

THE JOURNAL OF THE  
BREVARD COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

# THE INDIAN RIVER JOURNAL

*Volume III, Number 1*

*Spring 2004*

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



*Director of Brevard County Mosquito Control, Jack Salmela (left) and County Commissioner Joe Wickham (right) inspect a ditch and impoundment near Lake Washington in the early 1960s. Brevard County's impoundment program became the backbone of Mosquito Control, enabling the Space Program and consequent development to flourish here after the 1950s.*

The Indian River Journal is published by the Brevard County Historical Commission.

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**THE INDIAN RIVER JOURNAL**

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# THE INDIAN RIVER JOURNAL

Volume III, Number 1

Spring, 2004



James Kennedy, left, Director of the Kennedy Space Center, accepts a Resolution of thanks from the Brevard County Commission, represented by the Chairman of the Historical Commission, David Paterno. NASA donated 37,000 historical photographic images to the people of Brevard County.

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## THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

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On February 27, the Brevard County Historical Commission was host to NASA officials from the Kennedy Space Center at the Historical Commission archives and offices. The event was held to honor NASA for donating over 37,000 photographic images to the people of Brevard County. The photos document the Space Shuttle Program from the first STS-1 launch in 1981. They include images of the launches, launch preparation, astronaut training, individual profiles, and views from outer space.

Attending the reception was the Director of the Kennedy Space Center, James Kennedy, who accepted a resolution from the County Commissioners expressing their appreciation to NASA for this truly outstanding gift to the people of Brevard County. We thank Mr. Kennedy for taking time from his busy schedule and speaking so eloquently at the large gathering. He was delighted that the images would be made available to researchers, the citizens of Brevard County, and especially the children in libraries and schools.

### ***WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!***

With the gracious help of Nick and Debra Wynne at the Field Library of Florida History, the Historical Commission displayed 300 of the photos at the reception. For the next several weeks, these images will be on display at the Field Historical Library for the public to view. The Historical Commission plans to purchase displays so that the images can travel to such places as schools, libraries, shopping malls, and public buildings. ***However, the greater need is for the careful preservation of the images, and placement in traveling displays. This is a labor-intensive task and one that will require much human effort to accomplish.*** Therefore I am asking that, among our citizens, those who would like to donate some time to help us make these images available to everyone, please call the Historical Commission offices at 321-433-4415 and speak to our Director, Steve Benn.

David Paterno,  
Chairman, Brevard County Historical Commission

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

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We are delighted to present three informative articles in this issue. The first of these is from Dr. Gordon Patterson, a Professor of History at Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne. Among Patterson's previous publications is *Florida Institute of Technology: A History*. Patterson has published in Florida history, African-American history, and environmental history. His interest in environmental history, public policy, and disease vectors is manifest in his latest work, *The Mosquito Wars: A History of Mosquito Control in Florida*, to be released this Spring by the University of Florida Press. The article we present is on mosquito control in our county. As Patterson says, our county is unique in this state for its reliance on impoundment rather than spraying. Further, the Space Program and the subsequent development of the Indian River area would hardly have been possible without mosquito control!

We're privileged also to include an article on the history of the City of Cape Canaveral by one of the town's founders, Ann Hatfield Thurm. Ann and her husband, Richard, were active with the incorporation and management of the City for many years, serving on boards, the council, and as mayor. Ann has been the City Historian since 1985. In 1994, she wrote *The History of the City of Cape Canaveral and the Cape Canaveral Area* and donated all sales proceeds to the city. Ann says "We have always felt that those of us who were here during the early, formative years of the City of Cape Canaveral are truly privileged to have had the rare experience of seeing the beginning of a new city, one situated near a location known throughout the world as The Space Center of the United States."

Our final article is the first of two parts on the history of the Brevard County Sheriff's Office. Compiled by Joan Heller, formerly of the Sheriff's office and now Citizen Corps Coordinator for Emergency Management in the County, the article weaves together stories from the Commission's own books by Jerrell Shofner (see page 28) and a local history of Cocoa by James Drake and Joseph Moss. Look for the second half of this article with our next issue.

Good Reading to you!

Karen Raley, Editor

## LOCAL HISTORY IN BRIEF

**KAREN RALEY**

### *Old Melbourne High School Renovation*

On March 27, there will be a reception to kick off renovations to the old Melbourne High School. One of three structures completed during the 1920s, Melbourne High School has stood unoccupied for over 15 years. The first of the buildings, the Melbourne School, has been renovated and is now the Henegar Center for the Arts. The western-most of the buildings was razed several years ago to make way for a senior center. Old Melbourne High, the easternmost building (pictured below in the 1940s) has had roof, basement, and exterior repairs. There is work remaining to be done in the basement and throughout the interior, including electrical wiring, plumbing, and general repair and renovation.

The empty structure will be transformed into the "Strawbridge Building" of the Henegar Center, and provide space for artists, dancers, the offices of the Melbourne Main Street program, and a heritage room for the alumni of the school. Old MHS alumni will give guided tours of the building from 11 am to 5 pm. Former principals George Maxwell and B. Frank Brown will be attending. The Melbourne Municipal Dixieland Band will perform, there will be an antique car show, a cocktail party and a presentation of *Damn Yankees* at the Henegar Auditorium in the evening. Call Denise Halkias at 724-5409 for more information on the renovation and reception, or Jerry Brees, Director of the Henegar, at 723-8698.



