

**Okaloosa
Historical
Quarterly**

**North Okaloosa Historical
Association, Inc.**

*Celebrating
25 years*

1900s

**BAKER BLOCK
MUSEUM**



1940s

OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA

1990s

**Vol. 1, Issue 3
Summer 2021**



Discover. Experience. Connect.

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bakerbblockmuseum.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.

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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. 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.

Director's Notes

The North Okaloosa Historical Association dodged a near tragedy in May when a 38-foot recreational vehicle that was on fire stopped at the door of our mercantile store and library. Crews from the Baker Fire District arrived on scene to find the vehicle fully engulfed and fire threatening the Museum. We are forever grateful for their quick response and preventive measures to save the Museum.

While there was damage, charred beams, and doors, with a great deal of broken glass, it could have been so much worse. The pine sap that seeped from the beams across the front of the building told the story of how close the fire was to igniting the 113-year-old building made entirely of hart pine.

Holt Fire District assisted Baker Fire on scene. Most of the firefighters, all volunteers, are natives of the community and we heard many comments afterwards about their feelings on saving the Museum. We cannot say enough about their professionalism and dedication to our community.

Ann Spann

President's Message

In 1996, the year the Baker Block Museum was opened to the public, Bill Clinton was reelected president, the Summer Olympics were held in Atlanta, and Dolly the sheep was cloned. Oprah started her book club, eBay introduced its online auction website and Fox News debuted. To some, this feels like ancient history. To others, it seems like only yesterday.

The opening of the museum was the culmination of years of hard work by a group of dedicated volunteers from the North Okaloosa Historical Association: Dr. Eltise "Chip" Barnhill Carter, James Griffith, Rosa Nelle Moore Hilton, Faye Barnes Shaw, William E. Moore, Jr., and Charles and Jeanette Henderson. Their work continued after the museum's opening. They dedicated countless hours researching local history, building the collection, arranging displays, and planning special events. Although their mission was to preserve the past, they kept their eyes on the future.

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary this year, we honor the volunteers who have made the Baker Block Museum so successful. But we are also looking to the future. We need a new generation of volunteers who can continue the work. We need people who can assist visitors to the museum and lead tours. We need people who can help us to conduct inventory of the museum's collection. We need help planning fundraisers and special events. Even if you cannot come to the museum regularly, there are things you can do. You can help transcribe oral histories, research the history of an artifact in the museum, or submit an article for the *Okaloosa Historical Quarterly* magazine. Young or old, local or transplant, computer savvy or not, there is a role for you at the Baker Block Museum.

Come join us for another exciting 25 years at the Baker Block Museum.

Tracy Curenton

RV fire threatens the Museum



A fully engulfed RV parked in front of the Baker Block Museum threatens to spread the fire to the building May 16. (Baker Fire District photo)

A recreational vehicle fire in front of the Baker Block Museum nearly spread to the building May 16.

No one was hurt in the blaze and damage to the Museum was minimal. The RV was a total loss.

The driver of a 38-foot Tradewinds RV made an emergency stop around 9 p.m. in front of the Baker Block Museum when the occupants realized the vehicle was on fire. The RV came to a stop parallel to the Museum, about 10 feet from the porch.

Quick response by Baker Fire District, with backup by Holt Fire District, kept building damages to a minimum by primarily containing the fire to the motor home. Instantly realizing the RV was lost, the firefighters concentrated on keeping the flames away from the Museum which is housed in the second-oldest brick building in Okaloosa County.

Flames from the fully engulfed RV reached above the Museum roof line at one point. Heat from the fire was

so intense, it blistered the paint and warped the steel front door to the Baker Mercantile gift shop, cracked and broke numerous windows on the front of the building, and caused resin from the pine structure to begin bubbling out of the wood in numerous places on the front of the building. Flames did reach the front facing of the porch roof next to where the RV was



Flames from the burning RV reach above the Museum's roof line. (Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office photo)

(left) The steel door of the Baker Mercantile gift shop was warped and blistered by the heat from the fire. Broken windows of the store had to be boarded up.



(right) A displayed parking meter, one of two outdoor historical artifacts in front of the Museum, melted from the heat of the fire.



of the Museum that caught fire. Other than smoke inside the Museum and broken window glass, the extent of the damage was confined to the outside of the building.

“We are very grateful for the fast response by the Baker and Holt Fire Districts,” said Museum Director Ann Spann. “Their quick actions prevented the fire from spreading into the Museum. We also appreciate the support from the Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office and Okaloosa County EMS, who responded as well.”

Gulf Power and Mediacom both responded to assess and repair any utility damages shortly after the fire was extinguished.

The Museum opened as normal Tuesday, with the exception of wood-covered windows in the store.



Heat from the fire cracked and broke numerous Museum windows.

The RV continues to smolder after Baker and Holt Fire Districts extinguish the fire. The motor home was a complete loss, but the building sustained minimal damage, thanks to firefighting efforts.





Baker's block of brick buildings, shown here in the early 1900s, serves as the mercantile center of the growing community.



A 1941 photo shows the cornice over buildings on lots 13 and 14 had building on lot 11.

The Baker Block Project



In the early 1990s, a handful of Baker people had a dream, sparked by a realization that if they didn't do something about saving the history of the local area, it would be gone forever. Starting with five, this original group grew to seven people, all county natives with close ties to the development and history of the area. Dr. Eltise "Chip" Barnhill Carter, James Griffith, Rosa Nelle Moore Hilton, Faye Barnes Shaw, William E. Moore, Jr., and Charles and Jeanette Henderson began meeting in 1992 to discuss the best way to preserve the history of North Okaloosa County.

The group organized with bylaws

First Board Members

- Charles Henderson—president
- Faye Shaw—vice president
- James E. Griffith—treasurer
- Jeanette Henderson—secretary
- Dr. Eltise B. "Chip" Carter—public relations
- William E. "Bill" Moore, III
- Rosa Nelle Hilton

and articles of incorporation, filing as a non-profit, tax-exempt limited license corporation under the name of the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc. They began to locate, collect, catalog, and preserve as much significant north county history as was readily available, and to plan a permanent place to house, exhibit, and preserve the growing collection.

With that in mind, the number one project of the association was to find a home for the collection.

Around the same time as the group that was to become the NOHA was meeting, the set of four brick buildings, together known as the Baker Block, became available in the summer of 1992. This block of brick buildings was built in stages with the first two constructed around 1907 on Lots 11 and 12 of Block 8 in the community of Baker. Construction is credited to J.D. Newton, an engineer at the Bagdad Lumber Company. Buildings on Lots 13 and 14 were built later. All four spaces averaged around the same width, depth, and square footage.

September 17, 1992

The North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., is incorporated

September 1994

NOHA purchases Baker's block buildings

1996

Baker Block Museum opens to the public

2002

The research and genealogy library is funded



as vanished. The Blue Bird Market occupies the

In the 1990s, the Baker Post Office and Baker Mercantile are the only businesses left in the block of buildings.

Through the years, the four buildings were home to a number of businesses, including a mercantile, drug store, movie theater, meat market, millinery, post office, and a bank, before housing today’s museum, research library, and gift shop.

