



Preserving the Past for the Future  
Heritage Park ~ 8950 N. Campbell Road ~ Lakeland, FL

# DOWN AT THE DEPOT

*Published Quarterly*

**KATHLEEN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**EST. 1991** To document, preserve, and interpret the history and folk life of area communities.

Including: Galloway ~ Gibsonia ~ Green Pond ~ Griffin ~ Kathleen ~ Providence ~ Socrum ~ Winston

## CHANGE IS GOOD!

### CALENDAR

#### AUGUST

- 8 - Spaghetti Supper Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.
- 12 - First Day of School

#### SEPTEMBER

- 2 - Labor Day
- 11 - National Day of Service & Remembrance
- 12 - Spaghetti Supper Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.
- 23 - First Day of Autumn

#### OCTOBER

- 10 - Spaghetti Supper Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.

[ Newsletter Sponsored By ]

*The Brooks Family  
of Gibsonia*

*Charlotte (dec. 2017)  
Sallie  
Richard  
Becky*

As Winston Churchill noted *To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.* We will continue to seek that perfection part, but in the meantime, we hope that you will like the change in design for the cover of this newsletter. *What do you think? Let us hear from you!*

In addition to our usual updates on membership, donations, upcoming events, and projects, we have also increased the amount of historical information about the Kathleen Area in this issue, beyond the "Pages From the Past" segment (see page 4).

You can help in this effort by providing

photographs (especially from the 1850-1930 era) and by submitting stories for publication in *Down at the Depot*. Contact us at [kathleenahs@gmail.com](mailto:kathleenahs@gmail.com)

Other changes are afoot at Heritage Park, too. See page 2 for news about a date and name change for the fall event.

One thing that we hope does not change is your demonstrated affection for the Kathleen Area and appreciation for local history.

Thank you for your support!

*Lois Sherrouse-Murphy, President/  
Newsletter Editor*

## NEWSLETTER SPONSOR

The Brooks siblings grew up in the Gibsonia community, and have many fond childhood memories. Because the Kathleen Area and its history is important to them, the family has graciously sponsored this issue of *Down at the Depot*. The Brooks family home in Gibsonia was established in 1945. Living in the home were parents R.K. & Anne Brooks, the

four siblings, and grandmother, Charlotte Richardson. The home was located on the east side of Hwy 98 North, across from the present day Wal-Mart. Most of the homestead property is now devoted to retention pond use. All four siblings graduated from Kathleen High School, Charlotte '64; Sallie '69; Richard '71; Becky '72. *Thank you, Brooks family, for your generosity!*



## SAVE THE DATE - NOVEMBER 23!

Our fall event at Heritage Park has a new date and a new name! Save the date - Saturday, November 23 for *Cane, 'Cue, and Music, Too!*

The always popular cane grinding and syrup making will be a focal point of activities that day, with freshly made cane syrup ready for purchase along about 1:30 p.m. A full breakfast will also be offered, followed by barbeque for lunch, and foot stompin' music and entertainment throughout the day from the gazebo stage under the old oak tree.

In addition, if our last remaining two legacy tables are sponsored by that date (*see next page for the latest on the project*), a ceremony of recognition and appreciation will be undertaken for sponsors and honorees.

The new sugar cane patch is growing and the cane shed has been outfitted with a new smokestack, all through the efforts of volunteers J.D. Bath, Stuart Bath, Steve Elliott, Charley Krug, Lamar Lindsey, and Bill Sherrouse.



*The James W. Lanier Family of Providence, ca. 1916.*

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DORIS!

Join us in wishing Doris Stalvey Glisson a Happy 101st Birthday on August 31! Doris is one of the four founders of the Kathleen Area Historical Society, and though she is not able to be with us on a regular basis like she once was, we still think of her often and are grateful for her effort and determination in establishing the Society in 1991, along with Hilda Gavin Battle (1922-2001), Becky Hardaker Elliott, and Betty Ann Williams (1920-2015).

Doris is the great granddaughter of Kathleen pioneers, Henry and Catherine Rogers Prine, and has spent her entire life in the Kathleen Area.

She now lives at Valencia Hills Health and Rehabilitation at 1350 Sleepy Hill Road, Lakeland, FL 33810.



Drop her a birthday card in the mail, or better yet, stop in for a brief visit with Doris and bring the card with you.



