



"Preserving—Sharing—Caring"

Crossroads

"Full of Enthusiasm": Trinity's Mart Hill—Scholar, Founder, Leader, and Lover of Life

By Pamela C. Crosby

The content of this article on the life of Mart Pierson Hill is based on a January 24, 2022, interview (conducted by Lynn McLarty and produced by Rex Adams), as well as on newspaper, website, and magazine resources. To see the video interview please go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tD2tmjIBi6A>

When **Mart Pierson's** mother, **Almena Coleman**, met her father, **Fred Pierson**, **Albert Waller Gilchrist** was governor of Florida (serving from 1858–1926). Because Gov. Gilchrist was a bachelor, the governor's mother (**Rhoda Elizabeth Gilchrist Gibbes**) served as First Lady and hosted members of the state legislature at the governor's mansion ("Albert Waller Gilchrist," n.d.; "Gilchrist, Albert W.," n.d.).

Mrs. Gibbes often asked young ladies such as her nieces (in their extended family from South Carolina, where Gov. Gilchrist was born) to help with official social



Mart Coleman Pierson, the photo was likely taken when she was a student at Florida State College for Women (1938 to 1942). (Personal Photo/Provided by Almena Hill Pettit).

functions. According to Mart, her mother was a relative of the governor and was one of those from South Carolina who assisted in entertaining guests. Almena Coleman's involvement happily resulted in her meeting Fred Pierson (McLarty, 2022).



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Upcoming Events:

Wednesday, August 3, 2022
Sorting Squad Day

Wednesday, August 10, 2022
Meeting of the Committee for the Preservation of Church History

Fred was the manager of P. W. Wilson and company, a dry-goods store that flourished in Tallahassee's earlier years. Although he and Almena lived in Tallahassee, Mart was born in South Carolina because it was the convention in her family that expectant mothers went home to be with their own mothers for the birth of their babies ("Interior. . .," n.d.; McLarty, 2022).

When Almena was in the later stages of pregnancy, Fred drove her to the train station in Thomasville, and from Thomasville, she rode the train to Atlanta and then to Greenwood, SC, where the Coleman family lived. Along the route, the train went past her grandmother's house and stopped at her grandfather's store close by to deliver packages. Family members would debark at the store and walk to the Coleman house (McLarty, 2022; Pettit, personal conversation).

So on August 2, 1920, Mart was born in Greenwood. Her brother had been the first child in the family. Mart emphasized that she had two "old maid aunts," who assisted in caring for the new babies, which made it difficult for her mom to return to Tallahassee without their loving assistance. (McLarty, 2022).

Early Trinity Years

Mart's early memories of Trinity center on Sunday school. Children would first meet together in a general meeting in the basement before going "into little alcoves in the basement for different age groups":

All the children of the church would meet together on Sunday morning. . . [to] have a program, and then we would go into the age groups of Sunday school class. We always had to have a Bible verse handy, and ... when I said mine one day, I said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the *gossip*"—to the utter mortification of my older brother, who was sitting there. (McLarty, 2022)

Mart was active in the youth groups and enjoyed going to festivities when she was a young teen. One event was a banquet for young people, sponsored by the Women's Missionary Society, where attendees enjoyed "supper" on "long banquet tables, which were attractively decorated." and people enjoyed "humorous short talks," "vocal solos," and "piano solos" (Young People..., 1934, p. 2).

In her 2022 interview, she recalled as a child attending Sunday evening church activities at Trinity and at the Baptist church:

The Baptists had a Sunday night Training Union, but they seemed to have more fun than everybody. So we'd visit every now and then. We'd skip Methodist [church] on Sunday night and go to the Baptist to see what they were doing. (McLarty, 2022)



"Interior view of P.W. Wilson Company's dry goods store - Tallahassee, Florida." Image#RC02559. 20th century. (Photo/Provided by Florida Memory). Mart Hill's father, Fred Pierson, was manager here. <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/26319>

School Days

Mart began to shine in school early. She attended Caroline Brevard School and made the honor roll; she would continue to excel in her studies throughout her academic life. In addition, she was a Girl Scout, and she was trained in dance, performing dance routines with fellow dancers at a ball at Lake Ella's Legion club house—an event she attended when she was in her early teens ("Caroline...", 1928, p. 4; "Honor...", 1936, p. 1; "Girl Scouts...", 1932, p. 5; "Miss Bond...", 1934, p. 2).

Mart's dancing caused a stir among some ladies of the Methodist Church, however. In response to the criticism, her mother, whom Mart described as someone with a wonderful sense of humor, took the criticism in stride with a clever retort. According to Mart,

She [mother] was deeply religious, but her religion made her happy, and she made other people happy. . . . I took tap dancing and toe dancing, and a delegation of women from our church in their white gloves and hats called on my mother to object to the fact that she allowed her daughter, a Methodist, to dance—and in public. . . . Mother said [in reply to their criticism], “Ladies, I appreciate very much you all coming here, and Mart is a *Methodist*, but Mart’s feet belong to the *Episcopal Church*.” (McLarty, 2022)

While Mart excelled as a student of academics and dance, she was also outgoing, energetic, and popular. At Leon, she served as a junior high editor of *Leon High Life*, the school’s newspaper, later becoming its business manager in high school. She was secretary-treasurer and later vice president of the student body, won the DAR citizenship award, and was a cheerleader. Because of her “popularity, good will, scholarly marks and congenial attitude,” Mart was voted by her fellow students to be the 1937 May Queen of Tallahassee¹ (Leon..., 1934, p. 7; “Students...,” 1936, p. 8; “Students...,” 1937, p. 9; “Miss Mart...,” 1944, p. 2; “School...,” 1936, p. 3; “Mart...,” 1937, p. 2).

