



“YOUR TICKET TO THE PAST”



Membership Newsletter May, 2026 Edition

The day has finally arrived. Visitors will be welcomed to the newly installed baseball exhibits on **May 9th.**

Baseball themed items - key chains, T-shirts, coasters, & magnets - can be purchased from our gift shop .

Both Hal McRae and Thomas “Flash” Gordon will be signing autographs. Bring a cap, glove or baseball for them to sign. Mural postcards will also be available to be autographed.

A new exhibit has been added to the Military room. Learn more about the Bombing Range and one soldier’s time in Avon Park during World War II.

★ EVERYONE IS INVITED FOR A ★

RIBBON CUTTING AND GRAND OPENING

BASEBALL CITY DEPOT MUSEUM

Saturday, May 9, 2026
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

- Come experience Avon Park’s rich history in baseball!
- Meet hometown heroes and Major League greats **Hal McRae** and **Thomas “Flash” Gordon**

Music • Hotdogs • Hamburgers • Kona Ice



HISTORY NOTES



Have you ever wondered about the origin of certain place names? Some like City Hall, the South Side and Orangewood Drive are obvious. Others, especially those that are ‘people’ names, may well have an interesting story behind them. A museum volunteer was curious to know how Arbuckle Creek got its name. Her research revealed the following information.

Zachary Taylor, who later became the 12th president of the United States, spent some years of his military career in Florida involved in the Seminole Wars. He had forts built including Fort Bassinger and Fort Arbuckle in what is now Highlands County. When forts were first built, the small outposts were more than just places to store supplies and prepare for battles. They were also the area's earliest war memorials. Many of the forts that eventually dotted the area were named for fallen soldiers. Others were named for men who had won respect over the course of various wars.

Brigadier General Matthew Arbuckle, born in Oklahoma, rose through the military ranks in regiments throughout the South. He was assigned to posts during the War of 1812 and spent some time as an aide on the staff of Major General Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans. Following the war, Arbuckle was responsible for maintaining peace among the settlers and Seminoles and facilitated the emigration of the Seminoles to the West. The fort on a site that is now part of the Avon Park Air Force Range, the exact location is unverified, is named for Matthew Arbuckle. The creek and some of the roads in the vicinity of where the fort was located bear the name Arbuckle as well.

The naming of the forts has had the intended effect - even years later, the men remain memorialized in books and on historical markers that tell each tiny fort's history.

Can anyone help us to identify the soldier pictured here? This framed photo was found recently in the museum collection, with no identifying information.



A museum visitor would like to know more about the cement checker board table that used to be on the Mall. The game of checkers was once a favorite way to pass the time and visit with friends. If anyone has photos or can provide information or photos, we would be happy to learn more about that piece of Avon Park history, stop by the museum or call 863-453-3525 if the museum is not open.



❖ UP-COMING EVENT ❖

The Depot Museum will join other Main Street businesses and observe the Fourth of July with extended hours on Saturday, the 4th of July.



The museum will be open from 10 to 3 as usual. Beginning at 3 pm, the dining car will be open until 7 pm. Root beer floats and deep dish apple pie, berry and peach cobbler desserts all served with vanilla ice cream will be sold.



