

Monthly Publication from the Zephyrhills Historical Association

Volume 18 – Number 4

April 2016

The next Zephyrhills Historical Association meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 3rd in the meeting room of the *Zephyrhills Public Library*, 5347 8th Street. The business meeting is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. and the program is at 6 p.m. Refreshments include drinks, which are provided, and food brought in to share by members.

Speakers



Our speaker for the April meeting was Bernice Rooks. She was joined by her daughters Barbara and Joellyn. She talked about her personal history, and particularly about her history in Crystal Springs with her father, Walter T. Curtis, who was a carpenter, sawmill operator, and builder of the skating rink. The Crystal Springs Roller Rink is no longer open, but you'll find more information about the family and the rink is this month's feature article, written by our own Clereen Brunty and Madonna Wise for the Centennial Celebration of 2010.

Our presentation in May has become something of a tradition. This will be the fourth appearance by the Zephyrhills High School Chorus, under the direction of Luan Gore. While Luan and the rest of us get a bit older each year, the students retain their youth. It's one of the true joys in teaching I can tell you. We always enjoy these young folks when they come. I'm sure we'll see a talented group as always. We hope you'll join us.



Tuesday, May 17th, is our next Give-Back Scholarship Fundraiser at Mike's Smokehouse on 7th Street. We are meeting at 5 p.m. on that day. Contact Patty Thompson (813-780-8559 – pattycakeclown1@aol.com) for information.

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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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Visit at the Crystal Springs Roller Rink

Published in The Zephyrhills News
 by Madonna Jervis Wise and Clereen Morrill Brunty
 for Countdown to Centennial
 July 30, 2009

The Crystal Springs Roller Skating Rink debuted in September 1939 and was built and opened by Walter T. Curtis, who was born in Texas. His daughter, Bernice Eleanor Curtis Rooks, the ZHS Valedictorian of the class of 1940, was almost four years old when she moved to Zephyrhills with her parents and brother. Mr. Curtis also operated a sawmill and was a skilled carpenter but he had a hankering to build a dance hall in the picturesque location of Crystal Springs near the legendary springs. He eventually decided upon a skating rink. Curtis personally milled all of the rough cut pine which



provides the signature look of the vintage Depression-era building that gives one a feel of walking back into a bygone era. Mr. Curtis wanted the skating surface to be just right for his skaters so he imported Tennessee Maple for the tongue and groove flooring that he painstakingly installed. The benches, vintage cash register and walls remain the same today as they did in 1939. Even if the rink had no

air conditioning for the sweltery nights or heat for the bitter cold nights, nothing kept the skaters from having a great time. To this day it remains the same. With 18 windows & several large fans, who needs air conditioning?

Situated on an adjoining area to the Crystal Springs Water Preserve, Curtis leased the Springs area for ten years and operated a swimming pool next to the rink for some time. Admission was 15 cents. His daughter, Bernice, met her future husband, Truman at the swimming pool, and another chapter of the rink's history began when Truman Rooks took the reins in 1972. Skating was a tradition for the Curtis-Rooks family. Grandpa Curtis configured baby shoe skates for his three granddaughters, Marilyn, Barbara and Joellyn, who say they were skating at age three. Truman said he skated himself until age 65.

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Opening just before World War II, the skating rink is a Tampa Bay area attraction that chronicles many wonderful tales. Imagine the friendships that were created, the romances that blossomed and sometimes flourished, and the refuge from problems of the day that were provided by an afternoon at the skating rink. Army buses of soldiers from MacDill came twice per week during the 1940's to enjoy the facility. Skating was a national craze; Lou Brooks in the book, *Skate Crazy* defines the period of 1937-59 as the golden age of roller skating, although roller skating dates back to the 1800's. Throughout the years, the Crystal Springs Rink has hosted parties






of all types. Once open seven evenings per week, the rink is now open on Friday's and Saturdays and for private parties. For 35 cents in 1939, you could skate for two hours and today for \$4.00, you can experience the era and get some wonderful exercise.



Roller skates have evolved over time! The original skates were clamp-on style and later shoe skates which then morphed into boot skates. Of course today, some skaters prefer the in-line skates, daughter, Joellyn mentioned. Joellyn has been co-managing the family facility since 1984. With three daughters, all remember working at the rink. Barbara shared that slumber parties were quite unique events to host when your family operated the community skating rink.

