

Great Strides in Our Education Programs

by Richard A. Marconi
Curator of Education

In 2003 the Historical Society launched its first education program for fourth grade, "Florida History," a partnership with *The Palm Beach Post* and the School District of Palm Beach County. Since then, the education programs have grown with the seventh grade "Palm Beach County History and Civics" (2005), "History in Your Own Back Yard" (with the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach, 2006), Traveling Educational Trunk program, and the Florida History through Art Contest. These successful programs have reached over 168,000 children in Palm Beach County.

As a partner with the School District for the NEH Teaching American History grant (2007-2010), the Society has arranged for and conducted four teacher workshops covering different topics about the history of Palm Beach County. In 2007, with the assistance of the Junior League, a comprehensive docent Training program was established to train docents for the new Richard and Pat Johnson Palm Beach County History Museum. Docents receive at least 57 hours of training before leading group tours.

As part of the docent program, the Society partnered with the Palm Beach County Bar Association to train eighty lawyers to be docents in the historic courtroom and to discuss the civics exhibits the Bar Association installed in the courtroom and the fourth floor balcony. Through the end of October 2009, docents have led 336 tours of the museum and courtroom.

Two new projects are being added in 2009. The first, the Palm Beach County History Institute, is a weeklong workshop immersing social studies and history teachers in local history. Six organizations have come together to form the Institute, Historical Society of Palm Beach County, Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach, Flagler Museum, Spady

Cultural Heritage Museum, Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens, and the Loxahatchee River Historical Society. The First class of 14 teachers was held in June 2009. This program is believed to be The first of its kind in southern Florida.

Currently under development is Palm Beach County History Online which is now available to the public. Several sections are still under development and will be added by June 2010. This

ambitious, eighteen-month project was generously funded by the Marshall E. Rinker, Sr. Foundation, Inc. and the Community Foundation of Palm Beach and Martin Counties. The grant provided the funding for the Society to work with Lise Steinhauer, who researched and wrote most of the text for the site, Brian Black of Black Design, who designed the graphics for the web site, and the web master, Kevin Clark, who handled all the technical aspects of making the site come alive. Palm Beach County History Online is comprehensive and will also include a section for teachers, who can access lesson plans written by former educator Heather Rogers, and

teachers Debbie Doyle, Dennis Yuzenas, and Clint Kovach.

Grants from the Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties, the Kenan Foundation, and the State of Florida's Bureau of Historic Preservation funded the expansion of the Traveling Educational Trunk Program. The Society has provided, on long-term loan, two trunks to each of the seven elementary schools in the Glades area. Each school received one Seminole and Miccosukee trunk and one



Palm Beach County History Online.

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cataloguing our library for nearly three years. We are down to the end thanks to summer intern Jennifer Brown, for which volunteer and project leader Sharon Freidheim is very thankful, as she can now take on a new project. It is also much easier to find one book out of the nearly 4,000 on the shelves. The end result of this cataloguing will be better public access. If you think this kind of work sounds intriguing, know basic computer skills, and have a few hours once a week to volunteer in the archives, please call Debi Murray at 561-832-4164, ext 105.

Debi Murray is a native of Palm Beach County, Florida, and has been Director of Research & Archives

at the Historical Society of Palm Beach County since 1999. She attended Florida Atlantic University where she graduated *magna cum laude* and eventually received her Master of Arts in history. Murray was the point person for the Historical Society's most recent project, the Richard and Pat Johnson Palm Beach County History Museum. She is co-author of *Palm Beach* (Arcadia Publishing, 2009); co-author of *Palm Beach County at 100: Our History; Our Home* (*The Palm Beach Post*, 2009); and executive producer and co-writer of the Historical Society's one-hour documentary "Puddle Jumpers of Lantana: The History of the Civil Air Patrol's Coastal Patrol 3" (2007).

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database were completed: the data entry of donor information and accession transactions.

Over the seventy-two year history of the Historical Society of Palm Beach County, the organization currently has accessioned over two thousand donations. These donations total over an estimated two million individual items.

Steven Erdmann is Curator of Collections and

Exhibits. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in cultural anthropology and an Master of Arts in museum studies. Erdmann has worked with museum collections, both in the private sector and non-profit world, for over twenty years. He joined the Historical Society staff in 2006. Erdmann was previously with the Museum of Northern Arizona.

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Ancient People of South Florida trunk. Teachers completed training in October 2009 and the traveling trunks were turned over to the schools on long-term loan from the Historical Society. Four Pioneer trunks have also been developed and are now available for loan.

Richard A. Marconi is Curator of Education and has been on staff with the Historical Society since 2002. In 2001 he graduated *summa cum laude* from Florida

Atlantic University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in history. Marconi is co-author of the Arcadia Publishing's Images of American series: *West Palm Beach 1893-1950* (2006) and *Palm Beach* (2009); co-author of *Palm Beach County at 100: Our History; Our Home* (*The Palm Beach Post*, 2009); and producer and co-writer of the Historical Society's documentary "Puddle Jumpers of Lantana: The History of the Civil Air Patrol's Coastal Patrol 3" (2007).

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applications. I started to go through them in 2004, but ran out of time. These forms provide the name of the office, the postmaster applying, and hand-drawn maps showing exactly where the new office would be in relation to others in the area. I made copies of the applications for local offices that I could find, but there are more to be unearthed. In addition, there may be other sources available and any clue could lead the way to more information.

Compiled from the Geer Family file; Post Office File in the HSPBC archive.

Printed Sources:

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Robinson, Tim. *A Tropical Frontier: Pioneers and Settlers of Southeast Florida, 1800-1890*. Port Salerno, FL: Port Sun Publishing, 2005.