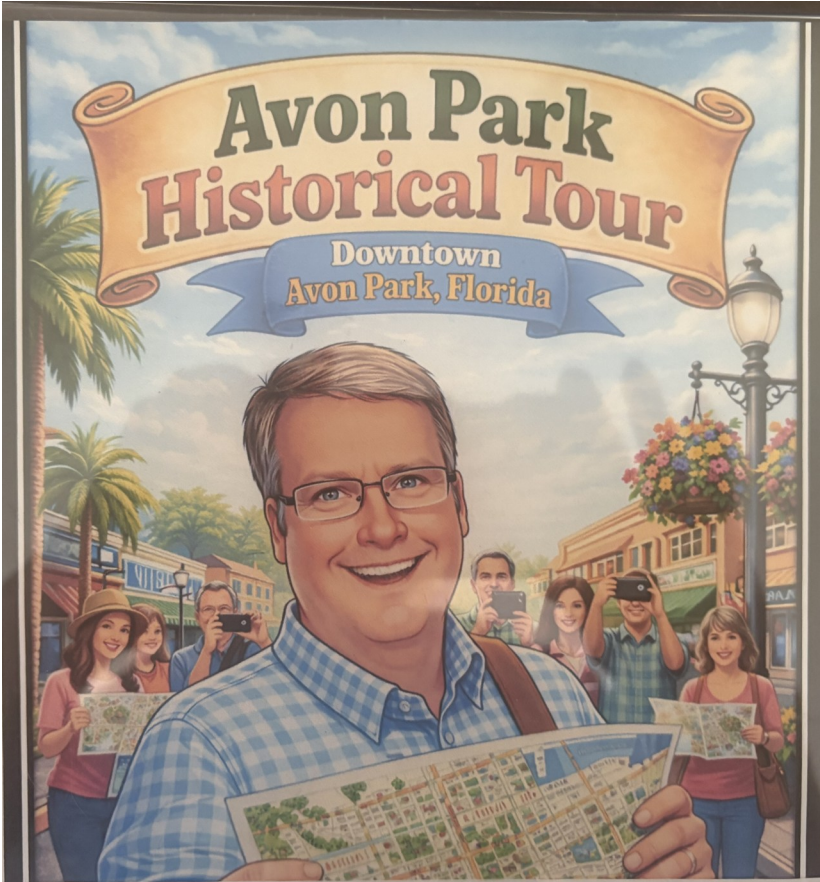
Enjoy an All-American dessert
for \$5

Root beer floats - \$8



The Museum will be open all summer as per our regular schedule, Wednesday through Saturday 10 - 3 pm. The STRIKE ZONE for kids will be a special attraction on Saturdays. Young players can test their pitching arm.

Main Street Walking Tours



Historical Society Board Member David Flowers is sharing his recollections and knowledge of Avon Park Main Street buildings and landmarks as he leads tours of the downtown area. Walking tours are taking an appreciation of history on to the street. A stroll down Avon Park's Main Street is a stroll down Memory Lane for some and an introduction to new businesses for others. Tours begin with a slideshow presentation at the Depot Museum for an overview of the city's development. Nearly all the buildings on Main Street have been repurposed over the years. From banks to shops and everything in between, each building has its own story.

The bandstand was not originally located on the Mile-Long Mall.

It has had several uses over the years. Those details are some of the interesting things to be learned from the tour.

Currently, tours are being offered on Thursdays from 10 to noon. The cost is \$10 per person. Reservations are requested. Sign up at the museum or leave a message at 863-453-3525. So get out your comfortable walking shoes and join us.

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Ricky Helms following a prolonged illness. Ricky served on the Historical Society Board of Directors for several terms and has served as President and Vice President. He was an active volunteer, assisting with security issues and grounds maintenance and anywhere else when called upon. A life-long resident of Avon Park, he was a knowledgeable and interesting docent and enjoyed welcoming visitors to the museum.



Our heartfelt condolences go out to wife Beth and their two sons and grandchildren.

THE MUSEUM'S most important asset continues to be our VOLUNTEERS.

Considering the amount of hours that the museum is open, added to that, the time involved with other things like landscaping, cleaning, event planning and execution, and mounting exhibits, 4800 hours is a very conservative estimate of the number of volunteer hours it takes each year to operate the museum. The Bureau of Labor Statistics places a dollar value on the time donated by volunteers in the state of Florida. Using that rate, the work done by volunteers has saved the City of Avon Park \$137,000. That is what it would cost the city to operate and maintain the Depot Museum each year with paid staff. The Historical Society does the job with an annual operating budget of under \$20,000 and a crew of amazing volunteers and the support of the community. These are the folks who kept the Depot Museum open this past year. They were recently invited to an appreciation luncheon in the dining car - a humble thank you for an important job, well done:

Anita Helbig Beth & Ricky Helms Brenda Gray Carol Breckenridge Dave Sanford
David Flowers Deb Kent Elaine Levey Frank Magnifico Grace Hudson Harry Ressler
Jane Avery Judy Laycock Julie Everett Larry Hedley Laura Austin Sue Hill
Merrie-Anne Santore Marva Turner Michael Miller Pat Harrington Penny Norton
Robert Cook Ron Sevigny Rosie Longanecker Sharon Seymour Roberta Gillette
Sue Bentley Tom Tullo Vickie David Joan Kinney Nancy Fisk Ann & Steve



There have been some changes made to existing exhibits for a cleaner more organized look. Before entering the baseball room, there is a photo op for visitors in a ticket booth painted by Madison Burnett.



