

# *Okaloosa Historical Quarterly*

*North Okaloosa Historical  
Association, Inc.*



**Vol. 5, Issue 2  
Spring 2025**



**Discover. Experience. Connect.**

OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA



The Jeanette and Charles Henderson Heritage Park is blanketed in snow January 22 following a record snowfall in Northwest Florida. The flag is at half-staff in honor of the passing of former President Jimmy Carter, the 39th President of the United States., who died January 20. *(photo by Joey the Jeweler)*

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Northwest Florida was hit with a record snowfall in January.

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**North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc. / Baker Block Museum**



**Spring 2025, Vol. 5, Issue 2**

**North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., Mission**

The mission of the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., is to collect, preserve, and promote the history of Okaloosa County, the northwest Florida Panhandle, and the surrounding communities.

**CONTACT**

Phone: 850-537-5714

Mail: P.O. Box 186  
Baker, FL 32531

Email: [bakermuseum@aol.com](mailto:bakermuseum@aol.com)

Location:  
1307 Georgia Ave.  
Corner of State Road 4 and  
Highway 189 in Baker

[bakerblockmuseum.org](http://bakerblockmuseum.org)

The Baker Block Museum is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization of the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., and is managed by its Board of Directors.

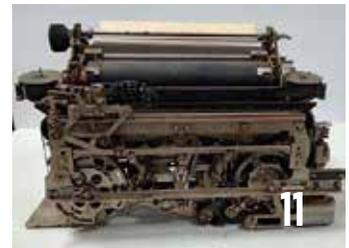
The *Okaloosa Historical Quarterly* is published by the North Okaloosa Historical Society, Inc., and is an authorized publication for distribution to Museum members and visitors. Contents of the *OHQ* is copyrighted, all rights reserved.

Items to be considered for the *OHQ* may be submitted to the Museum at P.O. Box 186, Baker, FL 32531 or emailed to [bakermuseumnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:bakermuseumnewsletter@gmail.com). Deadline for submission is March 15, June 15, Sept. 15, and Dec. 15 for consideration in the next quarterly issue. Articles received after the deadline will be considered for future use. All submissions will be edited for accuracy, clarity, brevity, and conformance with *OHQ* guidelines.

**On the cover:** Northwest Florida received between 7-10 inches of snow January 21, smashing previous snowfall records set in the 1880s. (Photo by Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Deputy Tanner Kant)

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**FOLLOW ON**

[bakerblockmuseum.org](http://bakerblockmuseum.org)



# 3rd Saturday



At the Baker Block Museum

## Event Calendar

For more information: 850-537-5714 • [bakerblockmuseum.org](http://bakerblockmuseum.org)

**April**  
**19**

**By Land and Sea:** Luna's 1559 Colonization Attempt in Pensacola  
1 PM, Hilton-Shaw Genealogy Library

**May**  
**17**

**Baker Arts Festival**  
9 AM-3 PM, Heritage Park

**June**  
**21**

**Floridale**  
1 PM, Hilton-Shaw Genealogy Library

**July**  
**19**

**Homemade ice cream**  
Noon, Hilton-Shaw Genealogy Library

**Sept**  
**20**

**Pirates!**  
1 PM, Hilton-Shaw Genealogy Library

**Oct**  
**17&18**

**Creepy Cabins**  
7-9 PM, Heritage Park

**Nov**  
**15**

**Baker Heritage Day**  
9 AM-3 PM, Heritage Park

# President's Message



It is my honor to take over the reins of the North Okaloosa Historical Association Board of Directors following our annual meeting in January. Eva Joiner was selected as vice president, Tracy Curenton is our new secretary, and Sharry Rustin continues as treasurer. During the meeting, we set our 2025 goals: Increase new membership by 30 percent, which I'm happy to report we've already met; complete the historical marker for the Museum building; and apply to get the Museum building and historical cabins on the Florida Master Site File. All three goals continue to move forward.

On a sadder note, we say farewell to one of the Museum board's founding members, James Griffith. A longtime Baker resident, he passed away January 11 at age 94. Mr. Griffith worked closely with Charles Henderson, who the Heritage Park is named after, as they supervised the work crews that renovated the brick block building that became the Baker Block Museum. He is featured on page 9 of this issue.

*Stephanie Holcombe*

## Director's Notes

Let me begin by saying we are grateful to the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners who budgeted \$245,000 during a January meeting for a new roof on the Baker Block Museum building. The roof is badly needed—our old building has sprung more than a few leaks—and we look forward to this work beginning soon.

We have a great lineup of **3rd Saturday** presentations this year. Dr. Della Scott-Irington with the Florida Public Archaeology Network will be our guest speaker April 19. Her topic will be “By Land and Sea: Don Tristán de Luna’s 1559 Colonization Attempt in Pensacola.”

This will be followed by our annual Baker Arts Festival May 17 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Heritage Park. We will have plenty of vendors, music, and food. And we still have a few vendor spaces still open. This event will have something for the entire family and admission is free, so don't miss it.

Then, in June, Dr. Brian Rucker will give a presentation on the once-planned community of Floridale on June 21 at 1 p.m. in the Hilton-Shaw Genealogy Library in the Museum. Copies of his book, *Floridale: The Rise and Fall of a Florida Boom Community* will be available for purchase.

*Ann Spann*

# 1934 Baker Shooting *3rd Saturday*



Mike Simmons returned to the Baker Block Museum for a *3rd Saturday* presentation February 15 about a 1934 shooting in Baker that left three men dead.

The event was the result of a fence line dispute that got out of control when tempers flared. The shooting occurred just across the street from the Museum where Baker's HealthSmart pharmacy now stands. Mike wrote a book about the event called *He Killed a Man*. Explaining the title, he said whenever

he brought up the name of his great-uncle, Ara Baker, who was involved in the shooting, the response was always, "Yeah, he killed a man." Hence the title of his book.

Simmons, a retired Pensacola police officer and Escambia County Sheriff's Office correctional officer and historian, last spoke September 21 about fallen law enforcement officers in Okaloosa County.

For information about the 1934 shooting in Baker, see page 20.

# FROM THE COLLECTION



Left: Maxine Adams, 89, stands next to the portion of the mural she painted with Judy McLendon (above), who passed away in December 2009.

Below: The 23-foot-by-11-foot mural, depicting a scene of a Native American village next to a river with cypress trees, is part of the Museum's American Indian collection. The mural was completed in January 2003.

Ms. Adams visited the Museum for the **3rd Saturday** presentation about the 1934 shooting in Baker when three men were killed. She is the granddaughter-in-law of one of the shooting victims, Alpheus B. Morris.



