

THE QUARTERLY OF THE
BREVARD COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

THE INDIAN RIVER JOURNAL

Volume II, Number 1

Summer 2003

**Brevard County Historical
Articles & Features
Organizations & Activities
Announcements & Reviews**



Pictured above is the original Haulover Canal. Before the canal was built, traders and Indians "hailed over" their boats on a narrow spit of land between the Mosquito Lagoon and the Indian River. During the Second Seminole War, Fort Ann was erected on the Indian River side of the haulover trail. In 1854, a canal 3' deep and 14' wide was cut on the trail allowing boats to sail through.

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THE INDIAN RIVER JOURNAL

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THE INDIAN RIVER JOURNAL

Volume II, Number 1

Summer, 2003



Around 1900, three ladies on an outing netting the once-abundant blue crabs in the Indian River react to a specimen who decides to fight back !

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THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

As I sit down to write the Chairman's Report for this, the second issue of the *Indian River Journal*, I reflect on loss of the space shuttle *Columbia*. Having personally witnessed every U.S. manned launch but four, I can't help but feel, given the complexity of the endeavor, how fortunate we are that there have not been more such tragedies.

Those of us who live and work in Brevard County are reminded how fortunate we are to witness one of the most exciting and important triumphs of the history of human endeavor: the exploration of and, possibly, the eventual settlement of space. Unfortunately, we must also witness the inevitable tragedies such as the loss of the three astronauts in the pad fire (1966), the *Challenger* disaster (1987) and the loss of the *Columbia*.

Because of these tragedies, there are those who question the need for the U.S. manned space flight program. We should recall that Christopher Columbus, on his voyage of discovery over 500 years ago, also lost his flagship, the *Santa Maria*. Because of her loss, Columbus was compelled to leave behind 40 of his men on the island of Hispanola. When he returned the following year, he found every one of those he left behind had died. However, the European explorations continued. Ponce de Leon, Panfilia Naervez, Hernando de Soto, and hundreds of their men followed Columbus, risking and sacrificing their lives seeking personal fame and fortune in the New World.

Like those early explorers, the *Columbia's* crew knew the risks and were willing to take them. Unlike those explorers, they sacrificed their lives—not for personal fame and fortune—but for a nobler cause. The experiments conducted on their mission were designed to help the peoples of all nations. In the wake of the *Columbia*, new missions will follow. We are indebted to the crew of the *Columbia* and

others like them who further the achievements of humanity through their personal sacrifices.

To the crew of the *Columbia*:

Michael Anderson
 Laurel Clark
 Ian Ramon
 William McCool
 Davis Brown
 Kalpana Chawla
 Rick Husband

Bob Gross, Former Chairman
 Brevard County Historical Commission

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

With this issue, the editors of the *Indian River Journal* are pleased to present the writing of one of Brevard County's most persistent historical researchers, Ed Vosatka. Vosatka's fields of expertise include railroads of the area and the history of the Union Cypress Mill in Hopkins (South Melbourne). From his wealth of data about these subjects, Vosatka has put together a delightful piece that takes us back to a time when the steam whistle was an intrinsic part of daily life. Whether on boats, factories, or trains, the whistle regulated people's lives by marking time and activities.

Showcased as our cover story, we present the work of David Paterno, an expert on the Seminole War's Fort Ann, Brevard County's only fort. Military installations as important as they are to our county now, it is interesting to learn about the US government's earliest post here. The fort site is on private property, so it cannot be visited at this time.

We are also pleased to introduce a new feature--our Mystery Photo. We hope that one of our readers will be able to tell us something about the picture on page 16.

Finally, we have more interesting articles and book reviews for our readers. We hope you avail yourselves of some of the fascinating local history reading that is available about our region.

Good Reading!

Karen Raley
David Paterno
Co-Editors

LOCAL HISTORICAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Indian River Historical Cruises in Titusville

The North Brevard Historical Museum, Space Coast Nature Tours, and Indian River Dry Goods Company have united to provide the public with a new Indian River cruise. Every Friday at approximately an hour before sunset, the 44-foot cruise boat *Skimmer* leaves from the Indian River Steamboat Wharf at Space View Park in Titusville for a "Living History Cruise" on the Indian River. The cruise is 45 minutes long and is a narrated expedition that offers passengers a chance to learn more about the steamboat era on the Indian River.

Cruise-goers learn about historic sites on the Titusville waterfront, pioneer settlers in the area, and Confederate blockade runners at Sand Point. The historic narration is performed by crewmembers dressed in period costumes. There is also an opportunity to learn about the beginnings of NASA's spaceport. The tour boat accommodates 49 people with comfortable seating and is handicap accessible. A portion of the pro-fits from the tours goes to the North Brevard Historical Museum. For more information on the cruise, call 321-267-4551.

Smith Family Homestead Old Florida Cracker Day

Barbara Smith Arthur and members of the Arthur and Smith families joined with Ann Wheatley Smith, Richard Ott, and Betty Preece of the South Brevard Historical Society to put on the first annual Old Florida Cracker Day at the Smith Family Homestead Saturday, May 5. The historic homestead is located on Mullet Creek, south of Floridana Beach. Presenters included author Patrick Smith, James Culberson, Diane Barile, Bob Gross, Zoe Toler, Laura Hiott, and the musical duo, Robin and Eddy. Barbeque was provided by the Palm Bay High School Booster Club.