Technically, Mart was a “1937 ½” graduate of Leon High School (“We Heard...,” 1938, p. 2). She explained in her 2022 interview why she “had to graduate” in the middle of the school year, January 1938:

[In] those years, for some reason, they would let children skip grades, and I skipped a grade . . . in the sixth grade so I had to graduate in the mid-year. They had mid-term graduations and graduation in June and in January, and it was just a great mess because there’s nothing to do from January to June. (McLarty, 2022)

Mart’s best friend growing up in Tallahassee was **Helen Ausley (Willis)**. Helen and Mart both went to Trinity, and Helen’s family had been “fixtures” of the church for decades, with Helen’s grandparents being **George Washington Saxon** and **Sara Saxon** (McLarty, 2022).

Mart remembered that

neither of our mothers could drive a car, so she [Helen] and I had to catch rides with people, and we had a lot of good friends . . . whose parents would take us around. But Mother and Miss Bessie—we

called Mrs. Ausley [“Miss Bessie”]—they just couldn’t drive.... I think it was probably a good idea because they were both very loquacious people. They talked a lot and were cute and funny, and they probably would not have been as good of drivers as they would need to be. (McLarty, 2022)

As a young girl growing up during the Depression, Mart heard her mother talk about the need for the family to reduce spending—prompting their “cutting down on everything.” Mart expressed her gratitude that she, herself, never “wanted for anything” during that time, while her father continued to manage the P. W. Wilson Co. (McLarty, 2022).



Mart Pierson as Leon High School May Queen, 1937. (Personal Photo/Provided by Almena Hill Pettit).

College Life

Mart entered Florida State College for Women (FSCW) in 1938. That year 800 first-year students (1800 students total enrollment) from various areas came to the campus. Mart’s major was English literature, and she roomed with Helen her first year. Helen moved home after the first year and later married,² while Mart continued to live on campus throughout her studies there (Berlow, 1982, p. 4C; Institutional Research, (cont. on p. 4)

(cont. from p. 3)

n.d.; Chapman, 1958, p. 15; McLarty, 2022).

When Mart first attended FSCW, the United States was emerging from effects of the Depression, and the nation would soon be on its way to involvement in a second world war. As she progressed through her college years, life on campus began to dramatically change. With armed forces bases as well as the University of Florida close by, many young men often visited the capital city (Berlow, 1982, pp. 1C, 4C).

Mart recalled that

all of the girls were having a grand time. You know there were about 1900 girls, I think, and it got so you'd see uniforms walking around the campus, and all people were just very excited about that. (McLarty, 2022)

Campus rules were made, and penalties for breaking them enforced. Mart, for example, told a reporter in 1982 that she was “campused” (not allowed to leave the campus) for a week because she had been 10 minutes late returning from a date (Berlow, 1982, p. 4C).



“An FSCW student reading newspaper about Pearl Harbor Attack - Tallahassee, Florida.” Image#RC01345. 12/7/1941. (Photo/Provided by Florida Memory). <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/25276>

But there was the serious side of the war years as Mart remembered,

When Pearl Harbor happened. I was in the library writing a term paper on Robert Browning, and the door of the library flew open, and some girls screamed the [Japanese] had bombed Pearl Harbor, so of course then the whole campus went crazy.

Dr. Campbell was the president.... They had to al-

most ... lock the girls in the dormitories. They [administration] were afraid that [the students] would try to go home, or they didn't know what they might do. . . . Several did sort of get upset, but they had counselors come in and work with them. . . . It was sort of dicey for a little while, but Dr. Campbell had handled everything just beautifully. (McLarty, 2022)

Mart—who was to become an important player in leading FSCW students to support the war effort—was elected student body president, and in turn, she served as chair of the extracurricular activities committee. An important activity of the committee was to oversee the sale of defense bonds and stamps. A defense unit was established at the college that was part of a state-wide initiative (“Florida State...,” n.d; Richards, 1941, p. 20; “State...,” 1941, p. 1).



“Chinese cadets at Dale Mabry Field.” Image# DLN003242. 1941. (Photo/Provided by Florida Memory). <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/320265>

Another of her committee responsibilities was to help welcome those service personnel who were stationed at Dale Mabry Airfield. Decades later, in an interview with former FSU President **Stanley Marshall**, which was published in *Tallahassee Magazine*, she recalled an interaction at a Sunday lunch with Chinese pilots in training to fly American fighter planes. As a hostess at one of the tables, she was asked by a “lieutenant” about the size of FSCW. She replied proudly that it was the third largest college “purely” for women. Hearing what he thought to be remarkable news, the lieutenant turned to the man beside him to say in wonder, “This is the third largest school in the United States for *pure* women” (my emphasis, Marshall,

2012).

As was quite expected, Mart was a dynamic, innovative student body president at FSCW. In March 1941, before she had taken office, she spoke about her upcoming leadership role that would begin in the fall. Her talk was broadcasted to students from radio station WTAL, which was Tallahassee's first radio station (the station was established in 1935). Having access to broadcasting from the radio station was part of many college students' lives because FSCW students were responsible for radio programming each Wednesday. Mart was the first CGA (College Government Association) president to address students over the radio. She expressed her hope that the students would place their trust in her (Miss Pierson..., 1941, p. 3; Hare, 2002, p. 99).



Mart's photo as student body president at FSCW. From Florida State University Student Body Presidents. Published photo can also be seen at <https://sga.fsu.edu/PDF/SGA-Pres-Photos-1932-2017.pdf>

Later in the fall in an interview about her role as president, she spoke with **Betty Ann Taylor**, editor of *The Flambeau*, FSCW's student newspaper, about her plans for the school year 1941-42.