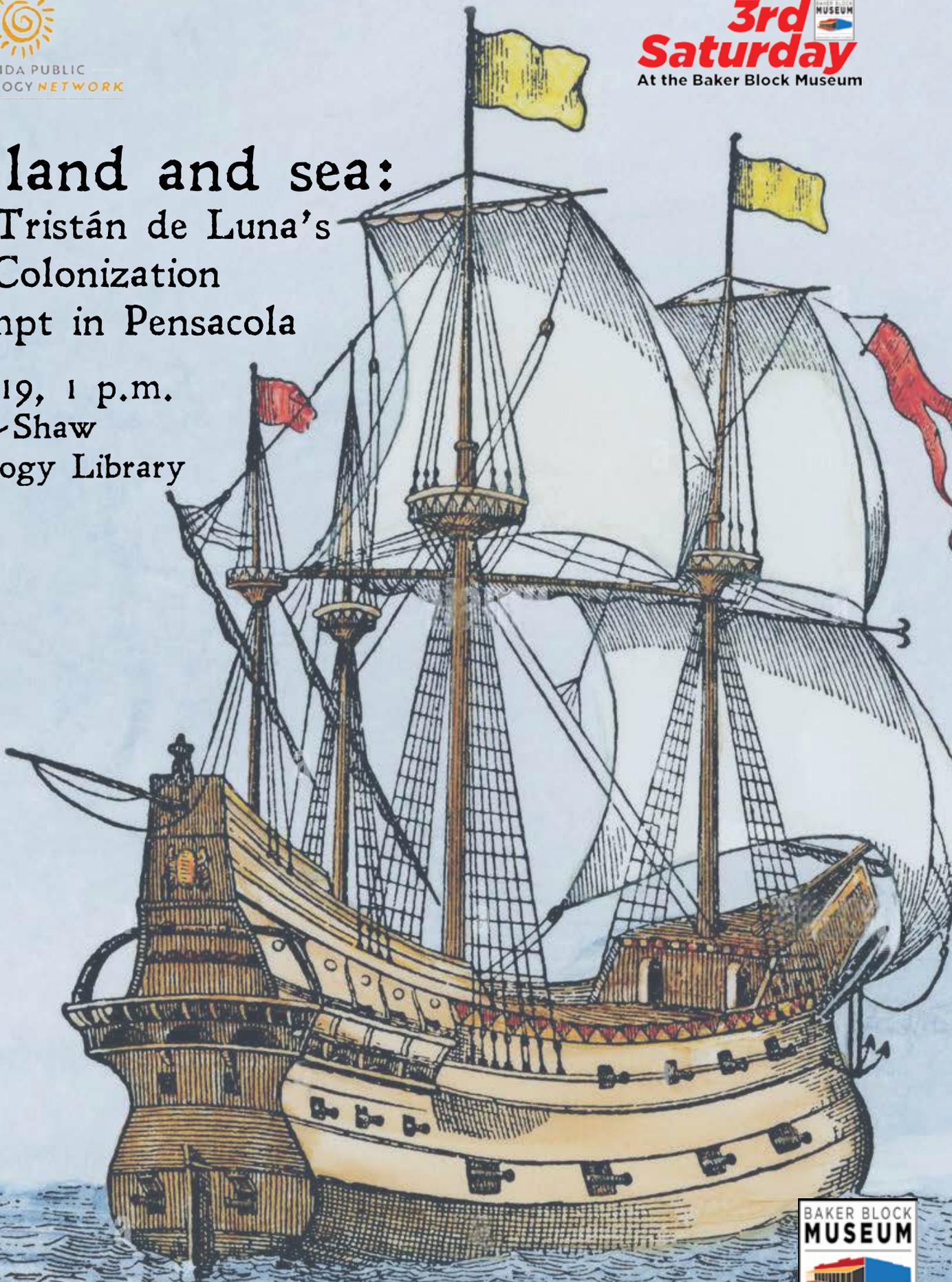


FLORIDA PUBLIC  
ARCHAEOLOGY NETWORK

**3rd**   
**Saturday**  
At the Baker Block Museum

# By land and sea: Don Tristán de Luna's 1559 Colonization Attempt in Pensacola

April 19, 1 p.m.  
Hilton-Shaw  
Genealogy Library





## James Peter Griffith

November 30, 1930 — January 11, 2025

One of the founding members of the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., passed away January 11 in Baker at age 94. James

Peter Griffith, Sr., worked side by side with Charles Henderson as they supervised the renovation of the brick block building that now houses the Baker Block Museum.

James was born November 30, 1930, to Joel and Ila May Griffith. He was born, raised, and died in the home that sits on the property settled by his grandfather on Griffith Mill Road.

James graduated from Baker School in 1948 where he served as class president. He was married to Viney Lundy from 1948 until her passing in 2017. Together they built a home in Pensacola where they raised five children before retiring and moving back to Baker in 1986.

James went to work for the U.S. Post Office in 1948 where he started as a letter carrier and later became an electronic technician on the letter sorting machine. He retired in from the post office in 1983.

He was a member of Myrtle Grove Baptist Church in Pensacola and later a member of Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church in Baker. James was active in many organizations. He was president of the Letter Carriers Union, president of Myrtle Grove Ball Park, a 60-year

member of the Masonic Lodge, a member of Lion's Club, president of volunteer firemen in Myrtle Grove, and chairman of the board for Pensacola Federal Employees Credit Union.

James loved to hunt and fish with his family and friends. He enjoyed gardening and providing his family with vegetables and pickles. He and his family made cane syrup for many years. He was always willing to help someone using his electronic and mechanical knowledge, particularly when someone needed repair on a washer or dryer.

His wife Viney, who was born in Laurel Hill in 1931, passed away February 11, 2017.

James is survived by his children: Gwen (Donnie) Bobe, Eileen Kindig, Jimmy (Tami) Griffith, George (Cathy) Griffith, and Henry (MaryAnn) Griffith. At the time of his passing, he had 12 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren and many nieces and nephews. He was buried in the Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church cemetery.



James Griffith, left, and Charles Henderson supervised the renovation of the brick block building that became the Baker block Museum.