At the time the buildings became available in 1992, only two of the buildings were occupied, by the Baker Post Office and the Baker Mercantile. The Baker Mercantile had been in operation continuously since 1910, first as Z.W. Moore General Merchandise. After Moore passed away, his son, Belah, operated the store, followed by a cousin, Jack King, for 17 years. With King’s passing, his wife didn’t want to operate the store and put Lots 11, 12, and 13 up for sale. The fourth building, Lot 14, housed the Baker Post Office and was owned by Baker resident Brenda Lundy. She also expressed an interest in selling her space, especially since a new post office building was scheduled for construction. The two other units, Lots 11 and 12, had been vacant for years. Price for all three buildings was set at \$50,000. Once the post office moved out, Lundy’s asking price was \$16,000 to complete the set of four buildings, for a total of \$66,000.

The three lots King owned were in a state of disrepair. The mercantile store was filled with its original furnishings—cabinets, shelves, and showcases—as well as merchandise dating back to its early days

of operation. Major repairs needed included a new roof, handicap-accessible bathrooms, adding air conditioning and heating, and complete rewiring to bring the building up to code. Initial estimation for restoration was \$60,000.

With a \$126,000 estimated price tag for



Merchandise filled the Baker Mercantile at the time the board purchased the block building.

October 18, 2005

The Museum becomes part of Okaloosa County Parks & Recreation

2006

The first log cabin is relocated to the Heritage Park

February 17, 2007

The Heritage Park is dedicated to Jeanette & Charles Henderson

July 2021

25th anniversary of the Baker Block Museum

1993-1994 North Okaloosa Historical Association Membership

Lifetime

Gracie & Jeff Bradley
Dr. Eltse B. Carter
Wendell & Joyce Grubbs
Rosa Nelle Hilton
Faye Shaw

Members

Gary Barber
Hereford & Vera Barnhill
Lillie Barrow
Ralph & Ada Barrow
Joyce R. Blaylock
Ferrin C. Campbell, Sr.
Melba H. Childers
Joe & Betty Curenton
Margaret S. Gebauer
Mrs. O.L. Gilman
Joyce P. Gilmore
James & Viney Griffith
Irene Grouer
Charles & Jeanette
Henderson
Ray Hudson
Carlis & Faye Jackson
J.C. & Ella Bea Johnson
Matt Johnson
Amazon Kilcrease
Lucelle P. King
Garrett F. Kirkland, Jr.
John McMahan
Georgette Miller
Mabel Peaden
Morris & Martha Rogers
Gene & Fred Schneider
Ann Spann
Chadrick & Judy Wilkinson
Virginia Wood
1st Bank of Crestview

purchase and restoration, NOHA members began searching for grant monies to pay for the project.

Funding the dream

The newly formed NOHA began an earnest search for ways to finance their objective of creating a permanent place to exhibit their growing collection of Okaloosa County history, referring to it as the “Baker Block Project.”

Turning to state funding, NOHA members applied for a state grant through the Florida Department of State Division of Historical Resources, the state agency “responsible for preserving and promoting Florida’s historical, archaeological, and folk culture resources.” The Historic Preservation Grant Program is designed to help preserve and maintain Florida’s historical buildings and archaeological sites, and the special category grant provides state funds for historic preservation.

Unfortunately, the initial request was denied. However, through perseverance and determination, and a little pro bono help from Crestview attorney Ferrin Campbell, a second grant application was filed requesting fiscal year 1994-1995 funds. This one was approved to the tune of \$137,000 earmarked to

purchase and renovate the four contiguous commercial brick buildings known as the Baker Block.

In addition to state money, the NOHA applied for and was awarded \$175,000 in legislative appropriations in 1994, bringing the total amount to purchase and renovate the block to \$312,000.

Renovation to restore the buildings to their original architectural early 1900s design was supervised by board members Charles Henderson and James Griffith. Crestview resident Tom Starkey, owner of Southeastern Engineering Company, surveyed the site for free. The board took advantage of inmate help with initial cleanup and some construction from the Century Correctional Institute in Century, Florida. It’s estimated this saved the organization \$40,000 in renovation manpower costs.

“The Baker community and north Okaloosa County can never thank this facility enough for their support on our behalf,” said Charles Henderson during the 1996

Baker Block Businesses through the Years

Baker Mercantile Company
Malloy’s Patent Medicine Drug Store
Miss Rosa Kierce Dry Goods and Millinery
Horace Cook Grocery
Bluebird Market
Adams Theater
Dawkins General Merchandise
Baker Post Office
Okaloosa County Teachers Federal Credit Union
Dixie’s Antiques
Baker Mercantile Vendor Mall
Copper Saddle Western Wear



(right) The interior of the block buildings are littered with trash and other unused and unneeded objects.

(below left) The pine wood ceilings show their age as boards begin to loosen.



(top) Sections of the brick are removed and reset by inmate help from the Century Correctional Institute in Century, Florida.



(left) The roof and roof line of the block building show years of patchwork repair.



Inmate labor from Century Correctional Institute in Century, Florida, saved the Board an estimated \$40,000 in renovation costs.

dedication ceremony.

The renovation restored much of the mercantile to its original design, creating a country store museum. According to Charles Henderson, renovations took 18 months and one day to complete. Modern additions to the building included metal roofs, 10-inch steel beams for added support, air conditioning and heating, bathrooms with handicap accessibility (the original design didn't have indoor facilities), and tongue-and-groove pine floors and ceilings.

Library

Also included in the board's vision was a

research library. Jeanette Henderson's fever to research family and local area history was contagious. The NOHA board members and volunteers began collecting written family and oral histories of the local area. Where to house the growing collection and how to make it accessible to other researchers became the next challenge.

In 2002, the board applied for and received a grant from the Three Rivers Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc., a 503(c)(3) organization based in Milton. A \$2,000 grant was awarded, earmarked to establish



With the exception of Lot 14 that housed the Baker Post Office, the block building was in a state of disrepair.



An inmate from the Century Correctional Institute in Century, Florida, paints the original mural on the Museum's east wall. The mural was done completely freehand.



(top) With a new porch in place, workers refurbish the face of building 13 next to the Post Office.

(right) Renovation on the Baker Block is complete.



The front porch is completely rebuilt, with fresh concrete, new steps, and steel posts to hold up a new roof.



The shelves, counters, display cases, and the store office of the Baker Mercantile Company (left) are restored to their original designs thanks to inmate labor from the Century Correctional Institute (right).



The renovated Museum starts to take shape. Original counters, display cases, and shelving from the Baker Mercantile have been refinished and display merchandise once for sale in the old store as Museum artifacts.

an outdoor classroom in the park. However, when the post office space became available, a request was made to apply the grant to establish a local history and genealogy library.

Once the post office vacated the last section of the block building, an entrance was knocked through the brick wall between the museum and the now vacant office space. The money went toward tables, chairs, bookshelves, and computers.

During the past nearly 20 years, the library has been filled with local family histories which now cover half of the library's wall. The other half is filled with local histories of schools, churches, cemeteries, and other research material. It contains more than 75,000 historical documents in the form of

books, pamphlets, maps, and newspapers, including issues of some of the earliest newspapers in the Walton-Okaloosa-Santa Rosa county area.

Heritage Park

When the NOHA board purchased the block building in 1994, it also acquired the vacant property, Lot 15, to the west of the building. In 2006, Lots 16, 17, 18, and 19 were sold to the county, and Lots 20, 21, and 22 were purchased by the NOHA board. All of these lots together comprise the approximately 3/4 acres that make up the park. In 2020, Lots 20, 21, and 22 were deeded to the county.

