

**Officers:**

Ed Siarkowicz, President  
Tonya Gordon, Vice President  
Theresa Owen, Secretary  
Susan Baird, Treasurer

**Flagler County Courthouse Usage Plan**

Revision: r070124

July 01, 2024

**Board of Directors:**

Susan Baird  
Robert Creal  
James Fiske  
Ashley Gonzalez  
Tonya Gordon  
Claudia Malo  
Theresa Owen  
Ed Siarkowicz  
Preston Zepp

**History of the Flagler County Historical Society**

The Flagler County Historical Society was established in 1983 as a 501c3 tax-exempt non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and public education of Flagler County history. The Historical Society is the largest holder of archived Flagler County Government records and maintains fossils, indigenous artifacts, and paper, photograph, literary, cartographic, and digital collections from the First Spanish Period through the modern day.

**Locations, Collections, and Public Service**

The Historical Society is located at 204 and 206 E. Moody Boulevard in Bunnell, Florida, directly across the street from the historic Flagler County courthouse. Housed in both the 1918 Holden House Museum, and Sisco Deen Research Library, Historical Society hours are Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. by appointment. The Holden House Museum is staged to reflect the history of the City of Bunnell. The exhibits of the Sisco Deen Research Library are dedicated to the history of the rest of Flagler County. There is no charge to the public for tours of the buildings and historical research requests. The Historical Society also maintains a 300 acre land-lease with St. Johns River Water Management. The lease contains historic properties consisting of a 1767 stretch of Kings Road and the archaeological remains of 1840 Seminole War Fort, Fort Fulton. The land-lease is juxtaposed to Hewitt's 1770 Sawmill and Dam, a historic property owned by the Florida Agricultural Museum. The land-lease and Sawmill site collectively function as the Kings Road Historic District. Public tours are currently in development.

**Executive Administration:**

Fran Anderson, Dora Spada

**Curation:**

Ed Siarkowicz  
Tonya Gordon

**Preservation Specialist:**

Preston Zepp

**Governance Committee**

**Historians Emeriti:**

Fran Anderson  
Gloria Deen  
Prunie Wadsworth-Rogers  
Bill Ryan

**Board Meetings:**

Fourth Thursday of the month on Zoom. Email us for the link to join in!

**Leadership and Staffing**

The Historical Society is an all-volunteer organization consisting of Officers, a Board of Directors, and Governance Committee containing retired Officers and Directors. Administration, curation, research, and tours are conducted by volunteer Docents.



### Partnership with Flagler County

The Historical Society maintains a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Flagler County Board of County Commissioners through the County's Tourism Development Office. In summary, the Society occupies the Holden House Museum and Sisco Deen Research Library through a zero-cost lease in exchange for archiving, maintain, and promoting Flagler County history.

### Income and Funding

The Historical Society is funded through Membership Sales, Private Donations, Annual Fundraisers, Federal, State, Corporate, and Private Grants, and an annual grant through the Flagler County Tourism Development Office. For 15 years, the Historical Society has derived income from its History Bus Tours program. This program was put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic and as the result of changed protocols for the availability of leased, County-owned transportation. Recently, the Historical Society attained ownership of a six-passenger ADA accessible mini-van due to a donation from the County and History Bus Tours are now in the process of being re-established.

### Mission and Goals

The Mission of the Flagler County Historical Society is to educate children and their families on the history of Flagler County and its surrounding areas. This history education is accomplished through onsite interaction with Society staff and Docents during facility tours, and by immersion, both onsite and off-site, with historians and researchers serving in the capacity of period re-enactors. Our primary philosophy is that history education is much more than names, dates, and facts, it is a way of sharpening modern day critical thinking skills through the study of life and survival skills of our predecessors. Our primary goal is to have our guests walk away from an experience with the Society with new tools not previously encountered.