### *LaGrange Church Cemetery Historic Markers*

In the photo below, the Rev. Amos Lewis, Historical Commissioner Roz Foster, and local historian Rose Wooley pose happily in front of the new historic marker that stands in front of the LaGrange/Mims Community Cemetery. Provided by the Commission, this is one of two new markers that identify and commemorate the historic LaGrange site. LaGrange Church was established in 1869 as the first Protestant church on Florida's east coast between New Smyrna and Key West. The church was used as a schoolhouse, a civic meeting-house, and as a church for both black and white members. The services were segregated.

New markers have been placed at both of the two cemeteries adjoining the LaGrange churchyard. The LaGrange Community Cemetery was a burial ground for white residents. It contains the remains of Col. Henry Titus, for whom Titusville was named. The LaGrange/Mims Community Cemetery, shown below, is a two-acre plot formerly known as the LaGrange Colored Cemetery. The LaGrange/Mims Community Cemetery, maintained by the trustees, is significant as the first non-family plot in northern Brevard County that is the primary burial site for the area's black families. Slain Civil Rights activist Harry T. Moore and his wife, Harriette Moore, are interred there.



*(Local History in Brief is continued on page 14.)*



*The 102nd annual meeting of the*

## THE FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

***"VISIONS OF PARADISE"  
TECHNOLOGY, ENVIRONMENT, AND CULTURE  
IN FLORIDA***

*will be held*

**April 14-17, 2004  
in Melbourne, Florida**

*at the the Rialto Hilton  
and the Florida Institute of Technology*

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Florida Historical  
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Melbourne, FL 32935  
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**The Alma Clyde Field  
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32922  
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## MOSQUITO IMPOUNDMENTS AND MISSILES: THE INDIAN RIVER MOSQUITO WARS

BY GORDON PATTERSON

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The 1940s and 1950s were the golden age for mosquito control. In 1942, researchers at a United States Department of Agriculture laboratory in Orlando pioneered the use of DDT. The first tests of DDT as a mosquito larvicide and adulticide were performed in Brevard County on Cocoa Beach in 1943. Within ten years DDT resistant mosquitoes were a widespread problem. This led State Board of Health to seek approval from the legislature for funding permanent or source reduction control. In 1953, the legislature approved what became known as State 2 Funds. This marked the beginning of a new age of mosquito control along the Indian River and the Atlantic Coast.

State 2 Funds made it possible for Volusia, Brevard, Indian River, St. Lucie, and Martin Counties to mount effective control programs of salt marsh mosquitoes. The idea was a simple one. It had long been known that mosquitoes require an aquatic environment for the development of their larvae. Filling the salt marshes was prohibitively expensive and slow. Ditches required constant maintenance and produced sandflies. A third alternative was to flood the high salt marsh during the mosquito-breeding season. This would achieve control by depriving salt marsh mosquitoes of the moist land they require to deposit their eggs.

St. Lucie County mosquito control had, in fact, experimented with mosquito impoundments in the 1930s. In 1935, St. Lucie mosquito control workers were trying to drain a particularly troublesome section of the county's salt marsh. Their plan was to use pumps to remove the water from the marsh. "When this failed, the pumps were rotated,"<sup>1</sup> Frank Evans and James David explained in a report on the history of impoundments in St. Lucie County, "and used to flood the

marsh.”<sup>2</sup> Both mosquito and sandfly breeding stopped in the impounded area. During the Depression, St. Lucie County Mosquito Control did not have the funds to expand the experiment. Source reduction using impoundments resumed in St. Lucie County in 1958.<sup>3</sup>

The new era of source reduction opened in December 1953 when Brevard County purchased three heavy duty draglines and a 10-inch Ellicott Dredge.<sup>4</sup> The county purchased three additional draglines in 1954.<sup>5</sup> Eddie Becton launched Indian River County’s source reduction program in August 1954.<sup>6</sup> Sam Minnich in Volusia County, Fred Harden in St. Lucie County, and Mark Witham in Martin County followed Brevard and Indian River County’s lead.

The logic was compelling. Salt marsh mosquitoes need moist land to lay their eggs on and water for the eggs to hatch into larva. Two different kinds of marshes are present along Florida’s Atlantic Coast. There is a low marsh, which falls below the mean high water tide line, and high marsh, which is above the mean high water tide line. In the low marsh areas tidal action prevents much of mosquito breeding and allows access to predacious fish. The high marsh was the problem. “It’s hard to imagine the number of mosquitoes that can come off a single marsh,” Lee Wenner, Brevard County’s mosquito control director in 1957 declared, “but to give you an example, there have been instances where as many as 12,000 eggs have been counted in one square foot of dry marsh which could conceivably hatch 516,000,000 mosquitoes in one acre of marsh.”<sup>7</sup> Brevard had thousands of acres of high salt marshland. An unfavorable combination of meteorological circumstances such as extreme tides, a tropical storm, or unseasonable rain could produce monstrous broods of mosquitoes.