## A SEAT AT THE TABLE UPDATE

Three more legacy tables are in place at Heritage Park! We are grateful and honored to our latest sponsors who chose to support "A Seat At the Table" as an enduring remembrance of area pioneer families. Those singled out for recognition by sponsors include:

**Clarence Prine Green (1898-1970) & Emilie Wise Green (1903-1998)** by their children and grandchildren, Lisle Townson, Gail Abbott, Renee Franks, Elena Skelton.



Clarence's parents were Leon and Ida Brown Prine, and his grandparents were Henry and Catherine Rogers Prine, pioneer settlers of Kathleen. He was raised by his paternal aunt, Annie Prine Green and her husband, William Henry Green, after the death of his mother when Clarence was an infant.

**Pat H. Murphy (1950-2019)** by his wife, Gurtha Murphy, and daughters, Gwen Isdell, Kristy Singletary, and Whitney Hare. Pat was a long-time member of the Society.



**Oren H. Wheeler & Helen Thomas Wheeler, Their children ~ William, Blanche, Edna, Robert, Irving, George, Patsy, and Nancy**



*Top Row: Bill Wheeler Jr. (grandson) Father, Oren Wheeler; Mother, Helen Wheeler; granddaughter, Susie Moeller (daughter of Blanche); Seated On steps: Left side, top to bottom: Bill, Robert, Irving, George. Seated on steps: Right side, top to bottom: Blanche, Edna, Patsy, Nancy*

sponsored by Bill Wheeler, Curt Wheeler, Tim Wheeler, Wes Wheeler, David Wheeler, Sally Maier, Mark Wheeler, Peggy Wheeler, Donnie Scott, Marshall Scott, Paul Wheeler, Janice Wheeler. George Wheeler Road in the Griffin community is named for the Wheeler patriarch George Wheeler (1869-1930).

The project debuted in November 2018, and the generosity of numerous sponsors has resulted in eight legacy tables on site in just six months time! Only two more tables remain to complete the project. Gather up your family members and classmates to claim your Seat at the Table!

Thank you for remembering some of our pioneer families and improving Heritage Park!



## PAGES FROM THE PAST GIBSONIA & AVIATION HISTORY

What does The Carpenters Home, the Gibsonia area, and aviation history have in common? Quite a bit as it turns out and the name “Haldeman” serves to connect the topics.

Jasper J. Haldeman (1871-1970) moved to Lakeland in 1914 from Kansas, along with his wife, Maude (1874-1968) and children, George W., Ruth, Virginia, and Walter L. By the early 1920s, Jasper J. Haldeman had risen to prominence in the real estate business, as the owner of his realty firm, President of the Lakeland Realty Exchange, and as a representative of the Lakeland Chamber in Commerce in the sale of a 1,700 acre site adjacent to Lake Gibson in December 1923. The site was purchased by the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners to build The Carpenters Home, a retirement home for “aged and disabled” union members which ultimately opened in 1929.

Haldeman also had other real estate interests in the area. In the September 9, 1924 issue of *The Tampa Tribune*, a new sub-division to be known as “Gibsonia” was to be placed on the market by J.J. Haldeman and associates. The property consisted of 320 acres on the west side of Lake Gibson with 1/2 mile of lake frontage, “lying east of the 1800 tract purchased by the National Carpenters Association...with a big elevation, being 27 feet higher than Lakeland and an elevation 8 feet higher than Lake Parker.”

By 1926, the office of J.J. Haldeman Co. Real Estate was located at one of the city’s most prestigious office locations, Suite 601 and 602 of the Marble Arcade Building at 129 South Kentucky Avenue in downtown Lakeland. Son, George, who had graduated from Lakeland High School in 1917, and attorney R.H. Amidon were also listed as principals of the real estate business.

While the real estate business was lucrative for the Haldeman family, George Haldeman had his own



*George W. Haldeman Sr. (1898-1982)  
Photo courtesy of Lakeland History Room  
Lakeland Public Library*

interests that would bring him fame and fortune. On May 13, 1917, he obtained his pilot’s license, making his first flight on a St. Petersburg airfield, now known as Albert Whitted Field. By 1920, Haldeman was employed as an aviator for an aviation company in Lakeland, and regularly performed in aerial stunt shows across Florida.

In November 1920, he married Virginia Lufsey, and the couple welcomed son, George, Jr., in 1923. By 1926, the family had settled in a home in the Gibsonia community, according to City Directories. Haldeman later created a landing strip near his home where his son remembered being called upon to wave a 100-watt light bulb as a landing light for his father, according to Haldeman’s obituary.