### The Historic 1926 Flagler County Courthouse

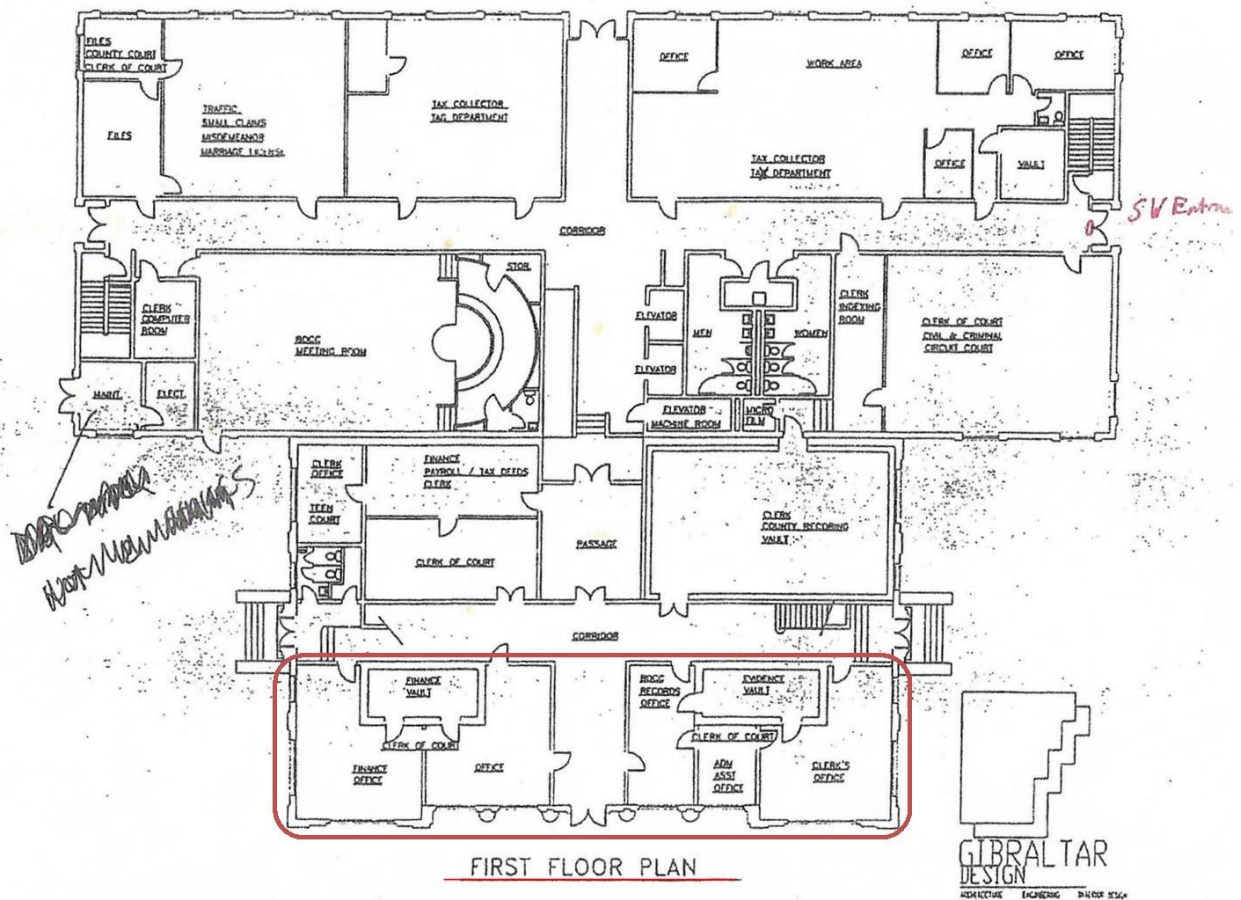
In early 2023, the Historical Society was made aware of the possibility that the Christian Academy was going to vacate the building in May of 2025. We were asked to develop and present a plan to the County demonstrating how we would utilize the building's space and floor plan to showcase Flagler County history for the purposes of history education and tourism. In preparation for this plan, a case study was conducted on the Polk History Center, housed in the 1908 Polk County Courthouse in Bartow, Florida. The Historical Society leased a 54-passenger tour bus and transported County and City of Bunnell elected officials and staff, and the principals of Flagler County's 15 historical societies, museums, and period-focus non-profit groups. Following the tour a questionnaire was given to participants and the responses were incorporated into the County presentation plan. Near the end of 2023, the Society learned that the Christian Academy had moved their departure date from the Courthouse to May of 2024. Plan development accelerated and at the beginning of 2024, an overview of the plan was presented to the County Administrator, staff, and a supportive County Commissioner.

The Society was told that a future meeting would be held to discuss the plan following engineering and environmental studies of the building.