Impoundments offered a practical and affordable solution. Draglines were used to dike an area of the marsh which was then flooded. The impoundments effectively removed the mosquito threat. In the mid-1950s, no one objected. Most people, in fact, considered the high marsh useless. Before Indian River County launched its impoundment program, Eddie Becton, Indian River County’s director, recognized that source reduction would have profound implications for

growth in Florida. “The work we are doing,” Becton declared referring to the IRMCD’s ditching and fill work, “is not only eliminating our mosquito and sandfly breeding area, but is changing the direction of development in Vero Beach. Scarcely anyone wanted to live next to a swamp, but since the program has started, the areas adjacent have started to build up.” No one could predict where this might lead. It might seem far fetched, but Becton speculated that there might come a time when “private developers may have us looking for places to fill in a few years. Who knows?”<sup>8</sup>

Nowhere did the impoundments have a greater impact than in Brevard County. In the late 1940s and early 1950s this county “with its fifty thousand acres of potential breeding area, probably had the greatest



Joe Wickham, left, and Jack Salmela, on the right. Salmela was the head of Brevard County’s Mosquito Control. Wickham was the County Commissioner in charge of the oversight of Salmela’s work. Wickham was an ardent supporter of mosquito control. This photo was taken near Lake Washington in the early 1960s.

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[salt marsh mosquito] problem of any county along the eastern seaboard.”<sup>9</sup> The problem was getting worse. Chemical control was no longer effective. By 1950, a sizeable percentage of salt marsh mosquitoes were resistant to DDT. The county’s future was tied to establishing long-term source control of pest mosquitoes.

Leon Jack Salmela played a central role in the development of Brevard’s system of impoundments along what was to become Florida’s space coast. “Jackie,” as Salmela’s numerous friends called him, grew up in the Indian River County fishing town of Sebastian. In 1949, Salmela, a World War II combat aviator, went to work for Brevard County Mosquito Control as a pilot. A thoughtful, sensitive man, Salmela possessed an abiding love for his native Florida. He learned mosquito control flying spray missions in a Stearman aircraft. By 1959, when he became the county’s mosquito control director, Salmela knew every facet of the county’s mosquito program.

President Kennedy’s 1961 call for America to land a man on the moon by the end of the decade drew Jack Salmela into the space race. Mosquitoes posed a threat to the success of the space program. “There have been times when the mosquitoes were so numerous,” Salmela explained, “that they would extinguish the kerosene lanterns used by commercial fishermen working in the area [off Cape Canaveral] after dark.”<sup>10</sup> It was not uncommon to have reports of 500 mosquito landings per minute. In such pestiferous circumstances, it was impossible at times for the technicians and engineers working in the space program to concentrate on their work. “You can’t imagine,” Jack Rogers, state entomologist, later observed, “how difficult it must have been to launch rockets with mosquitoes sucking the blood out of the technicians.”<sup>11</sup> Something had to be done.

In 1961, Governor Farris Bryant, General Leighton I. Davis, commander of the Air Force Missile Test Center, and Dr. Kurt Debus, head of NASA Launch Operations Center, reached an agreement to form a Joint Coordination Committee. This committee was charged with identifying problems, which had a major impact on the space center and the towns and communities adjacent to the launch facilities.

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The Joint Coordination Committee formed a special subcommittee to work out a plan for mosquito control.

Jack Salmela developed a cooperative plan between NASA and Brevard Mosquito Control. Under the agreement, NASA would provide Salmela with the heavy equipment and insecticides to help in establishing permanent and temporary control at the space center. By 1963, Salmela’s teams had “eliminated breeding in 11,588 acres.” “If it hadn’t been for mosquito control,” Jack Rogers maintained, “I don’t know how the space program would have gotten off the ground.”<sup>13</sup> In 1986, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awarded “Jackie” Salmela its Conservation Service Award for his “care and perseverance” in protecting wildlife and the environment while controlling mosquitoes in Brevard counties salt marsh impoundments.<sup>14</sup>



*Jackie Salmela in the boat with a dragline in the background. This photo taken in 1962. The images for this article and our cover were provided courtesy of the Brevard County Mosquito Control.*

The salt marsh impoundments along the Indian River reached their maximum extent in the 1960s. During the next twenty years a number of dikes were breached either through lack of maintenance or to open the marshes to natural tidal flow. 192 impoundments remained in use in 1989. These impoundments covered nearly 40,000 acres. More than two thirds of the impoundments were in Merritt Island National Wildlife Sanctuary (26,923 acres) which surrounds the Kennedy Space Center. The remaining impoundments were distributed between Brevard (3527), Indian River (2,769), Volusia (1,578), Martin (625), and Flagler (300) counties. By 1989, 81% of these acres were public lands.<sup>15</sup>

