

SOUTH BREVARD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. Box 1064
Melbourne, FL 32902-1064

S.B.H.S. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION & RENEWAL

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South Brevard Historical Society, Inc.

Founded 1966

P.O. Box 1064, Melbourne, Florida, 32902-1064

www.southbrevardhistory.org

May 2013

SATURDAY, MAY 11, 2013 – 3:00 PM

Melbourne Public Library
540 E. Fee Avenue, Melbourne

Growing Up in South Melbourne

Presented by Eugene C. Johnson



Please join us as Mr. Johnson shares his recollections of growing up in south Melbourne during the first part of the twentieth century.

Eugene C. Johnson is the grandson of Isaac Johnson, patriarch of one of the founding families of the south Melbourne area. Mr. Johnson was born and raised in south Melbourne and resided there until he graduated high school from Melbourne Vocational School. After high school he attended Florida A&M University and then enlisted in the Air Force in 1951. After serving 31+ years and achieving the rank of Chief Master Sergeant, Mr. Johnson retired from the Air Force and returned to Brevard County.

Since his return he has been a prominent member of the community. Among his many noteworthy accomplishments, Mr. Johnson served eight years as a BCC trustee, three as Chairman of the Board, and eight years on the Wuesthoff Board of Directors. He is President Emeritus of The Reginald E. Johnson Memorial Scholarship Fund Club, Inc., which was established after his son Reginald lost his life in a training accident at West Point just twenty days before graduating. The scholarship is awarded to qualified Brevard County high school students who plan to attend an accredited college or university. To date, over four and one half million dollars have been awarded to graduating seniors. This year scholarships will be awarded to 42 seniors.

DEAR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS....

I began this message as I returned from a week long trip to some very special historic places. It was a family trip but each stop and each day spent reminded me of the value of preserving and cherishing the buildings, artifacts, archives and stories of our past.

Our first stop as husband Carl and I headed northward was Savannah, Georgia. We had dinner and a stroll along the historic waterfront area. We love to visit Savannah with its lovely architecture, elegant city plan and intriguing stories. So do a lot of others. As we dined, six school buses of eighth graders passed by our window. Lots of tour buses....lots of people.

The next day we drove to Beaufort, South Carolina, for lunch and a look around. We found and drove around the National Historic District abut. I was almost moved to tears at the sight of so many beautiful homes and gardens and trees in such a compact area. Very little traffic. Preservation and pride of community very much in evidence. We did the usual introductory carriage ride and fortunately were the only ones aboard so we had the full attention of our driver. Beaufort, established in 1711, was occupied by the Union Army in 1863 and was spared destruction. The history is fascinating but what most impressed me was what seemed to be the community effort to preserve and protect that special area. We shall return.

We met up with family and stayed in Williamsburg, spending a day revisiting some favorite buildings and taverns. We got into the spirit of the "age" trying to engage in conversations with "in character" interpreters. I stretched the truth a bit saying that I had been at Center Square in Easton, Pennsylvania, on July 8, 1776 when the Declaration of Independence was read.....surely I would have been there!

Saturday, April 27th was Historic Garden Week in the Gloucester-Mathews, Virginia area. I have enjoyed these tours for many years and traveling the back roads to find "Magnolia" "Buckley Hall", "Springdale" and "Samarkand Gardens" was not a disappointment.

Home again, home again.....wondering "what do we cherish?"; "what do we protect?"

Carol Andren
SBHS President (321.725.4115)

UPCOMING SBHS PROGRAMS

June 8, 2013 **3:00 PM**
A View of History Through the U.S. Census
Presented Marion Harrison

July/August no meeting - summer break

September 14, 2013 **3:00 PM**
Melbourne Naval Air Station, Film and Discussion
Presented by Bill Barnett

All programs at the Fee Avenue Melbourne Public Library
540 E. Fee Avenue, Melbourne, Florida

AROUND BREVARD

May 1-12, 2013 **9AM – 5 PM**
Viva La Florida 500 Tall Ship Event
Hosted by National Air, Sea & Space Foundation
12 days of fun and activities at Port Canaveral.
For more information: <http://airseaspace.org>

May 23-26, 2013
Sailing in the Path of Discovery
Florida Historical Society annual meeting and symposium to be held aboard the Carnival Sensation Cruise Ship
Following the 1513 route of Ponce De Leon.
For more information: www.myfloridahistory.org/cruise

June 7, 2013 **7:00 PM**
Ybor City BC/AD (Before Cigars/After the Don)
Presented by Jeff Moates, Regional Director, Florida Public Archaeology Network's West Central Region
FHS Library, 435 Brevard Ave., Cocoa, FL, 321.690.1976

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We extend our sympathy to SBHS Board member Sandy Wilson and his family on the loss of his stepfather, Marvin Halberstein.

We are also saddened to note the passing of SBHS member Walter Obermayr. Our condolences to his family, including Melbourne Beach residents Donna and Robert McKnight.

SO – WHERE IS THE LAGOON? Diane Barile

Our lagoon has been here on the Central Florida coast for about 6,000 years. For over 200 years it has been called and managed as a river – not an estuary, with few inlets and a small drainage area.

Fresh and seawater blend into a nourishing soup, a bountiful community of land and sea plants, fish, mammals and people. Our lagoon in the recent past maintained the highest diversity of living things in the Western Hemisphere.

The first people known to live here, the Ays (Ais) had no need to raise food. They lived on the fish, shellfish and native vegetation. A 1605 emissary Mexia, from the Spanish Governor in St. Augustine, mapped the Great Lagoon of the Ays from Cape Canaveral to Jupiter Inlet. A failed mission at St. Lucie was the only Spanish settlement on the Lagoon.

During the Florida British era 1763-1783, two cartographers/surveyors were hired to map the coast line. Perhaps viewing the lagoon from the ship masts, their maps labeled the "Ays River" and then the "Indian River".

Had the lagoon become a freshwater stream? One map even depicted a northern headwater. Actually, there is no gravity flow of the estuary – only water pushed by the wind direction and minor tidal flow from the ephemeral inlets south of the Vero Beach area.

After the American Revolution, Spain, again in power, could not forestall the onslaught of Americans moving south and the immigrations of displaced Creek Indians called Seminoles. Florida became a territory in 1821 with British and Americans publishing guide books to "Indian River" country.

Unrest and mistrust between settlers and Seminoles was expressed in a series of Seminole Wars. Military maps detailed the peninsula (barrier islands), the "Indian River" and uplands from Miami to North Florida. After statehood in 1841 and the Civil War, settlers, tourists and speculators flocked to the communities developed along the "River". All official maps and signs listed the Indian River.

In the 1990's scientists and water managers investigated the future health of the Indian River. Education programs featured the need to use our waterway as a true enclosed lagoon, rather than a river flowing to the sea removing waste.

The U.S. Bureau of Geographic Names has turned back history! Our waterway, once the Great Lagoon of the Ays, the Ays Lagoon, the Ais River and the Indian River is now truly the Indian River Lagoon.

The SBHS thanks AAA Malabar Mini-Storage, located across the street from the Malabar Town Hall, for their generous donation of air-conditioned secure storage for the Society's collections and archives. We also wish to thank Y. (Rusty) Rutstein, SBHS member and owner of A Better Copy, located at 102 East New Haven Avenue, for providing discounted printing services for the newsletter.