

State tells Walton midwife to retire or face hearing

Okaloosa Historical Quarterly

North Okaloosa Historical
Association, Inc.

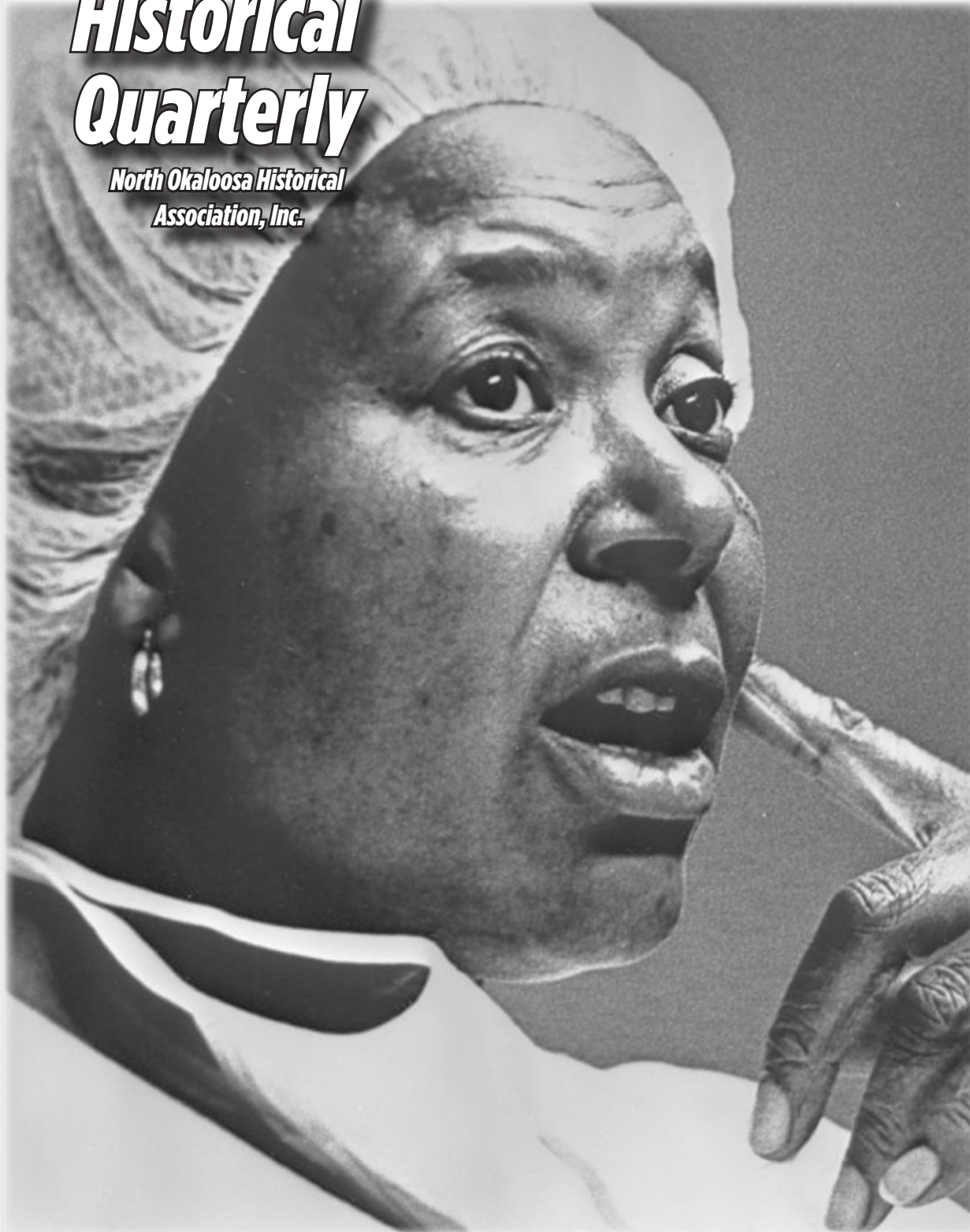
Midwife says she'll fight for right to deliver babies

Midwife's
license on
line today

Supporters say HRS
opposes birth option

Lawmaker
fights law
limiting lay
midwives

Midwife
wins fight
to regain
her license



Northwest Florida midwife trailblazer, Gladys Milton

Midwife reopens clinic
after 20-month closure

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Winter 2022



OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA

Okaloosa midwife named to Florida Women's Hall of Fame

In this Issue

Features

- 6 Bush House renovations in Crestview
- 10 Northwest Florida midwife trailblazer
- 11 Legacy lives on

Events

- 5 Wedding in the Park

Museum News

- 9 Accessions
- 16 Museum repairs
- 18 Membership News

Calendar of Events

- 21 Calendar



Page 5



Page 6



Page 10



Page 15



CONTACT

Phone: 850-537-5714

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

Email: bakermuseum@aol.com

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

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.

