

The Front Porch

Where The Tea Is Sweet and the Talks Are Long

Nov/Dec 2025

BURNS FUNERAL HOME

Healing through Helping

PAGE 12

**Cindy Roe
Littlejohn**

on Writing Her Roots
Page 32

Frank Davis

From Mischief to Mayor
Page 42

**Three Jerseys,
One Legacy**

The Journey of Alex Brown
Page 36

James Fishback

Influential Young Mind
Settles in Madison
Page 46



2025 CHRISTMAS ON THE SQUARE HISTORIC DOWNTOWN LIVE OAK, FL



Thursday, December 4 starting at 5:00 pm

Tree Lighting, Jingle Bell Fun/Run Walk,
Movie at Millennium Park

Friday, December 5 from 4:00 pm to 10:00 pm

Annual Art & Crafts Show (Over 300 vendors from across the United States), Food Vendors, Live Entertainment, Fireworks, Santa Land & Snow on the Square

Saturday, December 6 from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm

Annual Art & Crafts Show (Over 300 vendors from across the United States), Food Vendors, Live Entertainment & More

Saturday, December 6 at 6:00 pm

Lighted Christmas Parade

WWW.SUWANNEECHAMBER.COM

**SCAN
ME!**





**Cassidy Health
& Wellness**
Timothy Cassidy, FNP-C

- Primary Care
- In-House Lab Drawn
- DOT Physicals
- Work/School Physicals



- Wrinkle Treatment
- Biotin Injections
- Vitamin Injections
- IV Infusions



386-438-5722

Mon-Thur 7:30am - 5:30pm

310 S Marion, Lake City, Fla. 32025



- Weight Loss
- Hormone Replacement



New Patients Welcome
Most Insurance Accepted

New Patients Welcome *Most Insurance Accepted*



- Primary Care
- DOT Physicals
- In-House Lab Drawn
- Work/School Physicals



- Hormone Replacement • Weight Loss



- IV Infusions • Biotin Injections
- Vitamin Injections • Wrinkle Treatment



**Cassidy Health
& Wellness**
Timothy Cassidy, FNP-C

386-438-5722

Mon-Thur 7:30am - 5:30pm

310 S Marion, Lake City, Fla. 32025

Welcome to our table

At The 406 Restaurant, we take pride in our farm-to-table philosophy, sourcing the freshest local ingredients to create dishes. Our menu pairs perfectly with handcrafted cocktails, carefully curated wines, and a rotating selection of craft beers.

(386) 364-4870

406 Duval Street NE, Live Oak, FL 32064

Hours of Operation

Wednesday & Thursday: 4 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Friday & Saturday: 4 p.m. – 10:00 PM

The 406

The 406 Restaurant is housed in the beautifully restored Thomas Dowling house, built in 1896. Whether you choose fine dining, casual seating on the back porch or relaxed dining overlooking the gardens, The 406 Restaurant is the place to gather and savor exceptional food.



Upscale event spaces available for rent with event coordinator services.

contents

The Front Porch | Nov/Dec 2025

- 9 **Sittin' on the Porch**
Dan Buchanan

Features

- 12 **COVER STORY**
Burns Funeral Home
Healing through Helping



PAGE 12

- 18 **Thomas Raines**
A Pillar of Jefferson County

- 23 **Regional Reads**

- 26 **JM "Buddy" Phillips**
The Sheriff of Florida

- 32 **Cindy Roe Littlejohn**
On Writing Her Roots

- 36 **Three Jerseys, One Legacy**
The Journey of Alex Brown

- 42 **Frank Davis**
From Mischief to Mayor

- 46 **James Fishback**
Influential Young Mind
Settles in Madison

- 50 **What's Happening**
Nov/Dec Events



PAGE 18



PAGE 26



PAGE 32



PAGE 46

The Front Porch

Where the tea is sweet and the talks are long

Established 2019
Vol. 7 Issue 2 • Nov/Dec 2025

The Front Porch
is published every other month at
1695 South SR 53
Madison, Fla. 32340

Published by



Publisher
Emerald Greene

General Manager
Chelsie Holbrook

Editor
Laura Young

Staff Writers
Rick Patrick
Hailey Heseltine
Danny Federico
Jason Futch
Mickey Starling
Hailey Waldo

Contributors
Heather Ainsley
Rebekah Sheats

Sales Representatives
Tiffany Blaner
Amber Moore

Advertisement Design
Mark Estefan
Dona Gilbert Day
Lucy Golub

Advertising & Subscriptions
(850) 973-4141

On the Web
www.greenepublishing.com
www.ecbpublishing.com
www.riverbendnews.org

Member of
Florida Press Association
and
Florida Newspaper Advertising and
Marketing Executives



Subscribe Today

Published six times a year
(every other month)

\$25 Per year

Mail checks or money orders to:
Greene Publishing, Inc.
P.O. Drawer 772, Madison, Fla. 32341
For all credit card payments, call:
(850) 973-4141

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

Please note: If you are a subscriber to the
Madison County Carrier, Madison Enterprise-Recorder, Monticello News, Jefferson County Journal,
or *Riverbend News,* and you live in *Madison, Jefferson, Taylor, Suwannee, Hamilton or Lafayette County,*
you will automatically receive the magazine when published.

The Front Porch

Meet Our Staff



Emerald Greene
Publisher



Cheltsie Holbrook
General Manager



Laura Young
Editor



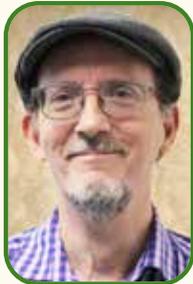
Rick Patrick
Staff Writer



Jason Futch
Staff Writer



Danny Federico
Staff Writer



Mickey Starling
Staff Writer



Hailey Heseltine
Staff Writer



Hailey Waldo
Staff Writer



Heather Ainsley
Contributor



Rebekah Sheats
Contributor



Mark Estefan
Graphic Designer



Dona Gilbert Day
Graphic Designer



Lucy Golub
Graphic Designer



Tiffany Blaner
Sales Representative



Amber Moore
Sales Representative

Jason Shoaf

District 7
State Representative



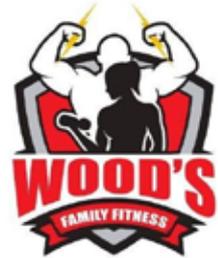
Proud
to be
serving
the citizens
of District 7

Thank you for allowing me to serve you for the past six years. If I can ever be of any assistance to you, please feel free to reach out to my office.

Office Numbers

Tallahassee - (850) 717-5007
Perry - (850) 295-5680
Live Oak - (850) 295-5680
Port St. Joe - (850) 295-5680

RESET.
RESTART.
**REACH
YOUR GOALS.**



- Free weights
- Weight machines
- Cardio Equipment
- Group fitness classes
- 24-hour access
- Day passes
- Certified Personal Trainer
**additional to membership fees.*



Multiple membership
packages available
JOIN TODAY!
Call or come by for more details

1397 Ohio Ave., N., Live Oak, Fla. 32064 | (386) 330-0363
woodfamilyfitness@gmail.com



A Policy...

everyone
"fall"
in love
with!



105½ N. Jefferson St., Perry, FL. 32347
(850) 584-5800
swanninsurance@fairpoint.net

Owned & Operated by:
Leslie Swann Anderson



SITTIN' ON THE PORCH WITH...

DAN BUCHANAN

Story and Photograph by Hailey Waldo

For nearly eight decades, Dan Buchanan has called Madison County, Florida, home. Born on Jan. 3, 1950, and raised on a local farm, his life story reflects deep roots in agriculture, education and service to both his community and state.

A proud graduate of Madison High School, Buchanan began his college journey at North Florida Junior College before earning his bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Florida (UF). Inspired by his favorite professor, Horance Gibbs "Buddy" Davis Jr., he developed a love for writing early on.

"To be a good writer, you have to know what you're talking about," he shared.

Throughout his long career, Buchanan has worked in nearly every corner of Florida, beginning in Gainesville, later serving in Chipley and making his way across ten counties. His professional life was marked by his dedication to agriculture and communication. He served as director for the Florida Cattleman's Association in Kissimmee, promoting the iconic "Beef – It's What's for Dinner" campaign, and later spent 42 years with the Florida Farm Bureau as a field representative.

His decades of service earned him the 2015 Pat Cockrell Award at the Florida Farm Bureau's 74th Annual Convention, honoring his lifelong commitment to Florida's farmers.

"Farmers are the most important people on earth," Buchanan emphasized. "One industry we cannot live without is farmers. Food doesn't come from Winn-Dixie. It comes from a farm."

Buchanan's passion for agriculture runs deep, a value instilled by his father, who paid for his college through cotton and tobacco farming.

"My best education came from farmers," Buchanan said, reflecting

on the many friendships and lessons gathered throughout his career.

Beyond agriculture, Buchanan also served 23 years in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserves. Buchanan's son, Geoffrey, followed closely in his footsteps, recently retiring as a Colonel in the U.S. Army. Buchanan spent a year in public relations at St. Vincent's Medical Center in Jacksonville, Florida, before realizing his heart belonged to the land, rather than the hospital halls.

Buchanan's life has been marked not only by professional dedication, but also personal resilience. Widowed once before, he found love again with his wife, Paulette Buchanan, whom he married in 2010. Together, they've continued a legacy of faith and service, helping churches with their Helping Hand Fund, which provides \$200-\$300 in groceries each month to families in need, as well as medical assistance for community members.

Though retired since 2015, today Buchanan remains deeply involved in the Madison community. A devoted member of Hickory Grove Methodist Church for 44 years, which he proudly calls "the ultimate agricultural church," he has become

a leading figure in its historic Founders Day celebration. The event draws hundreds of visitors each year on the third Saturday of October. This year it featured a hearty breakfast, homemade cakes, pies and barbecue, as well as a school house with Bible lessons being taught, train rides for the youth and an old country store. The event is a staple for the Madison community, showcasing the hard work and dedication of Hickory Grove Methodist Church towards the community.

Recently, a prayer garden was added to the church grounds, featuring Confederate Roses and a bed of Verna Lee William's amaryllis, more than 75 bulbs planted in her memory.

For Buchanan, life has come full circle, from Madison's farmlands to decades of statewide leadership and back again to the fields and faith that first shaped him. His story is a testament to hard work, community spirit and a lifelong belief that the roots of Florida's strength grow right here at home. ■



KITCH-ENCOUNTERS

Kitchen & Bath Remodeling



Over 25 years of experience

Kitchen and bath remodeling has never been easier
Top quality cabinets in traditional and contemporary styles

(850) 386-6555

2740 Capital Circle NE • Tallahassee, Fla.



TD-00002431 www.Kitch-Encounters.com

WAUKEENAH Fertilizer & Farm SUPPLY INC.

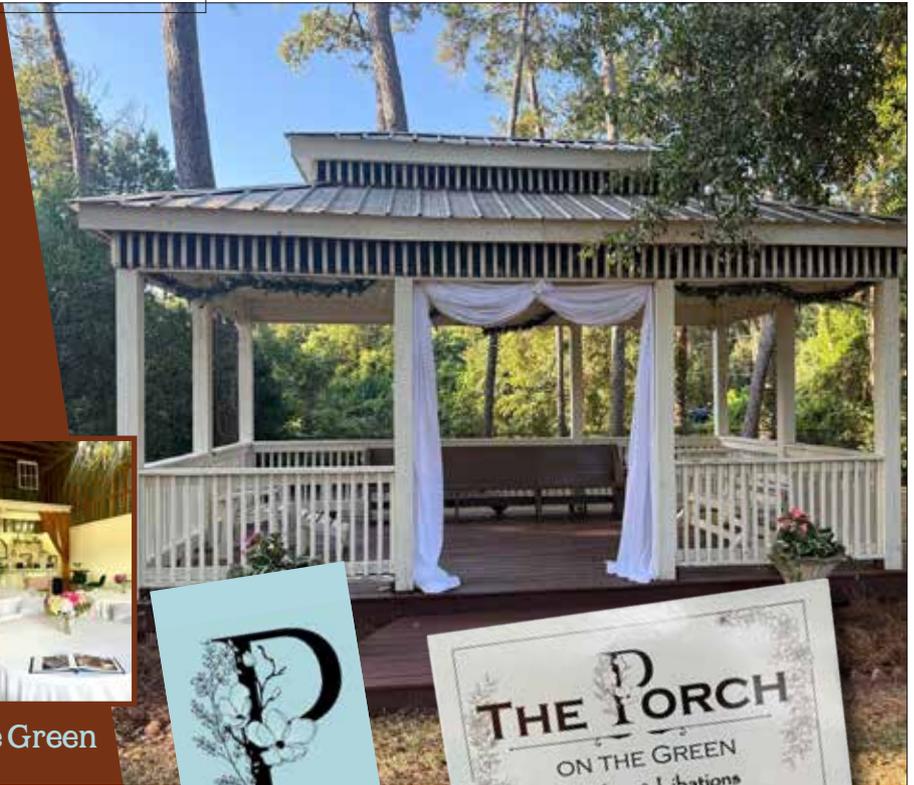
Fertilizer in Bag and Bulk
Feed • Seed • Chemicals Fencing Materials
Veterinary Supplies



(850) 997-4460

9643 Waukeena Hwy • Monticello, Fla. 32344

Call now to book your
holiday party, wedding or
next family event!
Restaurant and barn
available for rent!



Book on site at the Porch On The Green

(850) 997-3043

925 E. Washington St., Monticello, Fla



State Representative **ALLISON TANT**

Is Honored to Represent You and Your Family in the Florida House this Session!

2025 - 2026

Committee Weeks

- October 6th - 10th
- October 13th - 17th
- November 3rd - 7th
- November 17th - 21st
- December 1st - 5th
- December 8th - 12th

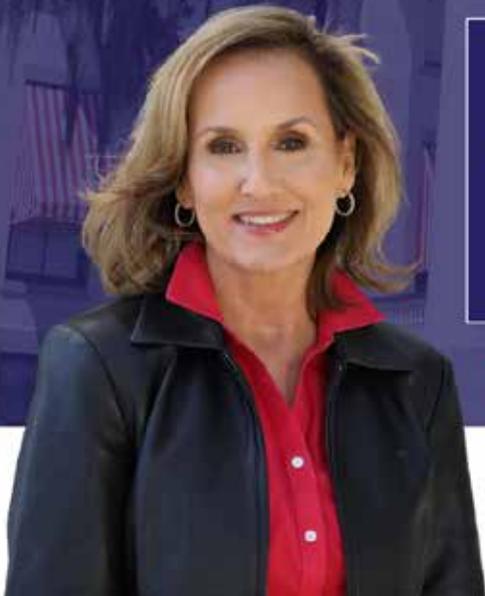
**LEGISLATIVE SESSION
BEGINS JANUARY 13TH**

Scan with your
smartphone camera
to sign up for our
newsletter!



Contact our office for
appointments or assistance:
Allison.Tant@flhouse.gov
(850) 717-5009

Thank you for your continued support!



@AllisonTantFL



The Office of
State Representative
Allison Tant



COVER STORY

BURNS FUNERAL HOME



Healing through Helping



Tommy Murrow and Steve Green - owners



The staff of Burns Funeral Home in Perry includes: (left to right) Tommy Murrow, Landen Feagle, Sydney Bohlman, Libby Couey, Jackie Mulvaney, Mark Kalinowski; (not pictured) Steve Green, Joe Rodgers, and Karen Williams.

Story by Heather Ainsley
Photography by Steve Green

“How can I help you today?”
 Likely one of the most casual and commonly asked phrases in any service industry, this question can be an especially daunting one for individuals seeking services at a funeral home. Not only can the funeral process be wrought with emotion and familial pressures, but for many facing a death in the family, there is often a sensation of not knowing where on Earth to begin. That is why, for the staff at Joe P. Burns Funeral Home, this question is extended, not casually, but with earnest sincerity.

