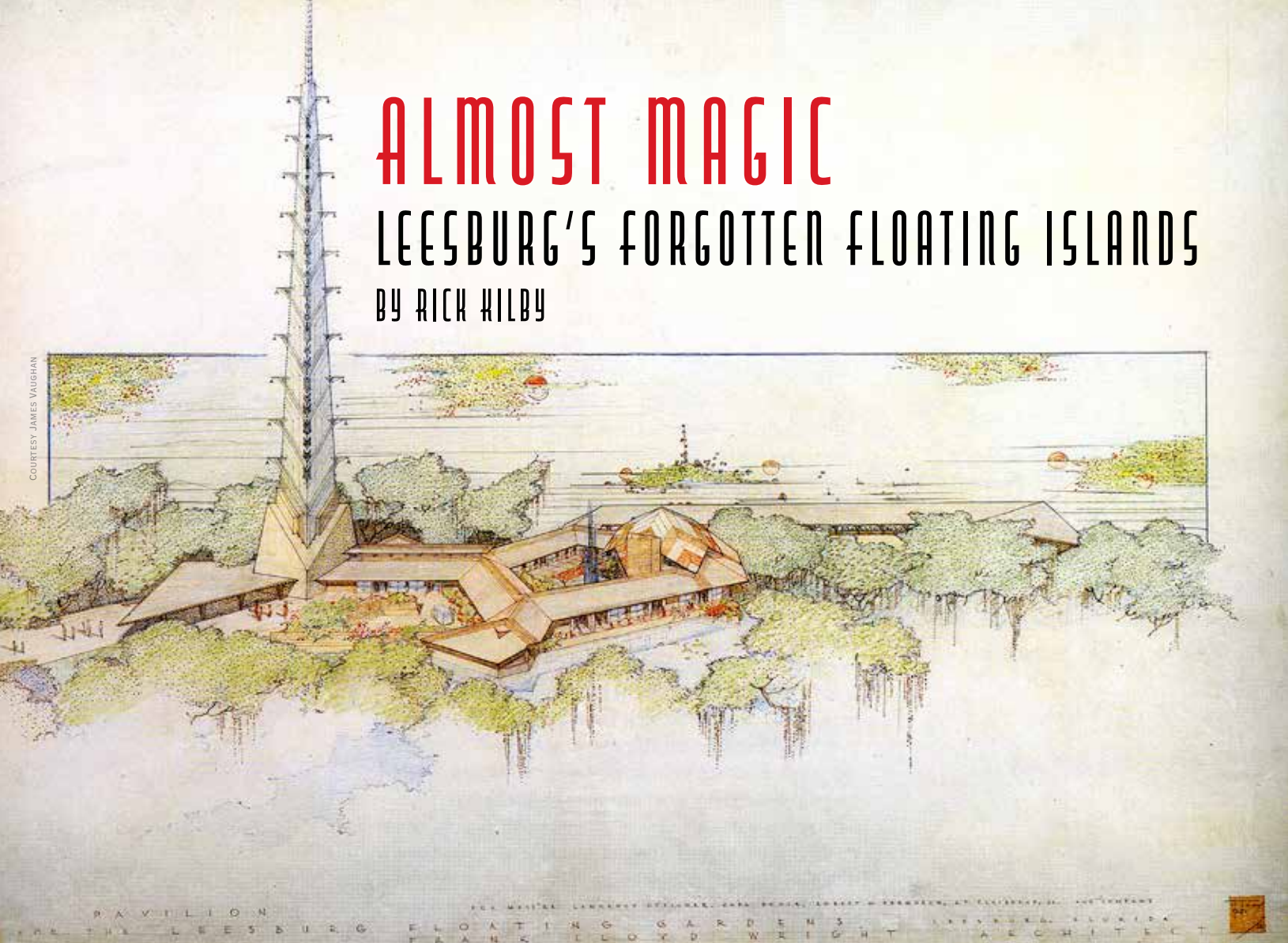
Left: Dick (from right) and Ralph Sias put together a model battleship while their sister, Marion Sias, and mother, Wilhelmine Sias, look on. Below: Vehicles move along Silver Star Road in the Pine Hills area about 1960.



ALMOST MAGIC

LEESBURG'S FORGOTTEN FLOATING ISLANDS

BY RICK KILBY



Above: Frank Lloyd Wright's rendering of Floating Islands. Below: Beverly Grizzard, right, led the State Advertising Commission for Florida Governor Fuller Warren, left.

