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FROM THE EDITORS

How many times have you travelled by car along Highway 41 heading south from Tampa or north from Bradenton? You emerge from the snarls of traffic around those two cities and settle down to the monotonous forty-five minute cruise. A few signposts spring up, but the towns they announce - Gibsonton, Apollo Beach, Ruskin - barely attract your attention. However, after reading about the history of Ruskin, this hamlet you rush by on the highway will never again conjure up just another ripe tomato. Take a closer look and you will see a community founded by a group of people attempting to establish a cooperative utopia in the sunshine.

There are other fascinating places that we never have time to explore amidst the frantic pace of modern life and the inside pages reveal some of them. For instance, Boca Grande, on Gasparilla Island, grew up around the railroad (not from the wanderings of a legendary band of pirates), and its residents are striving to preserve that origin. The Gamble Mansion, outside of Bradenton, housed a famous fugitive at the end of the Civil War - Confederate Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin, who was fleeing one step ahead of capture by Union forces. To discover more about how places looked in the past, including those mentioned above, do not discard your old picture postcards. Collect them and you will compile a vivid record of days-gone-by, as the photo essay reveals. Also, old newspaper articles can offer information about our own history, as one finds in reading the story about what Palmetto was like at the turn of the century. In addition to the interesting places you can read about and observe in this issue, you can also meet some noteworthy people, including the first woman reporter for the Tampa Tribune. Enjoy the stories and sights.

Unfortunately, TAMPA BAY HISTORY has lost one of its good friends. Last November, Bobbi Campbell Gonzalez died in an automobile accident. As a staff member of the Office of Information Services at USF, Bobbi did a good deal to publicize TBH throughout the Bay area. We extend our condolences to her family.

The deadline for the first annual TAMPA BAY HISTORY Essay Contest is fast approaching. September 1 is the last day for submitting entries. The winners will receive cash prizes of either $100 or $50, and the winning articles will be published in the journal. For additional information, please see the announcement on page 93 of this issue, or write the Managing Editor for further details.

This issue marks the departure of Cathy Bayless Slusser as our editorial assistant. She is completing her M.A. Degree in History and has been a valuable contributor to the journal. She plans to work as a freelance writer and historical consultant, and we wish her success in the future.
The cover photo on the Fall/Winter 1981 issue was described as a banquet attended by Jewish soldiers and their relatives and friends. Only after publication of the journal did the Managing Editor realize that the "banquet" was actually a Passover Seder. The historian-detective will notice the traditional Passover matzoth on the plates in front of the guests and the Haggadoth, the holiday prayer book, on the tables. This is a small point, but one that had to be made by the editor, a graduate of the Sholem Aleichem Folkshul #10, Bronx, New York, and a student of Menke Katz. Furthermore, although the Hebrew language is written from right to left, we did not intend to reverse the name of the synagogue which sponsored the seder. Its correct name is Schaari Zedek.

George Pozzetta, whose story on the 1910 cigar strike appeared in the same issue, wishes to thank Glenn Westfall for supplying the strike cartoons which accompanied the article.

Also, Marian Godown, our advisory board member from Ft. Myers, corrects us in describing a few photos that were used in the Edison Park article appearing in the last edition. Thomas Edison donated the two lots, not the buildings, for the Congregational Church (p. 33). His winter home is not one of the first pre-fabricated houses in the country (p. 37). There were pre-fabs in Key West in the 1840s and somewhat later in Tallahassee and Tarpon Springs. Edison merely borrowed the idea. Marian passes on this anecdote about Edison’s relationship to the Congregational Church: "Edison was an agnostic and used to jump behind his wife, shouting, ‘I’m a heathen, I’m a heathen,’ to tease her. She got Edison to join with her in giving the two lots."
Socialism in the Sunshine: The Roots of Ruskin, Florida

by Lori Robinson and Bill De Young

Today, Ruskin is a quiet Florida town, known primarily for the sweet, red tomatoes and other farm produce grown in its clay soil. Only a few street names and the name of the town itself remain as vestiges of a dream that brought a small band of settlers to the Florida pinewoods on the sparsely settled eastern shore of Tampa Bay. They were utopians from the North, intellectuals and farmers in search of a new life and a new community. As they cut down the pines from the surrounding turpentine groves and set about building their community, they named its shady but rocky streets after some of the men whose principles they held dear – Carlyle, Bellamy, and Morris. The newly-born village itself was named after John Ruskin, whose ideas and hopes had brought them a new way of life in the Florida wilds.

This cooperative colony was the brainchild of Dr. George McAnelly Miller, a former Chicago lawyer and college professor. Born in 1857, Miller had previously been president of two Ruskin Colleges, the first in Trenton, Missouri, and the second in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. Both were innovative, socialist, workers’ colleges, and had short histories. Internal strife and strained relationships with their surrounding communities caused the two colleges to decline.
Dr. Miller had become the president of Ruskin College in Trenton, Missouri, in 1900. Previously named Avalon College, it was founded in 1900 by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Vrooman as the central college in the United States for the Ruskin Hall Educational System of Oxford, England. Based on the English socialist John Ruskin’s ideal of higher education for the masses, the college at Trenton, located 100 miles northeast of Kansas City, provided a Bachelor of Arts degree to anyone willing to work for it. Students who could not afford to pay the tuition outright ($120 for forty weeks) could work for their education in the college’s industries or on its 1800 acre farm. All of them were required to work part of their school day in enterprises including a woodwork establishment that made boxes, house furnishings, brooms, and handles; a factory that canned the farm’s produce and that of neighboring farmers; a chemical works; a laundry; sewing and cooking; and five stores in the town of Trenton. The approximately 500 students were paid ten cents an hour, and wages covered both board and tuition, but not room rent, which was fifty cents a week. The physical work was designed not only to provide a way for the students to earn their way through college, but also to train the students “for the practical duties of life.”

In 1903 Miller left Trenton in hopes of establishing another Ruskin College. Internal strife, financial problems, and a poor relationship with the town forced Miller to look elsewhere. Resentment from Trenton’s business community over the college’s cooperative stores caused
friction between the community and the college, which in turn created financial losses for the college.  

Miller chose Glen Ellyn, a suburb of Chicago, where Ruskin College was formed from an amalgamation of twelve local colleges in April 1903. The school had an enrollment of 2500 resident and 8000 correspondence students, with a faculty of 250 professors and instructors. But within a year, the college, located in an old hotel and several other buildings, began a steady decline. Again, internal strife and problems in the community were the cause. Miller now realized that the survival of a workers’ college depended on maintaining a harmonious relationship with the surrounding community. In order to form a new college in its own sympathetic environment, Miller began searching for a location separated from the larger capitalistic community and containing enough land to support a college and its working students.  

In 1903, Miller travelled by train to Florida to search again for suitable land for a Ruskin College. Unable to find anything to his liking, he boarded a train going north to return to his family in Missouri. On the train he began talking to Mr. and Mrs. Norton Williams, who were travelling with their children to their summer home in the Carolina mountains. In Florida they operated a turpentine still near the eastern shore of Hillsborough Bay. The Williamses informed Miller of the area’s advantages, emphasizing Hillsborough County’s rich forest lands, turpentine camps, and balmy climate.  

Miller apparently remembered that conversation three years later. In 1906, a fire caused by lightning destroyed the college in Glen Ellyn. That same year Miller moved his family and belongings to an area south of Tampa called Shell Point. A brother of Miller’s wife Adaline, A. P. Dickman, joined the Miller family in Florida in 1907. Dickman and Miller then negotiated with Captain C. H. Davis, an extensive landowner along the bay’s lower east coast, for a tract of land in southern Hillsborough County. Consisting of 12,000 acres, it stretched from the Little Manatee River in the south to Apollo Beach in the north. Davis agreed to accept 550 acres of prime Missouri farmland, the combined land holdings of A. P. Dickman and his two brothers, as a down payment for 12,000 acres of timber and scrub land in Hillsborough County. The agreement was settled on the basis of $3.75 per acre for the Florida land. Part of the tract was then platted, and lots were sold even before the other two Dickman brothers and their families moved down from Missouri.  

In February 1908, the three Dickman families moved from their Missouri farmlands to the wilderness of central Florida. The three brothers regarded the venture purely in terms of profit, with no interest in Miller's socialism. Their farm equipment and stock, including a team of mules, a milk cow, oxen, and a matched pair of Berkshire hogs – later regarded as curiosities in a land of wild razorbacks – were shipped from Missouri by freight train while the three families travelled south by passenger train. From Wimauma, a quickly-growing farm community and the nearest railroad depot, the Dickman clan hauled their farm equipment, animals, and personal belongings on a rut road eight miles westward to their new home.  

Included with the 12,000 acres they had bought was a deserted turpentine camp, at one time operated by convict labor. The new settlers moved into the three wood-plank supervisors’ houses
inside the convict stockade and quickly converted the camp’s commissary store into a schoolhouse. Each family began its own garden and shot the game that was abundant in the area. Almost immediately a sawmill was put into operation to provide lumber for the first temporary homes and first public school. Wood cut up river was hauled to the water by mules or oxen and then rafted down to the Mill.

The pioneers next turned to making their land available to other settlers. After reserving homesteads for themselves and setting aside land for the new college, they began platting the entire tract. Through personal letters and advertisements in sympathetic, usually socialist, newspapers, the venturous were drawn to the area. The community offered two advantages: owning land in a newly-developing communal society and higher education for their children.

The four founding families set up the Ruskin Homemakers, an organization for the distribution of their land. As more and more people poured into the area, the families formed a community association called the Florida Club, which sold land to the new settlers. It was separate from the Ruskin Homemakers, but cash received from land sales went to the Homemakers. Prices for town lots ranged from $50 to $90. Consisting of about a third of an acre of land, they measured 90 by 130 feet and included a ten foot alley. Five and ten acre farms cost $35 to $55 an acre.

On November 9, 1909, the members of the Florida Club had their first formal meeting. Temporary leaders were agreed upon, and the name of the Florida Club was changed to the Commongood Society of Ruskin, Florida. At first, meetings were held monthly and then only as

Ruskin founder, A.P. Dickman, built this house in 1911.
necessary. The gatherings took place in the Assembly Building, somewhat along the lines of New England town hall meetings. A variety of subjects were discussed, and proposals were voted upon in a democratic manner by a showing of hands or voice vote. Trustees and officers were elected and committees were formed and issued reports. George McA. Miller played an important role in these meetings, and his suggestions were usually approved. Members of the Dickman families apparently were much less active politically. According to Arthur McA. Miller, the founder's grandson, “the Dickmans were out doing the farming.” The number of settlers who attended the meetings of the Commongood Society varied. The minutes of the meeting of February 26, 1910, announced that fifty members were present, and on November 26, eighty members attended.¹¹

Committees were abundant though they seemed ineffectual. The real work was done by the trustees who were led by Miller. Plans for a community newspaper were made, and the issue of April 1910 had a run of 5,000 copies. Since the community had nowhere near 5,000 members, it appears that the Ruskin News might well have been used to advertise the town to the outside world. The paper contained only local news. It usually extolled the virtues of the community, outlined Commongood Society transactions, and announced details of land sales.¹²

As he had done on previous ventures, Dr. Miller modeled his enterprise from the writings of John Ruskin. The English socialist believed that higher education should be made readily

The original Ruskin College.

Photograph courtesy of The Shopper and Observer News.
available to the working class, that the social ills caused by the industrial revolution could only be eradicated through the education of all people. Working men and women could only raise up, but not rise out of, their own class in society by being trained in both industrial and agricultural skills. Ruskin believed not only in the education of the intellect, but placed even more emphasis on the building of character in education. The cultivation of feelings was much more important than the acquisition of the dry facts of knowledge. Also essential was a more intimate association with nature. According to Ruskin, the student should not study nature as a mere spectator, but should interact with it much like an artist. All students were to do something with their hands. Manual labor prepared students as working units of the community. Ruskin maintained that a person was not totally educated or happy until he or she became a beneficent and effective citizen of the community. Thus, the education of the head, heart, and hand must be undertaken to “get that organic cooperation of brain and heart and hand required for the harmonious development of human powers. Rooted thus in nature and in manual work, and fed by a vital and intelligent teaching of history and of literature, children will grow into those ‘habits of gentleness and justice’ which are the supreme end of education.”

With these ideals in mind, Miller began developing the college. Land on Ruskin Inlet was set aside specifically for the college. Funding came from the ten percent demanded by the Commongood Society from all proceeds of land sales. The first college buildings were dormitories made of rough, unplaned boards, with a basic design that was simple and box-like.
There was one concrete classroom. What is now the Ruskin Women’s Club served as the main classroom building, and the home of Dr. Miller’s daughter Aurora was used as a music studio.

Admission to the college called for “a will to work and a desire for leadership in the liberal thinking field.” The curriculum offered three years of preparatory work and four of college studies. The subjects taught included social sciences, speech, language, literature, music, drama, art, and shorthand. As at the college of Trenton, Missouri, needy students could earn tuition and board by laboring on the college’s twenty acre farm or in one of its workshops including weaving, leather-working, and woodworking. A laundry and a cooperative store also existed. The students’ day was broken into three periods: four hours of study, four hours of classes, and four hours of work. At its peak, the college had a student body of 160.

In the early years, the founders of Ruskin hoped that there would develop an intellectual, social, aesthetic, and ethical life that would revolve around the college, one that would benefit the entire community. The college was not to be merely an institution of higher learning, but a school of basic studies for both children and adults. The college performed classical plays each month in the outdoor Shakespearian Theater, held weekly literary society meetings where students and colonists could exhibit their talents, and offered regular concerts by the music department.

Ruskin College was a strong incentive for luring prospective settlers. Working-class Americans, confined to the backbreaking toil of farm or factory, wanted their children to have a better chance in life. The college offered their children a special type of education, one that encompassed John Ruskin’s ideal of the relationship of head, heart, and hand. Their children would be educated intellectually and morally, as well as physically. And the parents themselves, as part of Ruskin's community, would also benefit from the college.

Prior to Dr. Miller’s arrival in 1906, and the subsequent flow of new settlers into the region, southern Hillsborough County had been sparsely settled. Its few original inhabitants were not “crackers,” but “fly-up-the-creeks,” a term used for people who lived out in the wilderness, seeming to want to hide from civilization. They lived on the higher spots of land, avoiding the flood-prone lowlands, and scratched out a living hunting game and fishing the river and bay waters. In what is now a rich agricultural area, farming was avoided. Turpentine companies had set up small camps staffed by locals and operated with convict labor. They drained dry the sap from vast tracts of pine trees and cut and sold the lumber. The land was then put up for sale.

The area was relatively inaccessible. There was a train depot at Wimauma, eight miles to the east of the rut road, and there was one bridge across the Alafia River at Riverview, twelve miles to the north by posted road. The trip from Tampa by road took eight hours, but only in good weather. In wet weather, the roads were usually flooded. A motor launch named The Lurline made a regular four-hour run between Tampa and Bahia Beach. Soon after the arrival of the three Dickman families in 1908, A. P. Dickman bought a small launch named The Kilcare, and this replaced The Lurline from Tampa to Ruskin. A. P. and his son Paul were in charge of bringing in new settlers who travelled by train or steamship to Tampa.
As more settlers bought land in Ruskin, resentment flared between the “natives” and the colonists. The newcomers were viewed with rising suspicion as Yankees who wanted to change the natives’ culture and livelihood. The establishment of a permanent public school, with Dr. Miller’s sixteen-year-old daughter Aurora as its first teacher, turned resentment into action. Forest fires were set on the colonists’ land, destroying timber still being tapped to produce turpentine, and stacks of cordwood cut for The Kilcare’s boilers were burned in the middle of the night.

Many of the new colonists were veterans of similar hostilities concerning cooperative communities that had failed, most notably two colonies in Ruskin, Tennessee, and Ruskin, Georgia. The first, located sixty miles west of Nashville, was founded in July 1894, by Julius A. Wayland, editor of the popular socialist newspaper, The Coming Nation. The colony flourished until 1899, when internal friction caused the dispersal of the inhabitants. Some 249 residents moved to a new colony near Duke, Georgia, where for two years they struggled to farm worthless, swampy land. The colony at Ruskin, Georgia, collapsed in September 1901. One of the new colonists in Ruskin, Florida, was Ray Edwards, son of A. S. Edwards, successor to Wayland as editor of The Coming Nation.

Socialist communities had grown in America around the turn of the twentieth century. The Depression of 1893, oppressive industrial trusts, and imperialism caused many people to lose faith in the American government and the capitalistic dream. Socialism was an alternative, and cooperative communities, self-sufficient and separated from the capitalistic system, were established as havens from oppression.
After the disintegration of some of these socialist commonwealths in the early 1900s, the newly-formed cooperative colony at Ruskin, Florida, appealed to many of the residents of those settlements. The dream of a new beginning and the hope for a better future for their children lured people to the Sunshine State. But more importantly, Florida itself beckoned to them.

At the time of Ruskin’s founding, Florida was enjoying a land boom. For years the state had been the playground of the rich. When vacationers returned home, they spread the idea that Florida could become an agricultural paradise where farmers, weary of the fruitless struggle against nature in the North, could make easy fortunes from Florida’s bountiful soil. Rich investors, along with the railroads, launched advertising campaigns which attracted the attention of small farmers and homeseekers in the frozen North. Florida was portrayed as a “land of dreams,” and reports of its wonderful productivity read like fairy tales. It was a “poor man’s paradise,” where farmers who had failed in the North could have a second chance and where homesteaders could buy up valuable land for next to nothing.