The interviewer described Mart as "full of enthusiasm," when discussing her plan of action, which included the establishment of a student curriculum committee. The committee would deter-

mine what courses students thought should be part of their college education. These suggested courses would be presented to the college for consideration (Taylor, 1941, p. 5).

The model for this initiative was an idea that Mart had learned about as a representative at a National Student Federation of America³ convention in New Brunswick, NJ, which she attended earlier with freshman advisor **Ella Maude Jones** from FSCW. The plan had been implemented at the time in several other colleges (Taylor, 1941, p. 5).

The Flambeau published in 1941 a feature on the proposal, which was based on the claim that student/faculty interaction and cooperation would be more meaningful if students could participate in curricular decisions. In light of this proposal, letters to twenty colleges across the United States were to be sent to determine to what extent student participation in curricular changes was taking place and how effective the initiatives were on each campus contacted. Those colleges included Vassar, Texas Women's College, Penn State, Hunter College, and Duke Women's College (*Florida Flambeau*, 1941).

Taylor, reporting on her interview with Mart, said,

Suntanned and rested from her vacation, Mart was ready to plunge into the year's work. She spoke of having regular office hours when the student officers will be available to answer questions and talk problems over with students. She is very anxious that all the girls will consider her and the other officers as friends and helpers, and not be in awe of them because of their positions. "It is the sincere hope of the Executive Council," she stated, "that we can be the kind of officers that the student body needs." (Taylor, 1941, p. 5)

On another occasion, Mart as student government president, spoke on her committee work in constructing a constitution for student government and stated the basic aspects needed for crafting such a document (*Florida Flambeau*, 1941).

Mart's experience in student government had spanned her college years, with her first office being secretary and then first vice president before being elected as president. Other leadership honors were being one of only 43 students selected on the sophomore council; a treasurer of Esteren, an honorary society; and a member of the judicial and college council, senior hall, senate, and executive council (Tallahassee..., 1941, p. 6; "Sophomore Council...", 1939, p. 2; "Campus Notes," 1939, p. 5).

Yet, Mart was also socially active, fun-loving, and outgoing; she was a member of Alpha Delta Pi, a social sorority, and the Village Vamps, which was a sorority-sponsored organization of "campus hostesses"—where students

(cont. on p. 6)

(cont. from p. 5)

assisted in the hosting of coffees and other official campus and city and state government events (“Miss Mart...,” 1944, p. 7; Tallahassee...,” 1941, p. 6; ; *Renegade*, 1968, p. 208).

One especially powerful testament to her popularity throughout her youth was the fact that she was a May queen—*twice*. In April 1942, she was elected by popular vote at the college to be the May queen of FSCW. And as mentioned earlier, she had been elected May queen at Leon High School in 1937 (“May Queen...” 1942, p. 2; “College..., 1942, p. 2).



“Poet Robert Frost talking to two FSCW students – Tallahassee, Florida.” Image# RCo6630. 1941. (Photo/Provided by Florida Memory). Mart is the young lady on the left. <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/29859>

As a senior, she had another notable honor. Borrowing her parents’ car, she drove poet Robert Frost from the train station to and around campus. The acclaimed poet spoke on February 6, 1941, in the college auditorium (Hoover, 2019; “Students to Sell...,” 1941, p. 2).

Mart’s endearing personality was undoubtedly the reason she was voted as “loveliest senior” by her classmates. And in addition, by popular vote, she was named as one of 17 most outstanding seniors (Berlow, 1982, p. 4C; “Annual...,” 1942, p. 7).

Academically outstanding, she was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, the scholastic honorary fraternity, and graduated cum laude with an A.B. degree in

May 1942. That year, there was a record number of graduates: 294 with Mart being one of the 23 from Tallahassee (“Three...,” 1942, p. 8; Tallahassee...,” 1941, p. 6; “Speaker...,” 1942, p. 1; “Record...,” 1942, p. 7).

Looking back while being interviewed by Stanley Marshall, she recalled the camaraderie of the women and the closeness of the campus community—characterizing FSCW as a place for women to break from their outdated perspectives. She described the student body as one that included many young women who had come from various small towns in Florida—towns she had never heard of before—and she found FSCW as a place for these women to experience independence away from their hometown lives (Marshall, 2012).

According to Mart, the campus climate was friendly and welcoming.⁴ At the Sweet Shop (a café on the edge of campus), Mart had made many friends with whom she had great “fun laughing and arguing and stretching our minds in an attempt to outdo each other’s ideas on life and love.” She said she was willing to go back and relive each and every day she had been there (Marshall, 2012).

Making Time for Church

Although Mart was a busy college student, she continued to maintain her connection to Trinity and participated in activities at the church, using her experience in and love for the arts to contribute to church life. For example, when she was a senior at FSCW, Mart delivered a message in story at the Methodist Vesper Service, which was part of a series of vesper services leading up through Christmas in 1941. At these services, led by **Rev. Jack Anderson**, church youth choirs performed special musical programs and led the congregation in Christmas music (Methodist...,” 1941, p. 7).

In addition to mentors at school, Trinity provided a place for other mentors who would make a significance difference in Mart’s life—such as **Frank and Beth Moor** as Mart reflected:

Frank and Beth. . . were just wonderful members of Trinity. . . I was just a child to them even during college, but Beth ...was just a force of nature. You know that she was one that [when] something needed to be done, Beth did it..., and Frank was a wonderful

member, too. (McLarty, 2022)

Maryland and Washington, D.C.