In March of 2024, the Historical Society brought onto its volunteer staff Diane Kamp, Ph.D. Education, responsible for the development of the Lake County Courthouse Museum; Stephen Bitgood, Ph.D. Psychology, who has written eight books and numerous scientific articles on the development of museum timelines, exhibits, and displays; and Dr. Elaine Studnicki, Past President of the City of Palm Coast Historical Society and Museum and retired Historian of the City of Palm Coast, as Grant Writer.

Upon learning that there was a pending lease between the County and the Flagler County School Board for the courthouse, the Society was relieved that the building would be occupied by an established organization.

Following discussions between Historical Society Board Member James Fiske and School Board staff, the Society is please to find out that there is the possibility of utilizing the front seven rooms on the first floor of the courthouse's historic structure. Our understanding of the available space is encircled by a red box below:



FLAGLER COUNTY SPACE NEEDS ANALYSIS

Our proposed plan for the usage of this space, as a hypothetical construct pending floor and wall space dimensions, is as follows by subject heading:

1. A Timeline of Flagler County History—A general overview of Flagler County history beginning with Mastodons, Mammoths, saber toothed tigers, and giant ground sloths, to Indigenous Populations and Settlements, First Spanish Period Occupation, British Colonial Colonization, Second Spanish Period Occupation, Revolutionary, Seminole, and Civil Wars, Land Booms of the 1920s, and then time frame highlights to the ITT era.
2. History of the Flagler County Courthouse—A timeline of courthouse history beginning with the still-standing original courthouse on S.R. 11, and including all phases of the 1926 courthouse featuring photos, original documents pertaining to Judges, Commissioners, and staff, supported by displays of original desks, equipment, documents, an overview of landmark court cases.
3. History of Bunnell and County Incorporation—From Alva Bunnell to Thomas Verdenius and the Bunnell Development Company; From Henry Flagler’s Railroad, and the Dixie Highway, to the original plan of the area’s layout and establishment as the “Crossroads of Flagler County”; The display would also feature a map of National Register Properties, other County museums, and future planned Historic Districts.
4. The FFA and Flagler County Generational Agriculture— Featuring the County history of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) educational program and the In-County commodities produced by long-standing family farms.
5. History of Flagler County Schools—With permission from the Flagler County School Board and Bunnell Elementary School this exhibit could contain artifacts, materials, and collections currently stored in boxes and filing cabinets in The Little Red Schoolhouse Museum as well as artifacts, photographs, and records obtained from the estate of Flagler County teacher, past President of the Flagler County Historical Society, Diane Marquis.
6. Genealogical Research Library—In partnership with organizations affiliated with Board Members Ashley Gonzalez and Tonya Gordon, and utilizing the 350,000-person genealogical database of Historian Sisco Deen, this research library would provide students and residents the services of a professional genealogist and DNA history consultant in establishing and branching out a family tree.
7. Florida Women’s Voting Rights Museum—Flagler County and Bunnell has a well-established history of proponents of the 19th Amendment which established for women, the right to vote. In partnership with the American Association of University Women, this display would provide an overview of women’s voting rights history, and its struggles, featuring local voting rights champion Alice Scott-Abbott. A National 19th Amendment speaker, Bunnell resident Mrs. Scott-Abbott was personally responsible for getting 250 Flagler County Women, 50 of them African American, registered to vote for the historic 1920 election. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis appointed her to

the Florida Women's Hall of Fame in 2020. In 2021 The Pomeroy Foundation granted a history marker in honor of her accomplishments to women's history. The Marker stands at her final resting place in Flagler County's Espanola Cemetery. In a proposed collaboration with the Flagler County Supervisor of Elections office, students and their families would be taught how to properly identify potential candidates, and vote.

### Security and Access

Of paramount concern to the Historical Society is the safety and security of School Board students, teachers, and staff. It is our initial consideration of this that we feel that open public access to these seven rooms is not an option. We propose that secure measures for access be instituted for these displays in the same manner currently in place for when the Historical Society gives tours of The Little Red Schoolhouse Museum at Bunnell Elementary, where background checks of tour guides and guests are mandatory for admission. The Historical Society is, of course, open to additional options proposed by the School Board for public access that would maintain security and ADA access to the aforementioned exhibits, displays, and services.

We appreciate your consideration of the utilization of this space. The ideas and concepts presented above are designed to augment our relationships with Flagler County and the Flagler County School Board, reaching for the mutual goal of providing quality educational experiences in local history to Flagler County Students and residents.

### Contact Information

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