

HAVANA HISTORY & HERITAGE SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



The Shade Tobacco Museum

Fall 2024

State grant makes Museum expansion possible

In 2021 the board of the Havana History & Heritage Society voted to purchase the Planters Exchange site with the commitment to preserve this historic landmark which had come to represent the agricultural history of this area and the work ethic and values that made the Havana area an outstanding place to live, work and raise a family. As Dean Mitchell, one of the earliest supporters of the Museum, stated, “a history worth preserving.”

Building on the earlier work of the Havana

Bicentennial History Committee, with the added support and donations from many in this area (along with a substantial mortgage from Capital City Bank), renovations to preserve this site have taken place, with plans to expand the museum exhibit areas and collections, and further establish this site as a major visitor destination and center for cultural and educational programs.

Since 2021 over \$170,000 has been raised via area donors and fund raising events, in addition to over \$294,00 in grants. Just

recently, these efforts have been increased by a \$500,000 grant from the State Division of Historical Preservation for the preservation of this site and the expanded development of shared community resources at this historic site including, in this first phase of reconstruction: over 12,000 SF of re-roofing, new “historic” design windows and doors, and other improvements for a 5,000 SF Auditorium/Community room; a library for accessing area history records, videos and artifact

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Cover of “The Barns of Gadsden County” 2025 calendar.

2025 “Barns” calendar now available

The 2025 Barns of Gadsden County Calendar is now available for sale at the Havana Shade Tobacco Museum. The full color calendar will cost \$20 plus tax. The barn photos were taken by professional photographer George Kemp and retired Gadsden County Extension Agent Bobby Durden, who guided George to the barn locations. Barns in the photos are located in Havana and Greensboro. Calendars are available at the Museum Shop, Havana’s fall festivals or by calling the Museum at (850) 270-7315.

Havana museum preserves county’s rich history

In the early 1800s, settlers from Virginia brought tobacco seeds to Gadsden County. John “Virginia” Smith settled near Quincy where he planted tobacco seeds. While tobacco had been used by Native Americans in the area, this tobacco was previously used for chewing and pipe smoking. Smith obtained some local Spanish tobacco seeds and grew tobacco from those. He noticed his Virginia tobacco and the Spanish tobacco began to cross-pollinate. That “hybrid” tobacco became known as Little Duval Tobacco.

Smith and others noticed that tobacco growing under the shade of trees produced larger, thinner leaves with better color. In the late 1800s growers were using wood slats hung over tobacco plants to provide shade. By 1902 slats were replaced with cheesecloth to provide shade for a “perfect” tobacco leaf that was only used for the outer wrapper of fine cigars.

This large, thin, tobacco leaf was harvested and hung to cure in large



barns, built specifically for providing necessary heat and humidity to dry the leaves to a pliable state. Some tobacco barns were built in Gadsden County by Luke Blackburn, Kenneth Pitts, Edward Sansom, Johnny Davis, Eugene Griffin, Forest Davis, Sr., George Johnson, Charlie Eggerton, Frank Gatlin, E P Clark and a Mr. Hiers. Barns were typically about 42’x 120’, frame construction and built for about \$5,000. Cured tobacco was removed from the barns to area packing houses for additional curing.

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P.O. BOX 187
HAVANA, FL 32333

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Memberships

Individual

Admission for 1 Adult

Family

Admission for 2 Adults & Children under 18
 10% discount at the Museum Shop

Friend

Admission for 4 individuals
 10% discount at the Museum Shop
 Invitation to Exhibition Previews

Patron

Admission for 6 individuals
 20% discount at the Museum Shop
 Invitation to Exhibition Previews
 Priority ticket purchase for Special Events & Programs

Business

Admission for an unlimited number of individuals
 20% discount at the Museum Shop
 Invitation to Exhibition Previews
 Priority ticket purchase for Special Events & Programs

Director's Circle

Admission for an unlimited number of individuals
 20% discount at the Museum Shop
 Advance ticket purchase for Special Events & Programs
 Docent Led Museum Tours (available upon request!)



Upcoming events

Quilt Show is November 2nd at Havana Museum

At 10:30 a.m., on Saturday, November 2, in the Havana Shade Tobacco Museum, Sheila Callahan will talk about "Patchwork and Quilting Around the World," outlining its history, materials and techniques with examples from her work and the work of other women who love to sew, including traditional and modern American quilts, African-American quilts, molas, and five African-inspired quilts.

