

# Panhandle Preservation Press

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## Fire hits Milton Historic District

Strong winds hampering firefighting efforts

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Rain has helped extinguish a blaze in Milton's historic district this morning that has heavily damaged an entire city block.

The fire was reported at 6:50 p.m. in the 6800 block of Caroline Street.

The fire started in a small building behind the theater and spread to the Mudd Pitt, a coffee shop, said a Santa Rosa County spokeswoman Joy Tsubooka.

Strong winds from the south are whipping flames 30 feet into the air above the Professional Mall building where the fire may have begun.

The fire is burning in a block along Caroline Street containing the Imogene Theatre, Mudd Pitt coffee shop, the local office of the Republican Party, an art gallery/bookstore, the offices

of a bail bondsman and the Johnson and Green law office.

The wind is hampering firefighting efforts. A second hook and ladder truck is now in position to spray the fire.

Milton firefighters are being assisted by units from Pensacola, Ferry Pass, Pace, Escambia County, East Milton, Bagdad and Whiting Field Naval Air Station. One firefighter was transported to a local medical facility for heat exhaustion, said a Santa Rosa County spokeswoman.

Angie Lopez, 38, and her son Brian were at a Boy Scout meeting at a nearby church when they smelled smoke and hear sirens.

"You could see smoke billowing out of the building and people coming out. Everything is on fire now. It's really, really said. It's heart-wrenching. It just makes you sick," Lopez said.

"It breaks your heart to see all that history that is going to be gone," she said.

Downtown Milton resident Carol Robey stood with her husband Kyle watching the fire

They live in a century-old home in the historic district.

"It's dishearting," she said. "I hope the city rebuilds. This is a wonderful neighborhood and we have wonderful neighbors. We know the city has been trying to build up downtown Milton. We hope the fire does not keep that from happening."



Milton Mayor Guy Thompson is at the fire scene. He marveled at how the many fire departments came together to help his city.

"This shows why Northwest Florida is such a special place," he said. Thompson has had an office in one of the building for many years.

"We're watching an awful lot of history go down the drain tonight. I'm keeping my fingers crossed that we can save the Imogene Theatre. If we can do that, that would be something," he said.

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Children make coil pots at last year's Archaeology Month Kick-Off Celebration.

## Archaeology Month Kick-Off Celebration Fast Facts:

- Saturday, February 28, 2009, 10:00 am-2:00 pm.
- Admission is FREE!
- Exhibitors should arrive for set up between 8:30 and 9:00 am.
- Florida Public Archaeology Network Coordinating Center, 207 E. Main Street, Pensacola

## PHPA "Digs" the Past

PHPA is jumping into the New Year by participating in its first group event of 2009.

In 2008, PHPA decided to support its member organizations by participating as a group in two different annual events held by member organizations. Participation consists of sharing information and literature about PHPA and its member organizations at a booth. In addition, member organizations are invited to set up their own booths to feature artifact displays, demonstrations, and information particular to the member organization.

This year PHPA has selected the Florida Public Archaeology Network's (FPAN) Annual Florida Archaeology Month Kick-Off Celebration as their first event of 2009.

The Kick-Off will be held Saturday, February 28<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 am-2:00 pm. Special features of the day include the *Destination Archaeology!* Resource Center & Gallery, flint knapping and other historic craft demonstrations, and many archaeological crafts and activities for kids including a dig box and atlatl spear throwing.

In addition to the PHPA

booth, seven member organizations have signed up to participate in the Kick-Off. FPAN welcomes all member organizations to participate by setting up their own booths, sending brochures and information to FPAN to be distributed, or by simply attending. This is a great opportunity to reach out to Northwest Florida families and individuals who are interested in our unique past.

For more information about FPAN's Florida Archaeology Month Kick-Off Celebration please contact Mary Furlong at [mfurlong@uwf.edu](mailto:mfurlong@uwf.edu) or (850)595-0050 x103.

## January Meeting & Grant Workshop a Big Success!

January's PHPA meeting drew a large crowd, which included a variety of members and non-members from throughout our region. It was exciting to see familiar and new faces pack the Baker Block Museum.

We believe the big crowd was due in large part to the fantastic presentation by our guest speaker, Deborah L. Douma. Deborah is the Director of Institutional Research and Grants at Pensacola Junior College. During her presentation, Deborah provided the attendees with a lot of

helpful hints for writing successful grant proposals. One of the most important tips was to remind grant writers that their proposal needs to fulfill the needs of the granting organization, not just meet the needs of the applicants. By simply changing perspective, grant money is more likely to be awarded.

Before Deborah's excellent presentation, we quickly worked through regular PHPA business. During the business part of the meeting we discussed events for

PHPA to participate in during 2009, decided to invite guest speakers to future meetings, and to make disaster relief the subject of our April meeting.

