



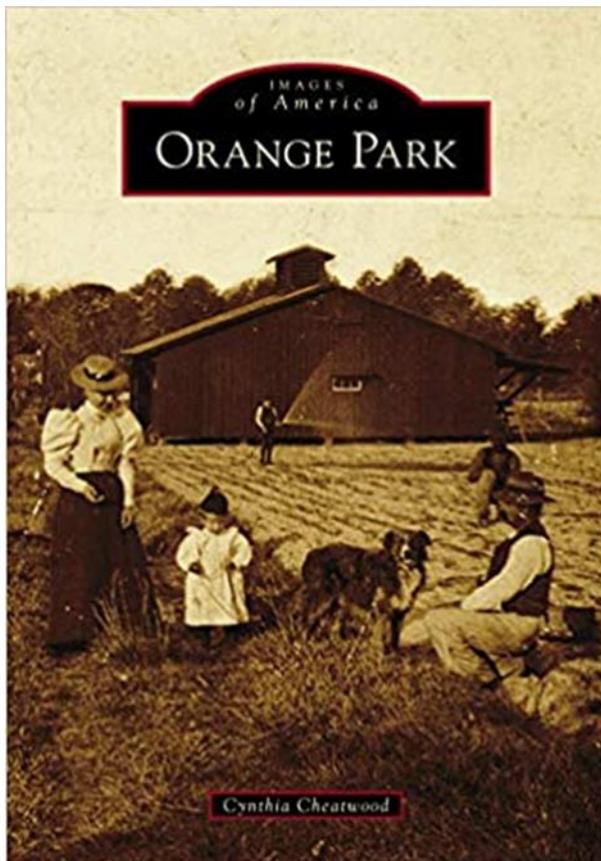
The Historical Society of Orange Park

August 2020 Newsletter

Making Progress

There is no doubt that the corona virus has upended plans for most everything this year. When the shutdowns and recommendations for self-isolation began back in March we all hoped that summer would bring a return to more normal routines and activities. Restrictions were relaxed somewhat but the coronavirus has remained persistent and somewhat pervasive. However, with reasonable precautions, small groups have been able to gather and socialize with a measure of success. To that end, the Society will resume the monthly open house tours of the Clarke House. The Clarke House will be open to the public from 2 PM to 4 PM, Sunday, August 9. We ask that anyone considering a visit to the Clarke House be mindful of their health and the health of others. Visitors will be required to wear face masks and follow social distancing guidelines while visiting. No more than 10 people can be in the house at any one time. We look forward to resuming normal activities.

Images of America - Orange Park



Orange Park, Florida, once known as Laurel Grove Plantation, was incorporated in 1879. Luring people with its healthy climate, therapeutic spring, and charming views of the St. Johns River, the town has played host to the rich and famous as well as the poor and humble. In early days, steamboats carried the likes of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Pres. Ulysses S. Grant, William Astor, and B.J. Johnson to the grand Hotel Marion for recreational or health benefits. Later, one of Florida's first integrated schools thrived just yards away. Important scientific studies were conducted at the town's "Monkey Farm" for 35 years. Orange Park, far more than a bedroom community for Jacksonville, has all the charm of small-town America.

A new book, endorsed by the Historical Society of Orange Park, presents the town's history

through images of its past. Using historical society records, decades of local newspaper columns, and published and unpublished histories of Clay County, Florida, local historian Cynthia Cheatwood has assembled a rich view of Orange Park's story. Many of this book's images, gathered from university archives, Clay County Historical Archives, the State Archives of Florida, and local collections, have seldom been shared.

Interested in the **history of Orange Park**?

This book is available August 24th. Pre-order on Amazon, Barnes and Noble or various other outlets online.

Series: Images of America

Paperback: 128 pages

Publisher: Arcadia Pub (August 24, 2020)

\$21.99

Copies will also be available for purchase through the Historical Society.

All author royalties for the sale of this book will go toward historical preservation in Orange Park.

Veterans Day Essay Contest

Despite our current heat and humidity the fall of the year is approaching. The Society is looking forward to our annual celebration of Veterans Day. Each year we host the Veterans Day Ceremony at the Veterans Memorial in Magnolia Cemetery. At this time, we are uncertain how the ceremony will be structured to accommodate the necessary restrictions related to the Covid-19 virus but we will work to resolve these issues. In conjunction with the annual ceremony, we conduct an essay contest for Clay County students from grades 4 through 12. Contest winners will receive a cash prize and have the opportunity to read their essay at the Veterans Day Ceremony on November 11. The categories for this year's contest are:

<u>Grade Level</u>	<u>Word Limit</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Prize Amount</u>
4 th – 6 th	300 - 500	Why do we celebrate Veterans Day?	\$50
7 th – 8 th	400 – 700	Why do we honor Veterans?	\$75
9 th – 12 th	500 – 1,000	What does it mean to be a Veteran?	\$100

All essays are due September 25. Please visit our website, www.ophistory.org, to download a copy of the contest rules and an entry form.

