



# THE DISPATCH

Newsletter of the Matheson History Museum

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## Announcing the Dr. David Chalmers Local History Fund

By Kaitlyn Hof-Mahoney, Executive Director

"We can begin, Dr. Chalmers is here."

Professor David Chalmers rarely missed a public program at the Matheson History Museum. To celebrate his belief in the importance of local history, the Chalmers Family has established the Dr. David Chalmers Local History Fund. It will honor his legacy by inspiring future generations to learn more about their community's history.

Professor Chalmers prided himself on being first and foremost a classroom teacher during his 39 years with the University of Florida. He was named the University's "Faculty-Teacher Scholar," and selected as one of the "eight top teachers," in a campus wide poll.

He was best known nationally as a scholar of American social and intellectual history. A leading authority on the Ku Klux Klan, his book "Hooded Americanism: A History of the Ku Klux Klan" has remained in print continuously since 1965.

(continued on page 2)



**Jean and Dr. David Chalmers,**  
courtesy of the  
Chalmers Family

To honor Professor Chalmers' love of history, his family has established a fund through the Community Foundation of North Central Florida to benefit the Matheson. Starting this fall, we will offer two paid internships to students at Santa Fe College and the University of Florida. These students will learn how to effectively preserve and display local history by working with the Matheson's collections.

**“David thought that history starts at the local level, and it was very important for local history to be preserved and made available. He’s opposed to teaching history as leaders and kings. Folks in the community is where it starts and belongs.” -Jean Chalmers**

We are grateful to David’s wife, Jean Chalmers, and their children, Kim Sita Chalmers and Henry Ross Chalmers, for their steadfast support of the Matheson and students in our community.

If you would like to honor a loved one through a donation, sponsorship or planned gift please contact our Executive Director, Kaitlyn Hof-Mahoney ([director@mathesonmuseum.org](mailto:director@mathesonmuseum.org) 352-378-2280).

## Collections Spotlight

### **Caroline Haile Matheson**

Chloe Richardson, our collections coordinator, has begun researching residents of the 1867 Matheson House. On the next page you can read more about Caroline Haile Matheson, Christopher's aunt. Included below are two images of her from the Matheson Family Collection.



with niece Lily McCuen

# Caroline Haile Matheson

by Chloe Richardson, Collections Coordinator

Caroline “Callie” Haile Matheson (pictured on page 2) was born in Camden, South Carolina on November 7, 1843, the ninth child of Christopher and Catherine Haile Matheson. As a young woman she attended Harmony Female College, located in the summer resort community of Bradford Springs, South Carolina and graduated in 1857 after completing her thesis on the “Comparison of Human and Divine Workmanship.” After the Civil War, Callie moved south to Gainesville, Florida along with her elder brother James Douglas Matheson and several of their other siblings.

Callie was a resident of the Matheson House throughout most of her time in Gainesville. She was living with her brother James and other siblings in 1867 when James married Augusta Steele. When Augusta first met Callie, she described her in a letter to one of her closest friends: “Sister Lizzie and Callie are very kind in assisting me and I think, and hope we will be united, and happy as one family. I have found them to be true ladies, and good sisters.” The only extant example of Callie’s writing is a sympathy note she wrote to Augusta and James after their first child passed away as a baby in 1869, and Callie’s own heartbreak and words of support make it clear that Augusta was right that the two had become close like sisters in just a short time.

As a well-educated and unmarried young woman, Callie worked as an assistant principal and teacher in the Experimental Department of East Florida Seminary, one of the precursors to the University of Florida here in Gainesville. She was a loving aunt to her many nieces and nephews, and she also spent some of her time in creative endeavors, as according to family lore she painted the fine landscape oil paintings still displayed in the front parlor of the Matheson House. She also was a frequent customer at her brother James’ dry goods store, purchasing fabric, lace, and even pearl buttons that she likely used for her own clothing.

In 1879 her sister Elizabeth purchased a small lot adjacent to the Matheson’s and Callie moved next door with her for a few years, but by the time she passed away in 1887 she was living again with James and Augusta in the Matheson House. Callie lived a much shorter life than most of her siblings, and never married or had children of her own. She did not leave behind much evidence of her time here beyond a few photographs and her beautiful landscape paintings, and a lock of her hair that was saved by her sister-in-law. Her memory survives in our archives, in her frequent appearances in her brother’s old store ledgers, and in snippets of letters written by the people who knew and loved her.

# Current Exhibitions

## We Are Here:

### Stories from Multilingual Speakers in North Central Florida

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Immigrant inclusion requires us to think about languages other than English, and to listen to the stories that people carry through their languages and their cultures. "We are Here" highlights stories from people who speak multiple languages in North Central Florida.

Through visual collages that centralize cultural images, "We Are Here" illustrates the immigration journeys of our North Central Florida community through stories that hold power in multiple languages. These stories include examples of successes, struggles, hopes, injustices, and dreams of a more inclusive and just community. The goal is to showcase these stories, make visible the language diversity present in our community, and advocate for all of our neighbors' right to access information in their preferred languages.

This exhibition was created in partnership with curators and designers Valentina Sierra Niño and Laura Gonzales, Language Access Florida, Rural Women's Health Project, Gainesville Immigrant Neighbor Inclusion Initiative, and UF's Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere with support from the Humanities Fund.

## Return to Forever: Gainesville's Great Southern Music Hall

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Between 1974 and 1978, the top concert venue in Gainesville was the Great Southern Music Hall, located inside the historic Florida Theatre at 233 West University Avenue. Jeffrey Meldon and Jim Forsman purchased the venue and transformed it into a state-of-the-art concert hall spotlighting national artists of legendary status, those who had cult followings – and others they just plain liked.

