

Monthly Publication from the Zephyrhills Historical Association

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May 2021

## There will be NO scheduled meeting in June.

### Future Meetings

I think we may be able to meet in July or August. If all of us have been immunized there will be no need for masks. We are also thinking of having a Christmas in July Dinner, probably on July 26. Bill and Maryhelen may be able to secure the clubhouse. If that doesn't work out, Polly has offered to have it at her house. I will have more on this by the end of June, but I am thinking we will ask for twenty dollars per person. That would pay Gail Fisher, the room rental, and would leave a bit for the treasury. If we go ahead with this I think the easiest way to handle the money is simply to bring cash, or a check made out to ZHA, to the Dinner. Andy can write a check for Gail and Wedgewood. You can just email me that you plan to attend in order to get correct numbers for Gail.



**We may get back to our fundraisers in August at Sergio's.**



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5x5 | 5x10 | 10x10 | 10x15 | 10x20 | 20x20 | RV | BOAT

**Jeff Miller**

**Pasco County Historian**

For a walk down memory lane visit

[www.fivay.org](http://www.fivay.org)

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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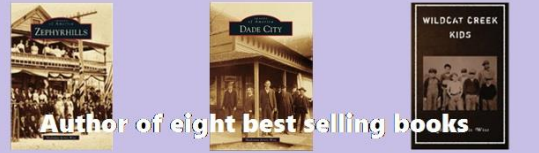
Elsie Burgess  
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HISTORY OF PASCO COUNTY

Jeff Miller's fivay.org site

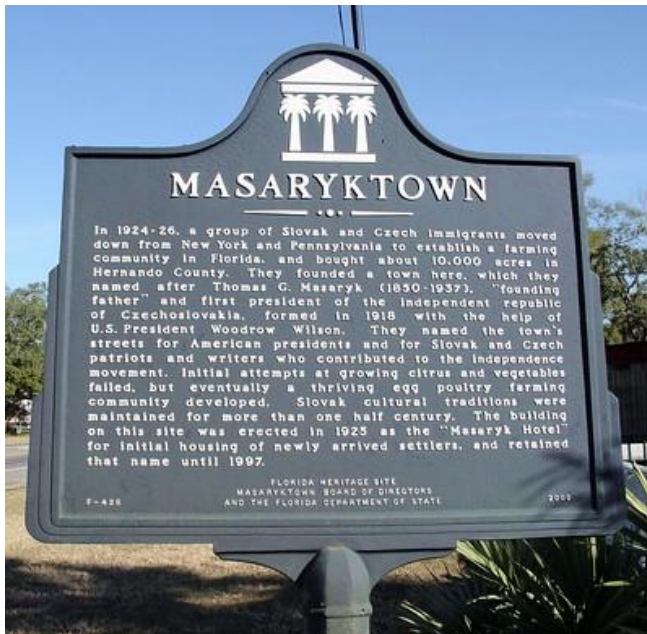
Masaryktown

Joscak's Paradise" Turns Inhospitable (2002)

The following article appeared in the Tampa Tribune on March 26, 2002.

By CAROL JEFFARES HEDMAN

MASARYKTOWN - The reports of prosperity in the citrus industry sounded enticing to the Slovaks laboring in coal mines and steel mills up north.



In 1924, Joseph Joscak, editor of the Czechoslovakian-language newspaper New Yorskey Dennik, wrote a series of articles about Florida, where it was possible to grow as many as three crops annually in the warm climate.

Real estate agents had convinced Joscak that a tract of land in Hernando County, where a small lumber operation was located, was ideal for cultivating citrus.

In September 1924, Joscak formed the Hernando Plantation Co. with 60 Slovaks and one Czech for the purpose of buying 10,000 acres in Hernando County. The idea was to sell shares to Czechs and Slovaks toiling in the factories of New

York and Pennsylvania. Shares were \$1,000 each for the groves to be planted on the property.

The amount represented a lifetime of savings for many of the immigrants, who came to the United States before the official forming of the independent Czechoslovakian state in 1918. At that time, Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia declared themselves free from the Austro-Hungarian empire.

Bound for "Joscak's Paradise"

About three months later, about 135 shareholders in the Hernando Plantation Co. left Pennsylvania, Ohio, New Jersey and mostly New York for what they called "Joscak's Paradise."

By 1925 there was land for a school and cemetery, as well as a two-story hotel built to house prospective land buyers who arrived by train. In 1929, the company purchased an additional 25,000 acres in Pasco County to plant citrus groves. As an incentive for people to buy shares in the grove company, and to get people to come, 20-acre tracts were offered to those who wanted to live in the new town.

<p><b>WATSON CLINIC</b> <small>LLP</small> Dermatology at Zephyrhills</p> <p><b>Rick L. Moore, M.D.</b> Dermatology</p> <p>6901 Medical View Lane Zephyrhills, Florida 33542 www.WatsonClinic.com</p> <p>Office: 813-788-7867 Fax: 813-783-7187</p>	<p><i>Artistic Expressions</i></p> <p>5906 7th Street Zephyrhills, Florida 33542 813 783-7731</p> <p>Custom picture framing Prints Needlework Photos Paintings Computer photo editing</p> <p>Beverly Koehler Barnett, Owner      aelframer@gmail.com</p>
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The town, straddling the Pasco-Hernando county line, was named for Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, first president of Czechoslovakia. The streets running north and south were named after American presidents. The east and west streets were named after Czechoslovak poets, writers, patriots and national heroes.

The newcomers were warned by a University of Florida professor that the winters were too cold for citrus. But they didn't listen, and the company proceeded to plant more than 1,100 acres of citrus trees. Another 3,000 acres of groves were sold to private individuals.

Then came back-to-back freezes, wiping out the groves in 1929. Many abandoned their farms. Others remained by borrowing money from relatives in the North. Some husbands returned to Northern factories and sent money back to the families they left behind.

Czechoslovakians throughout the country heard of the freeze losses and refused to buy more stock. Those who held shares would not advance any more money to replant.

Fewer than 50 families remained. But they had not received deeds to their land. The company, nearly bankrupt, had not paid the mortgage holder, John W. Wile of Indiana. And Wile refused to release any deeds.

A delegate from the company pleaded with Wile, telling him that unless the deeds were released, the families would desert Masaryktown, making it nearly impossible for Wile or the company to attract more buyers. Wile conceded and released the deeds for the 43 families who had bought land.

But when the Great Depression hit, the Hernando Plantation Co. folded, taking with it the savings of shareholders and landowners. Those who remained in Masaryktown started to grow onions, sweet potatoes and cucumbers. But without a steady market, their farming efforts also failed, and only about 25 families persevered.

Lacking any alternatives, several of those families bought chickens and found a profitable market in Tampa. A natural progression was egg production. An egg producers' cooperative was formed by the small poultry farmers, who were successful in selling in Tampa and St. Petersburg.

At one time the cooperative was the largest in the Southeast, making Masaryktown the egg capital of Florida. In the 1960s, egg and chicken farmers could no longer compete with large producers, and Masaryktown began to deteriorate.

Today, the town remains little more than a mile stretch of pavement along U.S. 41, its history going unnoticed to motorists traveling between Pasco and Hernando counties.