Celebrating Women's Equality Day

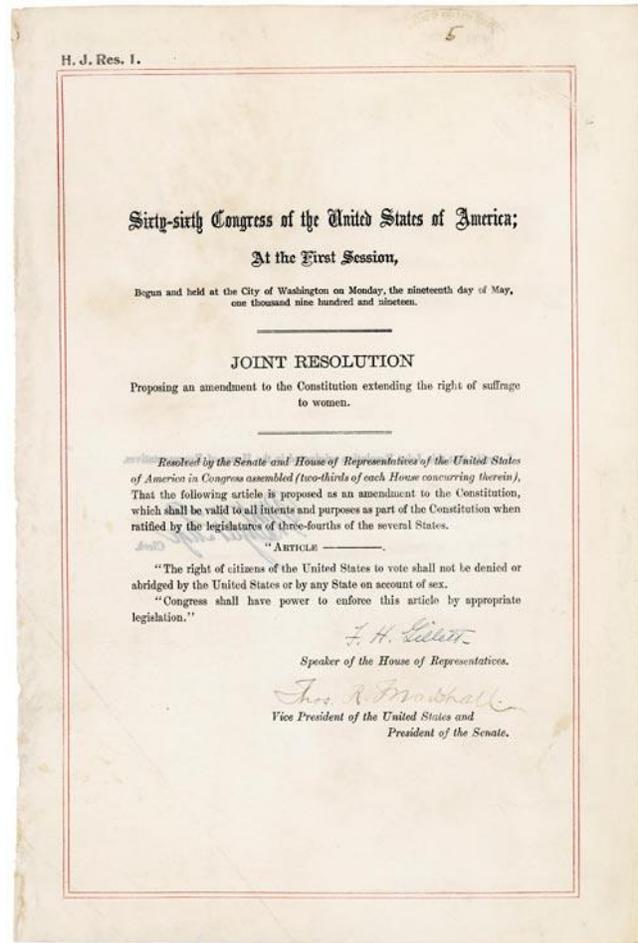
August 26th marks an annual celebration called “Women's Equality Day”, recognizing the passage of the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote. The bill creating it had been introduced at every session of Congress for 42 years, but ignored or voted down. On August 26, 1920, thirty-six states ratified the amendment, thus enfranchising half the adult citizenry, with

the words, "*The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.*" Florida, however, was not among those ratifying, and in fact it did not do so until 1969 (Mississippi was the last to ratify, in 1984!). Scrutiny of newspaper databases reveal there was not even notable press in Florida before or after ratification until the onset of the Women's Lib movement.

When asking why Florida took so long, history is only now offering answers. There are many stories of men believing that if women were given the right to vote the family, "home and hearth", would cease to be their focus. Many women's suffrage groups in Florida often only supported granting the vote to white women. African American women were frequently excluded from suffrage organizations across the country, but their absence in Florida appears more systemic. Some measures were taken to allow women to vote in various local elections as early as 1915 and Florida did pass a law granting "all residents suffrage" in 1921. However, Southern traditions seem to have held fast.

Perhaps Florida lagged in ratification due to a scarcity of champions. Few women are readily identified as vocal suffragettes from Florida. There are stories of two very active ladies from Tampa and another, Mary Nolan, from Jacksonville. Mary Nolan's story, in particular, highlights the full range of suffrage activities including protests and imprisonment. Jacksonville had an organization in 1912 called the Florida Equal Franchise League and a state-wide group that met in Orlando in 1913 who called themselves, the "Florida Equal Suffrage Association". Due to apathy across the state, however, that group only amounted to 1,000 women. There were no rural suffrage leagues formed which would indicate Clay County and its ilk were more insulated from participation.

Notable in the Congressional debates prior to passage of the 19th Amendment were the opinions of Florida Senator Duncan Fletcher (REP) who explained that the measure would enfranchise two million African-American women and "authorize the federal intervention into the registration of voters and elections". Using a familiar Jim Crow era defense, Fletcher continued that "each state should have and preserve the absolute right to say who should vote for its state officers". His





May Mann Jennings

Senatorial colleague, Park Trammel (DEM), going further, added that, in Florida, “at present, our elections are participated in almost exclusively by our white men, and the Negro is not a factor in the election of our public officials.”

