

**Transcript of an oral history interview in the collection of the
BREVARD COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION
308 Forrest Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922**

Speaker 1: As we continue our series on trying to get some history of early Brevard County, last week we had with us Bob Hudson from Titusville who spent his life in Brevard County in the newspaper business, and I'm going to ask Joe Wickham to introduce the gentleman who has been here probably longer than anybody in Brevard County at this point with his family and himself. Joe, if you would introduce our guest for today and tell us a little bit about his background.

Joe: I'm delighted to present the gentleman that we're going to talk about today and with, because his family was one of the original settlers in Brevard County and came here right after the civil war. He has been here his entire life, and we're delighted to have him with us today.

This is Mr. Lansing Gleason. Many of you have heard that name of the Gleason family, and this is a gentleman that has been here longer than any of the other Gleason members today. I'm delighted, Lansing, to have you with us today, and we're looking forward to a very fine visit.

First of all, we'd like to ask you, if you'd please tell us, how your family came here in the beginning, and where they came from, and how they came not only to Brevard County, but how they got here in the early days.

Lansing: In the beginning, my grandfather, William H. Gleason lived in Baltimore at the end of the civil war, and the war department had a project on to take one the southern states and put just Negroes in it. They sent him as a commissioner to go over to Florida and make a report on Florida, which he did. In doing that, he went all over the state [00:02:00] every way he could travel: horseback, boats, every way. He covered the whole state and got acquainted with a lot of people.

He reported adverse to putting the Negroes in Florida. He said it would ruin all the white people that were here, and he was opposed to doing it. With that, they disregarded the project, and in doing that, he went all over the state as I say, and he was very much taken with the state, so much that he decided to move here.

He made this trip around the state in 1865, in 1866 he chartered a schooner at Hampton Roads and brought everything with him to move the family to Florida. The boat had everything from chickens to mules to pigs, and everything else they

might need, farming implements. He and several other people, his mother, his partner Mr. W. H. Hunt and his wife, they came first to Miami. He chartered this schooner to bring everything to as far as with him, and they arrived at Miami on July 16th 1866. They leased [00:04:00] the Fort Dallas from the government and occupied it as soon as they got to Cape Florida, the schooner couldn't get any further up than Cape Florida where the light house is, so they came ashore in small boats. My grandmother used to tell me what their first night at Fort Dallas. Of course the fort had been abandoned then and used during the civil war, during the Seminole Indian War, and it had been abandoned, and it was just a pile of junk really. My grandmother tells about the first night they spent there, they brought mattresses along to sleep on the floor, and they had quite a night of it, and the panthers howling all the while, they were around Miami. They had brought some dogs with them, and the dogs were afraid of the panthers, and they begged to get in the house, so they brought them in the house so that the panthers wouldn't eat them. That was their first night at Fort Dallas. They cleaned it up and made it livable.

Joe: Did they come on up from there then? Is that what they did?

Lansing: Before that though, they started a farm there, and they moved from Fort Dallas to a place north of there, [00:06:00] a little town north of it, extinct now. They had a farm there, and they farmed there for several many years. They befriended with the Indians, the Indians were very nice to them and brought in deer and turkey and other things for them, they were very friendly.

They were the third white settlers in Miami at that time, there were two other families there: one south of the river, and one north of the river. They stayed there several years. The mosquitoes were so bad. Life just wasn't good there.

Grandmother Gleason was a postmaster at this place where they moved to: Biscayne, I think it was called. She was the first postmaster there.

About 1882, grandfather bought a piece of land up here at Eau Gallie, 16,000 acres from the State of which he paid a dollar for a quarter of an acre. The State was anxious to sell then, they wanted settlers in the country to pay taxes and build it up. He bought this 16,000 acres here. He also was a lawyer, and as a fee for quieting title to [00:08:00] some of these land grants, he took a share in the land grant from the people that claimed it. He did that at Titusville first, and he also did it Jupiter, and probably some other places. He had a law office in Jacksonville and worked from there to Miami and did this work while he was

doing that. The living wasn't good there (Miami) because the mosquitoes and the only people that came down there were refugees from the jail or bad people, and they had this land up here so they decided to come up to Eau Gallie and make a home here, which they did.

In 1883, they moved up to Eau Gallie. Prior to that, the State had formed the first agricultural college, and they agreed to build it in Eau Gallie for which he gave them 2,000 acres of his land. They built the original college building in Eau Gallie on Durress St, and they came up there to open that as a hotel. It was the first hotel in Eau Gallie. Eau Gallie was a really popular place there because the hunting was so good and the fishing was so good. People came from all over, some of them not too desirable, they came anyway.

One British group of hunters claimed that they killed 164 [00:10:00] deer in one day hunting in the back woods here. The fishing was very good, and the rivers were clear.

