

Monthly Publication from the Zephyrhills Historical Association

Volume 16 – Number 6

June 2014

The next Zephyrhills Historical Association meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 1st at the Zephyrhills Depot Museum, 39110 South Avenue. The business meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. and the program is at 7 p.m. Refreshments include drinks, which are provided, and food brought in to share by members.

Speakers



Our speaker for the June meeting was Gene Whitfield, Mayor of Zephyrhills. He spoke about the history of mayors of our fair city, and it proved to be interesting and enlightening. B. F. Parsons was the mayor with the longest term, nineteen years (1932-1951), and you'll find his picture displayed at the Depot Museum. Bob Johnson had a term of fifteen years (1977-1992), followed by Dr. Emerson Arnot with a thirteen-year term (1963-1976). James Bailey was mayor twice, once when he took over for Arnot while a councilman (1976-1977) and later as an elected mayor, from 1992 to 2000. Willa Rice remains our only female mayor, who served from 1957 to 1960. Those in attendance really enjoyed hearing from our newest mayor.

Our speaker for July will be Mike Mira, who owns and operates two restaurants in Zephyrhills. Our last dinner out was at one of them, Maine-ly New England. It's among our favorite stops. The second is also a very nice place, which many of us have visited, but has not yet been our destination for the monthly dinner out. It is the Island Breeze Cuban Cafe on Gall Boulevard just north of the KFC. Many of us have known Mike for years, and we look forward to hearing from him. Come join us.



Don't forget this coming Sunday, June 29th
44th annual ZHS Alumni, Faculty & Friends Luncheon
Zephyrhills Lions Club, 5327 Dean Dairy Road, Zephyrhills, FL
Registration begins 11 a.m. - Lunch at 1 p.m. - Meeting at 2 p.m.

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Please consider contributing old photos for the website.

My email address is on the opening page

ZHA Mission Statement

The mission of the Zephyrhills Historical Association is to research, gather, and share local historical information with all generations, through our literature, programs, and scholarships, and to volunteer assistance to the Zephyrhills Depot Museum and WWII Barracks Museum.

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Cows

by Jon R. Ferguson

When I was just a kid in Zephyrhills in the late 1930s and early 1940s, a lot of folks had cows in order to provide the family with milk and related products. Money was scarce, so you did what you could to stretch what little cash you had.

We lived near the edge of the city limits and “open range” was the rule of the land at the time. We never had more than one cow at the time. One was named Daisy, and another was named Lily (mother called her Lil). My twin, Jim, or I could walk with Mom or Dad to bring the cow to our outbuilding to milk her and let her spend the night. We’d walk her back to the pasture in the morning.

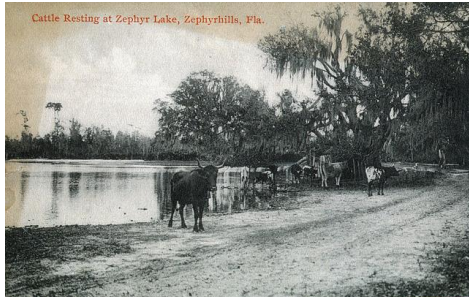
Dad did most of the milking. Mom would be cooking supper. Yes, we had the cat that would beg to be squirted in the face with fresh milk, and yes, we had the three-legged stool to sit on while milking, and yes, the cows often switched their tails to swat flies, etc. and the milker would get hit in the face, and yes, sometimes the milk bucket got kicked.

To retain the cattle outside the city limits and into the open range, cattle guards, or cattle gaps, were built of rails from the railroad in various places where automotive vehicles could cross but cattle or horses would not. I remember one on the north end of town as you entered the city on First Street and two on the south end, one on Highway 39 the other on U.S. Highway 301. Another was on Highway 54 at First Street. A drive-through gate had to be installed there so that those who had a horse and wagon could enter or leave town. The Green family is one that I know had a horse drawn wagon. Jack Green, one of the older children often was the wagon master. The gate was locked when not in use by authorized personnel.

