

THE HISTORIAN

BULLETIN NUMBER ONE HUNDRED TWENTY ONE

JULY 2005

THE SEBRING HISTORICAL SOCIETY

KEVIN TAYLOR, CO-DEVELOPER OF HARDER HALL, TO PRESENT PROGRAM AT QUARTERLY LUNCHEON MEETING SATURDAY, JULY 30, 2005 AT SEBRING CIVIC CENTER, 12:00 NOON

Please bring a dish to pass and \$1.50 for service and rent of the building.



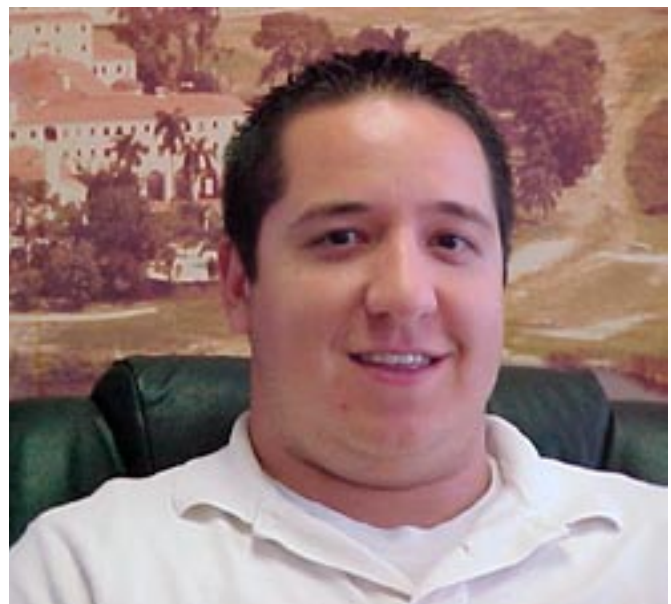
As everyone has been concerned about what is happening to Harder Hall, you will enjoy the upcoming program presented by Kevin Taylor, who is co-owner and manager of the renovation of Harder Hall. Mr. Taylor will be on hand to speak and to answer questions regarding the progress made at this grand old Sebring landmark.

Mr. Taylor was born in Mississippi and was raised in both Mississippi and Japan. He attended high school in Tokyo, Japan, where his father was an engineer. Taylor played soccer, basketball and football in high school. He went on to attend and graduate from Mississippi State University. Since his graduation, he has been in the restaurant business in Mississippi and Florida. He managed Don Shula's restaurant in Miami, where he met Marc Shenker, the other present co-owner of Harder Hall. Taylor and Shenker have been friends for many years and they started the Harder Hall project together.

Taylor and his wife, Andrea, have two children, a three-year-old son and a one-year-old

daughter. Taylor's brother, Perry "Pat" Taylor, is the Vice President of Marketing at Harder Hall.

Taylor's administrative assistant is Sebring resident, Pamela Morris. Ms. Morris states that Taylor has a great sense of humor, and is "lots of fun to be around, a great prankster".



Kevin Taylor
Harder Hall Co-Developer

Photo by Elizabeth Walker

SEBRING HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOKS NEEDED

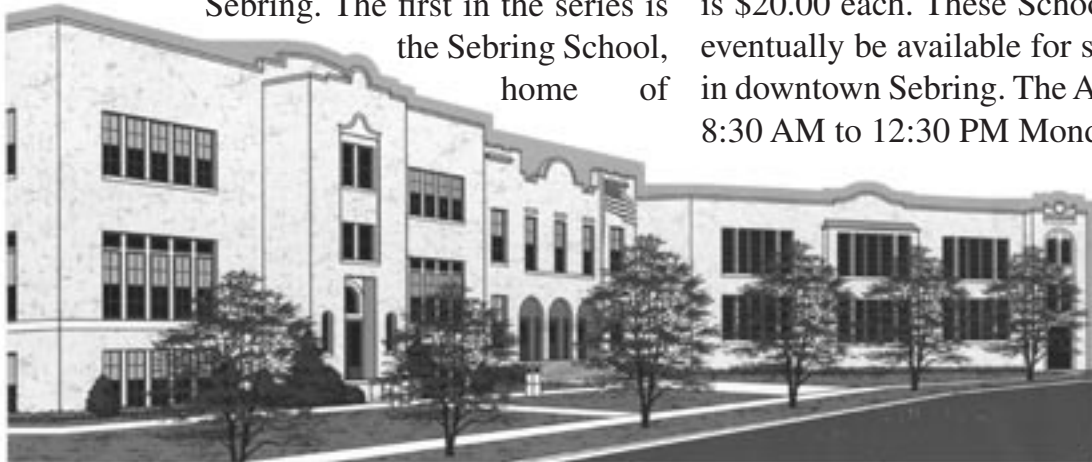
Our Sebring High School yearbook collection (The Nancesowee) is missing the following years: 1943, 1944, 1959, 1969, 1984, 1986, 1995, 2004 and 2005. If you know of anyone who might have these volumes, please ask them to consider donating them to the Sebring Historical Society. Thank you!