Truman and Bernice Curtis Rooks are terrific role models for the community. Truman has been a firm disciplinarian of the skating facility, setting the rules and managing the crew of kids. His daughters are proud of the many that stop by to say hi to Truman because of their fond memories of times there and his guidance. One particular poignant example was that of an anonymous letter he received with \$50, from someone who wanted to make restitution for a childhood prank of stealing some flag decorations; Truman smiles and reflects that this must have been weighing upon his conscience and he just wanted to make it right.

 <p>Garage Doors, Inc. Garage Doors Sales & Service</p> <p>Kerry Ryman President</p> <p>36413 SR 54 • Zephyrhills, Florida 33541 Telephone: 813-782-5926 • Fax: 813-788-6773 E-mail: kerry@rymanconstruction.com License # GDI 09084</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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Bernice, active in the Zephyrhills community, wanted to fulfill a lifelong ambition to be a teacher. She said her earliest memories were of ‘playing school’ and when she graduated from high school; her mother wrote a personal letter to Eleanor Roosevelt for financial help. (She said they did get a reply from the first lady but no funding). Her father sent her to business school and she worked for a while until her three daughters were in elementary school, and then took a job as one of only three school bus drivers in the Zephyrhills area; I.A. Krusen was the local school leader and hired her for the job. With her daily contact with the students and often serving as a substitute teacher when the school needed her, she decided to enroll in the brand new University of South Florida (opened in 1958); for \$50, a semester, you could take all the courses that you would like. Bernice’s student identification number was 18, meaning she was the 18th person to enroll at USF. Imagine how many students have enrolled since then!



Daughters, Barbara and Joellyn, share that they accompanied their mother to classes a few evenings per week and at the time, with only three buildings on the USF Tampa campus, they were fixtures themselves. Bernice finished her degree in 1963 and taught school until her retirement in 1990 at East Zephyrhills, West Zephyrhills and Woodland Elementary Schools. While daughter, Joellyn, carried on the Skating tradition and eldest daughter, Marilyn, works at Verizon, middle daughter Barbara continued the teaching profession and served as a teacher in Zephyrhills for 36 years. The Rooks are proud to have four grandchildren and four great grandchildren!

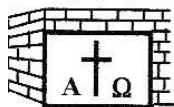
Truly wonderful citizens of our community, imagine the many people who have been impacted by these three generations of Curtis-Rooks families. Here are some comments from our ZHS alumni.

- I have many memories from the rink both for myself and my daughters. I wasn't a very good skater but managed to stay off the floor. Days then were easy and not so much pressure as today! **Phyllis (Geiger) Locke-Debien**
- Skating Parties! **George Neukom**

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- There was a group of 'mama's', Carleta Sibley, Lee Howard, Eileen Smith, Hazel Potter, Corinne Peeples, and probably others, that took their "daughters", Bunnie Sue and Carol Sibley, Arnetta Howard, Peggy, Gail and Mildred Smith, Shirley Potter, Barbara Peeples to the Crystal Springs Roller Rink years back when you still rented the old- fashioned clip on skates which attached to your own shoes. We went every Friday night of the year, except during football season as we were all involved either in the band or cheerleading or majorettes, or all three, and usually at least 2 of the "mama's" took us and stayed with us each time. They would take turns going if it was necessary, but they enjoyed visiting for the two hours we would enjoy skating, and nobody ever complained, just enjoyed it. The rink was usually quite full. Mrs. Curtis, who owned and operated it, was such a nice lady and we respected her even when she made us sit out for a few minutes to rest!!! As we got a little older, probably teenagers, our folks bought us each shoe skates and that was quite a thrill to have our very own to carry into the rink and not have to rent a pair. Truman Rooks, Mrs. Curtis's son-in-law, still operates the roller rink and there are still children and teenagers getting to enjoy it! **Gail (Smith) Geiger**
- I learned how to skate at the roller rink when I was three. My family and friends went there every time it was open. Mr. and Mrs. Rooks were very nice to us kids but didn't allow any fooling around that might cause someone to get hurt. It was either very hot or cold, depending on the weather because there was no heat or AC. And when Mr. Rooks painted the floors it made the surface very slippery. You could hold on to the rope in the middle of the rink if you needed to. Our daughter, Jennifer, learned to skate with us, her family, and with one of the Rooks' girls helping her when she was very small! **Carol (McLeod) & Howard Reeves**
- I loved the wood floor and Mr. and Mrs. Rooks. They always made us feel welcome and it was the place my parents grew up skating and then we got to do the same. I knew where every bump was located on the floor and when first learning to skate, I used that rope in the middle and the walls to bump into. Oh those large open windows felt good on a hot night. I can remember being awed by how well Joellyn skated! **Suzie (Hill) Pippin**
- I only went a couple of times as I was not a good skater and I got tired of falling and getting all bruised up. I do remember holding onto the window sills while I went around the rink. There were lots of windows that pushed out and were held up by a stick. No AC but we didn't seem to mind. We were usually hanging out with friends. It's amazing that the rink is still open after all these years! **Clereen (Morrill) Brunty**