By 1927, Haldeman was making plans to be the first to make a solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean, only to be upstaged by his friend “Slim” who flew from New York to Paris on May 21, 1927. The friend known as “Slim” was Charles Lindbergh and the plane the “Spirit of St. Louis.”

In a 1977 interview with *The Tampa Tribune*,

## PAGES FROM THE PAST- continued

Haldeman stated that he knew of Lindbergh's plans, but had not realized that those plans were so far along - "there was no reason to go solo across the Atlantic after that." However, he soon learned of a \$25,000 prize being offered for the *first trans-oceanic flight carrying more than one person* by the same promoter who had put up the \$25,000 prize for the solo flight. One of Haldeman's aviation students, a young woman named Ruth Elder (1902-1977) from Anniston, Alabama, was captivated by the idea of becoming the first woman to fly across the Atlantic. Even though she did not have much flying time, Haldeman set about providing extensive flight training for Elder. His Stinson monoplane, modified to accommodate two passengers, was delivered during early summer 1927. Most of the tests were conducted on the local field at Gibsonia. The yellow plane, dubbed "American Girl," departed New York at 5:05 p.m. on October 11, 1927 with Elder as the pilot and Haldeman as co-pilot and navigator, bound for a non stop flight to Paris.

Unfortunately, the plane developed an oil line leak, 250 miles northwest of Cape Finestra, Spain, forcing them to ditch the plane. Fortunately, for the aviators, the Dutch tanker, SS Barendrecht, was in this area of open sea and rescued the pair at 4:05 a.m. on October 13. The plane did not fare as well - "American Girl" burst into flames upon being hoisted onto the deck.

After a few tense hours, the city of Lakeland erupted into celebration upon learning that the aviators had been rescued. According to *The Tampa Times* October 14, 1927 edition, there was "a monster demonstration of merry making and exaltation ...the city virtually abandoned its business pursuits to honor its two adopted children"...with a "parade of immense proportions...snake dances of grownups, children, and students from Southern College through the

downtown section..." The city of Lakeland further embraced the pair's accomplishment by leasing a 160-acre tract in Eaton Park, along the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and Lakeland-Bartow Highway, for the Haldeman-Elder Field.

Upon their return to New York, the aviators were treated to a ticker tape parade and were guests of President Calvin Coolidge at a reception also honoring Charles Lindbergh and Richard Byrd, the Antarctic explorer.

Elder enjoyed celebrity, the result of her accomplishment at a time when few women were involved in the aviation industry, especially in such a high profile way. She was active in promoting women in aviation; appeared in a Ziegfeld movie; and women copied her bobbed hairstyle in an effort to be like her.



She eventually settled in San Francisco where she died on October 9, 1977.

Haldeman went on to experience a remarkable career in the aviation industry, setting many aviation related records and conducting flight tests on more than 100 domestic and foreign aircraft. As a Civil Aeronautics Board inspector, he was aboard the one and only flight of Howard Hughes' "Spruce Goose" on November 2, 1947. He spent over 30 years as a consultant on aircraft development, including supersonic models and the U.S. Air Force B-1 Bomber.

Haldeman died on September 10, 1982 at an assisted living facility on Daughtery Road (*now known as New Era*) in Gibsonia. He is interred at Oak Hill Burial Park in Lakeland where his headstone is inscribed "Pioneer Aviator."



## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Welcome aboard to the following new members:

**Jim and Lois Bowers - *family*.** The Bowers are frequent spaghetti supper attendees, and have lived in the Kathleen Area since 1980.

**Renee Franks - *lifetime*.** Renee descends from Clarence Prine Green (1898-1970), a pioneer family of Kathleen.

**Carolyn Grigsby Ritter - *individual*.** Carolyn is a descendant of the Sherrouse pioneer family. She was born in the cracker house at the corner of Galloway Road and 10th Street in the Galloway area.

Membership in the Society is based on a calendar year, and renewal is due in January, unless you are a member at the lifetime level. Members in good standing receive five newsletters per year.

Membership is offered at these levels: \$15 - Individual; \$25 - Family, \$125 - Lifetime (*one time payment*).