After her graduation from FSCW, the national sorority of Alpha Delta Pi awarded Mart a fellowship to attend the University of Maryland. While attending graduate studies in English literature, she assisted in the establishment of the local ADPi chapter and lived at the ADPi house ("Miss....," 1944, p. 7; Chapman, 1958, p. 15; "Personals," 1942, October 12, p. 2).

Mart described Maryland, where she lived, as "very exciting" because College Park was

just outside of Washington, almost like a suburb of Washington. We could take a train to there, and you

get so interested in everything that was going on—you know with the war effort. (McLarty, 2022)

The "Personals" section of the August 18, 1942, Tallahassee paper noted that Mart had entered the American Airlines school for reservation officers in New York City for a six-weeks course. In the summer of 1943 until early in the year of 1944, she was employed with American Airlines in Washington, working with international reservation ("Personals," 1942, p. 2; Chapman, 1958, p. 15; "Personals," 1944, p. 2; McLarty, 2022).

While she expressed that it was "thrilling" to be in Washington during the U.S. involvement in World War II, it was also "scary" to "be in the middle of this huge war."

Mart explained in her 2022 interview that although she had begun her work at the airlines in a low-level position as a reservations employee, the job was especially challenging because there were few planes available for commercial travel. As a consequence, travelers were booked according to their priority status:

The funniest experience I had in having to remove people [from their flights because of priority issues] was one time...they had the President's Birthday Ball, and they flew all these stars in, and the morning that they were supposed to go back to Hollywood, a contingent of young flyers had to . . . go to Hollywood to pick up planes that were going toward the war effort.... My job was to call ... the movie stars and say, "We regret this [being bumped from the plane], but it happens to everybody."

And I talked to **Walter Pigeon**—I had just seen him in this wonderful movie, and I thought he was the meanest thing to me.... I was so mad I couldn't stand it, and then the next one I got was **Bing Crosby**, and he was just darling. [He responded with] "don't mind ah'tol, Honey....Washington is just as good as Hollywood any time." He was just darling. I wanted to keep him on the phone.... (McLarty, 2022)

Captain H. Louis Hill

Although Mart was enjoying the excitement of Washington life, by February 1944, she was back in Tallahassee, attending parties in her honor for her upcoming wedding to **Captain H. Louis Hill**. The wedding took place on March 1, 1944, at Trinity with The Rev. Jack Anderson, Trinity's pastor, performing the wedding ceremony

(cont. on p. 8)



"Weddings of the '40s." Caption: "Mrs. Louis Hill (left), the former Mart Pierson, was married March 1, 1944, at Trinity Methodist Church. She and her banker husband live at 513 Plantation Road." Published 2/22/76, *Tallahassee Democrat*, p. 4G.

(cont. from p. 7)

(“Luncheon...,” 1944, pp. 2; “Bride...,” 1944, p. 2). 1944, p. 7; McLarty, 2022).

Louis, the son of **Mr. and Mrs. H. O. Hill**, had grown up in Tallahassee, attended Leon High School, and majored in business administration at the University of Florida (“Miss Mart...,” 1944, pp. 2, 7; “Adam...,” 1966, p. 3; “Hill,” 1952, p. 1).

In her 2022 interview, she said of Louis’s armed forces experience,

Louis was called into the army quite early. He had a reserve commission from Florida so he was called ... before we even got in the war.

Louis was said to have been on

the first boat that left the West Coast after Pearl Harbor, but I know he did say that all the way in the Pacific, they kept waiting [to be picked up]. [Louis and the crew were on] just this one little ship. They didn’t know the destruction at Pearl Harbor. It was not known how bad it was so they went all the way across to the South Pacific . . . unaccompanied, [and] landed in New Caledonia. Then he was there for two years, then came back, and that’s when we got married

She continued,

you know he came back on leave and . . . he had had hepatitis and malaria, so he was physically in bad shape—looked awful—but anyhow, we decided to get married, and we got married then. (McLarty, 2022)

At the time of Louis’s wedding to Mart, he was stationed in Meridian, MS, with the Army Air Corps. Louis’s experience in Meridian involved training as a “ground liaison” (“Miss Mart...,”



“Middle Florida Ice Co. truck in the Los Robles subdivision of Tallahassee, Florida.” Image# DLN003916. 1940s. (Photo/Provided by Florida Memory). <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/258732>

Mart explained the purpose of the training school:

The artillery officers were taught to call into the air officers to tell them where to bomb and who to bomb....Then he was sent to Germany [in 1945], and . . . the war ended pretty soon. (McLarty, 2022)

Louis was discharged from the army in 1945. After he returned home, he was employed with the Middle Florida Ice company. While Louis settled into employment at the company, Mart’s life in Tallahassee after the war centered on her family and a busy schedule of volunteer activities (“Here and There,” 1945, p. 3; “Our Men...,” 1945, p. 10).

Family and Community Life

The decades that followed were centered on family life. In a 1958 newspaper article, Mart expressed her enjoyment with traveling on family vacations with her husband and two children, and she emphasized the importance of parents in their children’s moral education. She nurtured her children’s interests, such as swimming and reading (which were favored by her daughter, Almena). She described her 13-year-old son as one who loved spending his time dissecting small animals while having his sights on becoming a doctor some day (Chapman, 1958, p. 15)—which he did!

The leadership skills she had developed in school and college were put to use in the Tallahassee community. She founded and led civic organizations that made significant and enduring achievements. She was president of the Tallahassee Service League, having served as chair of several committees within the league. One of her projects was the Junior Museum, the forerunner of the Tallahassee Museum.⁵ Mart’s goal was to staff the proposed museum with “40 League members there every week,” and these members would take on “assumed individual and collective responsibility for its success” (Chapman, 1958, p. 15).