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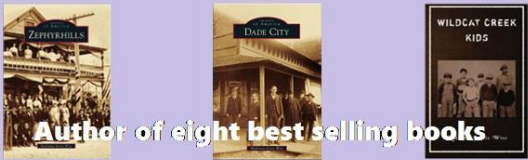

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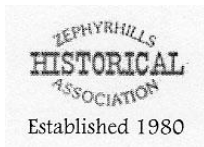
From son James

God Bless America

- I can remember hanging out the windows, because it got so hot. But the best part was when they were shutting down, and you got to help go around and shut all the windows. The little Rook girls were so cute and little and on their skates, skating better than everyone else! **Melody (Wheeler) Williford**
- Great music! **Sharon (Geiger) Reeves**
- Didn't we all find our first love here? After two hours of skating I would take my skates off and the earth seemed like it stopped spinning while my head couldn't stop. I still get that dizzy feeling every time I hear, "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree" and the sadness you felt knowing that the night was over! **Laura (Heller) Woodham**
- Having Friday night skate party's at the roller rink was such a past time. It also helped when you knew the guy behind the counter. It was easier to get your favorite song played and for him to let you skate the other direction! **Wendy (Hierlihy) Lair**
- I would skate there to just have fun! **Sarah Baggett**



 <p>Author of eight best selling books</p> <p>Madonna Wise Books Author, Research & Consulting Madonna Jervis Wise Zephyrhills, Florida Murphy, North Carolina</p> <p>813-469-8627 MadonnaJWise@gmail.com http://madonnawisebooks.wordpress.com</p>	<p>Cutting Edge Beauty Salon</p>  <p>813-782-4001 813-469-3437</p> <p>Joni Gauger owner/stylist</p> <p>6132 Fort King Rd. Zephyrhills, Florida 33542</p>
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ZEPHYRHILLS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 5TH, 2016

The Regular Monthly Business Meeting of the Zephyrhills Historical Association was called to order at 5:32 PM on April 5, 2016 by President Rod Rehrig, who gave the Invocation and led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Secretary read the minutes from the March 1, 2016 meeting. The minutes were amended to read Librarian Vicki Elkins is a lifetime member of the Zephyrhills Historical Association rather than an honorary member. There was a move by Rod Rehrig to approve the minutes, seconded by Tenci Alexander and accepted by those present.

The Treasurer's Report was presented by Clereen Brunty, with move to approve by Bill Kustes, seconded by Patty Thompson and approved by all.

Old Business: Regarding fundraising, Patty Thompson reported that the Association received \$32.88 from the dinner at Mike's Smokehouse on March 22, 2016. She announced that Sergio's Italian Restaurant has responded, and there will be a fundraising dinner April 19, 2016 for which flyers have been printed. Hungry Howie's was contacted, but they are unable to participate due to corporate rule. Coney Island Hotdogs is expected to open soon, and Rod Rehrig reports that the restaurant head seems to be very community minded.

Clereen reported on the Founders' Day event and brought in the plaque the Association won for best miscellaneous car and truck entry in the parade. Art Bessinger and Sharon Reisman worked at the gift shop and had \$48.50 in sales.

Regarding the scholarships, Margie Partain said there were 4 applicants (there had been 3 then another came in) and she called for a committee to form and meet briefly after the general business meeting to consider and decide on the scholarship recipients. Bill Kustes, Jerry Pricher, Tenci Alexander, Anna V. Boone and Margie agreed to meet. Two scholarships will be given out May 12.

New Business: Rod Rehrig, Ambassador of the Chamber of Commerce, presented information about the 11th. Annual Zephyrhills Scramble Golf Tournament at Silverado which costs \$75.00 to sponsor a hole which will advertise our Association. Jerry Pricher made a motion to approve, seconded by Bill Kustes and agreed to by those present.

The April Birthday dinner will take place at Panera's on April 15, 2016 at 4PM.

Jerry Pricher moved to adjourn seconded by Bill Kustes. The meeting was dismissed at 5:51PM.

Respectfully submitted, Anna V. Boone, Secretary

Zephyrhills Historical Association