Burns Funeral Home currently serves the communities of Perry, Madison and Mayo, and has been in operation since 1953. First opened by Joe P. Burns, the company is now owned by Steven Green and Tommy Murrow, both of whom worked at the funeral home for many years before considering ownership.

While it may seem an unusual career to get into for some, Murrow gained familiarity with the industry from a cousin who had worked for a funeral home elsewhere. Murrow got a job at a local funeral home right out of high school, and he began working for Burns in 1998. Green found his way into the industry through a friend who worked as a funeral director and offered him a part-time position helping out on the weekends.

“I was hesitant at first to accept the job offer,” admits Green. “It isn’t really a

job you typically think of finding yourself in. But, I was putting my wife through nursing school at the time and figured it’d help my friend out, so I accepted. I’ve always been soft-hearted, and those first few days of seeing the relationships that were built between the funeral director and people in the community really impacted me. Just the thought of having the opportunity to really help people just drew me in; I wanted to help people in the same manner. It’s really not a job that very many people look for – it’s a job that finds you. You have to have the right heart for it, a heart to serve people.”

Over many years spent working together full time at the funeral home, Murrow and Green became close friends. In 2007, the company was listed for sale, and the pair considered a unique opportunity to take their service and dedication to the next level.

“We were familiar with our surrounding community,” says Green, “and had poured our life’s work into the business for so many years, we didn’t want to work for someone else. We had a tremendous level of support and encouragement from our community, and with that support, we were able to buy Burns Funeral Home. It wouldn’t have been possible without the help and support of our community, who really made it happen.”

Today, Green and Murrow maintain a lasting relationship with their community, and offer a multitude of services that include burial, cremation, out-of-state transportation and



John Quintana of the Burns Funeral Home in Mayo.



The staff of Burns Funeral Home in Madison includes: (left to right) Steve Green, Julie Cherry and Bailey Barefoot.



Burns Funeral Home in Perry.



Burns Funeral Home in Mayo.



Burns Funeral Home is a proud buyer every year in the North Florida Livestock Show and Sale.

anatomical donation. Of the services they provide, Green says that perhaps the most impactful is what they refer to as “pre-arrangements,” where an individual can make all of their intended funeral arrangements themselves, sparing their family members the burden of making decisions on their behalf in the event of their passing. Not only does this alleviate strain on family and friends during a difficult mourning period, but it ensures loved ones are not faced with questions and preferences that they may not be prepared for regarding funeral and burial wishes.

“A lot of times we see people struggle to make the decisions and choices that they feel will most honor their loved one,” says Green, “where they wonder if they made the right decision or picked the right arrangement or something, that their loved one would have wanted. But I’ve never seen any ‘buyer’s remorse’ from a pre-arrangement, where someone said, ‘I wish they wouldn’t have made the arrangement.’ Not only does this service allow an individual to lock-in prices ahead of time so that the cost of the funeral doesn’t go up as time passes, but it alleviates the family from having to make difficult choices during an already difficult and emotional time. It allows them to simply show up and celebrate and honor their loved one’s life and memory.”

Death is never easy and can be a deeply harrowing experience. The team at Burns Funeral Home is dedicated to a mission that they feel is quite simple: to make the worst possible time in someone’s life easier in any way possible.

“We want to help people get through the grieving process, and help families get to the other side of their grief and find healthy ways to cope with their loss,” says Green. “Our team is constantly asking ‘How can we help this family?’ – and this is something that each person on our staff keeps very close to the heart. We care about the people we serve; we don’t ever get used to the hurt that people experience, we just learn how to manage it. It’s a very personal line of work – our staff cries, we mourn, we handle things behind the scenes of our job that no one ever sees or thinks about. Our entire staff goes above and beyond what is required, and we keep it very close to our hearts.”

In addition to staying connected and supporting clients from within the business, Burns Funeral Home is also actively involved outwardly within their community, sponsoring activities, staying involved in outreach organizations and helping to make a positive impact through sponsorship and support of

community events, especially revolving around children and schools. For the past 20 years, Burns Funeral Home has been a proud sponsor of the Future Farmers of America and 4H livestock sales.

While they strive to create as many positive connections as possible, working for a funeral home is not without its challenges.

"We don't have any room for failure," mentions Green, describing the pressures that can encompass the funeral industry. "Of course, we are all human, so mistakes happen, but there is an immense amount of pressure we hold ourselves to, to get everything just right, because it means so much to our clients and their family. We are constantly managing an expectation of perfection, and that is a never ending part of our job."

While the circumstances surrounding a funeral can be heavy and somber, there are multiple layers of each encounter that must always be handled with empathy and kindness. Funerals often bring to light the effects of substance abuse, addiction and troubled family dynamics. They can also emphasize the struggles individuals may have with processing their grief and developing healthy, effective coping mechanisms. Each staff member is trained and passionate about extending patience and grace to everyone they serve, in an effort to alleviate extra stress wherever possible.

"This work takes a heavy emotional toll," says Green, but it adds that the most rewarding part of his job as funeral director is seeing individuals come through a tragedy and resume life on the other side of it. "People find their 'new normal,' and to just see them smile again for the first time, knowing that they are coping in healthy, positive ways is so rewarding. Everywhere we go in town, we meet people who we have helped in the past who stop us to hug our neck and say 'thank you' and tell us how they are doing now, and what a difference we made for them. It's overwhelming, the gratitude and warmth that we are greeted with by families. It's very rewarding."

It takes a lot of work to become a licensed funeral director. In fact, individuals wishing to obtain a license must have a two-year associate of science degree, followed by a one-year mandatory internship under the guidance of a licensed funeral director. They must then pass a 500-question national board exam, complete with state law and rules exams. Those who are unsure about whether they are cut out for a job in a funeral home can undertake a year-long apprenticeship, where they work full-time under the guidance of a funeral director.

Not every position in a funeral home requires a degree, however; a number of supporting staff positions do not require a license. No matter what position they are in, all staff employed at Burns Funeral Home must maintain a standard of genuine compassion for the people they serve, as well as a dedication to and connection with their community. The team is always looking for people within their community who harbor a desire to serve families as support staff.

"Every funeral home is different," states Green, "and it isn't about who owns it. It all boils down to staff. They have to really care about the people they serve – it takes all of us. Tommy and I stand by our amazing team; they are honest, have integrity, and they care about their community. I have always considered a funeral home as less of a business and more of a ministry to people hurting. We are very much a family environment and our staff relies on faith and support of one another to help cope with any challenges that arise. We want to be God's hands and feet here on the ground, with God's grace to make it happen."

With the support of their community, and the dedication and resilience of their employees, Burns Funeral Home strives to maintain decades of compassion and care in the hopes of helping clients navigate the heartbreak and uncertainties that surround losing a loved one. ■



*Create a tribute as unique as
the life you're remembering.*

Funeral Directors

Steve Green,
Tommy Murrow,
Rusty Newsome,
Mark Kalinowski,
Joe Rodgers, and
Jaclyn Mulvaney

Joe P. Burns Funeral Home of Madison

323 SE Lakeshore Dr., Madison, Fla. 32340
(850) 973-1337

Joe P. Burns Funeral Home of Perry

1400 N Johnson Stripling Rd., Perry, Fla. 32347
(850) 584-4149

Joe P. Burns Funeral Home of Mayo

440 SW Monroe Ave., Mayo, Fla. 32066
(386) 294-2658

www.joepburnsfuneralhomes.com



Cactus Creek Boutique

1409 OHIO AVENUE NORTH

LIVE OAK FL 32064

HOURS: MONDAY - FRIDAY (10-6) / SATURDAY (10-4)



J + J STRONG



J+J STRONG provides farm fuel delivery and construction site delivery in Madison & surrounding counties.

We provide freight services in a 200-mile radius.

**All public is welcome at the Cardlock:
3955 SW SR 14, Madison, Fla.
and is OPEN: 24/7**

Phone: (850) 973-1431

Fax: (850) 290-7443

www.jj-strong-fuel.com

Let Us Do The Hard Work For You



Mowing • Site Prep • Driveways
Land Clearing • Fill Dirt • Rock
Mobile Home Pads • House Pads

locally owned and operated

PIONEER

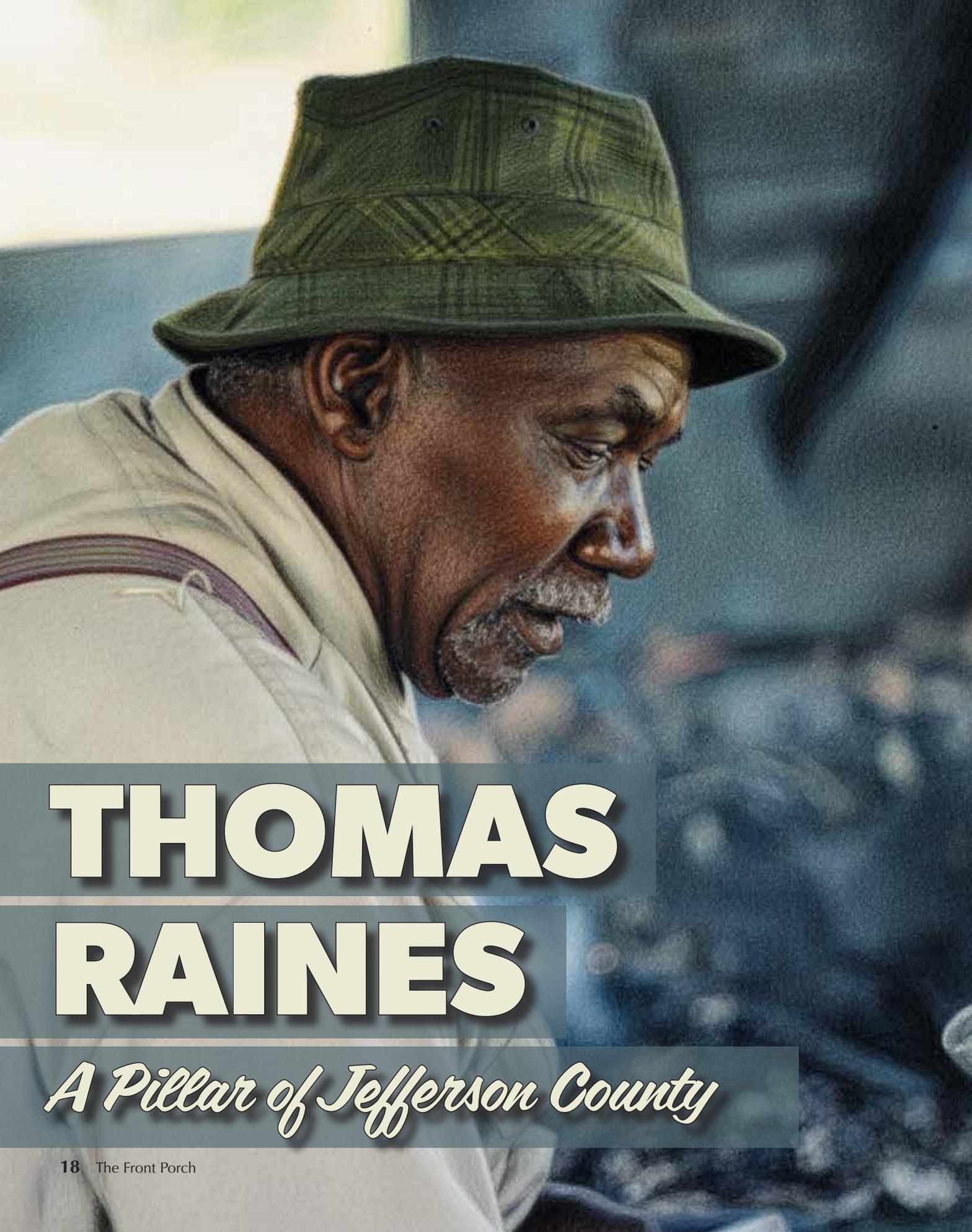
PAUL KINSLEY'S
LEGACY

EXCAVATING & TRACTOR SERVICES

Cheltsie Holbrook
Owner



Pioneer Excavating & Tractor Services, Inc. (850) 464-1230



THOMAS RAINES

A Pillar of Jefferson County

Story by Rebekah Sheats

Photographs Courtesy Florida Memory and Rebekah Sheats

"There's an old saying that when you do things right, the world will beat a path to your door."

Blacksmith Thomas Raines was surprised to hear these words spoken of himself, but his life and work certainly fit the proverb. In the late 1860s, Richmond, an African American blacksmith, hitched a mule to a wagon and brought his family to Jefferson County. Richmond had served as a slave on the Raines plantation in Georgia before the Civil War. When given his freedom at the war's end, Richmond took his master's name and decided to start a new life in Florida.

Richmond and his wife, Rosanne, settled northeast of Monticello on the Salt Road in what was then known as Linton's Mill (now Dills Crossroads). They built a log cabin, and Richmond set up a forge and blacksmith shop. His oldest son, Abraham, assisted his father in the forge. A second son, Alex, was born in 1892. Two years later, on Christmas Eve 1894, Thomas was born. All the children were born at home, with the assistance of a midwife by the name of Mrs. Snead.

As a young boy, Thomas (known as Tom) spent hours watching his older brother at work. Tom watched everything Abraham did and quickly picked up the craft of blacksmithing. Abraham was left-handed, but right-handed Thomas didn't let this difficulty slow him down.

"Sometimes it's just in you to learn," he later noted. "That's the main thing; I wanted to learn bad."

Tom's eagerness to learn and his enthusiasm for his trade would show itself for the rest of his life in the expert craftsmanship that was apparent in every item coming out of his forge.

Tom spent his childhood in the forge and also helped on the family farm. He never attended school and didn't learn to read or write as a child. About the time he turned twenty, he became interested in girls and decided he should teach himself a little "book learning" so he could compose letters to the young ladies. It appears that Thomas' studies paid off, for in January 1915 he married Edna, a seventeen-year-old who had attended school through the seventh grade. The couple welcomed a son, Aaron, in October 1915. A second son, Luther, followed later.

Shoes, Yokes and Fish Gigs

Tom's firstborn son Aaron wasn't



Miles Groover exhibits the work of local African American farmers at the state fair.

quite two years old when America entered World War One. Raines registered for the draft, but he was exempted from military service due to his occupation as a blacksmith; Jefferson County simply couldn't do without him. Blacksmiths were in high demand at any time, and this didn't certainly change with the coming of war. Raines explained:

"[They] kept me out of the war on account of all the work I do. See, there were a lot of farmers around here... All the people had mules and oxen and God knows what, you know. All those mules, you had to sharpen their feet. And then there were wagons with buggy wheels."

Horses, mules and buggies required much of Tom's time. He also forged farm implements and provided a variety of miscellaneous objects ranging from iron nails to roasting forks. Almost anything a farmer might need could be found or created in Raines' shop. Of his work, Thomas noted, "I have shod horses and mules, made ox bows and yokes, cotton baskets, wagon bodies and fish gigs [as well as] sharpening sweeps, making horse bits and working on guano distributors."

No job was too big or too small for him.

Locals frequented the blacksmith shop, but Tom's customers weren't limited to Jefferson County. People from Tallahassee and South Georgia came to Monticello to avail themselves of Raines's expert smithing. His customers even extended as far as St. Augustine, where Tom kept up a continual trade in repairing wheel rims for the historic

wagons and carriages used in that city.

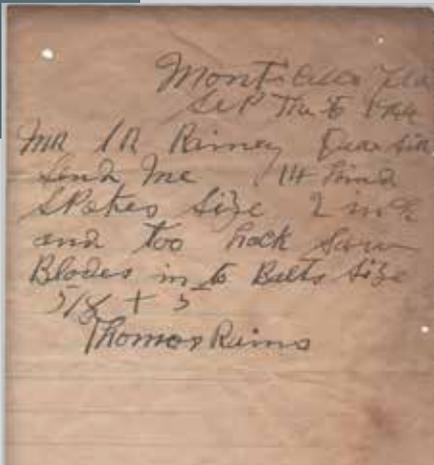
When not in his forge, Thomas worked a farm on the side, where he raised cotton and corn and kept hogs for meat.