President's Message

While we're not sure what 2022 brings, we're hoping to be able to get our events back on track, especially since we've had to cancel our annual Baker Heritage Festival two years running due to the pandemic. We also weren't able to launch our inaugural Baker Arts Festival last spring for the same reason.

That said, we did manage to meet or exceed most of our 2021 goals. We increased membership, launched a new website, and digitized our oral histories. We also managed to accrue \$7,100 in sponsorships this past year. Many thanks to the Baker Lions Club and Florida

Humanities for helping us to exceed this goal. We will set 2022 goals at our annual meeting January 20. I'm sure they will be just as challenging.

In November 2021, the Board approved the purchase of museum inventory software. This is the first step toward beginning what will prove to be a momentous task as we try to wrap our arms around inventorying not only our artifacts, but also our research material. Any volunteers interested in helping with this undertaking can call the Museum at 850-537-5714.

Here's hoping for a healthier, happier New Year for 2022.

Tracy Curenton

Director's Notes

The North Okaloosa Historical Association board of directors and Baker Block Museum staff were very proud to celebrate the milestone of the museum's 25th anniversary during the past year.

While the celebration was huge and the highlight of the year, we were forced to cancel other annual events such as the Baker Heritage Festival and spring Art

Festival. We are optimistic that 2022 will be a better year and that we will be able to move forward with more events and community participation in the Museum and Heritage Park.

Due to the pandemic and circumstances surrounding it, we still do not have our inmate crew that does maintenance and cleaning of our facility.

Anyone who is interested

in helping during events or with general needs at the museum is always welcome.

We are extremely grateful for the community support shown to this organization during the years and continue to seek that help. Okaloosa County is a great place to live and we are proud to call it home.

Ann Spann

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**

Wedding in the Park



Chelsea Howard and Thomas Breaden say exchange vows on the cabin porch in the Heritage Park.



The scene is set for a reception following a wedding in the Heritage Park November 20, 2021.

The log cabins in the Jeanette and Charles Henderson Heritage Park were the setting for the November wedding of Chelsea Howard and Thomas Breaden. Newlyweds and guests enjoyed a reception under the Pavilion following the ceremony.

The Pavilion at the Heritage Park can be reserved for any number of events such as family reunions, school and church events, parties, get-togethers, receptions, and, yes weddings.

Reservations for half-day or whole-day events are required in advance. A reservation fee (applied to the reservation cost) and clean-up fee (refundable) are required.

For more details, contact the Museum:

Email: bakerblock.org
Phone: 850-537-5714

Renovation begins on one of Crestview's oldest residences

Text and photos by Brian Hughes



The sound of hammers, saws and pry bars ripping out nails, splintering wood, and ripping out commercial carpet now comes from the 95-year-old white, two-story house on Wilson Street as contractors begin turning the former residence into Crestview's new history museum.

Renovation work began December 28, 2021, at the Bush House, one of Crestview's oldest surviving residences. During its 95 years as a residence, boarding house, public offices, and even a storm shelter, the solidly built home was altered, refitted, and transformed with electrical conduit, bare fluorescent tubes, gray industrial carpet, and linoleum flooring.

Workers have torn out ductwork that probably dates from the 1970s and was so cumbersome in size that city staff joked someone could drive a Subaru through it. Several downstairs heating and A/C units have been removed, with another slated for removal

upstairs. Removing the units made the rooms they were housed in look bigger and more spacious.

So far, the renovation has revealed well-preserved heart pine floors hidden under old carpet, long-lost doorways, and fragments of wallpaper that will help restore some of the rooms to their 1920s grandeur to reflect the home of an upper-middle-class Crestview family in the '20s and '30s.

The renovation work is funded by a \$250,000 state grant and the City of Crestview's Community Redevelopment Agency money. Overall estimated cost for renovation is



A worker removes a heating unit from the corner of the Bush House front parlor, making the room seem larger. The ducts above him were also removed.



The north front porch decking is removed for replacement and the four front 6"x6" columns will be replaced. The actual columns were encased inside a painted wooden box made to look like concrete columns.



A formerly enclosed doorway into the large back room is revealed during renovation. Ductwork has been removed from the ceiling, and the removal of a fascia above the opening to the room shows what may have been the header of a single door. Pulling up the gray commercial carpeting revealed heart pine floors throughout much of the house. These will be sanded and refinished.



