

**The Baker Block
Museum
is closed
until further notice
due to COVID-19**



Baker Block Museum

2020 Annual Report

North Okaloosa Historical Association

This weathered Dr. Pepper sign hangs on the east side of the Otahite Post Office in the Jeanette and Charles Henderson Heritage Park. The advertising slogan, “Drink a bite to eat at 10, 2, and 4” was used from the 1920s to the 1940s. It refers to the time of day when research suggested most people experienced an energy drain.





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VISION, MISSIONS, GOALS

Vision

The vision of the North Okaloosa Historical Association is to preserve Okaloosa County history.

Mission

The mission of the NOHA is to collect, preserve and promote the history of Okaloosa County, the northwest Florida panhandle and the surrounding communities.

Goals

The goals of the NOHA are to:

- preserve historical artifacts
- capture oral histories
- educate future generations
- promote a better understanding and appreciation of this area's rich heritage

NORTH OKALOOSA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

PRESIDENT

Tracy Curenton

VICE PRESIDENT

Phyllis Enzor

TREASURER

Sharry Rustin

SECRETARY

Connie Dukes

Mike Bush

Judy Cadenhead

Doug Hibbing

Stephanie Holcombe

Vacant

MEMBER EMERITUS

Jeanette Henderson

MUSEUM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ann Spann

BOOKKEEPERS

Ken Behring

Angie Holland

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

YEAR IN REVIEW

2020 Year in Review at the Baker Block Museum

The overarching event of 2020 without a doubt was the COVID-19 pandemic. It impacted the Museum's entire operations. Visitorship was robust in January, nearly doubled from the previous year. But as pandemic news became more dire, visitorship dropped off like a rock to single digits in April.

Like nearly every other business, occupation, organization, and association, the Baker Block Museum shuttered its doors for the month of May, reopening the first week of June. Visitorship picked up, but as the second wave arrived later in the year,

numbers again dwindled.

While by no means a complete accounting of visitors, sign-in data showed the Museum more than 350 visitors behind last year's totals, halting forward visitor momentum from 2018 and 2019.

Additionally, the pandemic caused the Museum to not only cancel its first-ever Baker Arts Festival scheduled for April, but to also cancel its keystone event, the annual Baker Heritage Day festival in November.

However, the North Okaloosa Historical Association did hold a small ceremony for its annual Okaloosa County Family



May's Family Heritage Wall of Honor ceremony.

Heritage Wall of Honor in May. Inductees were Caroline Baker Allen, Dr. George W. Barrow, and Roger Robinson. Attendance was limited to immediate family members with pandemic precautions in mind.

The pandemic notwithstanding, the Board pressed on with Association and Museum business.

This was the first year the NOHA Board established a set of specific goals to focus on during 2020.

Those were:

- Increase membership by 30%
- Apply for an Impact 100 grant
- Complete historical marker application for the museum building
- Redesign Baker Block Museum website
- Complete Museum asset

inventory

• Accrue \$5,000 in sponsorships
Of these, increased membership, an asset inventory and a successful Impact 100 grant application were completed. The other three were approved to roll over to 2021.

The Impact 100 grant was a detail-driven exercise with a \$112,000 payoff at the end. The project, “Digitalization for Historical Preservation,” was to digitize the oral histories, the 8 mm home movies, and the VHS tapes, as well as the 19 rolls of microfilm of historical newspapers. Although the NOHA was not a grant recipient, everyone on the four-member grant committee learned a great deal from the experience. Plans were quickly made to move forward with the digitalization

project with the resources on hand by starting with the oral history cassettes.

The North Okaloosa Historical Association published a sixth book in its historical series, *Give Me the Grace to Shout and Shine*, by Board member Judy Cadenhead (see page 12). This book focused on Sacred Harp singing and is available for



October's Fall Market Day in the Heritage Park.

sale in the Baker Mercantile and on eBay. Unfortunately, a book signing was not possible due to the pandemic.

In October, as pandemic fatigue set in, the Museum held its first Fall Market Day as a **3rd Saturday** event, complete with social distancing. Financially, it was a resounding success. Vendors bought table space for \$10 each and the Museum set up a booth and made a little money selling items from the Mercantile Store at yard sale prices. Feedback was positive with requests to set up another date next year.

In 2020, Museum Director Ann Spann became the Baker Block Museum representative to a coalition of the area museums, known as the Greater Okaloosa Museum Coalition. Organizing as

a state non-profit was the first step toward securing financial support for advertising for all the local museums. Ann was voted as treasurer for the coalition.

