



Martin Digital History

Newsletter of martindigitalhistory.org

January 2026

Happy Birthday Martin County!

In honor of the establishment of Martin County in 1925, the town of Stuart hosted a grand public celebration on January 28 and 29, 1926. Governor John Wellborn Martin attended as the guest of honor and delivered remarks marking the occasion.

The festivities included an impressive parade stretching more than two miles, featuring over 2,000 marchers and approximately 500 decorated automobiles and floats. A community barbecue further brought people together, serving five tons of beef and pork to more than 5,000 visitors.

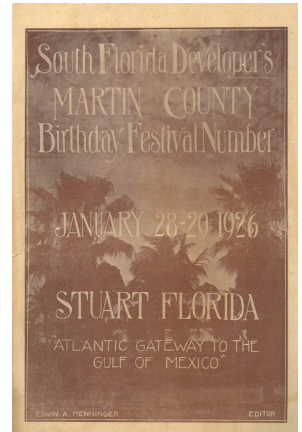
Governor Martin had signed the bill creating Martin County on May 30, 1925, and the county was officially incorporated on August 5, 1925. Formed from portions of northern Palm Beach County and southern St. Lucie County, it was named in honor of the governor.

The celebration was well documented through photography. Albert Ilion Waddington, who had opened a photography studio in Stuart just days before the event, was commissioned by the Chamber of Commerce. The Florida Photographic Concern, operated by Harry Hill in Fort Pierce, also captured the festivities, producing negatives numbered 9679 through 9692.

We have received images and information from multiple sources and are pleased to share a selection here as we commemorate the 100th anniversary of this historic celebration.



Governor John Martin shakes the hand of architect Addison Mizner while developer W.J. Conners looks on



A guide to the events was published



Florida Growers, Inc. float



The Palm City floats pass by the governor's observation station



The "Old Settlers" and Camp Fire Girls pass by the governor's observation station



The parade passing by the new Lyric Theatre



Mr. Harry Speedy's decorated car



The Golden Gate float won a \$100 prize for best float



Floats prepare for the parade

2025 Spotlight

Thurlow/Ruhnke/Ricou Collection

Collected by Sandra and Tom Thurlow, this collection includes prints and negatives created by photographers Arthur Ruhnke and Earl Dyer Ricou which document Martin County people, places, and events, primarily from the 1950s-1960s.

Arthur Ruhnke (1912-1986) moved to Stuart in 1948. Over the next twenty years, he produced thousands of photographs capturing bridge and highway construction, street scenes, hurricane damage, portraits of residents and community leaders, aerial views, school yearbooks, and visiting dignitaries.

Earl Dyer Ricou (1923-2011), a Martin County native, trained in photography after graduating from Stuart High School and serving in the U.S. Air Force during World War II. He opened Ricou Studio in 1949 and later moved to 246 Osceola Street in 1954, operating as Ricou Photo Center. His work included portraits, commercial photography, social events, and photography for local police and sheriff's departments.

Sandra Thurlow donated 3,659 records to Martin Digital History in 2025, many to this collection.



Baby turtles at the House of Refuge, 1962



Fire fighting class at the hospital, 1964



Dr. Julian Parker Day, 1961



Ready for the rodeo, 1953



Crating tobacco slips, 1954



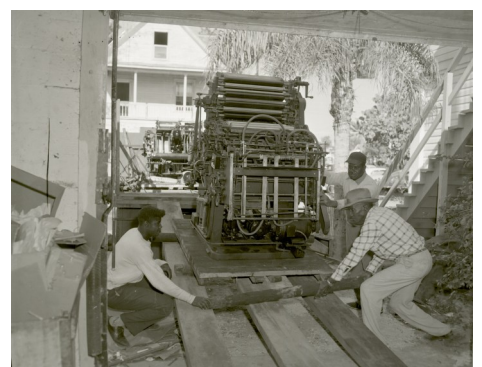
Stuart Paint Store mascot, 1955



Accident at Ricou Photo Shop, 1957



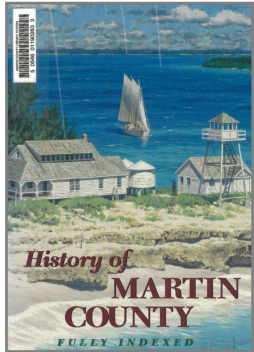
Capt. Earl Dare shows off 'Donut,' 1954



Delivery of offset printers to the Stuart News, 1956

From the Historical Society of Martin County...

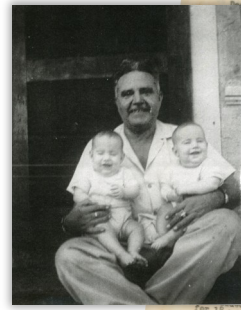
Among the many historical materials shared by HSMC this year, the letters of Ralph Hartman stand out. Written by Ralph Hartman Sr. (1898-1961), who served as Stuart's postmaster for more than 20 years, the collection consists largely of daily letters to his children while they were serving in the military



during World War II. The letters chronicle family activities and health updates, as well as events in Stuart, local gossip, news of area servicemen, and wartime activity in the region. Numerous local residents are mentioned throughout the correspondence. Reading these letters gives one a sense of the daily life of people in Martin County and a feel for the homefront during WWII.