Homesteader Robert Toombs Smith built the house in 1899, and the upper floor is still occupied by a member of the family. Smith planted and operated a citrus grove, rafting a railroad station over from Micco to be used as his packinghouse. There is still a productive grove at the homestead. Laura Smith Hiott, who recited her poetry at the celebration, was the first child born in the house. She was the eldest of 8 children born to Elizabeth and Robert. Four of the Smith sons became commercial fishermen, including "Honest" John, who lived in the house for many years, operating the fish camp on the property. Honest John and his wife, Gladys, had two children, Barbara and John. They are in the process of restoring the cluster of 4 buildings at the heart of the homestead: the home, detached kitchen, net house (formerly a stable) and the packinghouse.

On June 1, Laura Smith Hiott passed away. At the age of 102, she was the oldest living native-born resident of Brevard County. To donate funds in her memory for the support of the house museum and restoration projects, contact Barbara Smith Arthur at 724-5057.

John Smith and Barbara Smith Arthur confer during Old Florida Cracker Days.



Smith Comes to the Brevard Museum

The Brevard Museum of History and Natural Science, Inc., located at 2201 Michigan Rd., Cocoa has hired JaNeen Smith as its new Executive Director. Smith and her husband have returned to Brevard County from Frederick, Maryland. She was the Executive Director of the National Museum for Civil War Medicine there. No stranger to Brevard or the space industry, Smith and her family first moved here in 1955. She attended Brevard County schools and her father was the superintendent of the construction company that built the first launch pad at the Space Center.

Smith, who assumed her new position in November 2002, immediately set goals for herself and the museum. She has embarked on a number of projects to develop new programs and enhance present ones. Among her plans for the immediate future are the creation of a "Circle of Science" project. This program will be done in cooperation with the Florida Solar Energy Center, the Planetarium, Travis Park, and her own History and Science division at the Museum. Visitors will be able to participate at one or all of these facilities for one fee of \$10.00.

Smith would also like to build a replica of a "Cracker" house in which museum-goers can visualize what it was like to live in a pioneer Florida home. She has plans for a Heritage Garden, where visitors, especially children, can understand how early Floridians, including Native Americans, used herbs and plants for medicinal and culinary purposes. Director Smith eschews the normal museum static guided-tours in favor of a hands-on approach to exhibits. This, she hopes, will become a specialty of the Brevard Museum in the future.

The Brevard Museum of History and Natural Science, Inc. is open 7 days a week: Monday through Saturday from 10 AM to 4 PM, and Sunday from 12 noon to 4 PM. The museum is seeking volunteers to assist in various positions. For more information, call 321-632-1830.

(Local Historical News in Brief continued on page 10.)

ASK NOT FOR WHOM THE WHISTLE BLOWS

BY ED VOSATKA

"We understand the city fathers will pass an ordinance compelling the F. E. C. trains to blow their whistles continuously day and night, while going through the city. They must have it in for the F. E. C. Steam costs something."

-- Melbourne Times, June 11, 1925.

From the thunderous baritone of the ocean liner to the playful melodies of the calliope, the distinctive voice of the steam whistle quickly became part of American folklore. In bygone eras, it shouted "steamboat a'comin'" and "all aboard." It called men to the factory and told them when to go home. It spoke from the kitchen and the farmyard, the field and the forest.

For many decades, the steamboat was king along Florida's Indian River, its booming voice bringing out entire towns to welcome passengers, freight, mail, and newspapers. It was the same when the first trains began to arrive just before the turn of the century, pushing steamboat service ahead of them and on down the coast.



The steamer Swan lies at the dock of the Indian River Trading Company in Eau Gallie near the end of the 19th century. Eau Gallie was able to support big steamers like the Swan because the Eau Gallie River provided a deep enough harbor.

The big whistle at the Union Cypress Company's mill in Melbourne could be heard in Eau Gallie, five miles to the north.¹ Its unmistakable fire whistle would scream like a wildcat when calling for help. Guests at Melbourne's hotels and other winter residents, however, were "greatly annoyed" at being awakened along with the sawmill workers at 4:30 every morning.²



In the 1920s photo above, the FEC RR tracks cross Crane Creek going south into Hopkins. The mill town and its neighbor on the north side of the creek, Melbourne, heard the factory whistle from the Union Cypress Company. The water tower and 5 smokestacks of the mill can be seen on the horizon at the right.

Southbound trains whistled freeze warnings to Florida farmers along the way.³ Melbourne's Union Cypress Co. Railway did likewise, providing weather bulletins for those along its run to Deer Park.

