

West Pasco Historical Society

News, views and more from your local historical society

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**Rao Musunuru, M.D.
Museum & Library**

6431 Circle Blvd

New Port Richey, FL 34652

727-847-0680

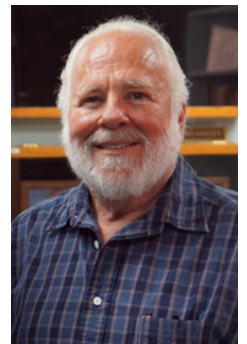
westpascohistoricalsociety@gmail.com



President's Message: Celebrating 50 years

WPHS PRESIDENT, BOB LANGFORD

DEAR MEMBERS:



On behalf of myself and the Board of Directors I would like to extend our sincere thanks for your investment and interest in your local museum. Thanks to the support of our members, Dr. Rao Musunuru, the City of New Port Richey and Pasco County we have many exciting things coming up this year at the museum.

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President's Message: Celebrating 50 years

WPHS PRESIDENT, BOB LANGFORD

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Covid-19 put a damper on our activities, but we are open and running in full force. Many up-and-coming events are happening and my wish is everyone in the community and visitors to participate. The hours for the museum remain Friday through Sunday, 1 PM – 4 PM. We hope to open for more hours before the end of the year if we can get enough volunteers. We have several local students who will be volunteering this summer and they will be selling cold drinks and snacks on the porch for those who visit Sims Park and need an inexpensive refreshment.

Renovation will be starting soon on the bathrooms and storage area and new flooring in the new family bathroom, hallway and kitchen. The outside of the building has recently been painted and needed repairs done, which is all part of keeping an old wooden building looking good. An electronic bulletin board is to be mounted on the front of the building with upcoming events and fundraisers displayed. More exciting tours are offered at the museum such as:

- Sunset Boat Tours; Group Tours – Outside of Open hours
- Downtown Historical Tours on Saturdays

Check the dates and book your reservation on line or at the museum during open hours. All tours are discounted for Members. Please remember we need VOLUNTEERS, so spread the word and encourage people to get involved. Volunteer applications are available on our website or at the museum.

Sincere Thanks,



Bob Langford, President





Walking back in time through Downtown New Port Richey

WPHS DIGITAL ARCHIVIST, PAUL HERMAN

In the last few years we have all witnessed a transformation of downtown New Port Richey into a vibrant and thriving destination for dining and socializing, with new restaurants and pubs, and a variety of entertainment choices. In a way, our downtown area is recapturing the magic it experienced during the boom times of the “roaring twenties”.

Beginning October 7th, you can take a “Walk Back in Time” to see firsthand the historic downtown buildings and places that attracted the rich and famous back in the day. Our tour guides, dressed in period costume, will describe how New Port Richey was founded, and take you on a leisurely two-hour stroll where you can experience the town as it was over a hundred years ago. A highlight of the tour will be a stop at the famous Hacienda Hotel for drinks on the patio.

Our walking tours of historic downtown New Port Richey will be scheduled regularly through the fall, winter and spring. You can view the schedule and make reservations by selecting the “Events” tab on our website (<https://westpascomuseum.org>). Special pricing is available for members of the West Pasco Historical Society. We're looking forward to seeing you ... and bring a friend!



Member spotlight: Midge London Prace

WPHS DIRECTOR, DAVID PRACE
EDITED BY WPHS VICE PRESIDENT, TOMAS MONZON

Midge London Prace is a Life Member of the West Pasco Historical Society for nearly 30 years, serving as President for 2 years. She served as a docent for the Dr. Rao Musunuru Museum & Library for many years. Midge spoke on behalf of the WPHS with a “Timeline of West Pasco” presentation as well as programs on antique purses and the museum’s “half doll” collection.

She also was a member of the Pithlachascotte branch of the Questers and was president for one year.

Midge was also nominated for Chasco Queen in 2004 and again in 2014.

Midge was a volunteer at Community Hospital, now Medical Center of Trinity (25 years). Assignments were Runner, Wheelchair transporter, Concierge, and Pathfinder. She also served on the Volunteer Board of Directors as Secretary.

She served for 5 years on the Board of Directors for Habitat for Humanity and participated in family liaison and dedication programs to the new families.

Midge was a Librarian for the Avery Branch of the New Port Richey Public Library at the CARES Elfers Enrichment Center and is also a member of the Friends of the New Port Richey Public Library, Pasco County Library system, and the Friends of the Hacienda Hotel.

Midge was a pollworker for the Pasco County Supervisor of Elections. She also served in the Ambassadors program for the Supervisor of Elections.

“[Midge] was a dynamo in her own way,” said her husband, David. “[She] ... always work[ed] well with others.”





New website and online membership system

WPHS DIGITAL ARCHIVIST, PAUL HERMAN

In the last few months, your West Pasco Historical Society has launched a new website (<https://westpascomuseum.org>). This is our platform for providing the public with information about our Rao Musunuru, M.D. Museum & Library, and is a resource for people doing research into Pasco County history.

If you are a member of the West Pasco Historical Society, you will be able to log in to a “member-only” area of the website to view Society records and newsletters. Members also have free access to view and search our archives of the New Port Richey Press newspaper.

One important feature of our new website is an online membership system. As a member, you will be able to log in, view your profile information, and renew your membership. This will help your society by automating the membership process and keeping costs as low as possible. If you are a member of the Society, and we have an email address on file for you, you should have received a notice telling you how to log in to the website. If you need help with this process, please contact our digital media archivist, Paul Herman, at archivist.wphs@gmail.com.

