



# TIMELINES

FRIENDS OF THE COLLIER COUNTY MUSEUM

FALL 1998

3301 Tamiami Trail East

Naples, Florida 34112

(941) 774-8476

Volume IV, No.3

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*Editor, Arthur R. Lee*

In connection with the Swamp Buggy exhibit, there will be a reception for all Friends' members and officers, owners and drivers of Swamp Buggy, Incorporated. Individual invitations will advise as to time and place.

## MUSEUM EVENTS BACK-TO-BACK

### Evolution of Swamp Buggy Show Oct. 10-18

by Peter Blackford

*The Swamp Buggy - Then and Now a part of Naples History*

One of the memorable parts of the Museum's permanent collection, an antique swamp buggy, will be getting lots of company beginning on Saturday, October 10.

Through the cooperation of Swamp Buggies Inc. (another Naples non-profit organization), we will be tracing the historical development of this unique form of transportation.

A southwest Florida phenomenon, centered in Collier County, the first buggies utilized Model T Ford running gear and oversized tires (often pirated from aircraft landing gear) decades before the current "monster trucks" were conceived. Born of necessity, it wasn't long before the competitive nature of man began to match performance of the buggies in the form of staged races.

The buggies which will be exhibited include examples of the earliest "woods buggies" from which the current "racing buggies" descended. Even though the size of some of these vehicles makes ONE of them a large-enough "collection", there are currently FOURTEEN planned for the event!

Six will represent the early types of buggies (including the oldest known example), and eight will be of the more modern style representing many competitive classes and championship winners.

### Annual Old Florida Festival Nov. 14, 15

Final arrangements are being made for the 10th annual Old Florida Festival, to be held November 14 and 15 on the Museum grounds. This year's observance, notes Director Ron Jamro, will feature the centennial of the Spanish American war, in which Florida figured largely, and Collier county's 75th anniversary.

History literally comes alive during the festival, as costumed interpreters re-enact historic events and demonstrate traditional crafts and musicians play tunes of long ago in the Museum's oldest and best known cultural event.

There is a serious purpose to the event -- the preservation of local traditions and folkways that are rapidly disappearing from our daily

Members of the Marco Island Historical Society are enthusiastic backers of the Old Florida Festival.

Last year representatives of the organization were present both days in period costume, strolling about the grounds and explaining to visitors events, costumes, and life-styles of the periods they represented.

Three months before this year's Festival the Society mailed the Friends treasurer a check in support, the first contribution for the event.

lives -- but the history lessons are well sugar coated by the festive at-

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## MUSEUM GOERS GET CORRESPONDENT'S INSIDE VIEW OF SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

Museum visitors are getting an insider's look at the Spanish-American war.

The conflict, whose most publicized theater was in Cuba, has been called the "newspaper" war because of the role the press, notably the competing New York newspaper publishers William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, played in promoting it in furtherance of their rivalry.

Newspapers and press associations flooded the arena with correspondents, even chartering courier boats to carry their dispatches from Cuba to telegraph stations at Key West.

One of those correspondents, Benjamin Heald of the New York Sun, kept a personal file of photographs of the conflict, especially the naval operations off Santiago de Cuba as seen from the USS New York, flagship of Admiral William T. Sampson. A set of his photographs was found in the attic of his home, and they have been made available to the Museum for its 100th anniversary exhibit, which opened Sept. 8 and will continue until November 30.

Curator Nancy E. Olson notes that the exhibit also includes uniforms and weapons used during the conflict. There is no admission charge.

### HELP WANTED!

Applications are still being accepted for the newly-created position of volunteer coordinator. It's a part-time position which pays \$5,500 a year, the costs being shared between the Friends of the Museum organization and the county.

Duties are wide-ranging and a premium in hiring will be placed on imagination, initiative, and skill in working with people, according to Director Ron Jamro. Obvious tasks are assignment and instruction of volunteers, but a good deal of initiative is expected in making maximum use of volunteer workers to further the goals of the institution.

Museum telephone number is (941)774-8476.

### BUGGIES from Page 1

Many of Naples' oldest families have been involved in this sport over the years, and the Friends thought it appropriate to provide recognition in the form of a special exhibition. This display will be in place only from October 10 through 18, so time is very limited to share this part of our history with children (of all ages) and other members of the community.

**EARLY Buggies** committed to the exhibit include:

**TUMBLE BUG**, built by Ed Frank and run in the original Swamp Buggy Race, is now owned by Paul Frank.

**POGO**, built in 1953 and in continuous operation ever since. It is owned by Ray and Mark Carroll, grandsons of builder Capt. Ernie Carroll.

