

Sanford Historic Museum & Holy Cross Episcopal Church



Museum Event

The 150th Anniversary Committee of Holy Cross Episcopal Church, in conjunction with The Sanford Historical Museum, is delighted to announce an event to be held at the museum on March 23 at 5:30 pm. Joshua Chase and Randall Chase will participate in a panel discussion moderated by old friend, long-time Sanford resident and Holy Cross member Ross Wontenay. We are hoping to hear panel members' recollections of growing up in Sanford and at Holy Cross Church in the 1950's and 1960's. We also look forward to learning more about the prominent role of the Chase Family in the growth of the city and their support of Holy Cross Church over the years. Also included in the event will be a brief tour by museum curator Brigitte Stephenson.

Josh and Randall Chase are grandsons of Sidney Octavius Chase who came to Sanford from Pennsylvania in 1878 lured by an article in Scribner's Magazine describing great fortunes to be made in the booming citrus industry. Sidney first went to work for town founder Henry Shelton Sanford at his Belair Groves and Experimental Gardens. There he learned as much as he could about citrus cultivation. In 1884, he was joined by his brother Joshua Coffin Chase and together launched Chase & Company which sold insurance and fertilizer.

In 1886, the brothers themselves began buying citrus groves throughout Central Florida. Following the freezes of 1894-95, they also turned to growing celery and became the area's first large scale producers. By 1902, the brothers acquired Henry Sanford's beloved grove Belair. As the town of Sanford continued to grow and prosper, so did Chase & Company. In the early 20th century, Chase & Company was one of the town's largest employers. The brothers built a fertilizer plant to support their own needs and those of fellow farmers. This fertilizer product and also building supplies eventually became the well-known brand, Sunniland. One hundred years after its founding, Chase & Company was dissolved in 1984.

The brothers were also known as civic leaders and philanthropists. They became major contributors to the building of Rollins College in Winter Park as well as to the Florida Historical Society. The Sidney Chase family members were always active at Holy Cross. During the Great Depression when the church was struggling to keep its doors open, large memorial gifts by members of the Chase family freed the church from its indebtedness and allowed for its consecration in 1941.

Representing the third generation, Josh and Randall, along with their sister Laura, grew up in a family home built by their parents, Randall Chase II and Julia Chase, on the Belair Grove on the shores of lovely Crystal Lake. Their father Randall became president of Chase & Company from 1948-65 following the death of their grandfather Sidney.

Randall Chase graduated from Seminole Highschool and Florida State University. He received his Masters of Divinity from Virginia Seminary and was ordained as a deacon at Holy Cross in 1972. He received his Doctorate of Divinity in Boston. Randall served in three churches in Florida before going on to serve in dioceses in Rhode

Island and Massachusetts. He was dean of The Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts as well as a member of the National Executive Council and Trustee of the Church Pension Fund.

Joshua Chase, a graduate of Phillips Exeter Academy and Cornell University, served in the US Navy from 1971-74 aboard the USS Nespelen. He was employed as an accountant by R.S. Musselman before receiving his CPA certificate in 1977. He was employed by Morton Frozen Foods from 1977-80. He returned to Florida in 1980 to work for Chase Groves, Inc., but moved to Gainesville, Florida in 1984 where he worked for Purvis Gray & Co., CPA's until his retirement 2010. Since retiring he worked on the family timber plantation until it was sold in 2019.

The Holy Cross-Sanford Museum event is open to the public but seating is very limited due to the size of the museum. Please make a reservation at the Sanford Museum. (407-688-5198) A suggested donation is \$10 Proceeds will go to the museum.