

Davenport

HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

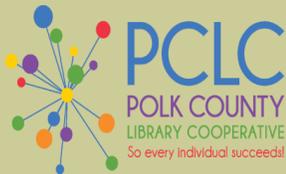
POLK COUNTY, FLORIDA

5 South Allapaha Ave., Davenport, FL 33837

Autumn 2022

News from 'The Port'

Partners



President's Corner



DHS President
Freida Linder-Priest

As a new membership year begins, it's always good to reflect back to all that our Society has accomplished; however, the part we need to focus on now are the plans being made to grow our membership as well as preserve the

history of our great city.

We have begun the task of interviewing our pioneers and with the grant we have been awarded by the city, we will expand and do more.

The support from our partners and citizens of Davenport continues to amaze me. The gifts of artifacts and those that have been loaned to us has added value to the exhibits that have been displayed.

During my second year as President, reminders are needed to ensure that museum artifacts are housed safely, not to be sold but cared for in a professional manner. We have begun to look at policies and procedures to ensure our organization a smooth transition into the future.

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Museum Hours

10 AM to 4 PM — Wednesdays

10 AM to 3 PM — Thursdays - Fridays

10 AM to 2 PM — Saturdays

The Flat Iron Building:

A Community Gathering Spot

Located at 2 South Allapaha Avenue, Davenport's *Flat Iron* building is 97 years old. As with numerous other wedge-shaped buildings, the name "flat iron" derives its name from its resemblance to a cast-iron clothes iron. Funny but many of today's most popular old buildings were triangular in architecture.



Now, imagine you're five years old around 1954 on a hot Florida summer day and you're in that building. No air conditioning. It's around 5 PM and you're with your dad in the back, hidden in plain site as the workers hit quittin' time at the Holly Hill Fruit Products factory. They come in for their evening ales, to chat about their lives, shop a few groceries, play a pinball game, and have a spot of fun.

This was Sharon Knowles, "a home-grown Davenport girl," talking about her experiences at the Flat Iron when she was a child. "It was a meeting place in Davenport's heyday," Sharon said, "a time and place when Davenport's small town history came to life."



Sharon Knowles

Way back when, the Flat Iron was originally known as the Davenport Garage and Battery Company. John L. Schmidt, a wealthy Pennsylvania native owned it. According to *The Heritage Trail from Horse Creek to Davenport* published by Judith Torgersen Thompson in 2013, Schmidt was "educated in Germany as an electrical engineer and established the first automobile service in 1919 and also opened a Studebaker dealership." Remember those? Davenport was *all that* in its day. Thompson adds:



[Schmidt] served four terms on the town council. The first building for the Davenport Garage and Battery Company was located on

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“ the corner of Bay Street and Dixie Highway, but was torn down and replaced by The Mart Around 1925, Schmidt built the *flat-iron building on the point* on the Dixie Highway. This *flat-iron* shaped building was constructed with Mediterranean Revival style at a cost of \$20,000. After conducting business there until 1928, he moved his business to the garage a little further north that is now owned by Holly Hill. He didn't stay there long. In less than a year, he moved back to his garage *on the point*. This building is made from hollow tile and brick. It contained three gas tanks, a large show room, and garage space for 30 cars. (Pages 286-287.)

While this building was the first auto dealership and service station in Davenport, it had a number of tenants and owners over the years.

“ ... It was owned by Bruce and Lucille Ingram and utilized as a service station until Lucille's brother, Lionel Collins, ran it. It has been used as an antique store and [was] owned by Menninger Corporation. (Page 287.)

Menninger Corporation, which supplied the sports industry, was founded in 1959. It closed in 2000 with various tenants, including an art gallery, occupying the Flat Iron after Menninger.

According to Polk County property appraisers, the last sale of this property was at just under \$300,000. The Flat Iron is now owned by Bad Dog LLC.

David T. Gill, owner of record, has no immediate plans for the building. With its history as a popular community gathering spot “back in the day,” Mr. Gill has quite the landmark reputation to live up to.

Honorable Mention

We're getting around! DHS was mentioned in *Polk ArtBeat* in their July 1-15, 2022, issue. *ArtBeat* is an email publication of the Polk Arts & Cultural Alliance.