Laura and Lorenza Bush stand in their side yard in this photo from *Crestview: The Forkland* extensive history book.

\$329,800. Work is being done by Triple R Construction of Navarre.

Because no interior photographs or blueprints exist, the restoration will not be an exact recreation of what the house was like when the Bush family lived in it; however, the north front living room and dining room will be restored to period accuracy.

The museum's main exhibit room will be the house's southwest section, originally two separate rooms, plus a formerly open porch. These spaces were opened up into one large, unusually shaped room throughout the years.

Bush House

In 1925, Louisville & Nashville Railroad

supervisor of tracks Lorenza Bush began building his family—wife, Laura, and their two children, R.D. Girard and Beulah Opal—a handsome white clapboard house on the corner of Wilson Street and then-Chestnut Avenue (now Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue), just south of the tracks he supervised. The site was formerly a livery stable owned by “Cussing” Douglas, according to the *Crestview: The Forkland* history.

Bush, born in Alabama, began working with the L&N Railroad in 1894. He transferred to Pensacola before moving to Crestview in 1910 where he was supervisor of tracks. From his house on Wilson Street, he could see the tracks



Tanya Nunes, the great-great-granddaughter of Lorenza and Laura Bush, examines renovation details with Rick Rausch of Triple R Construction who is overseeing renovation of the 1926 Bush House.

and train depot to the north. Bush worked for L&N for 45 years until his retirement. He passed away at home at age 74 from a heart attack.

Special visitor

The renovation work's planned start date was pushed back a couple weeks while the city assisted Okaloosa County staff in moving the offices of Elder Services from the Bush House to the Tri-County Building behind the house on Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue.

The delay allowed a visit from a special guest before workers moved in.

Tanya Nunes, the great-great-granddaughter of the home's builders, Lorenza and Laura Bush, paid a visit December 27, 2021, and shared her memories of playing in the house as a little girl.

Without blueprints or interior photos to work from, Nunes' visit helped fill in some gaps in the city's Cultural Services' knowledge of the home. For example, what was correctly assumed to be the home's dining room was, in fact, only half the dining room. Feeding the unfortunate was high on Laura Bush's priority list, a benevolence that came full circle when the house also served in recent years as a distribution center for Meals on Wheels and similar food programs. As a generous woman of means, Laura Bush's spacious kitchen—which actually ran along most of the back of



Tanya Nunes shows contractor Rick Rausch the blanket her great aunts made from sewing two floor-length fur coats together. She is giving the coat to the museum for display.

the house—fed folks in her equally big dining room, which partially encompassed today's kitchen. "She fed anybody who needed it," Nunes said. "They (the Bush's) had money."

During the time of the Great Depression, Laura Bush helped provide work for the unemployed by having improvements and changes done to the house, which partially explains its interesting floor plan and surprise revelations as work progresses. "She had men working on it all the time," Nunes said. "Most of the men worked for free and she'd feed them."

People would also queue up at the back porch door where they would receive food to take home to their families. Today that porch has been partially closed off for storage but will be restored during the renovation.

During Nunes' visit, windows allowed a breeze to waft through the house. "They always had the windows open," Ms. Nunes said. "The porches were where you visited on a hot day, or where you sat and shelled pecans from the trees out back." Although the front porch remains, the south porch was enclosed and became part of the former kitchen. The back kitchen porch will be restored.

While visiting, Nunes presented a heavy black blanket to be displayed in the new museum. It was made by her great-aunts by sewing two floor-length fur coats together.

Growing the collection



Family members of A.B. Moore dropped by the Museum last quarter and donated two portraits of the former mercantile store owner. Arthur Belah Moore's father, Z.W. Moore, owned and operated the Z.W. Moore General Merchandise located in the Baker Block buildings beginning in 1910. After his father passed away, Belah continued running the store. Eventually his cousin, Jack King took over the Baker Mercantile which operated continuously until it eventually closed in 1992.



Moore was a member of the board of trustees of the Okaloosa County Hospital System. He was also a rural mail carrier as well as Baker's postmaster from 1941-1943. Moore was a member of Mt. Ewell Masonic Lodge No. 131 in Baker, a Shriner, a member of the board of directors of the local REA cooperative, and officer and member of the board of directors of the Bank of Crestview. He died in Baker in 1967.

Renovation is tentatively scheduled for completion in mid- to late-April. Until then, members of the Crestview Historic Preservation Board will be working with the city's Cultural Services to create exhibits and determine what parts of the county seat's heritage to focus on.

As a member of the Bush family, Nunes is eagerly looking forward to following the renovation progress and maybe reliving some memories from her childhood, such as swinging in the front porch swing. "I remember we used to swing so high we'd go out over the bushes" behind them, she said.