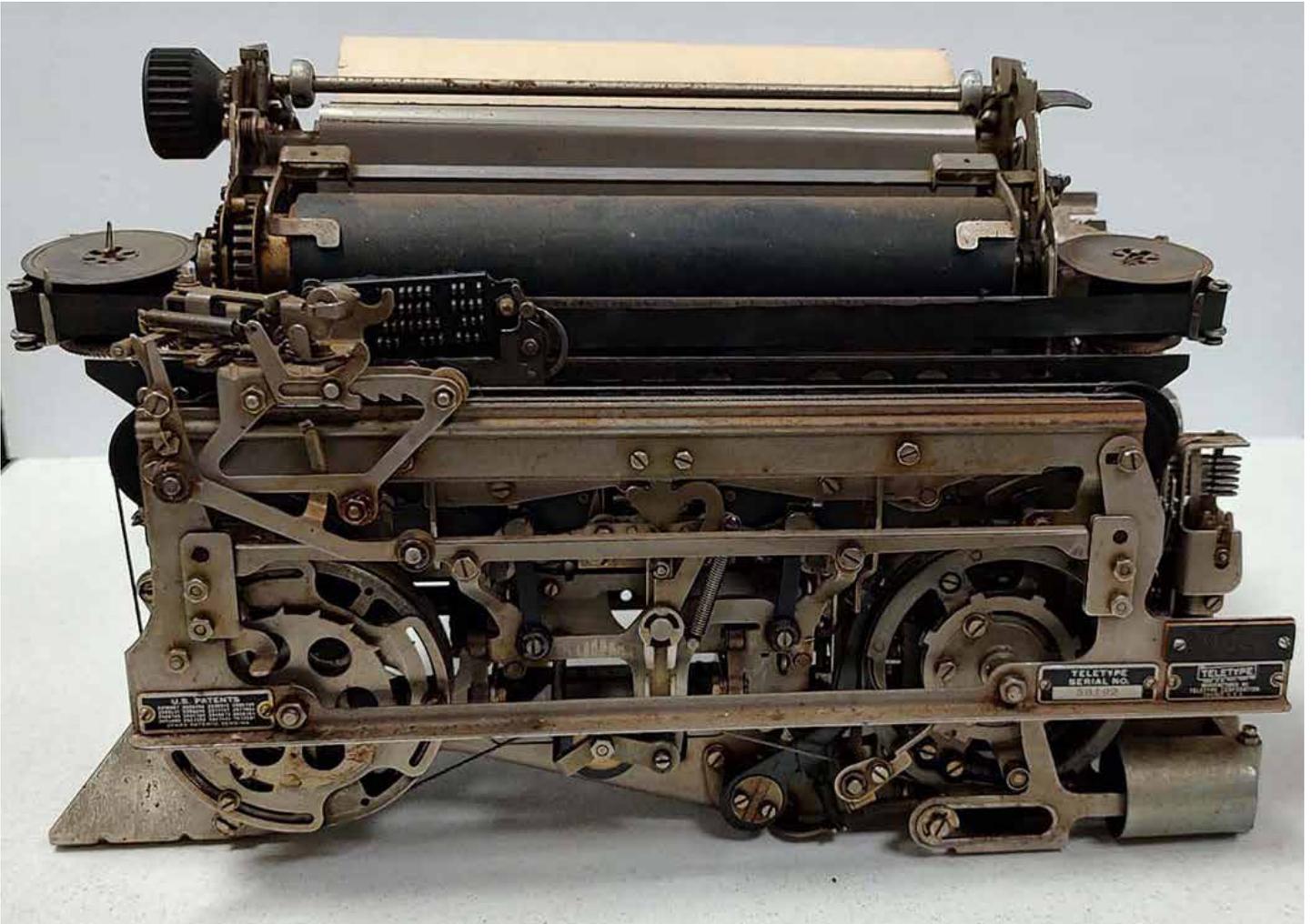


# Baker Arts Festival

**Saturday, May 17  
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
Heritage Park**

**Booth space available  
For more information:  
850-537-5714  
[bakermuseum@aol.com](mailto:bakermuseum@aol.com)  
[bakerblockmuseum.org](http://bakerblockmuseum.org)**

# GROWING THE COLLECTION



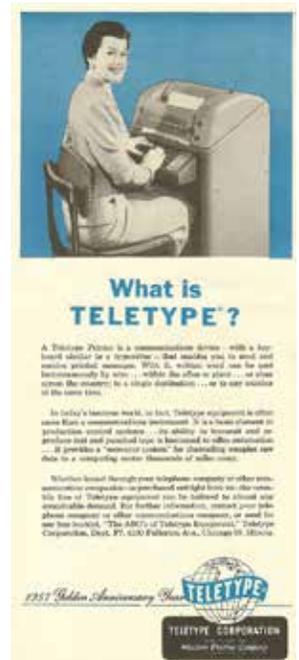
Crestview resident Willard Wilson donated a 1950s Teletype typing unit to the Museum in February. This unit was used by the flight service station at the Crestview Airport to send pilot destinations to the control tower. The unit is a Model 28 KSR and was manufactured by Teletype Corporation in Chicago, Illinois.

The Teletype machine was a staple in newsrooms, airports, and other places where transmitting and receiving typed messages was needed. Like the typewriter with the arrival of personal computers, use of the Teletype machine started to



Model 28 at the New York Transit Museum.

decline as the fax machine grew in popularity in the 1980s.



April is National Volunteer Month

# Be a volunteer!



**The Baker Block Museum is looking for people who:**

Like history  
Like interacting with Museum visitors  
Can do light computer work  
Can organize files  
Is handy with a hammer and nail

Flexible hours

See Museum Director Ann Spann  
850-537-5714 or [bakermuseum@aol.org](mailto:bakermuseum@aol.org)

# FLORIDALE

SATURDAY  
JUNE 21, 1 P.M.  
HILTON-SHAW LIBRARY

PRESENTED BY  
BRIAN RUCKER

For more information: 850-537-5714 • [bakerblockmuseum.org](http://bakerblockmuseum.org)

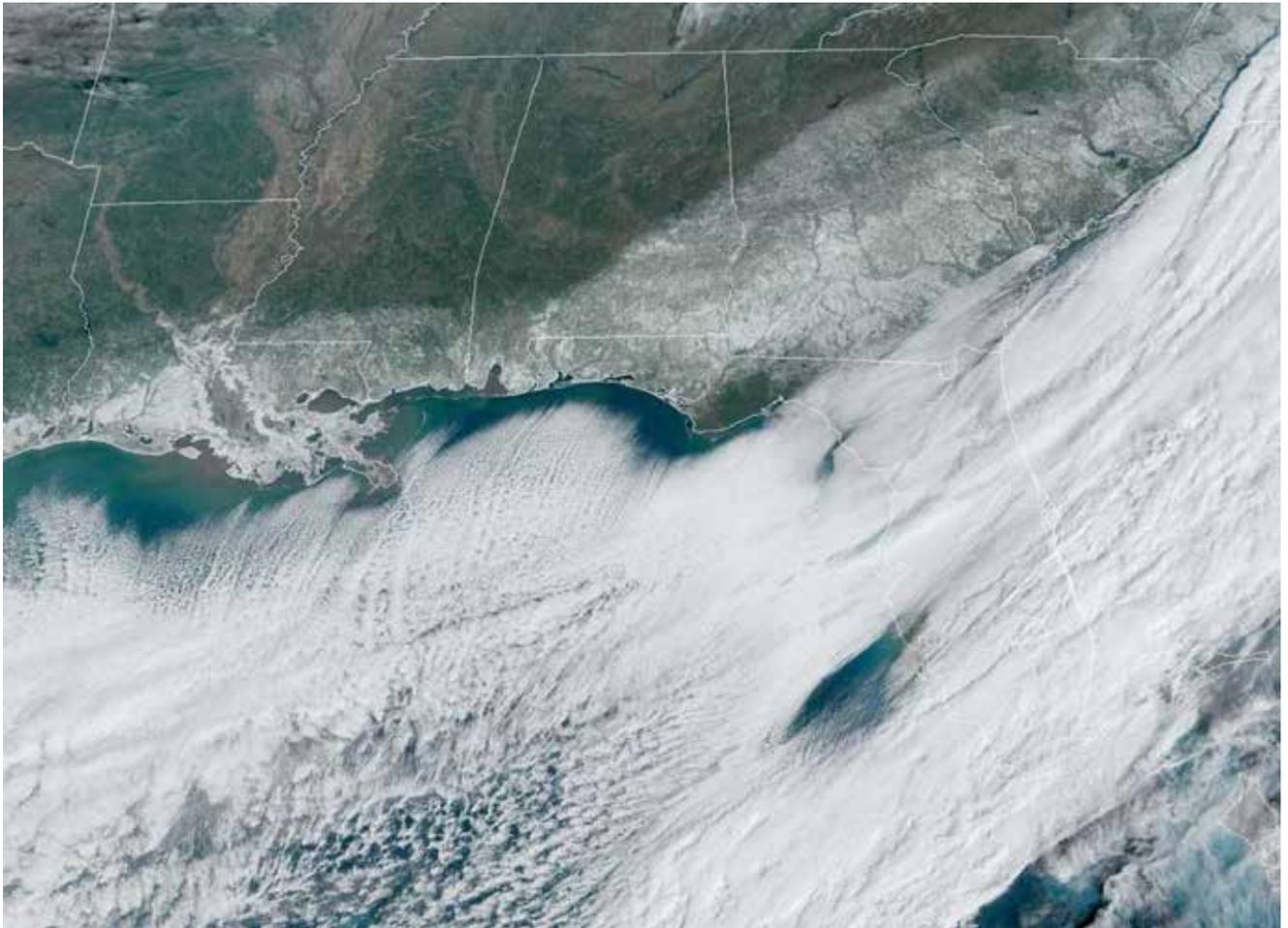
*3rd*  
*Saturday*  
At the Baker Block Museum



# SNOW BELTS PANHANDLE

Headline from the *Orlando Sentinel*, January 31, 1977.