Another supported project was a class for those children needing special assistance at Prince Murat School. Financial aid was designated for the class with members of the Service League conducting a study of “exceptional child education.”

As president, Mart presided over 140 members in the League including a board of 19 women. During her term as Service League president, the Association of Junior Leagues accepted the League into its national alliance. Mart was also active in two PTAs, and was a Cub Scouts den mother and Brownie leader (Chapman, 1958, p. 15; Clifford, 1984, p. 7G).

Mart's love for her alma mater has been a driving force in her voluntary service to Florida State University. In addition to being a charter member of FSU's Theatre Guild, she is a founding member of FSU's Foundation Board of Trustees, receiving the university's most prestigious award for service, the Mores Torch Award. In 1999, Mart was awarded an honorary doctorate from FSU based on her promotion of the arts at the university ("Hats Off...", 1998, p. 10; "FSU Awards...", 1999, p. 2C).



"FSU [Foundation Board] - Tallahassee, Florida." Back row: Jack Daniel, Richard Gardner, Dr. Champion, Jack McKay, Godfrey Smith, Phil Fleming. Seated: Joe Hays, Charles Ausley, Beth Moor, B.K. Roberts, and Mart Pierson Hill. 1950s. Image#No4289 (Photo/Provided by Florida Memory). <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/150945>

In a 1984 *Tallahassee Democrat* article on nominations for the local newspaper's Woman of the Year recognition, Mart's interest in art and culture was noted. Her volunteering experience included membership in the Fine Arts Council of Florida, board member of Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra, charter member of the Florida State Theatre Guild, Tallahassee Music Guild, and LeMoyne Art Foundation, and chair of the FSU Theatre Patrons association (Clifford, 1984, p.

7G).



Mart Pierson Hill receiving in 1999 an honorary doctorate in humane letters in the field of public service for her promotion of the arts at Florida State University (Personal Photo/Provided by Almena Hill Pettit).

Participation in extensive volunteering in the community together with her involvement in Tallahassee societal activities has often prompted features of her in the lifestyle section of the *Tallahassee Democrat* over the years. Descriptions of her house was also an interesting topic for readers. Mart and Louis's home was filled with antiques, and their swimming pool was the place for annual parties including those for Sunday school classes. She and Louis were an important part of Tallahassee society as members of the Country Club, the Cotillion Club, and the Town Club (Chapman, 1958, p. 15).

Trinity Leadership

Trinity also benefitted from Mart's leadership acumen. For several years, she led various circles in the Women's Society for Christian Service (WSCS), such as chairing in 1947, Circle 14, and in 1953, Circle 6. She often hosted circles in the 1950s at her home in Plantation Heights, a subdivision off Meridian Road ("WSCS Committee...", 1947, p. 3; "Trinity Methodist...", 1953, p. 22; "Mrs. Hill Hostess...", 1955, p. 7).

The WSCS at Trinity organized and taught courses of study, and in 1955, a particularly interesting topic was presented in several sessions on Native Americans. One of the sessions was "based on the Cherokee and Seminole tribes." Mart

(cont. on p. 10)



(Tallahassee Democrat Photo, 11/ 29/1955, p. 4. Caption: "STUDY INDIAN LIFE A mission study on the American Indian is being held this week by the Women's Society of Christian Service. Trinity Methodist Church. Here, Mrs. Kenneth Ballinger (center) as "Ocoee Bowlegs," a Seminole woman, is interviewed about life on the Seminole reservation by Mrs. Louis Hill (right) and Mrs. Godfrey Smith (left). The studies will continue through Thursday from 10 to 11:30 a.m.")

applied her interest and skill in the arts by describing "Seminole history" with Patty Hill Smith and Lucille Ballinger in the form of a skit ("WSCS Course...", 1955, p. 4).

Another of her volunteering roles at Trinity was serving on the Board of Stewards. She led the fund-raising drive to renovate the education wing, planned worship services, and served on the parish relations commission and administrative board (Chapman, 1958, p. 15; Clifford, 1984, p. 7G).

Louis as Business and Civics Leader

Like Mart, Louis was the subject of several local newspaper articles; his reputation was that of a "banker with a heart." His father had been a founder of Tallahassee's local Coca-Cola bottling company in 1904, the site of the bottling company being on St. Michael Street in Tallahassee at the Middle Florida Ice Co. In 1940, a separate bottling plant was built next door to the ice company and later during WWII, H.O. Hill, Louis's father, took over the ice company, while his partner, Lewis Lively, took over the Coca-Cola company—thus ending their partnership (Clifford, 2003, p. 2B; Ensley, 2016).

Mart recalled in her 2022 interview that following Louis's return from the Army, he worked in the ice business for "three or four years" and Louis

was named the officer of a new bank that was getting started. It was the People's Bank, and he eventually became president of the People's Bank ... and that's where he spent the rest of his working days. (McLarty, 2022)

One of Louis's admirable achievements was his work as an advocate of student loans in the late 1960s. Although **Sandy D'Alemberte** (FSU past president) and **Bob Graham** (U.S. senator) led the battle in the legislature, both attributed Louis as the "real hero in the legislation." Many other bankers opposed the idea; yet at one point, People's Bank had "the largest student-loan portfolio of any bank in the nation" (Clifford, 2003, p. 2B).



Mart and Louis Hill (Photo/Provided by Almena Hill Pettit).

Louis was an avid FSU athletics fan and was honored for his support of FSU student athletes and programs including serving twice as Seminole Booster president and being inducted into the FSU Sports Hall of Fame (Clifford, 2003, p. 2B).