The scrub and timber lands east and south of Tampa – the “prairie lands” of central Florida – were reported to have a fantastic growing season. In ten months, two farm crops and three truck crops could be raised on fertile soil. In an advertisement in Florida Fruit and Produce News in January 1911, the lands fronting Hillsborough Bay were advertised as “one of the greatest producing districts in this country from an agricultural and horticultural standpoint.” It also noted that the land contained an irrigable belt, a zone of shallow artesian wells “where ever-flowing streams of pure water are obtained by boring to a depth of only fifteen to a hundred feet.” The Tampa Bay Land Company was selling the land at $60 an acre, in ten-acre tracts. Tampa, “the metropolis of South Florida,” was reported to have the best local market for produce and the best shipping facilities. Thus southern Hillsborough County had an irresistible pull to many people seeking new homes and lives. It offered not only the dream of rich farmland, but the appeal of a cooperative community and the advantage of education for children.

Selling the land in Ruskin to these people was the main concern of the Ruskin Commongood Society. Its object was “to hold and administer for its members the collectively owned funds, property, and privileges accruing to them by virtue of their being allotees of land in Ruskin Colony.” All landholders were members of the Society, and men and women were eligible to vote in the affairs of this public body. A portion of all land sold was set aside for the “common good.” This land could be used for school grounds, the college campus, streets, roads, or parks. Ten percent of all proceeds from allotments went to the Commongood Society to finance college and community improvements. Payment for land could be in cash, but new settlers could also labor on community projects, such as land clearing, street building, or dredging, to pay for land. Laborers were paid in colony “scrip,” sometimes the only money in circulation. The economy flourished. By 1910, homes had been built or were being built on both sides of Ruskin Inlet for a distance of two miles. Two college buildings and a cooperative store held a central location. In November 1910, the Commongood Society administered the sale of 3000 town lots which the founders hoped to sell within nine months. They lasted nine weeks. Still there was a demand for more land. To accommodate the buyers, 11,000 acres of farm and timber land ten miles to the east of Ruskin was bought by an association composed of Dr. Miller, the Dickmans, and some prominent citizens of St. Petersburg. The new site was modeled after Ruskin, and was named
Morris Park, after William Morris of England, the successor of John Ruskin in the advocacy of education for the working class. A large pine mill was put into operation there, and a cypress shingle mill was begun at Big Cypress, six miles west of Morris Park. A town site was surveyed, and colonization soon began. The town was named Aurazoda, a combination of the names of Dr. Miller’s daughters.26

The inhabitants of the area quickly realized that their flat, mucky land made excellent truck farming areas, and that the climate was ideal for growing winter vegetables and fruits. State agricultural officials discovered that the mineral-rich soil was underlaid with a shell-filled marl two to three feet below the sandy topsoil. A marl base allowed irrigation without the loss of fertilizer, as the marl prevented the fertilizer from being absorbed too deeply into the soil.27 Also, numerous artesian wells were dug around the colony. Many of the deeper wells, those dug from one to three hundred feet down, were used not only for irrigation, but, because of their strong water pressure, also provided water to the second-floor level of Ruskin’s homes. As agriculture grew in economic importance, the college became less crucial to the community.28

Agriculture received a further boost when the railroad connected southern Hillsborough County with Tampa. Built with local pine and cypress the tracks were laid in 1913, to connect Ruskin with the Seaboard Airline Railroad at Morris Park. The railroad’s primary purpose was to haul timber to the mill at Morris Park; however, it also had limited, free passenger service and mail use. Additionally in 1913, the Atlantic Okeechobee and Gulf Railroad promised to make Ruskin the terminus of the suburban service from Tampa, with three round trips daily, and pledged to extend the Ruskin-Morris Park interurban from Aurazoda to Tampa and Bradenton.29

By 1913, travel around Ruskin had been greatly improved. Twenty-five miles of roads and ditches had been built, connecting the colonists with each other and the town. The roads were reported to be passable at all times. One such road, called “The Wire Road” because of utility communications lines running alongside it, linked Ruskin with Tampa. This later became U.S. 301. In 1914, the colonists decided to build a road that would connect Tampa with Manatee County to the south, with bridges across the Alafia and Little Manatee Rivers. Hillsborough County commissioners thought that a graded road along the bay was a costly luxury, one that would be used only by those “crazy Yankees” trying to homestead the swamplands of southern Hillsborough. They refused to have anything to do with it. Instead, the colonists who believed that this road was essential to deliver their produce to neighboring towns passed a local bond issue for $30,000. A nine-foot shell road was built, which later because U.S. 41. Shortly after its
construction, the road was damaged severely when a Ringling Brothers Circus caravan, after a show in Tampa, came through the area during a rainstorm. In 1916, the road was rebuilt from asphalt paving blocks to a width of twelve feet. This time the county commission favored the improvement, perhaps because one of the commissioners had an interest in an asphalt paving plant. By 1922, U.S. 41 had expanded to four lanes and was advanced to a width of twenty-four feet.30

Additional sources of transportation for the colonists were the small launches that made regular trips between Tampa and Ruskin. *The Kilcare* left Ruskin at seven in the morning on every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and arrived in Tampa at 10:00 a.m. It left Tampa at 2:30 in the afternoon to return to Ruskin. The voyage cost fifty cents each way. *The Bessie*, *The Isadore*, and *The Nokomis* were located at the foot of Whiting or Washington Streets, and made frequent trips to Ruskin.31

Although connected with its neighboring towns by rail, ship, and highway, Ruskin remained somewhat isolated by its own choice. Many colonists had learned through previous experiences that outsiders were distrustful of socialism, a system that was perceived as a threat to the American way of life. Nevertheless, the colonists depended for their livelihood on the sale of their produce to neighboring areas. Pepper, squash, carrots, and cabbage were Ruskin’s major crops, with carrots and cabbage grown for the market in Tampa. These were taken to the streetside markets along 7th Avenue and 40th Street in Ybor City, where the Ruskin farmers and
Latin vegetable peddlers bargained over the produce. The Latins then loaded the goods onto horsedrawn wagons, and sold them in the residential streets of Tampa. Eventually a farmers’ market was built by the merchants and peddlers at East Broadway and 47th Street.32

Throughout Ruskin’s early years, life was generally peaceful. People were notified of important events, such as a fire or a meeting, by a bell rung in the community center. There was no fire department, only a bucket brigade. The town church was nonsectarian. Services were held in the college’s assembly hall, and Dr. Miller usually read from his translations of original Hebrew and Greek Bible verses. A. P. Dickman ran the daily newspaper, and his daughter Pauline delivered milk to the local farms. Boys earned extra money by shooting alligators and selling their hides. The colonists built their own cannery, operating the whole process, including soldering the cans by hand, without outside assistance. By 1913, Ruskin had a local and long distance telephone system and electric light plant, and its cooperative store was doing a $25,000 a year business. The colony itself was expanded. Land was bought northward to extend the artesian belt and included more timber acreage, and purchases were made southward to add more truck farming and citrus land.33

Cooperation was continually stressed. The colonists labored on public works projects to pay for their land, and college students worked in the fields and cooperative industries to pay for their education. The concept of the “common good” was the motivation for the colony. To this end, it tried to promote “social purity.” To keep the community pure, no liquor or cigarettes were allowed into the colony. Only whites could lease colony land. However, women had the same privileges as men. Dissidents or undesirables were removed by means of a “reverter clause,” a
legal loophole included in the land deed. This clause had the effect of making it easy for the Commongood Society to remove a member with the least amount of legal formality. In such cases the land would “revert” back to the Commongood Society.

In 1914 the Ruskin Colony Farms newspaper described the Ruskin Community ideals as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right Relationship</th>
<th>Individuality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Effort</td>
<td>Dignity of Labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Purity</td>
<td>Ennobling of Character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Unfettered</td>
<td>A Home for Everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Education</td>
<td>Link Head, Heart and Hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Thought</td>
<td>Sex Equality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As utopian as Ruskin seemed, many of its young people became dissatisfied with its tedious small-town life. Higher wages and the appeal of the big city prompted the young to begin drifting away. World War I emptied Ruskin of most of its remaining young adults. The men were drafted, and the women took government jobs away from home. The college was closed. In 1918, a disastrous fire destroyed all but one of the college buildings. The final blow to the college came in August 1919, when Dr. Miller died suddenly while on a lecture tour in Ohio. He had gone there to promote his book The New Order of Jesus and to recruit new settlers and students for Ruskin. The college would never reopen. Few of Ruskin’s young people returned after the war. They had seen the outside world and succumbed to its temptations. However, one young man who did return was A.P. Dickman’s son Paul, who immediately set up a sawmill operation.

In the 1920s there was another land boom in Florida, and Paul Dickman was busy buying and selling real estate in Tampa. But, prosperity was shortlived. The bubble of land speculation burst around mid-decade, and the Crash of 1929 left many people deeper in debt, including Paul Dickman. His 2500 acres of farmland in Ruskin constituted all of his assets. However, he weathered the Depression and became Ruskin’s leading farmer, instituting new farming techniques into the area. Dickman taught Ruskin farmers how to farm for a profit, and he built his own cultivating machines specially suited to the Florida soil. He discovered that the marl-based earth was perfect for growing tomatoes, and the new Ruskin vegetable industry was begun. In 1941, Dickman organized the growers into the Ruskin Vegetable Cooperative. They pooled their produce and figured out innovative ways of packaging.
and shipping their fruits and vegetables by using cellophane wrappers and refrigerated trucks. Their success earned Ruskin the nickname: “America’s Salad Bowl.”

During World War II, Tampa and Ruskin developed a closer relationship. Many people from Ruskin found work in Tampa’s shipyards and sulphur plants, while many Tampans chose to live in Ruskin as Hillsborough’s newest residential area. In the last two decades, Ruskin has blossomed into its present agricultural greatness. It grows about 3000 acres of tomatoes yearly, and nearby Apollo Beach has one of the largest and most modern tomato packinghouses in the world. Also important to the area are phosphate mining and shipping, flower and tropical fish farms, and real estate.

As a result of George Miller's dream of a college within a supportive, socialistic community, the town of Ruskin was founded. Miller's cooperative community surrounding and supporting a socialist workers’ college lasted barely a decade. Nevertheless, the Commongood Society, though generally inactive, existed until October 1967, when it quietly dissolved. Speaking of the old community, Arthur McA. Miller reflected: “I’d really prefer to call it a communitarian or communalistic experiment, rather than socialist or communist. It really wasn’t.” Because George Miller had depended on his wife’s brothers, three Missouri farmers, to help him finance and organize the colony, and because the community itself was colonized by farmers, Ruskin survived and flourished in an agricultural setting. In the process, the triumph of capitalism nearly erased memories of the town’s radical roots.


5 “The Early History of Ruskin.” Notes Based Upon the Williams Family and Other Area Residents, etc., Notes Based Upon Mr. Paul Dickman and Other Area Residents, no author, no date, vertical files, Hillsborough County Preservation Board, Tampa, p. 1.


9 Interview with Arthur McA. Miller, April 1974.


12 Ruskin News, April 1910.


17 Karen De Young, “Ruskin: The Years Wear Thin a Dream,” St. Petersburg Times, 9 May 1974, p. 3-D.


19 Willard Miller Interview.

20 “Two-Day Program to Mark Ruskin 50th Anniversary,” Tampa Tribune, 24 March 1960, p. 2-B.


24 “The Logical Point for the Truck Grower” (advertisement), ibid., 6 Jan. 1911, p. 20.


29 “Interurban Railroad Development Planned by Ruskin Colonists,” pp. 18, 23.


34 *Ruskin Colony Farms*, 1914.

35 Arthur McA. Miller Interview.

36 Karen De Young, “Ruskin,” p. 3-D.


38 Arthur McA. Miller Interview.
Captain Carey Johnson, retired bar pilot, sadly shakes his head as he ponders the demise of the phosphate shipping operations at Boca Grande, Florida. It bothers him that after seventy years of being one of Florida’s major deep water ports, Boca Grande should be abandoned.

Captain Johnson is part of the family of pioneering seamen who opened the port and saw it develop after phosphate was discovered and mined near Bartow in 1885. A need emerged for better shipping methods than that of floating barges down the Peace River to Punta Gorda and Charlotte Harbor. This, in turn, led to the building of the railroad and the establishment of the quaint and unique town of Boca Grande on Gasparilla Island.

Boca Grande is the deepest natural port between Tampa and Miami with a thirty-two foot controlling depth and holes reported up to ninety feet deep. Favorably located at the western end of Charlotte Harbor, it afforded access from the Gulf for ships of many foreign countries. In 1888, Captain I. W. Johnson and his brother, Will Johnson, sailed from Punta Gorda to Gasparilla Island and became the first pilots for the area. The only other inhabitants at the time were the Gasparilla lighthouse keeper and his family. The few buildings were the lighthouse, a cottage for the quarantine doctor, and a bunkhouse for the pilots.
A decade later, the Alafia Manatee and Gulf Railway Company was incorporated by the Florida Legislature “for the purpose of constructing and operating a railroad for the transportation of passengers, produce, goods, and all other freight, from a point at or near Plant City, Florida . . . to a point on Charlotte Harbor.”¹ In 1906, the Company was absorbed by the Charlotte Harbor and Northern Railway, which proposed to construct a 110-mile road from Plant City to Boca Grande.² By then, the American Agriculture and Chemical Company, the parent company of the Charlotte Harbor and Northern Railway, had begun extending its mining activities and developing the railway and the deep water port of Boca Grande for overland shipment and transloading to ships.³

In 1906, when railway president L. M. Fouts, his engineers and sixty laborers stepped from the steamer Mistletoe onto the Boca Grande beach to begin work for the railroad, the only buildings were the original three port personnel buildings, and the inhabitants consisted of the lighthouse keeper, Captain William Lester, and the assistant keeper and his family. While railroad construction got underway, American Agriculture and Chemical Company, through its subsidiaries, was also building a town complete with power station, electricity, telephone, water, sewers, paved streets and sidewalks, rarities in the Florida frontier at that time.

Construction of the CH&N line proceeded from Boca Grande northward. It passed across Gasparilla Island, on trestles and drawbridges over Gasparilla Pass and Gasparilla Sound and progressed through Fort Ogden and Hull to reach Arcadia, forty-nine miles away in 1907. Company repair shops were located in Arcadia. In 1910, the line was extended to connect with the Seaboard Air Line Railway at Bradley Junction and also to phosphate mines around
Mulberry. There the railroad linked up with the Atlantic Coast Line at South Mulberry. The line’s ninety trestles totaled over three miles in length. 4 In 1909, the Railway had four locomotives, seventy-nine cars, carried 13,721 passengers, and transported 36,545 tons of freight. 5 In addition to phosphate, it handled shipments of lumber, vegetables, citrus, and livestock that were loaded on the Seaboard Coast Line at its terminals in Plant City and Mulberry. By 1917, the Charlotte Harbor and Northern had expanded to eleven locomotives, 217 freight cars, fifteen passenger cars, and fifty-six units of work equipment. 6

The railroad depot at Boca Grande, constructed between 1909 and 1913, at Park and Fourth Streets in the center of town, has been an important Florida landmark since it was built as the extreme western terminal of the line. Linking the mainland with the island, the railroad provided the only access to the Charlotte Harbor port other than by water. To serve its employers and construction personnel on the island, the railroad expanded from its original cargo-transporting
capacity to include passengers, baggage, food and all the other necessities for living in an isolated community.

The building was completed in two sections: the first twelve-bay southern section about 1910, and a nine-bay northern section in 1913. First floor interior areas included waiting rooms, restrooms, ticketing, and baggage facilities. The second story served as office headquarters for railroad and dock operations. For a time, part of the space was leased by the United States Customs Service. Tongue-and-groove siding, the material of boxcar interiors, was installed as wainscoting, paneling, ceiling and counter facings. The building had hardwood floors throughout and red tidewater cypress trim.

Because the area was noted for its abundant sport fishing grounds, the company also built a small inn primarily to accommodate company executives. They soon saw the possibilities of a tourist trade. The excellent fishing, the wonderful climate and the natural beauty of the island were splendid advantages for an industrial-transport operation.

In 1913, Karl P. Abbott, at age twenty-four, was hired by Peter B. Bradley, president of American Agriculture and Chemical Company, to manage and expand the small Gasparilla Inn. He arrived to find an embryonic town containing the railroad station, a red brick general store, a drugstore, four residences the CH&N had built for its officers, an unpainted frame church, a schoolhouse, and the little inn. Abbott recalled: “I met Mr. Fouts, president of the railroad, who was in charge of everything . . . the pilots, Captain I. W. and Will Johnson . . . and all the
old-timers – Jeff Gaines, the postmaster; Jerome Fugate, the druggist; a man named Gilligan who ran the general store; and John Riley, the superintendent for the company. In a little room in back of the store, Louis Fouts, son of the elder Fouts, had opened a bank.\(^8\)

Young Karl Abbott was faced with the responsibility of building and furnishing a new, larger hotel complete with lounge and clubroom, dining room and kitchens, and ninety bedrooms, each with private bath. The property also was to include quarters for service employees and guides, a powerhouse, boathouse and bathing pavilion on the beach, and landscaping. Abbott went to Colebrook, New Hampshire, at one point during the construction, and hired a “hard-working New England” hotel crew. Miss Hattie Rhoda Mead, from Sloane’s Department Store in New York, did the decorating. When all was ready for Abbott’s grand opening, in the summer of 1913, there was just one thing wrong – he had no bookings!