1. The ancient Romans experimented with the use of impoundments to reclaim the Pontine Marshes as early as 160 B.C.E.. For details on St. Lucie County's first impoundments see: J.B. Hull, W.E. Dove, and Norman Platts, "Experimental Diking for Control of Sand Flies and Mosquitoes Breeding in Florida Salt Water Marshes," *Journal of Economic Entomology*, 32,2 (1939), 309-312.
2. James David and Frank Evans, "The Evolution of Marsh Management Practices in Saint Lucie County, Florida," *Workshop on Salt Marsh Management and Research, Bulletin No. 1*, 1989, 2.
3. David and Evans, "The Evolution of Marsh Management Practices."
4. A.J. Higginbotham, "Brevard County Mosquito Control District," *Report of the Twenty-fifth Annual Meeting of the Florida Anti-Mosquito Association*, Naples, April 25-28, 1954, 10.
5. Charles Stoner, "Brevard County Mosquito Control District," *Report of the Twenty-sixth Annual Meeting of the Florida Anti-Mosquito Association*, Panama City, March 27-30, 1955, 13.
6. E.M. Becton, "Indian River County Mosquito Control District," *Report of the Twenty-sixth Annual Meeting of the Florida Anti-Mosquito Association*, Panama City, March 27-30, 1955, 40.
7. Lee Wenner, "Brevard Mosquito Control," *Report of the Twenty-eighth Annual Meeting, Florida Anti-Mosquito Assn.*, Miami Beach, April 28-May 2, 1957, 8.
8. Becton, "Indian River County," 40.
9. Thomas Cain, "Report of Brevard County Mosquito Control District," *Report of the Twentieth Annual Meeting, Florida Anti-Mosquito Association*, Mount Dora, April 3-6, 1949, 33.
10. Jack Salmela and E.A. Philen, "A Cooperative Mosquito Control Plan for Cape Canaveral and the NASA Merritt Island Launch Area Involving Federal, State and Local Agencies," *Report of the Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting, Florida Anti-Mosquito Association*, Jacksonville, May 5-8, 1963, 77.
11. A. J. Rogers, interview, May 18, 2000.
12. Jack Salmela and E.A. Philen, "A Cooperative Mosquito Control Plan," 78.
13. Rogers, interview, May 18, 2000.
14. Florida Coordinating Council on Mosquito Control, Florida Mosquito Control: *The State of the Mission as Defined by Mosquito Controllers, Regulators, and Environmental Managers*, University of Florida, 1998, 185.
15. Jorge R. Rey and Tim Kain, *A Guide to Salt Marsh Impoundments of Florida*, Florida Medical Entomological Laboratory, University of Florida, Vero Beach, Florida, 1989, 2-3.

## OLD FLORIDA CRACKER DAY

SATURDAY - MARCH 20, 2004

11:00 am - 4:00 pm

at Honest John's Fish Camp  
(the Smith Family Homestead)  
South Melbourne Beach

**DIRECTIONS:** Entrance is on A1A, 10 miles south of the stop sign at A1A and Ocean Ave. in Melbourne Beach. Turn right on Mullet Creek Drive just opposite the Sebastian Beach Inn on A1A.

**ADMISSION:** Donation of \$5 per person; Children 12 and under and Members of the US Military in uniform admitted free

**PARKING:** On the Premises.

**FOOD:** A **FISH FRY** meal will be available for purchase

### FREE ACTIVITIES:

Use the kayaks and canoes

Tour the homestead

Visit with historians, authors,  
crafters, & naturalists

### 1:00-2:30 PROGRAM

Robin and Eddy

Fiddlers Michael and Cody Granatoski

Master Storyteller Ada Forney

Family Stories told by Brevard "Crackers"

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Phone 723-0625

*A fundraiser presented by The South Brevard Historical Society  
and members of the Smith Homestead's Founding Family.*

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**LOCAL HISTORY IN BRIEF** *(Continued from page 7)*


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### ***Melbourne Beach Old Town Hall History Center***

Thanks to the hard work of the members of the Williams Building Committee and the outstanding community spirit of Melbourne Beach residents and businesses who continue to donate their time and resources to the general cause, Melbourne Beach continues its success in historic preservation.

Committee members Sheryl Alberga, Betsy Baird, Ann Downing, Paula McNutt, Laurie Simmons and Esther Zimmer report that the work of rehabilitation on the Williams Building moves along in short spurts because it depends on when the general contractor and the other craftsmen can find time to donate their efforts.

Major rehabilitation accomplishments at the History Center include a new roof, a rebuilt cupola, asbestos removal, septic tank repairs, new plumbing, new electric system, cables in the attic to hold up the ceiling, inside wall framing, and installation of five French doors, 10 glass sidelights, a new AC unit and ductwork. The outside siding has been stained. It may not be apparent from the street, but the work listed here certainly shows that Melbourne Beach is moving ahead. The Committee wishes to express its appreciation for all the wonderful community support.

### ***Melbourne Beach History Tour***

On Sunday, March 7, from 1-5 pm, there will be a Historic Tour in Melbourne Beach which will combine buildings from its earliest era with those of the 1920s real estate "boom." Known as Brevard's first beach community, Melbourne Beach is a small oceanside town of quaint cottages, inns, and small community buildings. Already well known are the Community Chapel, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, and the Women's Club. These buildings and a replica of Captain Beaujean's original house and post office will be open for public viewing.

The 1889 Ruth Ryckman House will have an exhibit of china, silver, linens, and clothing donated by Ryckman's great grandniece. There will be other homes open for viewing which have original bead board walls, wood flooring, shelves, cabinets and other unique features typical of the way residents lived many years ago. These include the Walter Brown Pink House, the Mill Owner's house on the beach, the Fisherman's Cottage, the Connecticut Governor's vacation House, and two original 1915 Ocean Avenue residences.