The story has a familiar beginning. A large parcel of land located close to the intersection of two major highways is acquired as the site for an attraction in a Central Florida region known primarily for citrus groves and beautiful lakes. The man behind this new enterprise, who knows a lot about tourism, has assembled a dream team of nationally renowned experts in architecture, horticulture, and engineering to create a project that will likely reshape Florida's tourism landscape.

But this plan, hatched about ten years before Walt Disney came to Central Florida, was never completed, and it has largely been forgotten. Leesburg's Floating Islands attraction was an attempt to get a piece of the action by the leader of the state's tourism bureau

at a time when more people were flocking to the Florida than ever before.

A VISION INSPIRED BY NATURE

The concept of a Floating Islands attraction belonged to Beverly Grizzard, an ambitious man who, despite losing a leg in motorcycle accident, seemingly had the Midas touch. After moving to the Leesburg area from Tennessee in 1934, he worked for Sinclair Oil, ran a Studebaker dealership, and owned a hotel. He was a big supporter of Florida Governor Fuller Warren, and that landed him a job in Tallahassee in 1949 operating the state's bureau of advertising.

Grizzard's appointment came during a golden era for Florida tourism. After World War II, soldiers

who had been stationed throughout Florida "got sand in their shoes" and returned in huge numbers after the war. Some visited as tourists, but many became new residents, and the state experienced a building boom. Grizzard participated in this explosion of growth by building a subdivision on Lake Griffin in



Leesburg called Beverly Shores. One day Grizzard was at his home on Lake Griffin, as his son Tom tells the story, when he noticed a floating island – a natural phenomenon on Florida waterways. According to the UF / IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants, these islands are composed of a variety of plants that grow in packed organic materials like peat and mud. In some cases, they get so big that trees grow on them. The floating islands of Orange Lake in Marion County were used to promote boat tours on the lake for decades and were even included in a 1937 “Ripley’s Believe It or Not” cartoon.

Grizzard imagined that Seminole Indians in Florida’s interior could have used floating islands to hide their villages from enemies. He even envisioned a dramatic performance by actors telling the story of the Seminoles and the floating islands. It turns out Grizzard was about 10 years ahead of his time: By the mid-1960s, several outdoor Florida dramas portrayed Native Americans for tourists, ranging from Paul Green’s “Cross and the Sword” in St. Augustine to performances at the Six Gun Territory attraction near Silver Springs.

In addition to the Seminole drama, Grizzard also borrowed ideas from Cypress Gardens. In his role leading the Florida Advertising Commission, he had tangled with Cypress Gardens founder Dick Pope. Many aspects of Grizzard’s vision for Floating Islands resembled Pope’s iconic attraction, including a seating area from which audiences could view water-ski shows as well as swimming and diving exhibitions. Beautifully manicured grounds full of lush, tropical greenery would create photogenic backdrops – a concept perfected by Pope – to help publicize Grizzard’s park.

CREATING A “TOURIST MECCA”

Grizzard thought Leesburg was the perfect location for his concept – halfway between Silver Springs and Cypress Gardens, then the state’s two most popular attractions. This was the pre-interstate era of named scenic-driving routes, and the Orange Blossom Trail, one of the more popular, extended from the Georgia state line all the way to South Florida, passing through Leesburg. Grizzard found four investors from New York, and they established the Floating Islands



Carl Byoir was the associate chairman of the U.S. Committee on Public Information in May 1918.

Corporation to build the attraction nearby, on 120 acres that stretched from the western edge of Lake Griffin to the opposite side of the Orange Blossom Trail.

The investors were led by Carl Byoir, a legend in the field of public relations whose career included work for three presidents: Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, and Franklin Roosevelt. For Roosevelt, Byoir coordinated a series of Birthday Balls to combat polio – the genesis of an organization that came to be known as the March of Dimes.

In 1935 the Orlando Chamber of Commerce hired Byoir to promote the city to Florida tourists. He organized events designed to lure winter visitors to the City Beautiful, including a golf tournament, a swimming demonstration featuring Olympic athletes, and a 1936 stopover by FDR and first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. In 1949, Byoir spoke at a series of clinics organized by Governor Warren about the importance of developing a Florida tourist market during the summer, a point of emphasis during Warren’s administration and Grizzard’s term as the state’s lead promoter.



