



ABOVE: C.S. Belton III, left, and his brother, Chris Belton, stand in front of "The Belton Society Syncopators Harlem Nights in Palatka" mural.



ABOVE: In attendance at the mural dedication, standing, from left, were Mertice Mason, Otis Mason, Harriett Belton Pinkston, Craig Belton Jr., Craig Belton, Chris Belton, Connie Belton Schnieder and C.S. Belton III. In front is C.S. Belton Jr.

AT RIGHT: The late Clint Snyder, pictured, and Elizabeth Snyder, were founding members of the local mural committee. Mr. Snyder died Nov. 23, 2014.



MURAL *Dedication*

Special to the Daily News

Descendants of the musicians featured in "The Belton Society Syncopators Harlem Nights in Palatka" mural gathered for its dedication recently. The mural was painted by artist Nina Mateyunas of Palm Coast on the west wall of Angela's Bridal Wear and Boutique on St. Johns Avenue in Downtown Palatka.

The dedication of the mural was on the grounds of St. Mary's Episcopal Church. The Conlee-Snyder Mural Committee sponsored it. Soprano Camellia Johnson sang the "Star Spangled Banner" and the United States Navy Jazz Band provided entertainment.

Myrtice Mason, and her husband, Otis, son of the late Cookie Mason, of St. Augustine came for the dedication. Cookie Mason, is pictured in the mural as the figure leaning back playing the trumpet in front of the grand piano.

Also in attendance were C.S. Belton Jr., son of the late Cortlandt S. Belton, organizer and band leader of the Belton Syncopators, pictured far left in the mural. The late bandleader's grandchildren, Craig Belton, Chris Belton, Connie Belton Schnieder and C.S. Belton III, along with great-grandson, Craig Belton Jr., and Belton's former daughter-in-law, Harriett Belton Pinkston, were also on hand.

After the Syncopators were organized they soon became one of the most well-known dance bands in the United States, according to a news release from John Alexander of the local Conlee-Snyder Mural Committee.

The renowned orchestra leader, Duke Ellington, and his band, along with the Belton Society Syncopators, often played at Booker Auditorium in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The venue is known as Booker Lefty Turner Park on North 10th Street in

Featuring 'The Belton Society Syncopators Harlem Nights in Palatka'

Palatka.

Alexander said after playing and traveling across the country, C.S. Belton was advised by his physician he could no longer continue playing with the band because of a chronic case of asthma.

"I would say it was 1939," Alexander said.

Belton returned to Palatka to work in the family business.

"His parent had a little restaurant called Belton's Place," Alexander said.

Wilbur Belton also discontinued playing the piano with the band and returned home to Palatka. He later was the organist at St. Mary's Episcopal Church and worked at the *Palatka Daily News*.

"It is the desire of the mural committee to depict the beauty and history of Palatka and Putnam County through our murals," said Alexander, mural committee chairman and emcee for the dedication.

The mural includes three local figures dancing. They are Dr. Judy Rothschild, back left, dancing with former Palatka Mayor Vernon Myers, and Lynda Crabill, fourth from left, dancing with an unknown partner.

The late Clint Snyder and Elizabeth Snyder were founding members of the local mural committee.

Alexander said the next mural to be painted locally would be "The Veterans Memorial Mural" depicting conflicts from WWI to Iraq and Afghanistan.

"These conflicts will be painted on seven panels over a period of time as donations allow," he said. "Names of soldiers killed or missing in action will be listed between the panels."

The 100-foot-by-16-foot mural will be painted on the west wall of the Guardian Ad Litem building at 514 St. Johns Ave., Palatka.

Anyone who would like to have a soldier's name listed, can call Alexander at 325-4266.