Back when engineers were assigned to regular locomotives, a bond formed between the engineer and his steed, which often reflected his personal tastes and became affectionately known as "she." Every railway had its musicians, clever engineers coaxing tunes and other ditties, bird calls, laughter, drum beats, tap dances, bugle calls and the like from their whistles.⁴

Legendary Casey Jones could make his homemade whistle say prayers or scream like a banshee. One C&O engineer invariably played *Home, Sweet Home* at midnight on New Year's Eve. And a Southern Ry. engineer once got in trouble for playing *How Dry I Am* while passing through town during Sunday morning church services.⁵

Around the turn of the century, new regulations moved the railways away from individualism and self-expression and toward standardization and uniformity.⁶ Engineers were no longer assigned to their individual locomotive, rather to a standardized fleet engine operating out of a motor pool. Creative whistle talk was similarly muzzled by rules and regulations.

Through his whistle, the engineer commanded his crew. It was, and still is, his main way of communicating with people along the way. Yet, he now found himself the target of public criticism for whistling too much and too long. (Did anyone ever complain about a steamboat whistle?)

The photo at the right shows the Florida East Coast train approaching the Titusville station at the turn of the last century.



NOTES:

- 1 "Eau Gallie," *East Coast Advocate*, August 30, 1912, p.5.
- 2 "More Amusement for our Visitors," *Melbourne Times*, January 9, 1924.
- 3 B. A. Botkin and Alvin F. Harlow, eds., *A Treasury of Railroad Folklore*. (New York: Bonanza, 1983), p. 339.
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 342-343.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 339-341.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 340.

Indialantic Heritage Committee Makes New Plans

Indialantic's Heritage Committee formed last year to help celebrate the Town's 50th anniversary. Led by Carol Andren, the committee continues its activities. This year, it has begun work on local oral histories, organizing the Town archives, and maintaining a periodically changing exhibit. The group also plans to present programs and contribute vignettes to the Town newsletter. The Heritage Committee is seeking additional documents for its archives and would like to borrow items to show in its locked display case at the Town Hall. Persons interested in participating in the committee should call Carol Andren at 725-4115. Meetings on the third Tuesday of each month at 8 AM at the Indialantic Town Hall.

Melbourne Forms Historic Preservation Committee

The City of Melbourne has chosen a 10-member *ad hoc* committee to advise the city on the planning of a Historic Preservation Ordinance. The City hopes to become a Certified Local Government.

Recently, Melbourne lost the historic "Doc" Sloan Residence, built in 1926 and torn down to make way for a drug store. For months, citizens have waited to see the fate of the city's famed Trysting Steps. The last vestige of the old waterfront business district, the landmark connected Front Street to the once-gracious Bluff Walk, now also gone. The present concrete steps were rebuilt in 1938 in the same configuration and location as the original ones, which were erected prior to 1886 over an Indian mound. Developers plan to demolish the steps, the mound, and two older homes to place three multi-story buildings on the homesite of Peter Wright, Melbourne's original settler. Citizen protest thus far has not protected these historic sites.

In the historic waterfront residential area in the Eau Gallie section, neighborhood protest curtailed Florida Historical Society's plans for the Rossetter House. A portion of this old home was built by John Houston's slaves, and the front section was added by James Rossetter in 1908. The home will become a house museum.

FORT ANN AND THE SECOND SEMINOLE WAR

BY DAVID PATERNO

Fort Ann was one of approximately two hundred forts that were established during the Seminole Wars. Located near the present-day Kennedy Space Center, the fort may have been the only Seminole War fort established within the confines of the modern boundaries of Brevard County. It was situated beside the Indian River and served as a garrison for United States troops as well as a depot for supplies and equipment. Two participants in the war kept journals and wrote about events that occurred during late 1837 and early 1838.

In 1837, General Thomas Sidney Jesup began a major military offensive against the Seminoles in order to drive them deeper into the swamps of southern Florida. In command of Jesup's eastern column was Brigadier General Joseph Hernandez, a native Floridian who established a series of forts along the Atlantic coast.

From New Smyrna, General Hernandez sent a force overland and another by water to find a narrow strip of land that was being used to "haul over" boats and canoes from the Mosquito Lagoon to the Indian River. It was his intention to erect a fortified depot to supply troops continuing down the river. The two forces met at the haulover.

With some 20 naval personnel manning flatboats, 225 infantry and artillery officers and enlisted men were barged down the waterway. The expedition saw shorelines that "lay in all wilderness of nature: in some spots towering forests rose: the perennial palmetto—the russet-trunked pine—the silver shafted water oak, and a variety of other trees proudly tossed their heads in the wind...." However, when they came to the haulover area, the landscape changed dramatically, becoming an "open prairie" with little more than saw grass and scrub palm. After moving over the narrow strip of land from the lagoon, the expedition established a camp on the Indian River side. The lack of woods at the

