Davenport Historical Society Inc.
Polk County, Florida

5 South Allapaha Ave., Davenport, FL 33837 **Autumn 2024**

News from 'The Port'

Partners

Vice President's Letter

Memories of Lake Play

I have discovered that my memories are now a part of history. I have many memories of Lake Play. I have seen many changes over the years. There were enormous Live Oaks that circled the lake in the 1970's.

I have seen the dry bottom of the lake. It was cracked mud with a newspaper stand and two bicycles stuck in it.

Then, when Hurricane Charley and his tornado friends went through Lake Play in 2004, our majestic Oaks were destroyed. We lost so many trees.

I remember all of the ducks! I counted 32 of them before the city removed them. (Perhaps a few too many duckies.)

And, what about the beautiful swans that Lakeland provided as a gift the City of Davenport? They didn't last long.

I remember the "path" around the lake. Then a brick path was installed. Nice! I saw the playground arrive. Yahoo! My grandson loved it. Over time, the bricks shifted and the walkway had to go.

Today, we have a wonderful walkway with guardrails. It has become very popular with walkers, joggers, ad their furry friends. I still find myself every morning, walking that same path. I began walking 50 years ago. What are your memories?

Billie Sedore

Vice President

Lake Play History

Many cities in the South are full of haunted stories that attract the imagination of tourists and visitors. Davenport's has stories too, although not haunted. A whole bunch of them are about Lake Play. Actually Lake Play is so full of stories — both true and made-up — that we decided to dedicate an entire issue to the past and present of the lake.

One of the stories about it was that it was bottomless. It was unfounded however, during a period of extreme drought, when the lake exposed its hidden treasures: a newspaper stand and a couple of bicycles.

Swans were donated to the city from Lakeland, Florida. They apparently came from Queen Elizabeth of England. A male and female found a home in Lake Play … for a little while.

When Hurricane Donna blew through Davenport in 1960, the water from Lake Play went as high as Maple Street. One Davenport resident complained that turtles were found sitting on her kitchen window sill.

Museum Hours

10 AM to 4 PM — Wednesdays

10 AM to 3 PM — Thursdays - Fridays

10 AM to 2 PM — Saturdays

Free Admission

A family member of Alfred Chumney suffered from sleep walking. That person was found dead in Lake Play.

Before the lake was dredged in 1927, the lake was much larger, even up to City Hall and close to the Baptist church. Miss Davis would see alligators and turtles nestled under her windows enjoying the warm Florida sunshine on Maple Street.

In 1910, ET Hitchcock stated that there were nearly 100 African-Americans living around Lake Play in small huts. Most of them found jobs working with the turpentine mills and later with Holly Hill Citrus. (*History of Polk County* by MF Hetherington.)

In Clarence Meyer's book, *The Davenport Story*, he mentioned that Lake Play was called Lake Helen. The story was that a girl named Helen. She drove a team of mules into the lake and drowned. The children always felt this was a fictional story to keep them from playing around the lake. (Page 20.)

Juanita Scott's family said that people would throw trash in the lake along with bottles before they could be returned for a deposit.

Davenport School held a May Fest in which the students would elect a King and Queen to rule the day. Court attendants were also chosen, and a Maypole was placed for a dance and other activities. This was discontinued during the Cold War and its connection to Russia.

Annual Meeting in September

The DHS annual meeting will be held on Monday, September 31, 2024, at 10:00 AM at The Museum. All are welcome!

DHS Sewing Club

The Museum hosts a sewing club on the third Saturday of each month. For more information, contact Freida at 863-557-3452.