Ask me something.

Joe: When you come up there and you had all the fishing else, were there any other settlers in the area of Eau Gallie at that time?

Lansing: The first ones there was the Houston family, which came to this area in 1859. They settled out of Bovine and brought the cattle with them. During the night they were first there, panthers killed some of the cows, and so they took care of that. They moved to Eau Gallie in 1859, they were the first settlers in Eau Gallie.

Joe: Did they come down the St. John's River?

Lansing: People in those days went by the government surveys: they followed the surveys that were available at that time which showed the way to go to get across the river and to get to wherever they wanted to go. Of course, the survey was made in 1844, so they were available then, they were very useful. People travelled that way, I think they crossed the St. John's River somewhere up near Titusville and came on down to Eau Gallie from there. [00:12:00]

Joe: Lansing, when did Eau Gallie start to grow? You mentioned some of the early settlers. What year did they start thinking about an incorporation of the city, or high schools?

Lansing: In those days, they took the schools to the children, they didn't have central schools. Bovine had a school, Aurora had a school, Eau Gallie had a school. You only had four, five students and they had a school. The schools went to students.

Joe: Was there a doctor in the area back in the days that you're talking about?

Lansing: No, there was no doctors here in those early days. I think Dr. [Peek, 00:12:48] was the first one that came, and he probably came about the time of the railroad boom, which came to Eau Gallie in 1893. When, Dr. Creel came in 1910, he moved on to Fort Pierce, but he was the first doctor here. Prior to that, there was no doctors.

My father had a medical book that gave all the information that they knew available at that time for different ailments. He'd read the book and see what was wrong and took care of it. Everybody did it that way. The children were born with midwives.

About 1893, the railroad came in, and this was terminus at Eau Gallie for about two or three years.

Joe: Could you explain where the railroad used to go before, is it where it is today?

Lansing: The deep waters of Eau Gallie was a favorable [00:14:00] place for a dock, and the railroad built a railroad dock out in the Indian river, and tracks went out on the bridge on the river. They had a warehouse there too. If a train came and there was no boat in there at the time, they stored the goods in the warehouse, or if a boat was there, they transferred the goods straight to the steamer. The steamer went from here down to Jupiter, and from there they had a short railroad to south of Jupiter, on to Bay Biscayne.

Joe: The railroad as you see it today, did not your father have something to do with putting it where it is today?

Lansing: They wanted it where it was, they chose the place because of the deep water in the river, and the station was done on shore near the river, and they had this warehouse out on the dock, of course.

Joe: You dad owned the property at that time, didn't he?

Lansing: He owned a lot of it there, 16,000 acres.

Joe: Yeah, that's what I mean. The railroad had to deal with him to ...

Lansing: He gave them 2,000 lots, 2,000 acres I guess it was, that's what seduced them to come in.

Joe: Wasn't it in the early 30's when they moved the railroad to where it is today from down the Guava and moved it out to where it is today?

Lansing: Yeah, they did. When the railroad ran on south, they didn't need the dock with the warehouse on the river, so they moved up to Guava Avenue, [00:16:00] which was then Sixth Street, I believe.

Joe: That's right.

Lansing: It was there for several years. It was a good station because of the large amount of fish that were caught and shipped up to Georgia. They were packed up in ice and barrels, and about from 100 to 200 barrels a day from Eau Gallie from the station.

During the first Florida boom, the railroad had a bad curve in it because of the way they had from the dock was down on the river, and they had a lot of accidents there, so they moved it west of Guava Avenue up to Avocado Avenue where it is now.

Joe: Right, Jerry, you had mentioned about the State University or something.

Jerry: That's something we were talking about. That State University building that he's talking about is just about at the end of what is now known as Aurora Rd?

Lansing: A little south of there.

Jerry: Where it hit the river.

Lansing: Yeah, it was built on the river. It was a nice building built with coquina rock, and it was ideal for a hotel use after he bought it from the state.

Joe: Was it agricultural?

Lansing: Agricultural College. I guess it was the first college the state had.

Lansing Gleason

Joe: That was before the University of Florida?

Lansing: Oh yes, later it was moved to Lake City. Of course, grandfather was a Republican, so when the Democrats got control in 1876 or so, they moved it to Lake City.

Jerry: And that's where the University of Florida was born, so it probably turned [00:18:00] into the University of Florida in Lake City.

Lansing: No, it was in Lake City just short time, and then they moved it to Gainesville.

Joe: That's what he's talking about.

Jerry: That's what I mean. Now it's the University of Florida.

Lansing: Yes, that's right.

Jerry: But originally it was in Eau Gallie.

Lansing: Yes. But it never opened here, they built the building, but it never opened.