His first reservation request came from a prominent and famous Boston dowager. With tongue-in-cheek and many rooms at hand, Abbott requested a “social reference” for her. This so amused the lady that she told her friends about the Inn that accepted only “the right people”, and the word spread fast. The “right” people came: the Saltonstalls, Russells, and Cabots joined the Drexels and Biddles who arrived from Philadelphia, the DuPonts from Wilmington, and George Eastman, the camera executive from Rochester.

Again, the railroad was the catalyst. Travelers could board the Silver Star in New York, have Pullman cars and a diner at their disposal, and arrive in Boca Grande twenty-four to twenty-six hours later. Some of these vacation families later purchased property on the island, and built the fabulous winter homes that to this day line the beachfront and hide behind great privacy walls and lush tropical foliage.

Barron Collier, the noted publisher, purchased the Gasparilla Inn from American Agriculture in 1930, and in the 1950s, Bayard Sharp took it over. The old Inn, refurbished occasionally, and with a sporty eighteen-hole golf course attached, still retains its nostalgic charm and character. As in the past, it caters to the well-to-do gentry.

The railway and the town have undergone more extensive changes. In 1928, the Seaboard Airline Railroad acquired all of the capital stock of the CH&N and absorbed the operations of the Boca Grande Route.\(^9\) Until 1958, the railroad was the only land transportation link with the mainland. In that year, the Boca Grande Causeway was built. Until then, a friendly ferry ride provided transportation for islanders who needed to get to the mainland for doctor and dentist

Cargo raft towed by Captain Sprott’s ferry.

Photograph courtesy of Ramar Group Companies, Inc.
appointments and necessary shopping trips. The fare was five dollars round trip, eight dollars for out-of-towners.

Lifetime residents today fondly recall their early experiences, though some would be considered great hardships by today’s standards. Mrs. Myrtle Bloempoort, born in Boca in 1915, remembers that in her youth there were only two automobiles on the island, both of which had been brought over on Captain Sprott's ferry. At the time, the “ferry” for transporting bulky things, like cars, consisted of a motorboat which towed a raft large enough to accommodate whatever cargo it was carrying.

Myrtle’s father had come from New York to Boca Grande when he was about twenty to work as an accountant for the railroad. He and the niece of the owner of a small hotel called “Palmetto Inn” were married on the island. Myrtle thinks of her childhood as “the most wonderful time.” She remembers the stiff white collars, straw “boaters,” and seersucker jackets all the men wore. The band concerts especially bring back warm memories. Her father played the trombone and founded a band made up of company employees, guides, fishermen, and anyone else who could
play an instrument, including Karl Abbott, the Inn’s manager, on the alto horn. Sunday afternoon concerts were commonplace events, but the band played for special events, too. For one such event, they travelled to the three-day Gasparilla festival in Tampa and participated in the general merriment.

Myrtle married at eighteen and left the island to “see the world.” The young couple moved to Boston, where Myrtle soaked up the big-city ways, history of the venerable city and its culture. When the marriage floundered, where did she head? Back to Boca, of course, where she worked for a time at the Western Union office located in the depot, and then opened a sportswear shop which she ran for twenty years.

The San Marco was the town's movie theater, a wooden structure with a tin roof and shell floor. A good rainstorm drowned out the film soundtrack. Everyone came to the theater, with the winter residents, like the Crowninshields and DuPonts, having boxes with their names on them. Myrtle and her husband, Jan, a builder, recently bought the theater and plan to renovate it, possibly converting it into boutique shops.¹⁰

The town had three churches, Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopalian, all housed in frame buildings. The Catholic church, the Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy, is a mission-style building on Park Avenue and was built in 1950. The first school was a one-room building with grades one through eight. Those who sought higher education went to the mainland. In 1929, one of the original “winter people,” Mrs. Crowninshield, was instrumental in having a new twelve-grade school built. Today that school is the Community Recreation Center.

Mrs. Thomas Cost (Pansy, as everyone knows her) is another native of the island. Her mother and father met there in 1919, and were married shortly thereafter. Her mother’s relatives worked for the railroad, her paternal grandfather was employed in construction, and her father followed in his footsteps. Pansy insists that Boca Grande never felt any severe effects of the Great Depression. Life continued just as before with the shipping operation and construction the mainstays of the economy. Pansy supervises the town’s unique library, and she is the guardian of the historical bits and pieces concerning Boca Grande. She laments the fact that very little documented material has survived and most of that is in private scrapbooks and memories. Her knowledge and pictures of the old Inn and ferry are among her treasures.¹¹

The library was the inspiration of attorney Roger Amory of Boston, one of the distinguished winter residents during the 1940s. Mr. Amory, a collector of rare manuscripts and first editions, conceived of a library as a leisure center and not only as a place where people could go for research, reading, and study. As a result, the building he had erected in 1949 is a storehouse of...
treasures as well as a tranquil oasis for travels of the mind. Six coquina rock steps lead to its massive pair of cypress doors. Coquina rock walls, a cypress ceiling, and red tile floor form the entrance hall overlooking landscaped courtyards, where visitors can relax, rest, read, or just enjoy the peaceful atmosphere.

Inside, the library contains an estimated 15,000 volumes in the shelf-lined room off the entrance hall. Some of Amory’s early editions are within easy reach of the visitor. Kept under lock are more valuable collections, some up to 500 years old. In a glass case built into the coquina rock walls rests a chained manuscript labeled as “written before the birth of Christopher Columbus.” Even in the limited open hours of summer, it is a meeting place for the islanders. The name, The Johann Fust Community Library, honors the man who financed Gutenberg’s invention of movable type and made mass publishing possible.

One of the most interesting old houses in town has a fascinating history described by its current owner, James M. Ingram, a physician, in Journey’s End – the history of an island home. A man named Stackhouse (no first name is recorded) came to Boca as a gang-foreman with the railroad builders. He acquired land on the beach just outside the existing plat of the village and engaged a contractor B. S. Barnett, to build a house. Dr. Ingram reports: “Virgin heart-pine for the house was cut between Arcadia and Wauchula. This lumber, together with laborers, tools, bricks and several mules, was floated down the Peace River, across Charlotte Harbor, and then through the bayou, in one large flotilla of wooden barges. On arrival on the bayou side of the island, Mr. Barnett’s crew cut cabbage palm logs and laid a corduroy road. All the material for the house was hauled by mules on this road across the island. The house was begun and completed in 1914.” In less than two years, Stackhouse disappeared and left the premises to the mercy of weather and vandals. “In 1921,” Ingram writes, “the area’s worst hurricane rolled the Gulf in from the west and over the island. Whatever windows, doors and furniture that had not been taken from the house by vandals were blown to the mainland. Over a foot of sand covered the floor, but the house survived its first of seven hurricanes.”

Over a period of years and a series of owners, including the Anthony B. Drexels, the house acquired additions, extra rooms, and cottages. Dr. Ingram has owned it since 1962. The original

Haircuts were hard to come by. This photo of Mr. Richard Kuhl, one of the first railroad accountants and later the town’s hardware man, indicates that he had many talents.

Photograph courtesy of Ramar Group Companies, Inc.
heart-pine lumber was so hard it defied nails and saws. There was virtually no rot, and the house has remained impervious to termites, without chemical preservation, for forty-eight years.

When port facilities fell into disrepair a few years ago and required expensive reconstruction, Seaboard decided to abandon Boca Grande in favor of other ports. The busy little station, which had been the island’s lifeline, town meeting place, and center of communication for the village, stood idle. In 1978, Ramar Group Companies, Inc., led by Robert A. Morris, an architect, bought the depot as part of a corporate program of purchasing and restoring historic buildings in southwest Florida. The following year, the Boca Grande depot was entered on the National Register of Historic Places. The restoration project is an absorbing one for Mr. Morris who asserts: “I think that one of the responsibilities of an architect is to preserve the things that were there before he got there.”

Ramar work crews have painstakingly dismantled narrow tongue-and-groove boxcar siding, scraped untold layers of paint, sanded and refinished, and repaired weighted rope-and-pulley window sashes to perfect working order (even some of the original pane glass was saved). They have exposed narrow wood lath under boar’s hair strengthened plaster and replaced materials damaged in a boiler-room fire that charred much of the original southern section. They have salvaged everything possible and duplicated where necessary. As part of this restoration process, the manufacturer of the original French tile roofing replaced broken tiles with identical reproductions.

The Gasparilla Inn’s bathhouse at the beach was blown away in a severe storm in the early 1920s.

Photograph courtesy of Ramar Group Companies, Inc.
The abandoned Charlotte Harbor and Northern Railway station as it looked when Ramar Group Companies, Inc., bought it in 1978 to restore it and maintain its historical significance at Boca Grande.

Photograph courtesy of Ramar Group Companies, Inc.

The restored station, with the addition of a tower and paved terrace, retains its nostalgic character and serves as a focal point of community activity.

Photograph courtesy of Ramar Group Companies, Inc.
Built of white sand brick, with interior walls of red brick faced with plaster, the original two-story building is 141 by 36 feet. Mediterranean Revival influence is evident in the hip roof of clay tile and an arcaded loggia covering the entrances. A balustraded gallery runs the length of the building under a seven-foot overhang of the roof. Another distinguishing feature is the carved toe bracing, keyed and tenoned to the rafter butts at the cornice. The ticket office’s bay window furnishes visibility up and down the tracks. A pair of glass bay windows face the street.

In restoring the structure, the Sarasota-based Ramar Group added extensive decking on the west side to foster community use of the area as a meeting place. An exterior stairway, roofed and braced like the main building, gives access to the west gallery and to shops and offices on the second floor. A restaurant, retail shops, and a savings and loan association occupy the ground floor. An historic marker at the front entrance identifies the building and its place in the history of the village of Boca Grande. A tree, planted in 1954 by the Boca Grande Women’s Club and dedicated to the “Spirit of Christmas,” has served as the community’s Christmas tree each year. The whole community gathers around and sings carols, perpetuating a tradition that is symbolic of the great unity among the islanders.

The activity at the port is now limited to oil shipments from Venezuela, Texas and Louisiana. Oil comes in on tankers and is transloaded to inland barges and sent on to Florida Power and Light in Fort Myers.
Captain Carey Johnson longs for the exciting days of his piloting career when the port bustled with activity and sailors came from many foreign nations. The captain muses: “We shipped over two million tons of phosphate to all over the world for fertilizer to help feed the world. I felt like I was doing something.”

Indeed, all the islanders can claim they have helped make Boca Grande a very special place in the past that they hope to preserve for the future.

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1 Acts and Resolutions Adopted by the Legislature of Florida at its Sixth Regular Session, Tallahassee, 1897, pp 166-168.


4 Richard E. Prince, Steamboats, Locomotives and History, (Green River, Wyoming), 1962, p. 94.

5 Poor’s Manual of Railroads, 1910, p. 409.

6 Prince, Steamboats, Locomotives and History, p. 94.

7 Drawing Number 7454, Charlotte Harbor and Northern Railway, October 22, 1912.

8 Karl P. Abbott, Open for the Season, (Garden City, New York), 1952.

9 Prince, Steamboats, Locomotives and History, p. 96.

10 Interview with Mrs. Myrtle Bloempoort, July, 1981.

11 Interview with Mrs. Thomas (Pansy) Cost, July, 1981.


13 Journey's End - the history of an island home, pamphlet written by James M. Ingram, M.D.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Interview with Captain Carey Johnson, July, 1981.
“WISH YOU WERE HERE”: A Photo Essay

by Hampton Dunn

I am a deltiologist. So are thousands of other Floridians. And possibly a million or more other Americans. If deltiology sounds like Greek to you – it is! It comes from the Greek deltion – meaning small picture – and logos – meaning knowledge of the subject. The word is not even in the dictionary, yet. But if this species continues to proliferate it will surely be properly recognized by Mr. Webster one of these days. In England the word Cardiology will have the same meaning as Deltiology. What it is, is Postcard collecting.

I did not become a deltiologist just to have a hobby, or even just to collect old postcards. As an author of a dozen books on Florida historical subjects, I was challenged three or four years ago to put together a Florida history featuring antique postcard views, along with a commentary on each scene. The challengers were Jay Dobkin, head of the Special Collections Department of the University of South Florida Library, and my old newspaper “buddy,” Lucy O’Brien, who runs an antique shop in historic Ybor Square and specializes in stocking old postcards. [Ed. note: See her story on page 50]

An exponent of pictorial history, I believe that it is the quickest and most effective way to record and project olden times “the way it was.” Having written millions of words as a newspaper reporter, free lance writer, editor and lecturer, I acknowledge that pictures may be drawn by words, “picturesque language” so to speak; but visual aids and illustrations are the best way to take your audience to early sights and scenes. A vivid picture really is worth a thousand words!

Sure you can describe a Victorian mansion as a large, three-story structure with lots of gingerbread carpentry, dormer windows, wooden shingled roof, and all that; however, does not a photo tell it better? How about a description of Main Street – the frame stores, the brick post office, horses and wagons on the streets, kids riding bikes, ladies in their long dresses and big hats. Does not a photo tell it better?

I admire the itinerant photographers who went from village to village and from city to city in the early part of this century and shot a few scenes – the post office, churches, main street, schoolhouses, beaches, trolley cars, landmark structures – and then had them printed up on postcards. They contributed tremendously to the treasure trove of history. Natives bought the cards and mailed them to their friends and relatives where postcard collectors grabbed them, tucked them away in albums and put the albums on coffee tables as conversation pieces. Most small towns had no local photographers. Thus, these traveling cameramen did a great thing in recording the early scenes and passing them along as a heritage of the times.

This collector bugged his friends and relatives to dig through their attics for old postcards, stalked antique shops, flea markets, second hand book stores for cards, and was on the lookout on his frequent out-of-state trips for these “goodies.” When the collection reached some 3,000
items, in 1981 I published a book entitled “Wish You Were Here”: A Grand Tour of Early Florida Via Old Post Cards” (Byron Kennedy & Co., P.O. Box 10937, St. Petersburg, FL 33733 $19.95). There are scenes from each of the state’s sixty-seven counties, and it contains some full color reproductions of several of the old postcards on the book jacket. The title, of course, is the most frequent message written on postcards, dating back to the earliest days around the turn of the century. A postcard manufacturer researched it and determined that this was indeed the most popular note on cards.3

The advent of postcards coincides closely with the influx of tourists coming to Florida in the 1890s and the years since. This popular pastime, mailing cards to the folks back home by the visitors, did much to publicize Florida as a paradise and continues to do so today.

The following cards are from my personal collection and display scenes from the fifteen county area of Tampa Bay History.
Court Houses long have been a favorite subject for postcard scenes. Here is a neat view of the Charlotte County Court House at Punta Gorda. The card was mailed in 1944, during World War II. This card was sent to a lady and her daughter in Fountain City, Tenn., with this message: “You both should be here. Plenty of ‘old folks’ . . . and ‘oodles’ of Army, Navy & Marine flyers for Betty. See why I’m having a good time?”

This was a handsome high school building for Punta Gorda, considering this card was mailed in 1913. It appears to be constructed of sturdy stone and must have served several generations of Charlotte County students.
Even commercial property in Naples has that handsome, tropical look as evidenced by this postcard showing off the Beachcomber motel. The caption on the back noted it had “sixty units, air conditioned, heated, soundproofed, bedrooms, efficiencies, suites, daily maid service, bellboys, individual telephones, beautifully landscaped patios, a cabana club, seven miles of public beach, and all sports.”

One of Arcadia’s oldest hotels was the Arcadia House, built before 1901. The original wooden Arcadia House, shown in this 1908 postcard, has been torn down, but a later brick Arcadia House Annex is still in use as a rooming house.
For many decades, the Sunny South Farms has been a prosperous agricultural development in DeSoto County at Fort Ogden. The homestead of the Russell family still stands and is a landmark.

Truly a distinctive landmark in Wauchula is the First Baptist Church at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Main Street, seen in this postcard mailed in 1957. The church was organized by Parson John Hendry in 1876. On the night of the Normandy invasion during World War II, the bells of the church began to toll about eleven o’clock in the evening and prayers were said in the sanctuary for boys taking part in the landing.
This postcard shows the giant raw sugar house of the United States Sugar Corporation at Clewiston. Its caption states that it is capable of producing a million pounds of raw sugar a day. From sugar cane to sugar crystals requires about eighteen hours of processing.

Writing from the Clewiston Inn in 1947, the correspondent who mailed this card reported: “We are enjoying lunch in the Everglades Room – a haven completely away from the wilderness we’ve been driving so many miles through.” The white-columned Inn still is well known for its southern hospitality and Old South cuisine. It is owned by the U.S. Sugar Corporation.
It is now a retreat for the University of South Florida students, faculty and staff, but originally this was the Chinsegut Hill Sanctuary on U.S. 41 north of Brooksville. It was the mansion on the hill owned by Colonel Raymond Robbins, wealthy gold miner who struck it rich in the Alaska gold rush. During World War I, he was an American Red Cross official in Russia.