Jay Starkey's *Things I Remember*: celebrating a Pasco pioneer

WPHS VICE PRESIDENT, TOMAS MONZON



Perusing through the local history section of the New Port Richey library, I came across former Pasco pioneer and cattle rancher Jay B. Starkey's memoir, titled *Things I Remember 1899 - 1979*. In it, the elder Starkey, who moved to St. Petersburg in 1899, reminisces about a bygone era when St. Petersburg was a small town and when cattle ranching was at its peak in Pinellas and Pasco counties. To celebrate his legacy, I organized a panel presentation at the Starkey Ranch Theatre Library and Cultural Center, featuring Frank and Laura Starkey and Mark Berlinger of Pasco County Parks and Rec. It was a wonderful occasion and I hope you'll join us for the encores in October!



Introducing Mario Caruso: when a love for history and a chance encounter intersect

WPHS CURATOR, MARIO CARUSO

My love of history, historical artifacts, and museums all started during my childhood in Italy. One of my most favorite weekend activities was going to museums and exploring the many historical areas and neighborhoods of Palermo, Sicily with my father. He was by far my best history teacher; he often talked about growing up in Palermo and his experiences as an Italian Army Medical Corps officer during World War II.

Both he and my mother had a vast collection of antiques, so I was surrounded by historical artifacts (and I still am!).

Although I chose the medical field as a profession, the love of history and collecting antiques never left me. Fortunately (for me), my wife Karen has shared the same passion for nearly 40 years! While my wife and I were enjoying a walk in Sims Park we discovered the Rao Musunuru, MD museum. During our very first visit, we asked how we could get involved then completed volunteer applications. Just by sheer chance, the museum needed a curator, and I was fortunate to be chosen by the board of directors to fill that role. The position also requires that I sit on the board of directors, so here I am!

Of course, I'm already attached to all the fascinating artifacts found in the museum, but I discovered another great benefit of being part of the West Pasco Historical Society; the people that I have met and have the privilege of working with. I have come to realize how much they love our community and I'm still impressed by their depth of knowledge and passion for New Port Richey. I look forward to participating in the future of the West Pasco Historical Society and contributing, even in a small way, as we continue to look for ways to preserve and highlight our precious history.

Sincerely,

Mario Caruso, WPHS Curator

Upcoming WPHS events for Fall 2023

Please note that the following events and their times and locations are subject to change.

Make sure to follow the **West Pasco Historical Society** on Facebook for the latest updates and/or contact the museum by email or by phone during our operating hours.



OCTOBER

- **Panel discussion on Jay B. Starkey's *Things I Remember, 1899 - 1979* (free event)**
 - Friday, October 6, 2023 at 6 PM at Peace Hall
 - Tuesday, October 24, 2023 at 3 PM at NPR Library
- **"A Walk Back in Time" | Downtown New Port Richey Walking Tour (\$20 for WPHS members, \$30 for not-yet-members) (includes admission to the WPHS museum)**
 - Saturday, October 7, 2023 at 1 PM, meeting at the gazebo outside the WPHS museum
 - Saturday, October 21, 2023 at 1 PM, meeting at the gazebo outside the WPHS museum
- **"History of a House" workshop (free event)**
 - Thursday, October 26, 2023 at 5:30 PM at NPR Library

NOVEMBER

- **"A Walk Back in Time" | Downtown New Port Richey Walking Tour (\$20 for WPHS members, \$30 for not-yet-members) (includes admission to the WPHS museum)**
 - Saturday, November 4, 2023 at 1 PM, meeting at the gazebo outside the WPHS museum
 - Saturday, November 18, 2023 at 1 PM, meeting at the gazebo outside the WPHS museum
- **Historical presentation by the six first ladies of the United States (\$5 for not-yet-members)**
 - Friday, November 10, 2023 at 6 PM at Peace Hall
- **Panel discussion on Dr. Elroy Avery and the New Port Richey Public Library (free event)**
 - Wednesday, November 29, 2023 at 3 PM at NPR Library

DECEMBER

- **Local History Trivia (free event)**
 - Monday, December 5, 2023 at 5:30 PM at NPR Library
- **Documentary screening on the traditions of Christmas (\$5 for not-yet-members)**
 - Friday, December 8, 2023 at 6 PM at Peace Hall

Reliving the waterfront dreams of yesteryear

WPHS VICE PRESIDENT, TOMAS MONZON

One of the first things that attracted me to the City of New Port Richey was the beautiful view of the Pithlachascotee River from the equally beautiful Sims Park. I was even more enchanted with the river when I took my tiny jon boat out for a cruise there, departing from the Sims Park Boat Ramp and, after much putting around, finally making it to the stilt house fish camps out in the Gulf of Mexico. I said to myself, “this is something our museum guests have to see.” We teamed up with Island Paradise Charters and Captain Robert Hubbard to deliver several delightful historical boat tours along the river throughout the spring and summer. Make sure to keep your eyes open for the next tour and come learn about the waterfront dreams of the city’s founders!



**Thank you for reading this issue of the West Pasco
Historical Society’s newsletter.**

WPHS Board of Directors (2023-2024)

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Bonnie Martin, Librarian
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Marie Casanova, Director
Kurt Conover, Director
David Prace, Director
Beva Stevenson-Karay, Director
Judith Koutsos, Director
Abby Allgood Misemer, Director

The purpose of the West Pasco Historical Society is to preserve the history of the local community and further the historic knowledge of its citizens. The museum is housed in a building which originally served as the Seven Springs school house. The museum is open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 1 PM to 4 PM.