This antique appliance has been polished and an informative signage has been added.



Recent visitors from Maine, Cilla Jones and Marjorie Scott, shown here, were pressed into service. This job had been put on hold until someone was willing to climb a ladder. When Cilla said "I can do ladders" she was hired!

CLASSIFIEDS -- HELP WANTED

Pleasant work environment and flexible hours - does this sound good to you? If your answer is YES, you may want to become a Museum Volunteer. No previous experience required - Life experience will do. - Love of history, a plus. On-the-job training provided. Apply today!!

Thank you to our Corporate members who are supporting the Museum with their annual dues. Please thank them when you have the opportunity.



Alan Jay Automotive Avon Park Main Street, Inc
 Avon Park Service Club **Bagwell Lumber** Barben Fruit Co
Bug-Runner Butwell Stone & Soil **C. Elton Crews, Inc.**
 Cool & Cobb Engineering **Daniel Sauls Real Estate, LLC**
 Duke Energy **Emily Jones, Realtor at Remax** Forrest Hilton CPA
Hicks Oil Co. Highlands County Bingo **Jahna Concrete, Inc**
 Laye's Tire Service **Long's Air Conditioning, Inc**
Maxwell Grove Service Nucor Steel Florida, Inc **Ridge Florist**
 River Greens Golf Course **Dr. Ron Sevigny** Souther Signs
Stephenson/Nelson Funeral Services The Avanti Company
 Turner Furniture **Wells Family** Drs. Richard & Betsy Wood

**Please consider a gift to the Historical Society in lieu of flowers
to honor the passing of a loved one**

Names of those honored are recorded on a plaque in the Museum

*** Thank you to the City of Avon Park Public Works Department for getting the pump back on line so that the irrigation system for our grounds is now working again. Garden club volunteers are diligent about keeping the weeds at bay so now that the plants are getting enough to drink, the grass is green again and our garden plots are looking so much better. ***



Before the new addition, this is how the south lawn looked. Plants were relocated to make room for the construction. Now that the building is in place, it is time to replace the concrete sidewalk and circle so that the benches can be put back. Garden plots will again beautify the grounds. The plan is to plant another shade tree, as well. This project will be completed in the very near future. And very soon the sign at the corner of Main and Museum Avenue will have a new look thanks to Souther Signs.

Thank you to those members who have already renewed their membership for 2026.

Annual dues are due January 1st each year. So much has been keeping us busy at the museum that the renewal notices are late going out this year. Your annual dues donation is the main source of income for the museum. The Depot Museum belongs to the Avon Park community. Therefore, it is up to all of us to keep the doors open for visitors, and more importantly, to maintain exhibits and programming that share the history of Avon Park with the current generation.

If you have yet to renew for 2026, please take a moment to do so.

Please make checks payable to: The Historical Society of Avon Park

Drop off or mail to the Depot Museum

Annual dues: Individual \$25 Family \$35 Business \$75

Payments may also be made on line.

Click on Membership on our website (avonparkhistoricalsociety.com) to update contact information if necessary and pay by credit or debit card.

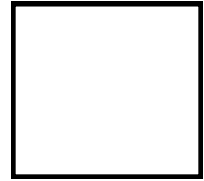
Historical Society of Avon Park

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Kamla Long Sue Hill Brenda Gray



Elaine Levey, Curator

Sharon Seymour, Volunteer Coordinator

Nancy Fisk, Newsletter Editor



MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Julie Everett Nancy Fisk

MUSEUM HOURS

Wed, Thurs, Friday, Saturday

10 am to 3 pm



CALENDAR of EVENTS

May 9

Ribbon Cutting for Baseball Exhibits Opening

July 4

Apple Pie Sale - Dining Car

September 27

Humanities Lecture

Title TBA