When the Tangerine Hotel was erected as a Mediterranean-style building in 1928, it was located smack on U.S. 41. But a few years later they rerouted this main highway through another section of Brooksville. Originally, the hotel was painted a bright tangerine and was named The Tangerine Hotel, thus saluting one of the top products of this citrus-producing area.
A landmark in Sebring since the beginning of the Florida real estate boom in the 1920s has been the Kenilworth Lodge. The Sebring family, who developed this community, invested heavily in the Kenilworth, the Nancesowee and other mid-town buildings and had not sold them when the boom collapsed.

The main business section of attractive Avon Park is featured in this postcard. A well-landscaped mall separates the main street. Predominant among the trees is the jacaranda, and Avon Park is known as “The Jacaranda City.”
This card, issued earlier than 1908, shows Tampa’s Franklin St. looking north from Lafayette St. (now Kennedy Blvd.) at the Court House Square. Note several means of transportation – an open air streetcar, horse and wagon, newspaper boys pushing a cart loaded with newspapers.

The “old” Tampa Yacht and Country Club was “new” when this postcard view of it was mailed in 1908. The caption on back noted: “The Yacht and Country Club at Tampa is picturesquely located on the Bay, accessible by boat or trolley, and is a source of much pleasure to its members. The building was erected in 1905 at a cost of $7,000, and is of wood and concrete foundation.” This structure was burned and replaced by a handsome, modern building still being used.
Established at the little community of Palmdale on U.S. 27 is a unique Florida “institution”. Tom Gaskins and his Cypress Knee Museum. Since 1934, Gaskins has been collecting rare cypress knees, has developed an unusual museum, and makes many items from them to sell. He also built a 2,000-foot catwalk through the cypress woods surrounding the place.

Some of the earliest flood control work done in South Florida was around big Lake Okeechobee. This postcard, mailed from Moore Haven in 1926, shows the canal locks at that town. The correspondent who mailed the card to a friend in Battle Creek, Michigan, noted she had “motored” three hundred miles that day to the Lake. The writer said she was staying at the hotel shown in the photo.
Local historian Marian Godown wrote that when the “ultra modern” Fort Myers Hotel held its gala grand opening in January, 1898, it was the biggest social shindig in the town’s thirteen-year-old history. Built by “Merchant Prince” Hugh O’Neill, the wooden structure on the Caloosahatchee River rambled over a block on First Street between Fowler and Lee Streets. Before it was sold to Mrs. Tootie McGregor Terry in 1907, the fifty-room hotel had been changed to the Royal Palm Hotel. It was torn down in 1947.

From its earliest times, Fort Myers has been a city of handsome homes. And some, such as the Winter residence of D.A.G. Floweree, were featured on postcards. This card was mailed in 1908 by a member of the family.
Bradenton got in on the recreational vehicle craze in its very earliest days during the Florida real estate boom of the 1920s. The city built a municipal trailer park along busy U.S. 41, and it continues to operate today. The postcard caption noted that “Nature and Men have worked wonders in making Bradenton Trailer Park easily the most attractive large Park in the World!” It noted that the facility was “convenient to shopping, parks, beaches, schools, churches, theatres, points of interest and tourist activities.” What else could a visitor want?

For years “the” place in Bradenton was the Hotel Dixie Grande on U.S. 41. The building was dynamited to destruction one day in August 1974 to make way for a modern bank building. The hostelry started as a community project to accommodate tourists during the wild real estate boom of the mid-1920s. Many famed guests have registered here, persons such as baseball’s Dizzy Dean, singer and President’s daughter Margaret Truman, Florida Governor, LeRoy Collins and legions of others.
The gracious old Hotel Edinola has been a landmark at Dade City since 1912. The three-story rambling structure was erected by Edwin J. Gasque, a French Huguenot descendant from Charleston. He combined his name with that of his wife Lola to coin the attractive name Edinola. It was a fashionable hotel for decades. In recent years, however, it has had its ups and downs and ins and outs. For awhile it was the campus of the Florida East Coast University. Presently it has been renovated and a country-style restaurant operates there.

They called U.S. 19 the New Gulf Coast Scenic Highway when this postcard was issued. But today, sad to relate, U.S. 19 is a crowded, over loaded throughfare laden with traffic hazards and cars traveling on it carrying bumper stickers that read: “Pray For Me, I Drive on U.S. 19.” This shows the bridge across the Cotee River at New Port Richey.
The “tin lizzies” brought visitors to Pass-A-Grille Beach in Pinellas County by the carloads during the boom days. This is a view from the popular Pass-a-Grille Beach Casino looking towards Boca Ceiga Bay. Notice the jitney buses in center of photo which provided “mass transit” to the popular spot.

“Oh, You Green Benchers” sighs this interesting postcard, referring to the “landmark” that made St. Petersburg famous as a tourist resort. The correspondent who sent the card wrote, “This is typical of St. Petersburg. Old and young sit here in the sun. Lots of ‘matches’ made. It is fun to walk by.” The card’s caption noted: “Started a scant twenty-five years ago, St. Petersburg’s Green Beaches, which line the sidewalks of the street, now have international fame. There are 5,000 benches on the streets with a seating capacity of 25,000, and, on any sunny winter afternoon, one may find them filled with winter visitors enjoying the spring-like weather.”
For years, sponging was the leading industry of the Greek-American community of Tarpon Springs. This post card shows the busy Sponge Exchange on the docks during its heyday. Some of the large fleet of sponge boats are seen in the background. The Exchange went out of business and much of the property was sold recently.

A local stock company was formed in 1902 to build the Oaks Hotel at Bartow. It was completed in 1907. After remodeling in the early 1920s, it became the New Oaks Hotel – a name it retained until it was torn down in 1973. All this according to Louise K. Frisbie in her book, *Florida’s Fabled Inns*. 
In the early days any town that was any town at all had a brass band which gave concerts in the city park. And that is exactly what is going on here in the city park at Winter Haven.

The correct name of the body of water is Lake Parker, as listed on this postcard from Lakeland. But when you consider the loving couple on the log beside the boat, would not “Lake Pucker” be a better title? Lakeland’s name is no misnomer. It is blessed with ten major lakes and several lesser ones.
The old Venice Hotel had been converted into winter quarters for the Kentucky Military Institute when this postcard was issued. The cadets first started coming to Venice in 1933. KMI closed out its Venice operation in 1970.

Here is another one of those scenic postcards published as a promotional piece by the Illinois Central System railroad. It shows a view of the fabulous Potter Palmer Estate. The showplace was at Osprey and the homeplace was called “The Oaks.” The decision to come to the Sarasota area was that of Mrs. Palmer, wife of the Chicago financier and developer.


THE TRIBUNE’S FIRST WOMAN REPORTER

by Lucy Fulghum O’Brien

When I was graduated, as they phrased it in those language conscious days, in 1935, from Florida State College for Women in Tallahassee, Franklin Roosevelt was president, United States participation in World War II was still six years away, and we were not a very prosperous country. Money was particularly hard to come by in Florida, where the real estate collapse in 1925 preceded the Wall Street debacle of 1929. I came out of the auditorium into sunshine, the tassel of my mortar board having been turned by FSCW’s legendary dean, William G. Dodd. The diploma I gripped said I now possessed a Bachelor of Arts with honors in journalism, but I had no idea how to use it to get a job. The thought of scouting a girls’ school campus for prospective employees had crossed no corporation’s mind. Consequently my outlook for economic independence was so gloomy that I, like the corporations, had tried not to think about it at all.
True, a misguided school principal had offered me work as a teacher of exceptional children in a town near my home in Tampa, but I was endowed with none of the saint of the daily task qualities, and I fled in terror to Atlanta, where one of my friends had a job with the WPA art project. There, with an introduction from my brother-in-law, I presented myself to the ranking editor of the Atlanta Constitution. The interview consisted chiefly of the editor’s lecture on the impropriety of women wanting to work for newspapers. “We took one on during the War,” referring to the 1917-18 hostilities, “because of the manpower shortage, and haven’t been able to get rid of her since.” As I mentioned, this was the summer of 1935.

Concluding that my prospects at the Constitution were not good and being loathe to return to Tampa (heavens, who was there to marry in Tampa?), I compromised by acceding to my parents’ wish that I take at least a brief business course. Once I learned the touch system and a scattering of shorthand, I became a secretary at Florida State Hospital in Chattahoochee, where an erstwhile roommate’s father was superintendent and where several of us recent graduates congregated for wages of forty dollars a month, plus room and board in the rambling old frame house built by Andrew Jackson. During the working day, I sat behind a screen in the white male receiving ward, taking notes, while doctors made cursory mental and physical examinations of patients. Fascinating! And, by night all of us FSCW girls dated the unmarried doctors. This stint lasted six months, during which my mother did not get a wink of normal sleep, and having sowed enough career oats to see that my destiny did not lie in Chattahoochee, I decided to catch my breath at home. Within two weeks, I met an Irishman to whom I lost my heart utterly and forever.

Because abandoning Tampa thereafter was out of the question, and because it was obvious that Michael O’Brien, my future husband, was going to be a hard man to convince, I settled down to considering job possibilities. Citified office work? I preferred something a little more interesting. Along about August, my father, a likeable and otherwise straitlaced gentleman from Georgia who loved to play cards, mentioned that he could make an appointment for me with Ed
Lambright, editor of the Tampa Tribune. No telling how highly Daddy had recommended me during a poker game at the Elks Club.

I do not know what I expected to come of it, but I accepted the suggestion, and attired myself in a brown dotted-Swiss dress with a white yoke and brown buttons from neckline to shoulders, a brown picture hat, and short white gloves. Despite my outfit, which was not unusual, Mr. Lambright was cordial. After a reasonable amount of conversation, he said: “Now you must meet the managing editor.” That announcement gave me my first inkling that I was not talking to the person who did the actual hiring and firing of reporters. The innocent public always has had the delusion that whoever writes editorials is chief on any paper.

Mr. Lambright picked up his telephone. “Mr. Simpson, I’m sending you a young lady who wants a job. If she makes as good an impression on you as she has on me, I believe you’ll hire her.” I did not doubt it. From the moment I walked into that wonderful, air-conditioned, art deco Tribune building, which architect Franklin Adams had remodeled from the old R. S. Evans used car emporium on Lafayette at Morgan Streets, I felt as Eve must have when she awoke alive and well in Eden. It did not occur to me that the Tribune had never put a woman on permanent assignment in its newsroom before. Later I learned – from the lady herself – that publisher S. E. Thomason’s daughter, Elizabeth Thomason Griffin (of the Exchange Bank Griffin family), had once done temporary duty for several weeks; but publishers’ daughters are not typical hired hands and therefore do not count. For different reasons, society editors do not count either.

I walked out of the editor’s office, past Mrs. Darby on the switchboard, past society, sports, and cartoonist George White’s art departments, and into the presence of R. W. Simpson, generally referred to as the “Deacon.” He was a tall, thin, gray man with a pursed mouth and years of Associated Press rectitude in his demeanor, a tyrant who made grown men suffer for their journalistic sins. He was also on exceedingly good terms with Charlie Wall, boss of Tampa’s nationally feared gambling establishment and cousin to all of Tampa’s more respectable Walls, including the Postmaster. Charlie was a good source, and news being news, the “Deacon” preferred to get it right. He also preferred everyone else to get it right, and woe to the reporter who forgot that audience is (or was) a singular noun. The sound of his footstep, the brief harrumph that signalled his approach, cast fear in the fingers on every typewriter keyboard.

I did not actually know these facts of Tribune life, but I sensed them. When the “Deacon” concluded our visit by telling me to go home, write something, and let him have a look at it, I did not make a nuisance of myself by asking what kind of something. I remembered a tale my husband had told me of a Notre Dame English examination that asked: “Write anything about anything.” Cogitate as I would, I could come up with nothing suitable but to revise an article on occupational therapy which I had done (while at Chattahoochee) for the state social workers’ journal. Fortunately the public library had a copy. I took a new version to the “Deacon’s” office, dropped it on his desk, and departed without interrupting his telephone conversation, a professional maneuver arrived at by instinct.

Sunday morning found me with the thimbleful of fleeting fame which comes from being published in a newspaper. Better yet, the “Deacon” soon called to say he had a six-weeks’ opening for an extra hand in putting out the “mailaway.” This has become the more popular and
profitable Gasparilla edition, which not only is ordered by Tampans but also by tourists at the pirates’ annual celebrations in February. In 1936, it appeared in October, a launchpad for the season whose weather lured Americans to the land of sunshine and Vitamin C. (Hookworm, maybe, but no scurvy in these parts.) Pictures and copy concerned Florida’s sixty-seven counties with special emphasis on the Tribune’s circulation area from Gainesville to Fort Myers. Most of the stories were rehashed from Allen Morris’s series of Florida Handbooks, Kim’s Guide to Florida, and as many chamber of commerce bulletins as were available. The experience was a good indoctrination into the geography, tourist attractions, and industries of my state, but it took years to overcome what the chamber of commerce sheaves did to my integrity, suffusing me, as they did, with the idea that anything worthy of being put into print must necessarily be wonderful.

Although the “Deacon” had committed himself to six weeks only, I was sure he would not let me go when that time ended. So sure, in fact, that on my first Thursday (the Tribune’s payday), I went down to Adams-Magnon Jewelry Company on Franklin Street and let Miss Ruth Coile, also known as “Sweetie,” sign me up on a three dollar down, three dollar a week contract for a sixty dollar bracelet. Simple arithmetic testifies to my optimism, and the fact that one of my
daughters (later a Tribune staff writer herself and now married to a Miami Herald editor) still wears the bracelet, proves my optimism was well-founded.

Just what premise it grew from is another question. I did not know enough to realize that in the manual typewriter era journalists did not bother to erase errors. “What do you think the letter X is on the typewriter for?” inquired Pete Norton, the sports editor whose desk I used until he came in at two o’clock in the afternoon. Pete also was the first to explain to me that type was not made of rubber and that my headlines would bounce (the way an overdrawn check bounces) right back from the composing room, if I had put in so much as one letter too many. All of this will seem cave art to today’s reporters who write their stories in computers and collect hot type as an antiquity.

As for emerging from the newsroom to get a story off the street, I had no notion of how to do it. In college my journalism professor, a one-man department named Earl Lynn Vance (the best teacher I ever had anywhere, except Ruth Carrell Johnson, who taught Latin at Plant High School), thought what we needed to learn in a liberal arts college was how to think straight, and that we could pick up the practicalities of journalism elsewhere. He was a non-conformist who would not take his Ph.D., who had worked for the New York Times, and who needled the faculty into thinking straight as regularly as he needled his students. Once each year his classes composed a mock edition of the Tallahassee Daily Democrat, and for weeks ahead we knew what our assignments were to be. Mine, as a Tampa girl, was to interview the governor’s wife, Mrs. Doyle Carlton, also a Tampan. I could not get up nerve to telephone her, since I had no clue as to what to say should she answer, and eventually took the risk of knocking on the Mansion’s big front door. When there was no immediate response, I gave up the assignment as futile. Mr. Vance subsequently ran me for editor of the Distaff, the FSCW literary magazine, for which I wrote courageous think pieces about the possibility of war and the improbability of God, but did not have to interview Mrs. Carlton.

Ill-equipped as I was to become the Tribune’s first woman news reporter, I did have a few things going for me. As best I can remember, forty-five years later, these were: exceptionally good health, even for a chit of twenty-two; the ability to change my own typewriter ribbons; an instinct for when to consult the dictionary; no romantic hankering for anyone in the newsroom –

George K. End at Rattlesnake, Florida.

Photograph courtesy of L. F. O’Brien.
or anywhere in the universe, except some law offices across Morgan Street in the Stovall Professional Building. Probably best of all, I was not demanding about money. When Red Newton (that is V. M. Newton, Jr., the “right-to-know” crusader) took me to the Tribune library to tell me in privacy (salaries were always secret) that I was hired and would be paid fifteen dollars a week, three dollars more than cigar workers or sales girls at Maas Brothers, I assured him that I would be glad to forego salary until I proved myself. He refused, but from that day forward knew me for a patsy who really would have worked for nothing.

My first on-the-job story (assembled from clippings) concerned George K. End, then living in Arcadia and widely known as the canner of rattlesnake meat. He was first cousin, I wrote with tongue-in-cheek, to the man who met the wolf at the door and got a fur coat in the process, except this Arcadia fellow caught snakes in the grass and served them for supper. End and his sons later set up a rattlesnake farm as a tourist attraction on the Tampa side of Gandy Bridge; he also obtained a Rattlesnake, Florida, post office there, cancellations from which are now desirable since the post office did not long survive. George, who forgot to keep enough antitoxin on hand, once did not make it to Davis Islands Hospital, once being enough for that particular shortfall.

The city desk, satisfied with my George End lead (or, as you might say, the Beginning of my End), sent me to Hillsborough River State Park, then in its preliminary stages of development. Not exactly hard news, but it was an unnerving first time out for me. Fortunately Roscoe Frey, the photographer who had the face of an Indian and a shoulder that sagged from the weight of his Speed Graphic, was sent along also. Roscoe asked all the right questions, and I merely wrote the story I had heard him gather. Having observed that what I needed to do was unbridle my curiosity, I never had trouble with questions thereafter.