Brian Hughes is a member of the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., is a Cultural Services Specialist for the City of Crestview, a journalist, and an historian.



**‘The difficult we do right away.
The impossible takes a little longer.’**

Gladys N. Milton

The sunset of midwifery in Florida almost set after one fateful delivery in 1987. On that December day, Gladys Milton, 63, Northwest Florida’s oldest lay midwife, fought to bring to life a stillborn infant who got stuck in the birth canal due of a condition called shoulder dystocia. Despite all the heroic efforts, the baby never took its first breath.

The Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, looking for any reason to end the lay midwife program statewide, seized the opportunity to suspend, then revoke, Milton’s midwife license, one she’d held since 1959 when the state first recruited her for the lay midwife program.

Gladys Milton was a force to be reckoned with. While she stated in her autobiography that she wasn’t “the fighting kind,” she also wasn’t ready to hang up her midwife spurs and quietly ride off into the retirement sunset. With the backing of lay midwives in Florida and across the country, and a huge fan base at home as well as in the state legislature, Milton faced down her accusers and eventually regained her license. Her battle solidified the practice of midwifery in the state of Florida for years to come.

During her 40 years as a practicing midwife, Gladys Milton delivered more than 3,000 babies in northwest Walton and Okaloosa counties, and southern Covington and Geneva counties in Alabama.

Gladys Delores Nichols was born in Caney Creek in Florida’s northwest Walton County in May 1924. She was delivered by a midwife, as were most babies from poor rural families, regardless of race. According to Milton’s autobiography, *Why Not Me?*, her mother, Lillie Mae Anderson, was only 14, and her father, Lonnie Nichols (or Nicholson), was 16 when they married in 1923. When Milton was seven years old, her baby sister died from colitis and the family fell on hard times. Lonnie left to look for work and never came back. Lillie Mae’s older sister, Maggie Lesure, took Gladys in and raised her for the next seven years. Lillie

Mae remarried and Gladys and her brother James, who had been sent to live with his Uncle Simon, rejoined her mother and new stepfather, Fremon Laton, at his farm in Paxton, Florida.

Milton had two children out of wedlock as a teenager: Henry Cephus in 1941 and Mabelois in 1942. She married her first husband, J.D. Russell (unrelated to her first two children) in 1946, but they soon divorced. Her second husband, Huey Milton, was a childhood friend from the Paxton/Flowersview, Florida, area. They married in 1947 and settled down in Flowersview. Three years later, they welcomed twin girls, Eleanor and Elinor. A year after that, Tyler Kent was born, then Deborah in 1954, and

finally Maria in 1957. Of her seven children, only the first two, Henry and Mabelois, were delivered by a midwife; the others were delivered by a doctor.

Becoming a midwife

In 1958, through a chance meeting with a health department nurse, Milton was recruited to become a midwife because of the critical need for delivery service in poor rural areas of northwest Florida. Before Medicaid, the Florida health department actively recruited and trained midwives to help take care of women who did not have access to medical care due to poverty, segregation, and who lived in remote rural areas. According to the 1931 Florida Midwifery Act, Milton had to study under the guidance of a doctor and witness at least 15 deliveries before she could be licensed to practice on her own. She trained under two doctors at the Florala Medical and Surgical Clinic at night, the only birthing center for miles, while maintaining a household and caring for a family of seven children. After witnessing 25 deliveries, Milton received her lay midwife license in 1959. In 1968, she became a licensed practical nurse and worked in the obstetrics section at the Mizell Memorial Hospital in Opp, Alabama.

After she received her license, for the next 17 years, Milton traveled a 25-mile circuit, during all hours of the day and night, throughout north Walton and Okaloosa counties in Florida, and south Covington and Geneva counties in Alabama, delivering babies and providing prenatal and postpartum care in the homes of her patients who couldn't afford expensive doctor and hospital care.

In April 1976, Milton opened the Eleanor Milton Memorial Birthing Clinic, named after her daughter who, along with her brother, Kent, were killed by a drunk driver as they were headed to the Paxton High School homecoming game in 1973. Eleanor had wanted to become a midwife like her mother.