Inspiration for Grizzard’s Floating Islands concept came from Cypress Gardens, top left, and floating islands in lakes such as Orange Lake, bottom right. Leesburg was ideally positioned on the Orange Blossom Trail almost halfway between Silver Springs and Cypress Gardens.



LEGENDARY DESIGNERS

In 1952 Grizzard and his wife, Dora Lee, went to Wisconsin to hire the world's most famous architect to design a plan for his new park. Frank Lloyd Wright had worked in Florida before – he designed twelve structures for the Florida Southern College campus between the 1930s and 1950s. The rendering Wright produced is highlighted by a towering spire that would be seen for miles. But Wright was fired – either the project's investors didn't like his design, or he simply didn't meet their deadlines.

The Floating Islands team then hired Paul Rudolph of Sarasota, a Harvard-trained architect who had studied under Walter Gropius, founder of the influential Bauhaus design movement. Rudolph also came up with a plan that incorporated a roadside tower, but his was only a modest 90 feet tall.

The central feature of Rudolph's design was a circular island in a man-made lake. The focus of the island would be the world's largest sundial made out of flowers and tropical plants. An amphitheater on the island would provide seating for audiences watching the Seminole dramas, water-ski shows, and swimming demonstrations Grizzard had envisioned. Smaller landscaped floating islands and docks for tour boats would radiate out from the central island.

With a budget of \$500,000 – over \$4 million in 2020 dollars – construction started in 1953. The project received a lot of media attention, and newspaper articles show progress in dredging the lake, drilling a well, and transforming the landscape. Mulford Foster, an Orlando horticulturalist and landscape designer, was hired to transform the natural setting into a “tropical wonderland.” Foster had gained a hard-earned reputation for his Orlando landscape designs for housing developments such as Lancaster Park and public parks including H.H. Dickson Azalea Park. His work also graced Florida attractions such as Marineland, where he worked with Gainesville engineer N.C. Ebaugh, who was also involved with Floating Islands. News photos show Foster examining air plants with Byoir and moving a 10-ton palm tree from his Orlando nursery to the Leesburg site in 1953.

GRIZZARD'S LEESBURG LEGACY

The reduction in the volume of newspaper articles in 1954 indicates that the project's momentum slowed. Before construction could be completed, two of the four New York investors Grizzard had gathered died. The heirs of the departed financiers had no desire to continue to fund the project, which never reached completion. Grizzard sued

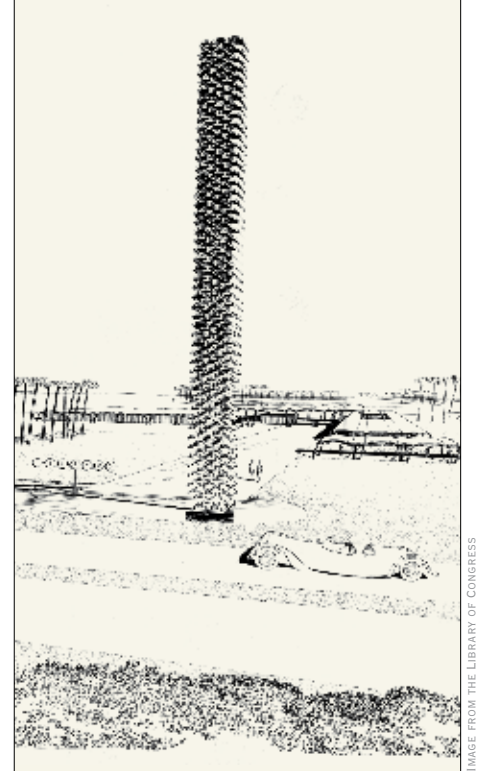


IMAGE FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

This rendering by Paul Rudolph shows that vaulted roofs for walkways would have been composed of sheets of plywood that were laminated and glued together.

the Floating Islands corporation in 1957 and as a settlement was given much of the land from the project. He built a residential development called Beverly Point on a portion of the property. Private homes lined one of the canals that had been excavated for boat tours. He also gave a parcel of land to Lake County for the creation of Beverly Shores Elementary School.