Gradually, from my colleagues at the Tribune, I learned the elemental skills of our trade. Jock Murray, who did the first investigative reporting on the lowgrade Florida school system, advised me that it took only 800 words, or about two-and-a-half double-spaced pages, to tell the story of Creation. Paul Wilder and James Clendinen, both imported (as Milton Plumb was later) from the Clearwater Sun around the time I came to the news room, showed me that newcomers, if talented, could out-write their elders. Bill Abbott shepherded me through a day at the national convention of the American Federation of Labor, held in the buff brick city auditorium adjacent to the Tampa Bay Hotel. Dozens of national reporters were in attendance, including May Craig, the American Gothic newswoman who even then was asking the same plague-take-it questions she put to John F. Kennedy.

It was the city desk men who wound me up and set me going. At first, they challenged my capacities by asking me to type Garden Club and Girl Scout notes, which were brought in handwritten. Among the Girl Scouts of those days were Oraleaze Bohich and Fruitilla Kitchens. Who could forget them? The desk also had other ambitions for me. Harry Schaden, the ten to six city editor, was a Brooks Brothers, tweedy type, complete with pipe, who eventually became an account executive for a New York advertising agency. His notion was that I should back him up in setting intellectual and aesthetic standards for Tribune coverage. As his stand-in music critic, I, soul sister to the crows, was an edge disappointing. One night when he sent me to Arthur Rubenstein’s violin concert in the Palm Room of the Tampa Terrace Hotel, I wrote the story...
three times without getting it to his satisfaction. He also disapproved of the hour of my morning arrival, which was eleven-thirty-five. I never minded working late, but my heart scarcely beats before noon. It was my father’s opinion that if I had not got a job on a morning paper, night-watching would have been the only employment open to me.

Red Newton, a warrior sprung full grown from dragon teeth sown* on the Tampa Times and the Tampa Tribune sports desk, handed me a sheet of copy paper, that lovely commodity cut from tag ends of newsprint rolls, and said: “Miss Fulghum, put some sex appeal in this.” “This” was a list of new YMCA officers, whose names he had just taken over the phone. I tried. When he sent me to do a feature on the Florida State Fair, I tried even harder. “Look at all the people around you,” Red admonished. “Remember that every one of them is a Tribune reader.” The whole, dusty lot of them. What Red meant was that he expected a female reporter’s stories to entice the reader’s interest with come-hither facts told in language that could be understood by every man, woman and child on the roller coaster. He was a terrible chauvinist. He armed his men with hatchets, teaching them that the downward glance was the only one a politician merited. From me, he wanted the woman’s angle and human interest.

In pre-World War II days, before the five-day work week and social security, all of us put in a

*A postcard of the U.S. Post Office at Rattlesnake, Florida.

Photograph courtesy of Hampton Dunn.

* By some modern day Cadmus. See Bulfinch’s Age of Fable.
six-day effort, sometimes dropping in on the seventh to see if we could be helpful. During my six I wrote a Sunday fashion page under the name of Julie Dale (the “Deacon” did not believe in force-feeding our egos, because we might be hard to handle if we thought we were indispensable); movie reviews under the name of Ruth Alden; an anonymous radio log; and, briefly, a food column under the name of Hester Hale. I was relieved of this last assignment after three days, having immediately exposed what has happily proved to be a lifelong unfamiliarity with the kitchen.

Sometime during those first years, I was actually given a desk. I never quite made it to mileage for the daily use of my parents’ ear, but I did get a desk. The instant I saw a new one being hauled in, I joyously assumed that the Tribune had at last earned enough money to buy a piece of furniture just for me. I could not have been more mistaken. The desk was for an alien, a man being sent in from our publisher’s Chicago paper, the Sun-Times. I was furious. Instead of quitting,* which occurred to me, I marched uninvited to the “Deacon’s” office and announced there was something I needed. The fright on his face could mean only one thing. He thought I was asking for a raise. Since I already had reached $25 a week, I scorned his low-mindedness. “What I need,” I told him in no uncertain terms, “is a desk.” It came the next day, smaller than all the others, and drifted about the newsroom for many years, occupied by one hapless reporter after another. While I sat behind it, there were moments when my ashtray slid off, setting fire to

*Ripping was not in vogue during the depression. From 1936 to 1941, my first Tribune tour, no one quit and no one was fired, not even our Communist wire editor, who was teased mercilessly, but nothing more.
my trash basket, and even twice when, in rapt absorption, I pounded my old Underwood so fiercely that it, too, fell to the floor.

I once calculated that my average daily output during that period was 2,000 words. It took better than two hours just to type them, two or three to gather the facts, and five to get the leads right. I was awestruck by Paul Wilder who often could begin at the beginning and go straight through, without a typo.

Most of the stories I was assigned to were routine, or worse, hackneyed. I remember a few others: a United Daughters of the Confederacy meeting on the anniversary of the firing on Fort Sumter; a surgeons’ convention, at which the new hip-pinning was described; an interview with Dr. Mason Smith, Tampa’s first psychiatrist, on shock therapy; an eve-of-War talk with Dr. Schick, inventor of the Schick test for diphtheria, who said he would have killed himself, as did other Viennese Jewish doctors, had he not come to this country; and a visit with a lady who had just undergone surgery for the removal of a third breast under her left arm.

However, one of the heroines I remember best was “Little Hope.” The Tribune for several weeks had been running an abundance of photographs and stories about a blonde youngster who
not only was an orphan but who also had been crippled since birth – and likely would have remained so had not a wise, generous man given money for corrective surgery, recently performed at a hospital south of Tampa. Unbeknownst to the rest of the world, but fully understood by all of us in the newsroom, was the fact that this great benefactor, this Solomon of Solomons, was none other than our publisher, S. E. Thomason himself. The story of Little Hope had been told and retold by the Tribune’s brightest and best, until half the surrounding population was ready to adopt the tyke whether her surgery was successful or not. The operation was successful, lucky parents had been chosen, and on a Saturday afternoon she was to go to her new home, accompanied by Tribune staff, of course. We must have been shorthanded because I, who had never written a Little Hope story so far, was chosen for the climactic event. At 9 o’clock that night the O’Brien took me downtown to see my first Page One story, hot off the press. Once not being nearly enough for that sort of gratification, I rose next morning to admire the Sunday paper again. Curses! Red (who would have to give back his Pulitzer; I would insist on it) had thought better of my lead and had rewritten it to include a prayer he said Little Hope had prayed when her new parents tucked her into her new bed. Not a word of my original version remained on Page One, appearing only after the reader turned to the jump. To give Red his due, many subscribers wrote in to say the prayer had made them cry.
Hard though it may be to believe, the O’Brien married me despite this disgrace. The great
event took place in September 1941, at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City, where Mike’s old English teacher John F. O’Hara (later a Cardinal) was stationed as Bishop of the Army and Navy. In December came Pearl Harbor. Mike did his World War II bit in Charleston, South Carolina, as executive officer of the Section Base, whose small craft swept the harbor for mines, and later as Personnel officer of the Navy Yard. We both did a little magazine writing, and I learned how to tailor Red Cross bathrobes for soldiers and sailors overseas. (What lengths one will go to for the Admiral’s wife in wartime!) As for newspapering, I never read Charleston’s News and Courier except on special occasions, such as the atom-bombing of Hiroshima. To tell the truth, I do not care much for newspapers except when I am working for them, on which occasions I wake from a sound sleep and my feet hit the floor the instant the paper has been delivered.

When Mike and I came back to Tampa in 1946, my longings for my Tribune past ran silent and deep. These surfaced as I accompanied a friend to break her engagement news to the press, and Paul Wilder caught sight of me in the society department. He stood stock still at the doorway. “Why don’t you come back to work?” he inquired. Foolish questions get foolish answers. “Why doesn’t someone ask me,” I replied. Red had succeeded the “Deacon” as managing editor. He had Paul call, Red and I talked, and within days I received a letter confirming our agreement for my reemployment at a stipend of $50 a week. Elation kept me pounding the pillows. When I asked permission of the O’Brien, who disapproved of sedatives, to take a sleeping pill, he said if I did not he would have to.

War had brought many changes to the newsroom. Harry Schaden had gone into New York advertising, and Bill Abbott, after a taste of Air Force Intelligence, decided he would rather see the world in peacetime also. Jock Murray, the Tribune’s old faithful, and Harold Tyler, a newcomer from Atlanta and Detroit, now ran the city desk. Several women had worked in the newsroom during my absence. Two of these were Gloria Cermak, who later was obituary editor for the New York Times (an excellent job, something like writing Profiles for the New Yorker), and Barbara Harrison, who married Jimmy Clendinen and thereby became one of the ranking Tribune wives. I confess to unworthy twinges of “What were they doing in my bailiwick?”

The powers, as usual, had deadly duties in store for me, the chief being to handle (that is, to edit, write headlines for, etc.) all the social notes that came in from the circulation area from as far as Alachua County on the north and Lee on the south. How abysmally boring this was can be fathomed when I relate that during the war, the Tribune had seen it as its patriotic duty to run photographs not only of the bride, but also of the bridegroom, often in uniform, cutting their wedding cake.

This fearful monotony presented me with three kinds of problems: physical, aesthetic and moral. It was out of the question to display the cake-cutting ritual in a one-column cut, and since marriages are epidemic year-round, being especially virulent in June and December, there was not enough space. Tribune inside pages were ugly at best, staggering advertising up both sides and leaving a kite and kite tail effect for news displays. Trying to get the cakecuttings into the kite tails was frustrating. Neither were the visual effects enhanced by the snapshots which graded from poor to awful.
My journalistic ethics required that a story, even a wedding, be printed the morning after it occurred. If weddings were worthy of more space than we gave divorces (that is, a line or two of type, set in agate, in the “News of Record”), then they deserved more than the laggard pace they were keeping. One stringer actually sent in a week old account with a fascinating last line: “Unfortunately the bridegroom went rowing on the lake during the afternoon’s festivities, and was drowned.” She was slow in getting the copy to us, she explained, because she had to wait for the cake-cutting photograph.

“Red,” I said, (I was on much more comfortable terms with him than I had been with the “Deacon”) “we ought not to give credit lines for wedding photographs unless our own men take them. Why should a commercial photographer get twelve square inches of advertising space for the cost of an out-of-focus glossy?” Red, who resented any infringement on freedom of the press, agreed, and with credit lines gone, the flow of pictures diminished.

My distress was further eased by the fact that despite my being the handy girl of the state desk, the city desk also called on me. Actually, my second Tribune tour brought me freedom and

Lucy O’Brien during her second tour at the Tribune when she walked to work from her thirteenth floor apartment at the Tampa Terrace Hotel.

Photograph courtesy of L. F. O’Brien.
maturity as a writer. Whenever I was pulled off the “state soc” chore, it was to do a story of broad readership. One weekend I had three on Page 1 (my record), the best of these being a suit Clifford MacDonald (owner of the printing company and founder of the training center for the retarded) brought against Daphne du Maurier for having stolen *Rebecca* from a novel, *Blind Windows*, written in the 1920s by his mother. He did not win, but it was a good story.

Also great fun were out of town junkets, such as the expedition Jimmy Clendinen, Jock Murray, Paul Wilder, and photographer Dan Fager and I made to Tallahassee to inaugurate Fuller Warren (the *Tribune* definitely had not tried to elect him, but gave him a two-day ceasefire for the inauguration), and the only search and destroy mission Red ever sent me on: a trip to audit the sex education classes at Florida State University (FSCW had undergone a sex change, and now was coeducational). What Red was looking for was Page One dynamite to rouse the rabble. Instead I came back with stories so complimentary that a priest at Sacred Heart (across from the downtown Tampa post office) considered sermonizing against them.

It was only in editing, not in writing, that I went for the jugular. Moreover, I was ideally content with my human interest beat. I did not get the gang killings. I was sent to the house to drink Spanish tea with the victim’s wife, and to have my hair done by his beauty parlor girl friend. If a lad hanged himself in jail, I did not get the hanging. I got the trip to his neighborhood and school to see what his life had been like, and to the funeral, to see how his mother took it. If a supermarket bag boy was killed in a midnight ride, I got the interview with his mother, heard her tell how bloody the car seat was, observed the mentally retarded sister, and the poverty of their home life. Sobsistering, some call it, but Meyer Berger, of the New York *Times*, gave me a first for “spot news” (in a Florida woman’s press club competition) for the bag boy story.

My second tour at the *Tribune* wound up when I became regularly too queasy to sit around patiently in front of a typewriter. Pregnancy was the cause of this *malaise*, a shocker to me who had been married and childless for eight years. I turned in my press card and opted for motherhood. Michaela O’Brien, named for her father, was born in January 1950, and was followed two and a half years later by Kathleen, named for her father’s first grade sweetheart who had smelled deliciously of talcum at dancing school.

Child rearing cut short what, in retrospect, may have been the most valuable reporting I ever did for the *Tribune*. The series ran for approximately thirty weeks as the Saturday installment of my six-day a week *Woman’s World* column. Despite its title, the column featured nothing but men who were chosen by Red from the economic and political power structures of Florida’s West Coast. There were bank and utility company presidents, cigar, citrus, shipping, cattle and sponge industry kings, doctors, lawyers and merchants. Each story took up a quarter page (when papers were wider, and type more densely set) and was based on the same sixty questions, prescribed by Red before the series began.

By 1955, Red thought I was ready to come out of retirement. “You have a husband, a house, and two children,” he explained, “So now you are womanwise enough to take over the society department.” I would do no such thing. He called in some of my buddies to persuade me. “What about this?” he asked. “Mrs. O’Brien doesn’t want to go back into society.” “Go back into society? I’ve never been in there in my life.” But the cause, after nearly twenty years, obviously
was lost. To Red, a woman was a woman wherever she sat. Besides, he lured me with sugar-plum talk of how I could make the department into anything I pleased.

There recently had been a poll which put weddings and engagements in the low five percent of reader interest, and since this had always been my view, he regarded me as in tune with the future. He gave three warnings!

First, “I don’t care if you don’t do a lick of work,” he said. “Just see that it gets done.” I proceeded to put in a fifty hour week, being confident that change would never be accomplished if I did not show the seven girls in my charge how.

Next, “Remember you’re the boss. You’re old enough to be some of those girls’ mother.” I was a year older than one of the mothers, but I am a disorganized democrat, inclined to fraternize with Indians.
Finally, “Don’t make changes too fast. Readers hate to give up anything they’re accustomed to.” He was whistling in the wind. I have been known to make the post office open up on Labor Day so that I could mail a Christmas package.

I started on a three year rampage which, miraculously, both the Tribune and I survived. The thing to go immediately was Society as the section title. I settled for Women in the News because the Miami Herald and other Knight papers had preempted For and About Women, a more inclusive phrase. Actually I wanted Infinite Variety, as in Shakespeare’s tribute to Cleopatra: “Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety,” but realized I would be laughed out of the newsroom if I suggested it. Bill Dozier, a post-World War II wire editor (not the Communist one) and unofficial editor of the bulletin board (where Miscreants were put in stock, just above the pencil sharpener) would have led the jeering section.

Ann McDuffie, long time Tribune food editor, started at the Times and has the longest continuous record of service of any Tampa newswoman.

Photograph courtesy of L. F. O’Brien.
Next I took aim at the chitchat column. “Let’s call it About People,” I said, having in mind the items *Time* uses in its *People* pages. The society editor agreed to the title change but clung to her traditional inanities. She was so unyielding and in such good standing with the conservative publisher that I looked for cooperation elsewhere.

Ann McDuffie gave it to me in a Sunday fashion piece called *The Personal Appearance Of* (borrowing a title I used in the 1930s on the Julie Dale fashion page) which featured well-dressed townswomen. Helen Foreman had a Monday feature called *They Are Sisters*, which turned up surprising relationships long buried under married names. Monica Sherman matched wits when she wrote headlines for early Ann Landers columns, Panky Glamsch brought her Tampa *Times* newsroom techniques to reporting, and still others went to the composing room to supervise changes our layouts underwent in editions for different parts of the state. We finally achieved indented columns with no division rules to air out the pages. We used wire stories (“What do you mean you let the woman’s page have it?” Red, who had been out of town, once roared. “Don’t you know we’re the only paper in the country that didn’t put Grace Kelly’s wedding out front?”). We sometimes even lucked into ways of getting our own coverage of the Paris fashion openings.
When I lunged ahead too rapidly with alterations in wedding and engagement styles, however, cries of outrage could be heard from Golf View, Palma Ceia, Hyde Park and Davis Islands, all the way to the office of our publisher in residence, Jimmy Council. (Ownership hung out in Richmond.) No protests were heard from little people all over the rest of our circulation area, for now no one got more than a one column cut, unless she was old T. C. Taliaferro’s granddaughter, marrying one of the sure-enough Rothchilds, in which case we requested an eight column strip through Associated Press wirephoto services in Paris. Instead of full sentence headlines, we introduced last-names-only captions for weddings and engagements, thus eliminating the torturous search for synonyms for Betrothed, Affianced, and Engaged. Wedding details were restricted, and nobody, but nobody, could have a picture unless it arrived in time to use the morning after.

All this slashing and cutting so angered the uppercrust that they took all their nuptial news first to the Times (the Tribune soon bought the Times), but it also released the Sunday cover for other stories. We began to pour picture layouts into it. When a really marvelous picture came along, we gave it the full eight columns. One of these was Roscoe Frey’s arrangement of Seven Great West Coast Beauties, on the stairway of the Alonzo Clewis house (burned, alas!) on Bayshore Boulevard. Another fine picture was made by Bruce Roberts from inside a department store
window, unseen by the little girl who pressed her face against the glass gazing at Christmas
dolls.