The birthing clinic was a one-room add-

Milestones

- **1959 begins practice as a midwife**
- **1972 Walton County director of Tri-County Community Council**
- **1976 opens birthing clinic in April; burns to the ground in August**
- **1977 birthing clinic is rebuilt**
- **1979 clinic burns again**
- **1980 clinic rebuilt and renamed Milton Memorial Birthing Center**
- **1982 appointed to State midwife advisory committee**
- **1983 first "family" reunion held**
- **1985 State attempts to shut clinic**
- **November 1988 license is suspended**
- **October 1989 license is revoked**
- **August 1991 license is reinstated**

on to the Milton house. With its opening, Milton could deliver babies at her home rather than drive all over the four-county area like she had for the past 17 years. Less than four months later, however, a lightning strike burned the house and clinic to the ground. With insurance money, a little money left over after funeral and hospital expenses, and with help from family and friends, Huey Milton rebuilt the home and clinic and it reopened in 1977. Unfortunately, the clinic and house burned again in 1979. This time the cause was an electrical fire. With community help from hospitals and businesses, Huey Milton once again rebuilt the home and clinic. It reopened in 1981.

Community service

Because of her connection with poorer rural areas, in 1972, Milton joined the board of directors of the Tri-County Community Council as a Walton County director. Founded in 1965, the council was a community action agency designed to develop and implement programs to serve the poor and eliminate poverty. In 1982, the Florida's secretary of the state Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services appointed Milton to the Florida Midwifery Advisory Council whose task was to develop rules regarding midwife responsibilities,



establish approved training programs, and determine the fate of unlicensed midwives. The direct result was the Midwifery Practice Act of 1982 which stated midwives must have three years of formal training at one of two established schools, the North

Florida School of Midwifery in Gainesville, and the South Florida School of Midwifery in Miami. Additionally, due to an amendment to the law, midwife licenses would not be issued to anyone after 1984 unless they were already enrolled in a midwifery school prior to 1984.

The fight is on

The Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services wanted to phase lay midwives out in favor of registered nurse midwives who delivered babies in a hospital environment rather than at home. Toward that end, DHRS began turning up the heat on Milton and closed her birthing center in September 1985, charging improper ventilation and paperwork violations. It took 20 months to satisfy the paperwork requirements, \$2,000 for physical improvements, and a \$425 licensing fee, before the facility was allowed to reopen in May 1987. It sported a new window air conditioning unit, two hospital beds, an incubator, and a handmade rocking chair. It also opened with a new name: the Milton Memorial Birthing Center.

In July 1988, DHRS sent Milton a letter thanking her for her many years of service and inviting her to retire, otherwise she would face an administrative hearing surrounding the December 1987 stillbirth. Charges against Milton claimed she accepted a patient even though the patient smoked a pack of cigarettes a day and had poor prenatal care during her 10th to 35th week of pregnancy, a violation of DHRS rules. She was also charged with failure to refer the mother-to-be to a physician after

the baby was determined to weigh more than 8.8 pounds. There were about seven charges in all. Milton denied all of them and hired an attorney who took the case pro bono.

A hearing was held in Crestview in April 1989. The only lay midwife in northwest Florida at that time, Milton had delivered more than 2,000 babies at that point in her 30-year career. The Department of Rehabilitative Services suspended Milton's license that November. Then, in October 1989, her license was revoked. She appealed and the 1st District Court of Appeal and a state hearing officer ruled that the baby's death was insufficient grounds for the revocation. By November 1991, Milton was again delivering babies after a three-year break in service.

Education

Milton was a believer in education, and worked hard for her high school diploma, lay midwife license, and RN certificate. She dropped out of high school when she became pregnant. However, later, when Milton was 29 years old, she moved 30 miles from Flowersview to Baker, living with Liller Williams so she could attend Drew School's evening adult classes to earn her last two credits needed for graduation. In 1951, the first graduating class of Drew School consisted of two people, Milton and Williams.

Later, when she decided to become a midwife, Milton took care of her family during the day and trained at night in Florala. She went on to earn her RN certificate while working at the hospital in Opp in the evenings, delivering babies there and in homes in the four-county area.

Honors

- 1992 Sage Femme, Midwives Alliance of North America
- 1994 Florida Women's Hall of Fame
- Gladys N. Milton Memorial Library
- 2001 Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame
- 2015 named "Woman of Light" by DeFuniak Springs Women's Club

Milton made sure all her children were able to attend and finish college. Henry, now Dr. Tariq H. Abdullah, became a pathologist. Mabelois taught English and Elinor became a special education teacher. Deborah became an accountant. Maria, after earning her premedical biology degree from Howard University, decided to follow in her mother's footsteps and became a midwife, gaining her license in 1990.

As a tribute to Milton's years of promoting the need for a library in north Walton County, Flowersview now has one of only four library branches, known as the Gladys N. Milton Memorial Library named in her honor.