During the years, the park began to take shape. In 2006, the Museum acquired an authentic log cabin for an

exhibit and living history program that was relocated to the park grounds in August of that year, from its original site on Old River Road just north of Shockley Springs Road. The cabin was donated by Danny Hall of Pace who was a descendant of several Okaloosa pioneer families. The cabin was built by Will Helms in the late 1870s, although the exact date is unknown. The single pen cabin measures 15-by-20 feet with a sleeping loft and is made of split pine logs. It has two 8-foot porches on both front and back, and a fireplace with a cooking hearth.

The park was officially dedicated as the Jeanette and Charles Henderson Heritage Park in February 2007, an event that took the couple completely by surprise. The Hendersons were recognized for their years of passion and dedicated service to expanding the Museum and preserving the area's history.

A couple of years later, a second cabin was added to the park in 2009, a dogtrot-style cabin with two single rooms joined together by a covered open-air passageway. Like the pen cabin, the exact construction date is unknown; however, it's estimated to have been built around the same time frame. The cabin was donated by Lillian Van Houten of Niceville. It was originally located on a site at the northern edge of the Okaloosa County/Alabama state line on Charles Booker Road.

The park today has several



The Heritage Park is named in honor of Charles and Jeanette Henderson in February 2007.



The Baker Block Museum is open Tuesday through Friday and every third Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

structures that create a “pioneering village,” consisting of the two log cabins, several farm buildings, a tool shed from Laurel Hill’s Jackson Veneer Mill, and the Otahite Post Office.

In 2019, a covered pavilion was added to the park. This venue is used throughout the year and is the performance area for gospel and folk music programs during Baker’s annual Heritage Day festival held the third Saturday in November.

25 Years Later

Today, the Museum houses hundreds of thousands of artifacts that tell the history of Okaloosa, Walton, and Santa Rosa counties. The library is filled with hundreds of local family histories, both written and oral, and information from the northwest Florida Panhandle and neighboring Alabama

counties just across the state line. Regional cemetery, church, and school records, service organization reference material, as well as an extensive collection of Native American research material, line the library shelves. Local area historical newspapers are available on microfilm and digitally. Online genealogy research subscription sites are free for researchers to use while visiting. All this—museum, library, and park—are all available to the public at no cost.

Speaking directly to James Griffith during the 1996 dedication ceremony, Charles Henderson said, “Bud, we did it. Now let’s rest.” The big dream of a small group of people with a vision of creating a museum to preserve the rich heritage of northwest Florida has grown into the Baker Block Museum and Jeanette and Charles Henderson Heritage Park.

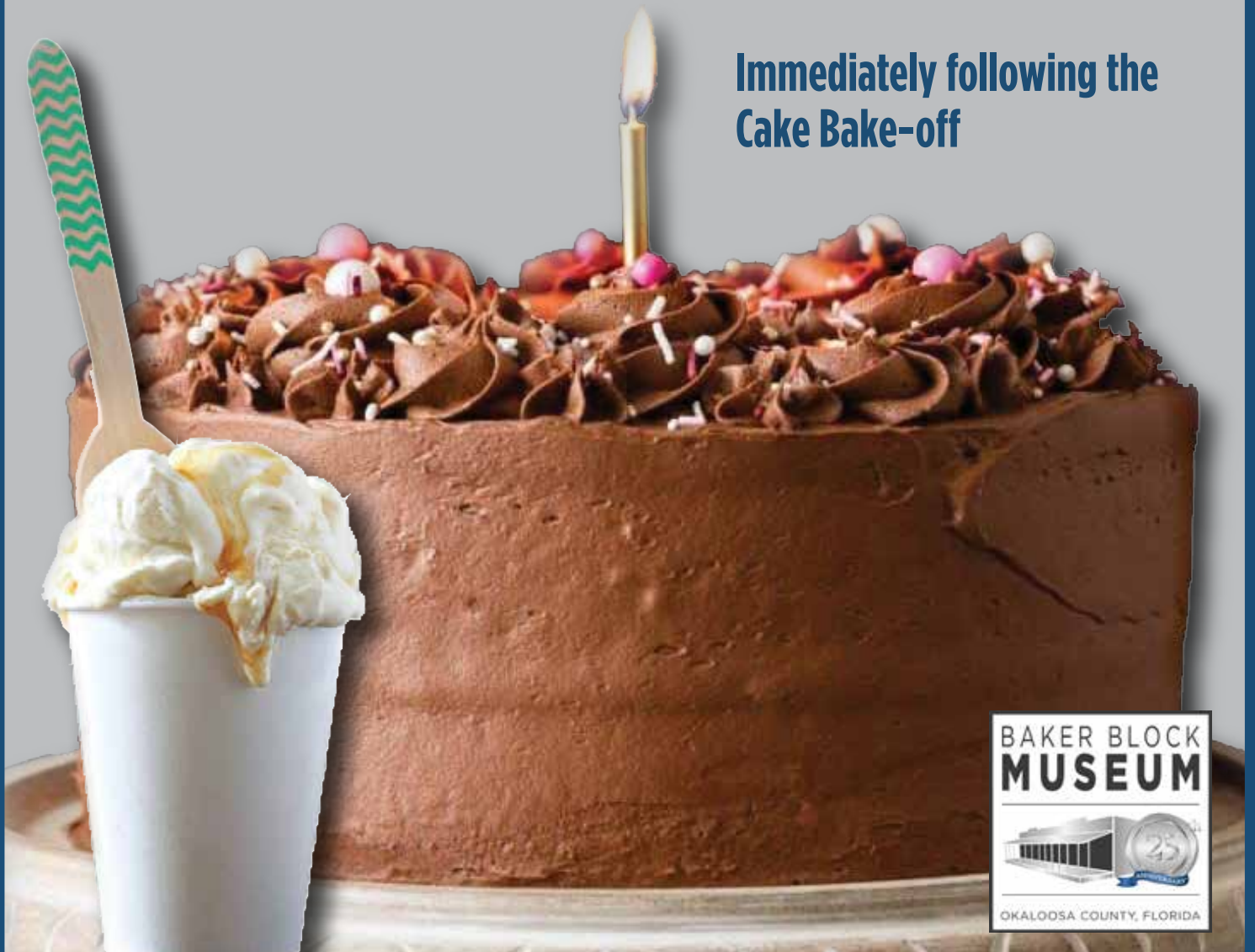
Stephanie Holcombe is a North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., board member, the editor of the North Okaloosa Historical Quarterly, and the Baker Block Museum webmaster.

Come help us celebrate our
25th Anniversary!

Ol' Fashioned Cake & Ice Cream Social

Saturday, July 17, 11:30 a.m.

Immediately following the
Cake Bake-off



HOURS
 TUESDAY-SATURDAY
 7 A.M.-4 P.M.
 LUNCH 11 A.M.-2 P.M.
 CLOSED SUNDAY & MONDAY

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SCRATCH ARTISAN



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Sponsor of the Baker Block Museum 25th Anniversary Cake Bake-off



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hoteldefuniak.net  

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Baker Block Museum's
25th Anniversary
Cake Bake-off



Saturday, June 17

1st, 2nd & 3rd Place Prizes

Grand Prize Winner

\$5 entry fee

Entry submission deadline July 15

Judge: Kimberly Howard, Back Home Bakery Cafe

Grand prize: Overnight Getaway at the Hotel DeFuniak

Other prizes: Gift certificates from Back Home Bakery Cafe, Salon Nirvana & Body B-Healthy

Contest Rules

Baker Block Museum

Cake Bake-off



The Cake Bake-off will be held Saturday, July 17, 2021, in the Baker Block Museum.
DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: July 15. Check-in is 9 a.m. on Saturday, July 17.