Sebring Historical Society Offers Collectible Replicas of Sebring Historic Buildings

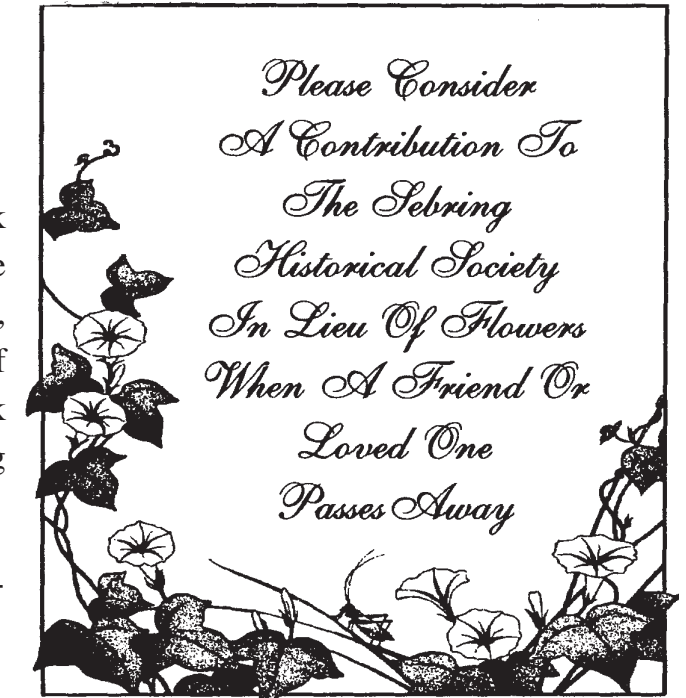
By Elizabeth Walker

President Wanda Whitehouse and Dr. Robert Fritz, project coordinator, are spearheading a four-purpose project with the Sebring Historical Society. The goal of this project is to: promote historic preservation; promote awareness of our past; attract new members to the Society; and serve as a fundraiser.

The Society has contracted with a company in Pennsylvania to create colored wood replicas of certain historic buildings in Sebring. The first in the series is the Sebring School, home of



*Old Sebring School
Replica*



grades 1 through 12, formerly on Pine and Center Street. It was later known as the Sebring High School. This beautiful piece is 10" X 4" X 3/4" and stands upright. The back of the piece tells the history of this building.

Other buildings being considered for this project include the Sebring Fire House, the Courthouse, the former George E. Sebring home, the Hotel Sebring, the Kenilworth Lodge, historic churches, etc. These would be unique gifts as singles or as a collection for those who have everything.

The Sebring School replica shipment has arrived and is now available for sale at the Sebring Historical Society Archive. The price is \$20.00 each. These School replicas also will eventually be available for sale at certain stores in downtown Sebring. The Archive is open from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM Monday through Friday, phone 471-2522.

Growing Up in Sebring 1921-1939

By Jack Ingle

I was six months old when our family moved from Athens, Georgia, to become citrus growers in the new town of Sebring in DeSoto County.

My father, J.W., used to tell me of the all-day, over sand roads trip to Arcadia to conduct courthouse business. Everyone was so thrilled when, in late 1921, Highlands County was formed with Sebring as the County seat. Hardee, Hendry and Glades Counties were also created at the same time. It took several years before all new County offices were fully functioning.

I was about four years old before I could clearly remember happenings. I had four older half sisters and brothers. James was a half brother. He drove a Model T Ford truck, hauling materials to build the new courthouse in Sebring and also to transport goods to and from the family grove and other jobs. The grove was 65 acres located between Downing and Power Line Roads facing State Road 17, and is still in production from being planted in 1918.

At first, Dad had a team of mules to work the grove, but later had a steel- wheeled



*Seated: J.W. & Pauline Ingle Standing: Alfreta Ingle
Harrington, Ann Ingle Elksnin, Jack Ingle, Robert Ingle.*

Fordson tractor that had to be hauled by the Model T truck when being moved from the grove to the vegetable farm on Jackson Creek. The tractor was so heavy that the front wheels of the truck would balance off ground and I would ride on the front fender of the truck to help hold it down.