In our efforts to jazz up women’s news, we occasionally lit fires too hot to handle. One was my
revival of Lucille Trice Knauf’s *Lotta Chatter* column of the 1920s. In its new incarnation, it
read more like Walter Winchell, with Ann McDuffie, a fine gatherer of gossip, playing Walter.
Three mistakes, one involving the Gasparilla Krewe, and we were cancelled.

Another effort in which we were curtailed was Ann Waldron’s series on her own pregnancy.
Ann, the best woman writer I ever worked with, and her husband, Martin, then our Tallahassee
bureau chief and later the New York Times man in the New Jersey state house, were having the
third of their four babies. Red decided that just before the baby was born we would begin doing
stories on her pregnancy and delivery to run on Page One. In the 1950s such material was heady
stuff and did not appear on family television sets, as it does nowadays. The series, tepid today,
was torrid for its time and irreverently funny. However, there were more outcries from the
prurient (none of whom got into this world by any other process). When Red called me in to tell
me that as soon as we could get the baby born, the publisher said we must cancel, I stuck out my
hand. “Congratulations. We got away with murder.” He sucked in the corners of his mouth
gleefully.

One by one, a few blows for women were struck, yet at the same time I was holding back the
forward movement of ladies of the press. My husband and my parents before him, who made me
financially independent of my wages, held down the pay scale for other Tampa women writers.
When the Tribune bought the Times and started looking for a new woman’s editor, they could
not get one, even from small towns, for what I was making. Hastily I was raised to $125 a week.
Money is not everything, and it was not long before I became ill with a case of acute nervous and
physical exhaustion, acute meaning it was bad, but temporary.

After recovering, I wrote a trickle of columns, called *World of Ideas*, for Leland Hawes, a
discriminating Sunday editor rising from the ranks of a new generation. Then I decided that what
I had meant to do with my life was write literature, not newspaper-speak. Being accustomed to
the instant rewards of daily journalism, I found the literary schedule dilatory. Two years elapsed
between the day my first short story was accepted by the Georgia Review and the day it appeared
in print. I therefore turned to a latent ambition, antique dealing, in which I am still occupied.

First Chattahoochee, then the Tribune, now The Red Horse. Funny farms, all of them. Of the
three, the early days at the Tribune were the most joyous. The “Deacon,” Red Newton, Bill
Abbott, George White, Paul Wilder, Martin Waldron, Jimmy Council, Bill Dozier, Pete Norton,
even the building we worked in, are no more. And as of October 1980, the O’Brien is gone also.

“It’s not that I’m older than you are,” he would tell his junior. “It’s that I have more to
remember.” He was a critter and a half, and I loved him a lot, especially for seeing me through
the Tribune, and all that followed.
THE DARING ESCAPE OF JUDAH P. BENJAMIN

by Michael G. Schene

An interesting and intriguing facet of the history of the Gamble Mansion/Judah P. Benjamin Memorial Site, located in Ellenton, Florida, was the escape of the Confederate Secretary of State, Judah P. Benjamin, to England. Benjamin was born in 1811, on St. Thomas Island in the West Indies; he settled with his parents in Charleston, South Carolina around 1817. He later entered Yale but did not finish, perhaps due to financial problems. Drifting into the South, Benjamin established a thriving law practice in New Orleans. There he became interested in the cultivation of sugar and purchased a plantation – Belle Chassee – on the Mississippi River in 1846. He prospered until the Mississippi flooded his plantation, destroying his house and crop. He then turned to politics, and he was elected to a number of positions, finally serving as United States Senator from Louisiana. With the secession of the state in 1861, he resigned his position and joined the Confederate government.
He was first appointed Attorney General and then late in 1861, was appointed Secretary of War. He held this position until March of 1862. He was then selected as Secretary of State, a position that he continued to hold throughout the remainder of the war. Possessing a trenchant mind, he was perhaps the most outstanding member of Jefferson Davis' cabinet. With the fall of Richmond, Benjamin accepted the fact that the war had been lost and began a long and torturous adventure to avoid capture and escape to England.

On April 1, 1865, General Robert E. Lee advised the Confederate government that his position in Richmond was untenable and the city would have to be evacuated immediately. This sent Benjamin – as well as other high-ranking Confederate officials – into a frenzy to collect vital papers, documents and monies. Gathering these items together, Benjamin, along with other Confederate leaders, left Richmond and set out for Danville, North Carolina, the following day. General Lee’s surrender on April 9, turned the retreat of these Confederate leaders into a desperate gambit to avoid capture and the sure retribution that they felt would be meted out to them by the victorious Union. Benjamin joined the remaining Confederate officials in the southward flight, vowing that he would never be taken alive.

Leaving Danville on April 10, the party journeyed to Greensboro, North Carolina. Here they were rebuffed by the citizens, partially as a result of growing Union sentiment, and also due to the fear that in aiding these Confederate fugitives, they would later suffer punishment. On April 15, the party left Greensboro and pushed on to Charlotte, North Carolina. Trekking ever southward, they finally reached Abbeville, South Carolina on May 2. The following day, May 3, as the group reached the Vienna Valley on the west bank of the Savannah River (twenty miles from Washington, Georgia), Benjamin bid his final adieu to Jefferson Davis, and struck out on his own hoping to avoid capture. His parting words were that he hoped to find a place that would be as far from the United States as possible. Benjamin realized that his familiar face would make it difficult for him to elude his pursuers. He decided to disguise himself as a Frenchman traveling through the South, and accompanied by a Captain H. J. Leovy, Benjamin now calling himself Monsieur Bonfals, made his way south. To complete his masquerade, Benjamin grew a full beard, wore goggles and a wide brimmed hat, and encircled his rotund figure in a massive cloak. Crossing the Florida-Georgia border, he abandoned “Monsieur Bonfals” and adopted the ploy that he was a farmer looking for land for himself and some friends from South Carolina. He decided to authenticate his deception and
induced a farmer’s wife to make some homespun clothing for him. He also secured the roughest and cheapest tack for his horse and, thus equipped, began a slow journey – always avoiding inhabited areas – toward central Florida. Crossing the Suwannee River about the 15th of May, Benjamin reached Central Florida in about five to six days, or around May 20. From here he “intended going to East Florida and trying to cross the Gulf from Indian River, but I learned that there was not a vessel to be found there, and that the risk of detection would be great.”

Desperate to flee the country and seemingly thwarted in his effort, Benjamin made his way to the west coast of Florida and was aided in his escape by Major John Lesley of Tampa. Lesley secreted Benjamin, now operating under the alias of Mr. Howard, to the beautiful mansion formerly owned by Major Robert Gamble, Jr. (then living in Tallahassee) located on the Manatee River. Captain Archibald McNeill, operating the plantation for the Confederate government, offered the fugitive shelter and hospitality. There Benjamin completed his plans for pursuing his escape from the United States.

The Mansion, well known as a Confederate refuge, was continually searched by Union forces. During one of their surprise “visits,” Benjamin was almost captured and shortly after this...
unpleasant episode, he decided to forsake the comfortable Mansion for simpler but safer accommodations. He crossed the Manatee River and stayed with Captain Frederick Tresca while plans for his continuing escape were finalized. Benjamin had chosen well in seeking the services of Tresca. Tresca was intimately acquainted with the waters off the west coast of Florida, and had great experience in outfoxing the Federals as a blockade runner during the war. The enterprise, however, seemed doomed to certain failure lacking a seaworthy vessel, until a Captain Currie came forward and volunteered the use of his yawl, which had been sunk in a creek for two years in order to conceal it from the enemy. Finally, on May 23, Captain Tresca, H. A. McLeod, and Benjamin set sail from Whittaker’s Bayou on Sarasota Bay.

After countless difficulties and several encounters with his pursuers, Benjamin and his companions finally arrived at Knight’s Key (now Marathon) on July 7. Here they procured a larger craft, the Blonde, and set forth for Bimini, finally reaching the island on July 10. After further adventures and several misfortunes, Benjamin finally arrived at Southampton, England, on August 30, 1865. An expatriate, today this daring ex-Confederate remains commemorated for the escapade that brought him to the Gamble Mansion.

3 Benjamin was well-known throughout the country as a short rotund individual. Johnson, Dictionary of American Biography, 2:192.
4 Louis Gruss, “Judah Philip Benjamin,” Louisiana Historical Quarterly, 19 (October, 1936):965. Gruss maintains that Benjamin was accompanied by a Captain Leovy. John H. Reagan, Memoirs, with Special Reference to Secession and the Civil War (New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1906), pp. 210-211. Reagan, the Confederate Postmaster General, states that Benjamin left the main body on May 3, with another Confederate official. Reagan, a contemporary, is excellent on details to this point, but has no knowledge of Benjamin’s activities after May 3. Reagan states that Benjamin apparently adopted the disguise because he knew of a Frenchman that was traveling in the Southern states and stated that he could speak broken English like a Frenchman. To encourage further the disguise, he let Leovy answer all questions and had them relayed in Leovy’s broken French. Meade, Benjamin, p. 318. John Taylor Wood, “Escape of the Confederate Secretary of War,” Century Magazine, 25(1893-1894):2, supports Meade’s statement that Leovy was a Colonel. I checked his name in the Confederate service records and found that an H. J. Leovy was not listed. U.S. National Archives. War Department Collection of Confederate Records. Index to Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers. Roll 282. He may, however, have been a staff officer and thus included in the Compiled Service Records of General and Staff Officers and Nonregimental Enlisted Men, a source that was not consulted.
7 About the 15th of May, Benjamin crossed the Suwannee River at Moseley’s Ferry. Alfred J. Hanna, Flight into Oblivion (Richmond, Va.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1938), p. 196. Hanna took this information from John Taylor Wood’s complete diary. The extract contained in Century Magazine does not include this information.
8 Butler, Benjamin, p. 363. Benjamin’s letter indicates that he was traveling very slowly, about thirty miles a day, “till I reached Central Florida.” This letter, as well as other accounts, establishes the fact that Benjamin did reach Central Florida. From here, we are not able to carefully document his subsequent progress through Florida.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., p. 364; Meade, Benjamin, p. 321; Hanna, Flight, p. 197. Laura McDuffee, The Lures of Manatee (Bradenton, Fla.: The Manatee County Historical Society, 1960). p. 31. McDuffee’s account of Benjamin’s travels and his connections from the time that he arrived on the west coast until he departed for Bimini was used by both Hanna and Meade in their work. McDuffee quotes from a number of local citizens who aided Benjamin while he was at the Mansion, but unfortunately the work is not cited. So there is no way of verifying these firsthand accounts. Further, there is no bibliography to determine where McDuffee obtained her material, in certain cases. McDuffee’s assertions that Benjamin did stay at Gamble Mansion before leaving for Bimini are supported by H. A. McLeod, who published an account of his adventure with Benjamin in the Galveston Daily News, May 27, 1894. McLeod apparently served with Captain Lesley, Company K, 4th Florida. Possibly he was from this area and familiar with it. Official records indicate that a Hiram A. McLeod enlisted at Tampa in August, 1861, joining Captain Lesley’s Company K, 4th Florida Regiment. He served until January 1864, when he left the service as a sergeant. U.S. National Archives, War Department Collection of Confederate Records. Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers. Florida. Roll 56. We know from his account in the Galveston Daily News that the H. A. McLeod, mentioned above, enlisted at “Tampa Bay with Captain Leslie [sic], Company K, Fourth Florida.” Although we cannot be certain, H. A. and Hiram A. are probably one and the same.

11 McDuffee, Lures of Manatee, p. 200. McDuffee, quoting from the Rev. William B. Tresca, whose father assisted Benjamin, states that: “After the War in 1865 Captain Lesley of Tampa escorted Mr. Benjamin to the Manatee River – arriving at Captain Archibald McNeill’s, who then with his family occupied the Gamble Mansion on the north side of the Manatee River” (p. 162). McLeod maintains that Benjamin used the name Boyd while he stayed at the Mansion. Galveston Daily News, May 27, 1894. McDuffee, Lures of Manatee, p. 159, states that when Benjamin arrived at the Mansion he was known as Mr. Howard. There is apparently no way to resolve this inconsistency.

12 Hanna, Flight, p. 199.


PROSPEROUS PALMETTO

Editors Note: In the spring of 1897, the Tampa Morning Tribune offered readers vignettes of small town life on the west coast of Florida. Reporters were sent to write stories dealing with then such villages as Clearwater, Ozona and Fort Meade. This article, which highlights Palmetto, was featured in the July 27, 1897 issue of the Morning Tribune.

The beautiful and progressive little city of Palmetto, situated on the north bank of the Manatee river, which is one mile wide at this point, just across the river from Braidentown, is the most enterprising and rapidly growing city in the famous Manatee country. The town has long since been laid off into beautiful business and residence lots, streets, avenues, alleys and parks; and liberal donations of beautiful sites have been made to the various churches and schools of that vicinity.

The town is incorporated and has a live, progressive and public-spirited set of city officials, who claim a bonafide population of 600 or 700 inhabitants, all of whom are most desirable citizens.

The city officials are: Mayor, R. F. Willis; city clerk, J. W. Jackson; marshal, Joe Terry, who also acts as tax collector and assessor (but the new charter calls for a separate assessor and collector). Town council: J. J. Haley, J. A. Howze, J. K. Parrish, J. D. Richards, J. W. Nettles, H. E. Harlee and Dr. M. B. Harrison.

Under the administration of the above officials the town of Palmetto has already taken its position in the front ranks of the live and more populous towns in Manatee county, and all that it now needs to make it leap ahead of any other town is the county temple of justice.

The Palmetto Academy, erected by the public-spirited citizens of the town and immediate vicinity, is a credit to the county. Between 150 and 260 pupils were in attendance last session and even a much greater attendance is expected the approaching term. Prof. J. E. Hughes, recently of Cedar Keys, is principal of the school, with two or three able assistants. The original cost of the academy was about $3,000.

The trustees of the school are: M. B. Harrison, M.D., chairman, and S. S. Lamb and J. W. Nettles.

At present only two denominations have houses of worship, to-wit: the Methodists, Rev. Dr. Claridy, pastor; and the Baptists, Rev. R. H. Whitehead, pastor.

Palmetto also boasts of a large and flourishing board of trade, known as the Manatee River Board of Trade, an organization already made famous throughout South Florida for great activity and general usefulness. It is blessed with a set of officers who have the confidence and respect of the commercial world. Its officers are: P. S. Harlee, president; S. S. Lamb, vice-president; F. A. Walpole, secretary and treasurer; H. E. Harlee, W. B. Whitehead, J. K. Parrish, J. H. Kennedy and Jno. W. Jackson, board of governors.
The Gulf Coast Telephone Company will soon lay a cable from Manatee to Palmetto, Ellenton, Terra Ceia and other important points in the Manatee country.

The Palmetto lodge, F. & A.M., No. 110 meets every fourth Monday night in the month at Palmetto. The officers are: Dr. M. B. Harrison, W. M.; P. S. Harlee, S. W.; R. F. Miller, Jr.; J. W. Nettles, secretary.

The new dock, which has recently been built, is 800 feet long; however, it is much shorter and better in every way than the old dock, and is a credit to the enterprise of Mr. J. A. Howze.

Upwards of 200,000 crates of vegetables and 25,000 boxes of oranges were shipped from the Palmetto section of the county last year; this estimate, of course, includes a radius of several miles in and around Palmetto.

The Palmetto News, Frank A. Walpole, editor, is one of the brightest papers in this section. The editor is very popular among all classes and is fast building up a large subscription and advertising patronage.

Lying on the fertile banks of the famous Manatee river, about two and a half miles northwest of Palmetto, is the famous Atwood grapefruit grove, which bears the distinction of being the largest one in the world. Mr. Kimball C. Atwood, of New York City, a millionaire, is the owner of 200 acres of as fine hammock land as can be found in the world. He has about 125 acres cleared and set out in choice grapefruit trees, which will soon come into bearing.
The Atwood grove is situated in the midst of the largest and finest body of hammock lands to be found in the state. In fact the town of Palmetto is in the center of some fourteen thousand acres of very fine hammock lands, and large quantities of early vegetables are annually shipped from the several wharves along the banks of the beautiful Manatee river; and the principal feature is the fact that frost never injures the vegetable or fruit crops of this section.

The Manatee Lemon Company [has] a large lemon grove about two and a half miles northwest of Palmetto, which embraces over 200 acres of rich hammock land, all set in fancy budded lemon trees, which will soon come into bearing. The grove is on Terra Ceia Bay, and will ship an immense crop of lemons, oranges, grapefruit and other choice marketable fruits this season.

Beyond a doubt this is the finest vegetable and fruit country in the world. If all the facts and actual possibilities which these 14,000 acres of rich hammock lands are capable of were written in one book, it would read like Arabian Nights’ tale - in fact, there is no limit to the possibilities.

There are scores of industrious citizens of Palmetto and vicinity [who] moved into that country only a few years ago very poor, but who now count their wealth by the thousands.

The best hammock lands sell from $50 to $250 per acre, and cleared hammock lands rent from $30 to $50 per acre per annum.