"My father had an old mule," he recalled, "and I had a little one I called 'Big-un;' he was a strong little scamper. And I used to plow him on Saturdays and times like that."

Tom's hogs were free range since no fence laws were in existence at the time. Besides pork and bacon, his family's diet was supplemented by produce received from customers who had no cash to pay for blacksmith services. During the Depression, Raines was often paid in meat, syrup or other farm products. Others suffered during the 1930s, but Tom's business was booming. In 1939, he had an income of five hundred dollars from his blacksmithing alone.

In 1940, a national African American exposition was held in Chicago. Representatives from each of the forty-eight states were asked to contribute items "to show the progress achieved in the farm and home life" of African Americans since the end of the Civil War. In Jefferson County, Thomas Raines was one of those chosen to contribute to the Florida exhibit. He sent several items to Chicago, including a tack hammer made in his forge.

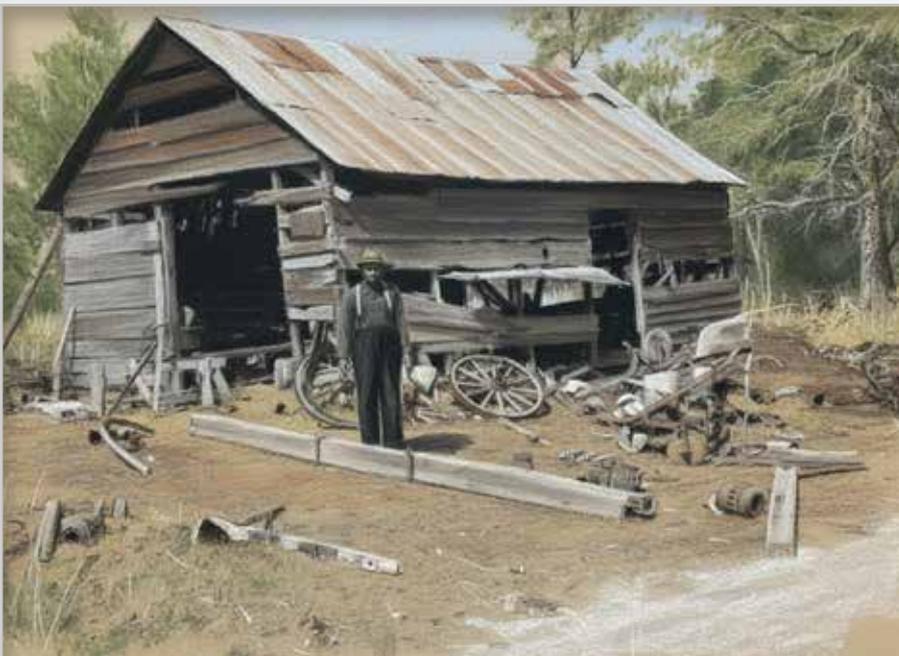
Despite the national recognition his work received, Tom remained a down-home, simple man. He was a friendly, smiling member of his community, where he attended church regularly at Elizabeth Missionary Baptist Church. He served as a deacon for many years



Rainey's letter written during WWII.



Painting of Rainey on display in the Wirick Simmons House.



Thomas Rainey in front of his blacksmith shop, circa 1960.

and could often be heard quoting from "the Good Book." He encouraged youngsters to follow the straight and narrow path and bemoaned the idleness and delinquency so often apparent in the younger generation. His quaint wisdom exhibited a character all its own, as when he quoted the proverb against the dangers of get-rich-quick thinking: "You have to teach [the young people] they can't get rich in one day. The Bible says you can't become a millionaire in [only] thirty years."

A Blacksmith in WWII

Rainey was exempt from military service in World War One. By the time America entered World War Two, he was too old to serve. Instead, he continued working long hours in his shop under wartime conditions. The war brought scarcities to all trades, including Tom's. He was fortunate to live only a few miles from L. R. Rainey's hardware store located a block north of the county courthouse in Monticello (the building still stands today and houses Stephen Walker's realty office and other local shops). With his international connections in Canada and elsewhere, L. R. Rainey was able to keep items in stock that could not be found elsewhere in Jefferson or neighboring counties.

Work at his forge often kept Tom too busy to travel into town to purchase items from Rainey. When he found himself in need of something for his shop, he would write a note, informing the storekeeper of the items he desired, and send it with a messenger to pick

up the needed supplies. Such business letters now offer a tiny glimpse into the world of Jefferson County during the war years. In September 1944, only a few months after Allied troops landed in France on D-Day, Thomas sent a short note to Rainey's store in Monticello. Concise yet detailed in its specifications, the letter read: "Send me 14 hind spokes, size 2 inch, and too hack saw blades in Co Balts size 5/8 and 5."

As the above letter shows, despite Tom's lack of formal education, he had learned enough reading and writing to conduct his business. He even served as a secretary for the Pullbearers Association and the Jefferson County Farmers Union.

Going to the Fair

For thirty-two years, Rainey left his forge for a few days each year to attend the annual Florida fair in Tampa. Each year, the African Americans of Jefferson County gathered samples of their crops, home-cured meats, homemade syrup, jellies and canned foods to exhibit at the Tampa fair. Miles Groover (1887-1966) was the local agricultural agent at the newly-created extension office in the county and oversaw the creation and running of the booth. A neighbor of Tom's, Groover lived in the Linton's Mill community, where he had learned farming at an early age. Rainey traveled with Groover each year and assisted in setting up the exhibit in Tampa.

"We used to take a carload of stuff on the southbound train," he recalled. "We'd haul meat, candy and peanuts, and stuff like that."

Other homegrown products included sugar cane, syrup, sweet potatoes, tobacco, corn, peas, hay, and fresh and canned fruit and vegetables. For the duration of the fair, Groover showcased the farm products produced by black farmers in Jefferson County.

Thomas would return to Tampa for the final weekend of the fair. He and Groover stayed with family and friends near Tampa since many hotels in the area did not serve black patrons at the time. Despite the segregation, the exhibits were well attended.

At the fair's completion, Thomas dismantled the exhibit and helped Groover load everything aboard the northbound train to Monticello. Through the work of these men and others, the industrious farmers of Jefferson County and their delicious produce became renowned statewide through the publicity they received at these fairs.

Going to the big city of Tampa was an exciting experience for Rainey, but one of his greatest traveling

experiences came when he made a trip to Washington, D.C., to tour the nation's capital.

"Hoover was president," he reminisced. "I was young and spent a whole day sightseeing."

Tom visited the monuments and memorials and never forgot "all those stairs" he had to climb to see everything.

A Historic Work

As decade followed decade in the twentieth century, Tom Raines continued to be a well-known pillar of Jefferson County life. When the Jefferson County Historical Association purchased the decrepit antebellum Wirick Simmons House in the 1960s and began to restore it to its original beauty, they hired Raines to make door hinges and other period metalwork necessary to authentically complete the house's restoration.

In the 1970s, Raines was one of the few local blacksmiths who still provided custom work. He saw many changes in his long life and joked that the advent of tractors had almost put him out of business.

He had seen many community changes as well. When asked about racial tension and discrimination during the days of segregation, he replied, "Jefferson County has always been pretty good about whites and blacks getting along. A lot of things have happened that ought not to have happened, but not like other counties. Most of the white people were pretty good in Jefferson County. I

always got along good with all of them."

Tom invested heavily in his community and the next generation. He worked with children in county 4-H clubs and also taught civil defense at Elizabeth Elementary School.

"He liked to teach others his trade, especially children and men in the community," explained Tom's niece, Nellie Thomas Randall.

Raines enjoyed passing on his love for blacksmithing, and he enjoyed the company too.

"He always prided himself on people watching him do his work," Nellie recalled.

Tom was a personable man who valued friendships and who refused to start a quarrel if one could be avoided.

"I never did argue with anyone," he explained. "My Daddy didn't like to argue either. My Momma could quarrel a hundred dollars' worth, but my Daddy, he wouldn't quarrel. He'd call people who'd quarrel a lyin' fool."

Tom's peace-loving character and his simple philosophy earned him the reputation of a likable, wise and dependable man. His character, as much as his work, ensured his enshrinement in history. In 1974, the county honored Raines with a Thomas Raines Appreciation Day. Locals of all walks of life gathered "to pay tribute not to a dignitary but to a blacksmith," noted the Tallahassee Democrat on Dec. 7, 1974. "[Tom] has become monumental as a man and as a neighbor," it declared.

The End of an Era

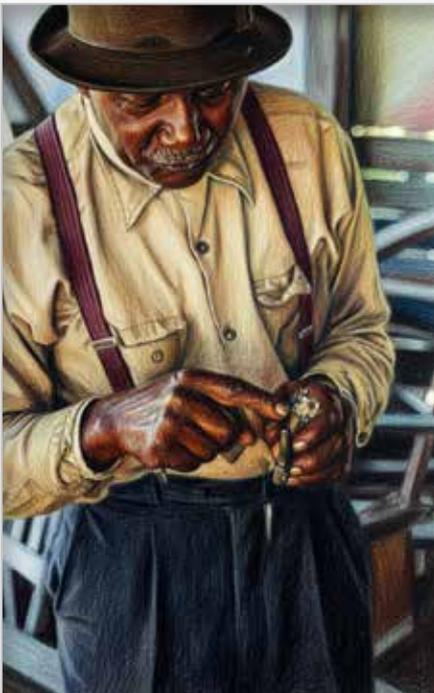
Untiring, Thomas worked his forge well into his nineties.

"I retired a good time back," he noted in January 1990, "but I worked it right on." He explained to one interviewer: "I have been trying to retire for five years, but it seems like somebody is always wanting me to do something. So I still come to the old shop every morning."

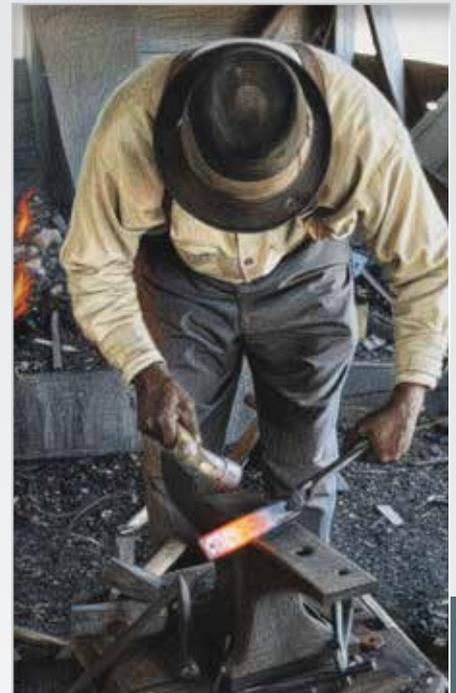
Raines loved his work, and even in his later years he continued to share the joy of blacksmithing with children and learners of all ages. In 1981 he opened his forge to a group of Jefferson County seventh graders. The event was a magical moment for the children, as their coordinator, Joanne Prichard, explained to the Tallahassee Democrat on May 7: "He fired up the forge and they (the students) got to try their hand at it. . . . In the stories he tells and the things he remembers and the things in his shop, there is an insight into Jefferson County history you can't find anywhere else."

To the end of his life, Tom continued to live on the same plot of land his father had settled on when the family originally moved to Jefferson County in the 1860s.

Three weeks short of his ninety-seventh birthday, Raines passed away on Dec. 4, 1990. He is buried in Groover Cemetery in Monticello. His passing marked the end of an era in Jefferson County, but his memory lives on to this day. ■



Thomas Raines at work in his shop, 1977.



Looking for a Realtor ?



Jessie Groover

850.464.1303

mossyoakproperties.com/agent/jessica-groover



Madison Plumbing

Matthew Browning, Owner

Certified Plumbing Contractor

Commercial and Residential

Lic #CFC1429684

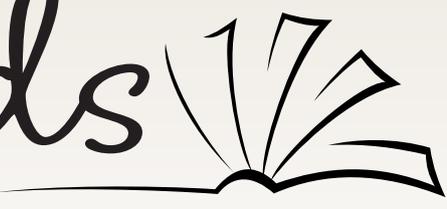


- *Trenching Work*
- *Plumbing Repairs*
- *New Construction*
- *Drain Cleaning*

(850) 973-6895 • 413 SW Range Ave., Madison, Fla. 32340

Regional Reads

By Laura Young

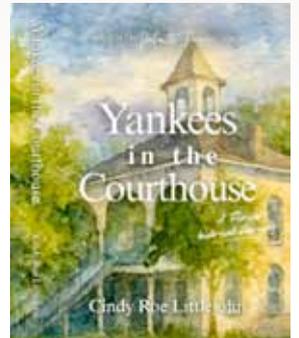


The interesting small towns that dot the landscape of Florida's Big Bend have produced a fascinating fusion of people, many of whom channel their experiences and interests into equally fascinating books. In this issue we're taking notice of two family biographies and a memoir. If there's a local author whose work you'd like to see noted in a future issue of The Front Porch magazine, email emerald@greenepublishing.com.



Yankees in the Courthouse: A Florida Civil War & Reconstruction Biography By Cindy Roe Littlejohn (Releasing November 2025)

Monticello-born author and historian Cindy Roe Littlejohn has completed the final book in her historical narrative series,



Palmetto Pioneers. Providing a powerful conclusion to her acclaimed historical trilogy, *Yankees in the Courthouse: A Florida*

Civil War Biography gives readers a vivid portrait of Florida's turbulent years during and after the Civil War. Drawing on meticulous research, Littlejohn narrates the real-life struggles of Mary Adeline Walker and her family during the South's journey from promise, to fracture, to painful rebuilding. The book shows Monticello, Florida, as a microcosm of the upheaval facing the South in the war's final years and the Reconstruction era. With biographical authenticity and storytelling skill, Littlejohn blends family history, regional heritage and universal themes of endurance and change.

"This is not just the story of one family," Littlejohn explains. "It is the story of a people caught between loyalty, loss and the uncertain hope of rebuilding."

The book will be available through major online sellers as well as locations throughout the Big Bend. Look for copies in Vintage Treasures, The Luckie Pearl and the Monticello-Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce in Monticello; The Bookshelf in Thomasville; Book Mart in Perry; the Gadsden Art Gallery in Quincy; and many shops in Tallahassee, including Hearth and Soul, Midtown Books, My Favorite Books and The History Shops in the State Capitol and Old Capitol. ■

Mud'dah

By Dr. Joseph L. Webster, Sr.
(BookBaby, 2025)

Dr. Joseph L. Webster, Sr. is a native of Monticello, Florida. A gastroenterologist who currently practices medicine in Orlando, Dr. Webster has combined his medical knowledge with a gift for storytelling in *Mud'dah*, a self-published family biography centered around its matriarch, his mother.



Mud'dah takes readers on a journey through time, from the era of Jim Crow segregation to the present day. Born in rural North Florida in the early 1900s, *Mud'dah* faced poverty, racism and inequality. She became a caregiver to her four siblings and ailing father at just 11 years old following her mother's death, and with resilience and determination paved her own path towards the life she deserved.

Dr. Webster's tribute illustrates *Mud'dah's* core values and honors the unyielding spirit that enabled her to overcome significant challenges. It celebrates the rich heritage of Black Americans while also transcending cultural boundaries to resonate with women of diverse backgrounds. Universal themes emerge about familial bonds and community support. Further, the book showcases Dr. Webster's devotion to service as well as his determination to improve healthcare and education for all people, especially those living in underserved communities.

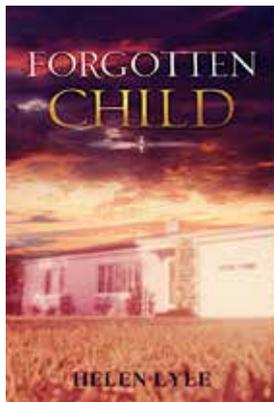
The book is available from the publisher and major online booksellers.