General Rules and Information

1. Entry fee is **\$5** along with a signed entry form.
2. Contestants must be amateurs. Chef's, cooks or culinary arts students are not eligible. Children under 16 must be accompanied by a parent or grownup who will be present during the event. North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., board members and immediate family members, and Museum employees and family members are ineligible to participate.
3. Only one cake per contestant is allowed.
4. Submission must be home cooked. No box mixes are allowed. Ingredients must be submitted by the day of the contest and will only be shared with the judge.
5. Cakes must be submitted as a whole and marked with the type of cake it is.
6. Do not submit anything that requires refrigeration.
7. All submission will become the property of the Museum and will be shared with visitors to the **3rd Saturday at the Baker Block Museum 25th Anniversary Open House Ol' Fashioned Cake and Ice Cream Social.**
8. Containers used to submit entries are the responsibility of the contestant and may be picked up after the ice cream social.
9. Contestants may work individually or with a team; however, prizes will be awarded to one member/team only, not each individual.

Judging

- No contestants, visitors or children are allowed in the judging area.
- Ribbons will be awarded for 1st, 2nd, 3rd place and a grand prize.
- Winners will be featured in the fall issue of the **Okaloosa Historical Quarterly** magazine.

Scoring System

- Each cake submission will be assigned a number for judging.
- Submissions will be judged on appearance/presentation, internal appearance and taste.
- The Contest Representative will tally all of the ballots. The contestant with the highest score will be awarded 1st Place. The contestant with the second-highest score will be awarded 2nd Place. Third highest score will be the 3rd Place winner. The Grand Prize winner will be determined by the judge.

Contest Day

- **Check-in** is at **9 a.m.** at the Museum.
- Judging begins at 10 a.m.
- Winners will be announced at 11 a.m.
- The **Ol' Fashioned Cake and Ice Cream Social** starts at 11:30 a.m.

Entry form

Baker Block Museum

Cake Bake-off



Baker Information

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ ZIP _____ Phone _____

Cake Information

Name of Cake _____

Ingredients used to prepare submission _____

This entry is (please check all that applies)

Gluten free

Nut free

Soy free

Please include any additional information you would like to share about your submission.

I certify that I have read, understand and agree to abide by the stated guidelines. I understand that I am responsible for my own materials and ingredients, and shall hold harmless the Baker Block Museum from any and all damages arising out of my participation in this event.

Signature _____

Date _____

Proceeds will benefit the Baker Block Museum programs.

Please make check payable to: Baker Block Museum, P.O. Box 137, Baker, FL 32567.

Contestants may pay in person at the Museum, 1307 Georgia Ave., Baker, FL 32567

For questions, please contact Ann Spann at 850-537-5714 or bakermuseum@aol.com.

Pamper yourself

Full services salon:

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Nails
Massage Therapy
Spray Tanning
Eyelash Extensions
Body Wraps
Body Scrubs
Microdermabrasion
Facial Waxing
Brazilian Waxing
Full Body Waxing

650 W. James Lee Blvd, Crestview, 850-398-2620
Tuesday-Friday, 8 a.m.-6 p.m., Saturday, 8 a.m.-3 p.m.
Closed Sunday & Monday



Sponsor of the Baker Block Museum 25th Anniversary Cake Bake-off



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850-682-8893

www.bodybhealthy.org

Mon-Thurs, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Closed Sunday



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- Collagen
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- Teas
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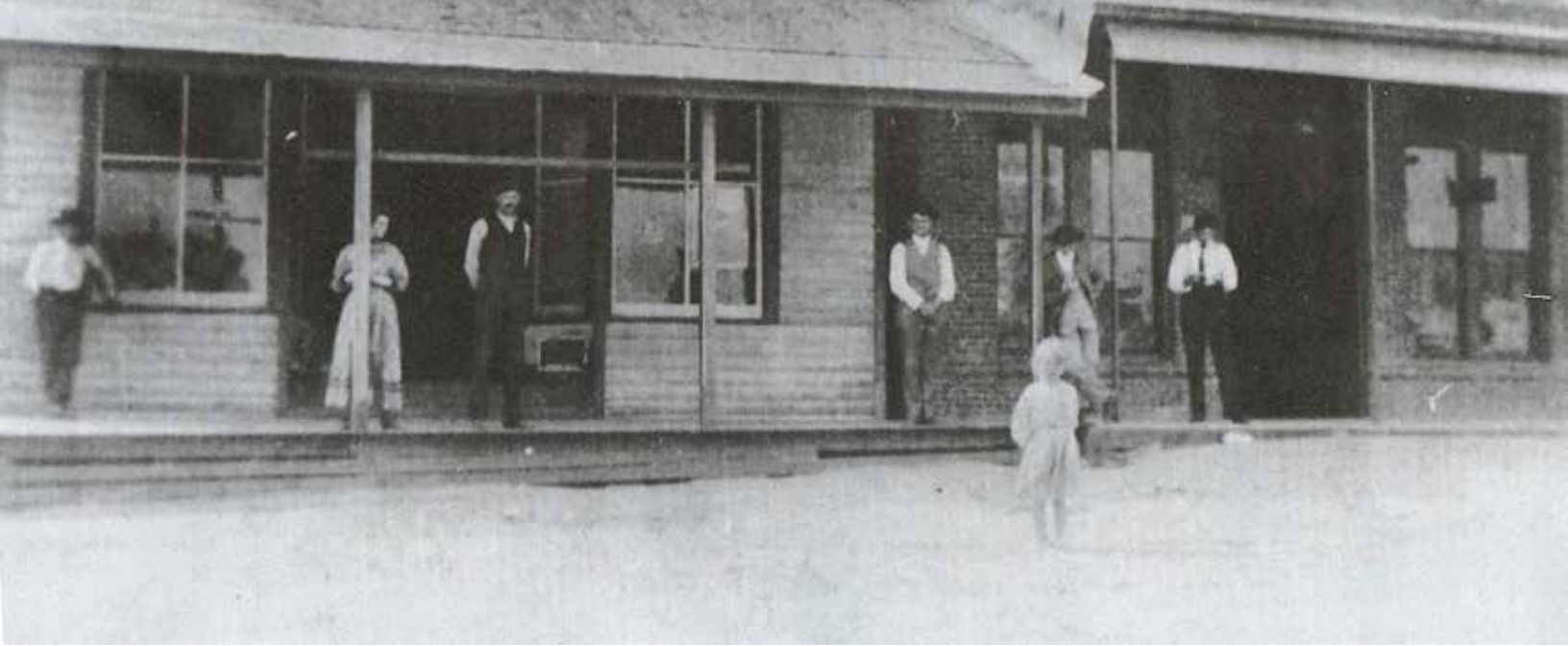
- BioMat Infrared Treatment
- Nutritional Blood Analysis
- Digital Pulsewave Analyzer Screening
- Alkaline Water
- Iridology Consults

Sponsor of the Baker Block Museum 25th Anniversary Cake Bake-off

Laurel Hill's Campbell Company

Dry goods, hardware, grocery, and general meeting place

By Mark Curenton



The Campbell Company started out in the wood-built building that once housed the Yellow River Railroad commissary.