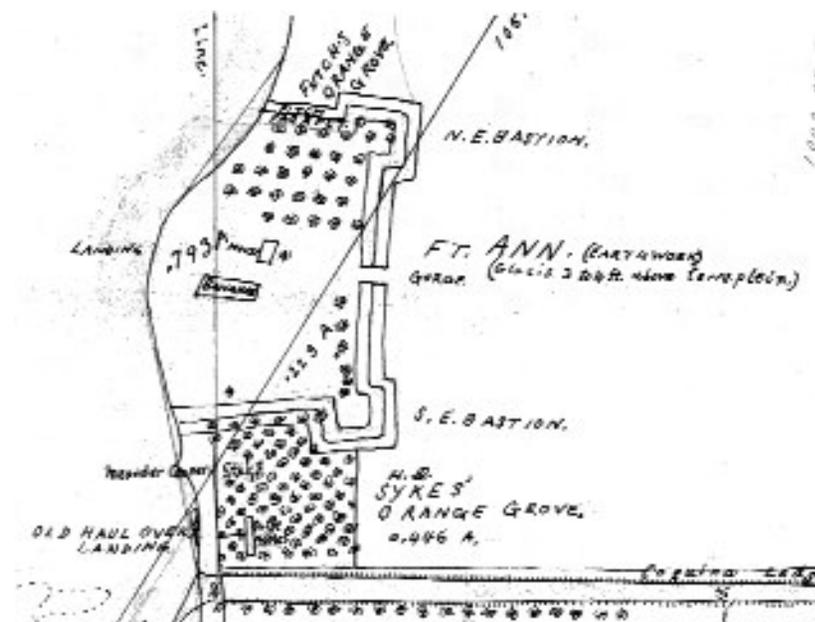
site would limit the building of a defensive structure, even though “a wilderness of cypress and pine forests” existed six miles away across the river.

The expedition reached the haulover on November 30, 1837. From this date until Christmas 1837, the troops at the haulover probably lived in tents and enjoyed no other entertainment than military drill by Lt. Col. Pierce. When Lt. Powell arrived with another expedition, he had with him 200 sailors, marines and soldiers. This increased the number of troops in camp on Christmas Day to over 400. General Hernandez arrived with an additional 500 troops on December 26, 1837.

The construction of the fort appears in the journals of two eyewitnesses to the event and is described in somewhat different terms. Jacob Mott was a physician who was assigned to the First Artillery. Major Reynold M. Kirby commanded a wing of the First Artillery.

Dr. Mott sailed with the troops down the waterway and arrived at the haulover on November 30, 1837. Although he returned with the boats the following day for more supplies to New Smyrna, he was back in camp the next day. After Gen. Hernandez left the camp for the other side of the river on December 7th, Mott records camp life as one of storytelling, hunting and military drill: “still more monotonous; nothing doing, nothing done.” Only the arrival of Lt. Powell and the naval expedition a few days after the main force arrived provided any relief from the boredom of the camp.

Christmas Day was a festive occasion for the troops with feasting and music. It is only after the holiday that Mott first mentions anything about a “fort.” He records the building of the fort: “In consequence of our anticipated departure, Lt. Irving [sic] of the 1st Art. was ordered to superintend the erection of some kind of fortification at the haulover, capable of being defended by one company, which were to remain as a guard when we had left.” This passage is sandwiched between the account of Lt. Powell’s departure with his



Above is a reproduction of the original hand-drawn map by J. Francis LeBaron.

command on the morning of December 26, 1837 and the alarm from General Hernandez’ camp signifying the arrival of Tennessee Volunteers which occurred on the evening of the same date. The implication is that Lt. Irwin received his order to build a fort on December 26. It further implies that Irwin would have had no more than 4 days to build his fort, since he himself departed the site on December 30 with the same expedition that carried off Dr. Mott. Lt. Irwin named Fort Ann for “the sweetest girl in Pennsylvania.”¹

Major Kirby arrived at the haulover on December 3rd in a supply boat. His account of the building is as ambiguous as that of Dr. Mott. He states: “Completion of the stockade fort being erected at the haulover was ordered on the 9th (of December), to be followed by the erection of another fort on the west bank of the river.” Kirby says nothing else about the fort. No description is given in his journal as to where the trees came from for the construction of the stockade. Certainly, trees were not present at the time in the immediate area of

haulover site. Yet trees were in abundance across the river at Camp Hernandez. To construct a stockade at Fort Ann, trees would had to have been cut on the western side of the Indian River and boated across to the eastern side. Kirby wrote in great detail about the comings and goings of the boats for supplies to different forts. Unfortunately, he did not leave us with any account of the transporting of timber for the construction of the fort. In addition, no evidence was given for a fort on the western shore of Indian River either in the two journals or from any "Post Returns" from a camp or Fort Hernandez.²

In 1880, J. Francis LeBaron surveyed the area surrounding Fort Ann and drew a map showing an outline of the fort with three sides or curtains and bastions on each of two corners. The fourth side was the Indian River. Within the outline of the sides, LeBaron writes the words parapet and ditch. He titled the outline on the map as "Fort Ann" and encloses the word "earthwork" in parentheses immediately after the title. He also notes the presence of a "glacis 3 to 4 ft. above terraplein." The bastions, glacis, and terraplein are indications of a sophisticated design to the fort. Traditional fort design at the time of the Seminole Wars suggests that Fort Ann probably had pushed up earth around a ditch which in turn was in front of a wooden stockade-like barrier. Behind the barrier was more "pushed up" earth to form a parapet upon which troops would stand to fire over the stockade.³

Whatever the design and construction of Fort Ann, it was substantial enough to ward off any potential attack and protect the considerable supplies that were stored there for the establishment of Forts Pierce and Jupiter. The fort was a beehive of intensive activity as a depot during the first four months of 1838. Troops from General Hernandez' campaign returned to Fort Ann on land and in boats innumerable times to obtain provisions for troops fighting in the "everglades" and for those garrisoned at Fort Pierce and Fort Jupiter. According to both Kirby and Mott, United States troops owed their existence to the supplies from Fort Ann.