The Forgotten Child

By Helen Lyle
(Graham Publishing Group, 2021)

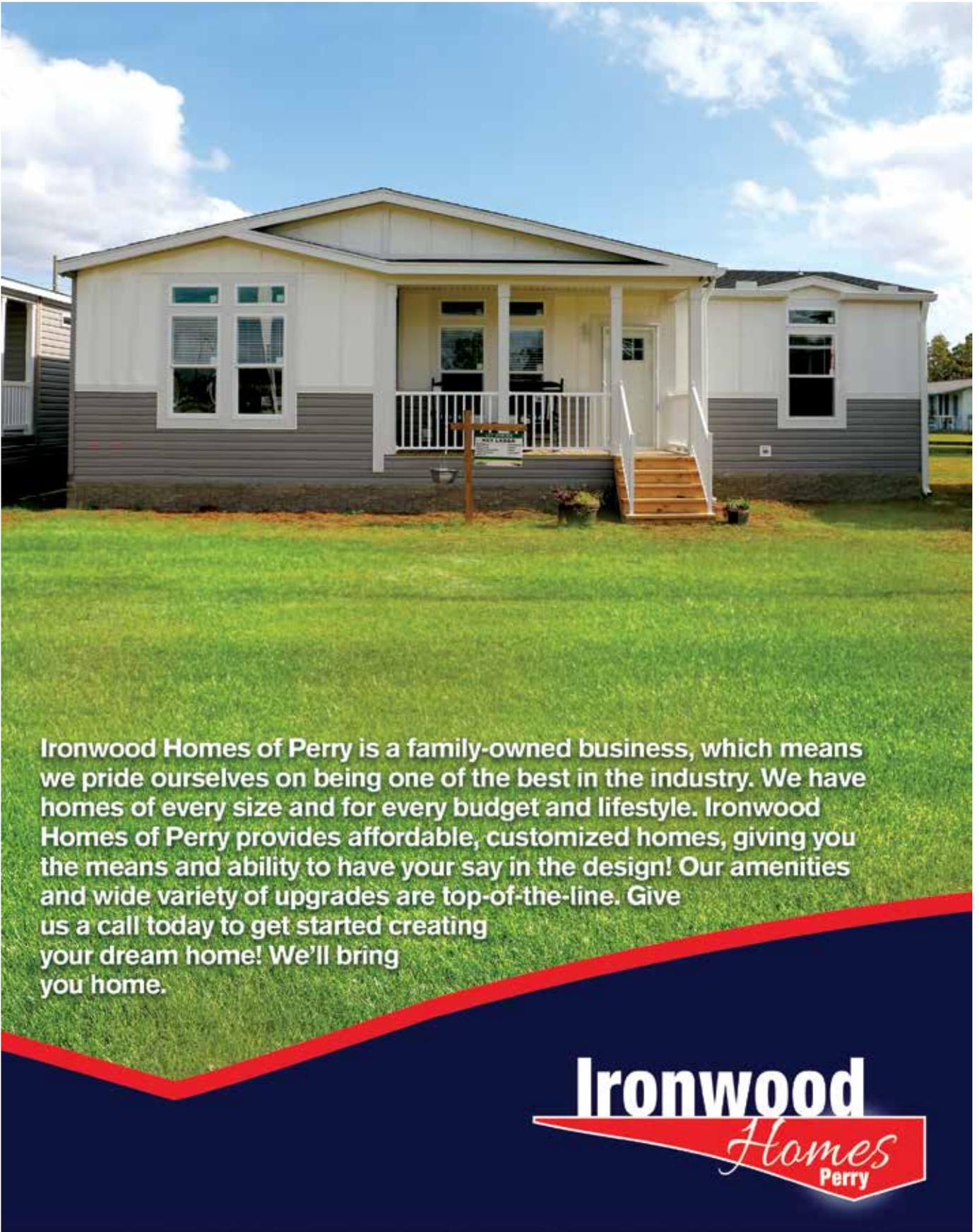
In this memoir, Jefferson County

resident Helen Lyle shares her experience being privately adopted many years ago in the deep South. She was "a little life not meant to be, yet God had a purpose for this unwanted life." The book tells about Lyle feeling the hand of God guide her through many trials. One was finding her biological roots, which led to a negative encounter. Lyle's life story is entwined with death, sorrow, deception and mystery, yet her belief that she was never alone due to the ever-present love of God carried her through all the hurt. The captivating account of her journey builds to a conclusion filled with her faith in a wonderful and merciful God.



"My objective is to tell others what God had done in my life, as well as, touch the lives of others who have experienced similar encounters like my own. I feel led to share my memoir as my testimony for the Lord, at a time so confusing to many. I pray my life's story, can plant seeds, that bring people to know God as their Savior.

The book is available from the author and a major online bookseller.



Ironwood Homes of Perry is a family-owned business, which means we pride ourselves on being one of the best in the industry. We have homes of every size and for every budget and lifestyle. Ironwood Homes of Perry provides affordable, customized homes, giving you the means and ability to have your say in the design! Our amenities and wide variety of upgrades are top-of-the-line. Give us a call today to get started creating your dream home! We'll bring you home.

Ironwood
Homes
Perry

Ironwood Homes of Perry



(850) 838-9090
ironwoodperry@gmail.com
3483 South Byron Butler Parkway
Perry, FL 32348
www.ironwoodhomesofperry.com





J.M. "BUDDY" PHILLIPS

The Sheriff of Florida



Buddy Phillips, on behalf of the FSA, helped dedicate the Carl Stauffer Library in 2002. Pictured from left to right, are: FSYR President Emeritus Harry Weaver, Buddy Phillips, Carl Stauffer, Suwannee County Sheriff Al Williams, FSYR President Roger Bouchard and Bradford County Sheriff Bob Milner. Photo Courtesy

Story by Jason Futch

John Marvin “Buddy” Phillips was the torchbearer of modern-day law enforcement. Starting his law enforcement career early, he served for more than 46 years, not only as an agent with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) but also as sheriff for seven counties, earning the nickname “Sheriff of Florida.” He was also heavily involved with the Florida Sheriff’s Youth Ranch (FSYR) and was the Executive Director of the Florida Sheriff’s Association. His accolades in law enforcement speak for themselves.

Buddy was born on Feb. 7, 1939, to John Marvin and Lillian Phillips in Live Oak. His father was the mayor of Live Oak for 20 years and the founder of Suwannee Laundry Dry Cleaning, which is still in operation and run by Buddy’s younger brother, Joe.

“Buddy was my mentor,” his youngest brother, Joe, said. “Hunting, fishing, he always took me with him and also kept me in check when I needed to be checked.”

While attending Suwannee High School, Buddy excelled in his studies and participated in various clubs. He also played on the Suwannee High School Bulldogs football team. Before he graduated in 1956, Buddy got his first taste of law enforcement by working at the Suwannee County Jail as a corrections



deputy under Sheriff Hugh Lewis.

However, upon graduation, he took a break from law enforcement and moved to Gainesville to attend the University of Florida. After a semester, he chose to transfer to South Georgia College in Douglas, Georgia, where he played for the football team, coached by future Florida State University legend Bobby Bowden.

In 1960, Buddy traded his school books for a military uniform and enlisted in the United States Army Military Police Corps’ European Command. During his time with the Army, he had begun

corresponding with a young woman from Jacksonville named Mary Jo Rogers. Following his time in the Army, Buddy married Mary Jo, returned to Live Oak, and in 1964, at the age of 25, took a job as a deputy with the Suwannee County Sheriff’s Office (SCSO) under Sheriff Duke McAlister.

As a deputy sheriff, Buddy was dedicated to helping families get out of sticky situations but also had a soft spot for children who needed a mentor. He became involved with the FSYR and offered his support and mentorship to the children who came through the program. Later in his life, he remained active with the organization as a member of some of its executive boards.

Then, in 1968, an opportunity presented itself. On Feb. 16, Sheriff McAlister announced he would be retiring as the sheriff of Suwannee County, prompting Buddy to throw his hat in the ring. With only four years of service as a full-time deputy, it was a long shot. Facing Buddy were Cecil Bonds, Laure Roberson and W.A. Nobles. All three men had some experience in law enforcement or were connected to the community in some way, which gave them the backing Buddy did not have.

During the campaign, he laid out his plan to modernize the agency, including expanding regular patrols into Branford and O’Brien. A year before he chose to run for sheriff, Buddy attended a months-

Florida Law Enforcement Officers' Hall of Fame

Established by the 2014 Legislature to recognize law enforcement officers who put their lives on for the safety and protection of the citizens of Florida through their works, service and exemplary accomplishments.



The family of Buddy Phillips gathered at the State Capitol in Tallahassee as he was posthumously inducted into the Florida Law Enforcement Hall of Fame in 2017. Photo Courtesy of FDLE.

long training at the National FBI Training Academy in Quantico, Virginia. There, he was exposed to modern technology, investigative techniques and a network of investigators and agency leaders, giving him an edge in his law enforcement career. To his credit, he was the only FBI-trained candidate and also had a 200-hour college certificate of training for law enforcement at North Florida Junior College.

Ultimately, Buddy prevailed, winning the May primary election and clinching the sheriff position early. When he won, he continued to work at the SCSO, shadowing Sheriff McAlister to understand the duties that came with the office. From Dec. 2 to Dec. 4, 1968, Buddy attended the Florida Sheriff's Academy, joining other newly elected sheriffs across the state.

On Jan. 7, 1969, Buddy took the oath of office, becoming Suwannee County Sheriff. He was destined to modernize the SCSO and help usher in a new era for the region. At 29 years old, Buddy was one of the youngest-elected sheriffs in the state.

Throughout the four years of Buddy's service as sheriff, turbulent times were happening throughout the country. The

Vietnam War was still raging, Civil Rights continued to be a hot-button topic, and public confidence in the government was beginning to falter. However, Buddy was able to keep Suwannee County safe at home. There were no significant incidents that took place. Considering his progressive stance on law enforcement, Buddy sought to improve the agency by starting its first investigations division, updating its equipment, and providing an equal opportunity for all.

Then, in 1972, Robert Leonard challenged him for reelection. Leonard was a Florida Highway Patrol veteran who was working as a beverage agent for the Florida Division of Beverages at the time of his campaign for sheriff. Unfortunately for Buddy, he posed a threat to his reelection chances, ousting him as sheriff in November of 1972. Following Buddy's loss, Leonard would become one of Suwannee County's longest-serving sheriffs, retiring in 1997 following the swearing-in of Al Williams.

"We are not sure why Buddy lost," Joe said. "But we thought highly of both my brother and Leonard."

While the loss stung a bit, it wasn't over for Buddy. Following defeat, he was

offered a position with the FDLE in 1973, cycling through a myriad of roles within the agency for the first 10 years, which included serving as a training specialist with the Florida Law Enforcement Academy. By 1983, he became the Senior Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, which ultimately evolved into the title of Inspector-Director of Mutual Aid.

His role as the Director of Mutual Aid oversaw the execution of the Florida Mutual Aid Act, which passed in 1969. The act enabled state and local law enforcement to share resources in the case of major incidents, such as riots and natural disasters. The role ultimately became a peacekeeping effort on Buddy's part to calm the waters of multiple sheriff's offices throughout Florida. He did not expect how many times he would be called to assist discombobulated agencies across the state.

Buddy received his first call in January of 1983, when Governor Bob Graham removed Sheriff Daniel Bennett of Flagler County due to several alleged actions leveled against him. This move did not sit well with Bennett, who was faced with a standoff against FDLE agents after it was rumored he was armed with heavy artillery in his office and was prepared to be combative. However, Bennett surrendered peacefully, handed the keys to the sheriff's vehicle to Buddy, and left. Buddy then went on the radio and announced to all active deputies that Flagler County had a new sheriff.

He ensured those who lived in the county that his role as the Acting Sheriff of Flagler County was only in place to oversee the continuity of the office.

"I have tried to make everyone aware that I have nothing to do with [Bennett's] investigation," Buddy told the Daytona Beach Morning Journal. "Certain things have to be done under Florida statutes when you assume office. It's no reflection on anyone else."

Following the appointment of Robert McCarthy to serve Bennett's remaining term on Feb. 8, 1983, Buddy returned to Tallahassee, but it wasn't long before he was called to his next assignment, which was significantly different compared to the rest of the agencies he would go on to serve as the temporary chief law enforcement officer.

In Glades County, located in South Florida, the citizens were in mourning. Sheriff William "Billy" Arnold, who was beloved by many in the county, had succumbed to a years-long battle with

cancer on Nov. 18, 1983.

"It was a different situation," current Glades County Sheriff David Hardin said. "When Buddy came to a sheriff's office, it was always a question of, 'What did the sheriff do now?' But in Glades County, he had to bring a sense of healing to our community."

The agency was relatively small compared to Flagler County.

"At the time of my father's passing, there were only seven deputies or so," Sheriff Arnold's son, Arlon, said.

Buddy would serve as Sheriff of Glades County through the Thanksgiving holiday and into December, continuing to implement the anti-drug operations that Sheriff Arnold had started. He eventually handed over the office to a veteran Florida Highway Patrol officer, Russell Henderson, who was appointed to fulfill Arnold's remaining term on Dec. 8, 1983.

Reflecting on Buddy's time in Glades County, Joe said he was quiet about some of his assignments, including those where he had to take on the role of sheriff.

"We knew that Buddy's time was different in Glades," he said. "But he never really talked about that time with anyone. He never really shared much about his work with his family. He tended to leave it at the office and focused on his family when he returned."

While 1983 was relatively calm for Buddy, 1984 and 1985 saw him traveling more. One assignment brought him closer to home.

On April 18, 1984, Columbia County Sheriff Steve Spradley was indicted on charges stemming from a major drug investigation. He was arrested and stripped of his title as sheriff, leaving Governor Graham to consider an interim replacement until he could find a more permanent leader.

When the opportunity to take on the role of acting Sheriff of Columbia County came, Buddy accepted the role and traveled to Lake City, where he attempted to cool the waters of an already tense sheriff's office. He was familiar with Lake City, considering it was a half-hour drive from his hometown of Live Oak.

Following Spradley's indictment, Buddy arrived at the Columbia County Courthouse in Lake City to meet with the county commissioners, then the Columbia County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) deputies who were waiting for an update as to what happened.

"I'm sure this is a traumatic experience for everyone," Buddy told

county commissioners during the meeting. "Let's get it over with. I'm from Live Oak, and I have a pretty good feeling of what you're going through."

As with his time in Flagler County, he assured those in Columbia County that he would not institute major shakeups at CCSO and business would remain the same while the governor sought a more permanent replacement for Spradley. During his time as the interim sheriff, he assisted in a major drug operation in Lake City with the State Attorney's Office and the Lake City Police Department, and terminated two deputies due to dishonesty.

One month later, on May 18, 1984, the governor appointed Lake City Police Department Assistant Chief Ray Dyal as Buddy's successor, allowing his time in Lake City to come to a close. While he was able to play a role in closing out an ugly chapter in Columbia County's history, Buddy was on to his next assignment in Pasco County a few months later.

In a similar situation, Sheriff John Short was indicted on corruption charges. Buddy's time as sheriff of Pasco County was longer than his previous visits, going nearly two months. During his tenure, he oversaw a broken agency dealing with terrible accusations and helped regain the people's trust in the agency.

Five months after returning home, Buddy was called again to assist the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office and serve as sheriff following Sheriff Glenn Sapp's suspension due to an indictment for grand theft. Sapp and others had allegedly sold two small planes to the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office illegally and attempted to avoid paying state taxes on a car a former Charlotte County sheriff gave him. A month later, John McDougal, a law enforcement veteran and former



The death of Glades County Sheriff William "Billy" Arnold (pictured here) was the only incident during Buddy Phillips' time as interim sheriff where he took over at no fault of the sheriff. Buddy sought to oversee the agency while its deputies and staff were in mourning. Photo Courtesy of FSA.