A tireless civic leader, he served on boards of Leon County Schools, Tallahassee Community



Above left, top row: Mart Hill on her 90th birthday (Personal Photo/Taken by Missy Brown and Provided by Almena Hill Pettit). Above right, top row: Mart and Louis Hill (Personal Photo/Provided by Almena Hill Pettit). Above left, bottom row: Mart Coleman Pierson Hill, January 24, 1922, in her apartment at The Grove at Canopy in Tallahassee FL, being interviewed by Lynn McLarty and video-taped by Rex Adams. Above right, bottom row: The Mart Hill Conference Room is an important meeting place at Trinity. The beautifully furnished and spacious convening area is used for Sunday school class and group meetings. The conference room was named in her honor through financial contribution to the church by her husband, Louis. (Photos/Taken by Pam Crosby).

College, as a member of the Florida A&M Foundation, and as president of Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club (“Louis Hill...,” 1961, p. 5; Clifford, 2003, p. 2B).

Louis also supported Trinity with considerable financial assistance and time. Louis’s death in 2003 was a considerable loss to all who knew and benefitted from this “banker with a heart” (Clifford, 2003, p. 2B.).

Committed to a Place of Joy

Even though Mart Hill has always lived an impressive public civic life, Trinity has remained an important part of her world—even as the world, itself, has constantly changed. She recalled hearing stories during the Civil Rights era when Trinity members felt the effects of dissention that erupted during that time:

There were one or two very prominent (cont. on p. 12)

members of Trinity who walked out when a Black person came to the church, and that caused a ... stir.” (McLarty, 2022)

Still she explained that

I’ve belonged to Trinity ever since I can remember. It’s the only church I’ve ever belonged to, and it’s the only one I want to belong to, I’ll have to say.

For her, a religious life and being happy go hand in hand, and she emphasized in her 2022 interview that church should be something enjoyable—something that adds to one’s happiness. Her advice regarding one’s participation and attitude about church underscored this attitude that focuses on the enjoyment of church:

Well, all I can say is I think everybody should be associated with [a] church. . . . I believe in enjoying your church. . . . The women’s societies that we have are fun....You meet once a month, and you have a nice meeting with conversation with members of the church. I just think everybody needs a church in their lives. (McLarty, 2022)

Mart’s comments about the enjoyment of church are not surprising. Her life has been a series of episodes in recognizing and feasting on joy. For all that she is—scholar, founder, leader, mother, wife, daughter, friend, hostess—we are grateful at Trinity to call this “lover of life” one of our own.

Notes

¹To read about other May queens who were members of Trinity and for an overview of this Tallahassee tradition, please see Crosby, P. (2022, January). “A May Queen Plays a Starring Role in the Earliest History of Trinity—as One Story Goes.” *Crossroads*, 6(1), 1-9. <https://www.tumct.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/January-2022-hs-crossroads.pdf>

²Helen Ausley married **Ben Willis**, who later served as a judge in Tallahassee, and he taught the Wesley Fellowship Class at Trinity for many years, being known as an excellent teacher (McLarty, 2022).

³The National Federation of Students of America was founded in 1925 and was a precursor to the National Student Association. The NFSA was a federation of student government organizations whose aim was to promote international cooperation and understanding among collegiate groups. See P. G., & Paterson, P. (1971, May). “Before Berkeley: Historical Perspectives on American Student Activism.” In *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 395, pp. 1-14. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/103857>

⁴For information on when African Americans were allowed to be admitted at FSU, see “Black History Month: Desegregation and Integration at FSU” on the Florida State University website at <https://history.fsu.edu/article/black-history-month-desegregation-and-integration-fsu>

⁵The Tallahassee Junior Museum received its charter on July 24, 1957, and held its first annual meeting on October 29, 1957. The name later changed to the “Tallahassee Museum of History and Natural Science” on April 30, 1992. From Florida Memory: <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/266891>

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I also want to express my sincere gratitude to **Almena Hill Pettit** for the photos she provided of her mother and for her assistance in confirming and correcting details about her mother’s life.

My gratitude also extends to **Rex Adams** for his continual service to Trinity’s Historical Society, including this production of Mart’s interview with Lynn, and to **Mike Kasper** for combining the video’s two parts that Rex recorded for our online archives.

Finally, I want to thank **Mart Hill** for her willingness to be interviewed and for showing us how astute, gracious, and intelligent women leaders can be!

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Call for Stories and Articles

- **"I Remember When" snapshots** are short descriptions that recount church life memories. They are usually **25–100 words long**.
- **Oral interviews:** Interviews may be audio or video taped. Trinity historians write up the interviews in narrative form with approval from the persons interviewed before publication. Videos or audios of the interviews may be posted on Trinity's website with permission from persons interviewed.
- **Firsthand stories:** Individuals may submit stories based on their firsthand experience at Trinity.
- **Research articles:** These articles are more formal in nature. Criteria for formal articles include **relevance** to the purpose of the newsletter, which is to publish articles that pertain to the history of Trinity in a substantial way; **quality of writing**; historical **accuracy**;