Legacy

Gladys Milton continued to deliver babies into the 1990s with the help of her youngest

daughter, Maria, by her side. She eventually turned full-time duties of the birthing center over to Maria. In 1996, Milton suffered a heart attack, but seemed to bounce back. However, she passed away at home in 1999 from complications associated with her heart.

Milton is considered a folk hero and pioneer among Florida's midwives because of her 40-year career. In 1994, Governor Lawton Chiles named her to the Florida Women's Hall of Fame. She was posthumously appointed to the Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame in 2001. And in 2015, the DeFuniak Springs Women's Club named her a "Woman of Light."

For a complete timeline of Florida midwifery, visit the Florida School of Traditional Midwifery website at <https://www.midwiferyschool.org/history-florida-midwifery>.



Legacy lives on

Daughter walks in mothers footsteps

Like her mother before her, Maria Milton, daughter of pioneer lay midwife Gladys Milton, is one of only a few Florida licensed midwives in northwest Florida. She celebrated her 38th year as a midwife in April 2021 and has assisted more than 600 women deliver babies. According to Florida's Department of Health "Annual Report of Midwifery Practice," there were 191 active licensed midwives in the 2020 fiscal year. Of those, Maria is the only one in Walton County.

While her mother was referred to as a "lay" midwife (or the dated "granny" midwife), according to Maria, today's preferred term is license midwife, or LM. All midwives, whether they're licensed or nurse midwives, are only allowed to deliver low-risk pregnancies. All others must be referred to a physician.

Maria, who graduated from Florida A&M University with a premedical biology degree, is also a licensed

clinical laboratory technician and is qualified in microbiology, serology, clinical chemistry, hematology, and immunohematology. She made the change from becoming a physician to midwifery while helping her mother deliver babies in 1984. For her, the decision was an easy one. "As medicine changed from general practitioners to specialists, doctors started caring less about their patients and more about the money," she

said. She saw doctors taking advantage of the health care system, making deals with drug companies, and, in her eyes, were scared to care about their patients. "I didn't want any part of that," she said. "We [midwives] do this because it's the right thing to do."

Getting her license was a drawn-out battle with the state of Florida. Maria was already enrolled in the North Florida School of Midwifery in Gainesville when the

Midwifery Practice Act of 1982 was amended that stated only those already licensed or enrolled in school would be allowed to be licensed. The state was attempting to phase out midwifery practice. As a result, Maria was denied her license twice before she appealed to the state supreme court. It took her four years of school and three years of legal battles before she received her license in 1990.

Back when her mother first began delivering babies, using a midwife was a way for pregnant women with no money, no insurance, and no other option, to have a safe birth, said Maria. When her mother received her license, she made one dollar an hour.

“I give quality care, the kind of care I would want.”

By the mid-1980s, charges for her services had increased to \$400 for delivery care.

Today, Maria charges significantly more for her services. “I charge a flat

\$4,000 fee,” she said. “That covers prenatal, birth and postnatal care. I’m expensive, but I’m not cheap. I give quality care, the kind of care I would want,” much like her mother’s Golden Rule motto: do unto others. The birthing fee must be paid in full by 36 weeks, “then there’s nothing else to worry about by the time the baby is born,” she said.

Maria, like her mother, is concerned about the whole person, not just the pregnancy. To have a healthy birth, the mother must be healthy herself, including eating a balanced diet. Cravings so often associated with pregnancy is the result of a diet imbalance, according to

Maria. During a natural childbirth, she allows her mothers to eat and drink, something not allowed in hospitals during the time leading up to delivery. “Mothers need to keep their strength up,” she said.

According to the annual report, Of the 2,022 midwife-assisted births in fiscal

year 2020, 43 percent were delivered at birthing centers such as the Milton Memorial Birthing. More than half, were delivered at home.

Besides licensed midwives, there are also nurse midwives. Registered nurses who want

“We need to make sure everybody gets the care they need.”

to practice midwifery must take additional courses to become licensed. They work out of hospitals, and do not travel to deliveries. And while it’s not required, many carry malpractice insurance much as a doctor would. Licensed midwives, on the other hand, are authorized to deliver a baby in a home environment.

Maria emphatically believes nurse midwives need to practice as a midwife rather than as a nurse. “We’re a midwife first,” she said. “Nurses need to be a midwife first, not a nurse, during birth. We’ve all got our place. We need to make sure everybody gets the care they need.”

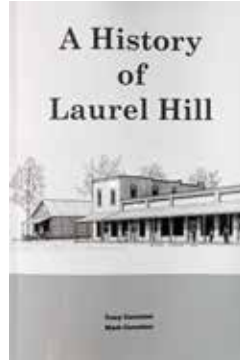
Stephanie Holcombe is a North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., board member, editor of the North Okaloosa Historical Quarterly, and Baker Block Museum webmaster.