Either a Jersey or a Guernsey was the chosen breed of cow we wanted because of the high cream content of the milk. Mother would let the cream rise to the top then she’d skim it off and save it to churn when enough was accumulated. Or, if we didn’t need the butter, she would let it sour for making clabber. She would make a sack of several layers of cheesecloth, hang it on the spigot and put the sour cream in it, she would then pour hot water over it. A pot was placed under it to catch the whey which was used to wet up the chicken feed in their troughs. Today that might be equivalent to “curds and whey”. Note that nothing was wasted.

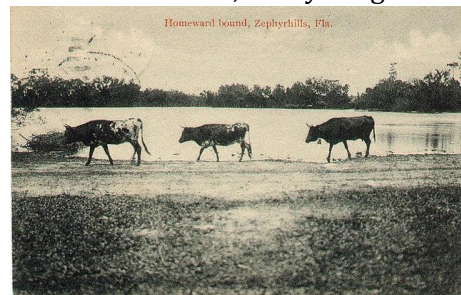
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If it was time to make buttermilk, the collection of cream was allowed to become room temperature before it was put into our “Daisy Churn”. It was a square glass container with a hand crank on top. It must have held two gallons of cream. One of us would churn until we saw flakes of butter forming. Mother was put on notice that we were almost through. She got to a stopping point in her kitchen chores and checked out our progress. Often she would take over the final churning because she could sense when the butter had been gathered to the top. The



soft butter was lifted out with a large spoon or flat stick and it was paddled to get out all the bubbles and milk. Perhaps a little salt would be added and the butter was formed into a ball or shaped in a mold, then hardened in the ice box (note I did not say refrigerator). A special treat was a glass half-filled with cornbread with buttermilk or clabber poured over it and served with a long-handled spoon. It makes me hungry just to think of it.

The woods where the cows were allowed to roam were sometimes burned off, and grass was scarce. In those instances the cow would be staked out in Zephyr Park where the grass near the lake would suffice until the woods were sprouting again. One time Jim and I both walked down to the park to bring Lily home for milking. The cow looked like Lily, but there was a halter on her. We didn't have a halter. We walked back home to bring Mother to determine if Lil had been taken by someone else. When the three of us arrived and neared the cow, everything looked normal except the halter. A man appeared from his house which was adjacent to the park and asked if that was our cow. We assured him that she was. He then told us that when he lived in Michigan he had a cow. He had brought the halter down to give to anyone who needed it and found that Lily would allow him to remove the rope we had tied on her and install the halter. We thanked him, and all ended happily. We were the only family who had a halter on their cow!



One of our cows had a bull calf. We named him “Butt me” because Jim or I could bend over and say “Butt me” and he'd butt us. After a while his horns started to grow and Dad was afraid that he could hurt us so he “let a neighbor take the calf home with him”. It took me a long time to put two and two together, but I do remember that shortly after than we had beef on our table which was unusual. We were usually happy with chicken and rabbit for meat. It's a good thing that I didn't figure this out until later. During the times when we didn't have a cow we bought raw milk from neighbors John Gardner and his Mother or Bessie Hill.

John Gardner lived with his Mother on the curve right near the landing strip used during WW II and across Highway 54 from the Royal family. Sometimes we were lucky and could buy buttermilk from her, and during the season she would let us pick a few tangerines from the tree overhanging the sidewalk.

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Bessie Hill was a neighbor in the next block south of us. She was always kind and generous. She had a pen of pigs across Third Street from her house. It was hidden in the palmettos. Jim and I loved to make them squeal by stoking them with a small stick. One time while enjoying the commotion we spotted Bessie coming with her cow. We ran to hide in the ditch beside Seventh Avenue, only to land near a blind chicken belonging to Bessie. You've never heard such squawking in all your life, she fluttered into flight and gathered all attention to herself. Well, there was nothing to do but walk calmly as if nothing had happened and hope that would camouflage the action. Duh! As evening approached Mom announced that It was my time to go pick up the milk. I begged off and said that Jim should go. "Well, then both you go" was the order. Good, two can conquer what one couldn't alone. We were prepared for the worst, but as we shivered at the back door, it swung open and the warmth from within fell upon us. "Greetings boys"! You are such nice boys to come in this cold weather to pick up the milk order, I have extra, so I'm sending a jar of buttermilk, and I remember that you like honey in the comb. I have a jar for each of you. There was not one mention of our escapade, but her deeds "heaped coals of fire upon our heads" and we never bothered her pigs again! "A soft answer turneth away wrath."