In April, 1838, the Army abandoned the post at Fort Ann by General Order. Although troops were no longer stationed at the fort, the site may have played a role in another war. Georgianna Kjerulff recounts a story about Fort Ann being used as a Union camp during the Civil War. The former Vice-President of the Confederacy, John O. Breckenridge, was said to have slipped by two Union camps on the Indian River, one at Fort Ann and one at Camp Hernandez, in order to escape to Cuba after the conflict was over. Kjerulff maintains that these camps remained until the hostilities had ended between the North and the South.

Whether or not Kjerulff's account is apocryphal, Kirby and Mott's journals give us a glimpse of Fort Ann as an important fort, however temporary, during the Second Seminole War. After the Civil War, the site at Fort Ann had one last useful period. W. E. Futch established a home within the walls of the fort. Apparently the fort was large because it enclosed not only his home, but also an orange grove. Unfortunately, the fort site is on private land on Merritt Island and not open to the general public at this time.

Sources:

1. Mott, Jacob Rhett. *Journey into Wilderness*. Ed. James F. Sunderman. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1963.
2. Kirby, R. M. *Diary and Memorandums from August 16, 1837 to May 18, 1838*. Transcribed Manuscript. Gainesville: University of Florida Libraries, Division of Special Resources.
3. Map drawn by J. Francis LeBaron in 1880 of the site at Fort Ann. The outline of the fort is clearly depicted as is Mr. Futch's home and orange grove. This map, and other historical maps, are housed in the Alma Clyde Field Library of Florida History in Cocoa, FL.
4. Kjerulff, Georgianna Greene. *Tales of Old Brevard*. Melbourne: The Kellersberger Fund of the South Brevard Historical Society, 1972.

MYSTERY PHOTO



Can you identify the house, car, people, or location in this photograph? This photo and the one on page 8 were donated to the Florida Historical Society by George Anderson of South Indian Field, Brevard County. The location is believed to be somewhere in Brevard or Indian River Counties. Below is a close-up of the two people in the picture. If you have any information or theories concerning this photo, please call Bob Gross, at 725-7450, with your comments!



THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON'S SALINITY: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

BY BOB GROSS

The Fall 2002 issue of *The Marker*, the Marine Resources Council quarterly newsletter, contains a very informative article by Jim Egan and Gerry Rosebery concerning the variations in salinity of the Indian River Lagoon and its importance to the health of the lagoon. The authors document "recent" variations in the levels of salinity throughout the lagoon and some of the causes and effects of these variations. The authors point out that continued development of roads and structures prevents rainwater from being absorbed into the ground. The subsequent increase in runoff, which dilutes the salinity and carries pollutants into the lagoon, is detrimental to the health of the lagoon.

A review of the historical record indicates that even prior to human development of the area, there were great naturally-occurring variations in the salinity of the river. Ossian B. Hart, who later served as Governor of Florida, settled on land six miles south of Ft. Pierce. He reported in 1844 that the inlets to the ocean were all closed and the residents had to dig a channel through the old Gilbert's Cut south of the present-day St. Lucie Inlet. The level of water was so high in the lagoon that when the cut finally broke through, the force of the outflow created an inlet almost a half-mile in width. The inlet remained open only a few years before it filled in once again.

William H. Gleason first visited the Indian River lagoon in 1866 and, by 1869, he owned large tracts of property in and around the present-day Eau Gallie section of Melbourne. Gleason recorded the following in 1886:

I would most respectfully call your attention to

the changes that have taken place in the waters of the Indian River previous to A.D. 1875, when the waters of the river were salter [saltier] than the ocean, so much so, that during the late war [Civil War] salt was made from the waters of the river for the use of the Confederacy. The water shed of Indian river is narrow—less than a mile in width between the ocean and the river, and it will not exceed two miles on an average between the St. Johns and Indian Rivers; the river receiving its main supply of water from the ocean, through the Indian river and Jupiter Inlets. The river being shallow, the constant evaporation going on for a series of years, made the water in the river salter [saltier] than the ocean.

In A.D. 1876 we had a severe hurricane, accompanied by a heavy fall of rain; about thirty inches of rain fell in as many hours. We had a similar fall in 1878, and also in 1880. Since then we have been having a series of rainy seasons until the water of Indian river has become nearly fresh, so much so, that it has had an effect on the oysters, which have lost their flavor to a great extent, and grass has appeared in many places, especially, in the neighborhood of Titusville and at the mouth of the St. Lucie river. During heavy storms and gales the grass is torn up by the action of the water, and is washed ashore, where it creates a stench, and sooner or later, unless it is rectified, must effect the health of the entire river, and will soon destroy all of the oysters, except perhaps a few near the Inlets. The fish are also disappearing, especially the salt water varieties and turtle.

Now, at a small expense comparatively this can be rectified, and the former saltiness of the river restored, and an increased quantity improved, and the number increased,

in fact there is no reason why the cultivation of oysters should not become an important industry on this river, as much so as in Chesapeake bay and the estuaries along the coast of New Jersey. An oyster farm will pay equal to an orange grove, and the demand for oysters is constantly increasing.