Jerry: You mentioned a while ago also the fact that you attended Kentucky Military Institute that was in Melbourne. As proud as we are today of FIT and BCC, we have a long history of being in the college business.

Lansing: Yeah. After the railroad came in, some people built several colleges on this land south of the Eau Gallie River and west of where US1 is now, and west of the railroad. They built colleges there, but that, for some reason, failed, and Colonel Fowler bought the project from the owners and moved the KMI school, the Kentucky Military Institute, moved the school to Eau Gallie in the winter time. They came in January and went back in May to Kentucky. It started out in 1907. There were two fires that students are accused of starting. Most of the school burned down in the last one, and it was replaced by a two story building.

Jerry: But it [00:20:00] wasn't ... It didn't last. It lasted up into the 20's didn't it?

Joe: Yes, it did, it lasted quite some time.

Lansing: He bought it in 1907, and 1922 he didn't come to Florida any more, it was bad times then. He sold the school to a man named [Silves, 00:20:24], I believe.

Jerry: Yeah, Colonel Silves.

Lansing: Then it changed hands two or three times, finally closed up, but it was here till 1922. I think now they come to Venice.

Jerry: You were speaking of the loading stuff from the end of the railroad on the dock, and going down to Jupiter and so forth. That was before the day of the Haulover Canal to open up the inter-coastal waterway was it not?

Lansing: I don't know just when the Haulover Canal was dug, but it must have been about that time. They moved it further north than it is now.

Jerry: Oh yes, I know that where the original one was started with Indian slave labor, but it never was finished and opened, it sort of died for the lack of Indians.

Lansing: Well they did haul boats across there to get to the Halifax River to the Indian River.

Jerry: But it was an over land ...

Lansing: Yeah.

Jerry: It was really a haul-over and that's how it got its name.

Lansing: Yes, that's right.

Jerry: I can remember when I was just a young person on Merritt Island, the White Swan and another one or two freight boats used to come down from Jacksonville, down the inner coastal waterway, and there on Merritt Island we had our own packing house, [00:22:00] I mean the community did, and shipped all of the citrus from that area, most of it, on by those river steamers, paddle wheelers, to Jacksonville, and then it was put on a large outside ship and went to New York.

Joe: Could you tell us something about the pineapple plantation you had over on the beach area in the early days?

Lansing: Well, when the railroad came in here they contemplated crossing the river at Eau Gallie to get to the freight from these pineapple plantations which extended on Merritt Island and on the south end of the Atlantic, several hundred acres of them.

Jerry: There were a lot of pineapples on further down, around Fort Pierce too were there not?

Joe: Did they have blight or something that killed them off, or what?

Lansing: Yes, I guess it was the nematodes maybe. They got into them and further they took the tariff off pineapples and they came in from Cuba which terminated the pineapple industry here.

Jerry: That's interesting.

Joe: I've heard of the story of when Flagler finally got his railroad all the way to Key West, he would haul Cuban pineapples to Jacksonville cheaper than he would Brevard County and St. Lucie County pineapples to Jacksonville, because he was so anxious to have some sort of a return cargo from Key West that he gave them a special price, and that sort of finished putting us out of the pineapple business.

Lansing: Yeah, that ended it.

Joe: Well, we didn't get back into the tomato business over there, you ought to be able to tell us something about the tomatoes. You know that was the one spot that they wouldn't freeze in this country in the early days.

Lansing: Yeah, [00:24:00] that was on the peninsulas, we called it then, opposite Eau Gallie there were savannas through the land, they were very rich in soil. We had some farmers come up from Dade County that farmed there for a couple of years, but when the Florida fruit fly came in, they wouldn't let us ship tomatoes across the river, and they said we had to bury them under 10 feet of dirt or something like that, so that terminated the tomato business.

It is interesting to note that tomato farmers didn't have much of an organization then, but the citrus people, they wanted to cut all of the citrus trees too and all the Guava trees, and they had enough political power to stop that.

Joe: They were trying to cut them all on Merritt Island and the peninsula? Would that have been something that wiped out all of the oranges?

Jerry: I worked for government, that one summer when I was in high school on that fruit fly irradiation program, and we went all over Merritt Island with little knapsack sprayers on our back spraying citrus and anything else that might have

fruit on it, and the spray was a mixture of brown sugar, arsenic, and water. That brown sugar would make it stick on, and also make the flies come and eat it. We'll never know whether that anything to do with irradiating them or not.

Joe: I think one of the most interesting things about that, Lansing, do you ever see a fruit fly out in any grove or anything else? The only one I ever saw they had between two pieces of plastic or something that they'd ironed in there so I could show people what it looked like, [00:26:00] but in the field, no one ever saw one. It was a great program.