Early Residents of Pasco County
from Jeff Miller's fivay.org site

Dr. JOSEPH M. ABBOTT (1844-1906) was an early physician who came to Florida from Texas. He is shown in the 1900 census as a physician in the Macon precinct, born in Kentucky. The town of Abbott (now Zephyrhills) was named for him or his father. The following is from *The History of Zephyrhills 1821-1921*:



In Texas Andrew Jackson Green was told by his friend, Dr. J. M. Abbott, who was ill and worn out from the strenuous work as a physician in the service of the C. S. A. that another doctor said he might live another six months if he came to Florida. In the company of his friend Green, Dr. Abbott arrived. At that time he measured six feet two inches and weighed ninety-eight pounds. They found lodging in Tuckertown, and before long the doctor's health began to improve. Mr. Green and Dr. Abbott went into partnership and set up a sawmill in the pines about where the present Zephyr Shopping Center and the overpass on Highway 301 are located. The doctor seemed interested only financially in the sawmill. Greatly improved in health, he brought his family -- wife, mother, son, and daughter -- to Lake Buddy (Pasadena). However, he maintained his voting precinct during reconstruction days at Tuckertown (Richland).

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Dr. Abbott was married to Henrietta (1855-1915). Her obituary, provided by Jeff Cannon, appeared in the *Pasco County Weekly News* in Trilby on June 18, 1915: "Mrs. J. M. Abbott, mother of W. C. Abbott, proprietor of the City Drug Store, died at her home in this city at 6:10 o'clock Tuesday morning. Mrs. Abbott was taken suddenly ill a few days ago, while preparing for a trip to Texas to visit relatives, growing rapidly worse. She was in her sixtieth year and had lived in this state for 34 years. Many friends will grieve to hear of the death of Mrs. Abbott, who was known to everybody in the entire community, and beloved by all. Besides her son, W.C. Abbott, of Trilby, Mrs. Abbott leaves a mother and two sisters to mourn her loss. Her mother, Mrs. F.L. Varnell, and one sister, Mrs. Jno C. Sweeney, live in Hillboro, Texas, and the other sister, Mrs. Joseph McGee, lives in Hermeliegh, Texas. Mrs. Abbott was buried at the Dade City cemetery Wednesday afternoon, the remains being accompanied to their last resting place by large number of sorrowing friends."

HENRY CLAY "H. C." DOUGLAS, JR., (1921-2010) was born Feb. 20, 1921, in Dora, Ala. His parents were Annie Maye Hodges and H. C. Douglas Sr., of Land O' Lakes. Henry's love of flying led him to join the U.S. Army Air Corps while in his early twenties. Based in Framlingham, England, he flew B-17 bombers, completing 30 combat missions in the European Theater. As a lieutenant in the 390th Bombardment Group and Eighth Air Force, Henry was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, followed



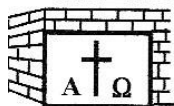
by three additional oak leaf clusters to Air Medal, and additional citations for exceptional performance under heavy enemy fire. Upon returning home and while awaiting college admissions, Henry became a flight instructor at Zephyrhills Municipal Airport, which had served as the 10th Fighter Squadron base during the war. It was then that he met Christine Krusen, his wife of 63 years. She was taking flight lessons as a birthday gift from her parents and Henry was her instructor. They married August 7, 1947, became graduates of the University of Florida and returned to Zephyrhills, where

Henry "Doug" joined Christine's parents, I.A. (Andrew) and Dorothy Barron Krusen, as an integral part of the promotion and further development of Krusen Grove and Cattle Co. (later becoming K-Bar Ranch) which the Krusens pioneered in the 1930s. K-Bar Ranch was well known for breeding award-winning Charolais, Charbray, and Brahma cattle for many decades. Henry's love of agriculture and his ranching career spanned over 60 years, where he served as president of the Florida Cattleman's Association, president of the National Charolais Association, president of the American International Charolais Association, and numerous agricultural boards and councils affiliated with the University of Florida. He also served on the Zephyrhills City Council for 10 years, the Board of Directors of SunBank, and was active in the Rotary Club. He was a member of the First United Methodist Church in Zephyrhills. Douglas died on Nov. 9, 2010, at Zephyrhills. He and his wife Christine were members of the ZHS Class of 1944. Their daughters are Susanne Miller (ZHS '69) of Tallahassee, Jennifer Blackburn (ZHS '71) of Clarkesville, Ga., and Andra Douglas (ZHS '77) of New York City. [Information from his obituary in the *Tampa Tribune* and from Clereen Morrill Brunty.]