This is a subject in which every person who resides on Indian river, or is a land owner is interested in, and I believe it is the duty of the County Commissioners to take the necessary steps to bring about the desired result, and that it should be done at the county's expense. By cutting an inlet from the ocean at the proper place, the inflow from the ocean would soon restore the river to its former condition. The old Spanish charts show an inlet opposite the mouth of the St. Sebastian river, and two



The view above, taken in 1930 by sport fisherman Paul Beckwith, Sr. of Indialantic, shows friends at the Sebastian Inlet.

inlets near the mouth of the St. Lucie river. One of these inlets, Gilbert's bar, was opened in 1845 [1844] and closed by the hurricane of 1847. Jupiter inlet has been opened and closed three or four times since then.

The most desirable place for an inlet for the purpose of introducing the ocean waters, and equalizing the saltiness of the river, is at some point on Banana river south of Cape Canaveral. The salt water would then flow into the main river, through Banana Creek, around the north end of Merritt's Island, and out of Banana river at its conjunction with Indian river. An inlet made from Banana river into the ocean south of Cape Canaveral can be made at less expense than at most any other point, as the distance to cut is only about forty rods. I believe an inlet could be made at a cost not exceeding three hundred dollars.

Later that same year, Gleason returned to the subject and wrote:

A few months since I called your attention to the fact of the bad condition of the water of Indian river, with a view to inducing the county board to make an appropriation to equalize the saltiness of the water.

The board at that time paid no attention to the suggestion; since that time a new board has been formed, and a great change has taken place in the water of the river. Millions of fish have died, and their remains now line the river banks and bottom of the river, and cannot get out to the ocean. This will create sickness unless something is done, and done at once, to purify the water, by letting salt water into the river and the contaminated water out into the ocean.

I wish you would now publish my former article, as the time has now come when prompt action is demanded, and must be taken to preserve the health of the residents along the banks of this beautiful Indian river. Since I wrote the former article I have made a very careful examination of the rout and cost of making an inlet from the Banana river to the ocean, and I think it can be accomplished at a cost not exceeding one thousand dollars.

These and other historical records indicate that the Indian River Lagoon has naturally varied from being nearly fresh to being considerably saltier than the ocean. Lt. Governor William Henry Gleason believed that the sea grasses of the river were detrimental to the health of the river and the cause of fish kills. Today, the prevailing thought is that the presence of grasses are an indication of the good health of the river.

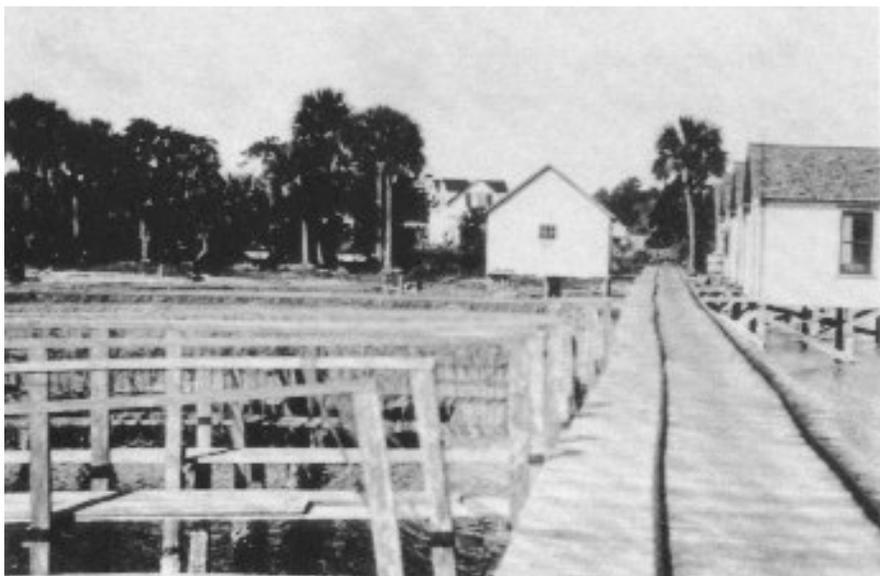
From a historical perspective, the lagoon was and is not static. When it was subject only to the rhythms of nature before the manipulations of man, its level of salinity varied widely. Today its condition still depends on the rhythms of nature but is more affected by human intervention. The appropriate level of salinity may be debated, but all can agree that the pollution of the river must be curtailed.

Sources:

Florida Star, January 20, 1886.

Florida Star, April 28, 1886.

Brown, Cantor Jr., *Ossian Bingley Hart*, Louisiana State University Press (1997)



Both of these pictures attest to the productivity of the Indian River lagoon in the early 20th century. Above are fish houses and net racks at Grant. Below, happy gents show off a single day's catch. The Cocoa bridge across the lagoon is visible in the background.