Cattle Exhibit Expansion

DHS is looking for opportunities to better feature the history of Davenport and the industries that it is founded upon, one of which is the cattle industry. Currently the display has a brand, a cow skull, a tent, a rope, and a backdrop, and just a few other items. We are seeking more items for loan or donation to include in the display to add to the authenticity. If you have an item that you would be willing to give us or lend to us, please contact Judith Thompson at 863-207-2521 or at judith.thmpsn@gmail.com. Some ideas of items might include a saddle, bedroll, cook kit, and spurs.

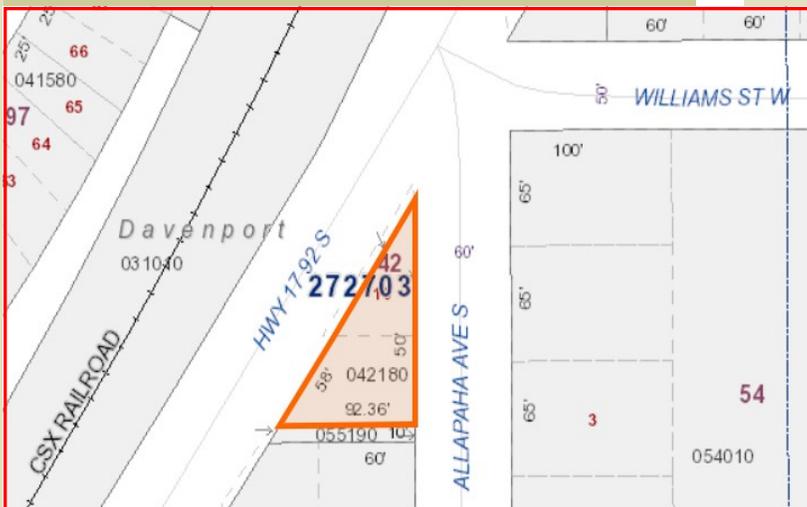


Veteran's Day Event

On Saturday, November 5th at 11 AM, Crossroad Stitchers will present veterans with 30 lap quilts at the Peter Rust Civic Center. Colonel Gary Clark will receive those quilts for his Flight to Honor program, which flies qualified veterans, round trip, to Washington, DC, and back home to Lakeland Linder airfield.

Party with DHS!

Let's party with DHS like it's 1999, as our volunteers participate in this year's Trunk or Treat celebration. Monday, October 31st from 6 to 9 PM at the Lewis Mathews Sports Complex.



Location of the Flat Iron Building @ 2 S. Allapaha Ave.

DHS Annual Meeting

October 1st marks the start of the new year for DHS and for membership dues. To end the current fiscal year right, we've scheduled to hold our annual meeting on Monday, September 12th at 10 AM, at the museum, of course.

9-11 & Heroes Exhibit

"Even now, more than 20 years later, the memory and effects of that day linger on." writes Donna Fellows-Coffey in the *Four Corners News Sun*. (8-30-22) Donna was speaking of the new **9-11 & Heroes** exhibit.

DHS gathered items from Davenport residents and is featuring them on a large wall in the center of the museum. The exhibit includes artwork, photographs, newspapers, magazines, memorabilia, a remembrance book, and the names of every victim from that tragic day. It also includes a commemoration of our heroes.

It's a solemn environment to say your prayers or to bid wishes for those we lost. The exhibit will run through September 30th.



Back in the Day:

An Event to Remember

Museum volunteers are organizing a "reminiscence group" and if you don't know what that is, here's the scoop. It will be an event for residents to get together for coffee and conversations about Davenport's history. DHS will sponsor long-time residents, also known as pioneers, to reminisce about Davenport's past and history, what's changed over time, and share *tea and crumpets*. And there will be coffee too. Just want the coffee? Yes, we can accommodate that. Just want to ask questions? Why, yes. Just want to listen? And yes, of course. We'll let you in on details in the next newsletter.

Museum Policy on Sales

There is a policy on sales: No sales of any donations whatsoever. Neither the museum nor DHS nor its volunteers sells any artifacts that are donated or lent to the museum.