JOHN GEIGER was born in Germany. He moved to Florida from Pennsylvania and homesteaded 640 acres. He set aside five acres of the farm for a family cemetery. His son John Jr., killed in the Civil War, was the first person buried in the cemetery. Children:

- Abraham Elias, a member of the Pennsylvania Reserves, fought for the Union, m. Sarah Elizabeth Smith on Dec. 20, 1868, in Tuckerton. Among their children were James Laurence, q.v., and Elias Jasper, q.v.
- John Jr., a member of the Pennsylvania Reserves, fought for the Union
- Jesse Cornelious, Martha (Barnes), and Samuel

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ELIAS JASPER GEIGER (1871-1942) was a prominent farmer and stockman of Zephyrhills and an uncle of J. Don Geiger, county prosecuting attorney. He married Alief Virginia Spivey. Children:


- Mrs. Angie LeRona (Geiger) LeHeup. b. April 3, 1911; d. March 23, 2010. She married J. J. LeHeup on May 3, 1929 (he died on Nov. 26, 1931); she also married L. G. “Lonnie” Skinner and William Alcroft LeHeup. Angie was a graduate of Zephyrhills High School, Class of 1929. She served as Postmaster of Crystal Springs for 27 years retiring in 1976. Over the years she was a member of First Baptist Church of Zephyrhills and First Baptist Church of Crystal Springs, singing in the choir. She also attended First Baptist Church of Dade City with her late husband Bill LeHeup. She was formerly a member of the Zephyrhills Historical Association and Pioneer Florida Museum Association.
- S. J. Geiger, Curtis, Victor, Manuel, and Mrs. Virginia Keller

JAMES LAURENCE GEIGER (1874-1951) married Josie Louise Seale (b. Nov. 1, 1876; d. Sep. 2, 1921) on March 20, 1895, at Abbott (now Zephyrhills). He was Postmaster from 1911 to 1921, or according to postal records, from 1913 to 1922. In Oct. 1911 he announced his candidacy for sheriff of Pasco County, saying he was born near the present site of Zephyrhills. Children: Blanche, James E., William A., James Donovan, and Gladys.

CEPHAS GEIGER (b. 1895) is shown as the teacher at the Cootie School in school board minutes from June 1913, and was appointed as the teacher at the Seven Springs School on July 3, 1916. He was born Oct. 27, 1895, in Abbott (now Zephyrhills). His parents were Abraham B. and Lucinda Geiger, both born in 1866. In January 1915 he was teaching at Groveland. On Feb. 15, 1916, the newspaper of Pasco High School reported: “The normal had a call yesterday from Mr. Cephas Geiger of Zephyrhills. Cephas is a strong teacher. He has just completed the term of his school in Lake County.” He enlisted in the military on July 29, 1917 and was discharged on Feb. 8, 1919. On May 24, 1919, a newspaper reported that Geiger closed the term of school at Blanton and will spend his vacation at home with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Geiger. He was living in Tampa in 1924.



ALICE FRYER HALL (1904-1996), a teacher and journalist, moved to Zephyrhills in 1941. She was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, Garden Club, veteran’s associations and the Democratic Party. She devoted herself to bringing a hospital to the community, which she did in the 1980s. She then raised \$750,000 for state-of-the-art cardiovascular equipment. In the early 1970s she helped open the community’s first nursing home. Hall supported the establishment of parks, museums and a rescue squad in Zephyrhills. She was born in Mississippi.