Franciscan monk, took on the role of sheriff, allowing Phillips to return home one more time during his tenure at FDLE. Later, both Sapp and Short were acquitted. While Sapp was able to return as sheriff of Charlotte County, Short did not return to the role in Pasco County.

Buddy retired from FDLE in 1988, taking on a new title: Executive Director of the FSA. The role is appointed, and the candidate is selected by a board of directors, which consists of county sheriffs. At the time of Buddy's appointment, the war on drugs was starting up, and efforts to educate the community on drugs became a focal point.

In 1989, the FSA formed the Florida Sheriffs Task Force. According to its website, the first statewide task force operation organized by the FSA was



In 2004, Buddy took over as the interim sheriff of Lake County, overseeing the agency following the resignation of Lake County Sheriff George Knupp. Photo Courtesy of Orlando Sentinel.

held in July 1989 to address the growing crack cocaine problem. It involved more than 1,500 law enforcement officers from various counties and resulted in 2,224 arrests.

Under Buddy, the FSA also aggressively pursued violent offender laws. In one instance, the FSA pursued "Truth in Sentencing" laws, also known as the Stop Turning Out Prisoners Act, which ensured that inmates served 85 percent of their prison sentence. The law was ultimately passed, and the FSA continues to monitor its implementation and success.

While at the FSA, Buddy shared his thoughts about the future of policing through columns he wrote for the organization's "Sheriff's Star" magazine. He was optimistic the fight against crime was successful and that Florida was setting an example in reducing crime.

Inspired by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C., Buddy also oversaw the creation of the state's first law enforcement memorial at the grounds of the Florida Sheriff's Association in Tallahassee. Equally fascinated with the history of law enforcement in Florida, he contributed to "Florida's Sheriffs: A History 1821-1945," a book showcasing the history of the agencies throughout the state, providing an in-depth look at Florida's evolution in law enforcement.

On March 3, 2002, after 46 years of public service, Buddy retired from the FSA but remained a consultant.

"The last 14 years of my service have been with the FSA, and it is gratifying to have been a part of the growth of this Association and our Youth Ranches," he wrote in his final article for the "Sheriff's Star" magazine.

While it seemed he would finally enjoy retirement, work called again, bringing Buddy out of retirement two more times. This time, Governor Jeb Bush appointed him to serve as sheriff in Charlotte County for the second time in October of 2003, following the indictment of Sheriff Bill Clement on felony election law violations. After serving two months as the Charlotte County Sheriff, he went to Lake County in February of 2004 to assume the position due to the resignation of George Knupp, who was facing perjury charges.

Despite the issues Knupp faced, Buddy was impressed with how organized the agency was, remarking, "I think [Knupp] has made some very good decisions with his staff. I'm very pleased by the professionalism of this agency and how well the community has responded."

Without making any drastic changes, Phillips handed over the agency to

Okaloosa County Chief Deputy Fred Cobb, who oversaw the agency until the first of the year, when Lake County Sheriff-Elect Chris Daniels was sworn in.

After Buddy served as Sheriff of Lake County, he chose to spend more time with his family. After half a century of service to law enforcement, it was time for him to enjoy the finer things in life. "Law enforcement had always been his dream, and he lived it," Joe said.

Buddy enjoyed retirement, during which he and Mary Jo traveled to their mountain home in North Carolina and other areas of the country.

"He was a terrific husband," Mary Jo said in an interview with the Suwannee Democrat. "We did all the tourist stuff. He enjoyed taking pictures of wildlife."

She had also told a story about how, during a hunting trip, Buddy would be in the deer stand, focusing on the sunrise rather than seeking out what he went to hunt.

Buddy had the opportunity to spend time with his two grandchildren and offered support and advice to his children, Mike and Cheri, who followed in his footsteps into law enforcement. Additionally, Buddy spent time contributing to his favorite charity: the FSYR.

"Buddy was always a firm believer in the FSYR," Joe said. In his retirement, he gave back to the FSYR and participated in special events to honor the youth of the ranch. In 2007, on the FSYR's 50th anniversary, Buddy took part in a memory video project that commemorated the facility's service. The video also showed archived clips of Buddy in some of the featurettes the FSYR had put together over the years.

"I'm just so pleased to be able to say that I remember the ranch when it wasn't a ranch," Buddy said. "I remember going out one afternoon with Sheriff Hugh Lewis, riding in the back of his vehicle with Thomas Musgrove, driving down a cow path. I saw it develop, but I also saw the young men out there and had a chance to relate to them, visit with them and talk to them."

Buddy soon found out that he was not doing well.

"He had developed a rare, aggressive type of cancer," his nephew, Joseph, said. "He would have to travel to Moffitt Cancer Research Center in Tampa regularly because of how aggressive it had become."

Buddy was not public about his battle with cancer. He chose not to worry the community about his health, but his family continued to monitor his progress as he continued his treatments in Tampa.

On June 10, 2008, Buddy passed away at the age of 69. It was a sad time for the family and his law enforcement colleagues.

"When I talk to people about Buddy's passing, I always say that not only did I lose my brother, but I lost my hero too," Joe said. "He did well with his life."

"You could trust him coming in [to a sheriff's office]," Julie Bettinger, an editor with the FSA, said in an interview with the Orlando Sentinel. "He never had a political agenda; he just wanted to comfort the department and help it move on."

"He had a great reputation as a good, conservative and ethical person," Lake County Sheriff Gary Borders said.

In an interview with the Suwannee Democrat at the time of Buddy's death, then-Suwannee County Sheriff Tony Cameron said, "Buddy was not only the Sheriff of Suwannee County, but he was also a good, Christian man who had the best interest of the State of Florida, the people of Suwannee County, and our nation at all times."

Buddy left behind a career that speaks for itself, one that has inspired a future generation of law enforcement officers. It was also a career that those who fondly remember him have shared with others.

Over the years, Buddy has been posthumously honored with awards and endowments named after him. The FSA's main office in Tallahassee was renamed the Perkins-Phillips Building to honor Buddy and Gary Perkins, another Executive Director for the association, who passed away suddenly. A scholarship fund was named in his memory, and in 2017, he was posthumously inducted into the Florida Law Enforcement Hall of Fame in honor of his service to Florida. And upon entering any sheriff's office in Florida, a painting hangs on the wall honoring Buddy's service to the FSYR. The painting is called "A Boy's Buddy."

Glades County Sheriff Billy Arnold's passing in 1983 revealed a poignant reminder of unwavering duty – a poem titled "You Never Walk Alone" by Harold Mohn, found in his desk. It was a fitting reflection of the legacy that followed, as Buddy stepped in to lead Glades County temporarily and, for a time, five other sheriff's offices he was appointed to in dire need of guidance. In their darkest hours, they never walked alone, as Buddy stood steadfast, a guardian of justice and a symbol of strength. His service was more than a title; it was a calling, etched into the hearts of those he swore to protect. He was not just a sheriff – he was the Sheriff of Florida. ■



“Community Minded, Just Like You”

Loan officers available until 8 p.m.

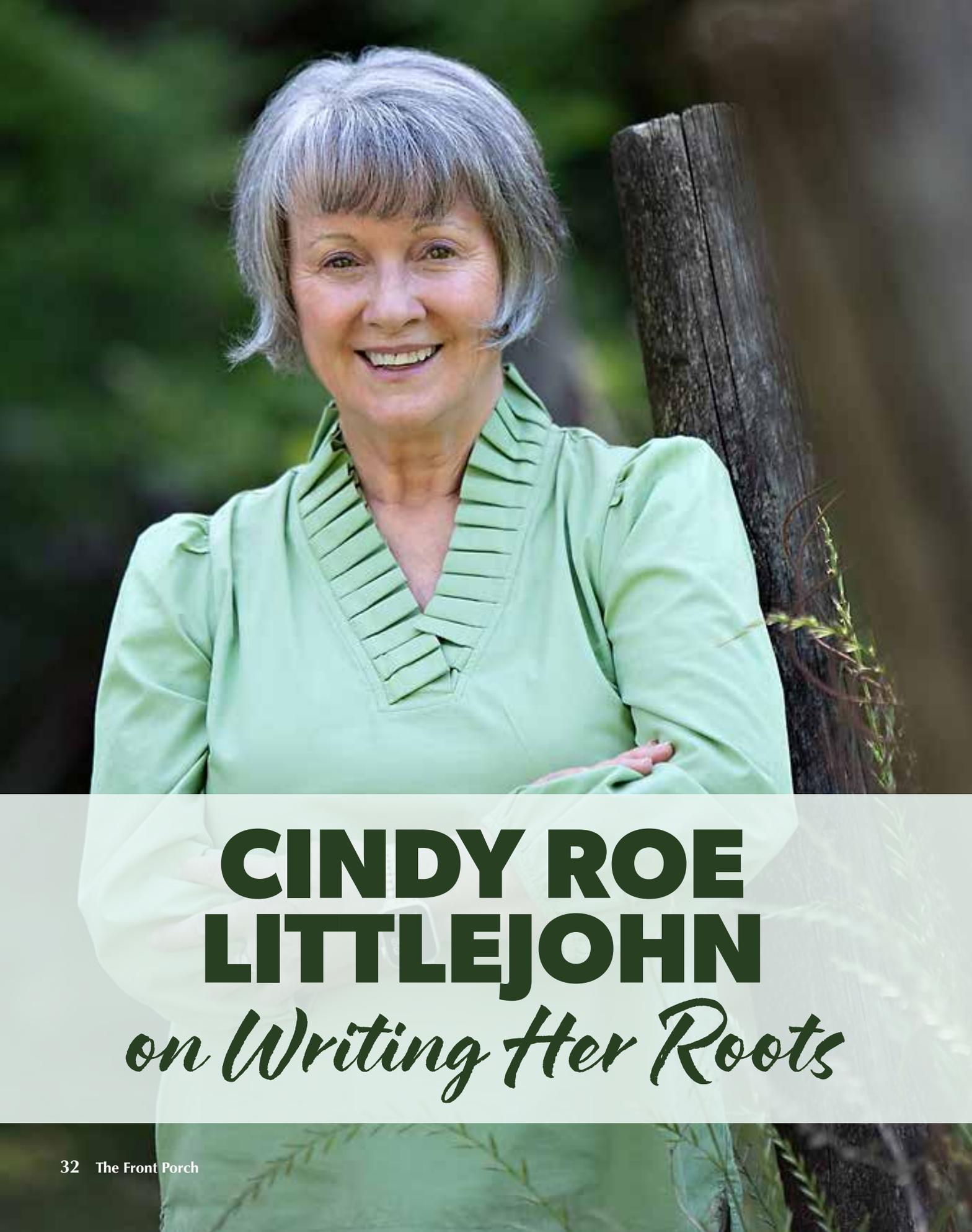
-- Apply Online --

**424 W. Base St.
Madison, Fla. 32340
(850) 973-2600**

**1825 S. Jefferson St.
Perry, Fla. 32348
(850) 223-7100**

**3003 Mahan Dr.
Tallahassee, Fla. 32308
(850) 223-7100**

www.mybcfcu.com



**CINDY ROE
LITTLEJOHN**

on Writing Her Roots

Story by Hailey Heseltine

Photographs Courtesy of Cindy Roe Littlejohn

Cindy Roe Littlejohn's family roots have been intertwined with Jefferson County history for generations. Her family legacy is what has fueled her lifelong interest in research and narrative nonfiction. Littlejohn is now an award-winning author, soon to publish the third and final book in a nonfiction series based on her own ancestors' histories, *Palmetto Pioneers*.

Littlejohn grew up in Monticello, surrounded by a long legacy of local history. Since she was a child, she was aware that her family had lived in the area since the county's beginnings. Though she always found the idea of it interesting, the one who truly sparked her interest in history was her father.

"When I was young, we didn't have two dimes to rub together ... but every summer, we took two weeks off, and we traveled far and wide across the United States, up into Canada, and one time, even down into Mexico. Because we didn't have a lot of money, we couldn't stop at places like Disney World, but almost all of the historical parks were free. If there was a battlefield, or a state capitol, or college campuses, Dad would take us there, all over the United States. It was pretty amazing. I was able to take that knowledge to the classroom. Almost any time we studied something that happened in the United States in school, I had already been there. I think that those vacations were my sort of historical research as a kid," Littlejohn recalls.

Meanwhile, when she attended Jefferson County High School, one of her teachers took an interest in Littlejohn's writing and helped her polish her work in the classroom. She took those skills far beyond the classroom. After graduating high school in 1972, already with one year of education at Tallahassee Junior College under her belt, she decided to continue her education at Florida State University (FSU). She earned an undergraduate degree in communications with an emphasis in public relations and minor in English.

In 1989, she married her husband, Chuck Littlejohn, and moved to Tallahassee. It was also around that time that she returned to FSU for a master's degree in organizational communication in the '90s. Following her first graduate degree, she was encouraged to continue studying. Littlejohn earned her PhD in communication theory and research from FSU in 1997. While still living in Tallahassee, she and her husband worked

as lobbyists until their retirement and move back to Monticello in 2014.

After self-publishing a private book for the Florida Land Council, Littlejohn started to become interested in publishing a book about her beloved hometown. Jefferson County's role in Florida history was an interesting one, having been home to many significant Florida residents in the past despite being rural today.

"It was then that I realized I could do more. I always had, in my mind, this little town of Monticello," Littlejohn explains. "There's a major story here about the role it's played in the settlement of Florida. So, I started looking around for ways that I could go about writing that and capturing that particular idea. I knew that my family was there when the county got started, so I started looking for someone in my family that could tell that story."

While tracing her own genealogical lines some years prior, she had worked backward from the name of an ancestor, William Hamrick, to learn more about her ancestry. One of the people her research led her to was Mary Adeline Walker, her great-great-grandmother. Walker was just seven years old when her family relocated from South Carolina to territorial Florida, specifically Jefferson County, in 1829. She was also, as Littlejohn later decided, the perfect narrator through whom to tell the story of *Palmetto Pioneers* because of her husband, William, and his involvement in politics.

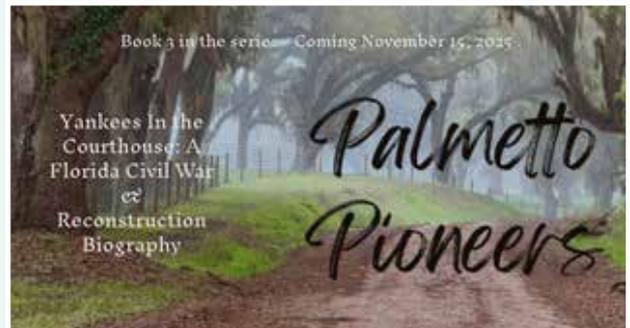
Littlejohn began writing the series in 2015, originally planning for it to be a single book following Mary's arrival in Jefferson County to the reconstruction era in 1871. A cousin pointed out to her that the book might be better read in multiple parts, and so it was split into three. The writing for the entire series was mostly finished by 2018. More arduous than the writing was the research involved in it, which Littlejohn gleaned by scouring historical



documents and carefully checking her own work.

While staying committed to historical accuracy, Littlejohn also knew that a nonfiction narrative could not be composed entirely of direct quotes and remain accessible for a wide audience, nor be a very approachable or relatable story. She developed a system for distinguishing dialogue that she invented for the story, in keeping with what she believed her ancestors could have said, and actual quotes, which she emphasized by putting in italics as well as enclosing with quotation marks. Though quite a bit of "filling in between the lines" was necessary to craft the nonfiction narrative, she wanted to distinguish the two elements.

In 2022, Littlejohn self-published the first *Palmetto Pioneers* book, *The Emigrants*, through Amazon. Holding a copy for the first time was an emotional



Yankees in the Courthouse: A Florida Civil War & Reconstruction Biography, the third and final book in Littlejohn's Palmetto Pioneers, launches Nov. 15.



tangible. She felt a similar sense of gratitude when book two, *From Harmony to Hostility: A Historical Biography About Florida's Path to the Civil War*, was published in 2024.