In 1892 the Yellow River Railroad, building north from Crestview, reached the Laurel Hill area, where the company established a town and the headquarters for the railroad. A depot was built along with a commissary and an engine shed to maintain the steam engines employed on the railroad.

Eric von Axelson, a Swedish immigrant, was hired by the railroad to sell off the railroad's land once all the timber had been removed. He persuaded the owners to close down the commissary and allow private individuals to open up businesses in the new town of Laurel Hill.

One of the firms that opened a general store in Laurel Hill in the 1890s was A.D.

Morrison & Co. Angus Daniel Morrison lived in Pensacola, and with his two brothers, Murdock and Malcolm, was heavily invested in the lumber and land business. Originally from Euchee Valley in Walton County, they owned a lot of property in the Laurel Hill area. Murdock Morrison moved to Laurel Hill to oversee the new store and the brothers' business interests in the new community. To help run the new business in Laurel Hill, they hired Angus Ernest Campbell, the son of their first cousin. Ernest Campbell arrived in Laurel Hill May 1, 1898, with his wife and three small children.

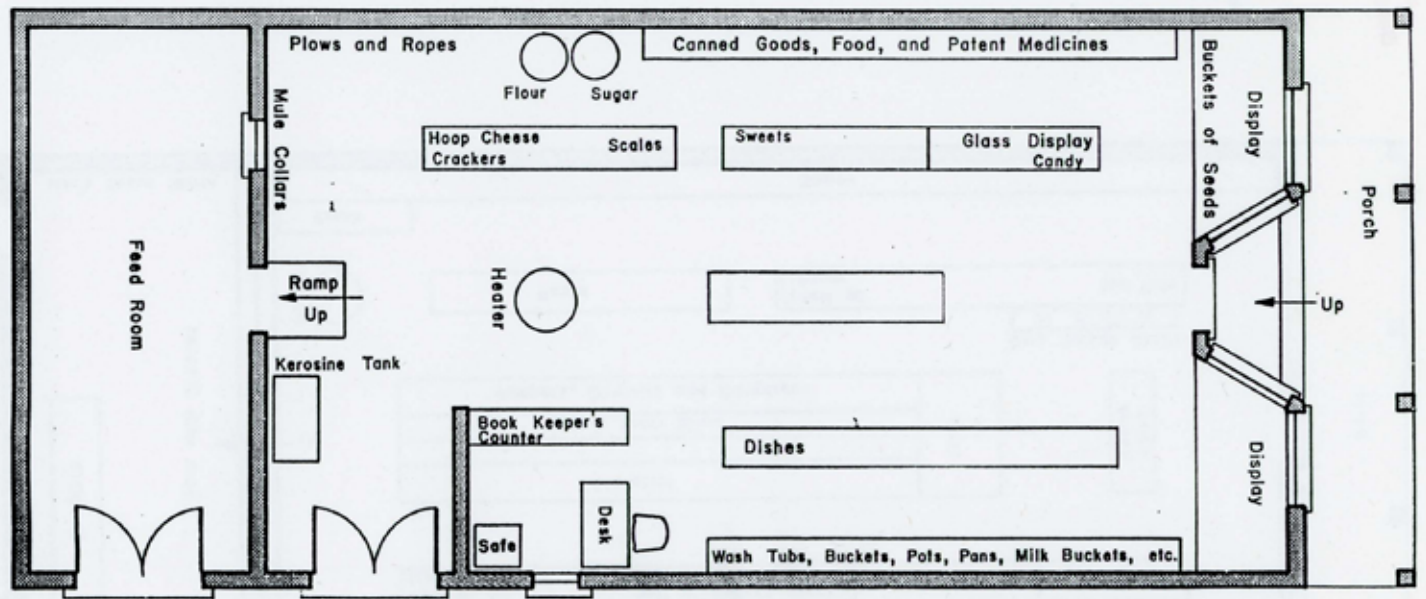
The A.D. Morrison store was located in a wooden building located on the west side of

Fourth Street, just north of Highway 85. Murdock Morrison died of a heart attack in 1900, and Alcus Daniel "Dan" Campbell, Ernest Campbell's brother, moved to Laurel Hill to work with his brother in the store. In the early 1900s, the Campbells purchased the business from the remaining Morrison brothers and changed the name to Campbell Company.

Business is good

The business prospered in the growing community. Eventually it outgrew the wooden building, and the dry goods portion of the business moved two doors north into the old People's Bank building.

Ernest Campbell ran the grocery and hardware side of Campbell Company in the



The Campbell Company grocery and hardware store layout. (Mark Curenton)

original wooden building. His youngest son, Clyde, worked in the store with him along with Ruth McPhail (Morris) who served as the bookkeeper. An alley ran along the south side of the store, between Campbell Company and Duncan Finlayson's general merchandise store that faced it on the highway. Wagons and trucks used this alley for deliveries and pickups.

The front of the store had large display windows. A

couple of steps led up to the recessed entrance of the grocery and hardware. Inside, down each side of the store, were shelves nearly up to the ceiling. A ladder ran on a track down each side of the store to reach the upper shelves. Groceries were concentrated on the north side of the store. Canned goods and patent medicines were lined up in the shelves along the wall. Large barrels held flour and sugar and were weighed out on a

pair of scales. In front of the shelves was a counter, the eastern end of which was glass and held candy and sweets.

Across the store, along the south wall, shelves held all sorts of buckets, pots, pans, tubs, and

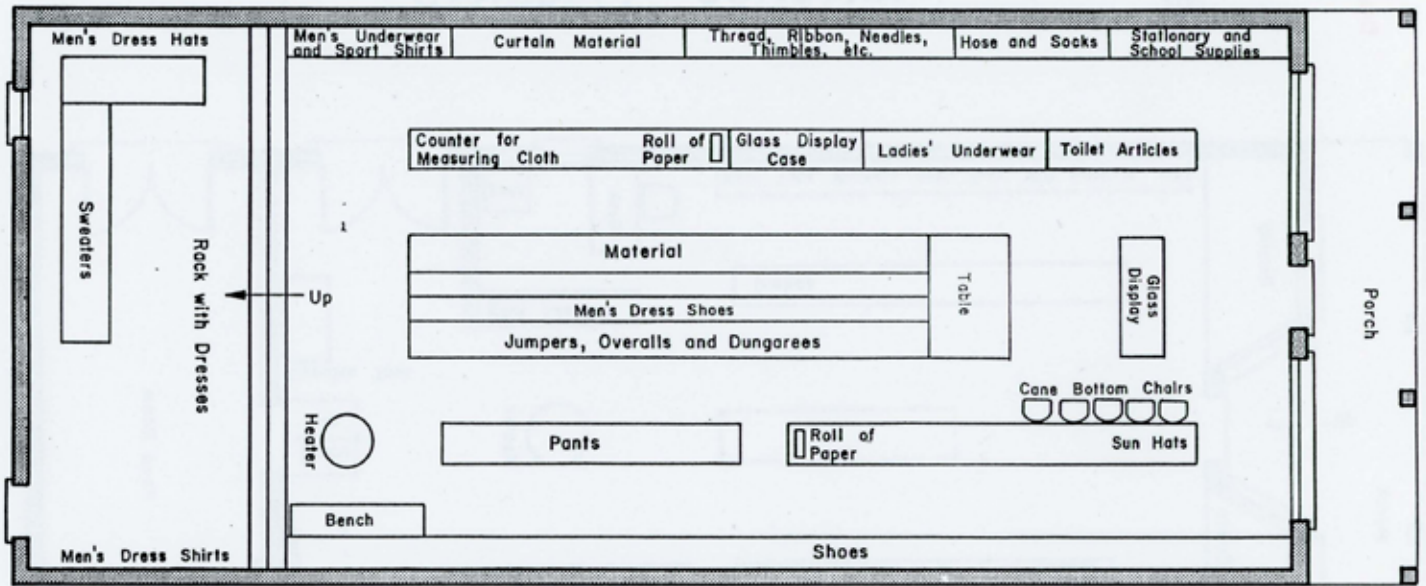
pails. A counter in front of the shelves held dishes that were for sale. A wood stove heated the store in the winter where farmers would congregate on cold, wet days when they could not work in their fields. Ernest Campbell received a daily newspaper, and he gave a summary of the news items along with his opinions on current events.