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Capt. HOWARD B. JEFFRIES (1843-1936) founded Zephyrhills as a retirement area for old union soldiers. He was born in Lafayette, Indiana, on April 17, 1843. During the Civil War he enlisted and served as a private for four years and six months. For two years he was a captain, in command of his regiment when the war ended. In December 1863, Lt. Jeffries, then in Company E. Pennsylvania Cavalry, married Helen Mar (b. Dec. 6, 1847, Carbondale, Pa.; d. Feb. 23, 1931, at Zephyrhills). After the war he devoted himself to newspaper and other literary work. In 1908 he saw an advertisement in the *National Tribune* by James L. Greer offering land for sale in Florida. He came here in December 28, 1909, accompanied by his wife and their daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Moore, and purchased 35,000 acres at Abbott Station. Mrs. Moore was business manager of the Zephyrhills Colony Co., which was formed by January 1910. In 1910 the name of the Abbott Station post office was changed to Zephyrhills. In 1920 H. B. Jeffries was commander of the Florida Department of the G. A. R. A son, Dr. (illegible) M. Jeffries, was living in New York City in 1931.



ELAM SANDERS LARKIN (1877-1934) was born on Mar. 28, 1877. In 1897 he married Rhoda Gavin (b. Nov. 10, 1877, at Thonotosassa) at Knights Station. School board records show that he transported students in the Ellerslie section in the 1920s and 1930s. Elam died on Apr. 9, 1934. Mrs. Larkin died on April 10, 1935. Her obituary lists survivors: three sons, William M., Dade City; E. B., attending the Univ. of Florida; Sidney, Dade City; three daughters, Emma, Bartow; Neva, Lakeland; Rhoda Jay, Dade City. A son Dell died in 1922 at age 20, and two children died in infancy.

WILLIAM M. LARKIN (1899-1973) was elected Pasco County prosecuting attorney in 1924. As a cattleman, he brought the first Santa Gertrudis bull east of the Mississippi in 1941 and established the first Santa Gertrudis herd in Florida. He introduced and sponsored the Fence Law of Florida and invented a cattle underpass that is used when a new road separates a piece of land. Larkin was born in Dade City, October 6, 1899. He received his law degree in 1922 from Stetson University and was admitted to the Florida Bar. He died May 26, 1973.

JOHN MARION O'BERRY (1843-1927) was a Civil War veteran and pioneer resident of Pasco County. He was born in Pierce County, Ga., on Apr. 17, 1843. According to his obituary, after the war he moved to Florida, settling in Blanton, where he has resided ever since. On Jan. 9, 1868, or according to his obituary in 1867, he married Miss Mary F. Jones (1845-1927), the daughter of Rev. Matthew F. and Emily E. Jones. Mr. O'Berry died on Aug. 14, 1927, and is buried in Mt. Zion Cemetery in Dade City. Mrs. O'Berry died eight days before her husband. Her obituary said she was "reputed to be the oldest woman resident of Pasco county." It said she was born in the Fort Dade section in October 1845. A 1924 article said that she was born in what is now Pasco County on Oct. 21, 1849. They had nine children, of whom eight survived them. They were four daughters, Mrs. M. C. Gainey, Bradenton, Mrs. A. S. Thompson, Tampa, Mrs. Robert Ansley and Mrs. Fannie Haycock, Blanton, four sons, W. J. O'Berry, Jacksonville, F. B. O'Berry, Columbus, Ga., J. L. O'Berry, Tampa and S. H. O'Berry, Dade City. Mr. O'Berry was survived by one brother, Tom O'Berry of Blackshear, Ga.

SOLOMON H. O'BERRY (1869-1930) married Sarah Elizabeth Howell (1870-1942), daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Jackson Howell, who were pioneer residents of Pasco County. Their children were: Muriel E., b. October 21, 1894, m. H. B. Hope; Winford Howell, b. Apr. 6, 1897; David Elmer, b. June 10, 1899; Mary Ellen, b. Nov. 21, 1901, m. Hugh L. Hargraves; Claude Jackson, b. Sept. 13, 1904; Sara Jane, b. Mar. 16, 1907, m. Mr. Gilbert; Nellie Fern, b. Aug. 7, 1910, m. Yulee Thompson; John Marvin, b. Apr. 7, 1913; and Lillian Ruth, b. May 10, 1916.

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