## Milton Fire cont.

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He pointed to a truck that has spent three hours dousing the west side of the building to prevent heat and fire from compromising the structure's integrity.

Smoke and flames can be seen coming from the windows and the roof of the Professional Mall building directly across the street from

the Santa Rosa County Courthouse.

The fire has destroyed several businesses, including the Mudd Pitt coffee shop. The building was bought by the Society in 1984 and restored with volunteer labor and state funding. The building is also the Society's headquarters and serves as a local museum.

The fire comes just a few weeks before the 100 year anniversary of a fire that completely devastated downtown Milton.

"It was the worst fire in Milton's history," said Wesley Meiss, president of the society who was in the Imogene Theatre when the fire began. "It's ironic that this happened tonight."

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## Next PHPA Meeting to Focus on Disaster Preparation

After the success of the January meeting, the PHPA decided to continue the trend of featuring a special topic at our quarterly meetings. In light of the recent tragedy of the Milton fire, we selected disaster preparation to be the focus of the April meeting.

This upcoming discussion about disaster preparation will cover a wide variety of topics including fire and hurricanes. We will draw on local expertise and experience to share useful information for our members and interested parties. If you have any suggestions for guest speakers or other resources to make this presentation helpful and informative for our members, please contact PHPA President Larry Bulger at [larrybulger@aol.com](mailto:larrybulger@aol.com).

In addition to the disaster preparation discussion, the next PHPA meeting will include quarterly business. Member organizations will announce their upcoming events and the status of their organizations. We will also continue to discuss the direction of PHPA and its role in Northwest Florida. Discussions of important subjects such as advocacy, outreach, cooperation, and of course finances are always an essential part of our meetings. We welcome everyone's thoughts, opinions, and ideas.

The next PHPA meeting will be held on April 20<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm at the Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park and Cultural Center in the Indian Temple Mound Museum, 139 Miracle Strip Parkway, Fort Walton

Beach. We invite all PHPA members and anyone interested in historic preservation in Northwest Florida to attend.



## PHPA Objective

To bring together community leaders and other interested individuals and organizations who are actively engaged in the collection, preservation, and restoration of historic property and memorabilia from the state of Florida and their respective communities. By working together during this time of financial and economic instability we can more effectively use our resources and manpower in the preservation of our historic treasures.

www.panhandlehistoricalalliance.org

## PHPA Member's Upcoming Events

Many PHPA member organizations have events planned for February and March. For more information about these events and a full calendar of PHPA member events please visit our website [www.panhandlehistoricalalliance.org](http://www.panhandlehistoricalalliance.org).

### February 7<sup>th</sup>

- Annual Fish Fry Fundraiser at the Destin History & Fishing Museum
- Classical Desserts: A Special Evening of Music & Desserts at the Panhandle Pioneer Settlement
- Scottish Ceilidh at Walton High School for the benefit of the Walton County Heritage Museum

### February 10<sup>th</sup>

- Pensacola Archaeological Society Meeting & Lecture: "Maritime History of Pensacola Based on Shipwrecks" at the Florida Public Archaeology

Network  
Coordinating  
Center

### February 12<sup>th</sup>

- Lecture: "History of Eglin" at the Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park & Cultural Center
- "Wise Mullet" Children's Program at the Destin History & Fishing Museum

### February 14<sup>th</sup>

- Sacred Harp Sing at the Panhandle Pioneer Settlement
- Florida Archaeology Month Kick-Off Celebration at the Florida Public Archaeology Network Coordinating Center

### March 6<sup>th</sup>

- Lecture: "Spanish Claim Florida!" Northwest Florida State College

### March 7<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>

- Rummage Sale at the Panhandle Pioneer Settlement

### March 10<sup>th</sup>

- Pensacola Archaeological Society Meeting & Lecture: "The French Connection at Mobile" at the Florida Public Archaeology Network Coordinating Center

### March 13<sup>th</sup>

- Lecture: "Spanish Claim Florida!" at the Bay County Library

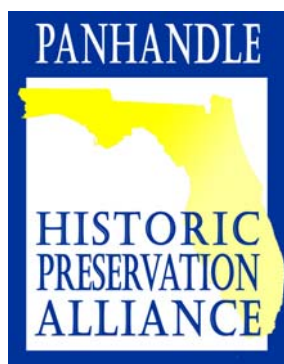
### March 14<sup>th</sup>

- Archaeology Day at the Bay County Library

### March 21<sup>st</sup>

- Annual Gumbo Contest at the Destin History & Fishing Museum
- Archaeology Day at the Constitution Convention Museum State Park
- Fire & Earth 2009 Coastal Pottery Expo at Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park & Cultural Center
- Legends & Lore Heritage Day at Falling Waters

*Preserving the Panhandle's  
Past*



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