Among the leading fruit growers of Palmetto and vicinity are: J. I. Pickens, ten-acre grove; J. W. Hendrix owns the Lightfoot grove of twenty acres; J. W. Hendrix, Jr., twenty acres; the Wimbush estate, ten acres; J. W. Nettles, ten acres; Lowery Bros., forty acres; the Wilson estate, ten acres; Mitchell Bros., twenty acres; J. J. Haley, ten acres; R. F. Willis, fifteen acres; J. A. Lamb, ten acres; S. S. Lamb, twenty acres; Mr. L. Engle, ten acres; Mr. McDougal, ten acres; W. H. Harrison, M. O. Harrison, P. S. Harlee, Willis Bros., and others too numerous to mention also own fine groves in this fertile hammock.

Large crops of fruit and vegetables are also shipped from Ellenton and Terra Ceia Island, which are also embraced in this fertile section of Manatee county.

Dr. M. B. Harrison, the leading practicing physician of Palmetto, also conducts a large drug store at that place. Dr. Harrison says that the health of this section will compare favorably with that of any other portion of the globe.

Dr. J. S. Helms, a young physician who moved to Palmetto about one year ago, is building a fine practice.

Palmetto offers a fine opportunity to some enterprising capitalist to build a large tourist hotel. Mr. S. S. Lamb, one of the leading citizens and a large property owner, would make liberal concessions to the right man. Mr. Lamb owns a very pretty thirty-acre tract within the incorporated limits of the town which would make a most desirable hotel site. Mr. Lamb is also one of the oldest and most progressive merchants of Palmetto. He carries a stock valued at some eight or ten thousand dollars, consisting of dry goods, groceries and general merchandise, and does an immense retail and jobbing business. The firm was established in 1878, and is one of the
strongest mercantile firms in Manatee county. Mr. Lamb also owns about 300 acres of fine hammock lands, thirty acres of which have been set out in a beautiful orange grove, most of which is bearing large crops. Mr. J. A. Lamb is engaged in the mercantile business with his father, Mr. S. S. Lamb, who also owns a valuable twelve-acre grove, eleven years old and bearing a fine crop this year.

Mr. M. C. Nettles is the popular and efficient postmaster.

Mr. J. K. Parrish carries a large stock of general merchandise, estimated at $5,000, which was established in 1885 and does a large and rapidly increasing business. He also owns about fifty acres of fine hammock land, containing an eight-acre orange grove in full bearing.

Mr. M. G. Shofper carries a very pretty stock of drugs, and his wife conducts a millinery business.

W. T. Chapman has a large livery stable and does a lucrative business.

C. E. Haley & Co. carry a full line of fancy and staple groceries. Mr. Haley moved to Palmetto eight years ago, for his health, which he has fully recovered. About a year ago he embarked in the mercantile business and has succeeded in building up a most enviable trade.

Mr. W. B. Whitehead established a general merchandise business about a year ago, and is fast building up a lucrative business.

Mr. John W. Jackson is a live and progressive real estate agent and has done a great deal toward building up the country by inducing desirable settlers to locate there.

Hon. R. E. Willis, the mayor of Palmetto, is also an extensive vegetable and truck farmer. Last year he cultivated about thirty acres, and shipped 3,000 crates of tomatoes, celery, etc.

The Palmetto Grocery Store, S. N. Thomas, proprietor, dealer in dry goods, notions, glassware, crockery, etc. is doing an immense business.

Messrs. W. H. and M. O. Harrison cultivated a thirty-acre truck farm last year, and from sixteen acres they gathered and shipped 4,000 crates of tomatoes alone, which netted over one dollar per crate.

Mr. J. McLean cultivated a nine-acre truck farm about one and a half miles east of town, and shipped 1,500 crates of vegetables, mostly tomatoes.

Many of the truckers will engage in the tobacco culture this year, and the weed promises to soon become a leading industry in and around Palmetto.
**FUNERAL HOME RECORDS AND THEIR VALUE IN GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH, PART II**  
by Denise Kelley & Randy Bobbitt

**Editor's Note:** This concludes the list of Funeral Home records begun in Volume 3, Number 2.

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<th>FUNERAL HOME</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sims Funeral Home</td>
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<td>Floyd Funeral Home</td>
<td>INDIAN RIVER</td>
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<td>Cox-Gifford-Baldwin Funeral Home</td>
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<td>1950 20th Street, P.O. Box 1113 - Vero Beach, FL 32960</td>
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<td>James &amp; Lipford Funeral Home</td>
<td>JACKSON</td>
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<td>Howard E. Kurfiss Funeral Home</td>
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**LEE**
Pittman Funeral Home
2116 Old 41 Road - Bonita Springs, FL 33923

Leo W. Engelhardt Funeral Home
2017 McGregor Blvd. - Ft. Myers, FL 33901

Farley Funeral Home
1105 Lee Blvd. - Lehigh Acres, FL 33936

North Fort Myers Memorial Chapel
Box 3473 - North Fort Myers, FL 33903

1968
1942
November 1965
1969

LEON

J. A. Culley & Sons
1737 Riggins Road - Tallahassee, FL 32301

Complete records since 1940s, fair to good records since 1920s, daily records only 1912-1920.

T. J. Beggs Funeral Home
301 N. Orange Street - Madison, FL 32340

1921

LEVY

Joseph Knauff Funeral Home
P.O. Box 250 - Williston, FL 32696

1946-48

MANATEE

Funeral Home Shannon
1015 14th Street - Bradenton, FL 33505

1939

Griffith-Cline Funeral Home
P.O. Box 2420 - Bradenton, FL 33506

November 1, 1938

Edwards Funeral Home
433 11th Avenue - Palmetto, FL 33561

August 1939

MARION

Roberts Funeral Home
P.O. Box 88 - Dunnellon, FL 32630

1969

J. Miles Hiers Funeral Home
910 Silver Spring Blvd. - Ocala, FL 32670

1930
Roberts Funeral Home  
606 S.W. 2nd Avenue - Ocala, FL 32670 

MARTIN

Aycock Funeral Home  
505 S. Federal Highway - Stuart, FL 33494 

December 1968

Johns Funeral Home  
P.O. Box 685 - Stuart, FL 33494 

1940s

MONROE

Beyer Funeral Home  
P.O. Box 15 - Key Largo, FL 33037 

1971

Pritchard Funeral Home  
828 White Street - Key West, FL 33040 

August 1980

NASSAU

Oxley Mortuary, Inc.  
P.O. Box 459 - Fernandina Beach, FL 32034 

1943

OKALOOSA

McLaughlin Mortuary  
P.O. Box 957 - Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32548 

1961

ORANGE

Colonial Funeral Home  
2811 Curry Ford Road - Orlando, FL 32806 

1965

Fairchild Funeral Home  
301 N. Ivanhoe Blvd. - Orlando, FL 32804 

1943

Franklin-Cole Funeral Home  
P.O. Box 55 - Orlando, FL 33802 

Firm established in 1890; older records held at University of Central Florida

Hawthorne Funeral Home  
52 W. Gore Street - Orlando, FL 32806 

January 1, 1954

W. Guy Black Home for Funerals  
December 1928
P.O. Box 3107 - Orlando, FL 32802

Cox-Parker Funeral Home
1350 W. Fairbanks Avenue - Winter Park, FL 32789

OSCEOLA

Conrad & Thompson Funeral Home
511 W. Emmett Street - Kissimmee, FL 32741

Crissom Funeral Home
803 Emmett Street - Kissimmee, FL 32741

Fisk & Journigan Funeral Home
P.O. Box 637 - St. Cloud, FL 32769

PALM BEACH

Kraeer Funeral Home
1353 N. Federal Highway - Boca Raton, FL 33432

Scobee-Combs Funeral Home
1622 N.E. 4th Street - Boynton Beach, FL 33435

Lorne Funeral Home
745 N.E. 6th Avenue - Delray Beach, FL 33444

Scobee-Ireland-Potter Funeral Home
320 N.E. 5th Avenue - Delray Beach, FL 33444

E. Earl Smith & Son Funeral Home
1032 N. Dixie Highway - Lake Worth, FL 33460

Mack Stephenson Funeral Home
P.O. Box 3648 - Lantana, FL 33460

Howard Funeral Home
754 U.S. Highway #1 - North Palm Beach, FL 33408

Village Funeral Home
307 Tequesta Drive - Tequesta, FL 33458

Mixson Funeral Home
P.O. Box 772 - Belle Clade, FL 33430

Mizell-Simon Mortuary
1934
Southdale Chapel
410 Parker Avenue - West Palm Beach, FL 33405

Quattlebaum-Holleman-Burse Funeral Home
1201 S. Olive Avenue - West Palm Beach, FL 33401

PASCO

Coleman-Ferguson Funeral Home
203 North 7th Street - Dade City, FL 33525

North Funeral Home
300 W. Main Street - New Port Richey, FL 33552

Lair-Kelly Funeral Home
P.O. Box 455 - Zephyrhills, FL 33599

Padgett Funeral Home
3212 Highway 19 North - Holiday, FL 33589

PINELLAS

Hubbell Funeral Home
499 Indian Rocks Road - Belleair Bluffs, FL 33540

Rhodes Funeral Home
800 East Druid Road
P.O. Box 895 - Clearwater, FL 33517

Pattison Funeral Home
438 Sugarland Highway - Clearwater, FL 33440

Moss Funeral Home
P.O. Box 60 - Clearwater, FL 33517

Moss Funeral Home
Largo Chapel
557 Clearwater-Largo Road - Largo, FL 33540

Feaster Memorial Home
P.O. Box 105 - Largo, FL 33540

Osgood-Claude Funeral Home
4691 Park Blvd. - Pinellas Park, FL 33565

Biscoe Funeral Home

1930s
1926
February 1961
1951; almost illegible records to 1931
1969-70
Miscellaneous to 1964; complete 1964-present
March 28, 1949
1933
1958
January 20, 1964
December 14, 1955
November 11, 1963
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<th>Address</th>
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<tr>
<td>737 Main Street - Safety Harbor, FL 33572</td>
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<td>Alan McLeod Funeral Home</td>
<td>February 1969</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915 62nd Avenue North - St. Petersburg, FL 33702</td>
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<td>C. James Mathews Funeral Home</td>
<td>May 15, 1951</td>
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<tr>
<td>2025 9th Street South - St. Petersburg, FL 33705</td>
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<td>Anderson-McQueen Funeral Home</td>
<td>1952</td>
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<td>2201 9th Street North - St. Petersburg, FL 33704</td>
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<td>Fred H. Kenfield Funeral Home</td>
<td>December 15, 1957</td>
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<tr>
<td>200 Pasadena Avenue South - St. Petersburg, FL 33707</td>
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<td>Downs Funeral Home</td>
<td>1944</td>
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<tr>
<td>1045 9th Avenue North - St. Petersburg, FL 33705</td>
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<td>Gee &amp; Pitts Funeral Home</td>
<td>1971</td>
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<td>3180 30th Avenue North - St. Petersburg, FL 33713</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jewish Funeral Directors</td>
<td>1972</td>
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<tr>
<td>4100 16th Street North - St. Petersburg, FL 33703</td>
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<td>John S. Rhodes, Inc.</td>
<td>April 29, 1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>635 4th Street North - St. Petersburg, FL 33701</td>
<td></td>
<td>John S. Rhodes, Inc.</td>
<td>April 29, 1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900 49th Street North - St. Petersburg, FL 33710</td>
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<td>Palms Memorial</td>
<td>Partial records 1895-1910; complete 1910-present</td>
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<td>649 2nd Avenue South - St. Petersburg, FL 33701</td>
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<td>R. Lee Williams Funeral Home</td>
<td>1958</td>
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<td>3530 49th Street North - St. Petersburg, FL 33710</td>
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<td>Simmons Funeral Home</td>
<td>1958</td>
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<td>Suncoast Funeral Chapel</td>
<td>1975</td>
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<td>7000 4th Street North - St. Petersburg, FL 33702</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas J. Brett Funeral Home</td>
<td>1960</td>
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<td>4810 Central Avenue - St. Petersburg, FL 33711</td>
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<td>Vinson Funeral Home</td>
<td>1925</td>
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<td>P.O. Box 1395 - Tarpon Springs, FL 33589</td>
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POLK

Kersey Funeral Home
P.O. Box 605 - Auburndale, FL 33820
October 1, 1950

Whidden Funeral Home
P.O. Box 1020 - Bartow, FL 33830
1925

David Lane Funeral Home
P.O. Box 685 - Haines City, FL 33844
1946

Genest-Lake Alfred Funeral Home
P.O. Box 1381 - Lake Alfred, FL 33850

Johnson Funeral Home
322 N. Scenic Highway - Lake Wales, FL 33853
1951

Marion Nelson Funeral Home
P.O. Box 829 - Lake Wales, FL 33853
July 19, 1926

Mizell-Faville-Zern Mortuary, Inc.
413 Hibiscus Street - Lake Worth, FL 33401
Incomplete 1928-34; semi-complete 1934-present

Dukes-Steen Funeral Home
3340 South Florida Avenue - Lakeland, FL 33803
early 1900s

Gentry-Morrison Funeral Home
417 N. Massachusetts Avenue - Lakeland, FL 33801
February 1932

Heath Funeral Chapel
328 S. Ingraham Avenue - Lakeland, FL 33801
December 1959

Thornton Memorial Home, Inc.
P.O. Box 2158 - Lakeland, FL 33803
Incomplete 1934-59; complete 1959-present

Crisp Funeral Home
P.O. Box 421 - Winter Haven, FL 33880
June 1958

Mitchell Funeral Home
P.O. Box 1254 - Winter Haven, FL 33880
1930

Ott-Laughlin Funeral Home
645 West Central Street - Winter Haven, FL 33880
August 1933

PUTNAM
<table>
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<td>Clayton Frank &amp; Sons</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>P.O. Box 67 - Crescent City, FL</td>
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<td>Wetherington Funeral</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>179 Cypress Avenue - Pahokee, FL</td>
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<td>Johnson-Davis Funeral</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>P.O. Box 1098 - Palatka, FL</td>
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<td>Masters Funeral Home</td>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>3015 Crill Avenue - Palatka, FL</td>
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<td>Craig Funeral Home</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>P.O. Box 99 - St. Augustine, FL</td>
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<td>Helms Funeral Home</td>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>406 Canal Street - Milton, FL</td>
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<td>Hawkins Funeral Home</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>135 N. Lime Avenue - Sarasota, FL</td>
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<td>Robert J. Lew Funeral</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>5750 Swift Road - Sarasota, FL</td>
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<td>Roberts Funeral Home</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>P.O. Drawer A - Sarasota, FL</td>
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<td>Toale Brothers Funeral</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>P.O. Drawer T - Sarasota, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whitfield Chapel</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>7511 N. Tamiami Trail - Sarasota, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson Funeral Home</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>P.O. Box 5546 - Sarasota, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ewing Funeral Home</td>
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<td>140 E. Venice Avenue - Venice, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farley Funeral Rome</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>1, 1963</td>
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</table>
265 S. Nokomis Avenue - Venice, FL 33595
Rawles Funeral Home 1956
225 W. Miami Avenue - Venice, FL 33595

SEMINOLE
Anderson Semoran Funeral Home October 1968
P.O. Box 175 - Altamonte Springs, FL 32701
Prisson Funeral Home Late 1800s to 1920s sketchy;
905 Laurel Avenue - Sanford, FL 32771 1930s more complete
Gramkon Funeral Home July 1956
130 W. Airport Blvd. - Sanford, FL 32771

ST. LUCIE
Yates Funeral Home 1934
P.O. Box 777 - Fort Pierce, FL 33450

SUMTER
Purcell Funeral Home November 1960
P.O. Box 265 - Bushnell, FL 33513
Beyers Funeral Home 1916
1123 West Main Street - Leesburg, FL 32748

SUWANEE
Harris Funeral Home 1939
P.O. Box 209 - Live Oak, FL 32060

TAYLOR
Joe P. Burns Funeral Home January 1955
P.O. Box 885 - Perry, FL 32347

VOLUSIA
Baggett-McIntosh Funeral Home 1901
736 S. Peach Street - Daytona Beach, FL 32015
Haigh & Black Funeral Home January 7, 1931
103 Broadway - Daytona Beach, FL 32018
Quarterman-Haire Funeral Home
1201 S. Ridgewood Avenue - Daytona Beach, FL 32014

Allen Summerhill Funeral Home
P.O. Box 1527 - DeLand, FL 32720

Lankford Funeral Home
P.O. Drawer Z - DeLand, FL 32720

David Land Funeral Home
P.O. Box 321 - DeBary, FL 32713

Hughey Funeral Home
1 North Causeway - New Smyrna Beach, FL 32069

Settle-Wilder Funeral Home
406 S. Orange
P.O. Box 819 - New Smyrna Beach, FL 32069

Lankford Orange City Chapel
190 S. Hall Avenue - Orange City, FL 32763

WALTON

Clary Funeral Home
P.O. Box 1136 - DeFuniak Springs, FL 32443

WASHINGTON

Blackburn Funeral Home
P.O. Box 582 - Chipley, FL 32428

Warren Brown has produced a delightful series of vignettes about aviation in Florida life and business from 1908 to 1980. The style is not scholarly, and the author can not resist editorializing here and there, but he has done an impressive research job to provide dates, names and places in a profusion which should gladden a professor’s heart. It is obviously a labor of love. He covers items such as the establishment of the early airlines in Florida, both home-grown and from out of state, aviation by areas and the impact of early military aviation in the state. His style recalls the freewheeling wood-and-wire days when pilots wore leather jackets and turned their caps around. Every flight was daring. Historians whose research takes them anywhere near old airfields, defunct aircraft manufacturing companies or any of the characters who made up the old “Alligator Club” will find this book a fruitful source of leads and facts.