Today, a Bealls department store anchors a strip mall near the spot where a glorious tower was to stand

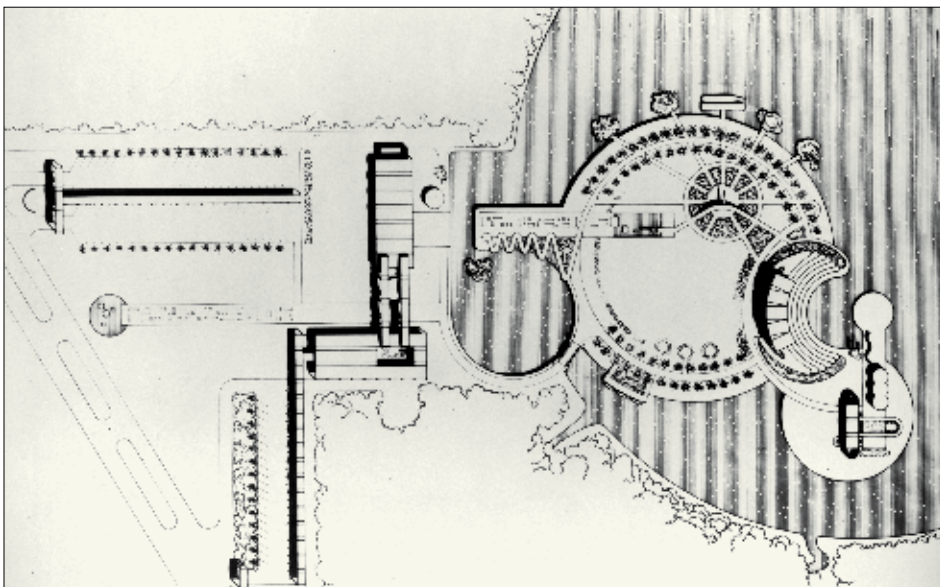


IMAGE FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



IMAGE: UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Left: Paul Rudolph's circular plan for Floating Islands. Above: Architect Paul Rudolph, right, shows a model of Floating Islands to J.T. Claiborne Jr., left, president of Floating Islands Corp., and Carl Byoir, director of Floating Islands Corp.

as a beacon for tourists on U.S. 441. According to Tom Grizzard, in order to develop the property, builders needed to cut down some large oak trees, and the county insisted on a deal to preserve the land behind the strip mall in perpetuity.

The man-made lake dredged for the ill-fated attraction is still behind the commercial parcel, but the land surrounding it has returned to a natural state. Further east on Lake Griffin, the shoreline is covered in native plants and flowers. The serenity of the scene is broken only by little blue herons and glossy ibises who compete for treetop “real estate” on which to build nests.



IMAGE: UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

One can only speculate at the success Floating Islands might have had. Sunshine Springs and Gardens, a short-lived attraction east of Sarasota, was a similar project. According to Ken Breslauer’s book *Florida Roadside Attraction History*, Sunshine Springs was created on a 400-acre tract of ranch land that was sculpted into “huge lakes and winding canals.” Even a ski show by former Cypress Gardens employees and a water-skiing elephant could not ensure its success, and it lasted less than four years. Like much of the Floating Islands property, its site is now home to a housing development and an elementary school.

While Floating Islands had a better location on the Orange Blossom Trail, that would have likely been negated with the advent of interstate travel in the 1960s, when highways like I-75, I-95, and the Florida Turnpike siphoned off much of the automobile traffic. The golden age of roadside attractions ended when new, corporate theme parks took advantage of interstate highways and multi-lane toll roads and pointed an ever-growing flow of tourists to Orlando – another Central Florida town of citrus groves and beautiful lakes. ■

Left: Mulford Foster shows tropical plants to J.T. Claiborne, Jr., left, and Carl Byoir, right. Below: The man-made lake at the Floating Islands site, dredged in the 1950s, still exists, surrounded by thick vegetation.



PHOTO BY IAN COWIE

See FLORIDA'S SILVER SPRINGS FROM PARADISE PARK FOR COLORED PEOPLE ONLY



RIK KILBY

SEGREGATED SAFE HAVENS

Although Florida's tourism industry boomed in the period after World War II, the state was still part of the Jim Crow South, and segregation left few recreational options for African American tourists. Most beaches were for whites only with a few notable exceptions. Perhaps the best-known beach for people of color was American Beach on Amelia Island in North Florida. In South Florida, Dade County's Virginia Key Beach was set aside for African Americans, and in Central Florida, Mary McLeod Bethune was instrumental in creating Bethune Beach in Volusia County, near New Smyrna.