In the back of the store were plows, ropes, and mule collars along with a kerosene tank. Behind this was the feed room where fertilizer and feed were stored in bulk. A large set of scales was used to weigh out each individual's order. Live chickens were also kept in this room. Some people brought eggs or live chickens to barter for their groceries. Campbell Company would resell the chickens to people who did not have a chicken yard.

Dan Campbell ran the dry goods side of Campbell Company. His niece, Maude Campbell, helped him in the



From left, Maude Campbell, Marie Campbell, Frances Hodge, Laura Campbell holding Dan, Ruth Campbell, sit on the porch of Campbell Company store.



The Campbell Company dry goods store layout. (Mark Curenton)

store. Every afternoon, Laurel Hill women congregated in the dry goods store to talk and visit with Maude and each other.

The dry goods store was located in a brick building north of the grocery and hardware store, with one single-story brick building between them. This intermediate building housed a variety of businesses over the years until it was bought by Campbell Company, and the grocery and hardware store moved into this space during the late 1940s. The old wooden building was sold to Porter Goolsby and was razed in the mid-1950s.

The dry goods building was a two-story building, originally built to house the People's Bank of Laurel Hill. The second floor housed the masonic lodge, accessed by a flight of exterior stairs at the back of the building. Masons used this space from the time their original building was blown down during a tornado

in 1916 until they moved into the second floor of the Bank of Laurel Hill building after the bank closed in 1927.

The first thing inside the door of the dry goods store was a glass display case. To the left were several cane-bottomed chairs where customers sat to try on shoes. In the afternoons, these chairs filled up with Laurel Hill ladies visiting Maude Campbell. A counter ran down the middle of the store. On one side of the counter was cloth. Beginning at 10 cents a yard, the price of the material increased as you got closer to the back of the store until it reached as high as a dollar a yard. A shelf to display various items was built above the center counter. In the back of the store a raised platform extended across the full width of the store. Usually, sweaters were spread out on tables in this area and a rack of dresses was on display, but during Christmas season, this platform was rearranged to

display Christmas items.

Campbell Company always closed the doors at noon and everyone walked home for dinner. Doors would reopen at 1 p.m.

Theft

One day, when Ernest Campbell returned after dinner, he noticed that the bar was off the back door and money was missing from the cash drawer. The next day it happened again.

R.J. Hart, a neighbor, agreed to hide in the store at noon to catch the thief. While he was waiting, the door under the display window opened and a young man, Arleigh Marlow, crawled out and went to the cash drawer. R.J. had his gun and held him there until everyone returned from dinner and the sheriff was called.

The young man came in the store in the morning and sat on the display window ledge and stealthily unlatch the door beneath the ledge. Then, when

everyone left for dinner, he crawled under the store and came up through a hole he had cut in the floor under the window and crawled through the unlatched door. After taking the cash, he left by removing the bar and going out the back door.

Continuing the business

When Ernest Campbell died in 1939, his son Clyde continued to run that side of the store. When Clyde was drafted during the World War II, Clyde's sister, Maude, moved over from the dry goods side to run the grocery and hardware. The Laurel Hill ladies followed her to that store for their afternoon get-togethers. In good weather, they lined up on a wide board that had been nailed between two of the posts that supported the porch roof. Here they

would swap news and gossip.

At the end of the World War II, Clyde Campbell went to the University of Florida on the G.I. Bill and earned a law degree. He opened a practice in Crestview while he continued to live in Laurel Hill. Every afternoon, he stopped by the store on his way home to see how things were going. Maude Campbell continued to run the store.

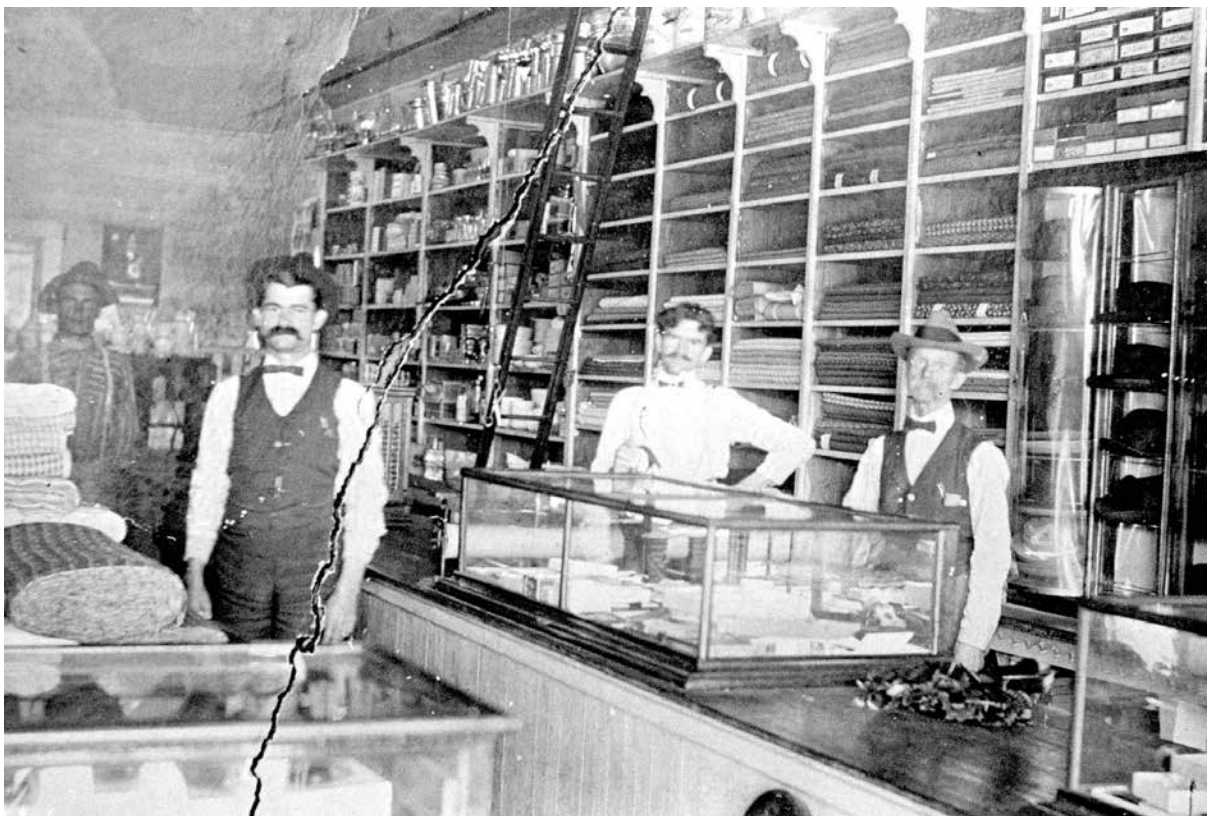
End of an era

In 1952, when Dan Campbell died, his daughter, McDonald Campbell, came home from teaching school in Pensacola and ran the dry goods store for 18 months. When she closed the dry goods store, she had a going-out-of-business sale. So many customers showed up for the sale, the front door had to be locked to keep people out until some of the people in the

store left.