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.**



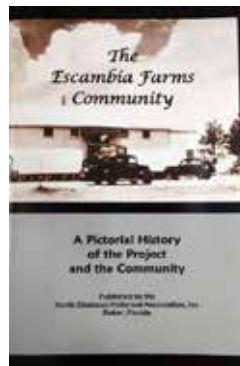
Give me the Grace to Shout and Shine, the newest book in the history series, focuses on the three most prominent gospel singing methods in the northwest Florida panhandle throughout the years: Sacred Harp, also known as fasola, five- or seven-shape note convention singing, and later, the gospel quartet.



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.



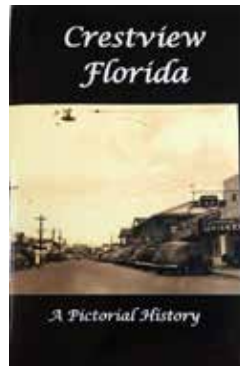
Turpentine in the Florida Panhandle casts turpentine as a significant element impacting the way of life in the Northwest Florida panhandle. It describes an integrated experience—culture, industry, and human condition—in the lives of those who lived it.



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

Getting back to normal



Workers from Hub City Glass repair fire damage along the the Museum's porch December 9, 2021, from the May RV fire (above).

Repair work from a May fire incident in front of the Museum is nearing completion.

In an emergency situation, the drivers of an RV abandoned their burning vehicle in front of the Museum May 16, 2021. The 38-foot Tradewinds RV was a total loss, but thanks to the quick action of Baker Fire District, with the support of Holt Fire District, the Museum was saved from extensive damage even as flames from the burning motor home reached above the building roof line.

Damage was limited to about two dozen or so windows either cracked or broken from the heat of the fire, blistered paint, a warped door leading into the Baker Mercantile gift shop and melted plastic on the vintage parking meter in front of the building.

The building did receive fire damage, but it was limited to the front porch. Fire charred the

front-facing boards along half of the leading edge of the porch. In addition to repairing the porch, Hub City Glass replaced all broken and cracked windows November 24, 2021.



Flames from a burning RV reach above the roof line at the Baker Block Museum May 16, 2021.

Museum receives Florida Humanities grant

The North Okaloosa Historical Association, Inc., was a recipient of a Florida Humanities COVID-19 grant in November.

The \$4,500 grant, presented by the Florida Humanities Council, the statewide nonprofit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, is to help offset general operating costs to help recover from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The NEH received \$135

million from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 that was approved by Congress during the spring congressional session last year. State humanities councils, including Florida Humanities, each received a portion of the NEH award to support museums, archives, historic sites, and other humanities-focused nonprofits.

NOHA was one of 129 Florida organizations awarded



ARP funding, and one of only seven in the northwest Florida Panhandle. Florida Humanities received 188 applications for ARP funding with nonprofits receiving the most funds for staffing and utilities.

Donation received from von Axelson family

The Baker Block Museum received a generous \$300 donation from Mary A. Cone, the granddaughter of Eric von Axelson, the “founder of Laurel Hill.” The donation was presented to the museum in the name of the von Axelson family. Eric von Axelson was a Swedish immigrant who came to the Laurel Hill area in 1894 to work for the Yellow River Railroad—a logging railroad—

as land commissioner. His job was to sell the land once all the timber was removed.

Von Axelson enthusiastically promoted the area in northern newspapers as the “Highlands of West Florida,” publicizing the healthy climate and rich farmland. His efforts saw Laurel Hill become Okaloosa County’s first incorporated town where he served a mayor and postmaster.



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Membership News

NOHA Board Members

- **President - Tracy Curenton**
- **Vice President - Vacant**
- **Treasurer - Sharry Rustin**
- **Secretary - Stephanie Holcombe**

Members:

**Joyce Arnett
Larry Bulger
Mike Bush
Doug Hibbing
Lucille King
Brenda Russell**

Emeritus Members:

**Judy Cadenhead
Phyllis Enzor
Jeanette Henderson**

2021 Goals

- **Increase membership by 30% — completed**
- **Apply for an historical marker for the museum building**
- **Redesign Baker Block Museum website — completed in March**
- **Accrue \$5,000 in sponsorships — \$7,100 received**
- **Begin to digitize the oral histories — completed in April**

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

January							February							March						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1			1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	4	5
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
16	17	18	19	20	21	21	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
22	24	25	26	27	28	19	27	28						27	28	29	30	31		
30	31																			

- 1 New Year's Day
- 15 **3rd Saturday:**
Museum open from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
- 17 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 20 North Okaloosa Historical Association Board meeting, 6 p.m.