A rare roadside attraction for people of color was Paradise Park adjacent to Silver Springs. Created by Silver Springs owners Carl Ray and W.M. "Shorty" Davidson in 1949, Paradise Park offered free admission for Black families until it closed in 1969 after Silver Springs desegregated.

Like Silver Springs, the park featured glass-bottom boat rides, a jungle cruise, and an opportunity to swim in the crystal-clear spring water. Paradise Park was an important gathering spot for African Americans, offering a location for picnics, beauty contests, dances, and baptisms. It is estimated that park attendance was 100,000 visitors a year. Today, the land the park once occupied is part of Silver Springs State Park.

COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT: THE EXECUTION TICKET OF TOM THOMAS

by Whitney Broadaway, Collections Manager

In 2018, History Center staff noticed an online-auction listing that grabbed our attention immediately. It was for a ticket to an execution by hanging in Orlando on February 19, 1907. The horrific fact that someone would have a ticket to a hanging as if they were going to the movies – right here in Orlando – was something that needed to be preserved, and we were able to acquire the ticket. The name listed on it was Tom Thomas.

LEGAL LYNCHINGS

Our research found that Thomas had been accused of murder. Census records revealed that he was Black – information that added a possible layer to the ticket's story.

In the Jim Crow South, the execution of a Black man was not always as it appears on the surface. Although technically sanctioned by law, such hangings sometimes amounted to legal lynchings. One

documented example took place in 1902 in Sumterville, west of Apopka, when Henry Wilson was executed.

Accused of murder, Wilson had to be moved several times during his short stay in custody to avoid the mob that sought to drag him away to be lynched. His entire trial, from arraignment to verdict and sentencing to a public hanging (even though public hangings were outlawed in Florida at the time) took a total of two hours.

Wilson's death warrant was sent to Gov. William Jennings to be signed. The *Gainesville Sun* reported "if the Governor [signs] the murderer will be hung by the sheriff. If he does not, the hanging will take place just the same."

The governor did sign, and officials moved up the date of Wilson's execution to appease the still-restless mob. Even a 2013 *Ocala Star Banner* article recalls the whole incident as a triumph by the sheriff in avoiding a lynching.



Shows the new 6000. Orange Co. Court House - this view was taken in the P.M. and shows the back - it is a fine building



Feb 19 - A Negro murderer is just being hanged behind the white screen (X) those next the Jail yard fence are Negroes - this side is lined with white people

UNCOVERING THE STORY

Our staff did not know whether the case of Tom Thomas in Orlando was similar to Wilson's, but we hoped to uncover more of Thomas' story. The seller of the ticket told us that, in 25 years as a dealer of paper ephemera, he had never before seen an execution ticket. Although the ticket was from Orlando, the seller was in Lincoln, Nebraska, and he had found the ticket in a scrapbook from Providence, Rhode Island.

Our search into Tom Thomas moved slowly. We learned that he had been accused of shooting and killing another Black man, Lige Sargent, at Overstreet's turpentine still near Lockhart in Orange County on October 1, 1906, according to news accounts at the time. Carey Hand Funeral records corroborated both deaths. An *Ocala Banner* article from February 2, 1906, described a Tom Thomas who was a well-known foreman and carpenter and the son of L.E. Thomas – a Reconstruction-era judge in Alabama – but we had no way to confirm that he was our Thomas. What we found was better than nothing, but we always want to know as much as we can.

A RESEARCHER'S BREAKTHROUGH

That brings us to the beautiful, symbiotic relationship archives can have with their researchers. Museums and archives house an overwhelming quantity of information, and community researchers may discover breakthroughs and connections that evade staff.

In this case, Ted Haddock, executive director of Orlando's Edward E. Haddock Jr. Family Foundation, made the connection. He's a frequent flyer in the History Center's reading room, with significant results. During his work with the Friends of Tinker Field Foundation, for example, he compiled research on Tinker Field – Orlando's now-gone, historic home of baseball and site of MLK's Orlando rally – that's now our library's best resource on the subject.

In June 2019, Haddock came in to do research on the Ocoee Massacre and other incidents of racial violence.

It was easy to pull materials for his visit – they were the same items our staff had been poring over to prepare for our exhibition on the massacre. The execution ticket was included.