My three older half sisters were in high school or just finishing. They were Ruth, Louisa and Helen. Helen was a senior in high school as I was entering first grade. I remember so vividly her walking me to school that first day in 1927. I was so scared.

Our family rented a house on the lakeside of North Lakeview Drive, just beyond the present Fountain Head. We lived there while the family home was being built on the lake one block north of the Kenilworth Hotel. (Still standing: 641 SE Lakeview Drive occupied by brother Robert, six years my junior, until his recent death on January 20, 2005).

Father owned a large tract of land on the east side of Dinner Lake. It was in original woods. Timber was cut, then ferried across the lake to a sawmill on Recreation Point, also called Salvation Army Point. There it was cut to specifications to build the family house. It was then transported by mule wagon or Model T truck to the building site.

I can just remember moving into the six-bedroom home before the cement porch floor had been poured so that a wide board was the walkway into the living room. By this time, my sister, Ann, was born (1923), so that Mother Pauline, Dad, brother James, sisters Ruth, Louisa and Helen were living in the self-built new home with wide spaces of vacant land on both sides.

These were the "Florida Boom" years. There was much speculation in land. Streets were being paved, water pipes, sidewalks and new subdivisions laid out and land being cleared for citrus groves. Even electricity was available nights from dusk to 10:00 PM and on Monday and Tuesday mornings for washing and ironing. Later, the city bought the power plant and electricity was available full time. Everyone had ice refrigerators with

(cont'd on page 4)

(Growing Up...cont'd from page 3) ice delivery from a diesel-powered ice plant on Park Street where the Atlantic Coastline (ACL) railroad siding made freight connections.

Dad had a truck farm on muck land on Jackson Creek. It was at least four miles from the ice plant. I can remember the vibrations and sound of that large one-cylinder diesel ice plant motor being felt there.

In 1929, Mother always left a check for the ice man. As he delivered that day, he told Mother he couldn't take a check and would need cash. She asked "Why?" "Haven't you heard that the two Sebring banks are closed?"

Well, they never opened again. The Highlands Bank and Trust Company had all of my father's money, as well as my child's savings account and neither of us ever got a penny back. My brother, Robert, had his child's savings account in First National Bank. Although it never reopened, he for years received a small check returning part of his money.

When I was very small, Dad and Mother would drive around Lake Jackson where there were no homes. Mother and I would stay in the car while Dad would "go fishing" with his 30-30 rifle. It would not take him very long to get a full mess for our family meal.

At that time, shooting fish was legal and an accepted way of getting fish. Lake Jackson was pristine, had a white sand bottom and was full of big bass. Along the uninhabited side of the lake, sporting men had put up shooting stands in shallow water to elevate them for shooting fish. Some of these stands were still around in the 1950s and 1960s long after shooting fish was illegal.

As the older half brothers and sisters left home, new members were added. Sister Ann was born in 1923, brother Robert in 1926, and sister Alfretha in 1933. All three were born at home as I was sent to visit cousins. At first, I really believed that the doctor brought them.

Sebring was booming from its beginning in 1912 up to the boom bust and then the Depression set in.

The ACL railroad came to Sebring in 1916. Kenilworth Lodge and its 18 hole golf course was built, soon to be followed by the

Arrowhead, the Santa Rosa, the Nancessee and the Sebring Hotel (present location of The Palms). All the Circle area and North Ridgewood was built up with buildings much as they are presently. All present city streets were paved with sidewalks and the downtown area lighted with the same light poles as used today (they were taken down at one time).

People were pouring into this busy new town. One major improvement was the new road around the big lake. Little Lake Jackson and the big lake are actually one lake. A long, one-lane wooden bridge and clay road circled the lake. In about 1925, sand was dragged in to narrow the opening. The old wooden bridge was so sound that when U.S. 27 was constructed, it was used for the north lane until U.S. 27 was six-laned. The road around the big lake was paved as a boulevard with curbs as it presently is on the west side of the lake.

Harder Hall Hotel was started in the late 1920s by two men of those names. Mr. Hall also built a four-story office building fronting the Circle and West Center Street, later to house the Tropical State Bank, business offices, with the top three floors as Martin's Hospital. It was finally torn down to become a parking lot.

Schools grew rapidly as new families moved into the area. The 1916 six-room brick school building became inadequate. A two-story, 12 classroom wing was added along with a large auditorium for school and community use.

School was a major community activity. All neighborhood kids walked to school. We cut through vacant lots, picking up others as we progressed. We had a great time on the way to school. We talked, teased, pushed and shoved all the way. Upon arriving at school, we did much the same until the principal rang a large handbell. Then by home rooms, grades 1-6 lined up to be marched to our classrooms. There were two classrooms for each grade. Lessons began with homework being turned in. After awhile, there would be a bathroom break and a recess period. Recess was free, outside, generally unsupervised playtime. You could do anything you wished. Boys played catch or bull ring marbles.