*It's being called the "storm of the century" and the "2025 Gulf Coast blizzard." An historic snowstorm transformed the northern Gulf Coast into a winter wonderland January 21. The snowstorm shattered longstanding snowfall records across the region. Most areas saw snowfall records that surpassed one-day and two-day records that stood for 130 years.*



A January 22 satellite image shows snow blanketing the Gulf Coast states from Texas to South Carolina and into North Carolina. (NOAA)

**A**n 8-inch snowfall is respectable in snow-prone parts of the United States. In northwest Florida it is unheard of. Until January 2025.

An arctic blast of frigid temperatures meeting a wet low pressure area moving in

from the Gulf set the stage for January's record snowfall that left Northwest Florida blanketed in almost a foot of snow, shattering 130-year-old snowfall records by more than 5 inches set in 1895. It was the most significant winter storm on the Gulf Coast since 1895 and the first recorded blizzard. For many locals, it was the first time for



Interstate 10 was closed in both directions from the Alabama/Florida state line to exit 192 west of Tallahassee.

them to see snow.

After it was said and done and measurements throughout the area were tabulated, according to the National Weather Service in Mobile, the forecaster for Mobile to Okaloosa County and points north, Milton officially came in as having the highest snowfall amount in Northwest Florida with 10.0 inches recorded. The highest Crestview amount was 8.8 inches recorded the airport. Destin recorded the lowest with 2.8 inches.

According to a January 24 Facebook post by the National Weather Service in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Pensacola, Mobile, and New Orleans had recorded more snow than the southeastern section of the state, where the highest amount recorded was 6.8 inches in Aberdeen.

Not only snowfall records were set during the two-day period. Record-breaking cold also set in. On January 22, Mobile plunged to 6 degrees, breaking the daily low temperature record and tying for the third-coldest low on record. Pensacola dropped to 13 degrees, breaking the daily low temperature record for that area. To add icing to the cake, Pensacola recorded colder temperatures on January 23 than Anchorage, Alaska.

Winter storm warnings stretched from the southeast southern tip of Texas to Jacksonville, Florida. Texas saw the first snowflake from the storm January 20 as the system began tracking eastward. The National Weather Service in Lake Charles, Louisiana, issued its first ever blizzard warnings for portions of the state, stating “near blizzard conditions are expected along and south of I-10...heavy blowing snow will reduce visibility as low as a quarter mile at times.”

Mobile’s National Weather Service issued an urgent weather message: ‘Winter storm warning in effect due to ‘heavy snow’”—a phrase not normally heard in Northwest Florida. The governor declared a state of emergency throughout the state.

The Florida Department of Transportation urged motorists to stay off roadways due to changing hazardous road conditions throughout the night. Interstate 10 was closed from the Alabama state line in the west to mile

### January 21-22, 2025 Local Snowfall Amounts

National Weather Service credits Milton with the highest snowfall in Northwest Florida.

<b>Milton</b>	<b>10</b>
Pace	10
Jay	10
Gulf Breeze	9
Baker	9
Crestview Airport	8.8
Holt	8
Fort Walton Beach	7.5
Dorcas	7.5
Harold	7.5
Laurel Hill	7.8
Navarre	6
Niceville	6
Valparaiso	5
Destin	2.8

marker 192 in Tallahassee due to heavy sleet, frozen precipitation, and snow that blanketed the Gulf Coast from Fort Walton Beach to New Orleans, Louisiana.

Sunshine, extra bright as it bounced off glistening snow, greeted everyone the next morning and began the melting process. With temperatures still below freezing, driving conditions remained treacherous. Melting snow refroze on roadways overnight, creating black ice conditions January 23 and into January 24. Numerous traffic accidents were attributed to slick driving conditions.

### **Falling records**

The snowfall smashed previous one- and two-day records set in 1895. The highest recorded amount of snow in Pensacola in February 1895 was a mere three inches. January's snowfall was officially 10.0 inches. The snowfall forecast was for 1-to-3 inches. Milton and Pensacola recorded 10 inches, the highest amount ever recorded during a single storm in the entire state of Florida, almost three times the record set in 1895. The weather event closed schools and government offices, stores and restaurants, roads and bridges, and canceled flights into local airports.

### **Past notable events**

In March 1993, severe weather roared across Florida producing a variety of severe and unusual weather conditions for a period of about 18 hours, including tornadoes, thunderstorms, high winds, and hail. While other areas received rain and other hazards, areas from Crestview to Pensacola received up to 4 inches of snow during this weather event.

According to the January 31, 1977, edition of the *Orlando Sentinel*, wintry weather closed schools in Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Escambia counties. In many places, the snow turned to slush and froze, creating hazardous driving conditions. Crestview received "some two inches," according to a *Playground Daily News* article. It was enough to close schools,

cancel activities, and cause travel advisories to be issued. Areas south of Interstate 10 only saw flurries while north county children "could actually romp in, slide on, and marvel at the accumulated snow."

And this was the second snowfall in less than two weeks. The first event occurred January 18. The weatherman at Naval Station Pensacola said the area had "never had two occurrences of snow in the same year," according to a *Pensacola Journal* article from February 1, 1977. Although the snow again closed schools and temporarily closed Interstate 10 and Pensacola Bay bridges, it didn't stick for very long. Temperatures rose to the mid-40s the next day.

## **Storm Éowyn**

The January storm system that produced record-breaking snow for the Northwest Florida Panhandle moved northeast across the Atlantic Ocean and became Storm Éowyn, an extremely powerful and record-breaking extratropical cyclone. These types of cyclones are defined as large-scale low-pressure systems that produce extremely high winds.

The storm hit the Isle of Man and the United Kingdom January 24 during the 2024-2025 European windstorm season. Éowyn was the most powerful and severe storm to hit the British Isles since Hurricane Debbie in 1961 and broke 80-year-old wind records.

Winds up to 97 miles per hour were recorded in England with 135 mph gusts reported in Scotland. More than one million people were left without power.

Two deaths were attributed to the storm.

The name Éowyn is a name from J.R.R. Tolkien's novel *Lord of the Rings* and was added to the European season from suggestions made by the public.



Two men engage in a snowball fight during the February 1894 record snowfall. (*The Pensacola News*, 1885)

## Snowfall sets record in Pensacola in February 1895

Describing the weather event as “a white wave,” *The Pensacola News* called the snowfall of February 13, 1885, as unprecedented. Snow began falling in the afternoon the day before, laying 3 inches of white powder by the time the storm was over. Cars were “snow bound” [*sic*] and school was canceled on Valentine’s Day.

By early evening on February 13, sleigh bells were jingling from improvised sleighs made from buggy bodies on runners, according to the article. Snowball fights broke out along snow-packed streets. When police tried to break the fights up, they, too, became targets. Horse-drawn street cars were abandoned on the streets when the tracks became covered.

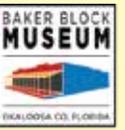
Drivers led the horses back to the stables.

The next morning, a glaze of ice covered the snow. Men, women, and children enjoying sleigh rides came under fire from snowballs. The article said employees from the newspaper gathered on the front gallery and peppered any and everyone who happened to pass within their sights. All along the way, others perched above the streets and attacked passersby.

A group of men organized a surprise counterattack on *The News* boys, proclaiming victory. The victorious group then attacked the other high-altitude bombardiers. Unfortunately, storefront windows became casualties during the hi-jinks—several were broken during the two days of snowball fights.