**GOBBLER**, also built in 1953, by Arthur Stewart, is currently owned by Jim Stewart.

**Unnamed**, built by Bill Parker, is now owned by Kim Griffin.

**FLYING SAUCER** was built by R.L. Walker prior to 1952 and is now owned by Sam Snell.

**RAMBLER**, built prior to 1951 by Leon McCormick and owned by Joe Smith Jr. Gary Cooper was once photographed riding in this buggy.

And the NEW:

**SHOWDOWN**, a V8 buggy owned by Albert Doria.

**SECRET WEAPON**, representing the Jeep class, owned by Rick and Peggy Johnson.

**AQUARIUS III**, a pro-modified buggy owned by John Fillmore and driven by Mike Fillmore.

**PORKEY'S DISORDERLY CONDUCT**, another V8, owned by Glenn Weber and driven by Ernie McCormick.

**RUBBER DUCK**, a pro-modified buggy (and veteran of an international tour to France), owned by Terry Langford.

**OUTLAW**, a popular modified buggy, owned by Lonnie Chesser and driven by Eddie Chesser.

## Mme. Potier of Lattes Retrieves France's Reputation

Liliane Potier of Lattes\* has retrieved France's reputation as the source of adventurous souls who have peeked under the rugs of the world's most remote and exotic places.

Last July she signed the guest book at the Museum, sparing her nation from being the only major European power whose tourists have not visited the attraction. She wrote that she found the Museum "very interesting."

Among the more off-beat nations recently represented by museum-goers is Thailand, joining the Philippines and Okinawa from Asia.

A compilation kept by Volunteer Kitty Hirschmann the past two years showed tourists at the Museum from all major European countries, all 50 states, six Canadian provinces, nearly all corners of the United Kingdom, plus the West Indies, South America, Asia and South Asia.

Signing the book is voluntary and thus it does not have the names of all those who have toured the attraction.

\*You're not being had: "Lattes" is not the plural of an up-scale *cafe au lait*; it's a community just off the Mediterranean coast west of Marseille where it curves south toward the resort city of Perpignon, the old Catalan capital.

### Director Hart Resigns

Jacqui Hart, a Friends' board member since 1996, has submitted her resignation because of the press of family obligations. She chaired a successful Black Cultural Festival last February 14 and 15, timed to coincide with Black History Month.

Acting Friends chair Denyse Smith Mesnik expressed her thanks for Ms Hart's efforts on behalf of the organization's activities.

**LMEAN YO**, representing the 6-cylinder class, owned and driven by Pete Weeks.

**LADY BUG**, representing the 4-cylinder class, owned and driven by Tricia Turner

## FESTIVAL from Page 1 Educational -- But A Rollicking Good Time for All mosphere of the light hearted celebration.

The activities are funded by the Friends of the Museum organization, with the support of the area's business and professional community, which recognizes its importance in providing a common background for the county's somewhat disparate population. Proceeds will go to the *Museum Express*, a program through which the Friends organization helps schools pay for children's bus trips to the Museum.

Educators value the authenticity of the colorful living history events which run through the two days. Reenactments and displays are open to the public from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. both days in the shaded museum grounds. Costumed re-enactors and craft workers display historic artifacts and materials in their camps and encourage questions from visitors. Period vendors or *sutlers* offer reproductions, art, food, and historically correct gift items for sale.

**Grounds to have 21 "Camps"**

Cultural themes will be separated in the museum grounds with some 21 distinct areas (camps) being devoted to such groups as the first Floridians, the Calusa and the Seminoles; the Spanish, colonial, Seminole wars, Civil war, pioneer crackers and cow hunters. Touring them, visitors will have a walk through time.

The Festival will offer daily performances by entertainers and folk musicians; three different musical groups have signed on. The program will be hosted on stage by Dr. Paul Esterline and his medicine show, a popular personality from past festivals.

A new feature this year will be a special performance, *Timelines*, in the Museum's newly completed lecture hall. The program -- patterned after a Victorian evening's home entertainment -- will be held Saturday from 7 to 9 p.m. and will feature historical impressions, "recitations," short talks, period music and dance.

## OLD TIMERS REUNION NOV. 29 AT SPORTS PARK

Have you been a resident of Naples since before Hurricane Donna?