BOOK NOTES

In our Book Notes section this time, we continue our reviews of recently-published local histories of Brevard County and the Indian River region. This issue, we focus on the south part of Brevard and neighboring Indian River County. Two of our selections concern regional images—photographs and paintings. Our first review is of **Images, Through the Doors of Time: Photos from the Kroegel Collection** by James Culberson. The work is about the historic photographic legacy left by Rodney Kroegel of Sebastian. Kroegel's father, Paul, was the famed naturalist and warden of Pelican Island, the country's first wildlife refuge. Kroegel's photos, rescued by Jim Culberson, augment Culberson's story about the pioneer Kroegel family.

Our second book, **The Highwaymen: Florida's African-American Landscape Painters**, gives us another look at the Indian River region. The story of 25 African-American men and one woman from the Ft. Pierce-Vero Beach area is richly illustrated with color plates of their oil paintings. The story of the painters is even more interesting than the pictures. Finally, we review a new release from Vero, **U.S. Naval Air Station at Vero Beach, Florida During World War II**, by George Gross. In the war, the US government opened several Naval air training bases in our state. Two were located in Brevard--the Melbourne NAS and the Banana River NAS. In our last issue, we reviewed William Barnett's history of the Melbourne base. This issue, we review the newly-published history of the Vero Beach base.

The Indian River Journal reviews histories (non-fiction) of the counties adjoining the Indian River. In subsequent issues, we will continue our reviews of local histories published before 2000 and keep our readers up to date on any new releases or reprints.

IMAGES, THROUGH THE DOORS OF TIME: PHOTOS FROM THE KROEGEL COLLECTION, James E. Culberson. (Melbourne, FL: Sea Bird Publishing, 118 pp, black and white plates, \$19.95 softcover from Sea Bird Publishing, 321-727-0801.)

Author and photographer Jim Culberson assembled the crumbling and decaying remains of a treasure trove of old photos by Rodney Kroegel. Sorting, printing, and researching them, Culberson realized the pictures told a story that should be shared. In this volume, he presents several of the images to us, illuminating them with local and Kroegel family history.

Photographer Rodney Kroegel was born in Sebastian, Florida, in 1903. He was the son of pioneers Ila and Paul, and grandson of Gottlob Kroegel, who came to the area about 1877. Paul, the famed warden of Pelican Island--the first wildlife preserve in the country--shared an interest in photography with Harvard zoologist, George Nelson. Nelson stayed with the Kroegels during the winter and studied local wildlife.

Rodney Kroegel and Nelson eventually shared a darkroom, and photography became one of Rodney's many income-earning endeavors. During the early years of the 20th century, Kroegel made portraits, took photos for 1920s land promoters, and documented life in the Sebastian area. Some of the most historically interesting scenes show the steady expansion of human development in the area.

Culberson's clear explanations illustrate his familiarity with photography and with Florida history. Most of all, Culberson's lyrical prose demonstrates his respect for the Kroegel family and the natural environment. He takes the reader on a thoroughly enjoyable and interesting journey.

KR



Rodney Kroegel took this photo in 1923. It shows the paving crew at work on Sebastian's Main Street. Note the streak of blacktop from left to right above.

THE HIGHWAYMEN: FLORIDA'S AFRICAN-AMERICAN LANDSCAPE PAINTERS, Gary Morton. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001, x + 150 pp, color plates, \$29.99 hardbound.)

In a 28-page essay and a 3-page preface, Gary Morton describes the Ft. Pierce community of African-American landscape artists who flourished from 1955 through the 1980s, producing upwards of 50,000 oil paintings. The essay is generously illustrated by 64 full-color plates. Influenced originally by A. E. Backus, a white landscape artist, Alfred Hair became the center of a movement among his friends, painting and marketing landscapes of Florida. According to Morton, Hair's characteristic lack of personal viewpoint, intensity of color, dreamy generalization, and dazzling speed created a distinctive new style. Hair and his associates left the viewer to fill in details and render an idealized scene familiar or personal. Morton argues that the authentic Highwaymen values stemmed from Hair's concepts and practices, especially his goal of making money by selling prodigious quantities of moderately-priced paintings. It was the practice of hawking paintings up and down US #1 that caused a collector in 1994 to designate the artists as "The Highwaymen."

Hair, much-beloved in his community, pioneered an alternative to working in the groves and packinghouses. His formulaic paintings were done extremely rapidly, and he enlisted friends and neighbors to help him prepare the boards and backgrounds. Nevertheless, the paintings had some degree of individuality because Hair composed, drawing spontaneously from his imagination, as he painted. A large group of painters imitated his successful methods and, although they compared themselves to Backus, owed as much to Hair. Morton describes the Highwaymen as descendants of the luminists and romantics of the Hudson River School.

Not meant to be a collector's guide to the Highwaymen, Morton nevertheless identifies each painter of the group and discusses a number of them. He notes that Harold Newton, later based in Cocoa, was one of the most prolific and talented of the group. Newton followed Backus more closely than most of the others, painting with personal

expression, taking more time to compose, and showing greater mastery of the art. Morton especially lauds Newton's deft ability with light. Whereas Newton is more often seen by the public as the leader of the Highwayman, Morton disagrees. Although many of the artists painted on their own and were only on the fringes of the community, Morton feels the key instigator and innovator was Hair. Hair was planning to move to Miami in 1970, when he was killed in a bar in Ft. Pierce. This, Morton feels, took the wind out of the movement, and the artists slowed in their efforts--both to paint and to sell. Yet, many of the painters continued to sell their works, some developing their art further. Others moved into new occupations. By the late 1980s, sales



Paintings by Alfred Hair (above) and Harold Newton (below).



and production were so low that Morton defines it as the end of the Highwaymen period.

