

Museum of Southern History, Jacksonville Florida

BY LYDIA FILZEN The Civil War Courier

History buffs, researchers and genealogists have a wonderful resource available in Jacksonville, Florida. The G. Howard Bryan Museum of Southern History boasts an outstanding library along with exhibits, especially pertaining to the Civil War era. The building is located in Jacksonville, at 4304 Herschel Street near San Juan Avenue. According to Van Seagraves, Curator, the museum was founded in 1975. Materials now housed there were previously in the homes of members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans Kirby Smith Camp. When the volume collection of books and relics warranted it, the organization pooled its resources and found a central location for the treasures. Seagraves said, "Some of the artifacts on display are on loan from private citizens and members, and some are owned by the museum." United Daughters of the Confederacy Florida Division President Nora Paye Castile was the only woman on the Board of Directors for a time. The retired teacher said "I got involved after I went to a genealogy meeting there. I wanted to do some volunteer work and I enjoy helping people do research." The purpose of the museum is to establish, maintain and perpetuate an educational facility for

those who are interested in the history of the southern United States. Exhibits present artifacts and memorabilia relating to pre historic Florida, local history, and facets of life during the War Between the States. Weaponry, uniforms, and personal items are available for examination. The museum also houses part of a gun carriage and a boiler plate salvaged from the "Columbine," a United States Navy ship sunk in the St. Johns River near Palatka during the Civil War. The Second Florida Cavalry succeeded in disabling the ship and running it aground, a unique feat for a cavalry unit. Exhibits at the museum include Civil War medicine, arms and equipment, cavalry, artillery, navy, infantry and cavalry artifacts.

The library collection is extensive, offering 5000 volumes. "I've had people come in from New York to do research on genealogy," said L. A. Hardee, President of the museum association. According to Hardee, everyone is welcome to utilize the library, and members can check out books valued under \$60.

The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. but is closed on holidays. Volunteers are present to answer questions or give a guided tour. Schools and senior citizens centers are encouraged to bring students for field trips. A small donation is requested for admission, and memberships are offered starting at \$25 a year. You can contact the museum at (904) 388-3574 for further information. Lydia Filzen is a Civil War novelist who writes under the name Lydia Hawke. Her first award-winning novel, *Firetrail*, is set during Sherman's march through the Carolinas. The heroine of her second

novel. Perfect Disguise, joins the Confederate cavalry. For further information, log onto www.lydiahawke.us.