As Haddock turned the pages of a 1906-1907 scrapbook photo album, he came to the reason we had also placed it among his research materials. In between jaunty vacation photos illustrating a family's trip from Connecticut to Orlando sits an unassuming photo with the caption "Feb 19th A Negro murderer is just being hanged be-hind the white screen (x). Those next [to] the Jail yard fence are negroes – this side is lined with white people."

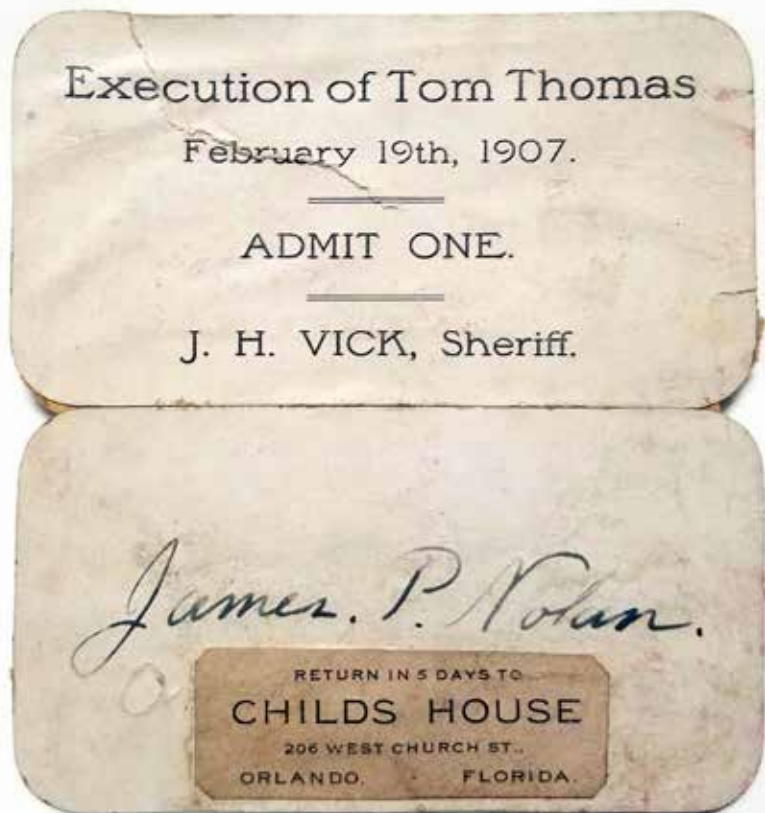
The album had been donated to the History Center in 2005 by someone in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and staff members had long known about this photo, with its haunting x to indicate the unseen hanging behind a white screen. But we had no other information about the image.

Now, Haddock made the connection: the date in the photo's caption – February 19, 1907 – was the same date printed on the execution

ticket. Clearly, the mystery photograph was from the hanging of Tom Thomas. Putting this photo and ticket together has opened our eyes in many ways. The white "screen" at some hangings has been explained as a decency measure, to comply with Florida's law requiring that executions be private. What we see in the photo appears to be an improvised tent, and since a ticket exists, it's easy to wonder if perhaps its real purpose was to keep people from seeing a "free" show.

Tom Thomas was pronounced dead after 19 minutes and was cut down and buried in an unmarked grave at Orlando's Greenwood Cemetery. Meanwhile, two gruesome souvenirs from the spectacle of his death made their way across the country to Rhode Island and New Mexico — waiting for more than a century to be reunited once again in Orlando. ■

Both the ticket and the photo album can be seen in the History Center's exhibition Yesterday, This Was Home: The Ocoee Massacre of 1920, which will be open until Feb 14, 2021.



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Reflections from Central Florida

The magazine of the Historical Society of Central Florida Inc. focuses on the Florida counties included within the History Center's mission: Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Volusia, Lake, Brevard, and Polk. The History Center is located at 65 East Central Boulevard, Orlando, FL 32801. Visit our website at TheHistoryCenter.org

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The Joseph L. Brechner Research Center

The Brechner Research Center houses the special collections of the Historical Society of Central Florida, documenting 14,000 years of Central Florida history. The center includes a research library, an archive, and space for researching items from the collection. The Research Center was created through a donation from the late Marion Brody Brechner in honor of her husband, Joseph (1915-1990), an award-winning journalist, community leader, and freedom-of-information advocate.