Help celebrate the 29th anniversary of  
the Baker Block Museum with

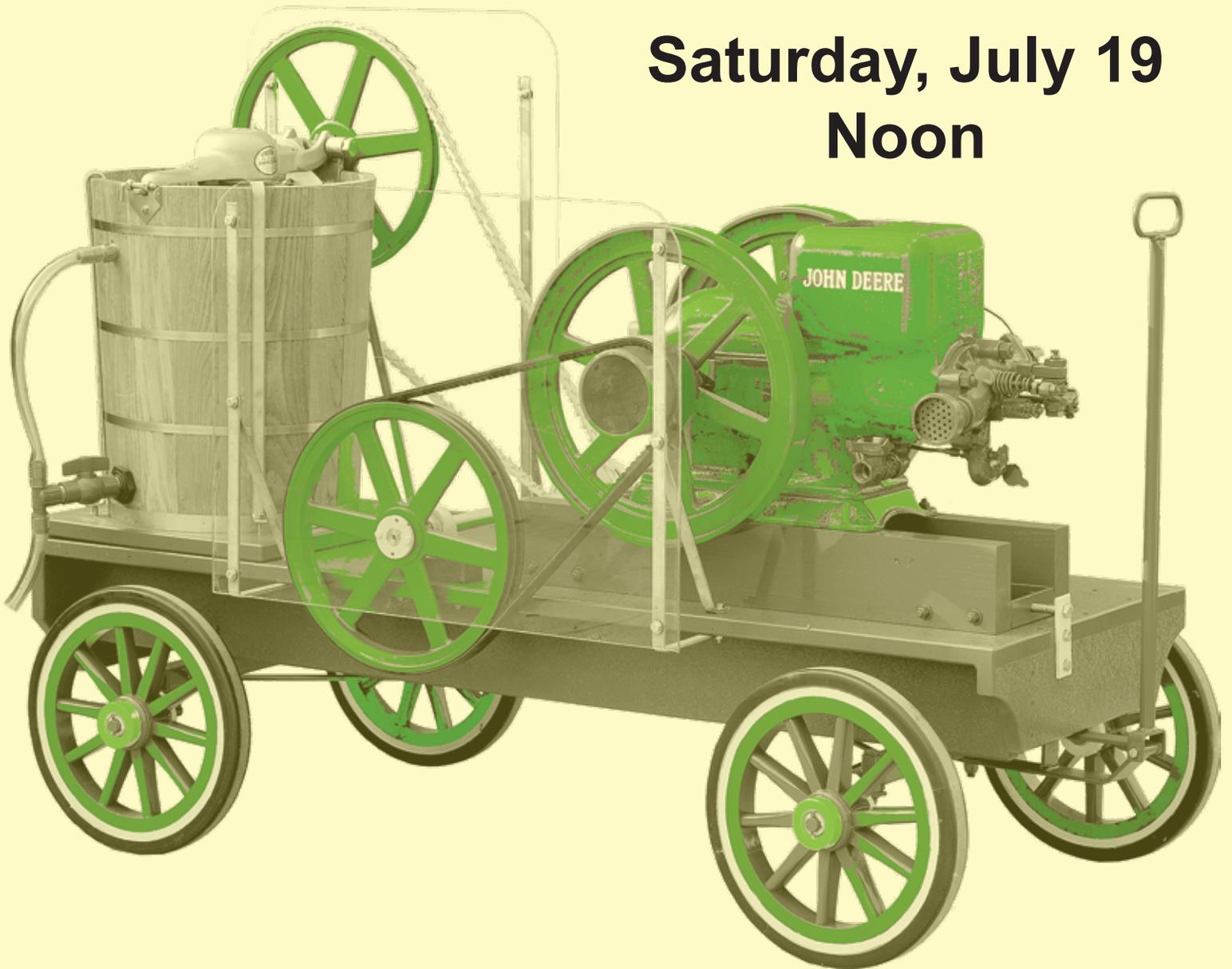
**3rd**  
**Saturday**  
At the Baker Block Museum



**FREE**

**Homemade Ice Cream**

**Saturday, July 19**  
**Noon**



**Made with the John Deere Model E Hit Miss engine ice cream maker**

For more info: 850-537-5714 • [bakerblockmuseum.org](http://bakerblockmuseum.org)

# SPONSORS

The North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., would like to thank our sponsors for their continued support of the Baker Block Museum.



Trevia Buckner, CPA



TheRestroom



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# OKALOOSA MESSENGER

SELL IT.  
If You Tell It  
Through  
THE MESSENGER

"Blind As A Bat To Everything But Right"

VOL. 5. NO. 18

CRESTVIEW, FLORIDA, TH

URSDAY, JANUARY 11, 1934.

\$1.00 Year

# THREE ARE KILLED

*"Death-dealing bullets whizzed through the air in a heart-rending, nerve-paralyzing manner"...as a "gun battle raged in a Baker store" is how the Okaloosa Messenger described the day three men were shot to death 1934.*

*Okaloosa Messenger, January 11, 1934*

**I**t was a cool, quiet afternoon on January 11, 1934—skies were fair and temperatures were in the mid 50s—when eight shots rang out in the quiet town of Baker at the local dry goods store north of Georgia Avenue on what is now State Road 4. First three. Then three more. Then two shotgun blasts. When the commotion stopped, Lloyd Shaw, Alf Morris, and his son, Robert, lay dead because of an argument over a fence line. Lloyd's son, Leroy, was seriously injured in the shooting. A bystander was also injured. According to witnesses interviewed after the shooting, the dispute was several years old, but came to a head around 4 p.m. in the store.

The store was owned by Alpheus Baker Morris, 56, a 30-year resident of Baker. Known by "Alf" or "A.B.," he was of medium build with brown eyes and dark hair, according to his draft registration card. The store was located on the east side of the highway where the HealthSmart Pharmacy now stands. This was Alf's

third location for his store. The first was located across from his home that is still standing on State Road 4, between the Brooks Produce Stand and Jackson Street. His second store was located on Lot 14 of Block 8 that now houses the Baker Block Museum's mercantile store and the Hilton-Shaw Genealogy Library on the far west end of the building. Alf was also Baker's first postmaster, serving from 1906 to 1912, when the town was called Cobb.

Alf's son, Robert Julian Morris, was at the store the day of the shooting. He arrived after playing basketball at the school. Robert, 20, the youngest of eight children of Alf and Artie Elizabeth (Kilcrease) Morris, was helping his father in the store that afternoon.

The dispute that ended in tragedy actually began several years earlier, between Ara Baker and Lloyd Shaw, according to several witnesses who were interviewed after the shooting.

Lloyd Lee Shaw, who was two-and-a-half months shy of his 58th birthday at

the time of the shooting, hailed from North Carolina. He was of medium height and stout of build with blue eyes and black hair, according to his draft registration. A well-known landowner and businessman, he owned several thousand acres of farm and forest land in Okaloosa County as well as land in Georgia and Louisiana. He also owned one of the largest blueberry farms in the county, according to newspaper accounts. As president of the Deerland Turpentine Company, he directed operations—and was owner—of the Acme-Shaw turpentine still in the Choctawhatchee Forest on what is now Eglin Air Force Base. The still operated from about 1905 to 1934. He also operated the Shaw Turpentine Company of Baker beginning in 1933. Although his primary residence was in the DeFuniak Springs area, he had just completed construction of a new home in Baker, according to newspaper accounts.