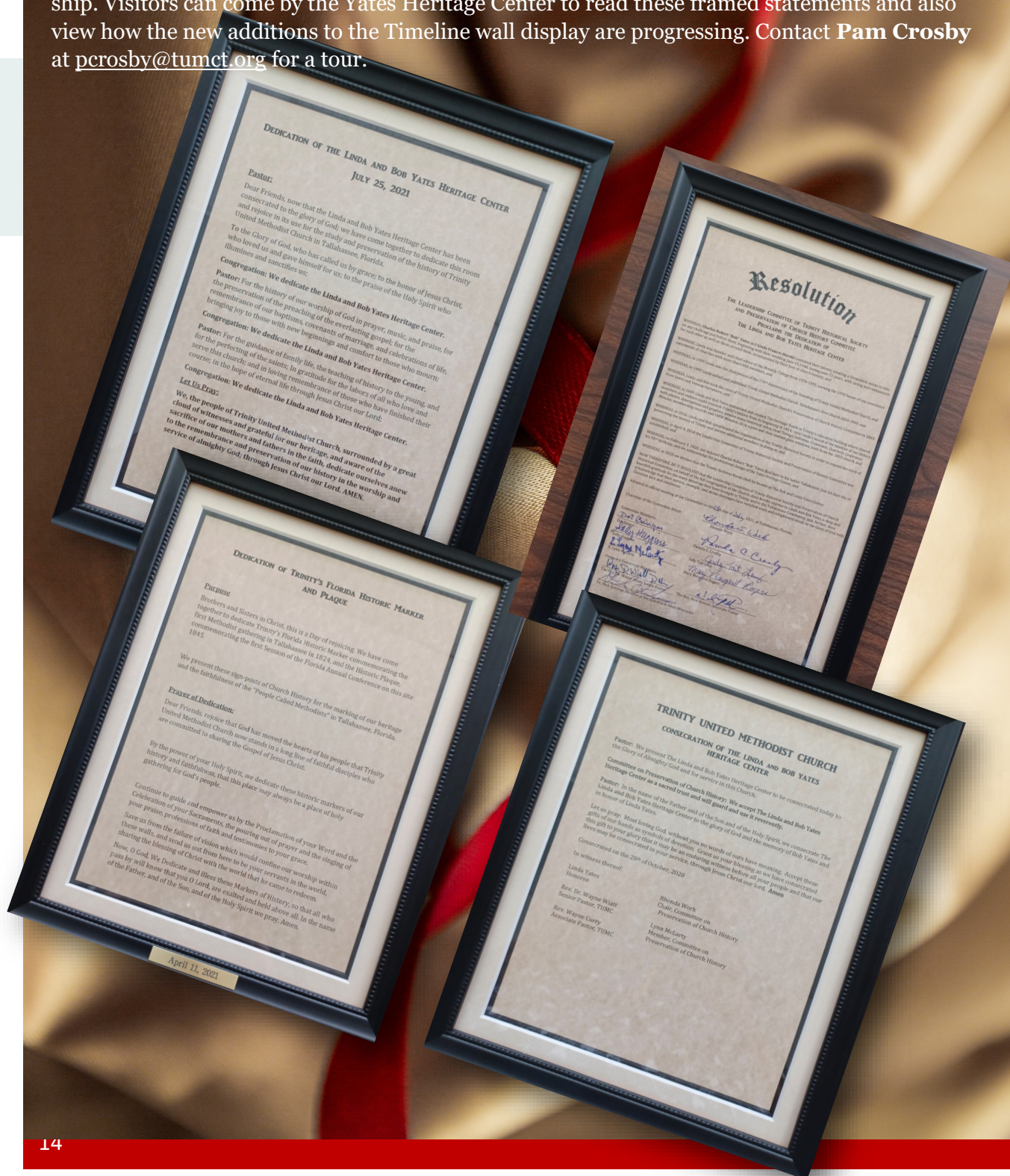
clarity; conciseness; coherence; and readability. Articles should be **original** works and not excerpts. The word limit for articles is **usually around 500 words, but can be longer.** A list of resources used for historical research may be requested.

General Guidelines

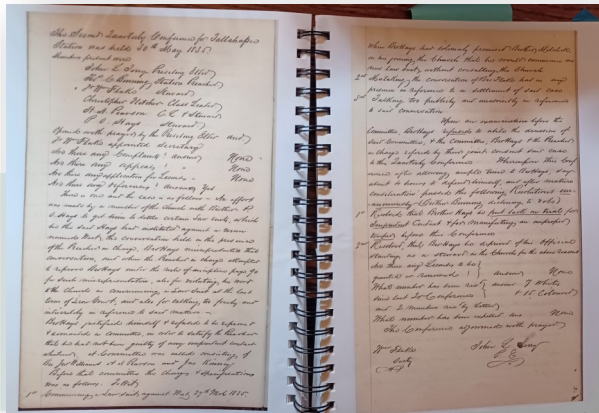
- Writing should be free of disrespectful language.
- Photos and information should not violate privacy, copyright, or other established laws.
- All accepted works are subject to editing in compliance with all *Crossroads* guidelines, including style guide standards, and **must pass editorial approval** before publication.
- Submit Word document to **Pamela Crosby**, editor, at pcrosby@tumct.org.

Framed Statements of Dedication and Consecration Added to the Yates Heritage Center

Thanks to **Lynn McLarty** and **Brett Ingram** for finding and giving homes for these important documents that mark significant events in our Historical Society, its members, and its wider community. **Judy Levy** spearheaded this project with impressive initiative and leadership. Visitors can come by the Yates Heritage Center to read these framed statements and also view how the new additions to the Timeline wall display are progressing. Contact **Pam Crosby** at pcrosby@tumct.org for a tour.