FROM THE COLLECTION



Across the nation, this year's Juneteenth celebrations were mixed with sadness and protest. The holiday commemorates the end of slavery in the United States and marks the day U.S. troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865 – more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation – to ensure that enslaved people were freed.

These items above, from the Juneteenth Memorial Services for Lives Lost to Police Brutality and Gun Violence at Orlando's Lake Eola Park and the Juneteenth Freedom Day March through downtown, are part of our continuing effort to collect history as it is happening. If you have something related to COVID-19, protests, or other recent events that you think might have a place in our collection, please email digital archivist Aaron Pahl at aaron.pahl@ocfl.net. ■

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WHITNEY BROADAWAY

Whitney Broadaway, collections manager, is a fourth-generation Central Floridian with a rich family history in the Orlando area dating back to 1893. Previously the book conservator at the UCF Library, she has been a collections professional for 10 years.



SAMUEL AUGUSTUS JENNINGS

Sam Jennings was born in Orlando but moved away in 8th grade. He returned to Orlando and finished high school at Jones High School. He attended Morehouse College in Atlanta. He worked for Amtrak for 30 years and retired a few years ago.



RICK KILBY

Author/graphic designer Rick Kilby's first book, *Finding the Fountain of Youth: Ponce de León and Florida's Magical Waters*, earned a medal at the Florida Book Awards in 2014. His latest book, *Florida's Healing Waters*, was published this year.



PEGGY SIAS LANTZ

Peggy Sias Lantz is the author of *The Young Naturalist's Guide to Florida*, *The Florida Water Story*, and *Florida's Edible Wild Plants*, as well as *Lake Lucy Tales* and a book being readied for publication titled *Adventure Tales from Florida's Past*.



MELISSA PROCKO

A native Floridian, Melissa Procko is a proud alumna of the University of Central Florida. After graduating with a B.A. in Anthropology, she worked as the One Orlando Collection's digital archivist before becoming the History Center's research librarian.

HISTORIC HAPPENINGS

BRECHNER SERIES: FEMALE PIONEERS



On March 8, 2020, historian Peggy Macdonald told the stories of some of the notable women who have shaped the Sunshine State, from Dr. Esther Hill Hawks to Betty Mae Tiger Jumper.

WOMEN'S HISTORY BREAKFAST



Our inaugural breakfast was celebrated on March 12 during Women's History Month and featured the extraordinary life of Mary McLeod Bethune—educator, activist, champion of racial and gender equality, and adviser to presidents.

DINING FROM THE YESTERDISH



Our chief curator, Pam Schwartz, teamed with the Bungalower's Brendan O'Connor on Facebook Live to explore Central Florida's culinary prowess of yesteryear and ventured into cooking some recipes for an attentive audience.

LAS HISTORIAS QUE NOS PUDIERAN CONTAR



A curator's tour of our summer virtual exhibition, *The Stories They Could Tell*, was presented in Spanish. It offered a behind-the-scenes look at what went into creating the fourth Pulse remembrance exhibition.

FLORIDA HIGHWAYMEN MEET & GREET



On Saturday, August 1, we welcomed a group of the legendary Florida Highwaymen artists back to the museum. Since 2002, the History Center has often hosted these legendary painters and their vibrant work.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF 19TH AMENDMENT



On August 17, the League of Womens Voters of Orange County presented a news conference celebrating the 19th Amendment. Featured speakers included Orange County mayors past and present: Linda Chapin and Jerry L. Demings.

**Join us for the
Virtual Presentation of the
DONALD A. CHENEY AWARD
Thursday, Nov. 5, 2020, 7 p.m.**

The Donald A. Cheney Award was established by the Historical Society of Central Florida to recognize and pay tribute to individuals in the Central Florida community who embody unfailing dedication to the area's history. This year's recipient is Francina Boykin, president of the Apopka Historical Society, whose research over decades has been crucial in unearthing the story of the Ocoee Massacre of 1920.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

65 E. Central Boulevard • Orlando, Florida 32801



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YESTERDAY, THIS WAS HOME

The Ocoee Massacre of 1920

THE LARGEST ACT OF VOTING DAY VIOLENCE
IN AMERICAN HISTORY

This landmark exhibition will commemorate 100 years
since the massacre, examine centuries of racial
oppression in our community, and help us engage
in conversations for moving forward.

ON EXHIBIT THROUGH FEBRUARY 14, 2021