Welcome Back 'Snow Birds'

If you live outside of Florida during the summer months and come here to "winter," welcome. You are officially a snow bird, and just the person we'd like to see attend our first Welcome Back Snow Birds event, scheduled for Wednesday, November 30th. We'll let you in on details in the next newsletter.



Membership Invitation

The Davenport Historical Society, Inc. purpose is to preserve the city's history and share this heritage by contributing to the records of the state of Florida and the United States of America in an effort that will embrace our past while working toward a brighter future for all of Davenport's citizens. Please join us.

Become a DHS Member

- \$ 15.00 Individual
- 18.00 Family
- 35.00 Business
- 75.00 Corporate
- 100.00 Lifetime Individual

Share Artifacts or Personal Stories

Volunteer Time to the DHS & Museum

Name _____

Address _____

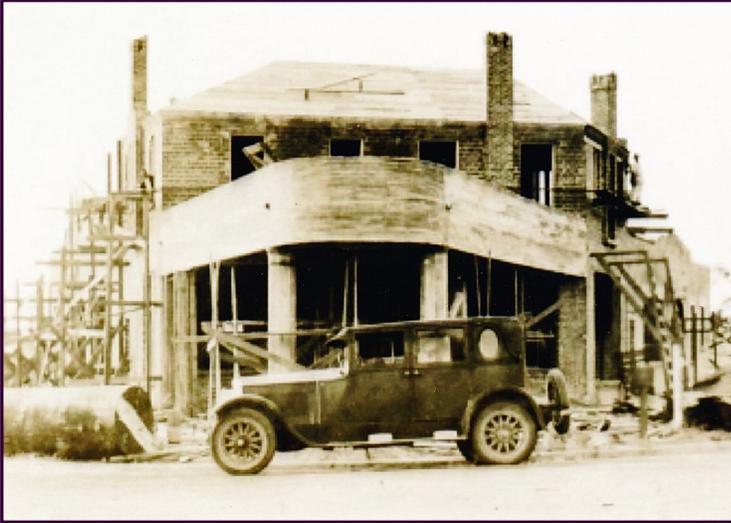
City/ST/Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____ Cell _____

Please complete & mail to:
Davenport Historical Society, Inc.
c/o Kathy Linder
PO Box 774
Davenport, FL 33836

DHS is a 501 c(3) non-profit organization.
Your contribution is tax deductible.



The Schmitt Building under construction, 1925-1926.

Schmidt Garage Is Back At Old Stand On Dixie Highway

John L. Schmidt and his business of supplying nourishment to automobiles and doctoring those with ailments peculiar to their type, has removed from the building he has occupied for a little less than a year on the Dixie Highway, to his old stand "At the point on the Dixie," which he built three years ago.

In his present quarters, he is better able to serve his customers in a more prompt and efficient manner. He has more room for repair work and storage and stands ready to cater to the wants of the populace in a more satisfactory manner.

He has been displaying a sign "Open For Business" and it looks like he means business.

The entire shop equipment of the Davenport Garage, Inc., has been removed to the "old stand," including Lee Rexford, the diagnostician and surgeon of auto and motor troubles.

From *Davenport Times*, October 4, 1929.

Pics from "The Port:"
The "Flat Iron" Building



Source: Wikimedia Commons



Unknown Photographer

Meetings

Second Monday of each month at the Peter Rust Civic Center.

Websites

- DavenportHistory.org
- Facebook: DavenportFLHistoricalSociety
- MyDavenport.org
- PolkHistoryCenter.org
- DES.PolkSchoolsFL.com
- DavenportHigh.Polk
- SchoolsFL.com
- VisitCentralFL.org



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TO: _____

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To say that I am excited about the new year would be an understatement, but we still need to search for DHS members and volunteers. The Fall season is here and it will be a busy time for DHS.

As always, I am so thankful to be given this opportunity to serve as your President.

Have a wonderful Fall season,

~Freida Linder-Priest, President, DHS

Christmas: A Time for Giving

All we want for Christmas is a ten-foot tree ...



DHS is looking for a 10-12 foot tree to decorate the museum for its first holiday season. Know where we could get one? Contact Freida at 863-557-3452.



Annual Christmas Tree Decorations

DHS is looking for volunteers to help during our annual decoration of Christmas trees at Market Square. For more information, contact Freida at 863-557-3452.