The Great Southern played host to a who's who of prestigious performers including Jimmy Buffett, Ray Charles, Muddy Waters, Bob Seger, Steve Martin, Ike and Tina Turner, John Prine, the Count Basie Orchestra, and dozens more.

This impactful exhibit showcases dozens of John Moran's performance photos from his two years as the Great Southern Music Hall house photographer. Also featured is a display of Bo Diddley artifacts. Written by music journalist Bill DeYoung and designed by historian Rick Kilby, this unique exhibit celebrates a golden age in the University City's musical history.

Thank you to Jeffrey Meldon and Meldon Law for sponsoring this exhibition!

# Thank you for shining a light on history!

In September 1913, Mayor Christopher Matheson gave his stamp of approval to the "Great White Way" in downtown Gainesville. This exciting project brought electric lighting to 13 squares of the business district. "White Way," referred to the brilliance of the lights. One resident in 1913 objected, saying he didn't want "to appear as if he was posing for a flash light photograph," when spending an evening on his porch. He lived on N Virginia St. and Sarah's Streetlight may be the one from his yard!

Decades later, the city began removing these lights to make way for new ones. Sarah Matheson asked the city to give her one, "for sentiment's sake." They delivered one from N Virginia St. (NE 2nd Ave.) to the Historic Matheson House. She paid a local electrician named Shorty Bean \$50 to install the light in her backyard.

Thanks to your generosity during the Amazing Give, we raised \$5,700 to restore Sarah's Streetlight and improve lighting throughout the museum! We have installed new motion sensitive lighting and repaired the modern lights throughout Sweetwater Park to create a safer, more welcoming environment for our community. We hope that you will join us this fall for the grand re-lighting ceremony!



**Sarah Matheson in front of the streetlight, 1977**  
courtesy of the Matheson collection

# Upcoming Events

## **Early Cuban Exiles: Memories of Loss, Struggle, and Rebirth**

Book Discussion with David Powell  
and Mario Cartaya

September 20, 7pm

## **History of the Alachua Seminoles**

with Chris Monaco

September 30, 4pm

## **We Are Here: Stories of Immigration**

with Rural Women's Health Project, Language Access Florida, Gainesville Immigrant Neighbor Inclusion Initiative, and UF's Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere

October 14, 4pm

## **Alachua's Queer History Gallery**

with the Pride Center of North Central Florida

October - Dates TBD

## **Tracing Your Ancestors**

Workshop with Karen Kirkman and  
Tatanya Peterson

November 11, 4pm

## **Downtown Festival and Arts Show**

November 18-19

Come visit us at our booth and win a prize!

## **Holiday Homes Tour (paid ticket)**

December TBD

\*All programs are free (unless otherwise stated) but require pre-registration. Please visit our website at [www.mathesonmuseum.org/events](http://www.mathesonmuseum.org/events) to register. Be sure to join our email list or follow us on social media to stay up to date with our programs and exhibitions. Please email Joanna at [info@mathesonmuseum.org](mailto:info@mathesonmuseum.org) to join the e-newsletter.

# Sweetwater Symposium Series

Starting this fall we will be launching a new program series: the Sweetwater Symposium Series!

Each program will take place in Sweetwater Park, located directly behind the Matheson. Watch the museum's e-newsletter and social media pages for more details as we get closer.

## **Music from the Front Porch/Sarah's Birthday Bash**

The Museum will be hosting local bands for an afternoon of music from the front porch of the Matheson House in celebration of the birthday of our original patron, Sarah Matheson.

September 9 - Time TBD

## **Florida's Heritage Gardening**

In early November we will host an event on Fall gardening in Florida, including a lecture by Dr. Sarah Cervone of the Florida Heritage Foods program.

November 4 - Time TBD

# Renew Today!

**All annual memberships are due as of January 1st, unless you joined/renewed since October 1, 2022.** You can easily renew online via our website:  
[mathesonmuseum.org/membership](http://mathesonmuseum.org/membership).

**Now is also a great time to switch to a sustainer membership.** Instead of an annual payment you can divide your membership dues up into monthly automatic payments (\$5 minimum). Instructions on how to become a sustainer member are in the blue box to the right.

What does your membership support?

- Continued care of our four historic buildings
- Permanent and temporary exhibits
- Collections care
- Expanded programs

All members enjoy:

- Members-only events
- Early registration to all museum events
- 20% discount in the museum gift shop
- "The Telegram" e-newsletter
- Newsletter twice a year

## 2023 Membership Gift

All members will receive one of three unique stickers, pictured below, that feature historic postcards from the Matheson collection.



# Become a Member!

## Sustainer Payment Plan

- Give monthly at any amount (\$5 minimum)
- You can register for an automatic monthly donation through Network For Good.
- Go to [www.mathesonmuseum.org/membership](http://www.mathesonmuseum.org/membership). Click the blue button at the bottom.
- When you reach the Network for Good membership page choose your monthly donation amount and then choose "Monthly" for donation frequency.

## Annual Payment Plan

- Student - \$20
- Senior Individual - \$25
- Individual - \$35
- Family - \$40
- Historian - \$100
- Heritage Circle - \$250
- 1867 Society - \$500
- Lifetime - \$1,000

**Visit our website at [mathesonmuseum.org/membership](http://mathesonmuseum.org/membership) to join today!**

## Follow us on social media!



@mathesonhistorymuseum



@mathesonmuseum



@mathesonmuseum



Matheson History Museum

Website: [www.mathesonmuseum.org](http://www.mathesonmuseum.org)

Our exhibitions and programs are sponsored in part by: Visit Gainesville - Alachua County, FL; The City of Gainesville; and the Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Council of the Arts and Culture, and the State of Florida.



**Gainesville.**  
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People empowered

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