Exhibits on the tour route include: antique cars, quilting, embroidery, surfboards, scrub jays, and sea turtles. A favorite local garden is featured. A fiddler and guitar player will provide old-time music. The History Tour is sponsored by The Williams Building Committee as a fund raiser to rehabilitate the Original Town Hall to use as an area History Center. This building was constructed in 1909 in the area now known as Ryckman Park. When a more modern Town Hall was built, the old building was floated down the Indian River and set on land in the Spessard Holland Golf Course area. After years of community use, the building was saved from impending demolition by a group of concerned citizens. Tickets will be available for a donation of \$10 in advance or \$12 on the day of the event. For more information, please call Ann Downing (676-0660) or Sheryl Alberga (725-4573).



*Pictured above are the Melbourne Beach Community Chapel (left), built in 1892, and the Ryckman House (right), which dates from 1889.*

## HISTORY OF THE CITY OF CAPE CANAVERAL

BY ANN THURM

As early as the 1920s, a group of vacationing retired Orlando journalists visited the area that is now the City of Cape Canaveral. Envisioning a seasonal retreat for inland residents, they invested more than \$150,000 to purchase the beach acreage that today comprises the area of the presidential streets in Cape Canaveral. The group of investors named their development "Journalista" in honor of their trade. Journalista later became an officially platted subdivision called Avon-by-the-Sea.

Fishermen, a few retirees, and the descendants of Captain Mills Burnham (the original official lighthouse keeper of the Cape Canaveral light) lived in the northern part of the present city. That area was named Artesia, and is today partially occupied by Port Canaveral.

By 1958, residents of the area began discussing the alternatives of forming a new city or being annexed by Cocoa Beach. Cape Canaveral residents decided that creating a city of their own was preferable to annexation because of Cocoa Beach's debts and land taxes. In 1961, a committee was formed to set into motion the incorporation of a new town. Raymond Jamieson was chairman of this committee. His wife, Frances Jamieson (Rose) was a practicing attorney in Cape Canaveral. She helped the committee with the legal aspects of the undertaking.

On March 10, 1962, electors (freeholders or landowners) met at the Tropicana Juice Plant at Port Canaveral to vote on the incorporation of a new municipality. Two hundred fifteen eligible voters were present. Election officials were chosen and an election was held. The vote was 152 for incorporation and 18 against. The town was named the City of Cape Canaveral. The citizens of the new city elected Raymond Jamieson as mayor and five others as aldermen (later called councilmen): Charles Applegate, William Eberwein, Dewey

Anderson, Don Clayton, and George Rogers. Jean Taylor was appointed the first City Clerk, and permanent election officials were also chosen.

The first City Council meeting was held at Cocoa Palms Recreation Room (a mobile home park) on March 21. Meetings continued to be held at that location for some time. At one of the early meetings, a hat was passed and \$57.50 was collected to cover postage and other minimal start-up expenses. This was the first General Fund Money for the new city.

During the next few months, a charter board was elected and a city charter was written. This was presented to the City Council in February of 1963. It was introduced as House Bill No. 167 in the State Legislature that same year. As a result of minor opposition to the Charter the Governor withheld his signature. In spite of this, the required number of voters in the State Legislature approved the bill and it became law May 16, 1963, without Governor Farris Bryant's signature.

The City had operated for one year under the general laws of the State of Florida when the first election under the Charter was held the first Tuesday of June, 1963. There were thirteen candidates for the five Council seats. Winning election were: Eugene Jandreau, William Eberwein, Richard Thurm, F. L. Murphy, and Jack Hurck. As specified by the charter, the five councilmen picked a mayor from among themselves to serve for a one-year term. Richard Thurm was selected as mayor and he served in that capacity for seven years.

The first location of the city offices was a store building at the corner of Monroe and Buchanan Avenues. By 1964, The Volunteer Fire Department building was used for meetings, and later it also housed the Police Department. Within a mere four years from the date of incorporation to the date of dedication, January 21, 1966, the City of Cape Canaveral had accumulated adequate monies to construct a City Hall free of debt. It was built on land donated by Brevard County

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that had been acquired from delinquent land taxes.

Canaveral City Park was developed in 1964 in the block that had been set aside years earlier by the Brossier brothers who, with others, had platted Avon-by-the-Sea. As in the construction of the Fire Department building, the City Park was developed using donated materials and volunteer labor.

By 1964 Cape Canaveral had many service institutions. The first bank near the intersection of Astronaut Boulevard (A1A) and North Atlantic Avenue was built. A new post office had been erected to the north of the original structure. Mrs. Elizabeth Holmes, descendant of original homesteading pioneers, the Eberweins, and sister of Councilman Bill Eberwein, was postmistress for 26 years. Before she held that position, her mother Elizabeth Beuhler Eberwein was postmistress for many years.

Capeview Public Elementary School opened in 1964. The Tereaney family opened their supermarket, appropriately named Storekeeper by the Sea. Rented quarters in storefronts were also home to the City Library, which opened in 1967. Several years later, the City built the present building which became part of the Brevard County Library System.