If so, you are eligible to attend the "Old Timers Reunion" to be held Nov. 29 at the Florida Sports Park, re-titled "Celebration Gardens."

The organizers welcome you to join the fellowship and share memories, laughs and hugs with the folks you don't get to see as often as you used to. Festivities begin at 1 p.m. and lunch will be served shortly thereafter; cost is \$23 and reservations are required. You can arrange for them and get more information from Thelma Hodges at 262-6441 or Denyse Smith Mesnik at 455-4234.

*Museum grounds are in peak condition for the upcoming busy season: new sod has been laid, trees are mulched, ornamental rocks have been placed. Nice!*

## B O O M ! You're on next!

In the circus, the ringmaster signals a change of act with a crack of his whip.

At the Museum's Old Florida Festival changes of activities will be signaled by the boom of a cannon.

In the past, cannoneers have fired off their weapons pretty much at will, sometimes, unfortunately, interrupting other acts or activities. This year, to give enactors a chance to make their presentations without distraction, but still to give the artillerymen an opportunity to set off their satisfactory bangs, the weapons will be fired on the hour to signal changes of performances.

have two children, Joshua (6) and Rachael (5). When not volunteering, she is an executive assistant to the CEO of Beasley Broadcast Group. Her husband's business, Michael Mesnik Fine Picture Framing, was established in Naples in 1972.

## Meet the Veep

*Here's the lady who has so competently guided the Friends organization in the absence of the president:*

The Collier County Museum is mostly about the history of this area, and who better to be a part of its preservation effort than the Friends' vice-president and summer-season chair, Denyse Smith Mesnik, a native Neapolitan and seventh generation Floridian?

Her grandparents, W. Roy and Geraldine Smith, moved to Naples in 1936 and are remembered for their work with the Standard Oil bulk plant, Comb's Fish company, and other businesses they established such as the Naples Grocery Store, Smith Furniture Store and W. Roy Smith & Co., realtors. W. Roy Smith was Naples' longest-serving mayor (1946-60), nursing the town through its city charter and the Make Naples a Better Place to Live plan, which provided initial funding for such institutions as Naples Community Hospital, Cambier Park, beach restoration and mosquito control.

Her parents, John and Sue Smith, owned Smith Leshner Insurance, Inc., from 1966 through the mid-70s. Within weeks of Hurricane Donna Smith Leshner distributed initial payments of over \$1,000,000.

Her sweetest memory is riding her bike around Old Naples as a child. "I grew up on 11th Avenue, and everything was a bike ride away, the Beach store, the movie theater, and businesses on Third Street and Fifth Avenue where everyone knew who you were."

A Friends board member since 1996, she explains: "It's an honor for me to give of my time to the Museum. My family taught me, early on, the importance of giving back to the community in which you live... it's easy to do that when the community means so much to you personally. Preserving what is left of Naples' history is so important: it's a sweet history molded by the efforts of honest, hard-working people."

She and her husband Michael

## Cooper Rides Again -- On Rambler



One of the older Swamp Buggies in the display at the Museum is Rambler, shown above being piloted by the late film star Gary Cooper. The photo was shot in 1951, and Rambler is still going strong. (Photo courtesy Doris Reynolds and Collier County Printing Company.)

**Next Friends meetings: Oct. 8 and Nov. 12 at 6 p.m.**

## MUSEUM HEAD LAUDS WORK OF VOLUNTEERS

The importance of volunteers to our society was stressed by Dona M. Ridewood, manager of the Museum of the Everglades in Everglades City, the first satellite of the Collier County Museum.

In a letter to the editor of the Naples Daily News rebutting one critical of volunteers she noted that volunteers' "contributions of time and expertise have helped control expenses that would have so hobbled some institutions that they could never have opened their doors to the public or provided services essential to the community." A large number of volunteer organizations "signals a caring and committed community," she concluded.



### JUST THE FACTS

#### The COLLIER COUNTY MUSEUM

*Address:* 3301 Tamiami Trail E,  
Naples, FL 34112  
*Hours:* 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.- Friday  
*Admission:* FREE  
*Phone:* (941) 774-8476  
*FAX:* (941) 774-8580  
*The Museum is wheel chair accessible*



#### FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM

*Regular meetings:*  
Second Thursday of every month  
*Time:* 6 p.m.  
*Place:* Lecture hall/Library  
*All members are welcome*  
*Address:* P. O. Box 2181, Naples, FL 34106  
*Phone:* (941) 774-8724

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P. O. Box 2181  
Naples, Florida 34106