Last year saw a number of Museum accessions, beginning with a 1962 Okaloosa County tax record book donated by Holt Water Works, Inc., weighing in at more than 50 pounds. Okaloosa County resident Ron Ballard



Donald and Sylvia Reeves

donated a number of tools and a 1950s Motorola portable tube radio. Barbara and Harold Clark from Andalusia, Alabama, donated a



Just a sample of the trove of historical records collected by Sylvia and Donald Reeves that was donated to the Museum's library in 2020.



One of many photographs from the Reeves donation includes a photo of the Miller school (above). The reverse side identifies the teachers in the picture and that the school was located behind the Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church (below).

Group of students at Miller School (located in area behind PRBC, & in use from 1910-1915). Teachers are sisters, Dotia Miller (Rt.) & Minnie (at left). DAR has one in his Sch. BK & some named.

band saw and surveyor's level and wooden tripod that belonged to his father.

By far the most generous donation came from the estate of Donald and Sylvia Reeves. Local history enthusiasts, the Reeves collected photographs of families of the north Okaloosa County area. Donald made it his life's mission to identify everyone in each photo. Their daughter, Wanda Reeves

Kelly, donated her parent's vast historical collection to the Baker Block Museum, consisting of boxes of photographs, albums, books, genealogy records, and yearbooks. This goldmine of local history, genealogy, and old photographs represents the largest donation of material to the Museum and is a one-of-a-kind treasure that greatly enhances the Museum's collection, and one members of the NOHA are proud to help preserve. Researchers have already benefited from this amazing collection.

As 2020 closed, the nation was still reeling from the effects of the pandemic. With the promise of a vaccine in the near future, the NOHA Board decided to push forward with next year's plans for a spring arts festival and a fall heritage day festival in hopes of a better year for everyone.

ACCESSIONS



Above: Crestview resident Ron Ballard donated a number of items including a Motorola radio, hand pump, railroad spikes and a two-handed straight knife. Below: Barbara and Harold Clark, of Andalusia, Alabama, donated a motor-driven band saw and a level and tripod..



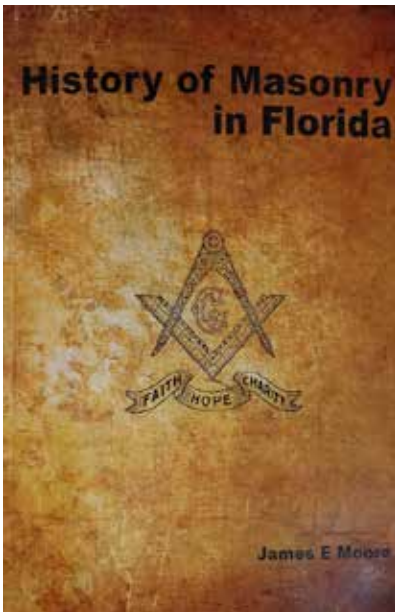
Left: Ron Ballard also donated a hand-cranked lathe and a cast iron water ram. Below: Holt resident Donna Ash donated a 5 token Okaloosa Mercantile coin..

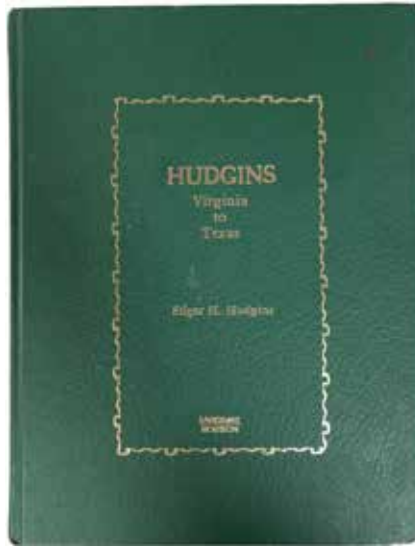


Above: This crosscut felling saw was another donation by Ron Ballard.

Left: James E. Moore donated an autographed copy of his book about Florida Masonic history.

Below: A handmade sign that hung at an open-air gazebo next to Holt's Diner where local old-timers gathered over coffee





Top left: an official 1962 tax assessment record from Okaloosa County. It's huge, weighing in around 50 pounds. This volume is 22 inches long, 18 inches wide and 5 inches thick and contains a wealth of information about business and property owners for 1962. Right: The Hudgins family history with several Okaloosa County and south Alabama names was donated by Phyllis Enzor.

Below: This 9x18-inch 1957 photo of Eglin Air Force Base flightline was donated by Holt resident Donna Ash.



