

Monthly Publication from the Zephyrhills Historical Association

Volume 16 – Number 8

August 2014

The next Zephyrhills Historical Association meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 2nd 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

Louie Holt was our presenter in August. He displayed another set of pictures from our collection. This time his presentation focused on buildings in Zephyrhills. Once again he showed them in chronological order and by location. He told us up front that he suspected some of the pictures he would be showing were not from Zephyrhills. He was



fairly certain going in that some of the pictures were actually of historical buildings in neighboring Dade City. As usual Louie was right. Folks in the audience concurred that the last set of pictures he showed were of Dade City buildings. Still, the crowd enjoyed seeing those pictures as well. We always enjoy ourselves when Louie is our presenter.

No definite speaker had been set at press time, but in all likelihood we will either be enjoying a return visit from Van McKenzie, who will be speaking this time more about his own upbringing here, or Steve Spina, who is a charter member of our association and newly reappointed City Manager. Either of these speakers will be enjoyable. Come join us.

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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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100th Anniversary of Woman’s Club

The GFWC Woman’s Club of Zephyrhills will be celebrating “100 Years of Service to the Community” in November 2015.

If you have pictures of former members or events involving the Woman’s Club, or know someone who may have these items, we would like to speak with them.

Please contact:

Judy Meserve at 813-907-8105

Janet Stevens at 813-907-1716


Becky Finley at 813-310-9165

The GFWC Woman’s Club of Zephyrhills was organized on November 11, 1915 by fifteen civic-minded ladies, and federated the same year. Through the efforts of Walter R. Gall and Mayor B.F. Parsons, The WPA (Works Progress Administration) built the Clubhouse from native rock hauled from a quarry on the Hillsborough River. The Women’s Club first met here in April 18, 1941. Dues in 1915 were one dollar a year. The first President was Mrs. L.N. Gilbert, and the Cherokee rose was selected as the club flower, with moss gray and pink as the club colors.



The original pledge was:

“Holding my membership in the Woman’s Club of Zephyrhills worthy of unfailing loyalty, I will sustain its good work and guard its reputation.”

<p>Shirts & Caps, founded in Zephyrhills in 1982, is now an internet-based national supplier of custom screen printed t-shirts. Still family owned and operated; find us online at www.ClassB.com!</p> 	<p>Artistic Expressions Custom Picture Framing specializing in the framing of needlework 5906 7th Street Zephyrhills, Florida 33542</p> <p>(813) 783-7731 Beverly Koehler Barnett, Owner E-Mail: aeframer@aol.com</p>
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Remembering Willie's Taxi and the Fishpond

Countdown to Centennial

Zephyrhills News – August 3, 2009

by Madonna Jervis Wise and Clereen Morrill Brunty



This week we would like to take you on a short walk back into history! As you recall special times in your own childhood, you undoubtedly remember key places and events. We have been fascinated by the fact that two 'institutions' are frequently mentioned as folks share stories of Zephyrhills and ZHS history with us—namely the signature fish ponds and Willie's Taxi Service. You may ask why we have combined these two characteristic establishments. Read on!

Willette Phillips had a taxi service in the late 1940's and 50's. Her stand was at the drinking fountain...on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Seventh Street that advertised "Zephyrhills, City of Pure Water." It was good drinking water without all the chemicals that are used today...*as written in "Zephyrhills From A to Z" Book.*

Jon Ferguson of the ZHS class of 1951 provided us with some insight: *Willette Phillips established the first taxi cab service in Zephyrhills. Competition soon joined her because of her business prowess. For example, Maurice Humphries set up a similar business across the street from her. Willie's booth was on the corner of 5th Avenue and 7th Street. A popular gold fish pond was nearby as well as the only public drinking fountain. Willie had a black and white television set in her nook. This was definitely the place to stop by and get the latest local news! Willie was always hospitable and everyone loved her.*

Scenic points-of-interest around Zephyrhills for most of the 20th century included some charming sites: several fish ponds inhabited by goldfish (koi--members of the carp family), a wishing well, a limestone bridge at Zephyr Park and the occasional building (such as the Women's Club on 5th Avenue) were crafted from a natural resource, local limestone rock.