One of the more interesting themes woven through the book is the struggle of early aviation boosters to make flying pay. Perhaps to build on this theme, Brown devotes considerable space to detailing the early efforts to start flying schools, manufacturing companies and airlines. The
growth of aviation respectability is one of a number of interesting historical side trails which lead from this book into research fields. The book’s chapters are arranged to cover episodes and events rather than proceeding strictly chronologically. The reader had better be prepared to skip around a bit. This lack of continuity makes the initial reading a little disconcerting, until the reader finally decides just to relax and enjoy. Sample chapter headings are “The Glenn Curtis School,” “Aeromarine and Florida Airways” (a lot of seaplane action in those early days, as one might expect in this area), “The Embry-Riddle Story” and “Tampa Bay Aviation.” The last chapter, one of four to deal with aviation in specific localities, begins with Lincoln Beachley’s night flight over Tampa, “which was widely acclaimed in the world press and helped to put Tampa on the world map” (p. 202). Brown gives a lot of attention in the Tampa Bay chapter to the development of local airfields; this section should provide some nostalgia for readers who can remember the 1920s and 1930s. Today, of course, flight has become routine and almost dull – the price, perhaps, of commercial respectability. The author’s lines about Weedon Island’s strip says it all: “Flying over the area in 1980, one can still see remains of runways, and there, standing alone, amid weeds and jungle, the solitary hangar that once represented a bustling airport in earlier years.” (p. 208).

The book is paperbound, footnoted for facts but without sources, and has a good bibliography. Researchers will find this a better than average local history.

Robert Killebrew


*Beyond the Fourth Generation* is a first person history. It is a view of historical events relating to over 50 years (1921-1974) of water management in south Florida as experienced by Lamar Johnson, surveyor and engineer, who played a major role in those activities. As noted in the preface, the author’s goal was to “. . . show the motivation of early generations. History in the dry record of public documents does not always reflect the mood of the times. The attitude of the period is often more interesting than the events.”

In the telling of this history, Mr. Johnson has done some careful research to supplement his own story as well as background his time period against what had happened in the years prior to his coming to south Florida. He describes, for example, the early railroad era in Florida, how the state “lost” 30,000 lakes, and the early surveying and drainage activities in the Everglades.

The book contains many photographs, several of which picture the early equipment used to drain the Everglades. Definitely missing from the book is a clear map of the region. The reader will be forced to refer to road atlases in an attempt to pinpoint where events described had taken place. Because the author did not adopt a strictly chronological sequence in telling his story, some of the chapters may seem disjointed. However, that small point does not affect the flow of the total book.

It is interesting to note that some of the items Mr. Johnson suggested for further study, such as the raising of the overall level of Lake Okeechobee, have been accomplished, or are now under
active consideration. It would have been interesting to discuss with the author, now deceased, what his thoughts and comments would be with regard to the present situation of Florida’s water resources.

Although some readers may not agree with the reasons why or with what has been done in the management of south Florida water resources, the book is an excellent look at the history of water management in south Florida and the motivations behind the historical events. Hopefully, we have learned from the experiences of the past generations and will apply those experiences to the management of Florida’s water resources in the next generation.

William Courser

Writing interesting local history is no easy task, and Frank Hurley is to be commended for his efforts in producing one of the most informative and enjoyable monographs on local history in the Tampa Bay area. The bibliography is impressive and should be of considerable help to future historians exploring these waters.

The book follows a chronological development of the beaches with particular emphasis on Pass-a-Grille. The first chapters deal with Indians and conquistadores in which he describes the islands as a “Pre-Columbia Supermarket” satisfying the Lucullan dining habits of the Timucuans. The results of these habits were numerous deposits of artifacts, bones, and shell mounds for future study by archeologists. The conquistadores or “Spain’s Paladins of Discovery” left little impact on the shores of the gulf beaches except to decimate the Indian population on the islands.

After briefly touching on British lack of interest in the area and the “unpleasantness at Lexington and Concord” which sparked the American Revolution, we find the islands were uninhabited until Florida was purchased by the United States, and fishermen began using the islands for “fish ranches.” Most of the fish were sold to Cuban plantations to feed the campesinos.

The beaches remained a place to fish and hunt not to live, until the latter part of the nineteenth century. The first permanent resident on the Keys was Zephaniah Phillips who homesteaded on Pass-a-Grille in the late 1880s. In 1898, the army began construction of Fort DeSoto on Mullet Key, and George Lizotte, a tour guide from London, made his first trip to the island. Lizotte was to become one of Pass-a-Grille’s most famous residents when he opened the first hotel, the Bonhomie, on the gulf several years later. Lizotte’s hotel, rustic as it was, would become well known along the gulf coast as a place to fish, swim, and enjoy the culinary delights prepared by Lizotte himself.

The middle chapters are perhaps the most interesting in tracing the slow but relentless development of the beaches by those hardy pioneers that withstood the heat, mosquitoes, and lack of cultural amenities in return for the serenity and solitude that the islands could provide. This section also traces the settlement and growth of the north islands, particularly Indian Rocks Beach. Descriptions of the first automobile, bridge, streetcar, and other such mundane events can make for dull reading, but Hurley documents such occurrences with enough anecdotes and local folklore that make it interesting and entertaining.
Particular attention was given to the construction of the fabled Don CeSar Hotel and some of the prominent guests who stayed there during the thirties. The guest register of the Depression Era included such names as Clarence Darrow, Walter Mayo, Henry Doherty, Senator Harry Byrd, and F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. The hotel remained solvent through the depression attesting to the popularity of the gulf beaches in spite of the economic disaster that gripped the nation. World War II was a busy time on the islands as men camped on the beaches and the Don CeSar was taken over by the government to house troops. Eventually it became a convalescent hospital and later, after the war, the VA Administrative Center for the west coast of Florida.

After World War II, there was a boom as servicemen returned home and remembered the time spent, however brief, on the gulf coast. Many returned to live in Pinellas County and some, of course, on the sun drenched islands. The postwar boom created a new demand for waterfront living, and the result was a new era of dredge and fill. The more recent history of the beaches is developed thoroughly but is less interesting, particularly for those of us that have lived through the condominium era. His monograph certainly merits the attention of any serious scholar of local history, and those interested in a good story.

Ken Ford


The growing concern about the natural environment of Florida and in particular its water resources has generated a number of studies. _Land into Water – Water into Land_ provides an informative historical perspective on the management of water resources of the state. The title of the book refers to the ubiquitous developer’s dream of dredge and fill operations in forging ahead in the name of progress.

According to the author, the book was written to answer a number of questions pertaining to the management of the state's water resources: “How did Florida get this way? Why and when were the waterways, canals, and the ditches dug? Why and when were the swamplands drained? What visions of progress danced before the eyes of the settlers and influenced the early politicians? What dreams of profit impelled succeeding generations of businessmen to concoct vast schemes for cutting up the landscape? [And] why did the shifting goals of the populace – private aggrandizement, agricultural expansion, reclamation, flood control, conservation, environmentalism – favor a certain public policy at one time and quite different ones during later periods?”

In coming to grips with these questions many important government reports have been used as well as outstanding books on the subject such as Carter’s _The Florida Experience_. A number of maps and photographs of landscapes aid in comprehending the topic.

The twelve chapters take the reader from a discussion of the early perceptions settlers had of the state, to the beginnings of planning and development of canals and other waterways and to early outside investors in land and water projects (ch. 4).
In the 1890s the first major challenge to “Florida Boosterism” so prevalent among state officials, developers, and speculators is described. Much of the book is given over to a discussion of the management of the Everglades. In addition, the Cross-Florida Canal is extensively covered. Also of special interest to Tampa Bay residents is the discussion of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (Swiftmud) and the Green Swamp.

The author properly emphasizes the leading positive role Florida began to play in the environmental field with the passage of a series of progressive environmental laws in 1972. These bills were the Florida Water Resources Act, the Florida Environmental Land and Water Management Act, the State Comprehensive Planning Act, and the Land Conservation Act. In addition, the author ably covers two familiar resource themes: the constant struggle between developers and preservationists and the structural and non-structural approaches to the management of land and water resources.

The last chapter of the book reviews the period up to the mid-1970s. The present use of water is covered, the nature of the State Water Plan as reflected in the five district plans is discussed, and the growing concern of water quality is portrayed. The book ends on the upbeat notion that Floridians may have learned from past resource management experiences to the extent that it is really better to cooperate with nature than to look upon it as another enemy to be conquered.

Roland C. Holmes

Largo . . . Then ‘Til is the work of the Largo Bicentennial Committee chaired by the mayor, Thomas Feaster. Longtime Largo resident Sadie Johnson did much in compiling this book. The book has the format of a high school yearbook divided into sections of writings, photographs, and other primary source documents. The table of contents includes such divisions as: A Chronicle, Schools, Churches, Police, Recreation, Banks, Reminiscences and Civic and Fraternal Organizations. The section, A Chronicle, begins with family histories of the pioneer families and then continues with a summary of important events that happened year by year since. The collection of photographs and old documents make this a valuable resource for historians and history buffs alike.

“Reminiscences” is a delightful series of stories told by old timers of life in the last seventy or eighty years in Largo. Some of these stories come from the oral history library at Heritage Park, the Pinellas County Historical Museum located in Largo. The reader must remember that the facts presented in this section are only as good as the memories of the storytellers.

One interesting quote to those who now fish in the Tampa Bay Area was Taver Bayly’s comment on local fishing at the turn of the century. “Fishing in those days was just wonderful. You cannot imagine today how it could be so good. We would go down to Bayly’s Bluff – particularly in that spot – you could get all the stone crabs you wanted in no time at all. If Mother said she wanted a five-pound red fish, we would go to the mouth of McKay’s Creek and with just a hand-line with a fiddler crab for bait, we would catch a ten-pounder, put it back, catch a little one, put it back until we caught one just the right size.” It is good that we have history books, because if you visited McKay Creek today you would never believe that this story could be possible.

There are several weaknesses in the book. One of these is a lack of an index. For a book of 218 pages it is very difficult to find a name or place. The lack of footnotes and bibliography also make it difficult to use for further research. Throughout the book there are corrections made by hand in ink which should have been corrected by the proofreaders.

Largo has grown from a town of several thousand people in 1960 to a city which now ranks as the fourteenth largest in the state of Florida. This book should contribute to the community’s sense of pride and unity.

James E. Jones


Lightfoot is a collection of stories about Thomas Claude Lightfoot, a pioneer who was born in 1893 in San Antonio, Florida, a community about twenty-five miles north of Tampa in Pasco
County. He moved at an early age to a homestead of 160 acres near Tampa in what is now Temple Terrace. He and his family later moved to Sarasota.

The booklet is arranged into twenty-four chapters which cover the various episodes in the life of Thomas Lightfoot. As of 1976, when the booklet was written, Thomas and his wife Mary celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary.

The episodes are based upon conversations with Thomas Lightfoot, materials gleaned from several Sarasota newspapers, and from Karl Grismer's book, *Story of Sarasota.* The chapters not only cover the career of Lightfoot, but major events in Florida history are mentioned which fill in the background of life in Florida before the turn of the century. Hunting and fishing trips were a part of any boy's life - but some adventures with chewing tobacco, panthers in the cypress and wild parakeets in the plum trees set these stories apart.

Lightfoot follows in the same vein as the Foxfire Books, in recounting the life of the frontier, when most of the necessities of life were produced on the farm. Anyone interested in this era will find a pleasant evening of entertainment here.

    Joseph Hipp
ANNOUNCEMENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE: The editors will gladly publish announcements of upcoming events related to local history, but these items must reach the editors at least two months before the publication dates of June 1st and December 1st.

Hampton Dunn has donated his vast collection of Floridiana to the University of South Florida. The Hampton Dunn Collection will be housed in the University of South Florida library where the headquarters of the Florida Historical Society is located. The materials will be helpful to researchers in Florida history. The Hampton Dunn Collection consists of more than 1,100 volumes, each related to some aspect of Florida history; thousands of historical photographs and negatives, manuscripts, vertical files, memorabilia, documents, maps, prints and paintings, historical issues of numerous newspapers, oral history tapes, a large antique postcard collection, color slides and miscellaneous other sources. For further information contact J. B. Dobkin, Special Collections, University of South Florida Library, Tampa, FL 33620. (813) 974-2731.

The eighth annual Pioneer Florida Festival will be held on Labor Day, September 6, from 10:00 to 5:00 at the Pioneer Florida Museum in Dade City. This one-day festival is a tribute to the pioneer settlers of Florida expressed through the museum’s historical resources, demonstrations of folk ways and crafts, historical exhibits, traditional music and story telling, "Cracker" foods and slide presentation on aspects of local history and pioneer life. Admission is $1.00 for adults and 50 cents for children (under six, free). For more information, call the Pioneer Florida Museum Association at (904) 567-0262.

Fort Myers Historical Museum Director Patti Bartlett is requesting anyone having artifacts from World War II - specifically relating to Page or Buckingham Field - to contact her. She and her staff are in the process of preparing a World War II exhibit and need Japanese war mementos, medals, uniforms, guns, shell casings, letters, diaries and any other artifacts from the military. Anyone wishing to donate such memorabilia may contact Bartlett at (813) 332-5955. An experienced carpenter is also needed to volunteer to help Museum Technician Mark Appleby in the construction of some exhibits. Anyone interested should contact Bartlett at the same phone number.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

RANDY BOBBITT graduated from the University of South Florida with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History. He is a free-lance writer.

WILLIAM D. COURSER is the Chief of the Environmental Section of the Southwest Florida Water Management District in Brooksville.

BILL DE YOUNG is a St. Petersburg insurance executive for whom history is pure avocation.

HAMPTON DUNN is Senior Vice-President of Peninsula Motor Club (AAA) who has written numerous books on Florida History. His latest book is entitled "Wish You Were Here!" - A Grand Tour of Early Florida Via Antique Post Cards.

KEN FORD is director of the Heritage Park Historical Museum in Largo, Florida.

JOSEPH HIPP is director of the Special Collections Division of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

ROLAND C. HOLMES is an Assistant Professor of Geography at the University of South Florida's St. Petersburg Campus. He has spent the 1981-82 academic year on a Fulbright Fellowship in Peru.

JAMES E. JONES teaches social studies at Largo Senior High School.

DENISE KELLEY is enrolled in a Master's Program in Personnel Organization and Development at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

ROBERT KILLEBREW received a Masters Degree in History from the University of South Florida and is currently serving in the Air Force.

LUCY FULGHUM O'BRIEN owns the Red Horse At Ybor Square, a shop where she sells antiques, books and collectable postcards.

JEANNE P. REIDY recently retired as Communications Associate from Ramar Group Companies, Inc., of Sarasota.

LORI D. ROBINSON graduated from the University of South Florida History Department in 1980 and now works for an electronics firm in Pinellas Park.

MICHAEL SCHEME was formerly with the Florida Division of Archives, History and Records Management and is currently with the Branch of Special Programs of the National Park Service in Denver, Colorado.
Managing Editor                  STEVEN F. LAWSON
Associate Editor                 JOHN J. BERTALAN
Associate Editor                 ROBERT P. INGALLS
Associate Editor                  LOUIS A. PÉREZ
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COVER: Pass-A-Grille, St. Petersburg, Florida. The women were out in their colorful and daring bathing costumes in the 1920s when this postcard scene was recorded for posterity. That’s the original Pass-A-Grille Hotel complex in the background. It was located along the beach between 23rd and 26th Avenues. See Hampton’s Dunn’s Photo Essay on page 33.
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FORE!

"Golf is slowly but steadily infecting St. Petersburg and almost every day some of the victims can be seen going through their strange performance on some of our streets. A movement to provide golf links should be got under way at once, before the windows begin to suffer too much." St. Petersburg Times, January 25, 1902.
THE LIGHTS GO ON IN LAKELAND.

"Lakeland will be lighted by electricity in a few days. Bartow rejoices over her sister’s progress and hopes that the illumination will be as bright and sparkling as her future and prosperity are assured." Polk County News, March 27,1891.
RECKLESS RIDERS.

"Who would have thought two years ago that our town would stand in need of an ordinance prohibiting reckless bicycle riding? Scorching has become a crying evil here and unless carpet tacks are scattered more liberally such a law will have to be enacted." San Antonio Herald, June 1, 1899.
THEIR BARKS WERE WORSE THAN THEIR BITES.

"While engaged in trying a criminal case at Tampa last week, lawyers George P. Raney, Jr. and J. J. Lumsford were only prevented from engaging in a fight by deputy sheriffs. Both showed their teeth." St. Petersburg Times, May 4, 1901.
SO MUCH TO SEE IN ST. PETE.

"If the Horticultural Society meeting for 1902 doesn’t come to St. Petersburg, it comes to the next thing to it - i.e. Tampa. Now, we St. Petersburg farmers must manage to bring them over here for one day, anyhow. One day in St. Petersburg will be as good as a week in most cities." St. Petersburg Times, May 23,1901.