



# DeSoto County Historical Society News

P.O. Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265, [www.historicdesoto.org](http://www.historicdesoto.org)  
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January 2012

## Sponsors Needed!

For a donation of \$100, you, your organization, or your business, will have a listing in this newsletter for 12 months!

Two or more people can make the donation together.

XXXX

January - **Jeanne Lloyd in memory of Dr. H.C. Lloyd**

XXXX

February - **Evelyn Sasser in memory of Kit and Candacy Mahon**

March - **Kay and Leonard Higley**

April - **Arlene and Warren Conley in memory of Leo and Hazel Williams**

May - **Happy Birthday to DeSoto County!**

June - **Max Fitzpatrick in memory of Lois Rachel Fitzpatrick**

July - **Mitzie McGavic**

August - **Darlene Head**

**in memory of R. A Head**

September - **Donn and Bebe Jackson**

October - **Howard Melton**

**in memory of his wife Velma**

November - **Ronnie and Charlotte Allen, in memory of Winnie Duncan**

December - **Happy 125th Birthday to the City of Arcadia!**

**WELCOME** to Warren Conley who joined as a new member in December.

## Officers and Directors

Thanks to Adrian Cline, Superintendent of DeSoto County Schools and the Society's first president, for installing new officers and directors at December's meeting.

They join existing directors Marty Dow, Marion Glanden, Vernon Keen, and Howard Melton. Congratulations to the following!

Bebe Jackson- President

Dennis Tyson - Vice-president

Michelle Potter - Secretary

Mitzie McGavic - Treasurer

James Chancey - Director

Arlene Conley - Director

Harold McLeod - Director

## An Excerpt from

*Recollections I: A Collection of Historical Photographs, Documents, Letters, Diaries, Stories, Recipes, Sayings, and Other Memorabilia about Arcadia and DeSoto County, Florida.*

## Circuit-riding Preachers Crossed Florida Prairies, Bringing Hope to Early Settlers

The founding of churches played an important role in the settlement of southwest Florida as pioneers pushed south into the pine- and palmetto- covered wilderness. Earliest records of church services show gatherings at a place called Camp Ground at Pine Level. Families moving here missed the worship services they had left behind, so they traveled from great distances by horseback and wagon to camp for several days by a small tributary of Horse Creek called Pine Level Branch, now known on some maps as Buzzard's Roost Branch.

According to Doris Cato Nicholson, late historian of DeSoto County, the early worshippers cooked over campfires and slept under wagons. Sometimes a nearby settler would "butcher a beef" to feed those gathered. A number of preachers would speak morning, afternoon, and night, delivering their sermons under brush or grapevine arbors which provided shade.

Names of the early families of Pine Level included Hagan, Mizell, Green, Messer, Barnhill, Platt, Johnson, Bartoff, Posey, Sellers, Seward and Carlton. The Camp Ground was near the present Camp Grounds Cemetery, accessible off Highway 70 west, just west of Florida Avenue. It features a marker erected by the Pine Level Civic Association in the shape of a Florida Historical Marker.

Circuit-riding preachers began coming to then-Manatee County from Polk and Hillsborough counties by horseback . . . .

**You can read the rest of this history by Luke Wilson in *Recollections I*, which will be for sale with *Recollections II* at the meeting.**

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: Please send all news, corrections, and :  
: suggestions to Carol Mahler at 445-0789 :  
: or online at [carolmahler3@gmail.com](mailto:carolmahler3@gmail.com). :  
:.....

**Mark Your Calendars for our  
Eighth Annual Pioneer Day  
on Sat., March 17, at DeSoto Park!**

President Bebe Jackson will chair the Pioneer Day committee, and she will need plenty of assistance! This year, we're planning more hands-on demonstrations of pioneer skills. If you know someone who can weave palmetto fronds, cane chairs, carve shingles, or do other old-fashioned crafts, please tell Bebe at the meeting or call her at 494-6607.

If you enjoy working with children, we need you in the children's area. DeSoto County students are on Spring Break the week before the festival, so we won't be able to have a "Learning Florida History Day" this year for them.

We invite businesses, churches, clubs, and others to display their history. Pioneer Day is an opportunity to show off our community's history and heritage. Please consider participating in some way!

**Pioneer Day Planning Meeting  
Monday, January 9, 5 p.m.  
Howard and Velma Melton Historical  
Research Library at the Ingraham Seed  
House, 120 W. Whidden Street**

**Thanks to Muriel and Lew Hall  
for their donation for a wall-mounted  
display case for the Howard and Velma  
Melton Historical Research Library!**

When the Library opens for regular hours, a display of the Hall family history will be featured for six months in a display case that will have a permanent plaque engraved with their names.

For a donation of \$200 or more, you, too, can display your family's history and have an engraved plaque affixed to a display case. Your donation can be in honor of or in memory of a loved one. Please send your donation to the Historical Society, P.O. Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265.

**Our E-Newsletter**

If you would like to receive your newsletter in your inbox, please send your e-mail address to [clelshore@embarqmail.com](mailto:clelshore@embarqmail.com).

**January Meeting Announcement**

The DeSoto County Historical Society's regular monthly meeting will be on the **SECOND Thursday** of the month,

**January 12, 2012**

at the **Family Service Center Annex** (old West Elementary cafeteria) at the corner of N. Orange Avenue and Effie Street. Available for \$5 at 11:30 a.m., lunch will be "Sloppy Joe" or chicken salad sandwiches, salad, and chips. (Thanks to Marty Dow for preparing this meal, and we give our special appreciation to June Sowell for making desserts and tea!) At noon, President Bebe Jackson will conduct a short business meeting, and then she will introduce our speaker,

**Joe Spann,**

a native of Polk County and manager of the Polk County Historical and Genealogical Library in Bartow. He will speak about

**Early Florida Railroads.**

*Come early and bring a friend--or two!*

**Annual Auction for Scholarship  
Raised \$1,087!**

Special thanks to all who donated new items for the auction, who bid on them, and who made a donation to this program. As a result, the Historical Society will award a scholarship to a DeSoto County High School graduating senior in 2012.

**We Need YOU for Yard Cleaning  
9 a.m., Saturday, January 14**

We're gathering at the John Morgan Ingraham Home and Seed House to clean up the yards. Please come and help!

**Happy Birthday to the City of  
Arcadia, December 6, 2011!**

At our December meeting, we sang a rousing "Happy Birthday" to the City of Arcadia. Cutting the birthday cake were representatives from the City, including Council Member Bob Allen, City Administrator Lawrence Miller, Assistant City Administrator Judi Jankowski, DeSoto County Sheriff Will Wise, and Author and Historian Howard Melton.