Marvin Leroy Shaw, 24, was Lloyd's oldest son and went by his middle name. He stood about three-plus inches short of six feet, had brown hair and eyes, and was dark-complected, according to his draft registration. He was with his father the day

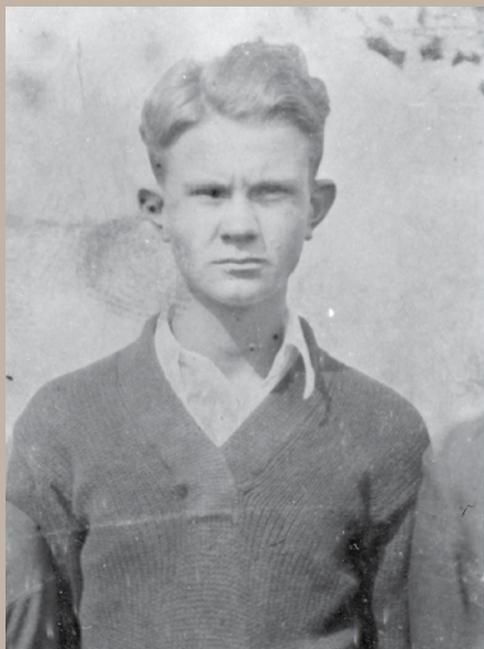
of the shooting.

Aaron Wiloby Baker, who was 38 at the time of the shooting, went by Ara. He was born in Brantley, Alabama, the seventh of 16 children and the fifth oldest boy. His draft registration says he was a short man with brown eyes and black hair. He was still living in Crenshaw County, Alabama, when he married Evie Lee Richards in 1920. By 1930, he was living in Baker and worked as a general store clerk, perhaps for Alf Morris. He also drove a school bus.

The dispute between Lloyd and Ara was about a shared property in Baker. Lloyd hired T.W. Coleman, a Crestview civil engineer, to survey his property. The survey determined Ara's fence was encroaching twelve feet onto Lloyd's property, so Lloyd removed it and replaced it with one of his own, according to inquest witnesses. At some point, Ara replace Lloyd's fence with his own.

## Shots ring out

On January 11, Ara was returning from his school bus route when Lloyd and Leroy Shaw encountered him on the highway south of Baker. Ara refused to stop and instead drove to Alf Morris's store. Lloyd



Robert Julian Morris



The Alpheus Baker Morris family around 1911. Only six of their eight children had been born by 1910. Standing behind Alpheus and his wife, Artie, are her parents, Charles and Susan Kilcrease.



Alpheus Morris's third store stood where the HealthSmart Pharmacy is now, just north of the intersection of State Road 4 and Georgia Avenue, on the east side of the highway.

and Leroy followed him there. Once inside, an argument broke out and Lloyd proceeded to beat Ara with a club he carried into the store, "mauling [Ara] in a most bruised and maimed manner," according to the newspaper, the *Okaloosa Messenger*. At some point during the beating, Ara drew a .38 caliber revolver he carried for protection and shot both Lloyd and Leroy. Lloyd was shot three times, once in the heart and twice in the right side, killing him instantly. Leroy was also shot three times in the body, "within an inch of his heart," according to news accounts.

Seriously injured, Leroy stumbled out of the store, staggered to the car, and grabbed his father's shotgun. As he turned back to the store, he saw a figure standing in the doorway. He shot twice, killing Alf and his son, Robert. They collapsed on the porch. While this was going on, Ara escaped through the back door of the store. Also injured was Clinton Johnson who was in the store at the time and lost a finger when Ara shot the Shaws.

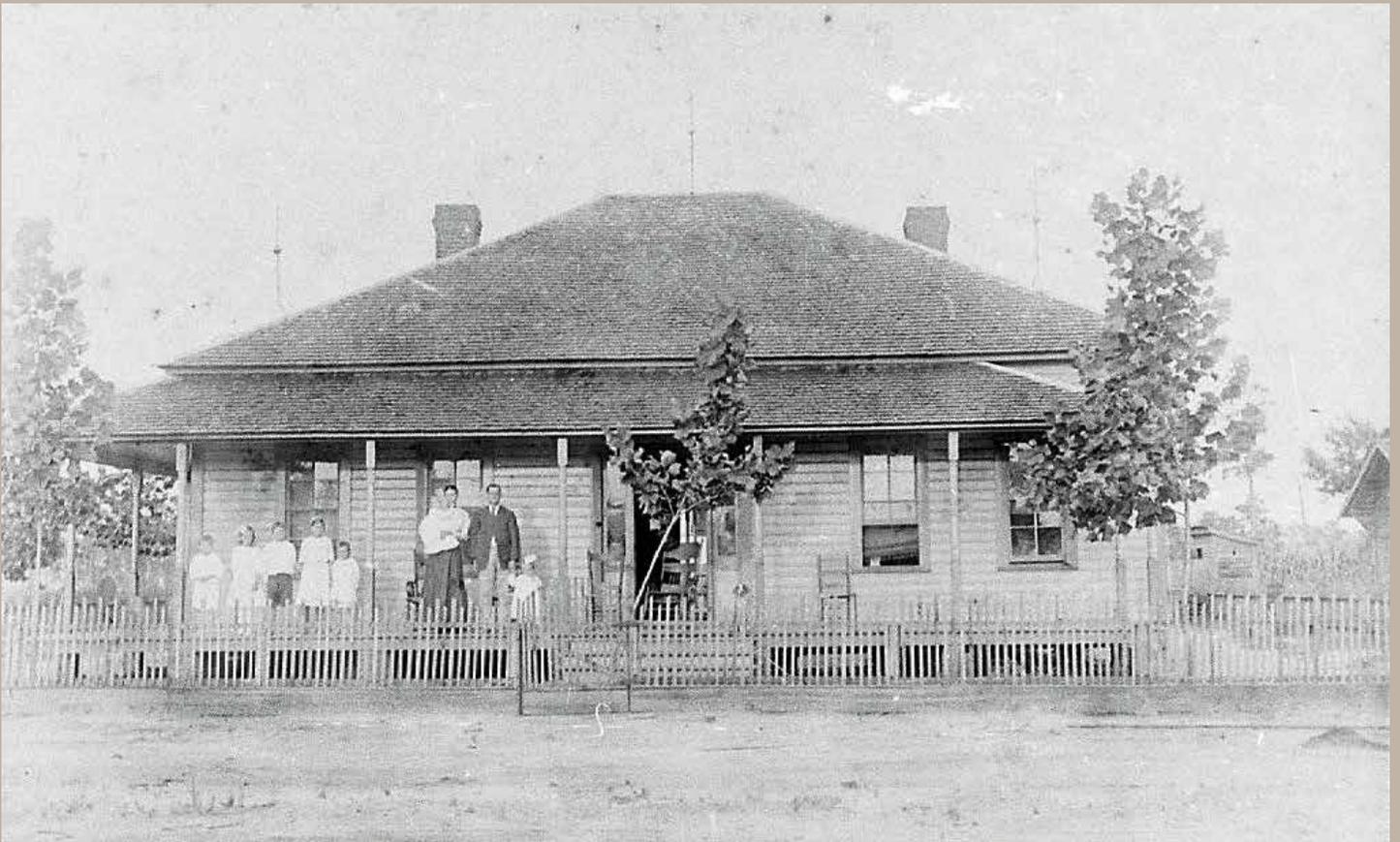
Newspaper accounts said Alf was shot first, in the face, and slumped to the floor, and Robert was shot second and slumped behind

his father. According to Judy Gail (Kennedy) Wilkinson, great-granddaughter of Alf Morris, her grandmother, who was the oldest daughter, said it happened differently.

"She always told me that Robert and my great-grandfather were shot when they went out on the porch of the store," she said, giving a different account of the incident. "My grandmother also told me...that Robert was shot first and my great-grandfather was right there. She said Robert went to see what was happening, and when he did, my great-grandfather went, too, and they were shot outside."