We are also proud to be able to make the *History of Martin County*, published by HSMC, now available online along with the full text of several other local history publications.

HSMC donated 408 records to Martin Digital History in 2025.



From Stuart Heritage Museum...

This year, MDH added several yearbooks from Stuart High School and Martin County High School, along with images from SHM's topical binders. The binders, particularly those featuring the Boxwell Sign Company and teacher Mrs. Lowery, provided some outstanding images. SHM donated 609 records to Martin Digital History in 2025.

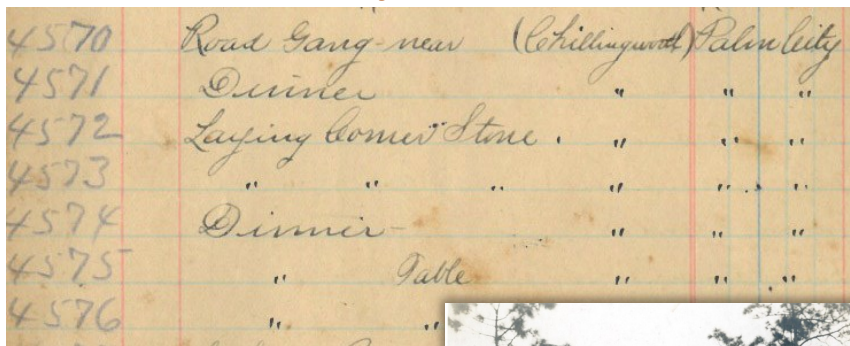


From Josephine Paradise and the Taylor-Ashley family...

Since we started MDH, I kept seeing photos marked "Original from Josephine Paradise" published in books, magazines, and websites. We were so fortunate to be invited to digitize the original collection, which includes documents as well as photographs. We've added two collections, the *Taylor-Ashley Family Collection*, which includes many early twentieth century images, and *Josephine Kitching Taylor's Writings*. Sarah Josephine Kitching Taylor (1895-1987), only child of Walter and Emma Kitching, was a prolific writer and historian. While much of these writings seem to be notes, they are filled with details of early Stuart and Martin County that are not available elsewhere. The Taylor-Ashley family donated 402 records to Martin Digital History in 2025.



From St. Lucie County...



From St. Lucie County we received to digitize four record books of the Florida Photographic Concern (FPC), a photography studio started by Harry Hill in Fort Pierce in 1904. Their photographs documented much of Florida life in the twentieth century. When we find FPC photographs with a number we can often find them in the record book with information on the subject, location, and photographer. This image, from Sandra Thurlow, is listed in record book 1 (PDF p. 147) as "4576 Dinner table, Chillingworth, Palm City, Fla."



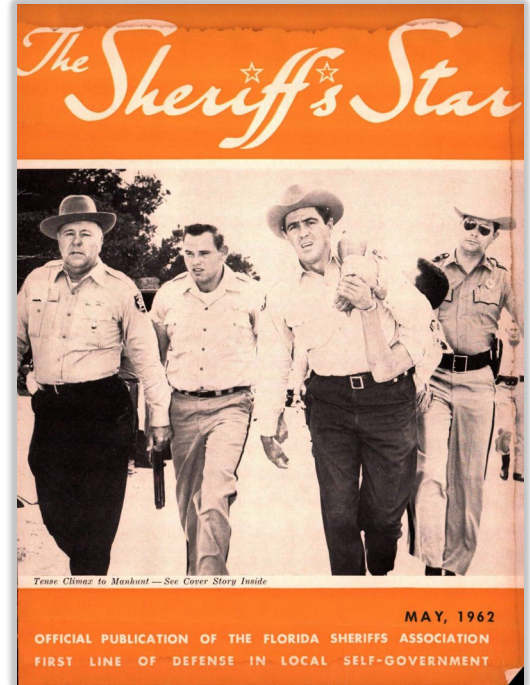
Interested in Martin County history? Visit and subscribe to Sandra Thurlow's

Sandy History Lady Blog



From the Martin County Sheriff's Department...

We were pleased to receive 143 images from the Sheriff's Department and to share with them copies of images of the Sheriff's Office previously added to Martin Digital History.



Sheriff Roy Baker, Jupiter Island patrolman Earl Powell Jr., Deputy James Holt, and Florida Highway Patrolman Danny Jackman, with a suspect carried between Holt and Jackman on the cover of the Sheriff's Star magazine.

What is Martin Digital History?

The mission of Martin Digital History (MDH) is to encourage the appreciation of Martin County's unique history by collaborating with participating community members and local organizations to collect, present, and interpret relevant digital content. This **participatory archive**, orchestrated by the Martin County Library System, is the result of the planning teamwork of several far-sighted community members and organizations, including Sandra Thurlow, Black Heritage Initiative, Stuart Heritage, the Historical Society of Martin County, the Library Foundation of Martin County, and many others. It is open for public participation.

- This newsletter will attempt to keep all informed about the project, including new participants and accessions, plans, events, etc. [Click here to subscribe to this newsletter.](#)
- More information: martindigitalhistory.org
- Support the project: <https://www.martindigitalhistory.org/participate>
- Feedback, comments, questions? Contact the archivist: Georgen Charnes, gcharnes@martin.fl.us



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