Using the foresighted mandate written into the City Charter that the city would not levy *ad valorem* (land) taxes for general operation, the municipality held a referendum and was able to build a recreation complex in 1975. The millage tax of .8 mils was removed after 10 years. Cape Canaveral has never used this tax except for capital improvements after a vote by residents. Storm drainage, a sanitary sewer system, and street paving were completed in 1966.

Since January 1, 1978, the City has contracted with the Brevard County Sheriff's Department for police protection. Fire and Rescue Services continue to be provided by the Cape Canaveral Volunteer Fire Department. A population of more than 10,000 permanent residents increases to 12-15,000 visitors in the fall and winter.

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*Above, the Canaveral Harbour Inn in Artesia, Florida. Built during the Florida real estate boom in the late 1920s, the Inn was located on the ocean and offered a bathing beach, fishing from a 750-foot pier, and party boat rentals. The Inn was known for its freshly-caught seafood, especially its shrimp. Investors like those of Journalista were hopeful the boom would last but, by late 1926, the collapse had begun.*



*Pictured above is Port Canaveral in the 1960s during the time when the City of Cape Canaveral was being organized.*

## HISTORY OF THE BREVARD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE—PART I: 1845 TO 1900

A COMPILATION BY JOAN HELLER OF STORIES FROM JERRELL H. SHOFNER'S *HISTORY OF BREVARD COUNTY AND COCOA: A LIVING HISTORY* BY JAMES A. DRAKE AND JOSEPH R. MOSS

Brevard County, originally called St. Lucie, was organized in 1845 as Florida was being admitted to the Union. During the shift from territorial government to state government, Florida's few residents continued to engage in occasional armed skirmishes with Indians. The first sheriff of Brevard County was Mills O. Burnham, a settler who gave his occupation in the 1850 Census as "gunsmith." Sheriff Burnham took office in 1845 and remained until 1847. He eventually operated the Cape Canaveral lighthouse which would be built a year after he left office as sheriff. He was appointed keeper of the Canaveral Light in 1853 and remained there until his death 33 years later.

It is likely that the size of the county population was much less of a challenge for Sheriff Burnham and his successors than was the vast distance over which these residents were spread. According to the 1850 Census, the county was populated by a mere 139 souls. Included in this number were 54 soldiers stationed at Fort Capron (near present-day Sebastian), 53 free white residents, one free black resident, and 27 black slaves.

The Brevard County of this era encompassed a far larger land mass than present-day Brevard County. Only its eastern boundary, the Atlantic Ocean, has remained the same. In its original configuration, Brevard's northern county line was near present-day Sharpes. Its western boundary joined Hillsborough and Manatee counties at the center of the state and its southern boundary ran along the shores of Lake Okeechobee and southeastward to the ocean. At that time, Brevard County included all of present-day Osceola, Okeechobee, Indian River, St. Lucie and Martin counties as well as parts of present-day Polk, Highlands, Glades, Broward and Palm Beach counties.

Upon leaving office in 1847, Sheriff Burnham was succeeded by Sheriff F. M. K. Morrison, who served until 1850. The county's third

sheriff, C. L. Brayton, served from 1850 to 1855. While leaving the county's boundaries and government structure intact, the 1854 Florida Legislature renamed the county from St. Lucie to Brevard and ordered that the name change take effect in 1855. James A. Armour was the first sheriff elected in the newly-named county. He was followed two years later by William B. Davis, who remained in office until 1860. By that year, Brevard County's population had nearly doubled to 267. Missing from the 1860 Census were the soldiers who left the area when Fort Capron closed in 1858.

When the first shots of the Civil War rang out at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, Brevard County's frontier community numbered just under 300 men, women and children. Among them were 31 slaves. When Florida seceded from the Union and joined the Confederacy in early 1861, most of Brevard County's young men marched off to war to fight in Virginia, Tennessee and elsewhere. One of Sheriff Burnham's sons was killed in battle and a son-in-law was wounded. Brevard County government functioned with no serious interruptions during the war years. The office of sheriff was held by Thomas M. McDaniel, who remained from 1860 to 1865.

Florida's Confederate soldiers surrendered in May 1865. President Andrew Johnson appointed a provisional governor to oversee the formation of a new state government and asked local officials to remain in their positions until new elections were held. Among Brevard County's interim officials was Sheriff Jackson Clifton, who took office that year. The new state constitution, written and implemented in July 1868, provided for the appointment of all local officials by the governor. Appointed to serve as Brevard County's next sheriff, Dempsey Cain was a resident of the area now known as Roseland in Indian River County.

Coming on the heels of the Civil War, a full-blown range war broke out among ranchers in Central Florida and continued through the early 1870s. It was estimated that, by 1865, about 100,000 head of cattle grazed freely in Central Florida. Cattle owned by various ranchers intermingled on the open range and were distinguishable only by their brands. Setting the stage for the range war to come, accusations of brand altering flew among ranchers.

Convinced that the criminal justice system was doing too little to help them, some ranchers began taking the law into their own hands. One of the cattlemen, a former Brevard County Clerk of the Court, was held captive by his angry competitors who threatened to hang him if he did not leave Florida for good. When the former clerk pressed charges against his assailants, a new dispute broke out, this time involving the location of the county line. Because no one could prove with legal certainty just where the line should be, that case and many others stemming from the range war were tried in Orange County.