We learned from our review of school history that before 1970 Zephyrhills High School also had a koi pond similar to the one by Willie's, that was tended by the school principal and proudly protected by ZHS students. The school pond was constructed by George McGinnis and his son, James Douglas McGinnis and built around 1946. George's daughter, Donah (McGinnis) Neal and son, Herbert McGinnis, described their recollection of the signature ZHS pond. *It was approximately eight feet horizontally, and made of stone with a dome that covered approximately one-third of the pond to provide shade.* They marvel to this day at how their dad was able to build the free-standing dome. McGinnis built many other ponds for Zephyr Park, one of which had a bridge walk-way.

<p>Dine In - Take Out Delivery - Catering</p> <p>The Sandwich Spot</p> <p>39013 CR 54 Zephyrhills, FL 33542</p> <p><i>"Best Cubans in Town"</i></p> <p>813-783-6396</p> 	 <p>ARMY STRONG <i>Airborne-Ranger, "All The Way"</i></p> <p>MICHAEL J. COCKILL Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired)</p> <p>8469 Maybelle Dr. (352) 596-9751 (h) Weeki Wachee, FL 34613 (352) 584-0758 (m) mcockill@tampabay.rr.com ZHS JROTC Bulldog Battalion, GO FOR IT!</p>
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We anticipate that our readers will recall memories of both Willie’s Taxi and the signature ponds from these glimpses back in time. Several other ZHS alumni shared their reflections of these two uniquely Zephyrhills adornments:

- My family lived what seemed a long way out of town on West 54, although recently revisiting our old home place, realize it is only 4 or 5 miles. We had to ride the bus and I always envied the kids that just walked to school and could hang around and cut up after school, instead of hurrying to catch the bus. One of these friends invited me to spend the night with her because there was a party at another friend's house that night. I thought it was well arranged and I was excited. To begin with the party didn't turn out as I had expected. Seemed we bus riding country girls were a little behind about teenage party activities. Then we walked to her home and met with her mom, screaming that we were late, and what was she doing bringing someone home with her. I was in a panic as we went to her room and to bed. As soon as the house got quiet I slipped out and walked downtown to Willie's corner. The streets were deserted and I wondered how long it would take me to walk home if she wasn't there. She was, and she just told me to get in and let's go. She assured me I shouldn't be upset or afraid and that my mom and dad would be really glad I came home. I'm not sure Willie ever got paid for that ride but she was truly an angel for that young damsel in distress...Carrie (Partridge) Clark
- Willie was a tall woman in stature and also had a good business mind with her successful taxi business on 5th Avenue for many years. She sponsored many softball teams and was an avid sports fan! Phyllis (Geiger) Locke-Debien
- Willie’s Taxi was on the corner by the water fountain which proudly proclaimed, Zephyrhills—the City of Pure Water! Patricia (Kline) Graham
- “I remember that unique gold fish pond in front of Willie’s!” Ann Brooke (Smith) Neukom said.

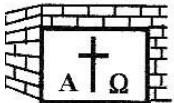
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- My family moved to Zephyrhills in 1946 - we did not have a car so we walked EVERYWHERE and it didn't seem hard when you are only 6 years old (it sure would now). I remember a fish pond located downtown next to "Willie's Taxi" (her office was a tiny stand). The fish pond was made with big rocks and it was full of huge goldfish. We would feed them bread or crackers and the pond was surrounded with huge elephant ear plants to keep the hot sun off the fish. There



was also a water fountain (made with the same type of rocks) and that water was always so good and cold, especially after walking the mile from our house to town. Norma Jean (Baker) Cecil


- Shirley (Stanley) Lanier said, "I was born and raised in Zephyrhills and I remember lots of the old markings. I remember Willie's Taxi (a very nice person) and also when Maurice Humphries opened a Taxi service across from Willie's Taxi Cab service. Also the rock fish pond with big gold fish in them and if I had an extra penny I would throw it in the pond. For some reason I would always be thirsty when I passed the water fountain and I remember the sign that read White's Only. We visited Elsie's 5 & 10 on Saturday because Saturday was my family's day to come to town to shop and buy groceries".
- I do remember that fish pond. I was fascinated with it. My dad, Lee Henry tried to put one in our backyard to make my Mom and I happy, but the fish died. And I remember the infamous water fountain that said "white only". I've told my children and grandchildren about it, and happily they could hardly believe something like that could have existed...said Kaye (Henry) Bolt-Brook
- I remember walking from my house on 10th Street downtown to go to Neukom's drug store to have a cherry coke, and walking down to Willie's to visit and see the gold fish pond. Going inside to say Hi to Willie, I remember her two big chow dogs behind the gate that were always lying on the floor beside her. If she was going in your direction she would give you a ride home...Charlene (Collier) Daniels
- In the mid 1960's, I would go to Willie's Taxi and toss a penny in the wishing well. The only public restrooms were located in the back of her building...Clereen (Morrill) Brunty