Maude Campbell continued to operate the grocery and hardware side of Campbell Company. One of the traveling salesmen who called on the business was Archie Champion from Montgomery. He represented a hardware company. They began seeing each other, and eventually he proposed marriage. Maude accepted. One afternoon in March 1957, she just locked the store and was married the next day in Troy, Alabama.

After Maude left, Clyde hired someone to run Campbell Company, but without an owner there to oversee the enterprise, business fell off. When Clyde built his house on Airport Road and moved to Crestview, he closed the store, ending the long legacy of Campbell Company.



From left, Ernest Campbell, Dan Campbell and Wiley F. Martin, the wool buyer for the Campbell Company, in the store around 1900.

Mark Curenton is a lifetime member of the North Okaloosa Historical Association and a Laurel Hill historian.



The removal of vinyl siding from the former Lamar and Hilton Hotel reveals the 1926 hotel's original upstairs front windows. The second floor will remain closed following the exterior renovation. (Photo by Brian Hughes) (inset) Crestview's Lamar Hotel was opened in 1926 on the site of the city's first business, the 1880s Powell Hotel. (Baker Block Museum photo)

Crestview's hotel history

Powell, Crescent, Okaloosa, Lamar, Hilton—just some of Crestview's many hotels

By Brian Hughes

For longer than there's been a Crestview, there's been a hotel on Main Street spanning the block between Woodruff Avenue and the alley to the south. Now the 1926 Lamar—later the Hilton—Hotel, more familiar today as the home of Desi's Family Restaurant, is getting a facelift.

Like all of Crestview's downtown hotels, the first building on the lot, the Powell Hotel, which probably opened in the late 1880s, originally welcomed guests arriving or departing aboard the daily trains that serviced

the community. Its proprietor, Hamner F. "Doc" Powell, considered Crestview's first citizen, had the contract to supply lightwood for the Pensacola and Atlantic Railroad's locomotives stopping at "Crestview Station." He soon became Crestview's first railroad agent, first home builder, first postmaster, and upon opening his hotel, the town's first merchant.

His Powell Hotel, the town's first business, was a handsome two-story wooden-framed building with a balcony overlooking Main Street. It's listed in the 1886-87 Florida State Gazetteer and Business Directory, and was also



Following a c. 1940 renovation by the Hilton family—no relation to today’s worldwide hotel chain—the front canopy and balcony were removed. The small white squares below the center windows show where joists once protruded from the façade to support the balcony. (Photo courtesy of Desi’s Restaurant)

a rooming house.

Doc’s wife, Eunice, managed the hotel after they married in 1901. Across the street was his livery stable, next to which he built a restaurant, which, like his hotel, catered primarily to P&A Railroad passengers.

There would be later hotels, including the Crescent Hotel, built in the late 1900s across the tracks roughly where the State Road 85 overpass is today, and the 1915 Okaloosa Hotel on the east side of Pearl Street on the corner of Railroad Avenue. But the Lamar Hotel, opened in June 1926, would prove the city’s most enduring. And for 11 years, it was the city’s largest building until the Smith-Johnson Shirt Company opened—now known as the Alatech Building and home of the Florida A&M University’s pharmacy school.

Built of brick by contractor Johnny Wilkinson for W.H. Graham on the site previously occupied by the Powell Hotel, the grand, two-

story, block-long landmark had 46 rooms upstairs, cleverly using a central lightwell down the center to insure every room had natural sunlight. A canopy and balcony protected pedestrians walking the length of the hotel along Main Street.

According to the Dec. 10, 1925, *Okaloosa News-Journal*, “The lower floor will constitute five store rooms, one will be used for a lobby, one for a café, and the other will be used for stores.”

One of those first ground-floor stores was the Cox Hardware Company on the hotel’s Main and Woodruff corner. After Cox Hardware moved up Main Street, Scarborough Auto and Home Supply took over the corner, with Roystan’s B.F. Goodrich tire sales shop. A large second-floor lobby spanned much of the building’s depth.

By the time of its sale to Aubrey and Rosa Nelle Hilton around 1940, the hotel badly

needed refurbishment. The Hiltons removed the front balcony and canopy and put decorative awnings over the Main Street hotel lobby and store entrances. Each room received a private bathroom.

The Grill restaurant opened next to the central downstairs lobby in the space currently occupied by Great Faith Ministries. It was run by Marie Douglass, whose husband, W.D. “Cooter” Douglass, was the local radio personality who famously nicknamed County Road 2 south of Laurel Hill as the “Hog and Hominy” for its rural setting.

The commercial space on the corner of Main Street and the alley was home to the B.S. Gillman Furniture Co., a local Kelvinator appliance dealer.

Today, the site of the former B.F. Goodrich store on the corner of Woodruff and Main, and the former hotel lobby, comprise Desi’s Restaurant.

Many a World War II Eglin Field soldier and airman was grateful for that large second-floor lobby. If they missed the last bus back to base following a night’s carousing in Crestview—the place to go on a weekend pass—Hilton would



Having just removed vinyl siding, workers prepare to seal the original brickwork and windows on the Main Street façade of the former Lamar and Hilton Hotel. (Photo by Brian Hughes)

rent them a cot up in the lobby.

That spacious upstairs lobby still spans most of the building, with hallways branching off to each wing. While dividing walls between the rooms have largely been removed, bright colors on the rooms’ exterior walls and unpainted strips in the ceiling show where each of the 46 rooms stood. Two of the southeast corner rooms remain intact, giving an idea of how cozy accommodations were.

As exterior renovations continue, passersby can again see the rows of windows marking the 10 rooms facing Main Street, most separated by the smaller bathroom windows. The canopy that sheltered 1920s and ‘30s pedestrians from afternoon downpours is being restored.

While the ugly vinyl siding that once shrouded the second floor has been removed, the windows themselves, though defined, will still be blocked since the second floor is unused. Perhaps one day a major renovation will occur, bringing that large upstairs space up to modern building codes. Lovers of old buildings and Crestview history can only hope.

But for now, while Desi’s hungry



The former Hilton Hotel’s large upstairs lobby once provided cut-rate overnight cot accommodations for soldiers and airmen from Eglin Field who’d missed the last bus back to base during World War II. The windows at the left overlooked an open lightwell. (Photo by Brian Hughes)



Interior Lamar Hotel rooms are defined by the different paint colors on their respective walls, scars on the floor, and unpainted ceiling strips. The skinny room with the red and blue exterior wall on the far left was a pair of bathrooms. Windows opened onto a lightwell that has since been roofed over. The remaining wall studs mark the wing's central hallway. (Photo by Brian Hughes)



This view down the southwest hallway shows exterior rooms, left, overlooking Main Street, and interior rooms, right, overlooking a former light well that is now roofed over. (Photo by Brian Hughes)

weekday lunch crowd feasts on the city's best fried chicken down below, the vast, block-long upper floor remains unoccupied, except, perhaps, for the spirits of a few of the thousands of railway travelers and Eglin Field soldiers who found shelter in Graham's downtown landmark.