Riding into Brevard County after a fugitive rancher, Orange County Sheriff David Mizell was shot to death as he crossed Bull Creek in Kenansville (then a part of Brevard County). The cattle dispute had erupted into a full-fledged shooting war. By May of that year, seven men had been killed in Brevard and Orange counties as a direct result of the conflict. Apparently content to leave the disputes to Orange County authorities, Brevard's Sheriff Cain resigned from office in 1870 at the height of the violence. He was succeeded by John Quincy Stewart, Charles Bass and Abner J. Wright. Sheriff Stewart would later be elected to the Florida State Senate.

By the late 1870s, still sparsely-populated Brevard County was rocked by political warfare between Republicans and Democrats. The Presidential election of 1876 and the Congressional election of 1878 were marred by voting irregularities and charges of election fraud. Sheriff Abner Wright and the Clerk of the Circuit Court were charged with violating Federal election laws and were ultimately convicted. The Clerk served a prison sentence in Albany, N.Y. and returned to Brevard County to hold public office again. Sheriff Wright escaped from custody in Jacksonville and disappeared.

In 1879, the Brevard-Volusia county line was shifted northward to include the area now commonly known as North Brevard. That realignment and steady influx of new settlers brought Brevard County's 1880 census count to 1,497. The balance of power between ranchers and growers had shifted dramatically in favor of the growers. By 1880, growers of citrus, pineapples and vegetables outnumbered

ranchers in the county three to one.

Brevard County's first jail was built in 1880 at a cost of \$565. The first recorded jail expansion came five years later when an iron cell was added. County officials pronounced the facility "as good a jail [for the size of the county] as there is in the state." Presiding over the jail was Sheriff W. F. Richards, who served from 1880 to 1883. Brevard County got its first courthouse in 1884, only four years after it built its first jail. Serving from 1883 to 1886, Sheriff M. E. English faced lawlessness not seen since the range wars more than 10 years earlier. As part of the county's first joint investigation with Federal authorities in 1884, Sheriff English and Deputy Marshal Thomas arrested the postmaster of New Haven (now Melbourne) for selling liquor without a license and for what a Tallahassee newspaper termed "some post office crookedness."

Two years later, the postmaster of Micco was found dead on the floor of the post office with a gunshot wound to the head. Two men accused of robbing and murdering the postmaster were arrested in Cocoa the following day. Sheriff English's deputy, E.H. Covar, succeeded him in office in 1886, but was forced by the governor to resign the following year for "drunkenness." In his letter of resignation, Covar acknowledged being drunk but explained that someone had spiked his drink. Covar was followed by J.E. Bowman who served as sheriff from 1887 to 1900. As Sheriff Bowman assumed office, the boundaries of the still-sprawling county were continuing to shrink. An 1887 boundary realignment broke off much of the west-southwestern portion of the county to form what is now Osceola County.

During Sheriff Bowman's tenure, the saloon business was booming and so was the illicit sale of unlicensed liquor. During the 1890s, Titusville gained a reputation as a "tough town" where liquor-inspired violence had become commonplace. A local lumberman who later wrote his memoirs explained that much of the violence could be attributed to the railroad construction underway. He estimated that there was one murder for every mile of track laid through Brevard County between 1892 and 1894.

The worst of the violence came in October of 1892 when a large group of black railroad workers stormed the town. Protesting the arrest of one of the workers for disorderly conduct, they began shooting up the town and robbing citizens on the street. The militia was summoned and, in the ensuing battle, several deaths were reported. The day after the riot, some white residents began drinking and decided to take revenge by attacking a predominantly black neighborhood even though the offenders had come, not from the community, but from the railroad camp. That disturbance was quickly quelled, but racial tensions remained high.

In September 1896, Sheriff Bowman and two of his deputies were attacked by an angry mob as they stopped at a Mims home for water. The trio was transporting to the Volusia County jail a black man charged with raping a six-year-old white girl. The mob took the prisoner from the Sheriff and his deputies and hanged him nearby.

Titusville's troubles in the 1890s were not restricted to alcohol and racial tension. Less than two weeks before Christmas of 1895, a fire broke out in a furniture and dry goods store. Before the flames were extinguished, much of Titusville lay in smoking ruins. The 42 buildings destroyed included most of the business district. As residents were still reeling from the shock, they learned that the store owner and his employee had earlier been indicted for burning a building in Chicago. Convinced that the two men had deliberately started the fire to collect the insurance, the townspeople were in an uproar.

Sheriff Bowman was reported to have abused and insulted the wives of the suspects as he searched their homes. Soon after the men turned themselves over to the sheriff, talk of lynching was rampant. As the two men sat in the county jail charged with arson, a local judge said he discovered that Sheriff Bowman was "so drunk that he had to go to bed and did not appear any more that night." Before the sheriff went to bed, the judge had him deputize the Town Marshall and several deputies to guard the prisoners from the mob. The temporary deputies remained on guard as the sheriff reportedly stayed drunk for the next several days. Alerted to the crisis, Governor Henry Mitchell ordered

the two prisoners moved to the Orlando jail. Despite his difficulties, Sheriff Bowman remained in office for another five years and was succeeded in 1900 by Sheriff Joseph P. Brown.