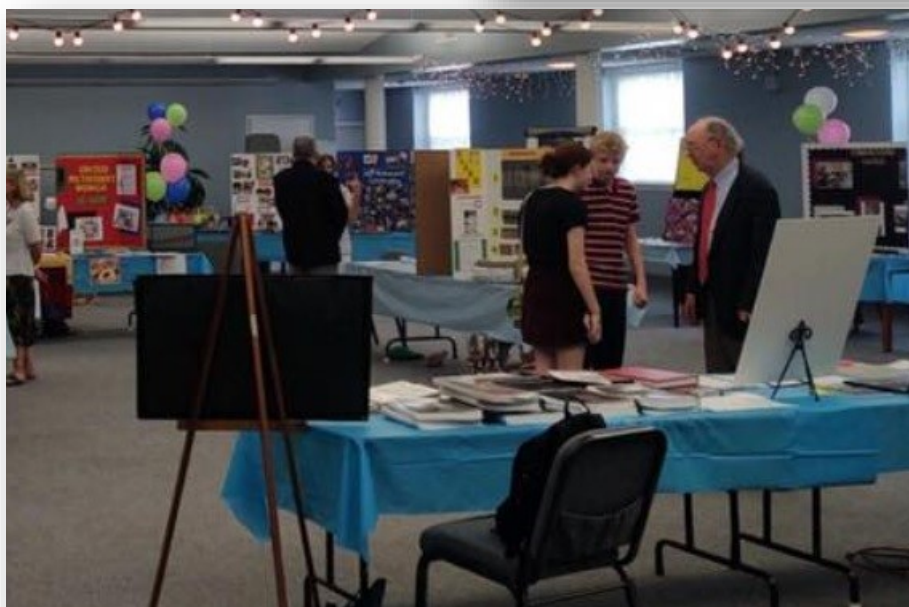
Celebrate and Educate! Trinity's Historical Society Tells and Shares the Story of Trinity with Church Members and Visitors



On May 22, 2022, from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Moor Hall, Trinity hosted a church-wide Ministry Fair. The purpose was to educate individuals about organizations and initiatives going on in the church while inviting persons to consider “finding” their “place” as volunteers.

Left: The Historical Society provided an interactive display that included documents, scrapbooks, and artifacts such as this bound *Quarterly Conference Minutes* volume with documents dating back to 1828.

Right: **Donald Crosby** looks through the *Quarterly Conference Minutes* displayed at the Historical Society table as part of the Fair. The *Minutes* is among the most important set of documents in the archives of Trinity, and volumes are housed in the Yates Heritage Center on the third floor of the Education wing of the church. Among those instrumental in the preservation of these documents have been **Lynn McLarty, Judy Levy, Colleen McConnell, and Rex Adams**.



Left: **Lynn McLarty** shares with visitors at the Historical Society table stories based on research that has been added to the archives. Among the goals for 2024, which will mark 200 years since the founding of the church, is an update of the published historical volume, edited by Linda Yates: *Trinity United Methodist Church: Tallahassee's First Church, 1824 – 1999*, which was also on display.

**Committee for the Preservation
of Church History**

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Linda H. Yates, Vice Chair
Dot Binger, Secretary
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*The purpose of **Crossroads** is to provide descriptions of historical events and to publish news related to the Trinity United Methodist Church Historical Society. Its intent is not to endorse or criticize theological or ethical positions related to issues that these descriptive accounts might raise. While we strive to be as accurate as possible, we make mistakes sometimes. Please send your comments, corrections, and requests for printed copies as well as inquiries about submissions to Pamela Crosby, chief editor, at pcrosby@tumct.org.*

Special appreciation for assistance in the copyediting of this issue goes to Cecile Baker, Dot Binger, Dan Drake, and Lynn McLarty.

**Making History: Quarterly News from Trinity's Historical Society and
Committee for the Preservation of Church History**

*The Committee for the Preservation of Church History (CPOCH) and the Historical Society (HS) have specific responsibilities, but work cooperatively on many projects. The CPOCH is responsible for researching and preserving the many documents, journals, reports, photographs, recordings, and other material relevant to our church history. The Historical Society is responsible for showing and telling the history of Trinity through the publication of its quarterly newsletter *Crossroads* and history volume, displays of documents and artifacts, and sponsorship of meetings. (Description by Rhonda Work, CPOCH chair)*

Restored Stained Glass Window Returns

Plans are underway to return to its former place one of our most valued art works in Trinity's historical collection. Since 2017, the north wall of the Yates Heritage Center (YHC) has been without its beloved stained glass window from the 1893 church structure. Now that it has been repaired in recent years by Trinity's accomplished stained glass artist, **Bob Jones**, **Lynn McLarty**, historian, and **Brett Ingram**, facility director, will be hanging the art work for display once again. For information on Bob's involvement in the repair process, and the plight of the window, see https://tumct.org/history/april_2017_hs_newsletter.pdf. We also want to thank **Carol Sanfilippo** for her assistance in the process.

Narthex Displays Highlight History

The May narthex display focused on the founding of the mission churches for which Trinity played a significant role. These included St. James CME, Boulevard, Magnolia Heights, The Wesley Foundation, Tallahassee Heights, St. Paul's, John Wesley, Calvary, Gray Memorial, Killearn, and Killearn Lakes. This month

highlights Trinity's property acquisitions along Duval Street. We hope that church attenders will stop by the display created by **Lynn McLarty** with assistance from Trinity member, **Lisa Boyd**.

Historical Society Welcomes Cecile Baker

Cecile Baker joined the Historical Society in July and will assist in copyediting *Crossroads* as her main focus. We welcome her presence, skills, and insights.

Sorting Squad Is on the Move Again

To "do history," historians must organize documents, artifacts, and photos so that they can confirm information of historical claims as well as discover new content to add to stories and narratives relating to research topics. After the COVID hiatus, May 25 marked the return of an ongoing activity in the YHC: sorting historical items in the Center's archives. Another sorting day is scheduled for August 3 at 1:30. All are invited to join "The Return of the Sorting Squad" as we sort through files, boxes of materials, drawers, and file cabinets. Treasures are always found on these days—please join us if you have a curiosity for historical finds.