Right away, the series was received more positively than Littlejohn had imagined. She regularly sells copies of both of her books on Amazon and in brick-and-mortar stores, among them the gift shop in the Old Capitol.

Beyond success in sales, the *Palmetto Pioneers* series has also received numerous accolades. *The Emigrants* won an IPPY bronze medal in Nonfiction in the Southeast, and it earned three medals from the Florida Authors and Publishers Association, two gold for History and Biography categories and a silver for its cover design. Though it did not win Best New Nonfiction with the international American Book Fest Best Book Awards General History category, it was a finalist. Meanwhile, *From Harmony to Hostility* won a bronze medal in the History category at the Florida Authors and Publishers Association President's Book Awards. It was also a finalist for the Foreword INDIES Book of the Year Nonfiction in the Southeast category.

"What I really wanted with these books was to tell their story," says

Littlejohn, "so that those in the family who are younger can understand our heritage. I also wanted to tell the story of Jefferson County's political role in the founding of Florida as a state. So really, it's for my family, but it's also for everyone in Florida."

With the publication of the final book of the series on the horizon, this chapter of Littlejohn's life is coming to a close. So, what's next? After the hustle and bustle of the holidays passes by, she plans to start writing a middle-grade children's version of *Palmetto Pioneers*. She is also "toying around with the idea" of a new series, another narrative nonfiction story based on her family's history. With a working title of *Florida's Movers and Builders*, it would tell the tale of Mary and William's descendants and their move to Indian River County during the early 20th century. Littlejohn admits that the new story will take years of research before it's ready to write, but she is nonetheless excited to tell more tales from Florida's past through the eyes of her own kin.

The third and final book in the *Palmetto Pioneers* series, *Yankees in the Courthouse: A Florida Civil War & Reconstruction Biography*, launches Nov. 15, 2025, on Amazon. ■

experience, she recalls, as she felt a rush over seeing the thing that she had worked so long for finally become something

Fresh Fruit & Juice available for Pick Up!

Fruit: November thru December.
Juice: Year-round
 Available at our packing plant located at 5314 Boston Hwy. Monticello, Fla. 32344.
Call before picking up!

Support your *Local Farmers*

www.floridageorgiacitrus.com
(229) 224-7698
5314 Boston Hwy., Monticello, Fla. 32344

FLORIDA GEORGIA CITRUS



FOR SALE

850-973-4458

**Crystal K Bochnia
Broker
(850) 973-7333**



P.O. Box 505
Madison, Fla. 32341
(850)973-4458

www.madisonrealtygroupllc.com

Love the job you trained for



HVAC/R



Agribusiness Management



Industrial Machinery Maintenance

Money should never stand in the way of chasing your dreams

Ask about Grants and Scholarships just for Career & Workforce students

DISCOVER.NFC.EDU



NFC has helped thousands of students just like you chase their dreams to earn certificates and degrees.

Start Today



SCAN ME

850.242.2232



CRUVER
photography

- weddings
- events
- products
- social media
- portrait's
- family & groups

Come see what it's like to
COME HOME TO CODY

As an 113 year old church in the community, Cody has always been a place of refuge and HOME thru the generations.

Our roots are firmly planted in Jefferson County, and we are finally back home and ready to create that sense of love and community, Cody was so well known for.

We would love to have you join us for a service, event, or even just a cup of coffee and a chat.

SISTER MARTHA RICEHOUSE, PASTOR SARAH SPAGNOLA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Weekly Services

SUNDAYS

MORNING WORSHIP AT 11 AM
EVENING WORSHIP AT 6 PM

WEDNESDAYS

PRAYER AND DEVOTIONAL AT 7 PM



Upcoming Events

FAMILY AND FRIENDS FALL FESTIVAL

NOVEMBER 15-16TH

JOIN US FOR A COMMUNITY WIDE CELEBRATION

Fall festival, games, great food, chili cook-off, revival, gospel sing and MORE!

THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW FOR MORE INFO AND TO STAY IN TOUCH

CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT SERVICE AND SUPPER - DATE TBD

CALLING ALL SINGERS, MUSICIANS, AND LITTLE ACTORS!

Christmas Choir, Kids Program, and Prime Rib Dinner

JOIN CODY FOR AN OLD-FASHION COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

CONTACT 850-694-3095 CODYPHCOMMUNITYCHURCH@GMAIL.COM



THREE JERSEYS, ONE LEGACY

The Journey of Football Great

ALEX BROWN

Story by Danny Federico

Photographs Courtesy of Alex Brown and Essie Brown

Born in Jasper, Florida, and raised in the small town of White Springs, Florida, Alex James Brown's story begins like so many others in Hamilton County – rooted in family, faith and football. Although the hospital where he was born no longer stands, the vivid memories of his childhood remain.

"We moved out to Black Bay when I was about 5 or 6," he recalled. "That's where I grew up until I left for college."

Football, however, wasn't just a pastime for the Browns; it was a family tradition. With four brothers – three older and one younger – competition was woven into their lives.

"By the time I realized what football really was, it was already embedded into our lifestyle," he said. "It's just what we did."

Their yard became a training ground for scrimmages and all sorts of games utilizing a football. Yet, behind every tackle and touchdown was a foundation built by his parents, James and Effie, who instilled both discipline and drive in their sons.

"My dad's probably my biggest influencer," Alex said. "He was a really good athlete."

He went on to note his father once had the opportunity to compete for the Summer Olympics in 1980 before the U.S. boycotted the Moscow Games.

"What he did was a fatherly thing," Alex stated. "He put his career on hold and put all that energy into us."

That sacrifice paid off. Three of James's sons went on to college, and Alex reached the pinnacle of professional football: the NFL.

At Hamilton County High School, Alex quickly became a standout.

"I started on varsity as a freshman cornerback. I was really excited about that," he recalled. "My dad would tell us,



'You've got to try to do things no one's ever done.' So, starting on varsity as a freshman was a big deal to me."

It helped that football ran in the family. His older brother, Ronnie Hartsfield, was already a Trojan, and another brother, Jason Brown, had recently graduated.

"The expectation was there that I'd be good because I'm one of the Brown boys," Alex said. "But it also helped because everybody welcomed me. I didn't have to fight over any hurdles – they wanted to see what I could do."

By the end of his freshman year, he had proven himself. Over the next few years, he grew (literally and figuratively) into a powerhouse athlete.

"Between ninth and 10th grade, I went from 5'10" and 165 pounds to 6'2" and 205," Alex said. "At that point, I thought, 'Okay, maybe I've got something here, because now I'm bigger, faster and stronger than everybody.'"

He went on to play multiple positions during his time as a Trojan, going from cornerback to outside linebacker and eventually quarterback in his senior year. As the senior quarterback in 1996, Alex threw for 863 yards and collected four touchdowns, and also rushed for 768 yards and 18 touchdowns.

Eventually, he began to notice

recruiters scouting the football games.

"People started to come around, and I would talk to my dad about what it takes to get to college. He didn't have a definitive answer, but he would say, 'When you're good enough, they'll come.' I didn't really know what 'good enough' meant," Alex recalled. "But in Hamilton County, everybody knows everybody. So, when you start seeing people you don't know sniffing around, they're looking for something, and you know you're doing something right."

Upon graduating in 1997 – also the last year the Trojans beat the Suwannee High School Bulldogs, he noted – it was time he decided on where to go for the next level.

"Auburn was the only school that offered me to play quarterback," he said about the recruiting process. "At that time, there weren't many Black quarterbacks in the NFL, but my goal was to make it to the NFL, not necessarily make it as a quarterback."

Looking for the best opportunity to leverage his skills beyond the collegiate level, and considering his experience as a linebacker ranked No. 1 in several publications, Alex ultimately decided to make his way to the University of Florida to play under legendary coach Steve Spurrier.

After playing with the Gators for two years and following Spurrier and his father's guidance, Alex made a pivotal change from the linebacker position to defensive end. The decision, he explained, was another shot at positioning himself for an NFL career.

"At first, I wasn't on board," he admitted. "I didn't really think it was going to work. But I was going to give it a try."

The decision proved to be monumental. In his first year as a defensive end, Alex broke the school's record for sacks in a season.

"I still hold every sack record at Florida," he said with pride. "That ended



up working out very well.”

During his career as a Gator, Alex recorded 161 tackles with 47 tackles for a loss and set the school’s record of 33 quarterback sacks. In 2012, he was inducted into the UF Athletic Hall of Fame as a “Gator Great.”

However, his college years weren’t just about statistics—his time on the field went much deeper. Alex said one of his proudest achievements as a college player was being able to wear jersey No. 13 in honor of his cousin, McArthur Zanders, who played football at Tusculum University in Tennessee before tragically passing away in a car accident.

“He only played one year,” Alex said. “I was able to honor him by wearing his number and just doing the best I could, because he could no longer pursue that dream.”

Another notable achievement, he said, was helping lead the Gators to the 2000 SEC Championship. Alex stated the team reunited in September at UF to celebrate during the Gators Championship Reunion Weekend.

“That was really cool to see the guys again—see coach Spurrier, a lot of our coaches from back then,” he said.

Alex’s dream of joining the NFL

came on Draft day in 2002, but it didn’t come without stress.

“I was at my parents’ house,” he recalled. “I thought I’d go higher than I did. It wasn’t very fun for me.”

He explained that rounds one through three took place on the first day and, with no announcement, a fitful night of rest followed. The next day, he was selected by the Chicago Bears in the fourth round.

However, looking back, Alex noted it was also the day his dreams became a reality.

“That’s what I always dreamed of,” he said. “I always dreamed of hearing my name called on TV on Draft day. You see it year after year and can only imagine what those kids are going through when their name is called. Then you get the call, and they’re calling your name. That, right there, was amazing.”

Although he was disappointed he didn’t get selected sooner, Alex stated his path unfolded exactly as it was meant to.

“Just because our plans don’t align with God’s plan, it doesn’t mean it’s not His plan,” he said. “God’s plan is always going to happen. So, when I look back and think about it, I ended up going to the best place for me at the right time.”

Alex went on to play eight seasons with the Bears. However, the transition from college ball to the NFL was no small leap.

“It was a little faster,” he admitted. “In college, you’re playing with 18 to 22-year-olds. Once you get to the NFL, you’re looking at anywhere from 23 to 40-year-olds.”

However, what really hit him was the realization of “production matters.”

“If you’re not productive, they’ll get somebody in there who will be,” Alex said. “The second I learned that it was a job, and I approached it as a job, I think I was better for it. And I had a lot of veteran players on the team that stayed in my ear about it, saying, ‘If you like everything how it is, then you better keep wanting it.’”

A highlight of his career with the Bears was making it to the 2007 Super Bowl in Miami – a game his parents were able to experience. Although the Bears lost the match against the Indianapolis Colts, 29-17, he took pride in being able to provide his mother and father with that experience.

“I know how much my dad loves football,” he said. “My mom loved watching me play at Florida, and loved watching me play in the NFL, and I think it was awesome that I was able to give them an experience that they probably wouldn’t have had.”

During his career, Alex faced some of football’s biggest names, including Marshall Faulk, Randy Moss, Tom Brady, Brett Favre and Peyton Manning.

“I did have to pinch myself sometimes because things were perfect,” he said. “It all worked out.”

But even in the toughest moments, he stayed grounded.

“My cousin would’ve given anything to be in my shoes,” he said. “So when things got rough, I reminded myself that I get to do this. That perspective kept me going.”

In April 2010, Alex left the Bears and was signed with the New Orleans Saints. He spent one year with the Saints before officially retiring on Aug. 9, 2012. Over his nine-year career, Alex played for 143 games, during which he collected 338 solo tackles, 45.5 sacks, 15 forced fumbles, 12 fumble recoveries, ran five interceptions for 27 yards, and defended 42 passes, according to *ESPN.com*.

Representing Hamilton County on a national stage was a responsibility Brown didn’t take lightly. “I think I was the first person from Hamilton to get a four-year football scholarship,” he said. “I saw a lot of really good players that didn’t get

the opportunity that I got, so I wanted to make sure it didn't go to waste."

He stated he carried his hometown with him every step of the way.

"I wanted people to look at me and say, 'He did it, so we can too,'" Alex said. "It was about showing the kids back home that it's possible."

His connection to the community continues to run deep, as he's made visits to the area throughout the years. Aside from Hamilton County High School's building moving closer to Interstate 75, Alex says nothing about White Springs has changed over the years.

"It's the same as I remember it," he said. "People are just trying to make ends meet. I hope one day I can bring opportunities back to Hamilton County. Help some of the people out there."

Now 46, Alex's life has shifted from the roar of stadium crowds to the quiet pride of fatherhood. He and his wife, Karimar, are the proud parents of one son, Antonio, and three daughters, Kaylen, Kennedy and Kasey. Since his retirement from the NFL, the two have built a life northeast of Atlanta. Their son, Antonio, currently plays baseball in Puerto Rico, and one of their daughters, Kaylen, is playing soccer with the University of West Georgia.

For the past eight years, Alex has been working as a sports analyst for NBC Chicago, covering the same league he once played in.

"They paid me to play football, and now they pay me to talk about it," he said. "It's crazy."

Alex credits his parents for being his biggest influencers, stating, "They taught me everything."

But he's also quick to recognize the coaches and teachers who shaped his journey – from Coach Gardner and Coach



Davis, to Coach Willis and mentors like Miss Imogene Bullock and Miss Williams.

"Over the last 40 years, so many people have helped me become who I am," he said. "If even one of those people hadn't been in my life, my path might have changed. Just because I don't say your name doesn't mean I don't appreciate you. No matter how small you think your role was, it mattered."

Looking back on a career that began in White Springs and flourished into the bright lights of the NFL, Alex remains humble.

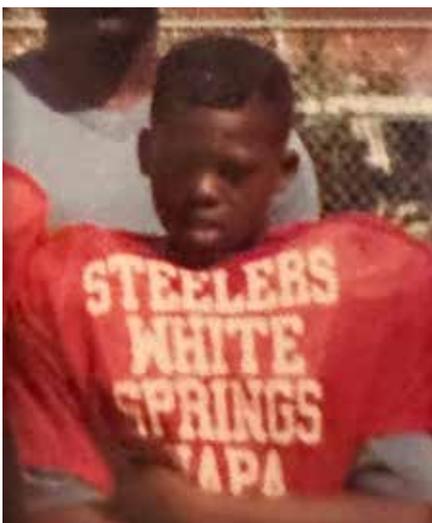
"I was blessed," he said. "I got to live

my dream, and I thank God every day for that."

Still, for all the records and achievements he's racked up, it's clear that what matters most to him isn't the fame, it's the foundation.

"My dad used to tell me nothing's ever given to you," he said. "You have to work for it."

That lesson still defines him today. As he looks to the future, watching his children carve out their own careers, he carries the same message he once lived by: work hard, stay humble, and never forget where you came from. ■





**BUDGET®
BLINDS**

Style and service for every budget.™

Design That Feels *Like Home*

Make your home feel warm and inviting this season. Shades and layered window treatments add style, comfort, and insulation—so you can cozy up in a space that truly feels like home.



Call (850) 668-4835
budgetblinds.com/tallahassee
2533 Greer Rd., Tallahassee, Fla. 32308

©2023 Budget Blinds, LLC. All Rights Reserved. Budget Blinds is a trademark of Budget Blinds, LLC, and is being licensed. Concept Blinds, Inc. franchise independently owned and operated.