Sheriff Brown's 17-year career as Brevard County Sheriff was somewhat tamer than those of his predecessors. The turn of the century brought less drinking and gunslinging and more emphasis on building roads and schools. A Cocoa resident was quoted in 1908 as saying that anyone who had not been in his town in a year "would scarcely know the place." There were now "fine residences, large stores, sidewalks, no saloons and nothing lacking now but good street lamps to make our town the nicest one on the river."

*(To be continued--In our next issue, we will take up the story at the beginning of the 20th century with Sheriff Brown.)*

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Shofner, Jerrell H. *History of Brevard County, Volume 1*. Cocoa, FL: Brevard County Historical Commission, 1995.

Shofner, Jerrell H. *History of Brevard County, Volume 2*. Cocoa, FL: Brevard County Historical Commission, 1995.



*In this turn-of-the-century view, wire has been strung from tree to tree along the Indian River road at Rockledge in order to keep out free-roaming livestock.*

## LOCAL HISTORY BOOK REVIEWS

### DAVID PATERNO

**CENTRAL BREVARD COUNTY.** A. Clyde Field, Ada Edmiston Parrish, and George “Speedy” Harrell. Charleston, SC: 1998, 128 pp., photographs and illustrations, \$18.99.

**NORTH BREVARD COUNTY.** John T. Manning and Robert H. Hudson. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 1999, 128 pp., photographs and illustrations, \$18.99 paper.

In the photographic retrospective, *Central Brevard County*, authors A. Clyde Field, Ada Edmiston Parrish, and George “Speedy” Harrell have assembled images of the life and times of people, places, and events from the late 1800’s to the present day relating Cocoa, Rockledge, Merritt Island, Cocoa Beach, Indianola and surrounding communities.

In a companion work, *North Brevard County*, authors John T. Manning and Robert H. Hudson give us a glimpse of pioneer families that settled in communities no longer on the map. Artesia, Chester Shoals, and DeSota Beach are examples of such communities that were uprooted when the government took the land for the future Cape Canaveral Missile Test Center. Others have been renamed and have grown and prospered. Sand Point became Titusville. Some of the communities were named for the first families that settled there: Allenhurst, Wilson, Orsino, and Clifton. The authors also provide sketches of pioneers who developed the area, often by the force of their personality as well as by their manual labor. Such are the histories of Col. Henry Titus, Andrew Gibson, and Dr. Benjamin Rush Wilson.

Both of the books contain images of the communities, people and social events gathered from museums, libraries, and personal collections. Some date to the 1890’s. The images, no matter how old, are sharp and clear, as are the texts that accompany them.

The books offers readers with ties to these areas, as well as those who are new to Brevard County, images that convey the pioneer experiences and the feelings of the residents. There are images of life in schools and churches that portray a socialization from the turn of the century to the present. There are images of homes that are fine examples of historic architecture, especially those of the Victorian period. There are images of modes of transportation in different eras. The reader sees trains, horses, and early autos as well as the steamboats and sailing craft that glided down the waterways of the county for pleasure and commerce.

There are also images of agriculture and the citrus industry as much pioneering development of the latter industry originated in north and central Brevard County. Not to be left out are early photographs of the space program, certainly the best known modern industry of the area. Whether one has an interest in history, or is a lover of old photographs, he will enjoy these two excellent retrospectives that are destined to become dog-eared from repeated viewing.



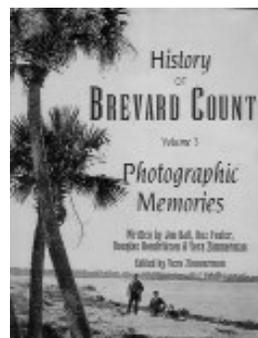
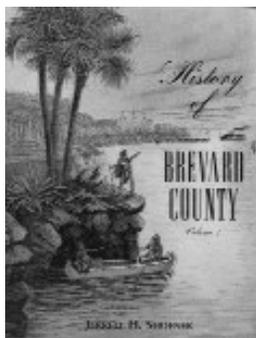
## A Description of the Indian River on a Night Trip from Melbourne to Floridana Beach

(excerpted from *On the Indian River*, by C. V. Hine, 1891)

“But this night voyage, which stretches toward midnight before it ends, is, notwithstanding its roughness, full of strange and pleasing sights. Innumerable mullet fish leaping high above them, keep the waters ablaze with phosphorescent light, and every dip of the oar-blades gives out a corresponding blaze of light, till the whole surface of the river as far as the eye can see, seems alive with silver flashings. By the sides of our bark luminous lines go gliding--phosphorescent processions of shimmering waters, like silver trailing trains of fairies. Fish flash above the waters--flash fiery in the moonlight; from their shining sides dripping weeping waters--sparkling tears--tears of pleasure at the glory--the silent glory of the night.”

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## HISTORICAL ORGANIZATIONS:

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- 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
- Town of Melbourne Village Historical Preservation Commission, Jean Henderson, Secretary, 724-0070.
- Williams Building Committee, Ann Downing, Secretary, Old Town Hall Historic Center, 2373 Oak St, Melbourne Beach, FL 32951

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