The most notable name among Clay County women supporters of women’s suffrage was May Mann Jennings. In 1914, she was elected president of the Florida Federation of Women’s Clubs, focusing upon conservation, education reform and women’s rights. While the group could not persuade the state legislature to vote to ratify the 19th amendment in 1920, they had, by 1918, led the movement for 16 Florida towns and 20 counties to enfranchise women in municipal elections. So well-known was May Mann Jennings for her influence that she was once visited by National Women’s Suffrage Party leader, Alice Paul, who entreated her to join the national party.

In 1920, when Florida’s women were legally allowed to vote, more than two-thirds of potential women voters did not turn out. Especially in the northern part of the state, it appears to have been a low priority. Indeed, the majority of actions taken in Florida to secure the vote were done by women in the southern part of the state. The small town of Fellsmere, Florida (near Vero Beach), claims to be the first place “where women could vote below the Mason-Dixon line”, having written into their town charter in 1915 that women should be allowed to vote in municipal elections. The men in the state legislature appear to have overlooked that clause when they approved the charter.

According to the New York Times, over five million women voted in Florida in the 2016 general election, (55% of voters) outpacing male voters (45% of voters). Given that the census says there were over eleven million women in Florida as of 2010, there were at least six million who did not go to the polls. Apathy is still a factor, it seems.

How should we mark this year’s 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment? Now would be a good time for Florida’s women to cast off the apathy that might have defined them one hundred years ago. The best way to honor the sacrifices made by women for at least four decades prior to the passage of the 19th amendment would be for all Florida’s women to cast their votes in recognition of empowerment so hard won.

<u>Early Vote Election Dates</u> 08/06/2020 - 08/15/2020	<u>Early Vote Hours</u> 8AM - 6PM	<u>Election Date</u> 08/18/2020
<u>Early Vote Election Dates</u> 10/19/2020 - 10/31/2020	<u>Early Vote Hours</u> 7AM - 7PM	<u>Election Date</u> 11/03/2020

Sources:

Chambliss, Chris, Clay County Supervisor of Elections.

<https://www.clayelections.gov/Election-Information/Upcoming-Elections>

Florida Historical Society, "Florida Ratifies the 19th Amendment"

<https://myfloridahistory.org/date-in-history/may-13-1969/florida-ratifies-19th-amendment>

Johnson, Kenneth R. "Florida Women Get the Vote". *The Florida Historical Quarterly* Vol. 48, No. 3 (Jan., 1970), pp. 299-312.

Pallone, Greg, "Women's History Month: Tiny Florida Town Pioneered Women's Suffrage", March 5, 2020, <https://www.mynews13.com/fl/orlando/news/2020/03/05/fellsmere--tiny-florida-town-pioneered-women-s-suffrage>

National Parks Service, "Florida and the 19th Amendment".

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/florida-and-the-19th-amendment.htm>

Other News

Green House Update

Funds are still being collected for this project. If you would like to help us save this piece of Florida history, please send a tax-deductible donation to the Historical Society of Orange Park, P. O. Box 08, Orange Park, FL 32073. Thanks!



Clarke House Tours

The Clarke House is once again open for tours on the second Sunday of each month. For those that have only visited the Clarke House during events such as Carrie Clarke Day and Hometown Holiday, our monthly open house tours provide an excellent opportunity to look around the house at a more liesurely pace. Built in 1912, the Clarke House features a large, open room on the first floor with many windows that provided ventilation in the days before air conditioning. The early 20th century furnishings and appliances provide a glimpse of home life in the early days of Orange Park. Visitors can also tour the two furnished, upstairs bedrooms. The next opportunity to visit the Clarke House will be Sunday, August 9 from 2 PM to 4 PM.



HELP WANTED!

SHARE YOUR EARLIEST ORANGE PARK MEMORY

IN 200 WORDS OR LESS, WRITE OUT
WHAT YOU RECALL AND WE WILL
SHARE IT IN THE NEWSLETTER!

Mail to:

P. O. Box 8, Orange Park, FL 32067
or info@ophistory.org

Additional History

For more information on local history, please visit the [Clarke House Park](#) website and the [Clay County Florida - History](#) Facebook page.

Corporate Sponsor

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We appreciate their support!

Look For Us on Facebook

Look for the Historical Society of Orange Park the next time you visit Facebook. Check our page for updates on society activities and updates on the Veterans Memorial. Don't forget to click "Like" on our page.

Membership in the Historical Society of Orange Park

We are grateful for the support our members have provided over the years through membership and participation. We ask that you continue to support our mission to preserve the history of Orange Park and share that history with the community. Ask a friend to join us as well. You can visit our website, www.ophistory.org, to download a membership form there.