- 13 Super Bowl Sunday
- 14 Valentine's Day
- 17 North Okaloosa Historical Association Board meeting, 6 p.m.
- 19 **3rd Saturday:**
Museum open from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
- 21 Presidents' Day

- 1 Mardi Gras
- 2 Ash Wednesday
- 17 St. Patrick's Day North Okaloosa Historical Association Board meeting, 6 p.m.
- 19 **3rd Saturday:**
Museum open from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

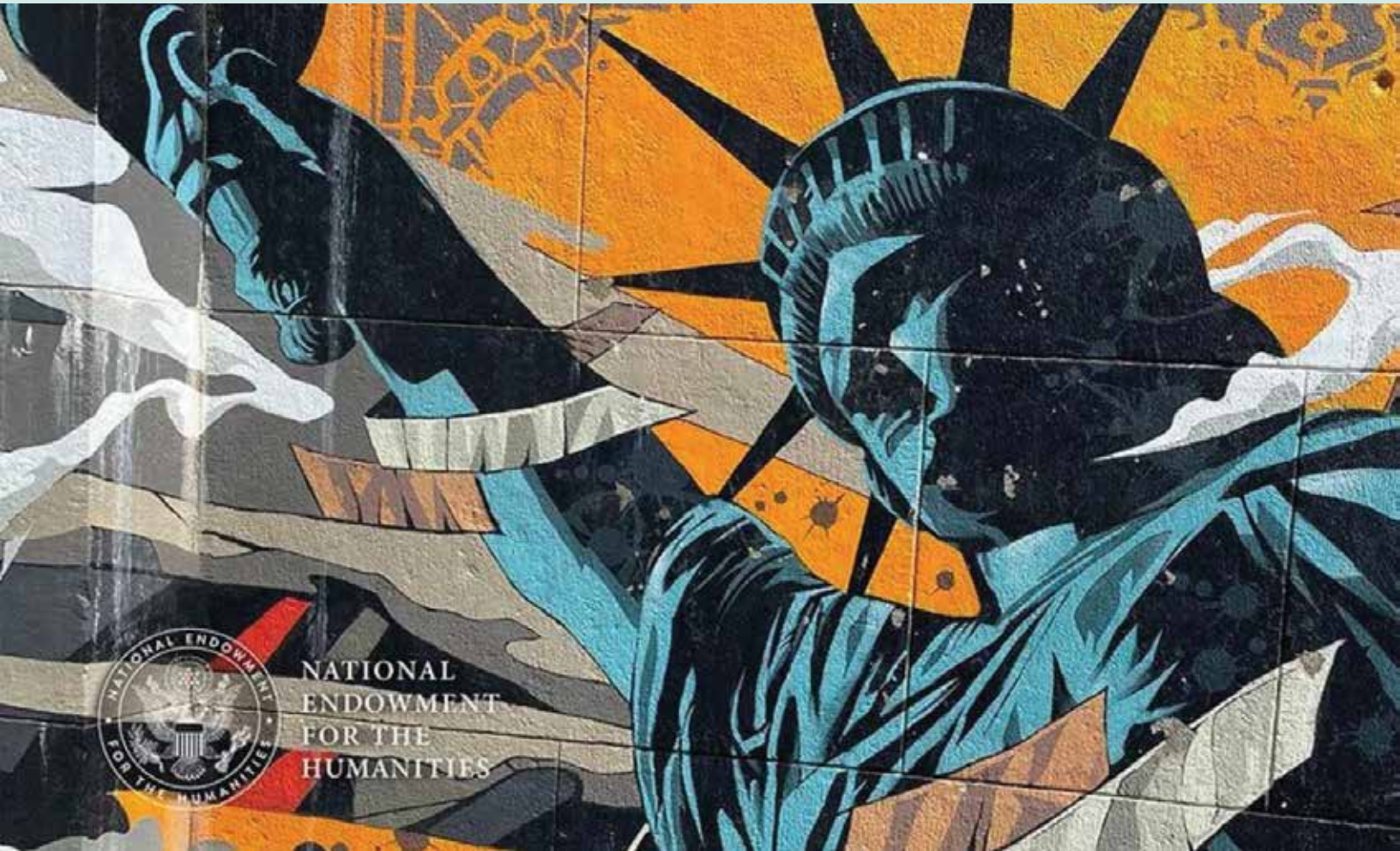


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at the Baker Block
Museum **GIFT STORE**



Florida

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American Rescue Plan
COVID Relief Funding**

**A grant to help recipients
recover from the economic
impact of the COVID-19
pandemic**