AOK Electric

Servicing and installing

GENERAC®

Sales and Service Dealer

(850) 973-9957

Licensed & Insured
EC 13005741

421 SW Range Ave.
Madison, Fla. 32340

Trademark Homes Center



**New / Used
Land • Home**

- **2026 Model Homes Arriving Weekly!**
- **In-house, on-the-spot financing, No Minimum Credit Score Required and ZERO down for qualified buyers. All credit situations considered.**
- **Top dollar paid for your Trade-in, regardless of age or condition.**

-OPEN HOUSE DAILY-

Visit Us On-Line at www.TrademarkHomesCenter.com

At Trademark Homes... *you have friends with LOW PRICES*

**1700 S. Jefferson St., Monticello, FL
(850) 459-4864 - call or text anytime**



There was no better way for the Davis family to celebrate Christmas than to share it with the grins and giggles of their nine grandchildren.

From Mischief to Mayor: **FRANK DAVIS**

Story by Mickey Starling

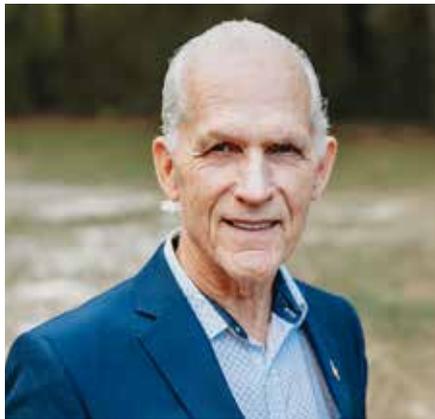
Photographs Courtesy of Frank Davis

Live Oak Mayor Frank Davis is a native of Greenville, Florida, where his early school days painted a different picture of what his future might have held. As early as second grade, Davis had mastered the art of truancy. By fourth grade, he was twice declared “incorrigible” by the county judge.

However, incorrigible turned out to be much like beauty – subject to the beholder. Davis’ fifth grade teacher, Colleen Campbell, showed him genuine love and concern. Her positive treatment caused Davis to miss only three days of school that year.

The next few years saw old patterns return, and despite the fact that Davis was the quarterback for the Greenville High School Pirates in ninth grade, he dropped out of school. Davis. Later, he regretted that decision and asked to be allowed to return but was denied by a faculty vote.

Other interests soon captured his attention, primarily in the form of Amanda Reams, his high school



sweetheart. The pair eloped when Davis was 16. Amanda was instrumental in Frank accepting Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, and that is when things began to change for him.

As has been a lifelong pattern in their 56 years of marriage, Amanda inspired Davis, this time it was to consider continuing his education. Amanda had enrolled at North Florida Junior College

(NFJC) in Madison.

“I looked at her textbooks and thought, ‘I can do this,’” remembers Davis, who soon passed the GED exam.

Next, Davis hit the fast track at NFJC, completing his associate of arts degree in a year and a half. Proving that was no fluke, he also graduated from Florida State University (FSU) in a year and a half, with intentions of becoming a teacher. However, Davis had a cousin in law school who encouraged him to pursue a law degree. He liked the idea and enrolled in Cumberland Law School at Samford University, in Birmingham, Alabama, where he graduated in 1977.

Davis returned to Florida and took a job at the Slaughter and Slaughter law firm, in Live Oak. He later began his own practice but soon realized he wasn’t happy practicing law.

“I probably became a lawyer to prove myself to others,” said Davis, “but, I had no passion for it.”

He got his first taste of local government work when the Suwannee County Commissioners and Clerk of Court Jerry Scarborough hired Davis as

their first Suwannee County Coordinator. He was planning and zoning director, oversaw approval of subdivisions, was responsible for emergency medical services and worked on other county projects, such as the new jail and improving the county airport.

In 1981, Davis and his wife began attending Melody Christian Center, in Live Oak, where he eventually became the lead elder. When the pastor left the church in 1985, Davis stepped in as pastor, a position he held until 2012. He continues to serve as pastor emeritus at the church, and Amanda has been the principal at Melody Christian Academy for over 40 years.

Frank and Amanda are proud of their four children, all of whom are graduates of Melody Christian Academy and living productive lives. Laura is an Oral Roberts University graduate and is co-pastor of Melody Christian Center with her husband, Darrin Baldwin. Leslie graduated as Valedictorian of FSU's medical school and now works as a hospitalist in internal medicine at Baptist Medical Center, in Jacksonville, Florida. Frank Jr. is a graduate of Flagler College and currently teaches Advanced Placement (AP) courses at Melody. Lisa is a graduate of FSU and serves as a contract specialist for the United States Air Force, at Tyndall Air Force Base, in Panama City. Davis has a daughter-in-law, Jess, and three sons-in-law, Darrin, Michael and Brad, whom he calls "the best."

Davis has enjoyed a lengthy career in ministry and public service. He has worked as mayor for the city of Live Oak for almost eight years. His decades of ministry have taken him to Haiti and Cuba many times. At last count, Davis has made over 30 missions trips to Cuba. He recalls falling ill while in Havana and spending the night in the hospital featured in Michael Moore's documentary movie, *Sicko*.

"That really made me appreciate what we have here for medical care," he said.

He was privileged to help rebuild Harmony Ministries Church and School, in Haiti, after the 2010 earthquake struck the impoverished nation.

"I've always enjoyed helping people," stated Davis.

One of the other tools he has used to reach people is writing books, 12 so far, most of which are Christian self-help books intended to inspire others to find their purpose and destiny in Christ. One such book, *Life's a Marathon*, highlights his life-long love of running, which he has been consistently and actively doing for 49 years.



Mayor Frank Davis (center) speaks at a joint press conference with President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden on Sept. 2, 2023, after Hurricane Idalia. Pictured, from left to right, are: Amanda Davis, Suwannee County Commissioner Franklin White, First Lady Jill Biden, Mayor Davis, Deanne Criswell, with FEMA, Live Oak Police Chief Keith Davis, Live Oak Fire Chief Sid Hayes and President Joe Biden.

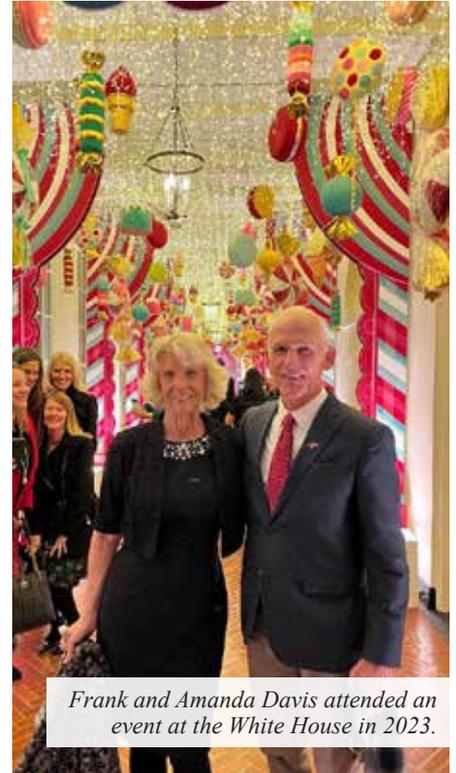
Live Oak was one of the first local areas to enjoy contemporary Christian music on the radio, due to the efforts of Davis and Melody Christian Center. He eventually purchased WOLR, after airing his "Higher Dimensions" program on the station for several years. Currently, he operates two low-watt FM stations in Live Oak, one for teaching and preaching (WFDA) and the other for music (WMLO).

Since his plate was only 95 percent full, Davis saw a need to help families navigate divorce and custody issues. In 2002, he became certified as a family court mediator and mediated cases for several years.

Love for family still takes center stage for Davis, who credits his wife for his success.

"I would have accomplished very little without her," he said. "She is the love of my life and my confidant."

If you ask his nine grandchildren, whom Frank and Amanda adore, they have plenty to say about their grandparents, and they are especially fond of riding on Papa's golf cart, going to his pond and eating his chicken and rice, a favorite dish of theirs. ■



Frank and Amanda Davis attended an event at the White House in 2023.



In 2023, the Davis clan gathered for an Easter family photo at Melody Christian Center, in Live Oak.



PROPERTY OF

POP'S

SANITATION SERVICES, LLC

1-855-563-9400

Where our *family*
takes care of *Yours*



Pop's Sanitation, LLC is a family-owned, local business that provides residential trash pick-up for your home.

Churches

Sign up and get one 96-gallon FREE weekly pick up

First Responders, Law Enforcement, Dispatchers, Military and Nurses

Sign up and get 1 month FREE



Providing residential trash pick-up for all of
Madison, Jefferson, Taylor, Suwannee, Hamilton,
and Lafayette Counties

(855) 563-9400
www.popssanitation.com

Gulf Coast Lumber & Supply, Inc

Locally Owned & Operated for Over 45 Years!



Crawfordville

3361 Crawfordville Hwy,
Crawfordville, FL 32327
(850) 926-5559
gulfcoastlumber@gmail.com
M-F 7 pm-6 pm • SAT 7:30 am-5 pm

Monticello

1400 S. Jefferson Street
Monticello, FL 32344
(850) 997-2519
gulfcoastlumbermonticello@gmail.com
M-F 7 am-6 pm • SAT: 7 am-5 pm

Woodville

9141 Woodville Hwy Woodville,
FL 32362
(850) 421-5295
gulfcoastlumber@hotmail.com
M-F 6 am-6 pm • SAT 6 am-5 pm



- 60-bed Skilled Nursing Facility
- Private and Semi-Private rooms
- Homelike atmosphere
- Wi-Fi for wireless access
- Cable TV
- Salon Services

- Designated outdoor smoking area
- Courtyard with gazebo & gardening area
- Fishing pond with dock
- Menu selection for meals
- Daily individual & group activities indoor, outdoor & off-campus
- Courtesy transportation to & from medically necessary appointments
- Elegant Dining
- Chaplin & worship services

2481 West US Hwy. 90
Madison, Fla. 32340
(850) 973-4880

www.madisonhealthandrehab.com



Madison

HEALTH & REHABILITATION



The Joint Commission
Gold Seal Of Approval™

Madison Health and Rehabilitation Center is a 60-bed skilled nursing facility with private and semi-private rooms. We are centrally located in the heart of Madison County and have provided quality care since 1985. Our dedicated teams of highly trained professionals focus solely on the needs of our residents. Each resident at our facility receives a well-defined individualized plan of care that caters to their needs. Short term or long term, our well trained therapists are here to assist the residents in achieving their goals. Our facility also offers outpatient therapy. The residents may enjoy visiting the beauty salon, spending the day fishing at our pond, relaxing at the gazebo in the beautiful, enclosed courtyard and much more. With quality care in a friendly and safe environment, our residents are able to enjoy themselves, while receiving the care they need.



Quality Focused Care, One Resident at a Time!



- Close to family & Friends
- Physician visits as needed
- Nursing: RN, LPN, CNA's
- Staffed above requirements with warm, friendly staff
- Plan of care meeting within 72 hours with resident and family (includes discharge planning)
- Registered Therapist for evaluation & treatments
- Restorative Nursing Program
- Wound Prevention Precautions
- Podiatry & mental health services provided on-site
- Resident council
- Medicaid application assistance
- Personal provider of choice

Serving Madison, South Georgia, Perry, Live Oak, Monticello and Tallahassee.



Madison resident James Fishback speaks at an Incubate Debate event at Jacksonville University.

INFLUENTIAL YOUNG MIND SETTLES IN MADISON

Story by Rick Patrick

Photographs Courtesy of James Fishback (except as noted)

Madison, Florida, may not seem like a top place for a bright young professional to settle. Especially when that same young professional grew up in the hustling and bustling Broward County area of Ft. Lauderdale. Yet, when James T. Fishback, founder and chief executive officer of the Azoria 500 Meritocracy Exchange Traded Fund (ETF), visited Madison while traveling through the Sunshine State, he found the town to be a pleasant contrast to the busy metropolitan Broward County.

“I had stopped in Madison several times to have a meal at O’Neal’s Buffet and really fell in love with the town,”

recalls Fishback.

In November of 2022, he found a house for sale on S.W. Pinckney Street within the Madison city limits and decided to make Madison his home.

“The price of the home was much lower than anything you could find in Broward County,” added Fishback. “Plus, Madison is in a good location for me.”

After spending his early years in Broward County, Fishback went to college to study International Economics at Georgetown University’s Walsh School of Foreign Service. However, he decided to leave school before graduating and went to work in the area of investment, operating a hedge fund for five years. During the time working in his “day job” of investments, he made the acquaintance of Vivek Ramaswamy, an American

entrepreneur and politician who recently ran for president and is a candidate for Governor of Ohio. The two soon became friends.

Soon after Donald Trump was elected to serve another term as president, an effort was set into motion to improve efficiency at the federal government level. The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) was formed under the leadership of billionaire Elon Musk, Ramaswamy and others. Ramaswamy remembered the investment experience of Fishback and invited his friend to become involved in DOGE. Fishback became an influential member of the group that soon began to uncover millions of dollars of tax payer funds that, in the opinion of some, seemed to be spent on items that were of little benefit to the taxpayers footing the

bill.

While working with DOGE, Fishback developed a plan that some thought to be rather unorthodox and radical. Fishback suggested that some of the money that appeared to have been wasted, be returned to the taxpayers, where the funds originated in the first place. Under Fishback's plan, 80 percent of the recovered funds would go toward paying down the national debt, while the other 20 percent would be returned to the taxpayers in the form of DOGE dividend checks.

In recent months, DOGE has been disbanded; however, the desire to make government run more efficiently is still strong among many. Fishback says the idea of the "DOGE dividends" has even resurfaced.

"Although DOGE may not exist any longer, the mentality of streamlining the government is still strong," added Fishback.

In addition to his work in the field of investment, Fishback has also founded Incubate Debate, a high school debate program that endeavors to help high school students develop debate skills.

"I was involved in debate when I was in high school and I enjoyed it," added Fishback. "I wanted to expand debate so more students can benefit from participation in the activity."

Fishback stated that Incubate Debate has grown to include more than 10,000 students. The stated mission of the program is to "challenge young Americans to debate." The organization hosts in-person tournaments for middle and high school students. These tournaments provide students with an opportunity to sharpen their speaking, research and thinking skills. Incubate Debate also provides materials to teachers to help students develop these valuable skills. Workshops are offered for any students wishing to hone their skills and use the "practice of debate in their everyday lives." Locally, Jefferson County High School in Monticello has an Incubate Debate program available for students. Recently, North Florida College hosted an Incubate Debate tournament. For more information on Incubate Debate, please visit the organization's website incubatedebate.org.

Fishback now spends much of his time on the road with speaking engagements, debate tournaments, Turning Point USA events and interviews across the nation. But now, when the influential young man who often met with people such as Musk and Pres. Trump comes home, he comes home to Madison. ■



James Fishback sits down for a conversation with Florida Gubernatorial Candidate Byron Donalds during the James Madison Constitution Dinner in Madison.



In October 2025, James Fishback spoke with students from the Jefferson Debate Team at an Incubate Debate tournament in Jacksonville. Photo Courtesy.

YOUR COMMUNITY BANKS



**Madison County
Community Bank**



301 E. Base St. • Madison | (850) 973-2400



**Member
FDIC**



**Taylor County
Community Bank**

A Division of Madison County Community Bank



1405 S. Jefferson St. • Perry | (850) 371-7000



**Member
FDIC**

Simple foods made for a satisfying meal

Chewbees

**FREE
COFFEE
DAILY!**



- Hotdogs
- Sausage
- Corndogs
- Chicken
- Turkey
- Roast Beef
- Jamaican Patties
- Nachos
- Wings
- Soups and more

Hours:
 Sun & Mon Closed
 Tues-Fri 10am-4pm
 Sat 9:30am-3pm
 @chewbeesrestaurant



850.688.0748
 1510 Capital Circle SE,
 Tallahassee, FL.

Simple foods made for a satisfying meal

— People you Trust, —
caring for people you Love



OUR PROMISE

We are dedicated to providing exceptional skilled and long term care which meets the highest standards in the field.