<p>CornerStone  Baptist Church 7th Street & 8th Avenue Come be our special guest Coffee & Donuts 10:30***** Worship 11:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. Dr. Neal Resue—Pastor * NealDoe1956@verizon.net</p>	<p>In Memory of Ryals Furniture Exchange And Great Parents Powell & Maude Ryals From son James God Bless America</p>
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 <p>Balloon City Zephyrhills THE PARTY STORE 813-780-7000 36606 STATE RD 54 ZEPHYRHILLS, FL 33541 BALLOONCITY1@AOL.COM www.BalloonCityZephyrhills.com LOCATED IN THE SWEET BAY SHOPPING CENTER</p>	 <p>Zephyrhills Museum of Military History <i>A City of Zephyrhills Facility</i> Open Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. 39444 South Ave. (813) 780-0078</p>
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- In 1961-1963 Willie would pick me and my brother up and take us to the Catholic Church EVERY Sunday Morning and pick us up after service and take us home again. She was always very protective of us kids and all other kids. She would say, you know I know what you kids are doing down town...I'm watchen'. The fee for this special service and care was 50 cents for the "ROUND TRIP". Thanks Willie for caring so much about so many people for so many years. Much love and respect...Mary Ann (Goodman) Bailey
- When I relocated to Zephyrhills in the mid 1950's there were two water fountains at Willie's, one marked "Whites only", and the other "Colored only." My how things have changed for the good! per Alan Thomas
- Willie's was a nice place to find a cab ride home! Sarah Baggett
- I remember vividly the day we were walking past Willie's and we stopped to get a drink of water. I was in 4th grade at the time and I was puzzled at a sign above the fountain that said, "Whites Only." I had no idea what it meant and when I asked my dad (a ZHS teacher) to explain what the sign meant, I was really shocked. I remember he added that we did not believe that segregation was right. How wonderful times have changed! Lynn (Nichols) Timmons commented.
- Adjoining Willie's Taxi service was a fish pond and we would feed the fish and throw in coins. I wish that pond was still there...I loved it as a kid. Suzie (Hill) Pippin



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- As a little kid, I could walk around town in complete safety. I'd walk from the municipal pool into town and if I had a few coins, I'd head to Neukom's, Elsie's 5 and 10, or Lamb's Toy Store and I would pass by Willie's. You could watch the goldfish in the rock pond or stop for a cold sip from the only water fountain in town. Willie was a kind and generous lady. She lived in a house that faced the football field in front of the school. There were lots of orange trees, and those of us who for one reason or another stayed after school and watched football practice were welcome to pick some green oranges to refresh ourselves in the afternoon heat. To this day, football season brings memories of tart green oranges and sweaty boys. Diane (Clements) Vilas
- Willie's Taxi – As a child I remember taking a cab home from Willie's, it was a male driver that had the fast, slow, fast, slow, fast, slow, technique all the way home. Never having that experience before, it's one of the childhood memories that has lasted. I also remember the building being very tiny and cute...Linda (Wells) Hauff.
- When David Myers and I would walk home from school, we would always stop at Willie's Taxi and drink out of the water fountain. I think most of the fish ponds were taken out due to some of our scholars kept putting soap detergent in them and making a big mess and killing the fish...won't say who, but they got in big trouble...Elaine (Howard) Edenfield

From the Desk of the Editor

One item of business at our next meeting will be the election of a board member to replace Cris White. Polly Gill has been filling the vacancy so far at the request of the president, and we hope to make her election official at that time. She and Tom bailed your editor out of countless difficulties back in the day when I drove less than dependable cars. Tom was one of those unforgettable characters in my life. I am hopeful that Louie Holt, a lifelong friend of Tom's, will soon have an article for this newsletter about him. Pictured below are Tom and Louie from the '61 Zephilsco.



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