The book is an informative and revealing study. The author is emphatic in his admiration of the painters and their spontaneous ingenuity. His respect for the work is augmented by his depiction of it as a means for economic betterment among a group with limited opportunities. Morton little addresses the huge upsurge in the collectibility of the paintings now, but his book will surely add to their value.

KR

U. S. NAVAL AIR STATION AT VERO BEACH, FLORIDA DURING WORLD WAR II, George W. Gross. (Cocoa, FL: Florida Historical Society, 2002, 196 pp., photographs, illustrations, index, \$19.95 paper.)

Before there was a "Dodgertown," Municipal Airport, or Piper Aircraft facilities in Vero Beach, the Naval Air Station for training aviators existed on the same land. Born in 1942, the station was populated by more than 4,000 officers, enlisted personnel and civilians at its height before 1945. That the station was an important training facility for the Navy is marvelously shown in this book by George Gross. He details the construction of the station as well as the personnel responsible for its beginnings. The Vero Beach NAS was home to Naval personnel who were training in World World II dive bombers and fighter aircraft. Naval airplanes with such names as the "Wildcat," "Hellcat," "Buccaneer," and "Texan" filled the skies over Vero Beach and roared in and out of the Air Station.

For historians of World War II, this is a must-have book. Gross has carefully researched many different sources, including U.S. Naval documents, in order to detail the history of the Naval Air Station. He provides numerous photographs that depict the aircraft, facilities and the human side of the training, including some 200 WAVES that were stationed at the facility. Gross much gives credit to Pam Cooper of the Indian River Library as well as others for assistance in researching and compiling this book. It was obviously a labor of love.

DP

HELP NEEDED

The Rockledge Heritage Foundation is restoring the old Rockledge Municipal Building, which was built in 1926, on Orange Avenue. They are looking for old photos of the Rockledge community, particularly of the Municipal Building, which will be displayed when the building is completed.

The Williams Building Committee, which is restoring the old Williams Building (old Melbourne Beach Town Hall) is looking for a photograph of the old bath house, which was located on the east end of present-day Ocean Ave. in Melbourne Beach. The image is needed to recreate the same for a diorama of the town, which will be displayed in the Williams Building when the work on it is completed.

The Brevard County Historical Commission desires to record the location of all privies or outhouses which may yet survive in Brevard County. The Commission would like to ensure that at least one or two of the structures are saved and restored for posterity.



The last remaining public City Outhouse in Titusville, above, is located on South Washington Avenue. Sold for \$100, it is now used for storage.

HISTORICAL ORGANIZATIONS:

- African American Preservation League, Helen Williams, President, 321/638-3805. Meets at Field Library 7pm, 1st and 3rd Tuesdays
- American Police Hall of Fame & Museum, 6350 Horizon Dr., Titusville, FL 32780
- Alma Clyde Field Historical Library (Florida Historical Society Library), 435 Brevard Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922
- Brevard Cultural Alliance, Kay Burk, President, 2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, Building B, Room 104, Viera, FL 32940
- Brevard Geneological Society, Jacque Rubins, President, P. O. Box 1123, Cocoa, FL 32922-1123
- Brevard Heritage Council, c/o Alma Clyde Field Historical Library, 435 Brevard Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922
- Brevard Museum of History and Natural Science, 2201 Michigan Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922
- Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation, Chris Lahnertz, President, 15 Azalea Avenue, Satellite Beach FL 32937
- Florida Historical Society, Nick Wynne, Executive Director, 1320 Highland Ave., Melbourne, FL 32935
- Geneological Society of North Brevard, Randy Hill, President, P. O. Box 897, Titusville, FL 32781-0879
- Grant Historical Society, Ruby Lord, President, P. O. Box 44, Grant, FL 32949
- Indian River Anthropological Society, Tom Pender, President, 3365 Heather Dr., Titusville, FL 32796
- Liberty Bell Memorial Museum, Rachel Felton, Curator, 1601 Oak Street, Melbourne FL 32901
- The Mosquito Beaters, George "Speedy" Harrell, President, 435 Brevard Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922
- National Railway Historical Society, Florida East Coast Chapter, Chuck Billings, President, PO Box 2034, Cocoa, FL 32923-2034
- North Brevard Historical Society, 301 S. Washington Ave., Titusville, FL 32780
- Preservation & Education Trust, Incorporated, Carol Pope, P. O. Box 560823, Rockledge. FL 32956-0823
- Rockledge Heritage Foundation, Amanda Mitskevich, 27 Barton Avenue, Rockledge, FL 32955
- South Brevard Historical Society, Betty Preece, President, P. O. Box 1064, Melbourne, FL 32902-1064
- Williams Building Committee, Ann Downing, Secretary, Old Town Hall Historic Center, 2373 Oak St, Melbourne Beach, FL 32951

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