Brynwood Health & Rehabilitation Center cultivates an atmosphere that is welcoming, inviting, wholesome, and



BRYNWOOD

HEALTH AND REHABILITATION CENTER

1656 S Jefferson St • Monticello, FL 32344
 P 850.997.1800 F 850.997.7269
 E info.ocbr@brynwoodhrc.com
 brynwoodhrc.com

Aflac

Aflac of the Big Bend Area

We Care on Purpose
RJSW & Associates
 An Independent Broker

112 W. Green St. - Perry, FL 32347
 Office: (850) 584-3160 • (850) 584-3124

1344 Vickers Rd. - Tallahassee, FL 32303
 Office: (850) 531-9908 • (850) 553-9332

WHAT'S HAPPENING



November 1

CarQuest Car Show

Monticello CarQuest's annual Car Show and Customer Appreciation Day takes place 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at 1321 S. Jefferson St. There will be free food and raffles throughout the event. Proceeds support Big Bend Hospice.

Wellborn Cornbread & Chili Festival

Enjoy a wide selection of cornbread and chili recipes at Andrews Square (1340 8th Ave., Wellborn) in the Fourth Annual Wellborn Cornbread & Chili Festival. First place winners receive \$350, second place \$200, and third place \$150. Attendees also can enjoy a blueberry pancake breakfast for \$6 a plate. Festival-goers can vote in the car and truck show, featuring classic and new vehicles. The first place vehicle wins \$1,000, second place \$500, and third place \$250. Visit wellborn.cc/cornbread-festival for more information.



November 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

Monticello Market

The Monticello Market is 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at Kelly & Kelly Properties (205 W. Washington St.). Interested vendors should apply on the MonticelloMarketFL Facebook page. For more information, email MonticelloMarketFL@gmail.com.

November 8

Branford Rotary Chili Cookoff

The Rotary Club of Branford and the Interact Club of Branford High School present their Fourth Annual Community Festival Chili Cookoff at the Suwannee River Greenway in Branford. Registration is 8-9 a.m. and costs \$20 per participant. Public entry for judging costs \$5 in cash or \$5.25 with a card, and will be held 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. People's Choice Awards

50 The Front Porch

are announced at 2:15 p.m.: first place \$100, second place \$50, and third place \$25. Attendees can enjoy music, food and drinks, and a 50/50 drawing. Proceeds support student scholarships and Rotary service projects.

Community Street Sale

At Suwannee Hardware & Feed (10572 Bridge St., White Springs) 7 a.m.-2 p.m., you can buy, sell or trade an assortment of animals, arts and crafts, produce, antiques, plants, tack, yard sale items and more. Free entry for shoppers; \$10 for vendors. Call (386) 397-2551 for more information.



November 9

Sugar Cane Festival

At one of the area's largest events, compete in the Soap Box Derby, enter the Cane Syrup Tasting Contest, see an array of live demonstrations, enjoy food/arts/crafts, attend live performances and more. The festival lasts 9 a.m.-4 p.m. on Bridge Street in White Springs.

November 10

Veteran's Appreciation Day – White Springs

The Supportive Services for Veteran Families invites all to gather and show love for local Veterans. The first 75 Veterans attending receive a free pulled pork dinner; all others pay \$10 per plate. The event takes place at Billy Bon's Lounge (10922 N.W. U.S. 41, White Springs), with live music.

November 11

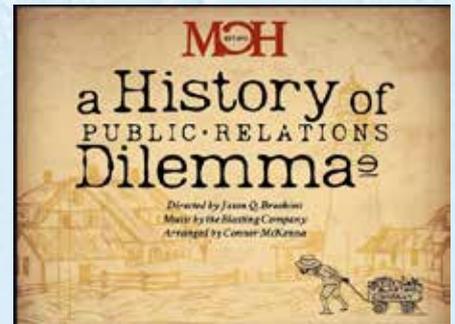
Veterans Day Breakfast – Monticello

Hosted by Otto M. Walker American Legion Post #49 (1065 S. Water St., Monticello), breakfast starts at 8:30 a.m., speeches begin at 9 a.m. and raffle drawings take place at 9:30 a.m.

November 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23

A History of Public Relations Dilemmae at MOH

Set in a rustic, early-20th century American bar, this show follows two brothers, Alexander and Abernathy Petrojvic, who attempt to help the patrons with their various public relations problems. Hilarity and hijinks ensue as



each new patron asks them for help with their increasingly strange dilemmas. For more information and tickets, call the Monticello Opera House at (850) 997-4242 or visit www.monticellooperahouse.org.

November 14

Veteran Services Summit

Join the United Way of Suwannee Valley for its annual Veteran Services Summit, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at the HCA Lake City Hospital (340 NW Commerce Dr., Lake City, Fla.). Local organizers and agencies interact with each other and with Veterans to share information about health, education, employment and social services for Veterans. Jennifer Jenkins with the Wounded Warrior Project will speak at noon. RSVP for the event by emailing suzanne@uniteddsv.org.



November 15

Wild Florida Trail Run

Hosted by Run Bum Tours, runners will experience some of the most breathtaking sections of the Florida Trail, with all races finishing at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park (11016 Lillian Saunders Dr., White Springs). The 50k has an 11-hour time limit and kicks off at 6:45 a.m. The 25k starts at 8 a.m.,



WHAT'S HAPPENING

and the 10k begins at 8:30 a.m. A portion of proceeds benefit the Florida Trail Association, supporting trail preservation and maintenance across the state. For full race details, visit runbumtours.com/details-wild-florida-trail-run.

Toy Run 2025

The American Legion Riders - Chapter 57 and the American Legion Family of Post 57 hold its 10th annual Toy Run benefiting underserved children in Columbia and Suwannee counties. Kickstands go up for an escorted, two-county backcountry ride, ending at Post 57 for the afterparty. Enjoy live entertainment and celebrate a great cause with fellow riders and friends. Entry is \$15 per rider and \$10 per passenger, plus a new, unwrapped toy. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. at the Wellborn Community Association (1340 8th Ave., Wellborn).

“Jeeps for Justice” Poker Run

Suwannee Valley Unsolved, Inc., will host its inaugural “Jeeps for Justice” Poker Run at Suwannee Hardware & Feed (10572 Bridge St., White Springs). Registration begins at 10 a.m., with vehicles departing at noon for Jasper, Madison, Live Oak and Lake City before returning to White Springs. All vehicles are welcome. Suggested entry donation is \$25; a \$50 donation includes entry, a t-shirt and a choice of two raffle tickets or two hands of play. For more information, call Jason Futch at (253) 246-9334 or Sgt. Norman Silver at (386) 288-6219.

Festival of Lights Volunteer Day

Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park (11016 Lillian Saunders Dr., White Springs) seeks volunteers to help get ready for its dazzling Festival of Lights. From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., volunteers (with admission waived) will help deck the park in its holiday finest. Local businesses, organizations and nonprofits are invited to create a nonsecular holiday display at no charge, highlighting their group. For more information, call (386) 397-7009.

November 22

Fresh Starts Farmers Market – Greenville

Organized by the Town of Greenville with DSR Public Health Foundation, V&B Farms and Seed Time Harvest, the market takes place 9 a.m.-12 p.m. at Greenville Grocery Store (1344 S.W. Grand St.) and features seasonal produce from local farmers; games and activities for the family; and an opportunity to connect with

neighbors. Interested vendors can contact Leroy Green at Igreen@dsrpublichealth.org or (850) 597-9757.

November 23

Community Thanksgiving Service – Monticello

An interdenominational worship service takes place at 7 p.m. at the Family Ministry Center (325 W. Walnut St., Monticello). The event, organized by the Jefferson County Ministerial Association, includes light refreshments, music, prayer and a Thanksgiving program.



November 28-29

Old Tyme Farm Days

Celebrate rural American life and heritage at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park (3076 95th Dr., Live Oak.). Enjoy many exhibitions, including syrup making/bottling, cane grinding, old tractors/ engines, farm animals, a swap meet, arts/crafts, a kid's tent, quilting, demonstrations and much more! Admission for non-campers is \$10 per carload.



November 28 - December 30

Suwannee Lights

Experience dazzling holiday displays using more than 12 million lights at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park (3076 95th Dr., Live Oak). Drive or walk through every night 6-10 p.m. Visit suwanneelights.com for ticket prices.

November 29 thru January 3

Colors of Christmas at JAG

The annual holiday all-member art show opens on Saturday, Nov. 29. at Jefferson Arts Gallery, with a reception from noon to 4 p.m. See and shop for lots of giftable art and many holiday-themed pieces – all original, handmade designs by local artists. The exhibit continues through Jan. 3 during regular gallery hours, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., or by appointment by calling (850) 997-3311.

November 30

Kidz Biz Day

The Monticello-Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce celebrates Small Business Saturday by encouraging young entrepreneurs who set up booths all around historic downtown Monticello 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Youth ages 6-16 are invited to register as vendors for just \$10 by calling (850) 997-5552.

December 4-6

Christmas on the Square – Live Oak

The 41st Annual Christmas on the Square, set in historic downtown Live Oak, has the theme “A Little Christmas Charm.” Events for Thursday, Dec. 4, include a Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony, Kid's One Mile Fun Run, Jingle Bell Fun Run & Walk and a Christmas movie night under the stars. On Friday, Dec. 5, arts/crafts/ food vendors open at 4 p.m., Santa shares gifts with kids, and a fireworks show lights up the winter sky. On Saturday, Dec. 6, enjoy the vendors, car show, agriculture exhibits, live entertainment and Santa Land magic, plus the Lighted Christmas Parade at 6 p.m. For more information, visit suwanneechamber.com/christmas-on-the-square.html.

Now - December 5

2025 Best of Riverbend Voting

It's time to shine a light on the very best that Hamilton, Lafayette and Suwannee counties have to offer. Vote for your favorite local businesses, inspiring leaders and community organizations in the categories of Small Business of the Year, Large Business of the Year, Best Business in Customer Service, Best Individual in Customer Service, Non-Profit of the Year, New Business of the Year, Young Professional of the Year, Outstanding Volunteer of the Year and



WHAT'S HAPPENING

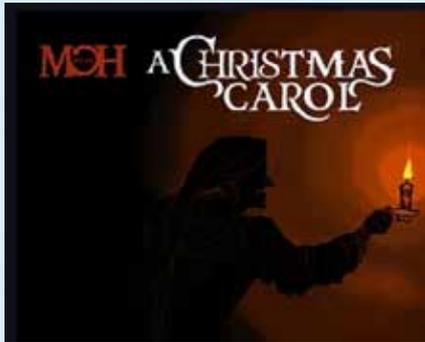
Hometown Hero of the Year. Vote at riverbendnews.org/2025-best-of-riverbend-community-choice/.

December 5-24

Stephen Foster Festival of Lights

From dusk until 8:30 p.m. each night, enjoy a magical holiday lights display, complimentary popcorn, hot cocoa, marshmallows by the bonfire, Santa, food/craft vendors and kid's crafts at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park (11016 Lillian Saunders Dr., White Springs).

December 5, 6, 7, 12, 14



A Christmas Carol at MOH

The historic Monticello Opera House stage is transformed into bustling 1840s London for this classic holiday tale of grumbling, miserly old Ebenezer Scrooge, who shuns the needy and despises Christmas. Everything changes when he is visited one night by the fettered ghost of his old business partner, Jacob Marley and three more otherworldly visitors who show him what he has been, what he is, and what is to come. For showtimes and tickets, call (850) 997-4242 or visit www.monticellooperahouse.org.

December 6

Fresh Starts Farmers Market – Greenville

Organized by the Town of Greenville with DSR Public Health Foundation, V&B Farms and Seed Time Harvest, the market takes place 9 a.m.-12 p.m. at Greenville Grocery Store (1344 S.W. Grand St.) and features seasonal produce from local farmers; games and activities for the family; and an opportunity to connect with neighbors. Interested vendors can contact Leroy Green at lgreen@dsrpublichealth.org or (850) 597-9757.



All American Christmas – Monticello

Beginning at 3 p.m., historic downtown Monticello comes alive with musicians, entertainment, a holiday marketplace and a fun zone for kids. Into the winter night, there will be a light parade, tree lighting and visits with Santa until 8:30 p.m. For more information, visit monticellochristmas.com.

Light Up Madison

Bring the whole family for a parade, vendors and more to celebrate the holiday season, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. in downtown Madison.



December 6, 13, 20

Monticello Market

The Monticello Market is 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at Kelly & Kelly Properties (205 W. Washington St.). Interested vendors should apply on the MonticelloMarketFL Facebook page. For more information, email MonticelloMarketFL@gmail.com.

December 12

Christmas on Bridge Street – White Springs

Between 3 p.m. and 8 p.m., White Springs will be filled with Christmas spirit as vendors and live entertainment take over Bridge Street. Enjoy an ugly sweater contest (\$10 entry benefits local food bank), a chili cook-off (\$20 entry fee), a Christmas parade at 6 p.m., and a visit with Santa.

December 13

Community Street Sale

At Suwannee Hardware & Feed (10572 Bridge St., White Springs) 7 a.m.-2 p.m., you can buy, sell or trade an assortment of animals, arts and crafts, produce, antiques, plants, tack, yard sale items and more. Free for shoppers; \$10 for vendors. Call (386) 397-2551 for more information.

Christmas at the Commons – Live Oak

At Live Oak Commons Plaza (1409 Ohio Ave. N, Live Oak, Fla.), enjoy shopping at local businesses and vendors 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Merry Madison Local Market

Enjoy local goods 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at Four Freedoms Park (112 Range St., Madison).

Jungle Jingle

The North Florida Wildlife Center has special activities and pricing for a holiday celebration like no other, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Enjoy free goat feeding, free face painting, animal encounters, local food /drink and more. For more information call (850) 347-0921, email info@northfloridawildlife.org or visit www.northfloridawildlife.org.



The Krickets and the Currys Christmas Concert at MOH

Ring in the holiday season at the historic Monticello Opera House with The Krickets and The Currys, two acclaimed roots music bands who join forces to feature their hit songs and holiday favorites. Showtime is 8 p.m. For tickets, call (850) 997-4242 or visit www.monticellooperahouse.org.

Caminez & Yearly

P.A. | ATTORNEYS AT LAW

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD LAW FIRM



RYAN YEARY

Attorney

SHANNON BROWN

Case Manager

Auto, Trucking, Motorcycle Accidents, Wrongful Death, Malpractice, Slip and Fall, and more

Offices Monticello & Tallahassee

850-997-8181

caminezlaw.com



**MADISON RV & GOLF RESORT
RAGANS FAMILY CAMPGROUND
THE STATION RV RESORT**

**MADISON
COUNTY**
FLORIDA

VISITMADISONFL.COM



SUWANNEE VALLEY PLUMBING^{LLC}

Local, Reliable, 20+ years experience

RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL

With over 20 years experience, our plumbers are dedicated to providing the highest quality service. We can tackle new installs as well as most repair issues. We take pride in our work and are always willing to go the extra mile to make sure our customers are satisfied. We cover Suwannee County as well as many of the neighboring communities. Give us a call & let us help you today!



SERVICE
386-287-0250



CONSTRUCTION
386-678-1555

CALL TODAY



suwanneevalleyplumbing.com
CFC1432405



James Madison PREPARATORY HIGH SCHOOL



Innovative Curriculum

Since its creation as Madison County's only charter high school, JMPHS has continued to build on its reputation of offering opportunities to a wide range of learners.



Hands-On Learning

Kids learn best by doing. Our interactive classes and dedicated teams, allow students to build, expand and reach their full potential.



Expert Instructors

Our faculty and staff are committed to providing as much energy, necessary in order for our students to become successful in an ever changing and competitive world.

About Us

JMPHS is a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) focused, college preparatory institution that carries an excellent reputation in a small atmosphere, making JMPHS conducive to individualized student and teacher interaction.

2025'-26' ENROLLMENT OPEN NOW



Ready to kick start
your child's future?
Apply today at JMPS.org



Contact Us
(850)253-2173



Visit Our Website
www.JMPHS.org



Our Location
2812 US-90, Madison, FL 32340