

TRACKS OF TIME

Monthly Publication from the Zephyrhills Historical Association

Volume 23 – Number 8

September 2021

There will be NO scheduled business meeting in October.

Future Meetings

Folks, I am quite confident we will have our next meeting on Tuesday, November 2nd. We are still unsure about the meeting place or time, but we will let you know. I am also confident we can have our regular Christmas Dinner in December. We're almost there!

Patty has arranged our next fundraiser for October 19th, 4 p.m. at Sergio's.



George Hill and Roger Boyes, Jeffries House
photo by Dave Walters, ZephyrhillsFreePress



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Jeff Miller

Pasco County Historian

For a walk down memory lane visit

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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Halloween History - Zephyrhills

by Erica Freeman

With Halloween Howl coming up, it's important to remember what led to this annual tradition. How did Zephyrhills celebrate Halloween before? It wasn't until the 1900s that Halloween was widely celebrated. One of the oldest Dade City Banners in existence already has Halloween as a popular holiday with parties and luncheons in 1914. Later, common elements like haunted houses and candy would become prevalent.



In 1921, Zephyrhills News reported that “Mrs. Stewart, in charge of the Junior League of the Methodist Church, gave the children a fine time on the night of Halloween. A bon fire was built on the lot opposite the church, and a wiener roast treat was enjoyed. Mrs. Stewart was ably assisted by Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Nicholson and others.” This was a last-minute change of plans because the “Old Folk” concert that was to have been given in the G.A.R. Hall on Halloween night was unavoidably postponed. The big storm of the previous week made it impossible to undertake the work of rehearsal for such an important program.” The “big storm” happened to be the Tampa Bay Hurricane of 1921, sometimes referred to as the Tarpon Springs hurricane. It was still a low category 2 or high category 1 when hitting east Pasco. Dade City took a direct hit with dozens of buildings damaged or destroyed. 110 acres of trees mowed down. Zephyrhills still suffered from broken windows, roofs ripped off and at least one building moved four feet from its previous location.

The G.A.R. Hall continued to be a favorite location for the public in 1927. The Ladies Aid Society of the Baptist Church gave a Halloween program, a cafeteria supper followed by entertainment. However, they charged admission to raise money for stained glasses windows that the new church would need. You can still see these windows on its columned building along 54 West. In 1933, Dr. Arnot presided over a carnival at the G.A.R. Hall that included a king and queen. Younger children were all given small presents, like whistles and small animals that made noise. By 1937, the veterans had reclaimed the building. G.A.R. Post No. 29 of Dade City entertained soldiers who were homebound before meeting everyone else for a dance at the hall. Veterans of the Spanish War made up the band.



As the veterans danced and played music, the P.T.A. had turned a basketball court north of 5th Ave into a sort of Halloween carnival with food vendors, a fortune teller, fishpond and a “Hell House” where multiple people, including a teacher, “completely lost their dignity”. The parade that accompanied the carnival became a tradition for decades although the idea of the carnival can be attended on October 30th downtown. Another memorable parade was 1950. The high school band led the parade and David Vestal was Grand Marshal. Costume winners included **Prettiest Costume BOYS** Ernest Colt first, James Blythe second, **GIRLS** Bonnie Borders first, Sandra Pricher second.

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By 1955, the Halloween event had expanded to include the parade, a midway, a talent showcase in the auditorium, cartoons in the music room, and a spaghetti dinner in the high school's brand new cafeteria. Annie Rose Allen was the school lunchroom manager. Those helping for the dinner included her husband, Otis Allen, their daughter, Mary Louise Allen, Anna Maria Trebour, Leta Mae Massey, Kenneth Higginson, and Phyllis Gaskin.



The variety show was sponsored by P.E. teacher, Betty Jo Brooks, and science teacher, J. Marion Bradley. Otis Moody sold tickets. There was a majorette act by Tawana Campbell, Ruth King, Ruby Hill, Mildred Smith and Shirley Stanley. Bobbie June Chambliss, Susan Gill and Grace Lippincott performed a short skit, "Three Little Ghosts". Anita Chauncey sang "My Pumpkin is Alright" among many other performers.

"Robert Brown, local agriculture teacher and his F.F.A. boys" built the midway attractions while Merle Bright and Otis Pricher installed the lighting. Judging the costumes were Mayor Floyd Gibson, Gladys E. Daniel and Althea Sibley. Prize winners included **Typical Halloween Costume** David Smith as ghost, **Storybook Character** Sandy Simons as a scarecrow, **Mother Goose Character** Douglas Gall as a little pig and **Funniest Costume** Terry Lee Alston as a clown. Terry's aunt, Jean Elinor Alston was Chairwoman of the Carnival Committee.

After the high school was moved to its present location in 1975 and Woodland Elementary School opened in 1978, the parade was moved earlier in the day as a field trip by local students and daycare children with the Raymond B. Stewart Middle School band leading the parade. The main carnival was split between the schools. By the 1990s, the parade had changed to individual schools during the day before being dropped altogether. The carnival idea has morphed into a singular event held downtown as Halloween Howl.

The haunted house has also become an important part of Halloween Howl. In 1922, the Dade City Banner described the Huckabay Halloween party containing a Chamber of Horrors on the second floor with shrieking ghosts in a dark room with simulated gruesome body parts to touch. The Chamber of Horrors was a term from Madame Marie Tussaud's wax museum in the 1800s. As mentioned above, even in 1937, haunted house still wasn't used for manufactured scary houses and was sometimes called a "Hell House". However, by 1987, they were so popular that multiple houses entertained residents. Crystal Springs contained "goo" to the children's delight. The former building for the Zephyrhills Fire Department downtown was transformed over two days into a attraction luring over 1,500 guests and giving away over 200 pounds of candy while still being able to leave at a moment's notice. That haunted house was moved to the former bank now occupied by the Eagles, the Jeffries House and this year, the Hart Block. Some residents put together their own haunted houses on their properties, too.

In a way, Zephyrhills celebrates Halloween all year round as Pasco High School Junior Mary Theo Morris pointed out in 1941, "Miss Percival's room is very prettily decorated. Everywhere you look, big black cats, funny faced pumpkins, and owls that stare right through you. Some of the football boys did not know what to think when they saw the orange and black colored paper. They must have thought we are traitors because orange and black are the Zephyrhills High School colors. However, the Juniors were only carrying out the Hallowe'en spirit."

Thank you to Jeff Miller, Clereen Brunty, UF, Steve Spina, Wikipedia