She will also present examples of "slow stitching," including boro and sashiko from Japan, bei jia bey from China, jogakbo from Korea, kawandi and kanthe from India, and American appliqué, embroidery, and quilting techniques. For those interested in learning more, handouts on African textiles, African-American quilts and slow stitching techniques will be available, as well as a "Quilt Talk Resources" handout with helpful books, websites and videos.

From 1:00 to 4:00, Sheila will host a free "Slow-Stitch Sewing Bee" at the Museum, where you can stay for a short while or all afternoon to learn some of the sewing techniques discussed in her morning talk. All tools and materials will be provided. No previous sewing experience is necessary.

Please do not bring children under the age of 12.

"VOICES OF HAVANA" VIDEOS CONTINUE AT MUSEUM

Havana Shade Tobacco Museum videographer Bob Bruggner continues to interview Gadsden's "historians" who provide an oral history of the area. Bob is also editing some of the previously recorded interviews and creating "Snapshots" which are part of the Voices of Havana videos. These can be viewed at <https://www.voicesofhavana.org/>.

GARDEN CLUB EXHIBIT DURING MONTH OF OCTOBER

The Havana Garden Club will be sponsoring an exhibit in the Nell Cunningham room celebrating 50 years of service to the Town of Havana during the month of October. The exhibit will highlight the Club's significant projects improving our community and its yearly traditions: the annual town appreciation luncheon; Christmas bow decorating; the fall Craft & Casserole sale; and the Spring Plant Sale. Significant individuals will be recognized, many photos, and memorabilia will be displayed.

CALENDER OF EVENTS:

Garden Club History Exhibit - Oct. 5 - 27

Quilt Show & Sale - Nov. 2

Barns of Havana Exhibit - Nov. 9 - thru Dec.

Grant/from front page

displays; two youth-adult classrooms for educational, home economics, and employment training tailored to our area interests and needs.

These funds not only ensure the future uses of this site, but provide substantial direct funds back to area businesses

and visitor businesses estimated at over \$300,000 annually.

Architecture plans, site diagrams, current programs, events and on-line video can be accessed via: www.havanahistorymuseum.com under "Site Development." We encourage you to visit this site to see the work in progress, to share your ideas, and even volunteer ... Call to schedule tours (352-214-1831).

History/from front page

Wrapper tobacco farming was a very labor-intensive, high dollar crop. At the height of tobacco farming more than 3000 curing barns stood in Gadsden County. Fewer than 100 barns are standing today.

The peak years for growing tobacco in Gadsden County were the 1950s through the 1960s with thousands of acres of farmland. In 1965 there were over 6,300 acres grown by 234 farmers, and tobacco was processed in 24 packing houses in the area. Some cigars were produced in Gadsden County, but most Gadsden tobacco was trucked to Tampa and Jacksonville cigar producers. The 1970s saw the end of tobacco farming in this area.

Interestingly, shade tobacco was also grown in the Connecticut River Valley,

where some is grown today. Marcus Floyd, a Gadsden native and brother-in-law of Mr. William Hardy Shelfer, moved to Connecticut to lead the development of tobacco farming in that state.

The Havana History & Heritage Society was formed in 2017 to preserve the history of this area. The Society founded the Havana History Museum, aka the Shade Tobacco Museum, to educate our community about shade tobacco farming, the dominant industry and economic mainstay of the area for more than 100 years. You are invited to become a member of the Society to help keep our history alive. Please visit the Museum with friends and family. Volunteering at the Museum will be rewarding and well worth your time.

The Havana History Museum is housed in the Planter's Exchange complex. This structure, listed on the National Register of Historic Sites, is located at 204 NW Second Street, Havana, Florida 32333. We can be reached at 850-270-7315. Please visit our websites at <https://havanahistoryheritage.com/> and <https://www.voicesofhavana.org> and our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/havanahistoryheritage/>.

Shade Tobacco Museum

The Planters Exchange Complex,
 204 2nd Street NW, Havana, FL 32333
 Open Friday 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
 Saturday 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
 Sunday 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
 Phone (850) 270-7315