Leroy, seriously injured, was carried to the Enzor Brothers Hospital in Crestview by James Lee of Baker. It is unclear if it was James Moore Lee or his son, James Wilson Lee, who took him there. Sheriff John P. Steele arrested Ara for the murder of Lloyd Shaw.

Word quickly spread about the shooting. "Death-dealing bullets whizzed through the air in a heart-rending, nerve-paralyzing manner"...as a "gun battle raged in a Baker store," was how the *Okaloosa Messenger* described the incident. The town of Baker



Above: The Morris family around 1913. By this time, all but Robert has been born. The family is standing on the porch of their house in Baker. The house still stands today, on the southeast corner of State Road 4 and Jackson Street (below).



only had one telephone at the time, although accounts did not say where it was located, but the phone rang off the hook from residents of nearby towns looking for more information.

Okaloosa County Judge Lloyd Clayton Powell quickly empaneled a coroner's inquest. Powell, the youngest judge in the United States, was admitted to the Florida bar in 1925 at age 21. As a former Crestview mayor from 1926 to 1927, he was also the youngest mayor in the United States. The inquest panel of five men listened to witness testimony and viewed the bodies. They found Ara Baker fired in self-defense and determined the slaying to be justifiable homicide and he was released from jail. They also determined Leroy Shaw's actions were illegal, but did not recommend a specific criminal charge. He was eventually charged with Alf and Robert's murders.

Five months later, Leroy stood trial for the murder of Alf and Robert Morris. Judge Leo Luke Fabisinski presided. Leroy pleaded guilty to two charges of manslaughter. But instead of jail time, he was sentenced to either pay a fine of \$3,000 or spend three years in jail. He did not choose jail. The sentence was unusual enough that Judge Fabisinski felt a need to state why he gave Leroy a choice: "I do not

want anyone to take this action as meaning that justice can be bought and sold, but after careful consideration of the circumstances, I think this disposition is what the case warrants."



Judge Leo L. Fabisinski

## Mules For Sale Cheap

Any parties needing MULES, if have no money can buy on good terms. No money paid down. Only want sufficient security. See me about MULES.

L. L. SHAW, Niceville, Florida

*Okaloosa News Journal* ad, April 8, 1921, page 3.

The Shaw family paid the Morris family an undisclosed amount, described by the *Pensacola News Journal* as a "substantial settlement" in land and money. To this day, the amount and the parcels of land is unknown by the Morris descendants. "What we heard is there were several pieces of property given to the Morrises," said Judy Wilkinson. "We tried to research it and find out where. We did find a couple of deeds."

### Epilogue

Alf and Robert Morris were laid to rest January 12 in the Shady Grove Cemetery. Lloyd Shaw was buried in the Magnolia Cemetery in DeFuniak Springs. By 1940, Leroy Shaw had left Florida and moved to Homerville in Clinch County, Georgia. He married and he and his wife, Lois, had three daughters. Leroy passed away in 1988 and is buried in Gainesville, Florida.

According to a niece, following the shooting, Ara Baker continued to carry a gun with him everywhere he went. He was never without a weapon within reach. He and his wife, Evie, had a third child after the 1934 shooting. They continued to live in Baker. Ara passed away in 1982, Evie in 1989. Both are buried in the Shady Grove Cemetery.



# Little Free Library<sup>®</sup> in the Heritage Park

Take a Book. Share a Book.

**Did you know the Museum has TWO Little Free Library<sup>®</sup> book exchanges in the Jeanette and Charles Henderson Heritage Park? The little red schoolhouse library near the day care center has children's books while the cabin library facing Georgia Avenue has reading material for grownups.**

**The libraries are near large oak trees with bench seating so readers can sit and enjoy their book selections.**

**Both libraries are registered with the Little Free Library<sup>®</sup> system.**



# SHOP

All items are available in the **Baker Mercantile Gift Store.**



**Flute: \$2.50**

Made of bamboo, this flute has a sweet, melodic sound. Perfect for beginning musicians. 12 inches long



**Paddleball: \$3.50**

A game of skill, this was a favorite toy of the 1950s. Children—and adults—would spend hours trying to improve the number of hits they could get in a row.



**Vintage carriage foot warmer: \$50**

This antique brass foot warmer/heater covered in a Turkish wool pattern was used for autos/carriages/sleds. Size: 13"x7.5"x3"



**Lighthouse puzzle: \$5.95**

Made by Silver Star Brands, this 790-piece lighthouse-shaped puzzle is a challenge for puzzle enthusiasts. 20"x35"



**Vintage T-Square: \$20**

This is a vintage Dietzgen Company T-square No. 2066. It is stamped with the Dietzgen EDCO logo, model number and length. 36"



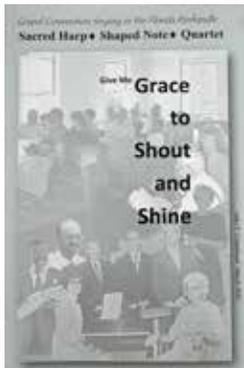
**Classic car metal thermometer: \$11.95**

This is an official GM licensed indoor/outdoor metal mercury thermometer. Classic car design. 17 3/8"x5 1/2"

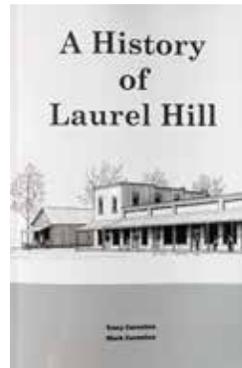
All this and much, much more is available in the **Baker Mercantile Gift Store.**

# Okaloosa County History Series

Available for sale in the **Baker Mercantile Gift Store**, on eBay, by email at [bakermuseum@aol.com](mailto:bakermuseum@aol.com) or by calling the Museum at 850-537-5714. **\$20 each.**



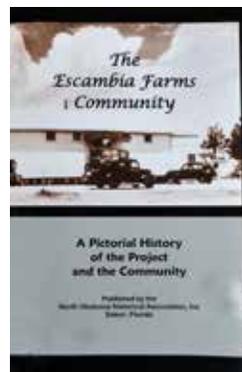
*Give me the Grace to Shout and Shine*, the newest book in the history series, focuses on the three most prominent gospel singing methods in the northwest Florida panhandle throughout the years: Sacred Harp, also known as fasola, five- or seven-shape note convention singing, and later, the gospel quartet.



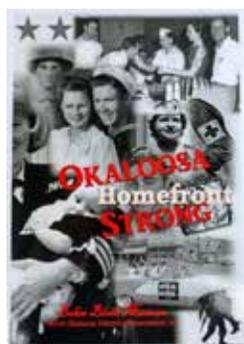
Drawing from interviews, newspapers, public records and photographs, *A History of Laurel Hill* tells the story of this historic town. The book covers the early history of the area under Spanish rule through the Civil War, the coming of the railroad, the Great Depression and into the modern era.



*Turpentine in the Florida Panhandle* casts turpentine as a significant element impacting the way of life in the Northwest Florida panhandle. It describes an integrated experience—culture, industry, and human condition—in the lives of those who lived it.



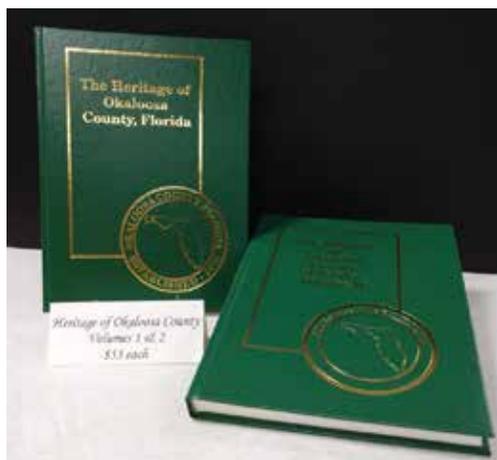
President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal program included aid to American migrant workers and tenant farmers. The Resettlement Administration created a planned farming community in the northwest corner of Okaloosa County in 1936 known as Escambia Farms. By 1939, the community had grown to 72 families and included a school to educate the more than 220 children.



