

Two Jackson County Women Write the first book about the history of the First Presbyterian Church in Marianna

Locked in a vault in the basement of the First Presbyterian Church of Marianna for more than 20 years the old safe gave up a "treasure trove" of historic old documents some dating as far back as 1841. The contents of that locked old vault inspired Judy D. Brooten and Rachel M. Christopher to undertake a 3 year project to research, document and write **The History of the First Presbyterian Church of Marianna, Florida 1835-2010** which was published and released on Friday, October 8 was made available to members of the church Congregation on Sunday, October 10, 2010. Anyone may purchase the 320 page hardcover book.

Judy D. Brooten and Rachel M. Christopher, both Jackson County residents and members of the Presbyterian Church Congregation worked together for the past three years meticulously compiling the church history from old Session records; old family bibles, old photographs. Brooten and Christopher spent hours of research pouring through the Florida Archives. They also interviewed current church members some of whose families were among the founding members more than 175 years ago. Members of the congregation went through old family bibles, old family pictures and helped to compile and document the first comprehensive history of the First Presbyterian Church in Marianna and its contributions to Jackson County and the City of Marianna.

The 320 page hardcover book was released on Friday, October 8, 2010 and chronicles the history of The First Presbyterian Church from its inception in 1835 to the present day members and ministries. The book includes more than 150 photographs and illustrations which capture the life and times of Jackson County, beginning before Florida was a state in what was then a wilderness in the same year as the Second Seminole Indian War began. The history is based on the lives of the original founders most of Scotch ancestry, one man and 9 women who built the first permanent church in 1840. The History includes documented eyewitness accounts recorded in written church records which date from the 1800s.

Christopher began the historical odyssey when she encouraged church member Scott Yant to open an old safe which had been locked in the basement of the church for more than 20 years. Yant and a friend were able to crack the safe on June 23, 2005 and gained access to the Session records, photographs and church registers dating to the mid 1800s which were in good condition. Christopher's love of history spurred her to compile the information into data sheets that could one day be organized into a written manuscript. In 2007, Judy Brooten overheard Christopher tell a mutual friend that she was hoping to find someone interested in writing the church history. Brooten a retired newspaper Publisher/CEO and writer offered to assist with the writing which evolved as the first written comprehensive history of the church in Marianna and the relationship with Jackson County.

As one of the oldest churches in Jackson County and one of the first churches in the Florida Presbytery, the Presbyterian Church in Marianna has a rich history which began well before the Civil War. The authors combed the early session records and the written histories of the women's ministries beginning in 1933 to piece together the early history. Their search led them to three families in the church that have ancestors that were members of the congregation in

the 1800s. And one family in the church can trace their family back to the Founders of the church.

The book is written in a conversational style and includes more than 150 photographs and illustrations of the church, its buildings and its members. Photographs of Marianna at the turn of the century and photographs of the first two buildings that housed the church in 1840 and 1899 are included in the book.

"We wanted to write a book that captured the history of the church within the context of the era and development of Jackson County. We used eyewitness accounts and reports written by church members that had been collected for more than 70 years and placed in the old safe", stated Brooten. "We supplemented our research with family histories and information from the State of Archives of Florida and other archives and publications. We deeply appreciate the cooperative spirit of other Marianna churches and the Chiploa Historical Trust in helping us document information about the First Presbyterian Church."

The book is available for purchase by anyone. Those wanting to purchase the book may do so by contacting the Church office 526-2430. The cost is \$20 per copy or 3 for \$50.00. The First Presbyterian Church office is open Monday through Thursday 8 to 5 and Friday 8 to 3 and is located at 4437 Clinton Street, Marianna.

About the Authors:

Judy D. Brooten

After nearly 30 years as a Publisher/CEO in the newspaper business, Judy D. Brooten, retired with her husband to their Jackson County ranch. Always artistically inclined, Judy put her experience as a newspaper publisher and writer to work assisting not for profit organizations in Jackson County. She is the Founding President of The Artists Guild of Northwest Florida, Inc. and the Founding and first chairperson for the annual Sunday Afternoon with the Arts. In addition to writing, she is an award winning photographer and colored pencil artist and she enjoys playing with her 3 grandchildren. She lives 'down a dirt road' with her husband, Kenneth E. Brooten, Jr.

Rachel Jeanette Micol Christopher

Rachel M. Christopher was born and raised in Valdese, North Carolina. She earned a B.S. in Math Education from East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, and a Masters in Christian Education from Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia. An avid volunteer in Marianna and at church, Rachel applies her time and talent to writing Christian Education programs, conducting adult Bible Studies and developing programs for the children of the church. Her creativity is expressed through numerous projects including the layout, design

and research of the book. Rachel is married to Reverend Dr. Huw Christopher from Mountain Ash, Wales, UK, the current pastor of The First Presbyterian Church of Marianna, Florida. She has a son, Dr. Micol Huw Christopher who teaches Astronomy at Mount San Antonio Community College in Walnut, California.