Brian Hughes, a member of the North Okaloosa Historical Association, is the public information officer for the City of Crestview, a journalist, and historian.

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**

Flexible hours

**See Museum Director Ann Spann
850-537-5714 or bakermuseum@aol.com**



2021 Nominee

Foy F. Shaw, Jr.

October 6, 1933-March 24, 2012

Nominated by son Craig Shaw

Foy F. Shaw, Jr., a successful businessman in Crestview for more than 55 years, was an integral part of the community and believed in serving its people. In his early 20s, he and his wife Cel moved to Crestview from his native Pensacola. Here they raised four children and a niece, all of whom were educated in the Okaloosa County school system and live in the local and surrounding areas.

Shaw was born in Pensacola October 6, 1933, to Foy F. and Vonceil Shaw. In 1956, Shaw moved to Crestview where he opened Shaw Moving and Storage with just one old used Dodge truck that had survived a fire. From its humble beginnings, he shaped Shaw Moving and Storage to serve the growing needs of Crestview, Eglin Air Force Base, and the surrounding counties.

Shaw believed in doing one's civic duty. He was instrumental in the creation of the Crestview Chamber of Commerce in 1956, and was later awarded President Emeritus after many years of service. He was an active member of the Kiwanis Club and the Jaycees. As a member of the Jaycees, he helped organize the inaugural Old Spanish Trail Festival in the early 1960s. He also served with the American Heart Association and was recognized for his 30 years of continuous service with the organization in 1998, and served another 11 years after that.

Shaw was elected as a city councilman in 1963, serving 11 years before becoming mayor



of the City of Crestview, a position he held from 1975 to 1976. He helped bring to life the vision of Twin Hills Park in the 1970s.

Shaw believed in giving back to the community and was sought for his wisdom and advice. In 2009, he was awarded the Northwest Florida Daily News Spirit of Freedom Award for his contributions to the community. The \$1,000 Foy Shaw Memorial Scholarship Fund, established in 2012 by the Crestview Area Chamber of Commerce in his honor, is awarded each year to a graduating senior from Crestview, Baker, and Laurel Hill high schools.

In 2015, a new 0.8-mile, two-lane arterial roadway connecting U.S. Highway 90 to the Bob Sikes Airport, designated as the Foy Shaw Parkway, was announced as a means to reduce traffic through local Crestview neighborhoods.

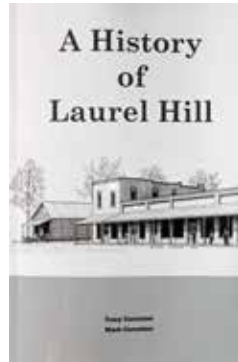
Shaw's favorite pastimes included hosting cookouts, taking people fishing, playing golf, and spending quality time with family, old friends, and new acquaintances.

Okaloosa County History Series

Available for sale in the Baker Mercantile, on eBay, by email at bakermuseum@aol.com or by calling the Museum at 850-537-5714. **\$20 each.**



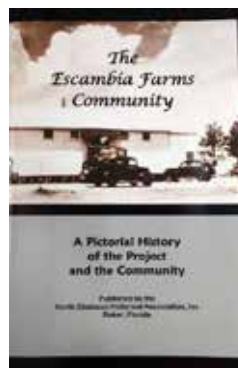
Give me the Grace to Shout and Shine, the newest book in the history series, focuses on the three most prominent gospel singing methods in the northwest Florida panhandle throughout the years: Sacred Harp, also known as fasola, five- or seven-shape note convention singing, and later, the gospel quartet.



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.



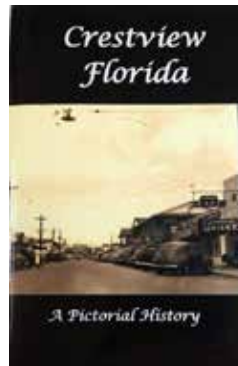
Turpentine in the Florida Panhandle casts turpentine as a significant element impacting the way of life in the Northwest Florida panhandle. It describes an integrated experience—culture, industry, and human condition—in the lives of those who lived it.



Present 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 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* shows in photos 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.

\$53 each

I.A. Steele 62nd Family Reunion

Who are these people?



The Steele family is trying to identify the people in this photograph from the 1982 family reunion. Some people have been identified. If you know who any of the people are, contact the museum at 850-537-5714 or bakermuseum@aol.com.

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | 20. Emily Middlekaugh (or Middlecoff) | 38. |
| 2. | 21. Richard Middlekauh | 39. |
| 3. | 22. Rose Lesprence | 40. |
| 4. | 23. ? Lesprence | 41. |
| 5. | 24. Aliwynn Steele | 42. |
| 6. | 25. Ray Vaughn Steele | 43. |
| 7. | 26. Lucille Steele | 44. |
| 8. | 27. Jack Cobb | 45. Marie Jones |
| 9. | 28. Bryan Smith | 46. Valton Jones |
| 10. | 29. Billy Price | 47. |
| 11. | 30. | 48. |
| 12. | 31. Janice Price | 49. |
| 13. | 32. | 50. |
| 14. Carole Steele | 33. Buddy Steele (I. A III) | 51. |
| 15. I.A. Steele, II | 34. | 52. Geneva Sanders |
| 16. James Hutcheson | 35. Bruce | 53. Betty Thigpen |
| 17. Loreen Hutcheson | 36. Ella Faye | 54. |
| 18. L.T. Jones | 37. Lottie Jones | 55. |
| 19. Irene Jones | | 56. |

North Okaloosa Historical Association

Membership News

NOHA Board Members

- President – Tracy Curenton
- Vice President – Phyllis Enzor
- Treasurer – Sharry Rustin
- Secretary – Stephanie Holcombe

Members:

Joyce Arnett

Mike Bush

Doug Hibbing

2021 Goals

- Increase membership by 30% — **halfway there**
- Apply for an historical marker for the museum building
- Redesign Baker Block Museum website — **completed in March**
- Accrue \$5,000 in sponsorships
- Digitize oral histories — **completed in April**
- Find a sponsor to purchase museum inventory software

New member this quarter

- Jayden Camizzi— annual

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.

Calendar of Events

July							August							September						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30	31					26	27	28	29	30		
4	Fourth of July						10	Okaloosa County schools begin 2021-2022 semester						6	Labor Day					
15	North Okaloosa Historical Association Board meeting, 6 p.m.						19	North Okaloosa Historical Association Board meeting, 6 p.m.						11	Patriot Day					
17	3rd Saturday: Cake Bake-off, 10 a.m. Ol' Fashioned Cake & Ice Cream Social, 11:30 a.m. Museum open from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.						21	3rd Saturday: Museum open from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.						16	North Okaloosa Historical Association Board meeting, 6 p.m.					
														17	Constitution Day					
														18	3rd Saturday: Museum open from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.					

Thank You!

The North Okaloosa Historical Association would like to thank the following sponsors for their continuing support of the Baker Block Museum.



Enzor Management

BAKER AUTO PARTS

TheRestroom

Okaloosa County Charities-Racetrack Bingo

2021 Baker Heritage Day

Saturday, Nov. 20
9 a.m.-3 p.m.



**Arts & Crafts
Music
Food**

**Pioneering
Demonstrations**

**Taking applications for vendor booths now.
See bakerblockmuseum.org for application form.
Call 850-537-5714 or email bakermuseum@aol.com for more info.**