If you are not certain of your membership status, contact Lois Sherrouse-Murphy at (863) 944-5656 or via e-mail - kathleenahs@gmail.com



*Jim & Lois Bowers*

## MUCH OBLIGED

Donations received during the past three months include:

- J.D. Bath - \$150 - *In memory of Gerald Robbins and Jim Watkins*
- Jim Beasley - \$40 - *designated for Marvin Short Benefit*
- Network for Good (4 anonymous donors) - \$75 *designated for Marvin Short Benefit*
- Harvest Meat Market, Ed & Anita Kirkland - hamburger for Spaghetti Supper



There are a variety of ways in which to support the Society, from cash gifts to participation at events to gifts of time and talent to support operations at Heritage Park. Servers, dessert bakers, and clean-up crews are always needed at

monthly Spaghetti Suppers, held on second Thursdays from 4 to 7 p.m. Are you known far and wide for a special cake or pie? A secret family recipe? Bring it to Spaghetti Supper for everyone to enjoy and increase your fame!



*German Chocolate Cake*

## KATHLEEN INCORPORATION IN 1914

Did you know that Kathleen was at one time incorporated as a town? The Tampa Times reported in the Wednesday, June 24, 1914 issue that...*Monday night, a large and enthusiastic mass meeting of citizens gathered in the new store building soon to be occupied by S.L. Collins & Co. with a large stock of fertilizers and farm implements of all kinds. The purpose of the meeting was to decide the question of incorporating the town of Kathleen and putting it into its proper class as one of the progressive little cities of south Florida. With only one dissenting vote, the motion to incorporate was carried and that voter will cheerfully join the band of boosting optimists and make the move unanimous. Now watch 'em grow! Kathleen has been on the map a long while, but soon its place will be marked by a big star!*

However, it was not until Tuesday, August 4, 1914 that the town was officially incorporated and a municipal government formed. Notice was given that a meeting would be held on the first Tuesday night of August 1914 at 7:30 p.m. at "the Depot Shed...with the undersigned male inhabit-

ants who are registered voters residing in the said proposed corporate limits..." The twenty-nine men present voted for the incorporation and elected W.A. Casebier as Mayor; A.S. Keith as Town Clerk; J. Henry Rutledge as Town Marshall, along with Aldermen George Green, W. Lanier, W.A. Ross, T.B. Dobbins, and B.T. Baldwin.

The Incorporation papers were filed with the Polk County Clerk of Circuit Court on September 2, 1914 and recorded in Incorporation Book A, Page 477.

At the time, Kathleen was a center of commerce for strawberries, citrus, and other crops, turpentine, the lumber and sawmill operations of the Strickland Lumber Company, and the means to ship by rail from the Kathleen Railroad Depot. The town also boasted of nine general stores, three doctors, three hotels, two churches, a school, and a druggist. The town of Kathleen was unincorporated in the late 1920s, likely because the city of Lakeland became more prominent as a transportation hub, offering both an east/west and a north/south rail line.

## SCHOOL DAYS

The familiar yellow school buses will begin carrying students to and from schools on August 12. But, there was a time, up until the late 1930s, when school bus transportation was not provided, resulting in numerous community based schools within walking distance of pockets of population. Some enterprising residents took it upon themselves to modify trucks to create school busses, like this bus for the Winston School.



Photo courtesy of State Archives of Florida



## KATHLEEN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 977  
Kathleen, FL 33849-0977



### Kathleen Area Historical Society Board of Directors

Lois Sherrouse-Murphy—President—944-5656  
Bill Pettis -Vice President—853-1987  
Gail Taugh—Recording Secretary—859-3280  
Beckie Sherrouse—Treasurer & Park Rental Coordinator  
859-1394  
Audrey Davis—Trustee—858-5357  
Edith Jackson - Trustee - 859-6122

#### Trustees Emeritus

Harry Brown  
Doris Stalvey Glisson (*founder*)  
Philip Sawyer  
Jim Watkins (1936-2019)  
Tommy Elliott (1929-2018)

#### Founders

Hilda Gavin Battle (1922-2001); Becky Elliott;  
Doris Stalvey Glisson; Betty Ann Williams (1920-2015)

Lois Sherrouse-Murphy—Newsletter Editor— 944-5656  
E-mail: [kathleenahs@gmail.com](mailto:kathleenahs@gmail.com)

## PARK USE

August 3	Ridge Archers Assoc.	<i>B</i>
September 21	Kathleen High School '64	<i>B</i>
September 27	Wedding	<i>B</i>

Create special memories at Heritage Park and support the Society's day-to-day operations.

Base rental rates are:

- Museum Building only (*B*) \$250/day
- Heritage Park grounds (*P*) \$250/day  
(\$500/day *Exclusive use entire Heritage Park*)

Refundable damage deposit of \$200 also required and not included in base rate. Contact Beckie Sherrouse, (863) 859-1394, to check availability and for additional details. *Thank you!*