Baker Block Museum Membership

Memberships

Individual — \$25

Certificate of membership and membership card

Family — \$50

Student — \$15

Lifetime — \$250

Baker Block Museum Lifetime Members

Dr. Wanda Batson

Joyce Blalock

Ronnie Bryan

Tom & Linda Barrow

Larry Bulger

Michael Bush

Mark Curenton

Phyllis Enzor

George & Cathy Griffith

James Griffith

James & Tammy Griffith

* Newest lifetime member

Henry & MaryAnn Griffith

Claudene Hall

Jeanette Henderson

Martha Jordan

Wanda Reeves Kelly*

A.E. & Mary Moses

Jo Nagel

Margaret Sasser

Faye Shaw

Ann Spann

Baker Block Museum Sponsorship

The Museum would like to thank our generous sponsors throughout the year of 2019. Without the support of these organizations, many of the programs would not have been possible.

**Adams Sanitation
Baker Feed & Country Store
Baker Metal
Baker Parts & Supply, Inc.
Baker Pic 'N Save
Eglin Federal Credit Union**

**Enzor Management
S&L Auto Body, Inc.
The Restroom Portable Toilets
Ruthie's Notions
WJSB 1059 AM, Crestview**

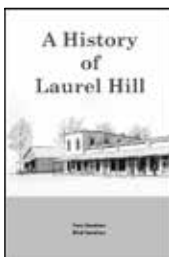
BOOK SERIES



By Julia Cadenhead

The newest book in the North Okaloosa Historical Association's history series, *Give Me the Grace to Shout and Shine*, focuses on the three most prominent gospel singing methods in the northwest Florida panhandle throughout the years: Sacred Harp, also known as fasola, five- or seven-shape note convention singing, and later, the gospel quartet.

Other books in the series



A History of Laurel Hill

By Tracy Curenton and Mark Curenton

Published in 2019

Drawing from interviews, newspapers, public records and photographs, *The History of Laurel Hill* tells the story of a modest logging camp in the 1890s that became the only incorporated town in the newly formed Okaloosa County in 1915. The book covers the early history of the area under Spanish rule through the Civil War, the coming of the railroad, the Great Depression and into the modern era.



Turpentine in the Florida Panhandle

Published in 2018

Turpentine significantly impacted the way of life in the Northwest Florida panhandle. *Turpentine in the Florida Panhandle* describes an integrated experience—through culture, industry and the human condition—in the lives of those who lived it.



The Escambia Farms Community: A Pictorial History of the Project and the Community,

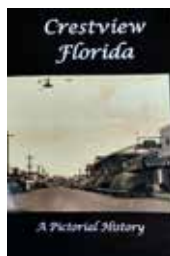
Published in 2017

In 1936, the federal government established the Resettlement Administration to help relocate urban and rural families to cooperative communities. Escambia Farms, located in north Okaloosa County on nearly 13,000 acres was one of those planned communities and had more than 80 families working and living on 95-acre homesteads.



Homefront: Okaloosa Strong, Published in 2015

Homefront: Okaloosa Strong is a sampling of the people, places, stories and events during wartime in Okaloosa County.



Crestview Florida: A Pictorial History, Published in 2015

A collection of photographs, *A Pictorial History* offers a look at Crestview's earlier days. Photographs include the railroad, town, schools, businesses and entertainment.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The 2020 Numbers

Income

Mercantile Sales	\$ 6,325
Donations	\$ 14,183
Sponsorship	\$ 650
Membership	\$ 340
Rent	\$ 7,160
Events	
Wall of Honor	\$ 95
Fall Market Day	\$ 194
Non-profit Funding	
Okaloosa County	\$10,060
Grants	\$ 8,000
Dividends	\$ 551
Miscellaneous Income	\$ 60

Total Income \$ 47,618

Expenses

Operations	\$ 3,614
Utilities	\$ 2,864
Supplies	\$ 2,711
Maintenance	\$ 1,033
Insurance	\$ 6,200
Payroll	\$ 19,323
Vender Payments	\$ 348
Miscellaneous Expense	\$ 813

Total Expenses \$36,906

Net Income \$ 10,712

Number of visitors: *581
-377 from
last year

Average number of visitors per month: 48

Visitor locations:

22 states—44% of the
country represented
1 country

Visits by counties in Florida:

Okaloosa	205
Santa Rosa	14
Walton	17
Escambia	23
Other Florida	27

** Numbers based on visitor sign-in data. Does not account for the total number of visitors to the Museum, Heritage Park and research library. COVID-19 played a factor in the decrease in numbers.*



A 1940s tool house from the Laurel Hill Jackson Veneer Mill sits next to the Otahite post office in the Jeanette and Charles Henderson Heritage Park. The mill operated from 1948 to 1989.