Okaloosa County has a rich military history. *Okaloosa Strong: The Homefront* is a sampling of the people, places, stories, and events during wartime in the county.



Officially founded in 1883, Crestview became a stop on the Pensacola & Atlantic Railroad. The geographic center of the county, the town became the seat of the newly established county seat in 1917. Crestview is situated on a rise between the Yellow River 4 miles to the west and the Shoal River 4 miles to the east. *A Pictorial History* illustrates how Crestview changed into the largest city in the county.



## Okaloosa County Heritage Books

Volume I & II

**Limited Quantity**

Includes a history of Okaloosa County, pioneer families, industry, schools, churches, towns, family stories, and genealogies.

**Call the museum for pricing.**





## **Jeanette & Charles Henderson Heritage Park Policy**

- Per Okaloosa County Ordinance:
- The Park is open one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset.
- All animals are prohibited in the Park with the exception of service animals.
  - All service animal waste must be removed by the owner.
- Overnight camping is not allowed.
- Commercial activity in the Park is not permitted except during scheduled events.
- Alcohol, fireworks, open fires/flames are not allowed, except during scheduled events.
- Illegal drugs are prohibited.
- Loud music, either live or amplified, that can be heard at a distance of 100 feet or more from the source, is not permitted except during scheduled events.
- Disorderly conduct will not be permitted at any time and will be subject to notification of law enforcement.
- Vehicles are not allowed in the park except during scheduled events.

Okaloosa County Ord., Chap. 16, Sec. 43

### **Park, Pavilion, and Cabins**

- Those wanting to use the Park, Pavilion and/or Cabins must schedule their event with the Baker Block Museum.
- A daily use fee and refundable clean-up deposit are required. Contact the Museum for more information.
- The reservation form is available at [bakerblockmuseum.org/park](http://bakerblockmuseum.org/park).
- A hold harmless agreement is also required to reserve the Park/Pavilion.

### **Photography**

- Professional/commercial photographers are required to schedule and pay the Park usage fee. Professional/commercial photography for the purpose of this policy is defined as accepting monetary payment in exchange for photography services.
- Non-professional, casual or personal photography on the grounds and the cabins is always allowed.

Contact the Museum at 850-537-5714 or visit the website for more information.

# SUPPORT

North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc.

## Membership News

### NOHA Board Members

- **President – Stephanie Holcombe**
- **Vice President – Eva Joiner**
- **Treasurer – Sharry Rustin**
- **Secretary – Tracy Curenton**

### Members

**Nina Adams**  
**Melissa Barrett**  
**Randy Batson**  
**Chris Henderson**  
**Brenda Russell**

### Emeritus Members:

**Judy Cadenhead**  
**Connie Dukes**  
**Phyllis Enzor**  
**Jeanette Henderson**

### New Memberships

**Randy Batson – family**  
**Eva Joiner, Crestview – individual**  
**Frankie Iverstine, Niceville – lifetime**

### 2025 Goals

- **Increase new membership by 35% – goal met**
- **Complete the historical marker application**
- **Apply to put the Museum and Park cabins on the Florida Master Site File**

## Why become a member of the North Okaloosa Historical Association?

Besides supporting the preservation of the history of Okaloosa County, membership in the NOHA has its benefits:

- » Membership card
- » *Okaloosa Historical Quarterly* magazine
- » 10% discount off books and calendars published by the NOHA
- » Email notification of special events
- » Invitation to the annual meeting in January

Lifetime members receive all of the above, PLUS:

- » 20% discount off books and calendars published by the NOHA
- » Recognition in the annual report
- » 10% off nomination for any Family Heritage Wall of Honor submission

# North Okaloosa Historical Association



## Membership Form

Membership in the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., is open to anyone interested in preserving and documenting the history of Okaloosa County and its pioneering families. NOHA serves as the governing body for the Baker Block Museum. Member benefits include the *Okaloosa Historical Quarterly*, e-mail notification of special events, discounts in the Baker Mercantile store, and an invitation to the annual meeting in January.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State and Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of membership (check one)

- Individual      \$25 per year
- Family            \$50 per year
- Student          \$15 per year
- Lifetime          \$250

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to volunteer at the Baker Block Museum

\_\_\_\_\_ I have items I would like to donate to the Baker Block Museum

\_\_\_\_\_ I have photographs that I will allow to be scanned for the Museum's collection

Return this form with your contribution made payable to:

**North Okaloosa Historical Association**  
Membership  
P.O. Box 186  
Baker, FL 32531



# Create a Legacy

## Make a legacy gift to the Baker Block Museum



### How would you like to be remembered?

Legacy gifts are one of the most significant demonstrations of commitment to the community an individual can make. A legacy gift, deferred gift, or planned gift is one you decide upon now and that provides for your favorite nonprofit program later.

You can leave a wonderful legacy to the Baker Block Museum by including the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., in your estate planning. There are many tax advantages when you make a planned gift. We encourage you to consult with your attorney or financial planner for your specific circumstance.

### Bequests

While there are a number of ways to build a legacy contribution, a charitable bequest is one of the easiest and most popular ways to leave a lasting impact on the Museum.

You may designate our organization as the beneficiary of your assets by will, trust, or other instrument. Simply specify an amount, a percentage of your estate, or what remains of your estate to the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., after you have provided for your children or other beneficiaries.

For more information on legacy gifts, contact the Baker Block Museum at 850-537-5714.

*The North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., is a non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Donations are tax deductible.*

# EVENTS

April							May							June														
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S								
		1	2	3	4	5				1	2	3	4	5	6	7												
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14								
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21								
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28								
27	28	29	30				25	26	27	28	29	31	31	29	30													
13	Palm Sunday & Passover						11	Mother's Day						6	D-Day													
15	Tax Day						15	North Okaloosa Historical Association Board meeting, 6 p.m.						14	Flag Day													
17	North Okaloosa Historical Association meeting, 6 p.m.						17	<b>3rd Saturday</b> Museum is open from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. <b>Baker Arts Festival</b> 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Park						15	Father's Day													
18	Good Friday													19	Juneteenth North Okaloosa Historical Association Board meeting, 6 p.m.													
19	<b>19 3rd Saturday</b> Museum is open from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. <b>By Land and Sea</b> , 1 p.m. an FPAN presentation						26	Memorial Day						21	<b>21 3rd Saturday</b> Museum is open from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. <b>Homemade Ice Cream</b>													
20	Easter							<b>Regular Museum hours:</b> <b>Tuesday-Friday, every 3rd Saturday, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.</b>						21	Summer Solstice 1st day of Summer													

## — 2025 **3rd Saturday** Events —

- April 19, 1 p.m. — **By Land and Sea: Luna's 1559 Colonization attempt in Pensacola**, FPAN presentation
- May 17, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. — **Baker Arts Festival**
- June 21, 1 p.m. — **Flordidale**, presented by Brian Rucker
- July 19, noon — **Homemade ice cream to celebrate the Museum's anniversary**
- September 21, 1 p.m. — **Pirates! The Last Scourge of the Gulf**, FPAN presentation
- October 17 & 18, 7-9 p.m. — **Creepy Cabins**, with a movie October 18
- November 15, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. — **Baker Heritage Day**