



Winter Garden Heritage Foundation

The year 2012 at the Winter Garden Heritage Foundation was a busy one, with every indication that 2013 is going to be even busier. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters and the granting of funds from organizations such as the West Orange Committee of 101, we were able to rack up a string of successful events that directly impacted- and were enjoyed by!- the residents of west Orange County.

The generous donation from C101 was specifically used to share the history of our area via three major photographic exhibitions. “Up From the Ashes,” staged at Winter Garden’s City Hall, featured 25 rare photographs of the city’s downtown, showing how it appeared both before and after devastating fires in 1909 and 1912. What really made this exhibition unique was that many of the photographs were given to us by descendants of West Orange County’s first pioneer families! We opened the exhibition with a History Makers reception honoring former City Manager Hollis Holden for the work he did that served as the catalyst to the restored historic downtown we enjoy today. His important contributions at the end of the twentieth century tied nicely to the exhibit that featured two pioneers who rebuilt downtown after the disastrous fires in the early part of the century.

A year-long exhibition on display at Oakland’s Historic Town Hall opened in early December and includes a collection of photographs depicting Oakland the way it looked before railroad bankruptcies, severe freezes and fires brought the thriving little town to its knees. At the opening reception, we were thrilled to meet many members of Oakland’s founding families, and hear them relate their family tales. (We’re also well into the writing and editing of a very comprehensive new book covering every aspect of Oakland.)

A third exhibition will open at the Winter Garden branch of the Orange County Library System on June 3rd, featuring a chosen sample of the large collection of photographs taken by Winter Garden’s professional photographer B.P. Hannon. These charming photos from the decades of the 1950s and 60s depict an era when all of West Orange County was prospering, due to the citrus industry and orange juice concentrate.

Sewing the present to the past and making the whole concept of “time” become a living, breathing thing – this is the most gratifying part of what we do. Through educational programs, tours, exhibitions, publications, and cultural festivals, we teach, inform and enlighten, in the strong belief that when community members understand their local history they are more likely to value and contribute to sustain its special character. Already two months into 2013, we are firmly on course toward another productive year, thanks in large part to the generosity of West Orange Committee of 101.