(continued ☞)

I don't remember what the girls did, but they were around.

Lunch break was 45 minutes. Kids who lived close by went home for lunch. Others brought their lunch and ate outside or in the school building. We could go to the Williams Country Store next to the school on Lemon Street if finances permitted. There was no lunchroom until I was in the ninth grade. Once a week, the entire student body went to "Chapel" in the auditorium. Everyone loved Chapel. We filed into the auditorium which held the entire student body. The principal presided. We sang songs that everyone knew, like "Billy Boy", "A Capital Ship for an Ocean Trip", and "Rubin, Rubin, I've Been Thinking".

Later on, when Sebring got a band director, Professor Gustat, we had a band program also. Younger classes sat in the right section. Middle age students sat on the left, and high school students sat in the center section. Seniors had the front seats reserved and came in after everyone else was seated. It was great to see everyone together and to get out of lessons.

When I was in the seventh grade, sitting in the very back of the left side, I had a so-called pea shooter. We boys would gather carrie beans, also known as black-eyed susans, and shoot them through a joint of bamboo. I was engrossed shooting boys in the back when the school principal, Mitch Ferguson, tapped me on the shoulder and said I was to report to him after Chapel. I didn't even have the chance to wear a heavier pair of pants.

When it was close to election time, the County superintendent, Col. Bailey, would be there to ask that we remind our parents to pay their "poll tax" of two dollars, which was required to vote. All poll taxes went for support of schools.

I mentioned the school band. The school had no formal music program. Mrs. Louise Campbell did volunteer to do some singing groups, but band became the thing. At first, the City paid the band director, P.J. Gustat, and the school allowed him to give instrument lessons at school and form a band outside of school time. It was such a success that soon, the school

added band music to its curriculum.

The Sebring band became a focal point of pride for the entire community. It gave community concerts at the City Pier each Sunday afternoon during the so-called tourist season. It also played for "Vesper Services" that were held on alternate Sundays at the newly developed Highlands Hammock State Park.

The Sebring band was way ahead of its time. At that time in Florida, only major city schools had bands. Sebring was small, but with its beloved leader, Prof.



JACK INGLE

Gustat, it competed in State contests, winning top honors for many years. In 1937, it was judged number one in the Southeastern contest held at Winthrop College in Rock Hill, South Carolina. The band was invited to perform at State inaugurations, world fairs, Cherry Blossom Festival, and performed in Mexico City. The band played at all home football games and many away games also. One home game announcer presented the band at halftime: "Here comes that Sebring band out on the field to make a "S" of itself".

Saturday nights were great family entertainment. Many families would in early evening park their cars around the Circle and Ridgewood Drive. Adults would visit from car to car. Children of all ages would gather in the Circle to play or romp around and have a good time.

A City curfew ordinance forbade children to be on City streets after 9:00 PM. A loud horn was blown from the City power plant for us to return to our parents and go home.

(Due to the length of this story, the remainder will be printed in the October edition of The Historian)

HELEN SCHLOSSER – A SPECIAL LIFE

Helen Mary Schlosser was born in Sebring on August 1, 1927, to William and Hedwig Schlosser. She died on April 15, 2005, at Mercy Franciscan Hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio, at the age of 77. Survivors include two brothers, Alfred and William Schlosser; and niece, Debbie Bauer.

Helen attended the Sebring Public School. When she was in high school, she worked for the Martin Hospital in Sebring. After she graduated in 1946, she moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, and worked for the Good Samaritan Hospital. When she completed her nurses training there, she became a Licensed Practical Nurse and began her nursing career as a private duty nurse, caring for people in their homes. She continued this work until she was badly injured after being struck by a car

in 1995. After her recovery and rehabilitation from the accident, she became a resident of the Mt. Healthy Christian Home in Cincinnati.

Helen had a generous, giving heart. Before moving to the Mt. Healthy Christian Home, she decorated Christmas trees and took them to Cincinnati Police Stations for years. She bought gifts for the police officers and their families. Helen also became very active in collecting toys for “Toys for Tots”. She became known as Mrs. Santa Claus! She loved to knit clothes for dolls and stuffed animals and share them with needy children. Her generosity touched many hearts and lives throughout her lifetime. She was a selfless person. When Helen heard of a need, she jumped on the opportunity to fill it, always reaching out to help others. Helen never married or had children, so her niece and nephews became her “children”.

--Note: Information for this article was contributed by members of Helen Schlosser's family.

NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS

- The Sebring Historical Society no longer has a post office box mailing address – due to hurricane damage at our post office. Please send all dues and correspondence to our new permanent address. In addition, please note that the post office now requires that the 4-digit suffix appear after the zip code on all of our mail. Complete address as follows: **Sebring Historical Society, Inc.**
321 West Center Avenue
Sebring, FL 33870-3109
- Please notify us at 863-471-2522 of any address change that you have. The post office will not forward “The Historian”. Thank you.

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The following memorials have recently been received from
April 2005 through June 2005

By Wanda Whitehouse, Memorial Chairman

*John H. Gose, Norval Neel, Ford Heacock, Jr., Patricia Belcher Martin,
Judge Clifton Kelly, Mrs. Clifton Kelly, Helen Schlosser, Jack Heffner, Allen Altvater, Jr.*

Anyone who would like to make a donation may do so by submitting to

Wanda Whitehouse, Memorial Chairman

9230 Spring Valley Lane • Sebring, Florida 33875-5977

LIFELONG RED CROSS VOLUNTEER AFFECTED BY FLORIDA HURRICANES

By Gena Gates and Stacey M. Winston

When asked to describe herself, lifelong American Red Cross volunteer, Verdelle Sebring Medlin, said, "I'm a jolly person who never stays angry for long."

This positive attitude is characteristic of countless Red Cross volunteers throughout history and is a trait that Verdelle relied on when Hurricane Jeanne struck her hometown of Sebring, Florida on September 25, 2004. After 68 years as a Red Cross volunteer, Verdelle became a disaster relief volunteer and a hurricane victim at the same time.

No stranger to hurricanes, Verdelle experienced her first storm as an infant in 1926. The windows of her home shattered from the destructive winds, and her mother snatched Verdelle from her crib amid shards of glass. More than 70 years later, she experienced a hurricane's fury again – when Hurricane Jeanne made landfall on September 25, 2004.

As the storm approached, Verdelle was both a resident and volunteer at the local Red Cross shelter, helping to ensure the safety and comfort of other evacuees even while her own home was in the path of danger.

Yet, such selfless acts of service are recurring throughout Verdelle's history as a Red Cross volunteer, beginning with walking door-to-door collecting donations with her aunt, who was the Red Cross chapter manager in Sebring when Verdelle was just a child. Verdelle has a long family history in Sebring. Her grandfather, George E. Sebring, came from Ohio and founded the city of Sebring in 1912.

As a teenager, Verdelle became a Water

Safety Instructor for the Red Cross, a role she continued into adulthood. Later, she also became a CPR instructor and disaster relief volunteer. She earned a degree in Physical Education from Stetson University and eventually received her master's degree in Hospital Recreation from New York University. Afterwards, Verdelle put her education to work for the Red Cross.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Verdelle served as a Hospital Recreation worker with the Red Cross on military bases around the world. During the Korean Conflict, she served in Korea and Japan, managing recreation programs at U.S. military hospitals. In 1955, Verdelle transferred to a base in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where she met her husband.

Verdelle continued her Red Cross involvement back in the U.S., becoming involved in Red Cross chapter management in Sebring during the 1970s. She served on various local committees during the following decades and eventually acting as Chair of her chapter Board of Directors.

When Hurricane Jeanne struck last year, Verdelle's home was severely damaged, and she found herself on the recipient side of Red Cross services for the first time. Verdelle received emergency assistance from the Red Cross, which helped her prepare to move into a new home. "It's strange to be on the receiving end of the generosity of the Red Cross," said the lifelong Red Cross volunteer.

Like thousands of others helped by the Red Cross after the storm, Verdelle is grateful that help was there when she needed it. She continues to faithfully volunteer four days a week at the Sebring office of the Polk and Highlands Counties Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Recently, Verdelle was recognized for her service when she received the Norman Ward service award from the American Red Cross.



S O C I E T Y

321 WEST CENTER AVENUE

SEBRING, FL 33870-3109

(863) 471-2522

www.sebringhistoricalsociety.org

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 5539
LAKELAND, FL

SEBRING HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD MEMBERSHIP 2005

OFFICERS

President Wanda Whitehouse

Vice President Marvin Kahn

Secretary Jacquie Trevelyan

Treasurer Shirley Kitchings

EDITOR

Verdelle Sebring Medlin

ARCHIVIST

Carole Goad

VOLUNTEERS

Joyce Bovard

Carolyn Collier

Betty Hall

Jackie Koza

Elizabeth Walker

DIRECTORS

Martha Bagnato

Sylvia Beeks

Carolyn Collier

Tim Eures

Donald Hall

Robert Fritz

Janice Shoemaker