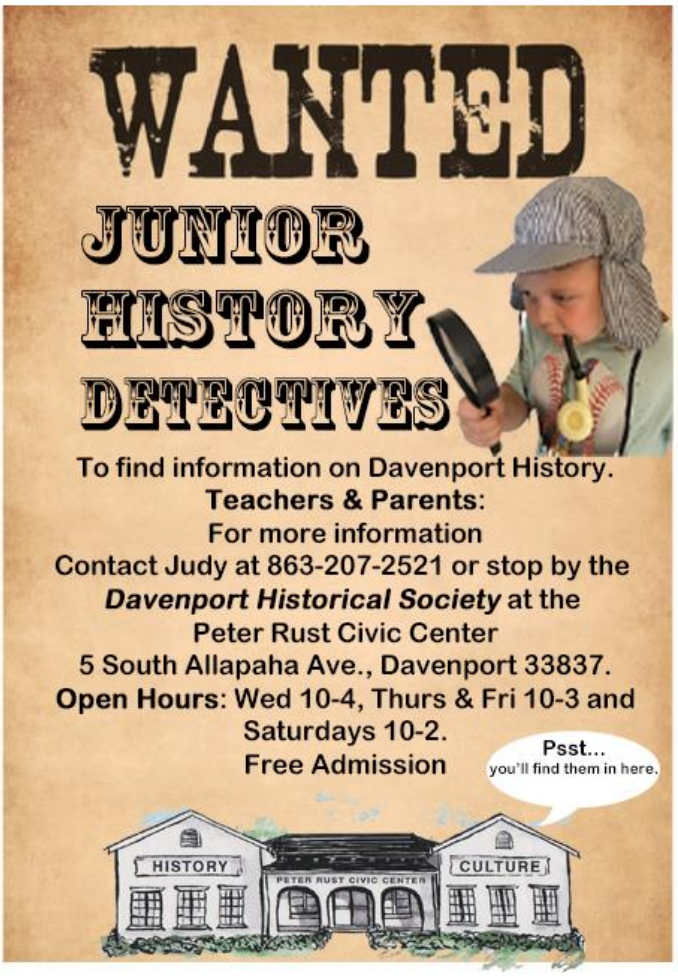
Book Exchange a Hit

The Read & Share Book Exchange Club covers your choice of book within a theme. The Book Exchange meets the second Friday of each month at 11 AM. Below are the book themes and dates for upcoming meetings.

- October 11 — A Classic You've Never Read
- November 8 — A Book That Celebrates Friendship
- December 13 — Christmas Stories

The ***Boutique*** is Open!

The DHS has opened what we're calling The Boutique, an amazing fabric-craft gift shop. Find fabric toys, books with fabric covers, fabric Christmas ornaments. Check it out.



Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) visited The Museum and toured the neighborhood with DHS Vice President Billie Sedore (far right). Davenport neighborhood tours are available by appointment. Call Billie at 863-422-1302 for more information.

New Membership Dues

Because we are dependent on the financial generosity of our members, we must ask all to renew your annual dues with DHS. Please mail your dues to Davenport Historical Society, Inc., c/o Joyce Hunter, PO Box 774, Davenport, FL 33836, and thank you for serving our community with your **tax deductible** gift.

Davenport Historical Society is seeking a volunteer **GRANT WRITER.**

Benefits include: quarterly newsletter, volunteer recognition program, VIP invitations to special events, and networking opportunities with partners and providers.

For more information, call Freida at 863-557-3452.

HISTORY PETER RUST CIVIC CENTER CULTURE

Davenport Historical Society, Inc.
Preserving History & Nurturing Culture
5 South Allapaha Ave., Davenport, FL 33837. Free admission.

HISTORY PETER RUST CIVIC CENTER CULTURE

Davenport Historical Society Inc.

Preserving History and Nurturing Culture

Membership Invitation

Our Mission Statement

The Davenport Historical Society, Inc.'s 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**
$ 20.00 Individual
25.00 Family
100.00 Lifetime/Corporation

___ **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 Joyce Hunter
PO Box 774
Davenport, FL 33836

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

Bird's eye view of Lake Play and surrounding properties.

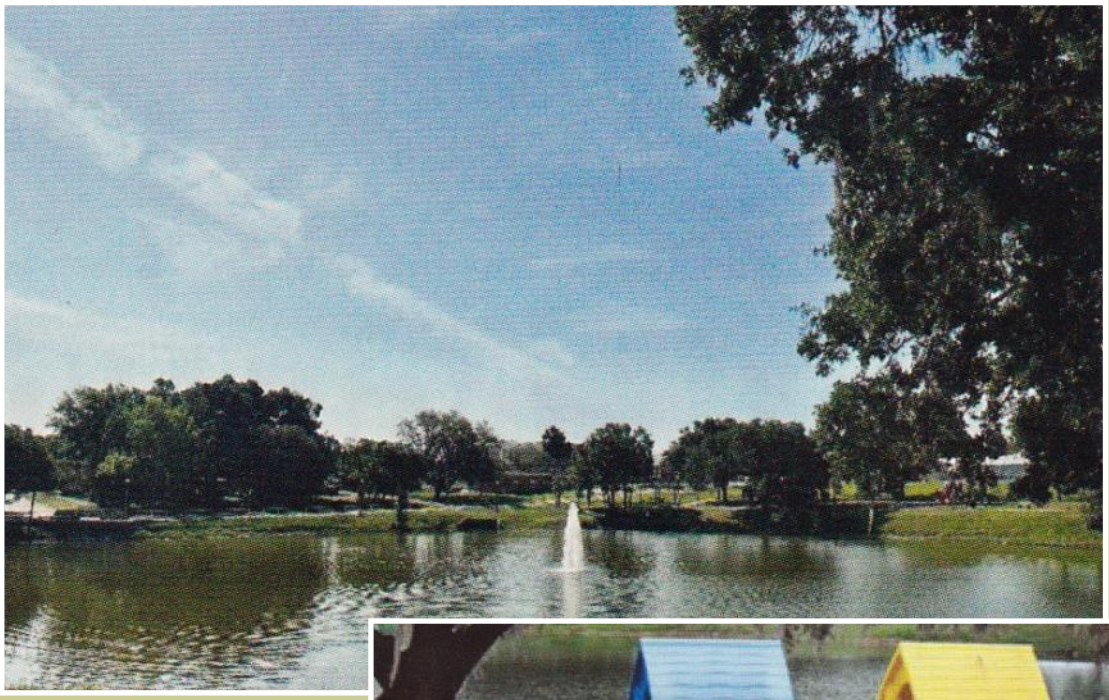
Pics from "The Port"

Homes on Lake Play.

Shacks on Lake Play

Modern Lake Play

The photos on this page came from the ***Guide to Davenport***, 2023-24, page 31.



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

Websites
- DavenportHistory.org
- Facebook: Davenport-FLHistoricalSociety
- Youtube: @Davenport-HistoricalSociety
- MyDavenport.org
- PolkHistoryCenter.org
- DES.PolkSchoolsFL.com
- DavenportHigh.Polk
- SchoolsFL.com
- VisitCentralFL.org

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quiltsandtea@msn.com

PO Box 774
Davenport, FL 33836

TO: _____

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DHS—Winner!

DHS was this year's winner of the best museum in the Four Corners area. Shown at right is the award.

Logging Volunteer Hours

The DHS uses our volunteer time logs for reports to the City of Davenport Commissioners, for grants, and volunteer recognition. That's why it's important to file all of your volunteer hours. To get the latest time sheet, go to DavenportHistory.org and click on the Links tab. A link to the time sheet is located at the bottom of the page.

Upcoming Museum Exhibits

- ***Our NASA Connection*** — July-September 2024. We have connections here in Davenport with NASA. Come explore with us.
- **September 11 Tragedy** — Entire month of September.
- **Holiday Exhibits** — October-December 2024.
- **Circle World** — January-March 2025.

Staples Connect
THE WORKING AND LEARNING STORE

This newsletter is sponsored by Posner Park's Staples.