Jerry: There weren't really very many of them here, I don't think. I think we probably did the right thing to jump in as we did down in Miami here recently, jump in and do some spraying and not take any chances of them spreading, because they could have wiped us out. The same thing, this canker situation we have now, if they just disregard it and let it go, we'd be out of the citrus business I think in five years' time, completely. I'm proud of them for paying attention, doing something about it.

Joe: When the Crane Creek drainage district and the Melbourne Tillman drainage district became a part of the area, did that really do the kind of a job that they felt it would do to drain this area and get it into a condition where they could utilize it?

Lansing: Yes, it did, of course the back country [00:26:55] was pretty wet then, and that drainage really made it livable and it was a good thing.

Joe: Did that old gentleman, Mr. Hopkins, did he not continue the Eau Gallie creek, Eau Gallie river on up into toward Lake Washington in the early days?

Lansing: Yes, he did.

Joe: What did he do that with?

Lansing: He did it with the mules and ...

Joe: [Slit-pans 0:27:21]?

Lansing: Slit-pans

Jerry: What's a slit-pan?

Joe: A slit-pan, you're man standing behind it and they skid it along.

Jerry: It looks like a wheelbarrow without a wheel?

Joe: I'm just saying, these things are interesting.

Jerry: Yeah, I can't believe they'd move that much earth with that sort of thing.

Lansing: Well he got it pretty well underway. Of course it's called Hopkin's ditch now, but the Jacksonville chamber of commerce brought a suit against him, contending that draining Lake Washington [00:28:00] into the Indian River would lower the water level of Jacksonville so ships couldn't use the channel there. They prevailed on that, so he never got to Lake Washington with it, but he did get several miles of it.

Joe: Did they find one place had a lot of fossils out there?

Lansing: Yes, there was a place where they found elephant tusks and all kinds of fossils of those ancient animals.

Joe: They did this with a slit-pan. Can't you image driving mules through that?

Jerry: No, not back in there where they had ... I'm sure there were some mosquitos in there also.

Lansing: A lot of mosquitos, but they probably had a lot of mules and a lot of slit-pans.

Jerry: The Hernandez trail, you remember where that was, do you? The Spanish trail that came up through there, where the regional settlers used to walk. Wasn't it somewhere near Turtle Mound Road?

Lansing: Where Turtle Mound Road is now, that was the high ground between the St. John's River, Lake Washington, and the Indian River.

Jerry: That was the high ground? And they would walk along there, wouldn't they, the old Spanish trail? Because that was the one spot they could walk up and down here in normal weather without having to ford streams and everything else,

Lansing: There's no bridges to cross. That was used by the ... I guess the Indians used it first, and then during the Indian wars, the army used it to spy things for the army. It was a pretty well marked trail.

Joe: Lansing, you were an attorney, is that correct?

Lansing: Yeah.

Joe: What year did you open your office here?

Lansing: I never opened an office, I took it for the real estate business.

Joe: Alright, so you were in the real estate business all your life?

Lansing: Yeah. [00:30:00]

Joe: You had some brothers here?

Lansing: No, I had two sisters.

Jerry: We had cousins.

Joe: Alright. I've heard of lot of Gleason's in south Brevard.

Lansing: Yeah.

Joe: You've got the Gleason brothers, and then George and Ivan wasn't it?

Lansing: Yeah.

Joe: They were cousins, were they not? First cousins?

Lansing: Well first it was George and my father, at least that was originally, that was organizing in 1899 and still exist today.

Joe: Was it your father who laid out the old city of Eau Gallie?

Lansing: Yes.

Joe: He laid out the ...

Lansing: Oh yeah, grandfather.

Joe: Grandfather, isn't that interesting? And what it is today. See they had the little village flat there in the beginning, which is down around the creek.

Jerry: What year was that planning done?

Lansing: 1893.

Joe: Isn't that interesting?

Jerry: The whole community has expanded from that original development. Was Eau Gallie here before Melbourne?

Joe: Well there was a time when they were both about the same size.

Jerry: Did they start about the same time?

Lansing: Yeah.

Joe: Yes, about the same time, wasn't it?

Jerry: My father came to Merritt Island in 1885, and quite a bit after that, he and Dr. Hill, Mr. Reed and Mr. Bruen had the Brevard Country telephone company. Do you remember that?

Lansing: Oh yes.

Jerry: The telephone company ran from New Smyrna to Jensen Beach, and they only had a few telephone poles, they had wires nailed up on trees, but it got the job done for back in those days.

Lansing: An interesting thing happened about [00:32:00] 1879 or so, this article was written by somebody that knew about it at the time, and my father had business in Miami he had land there, they never went on a boat by themselves if there was nobody else to go, so he walked to Miami on the beach, walked down and back, there's no other way to get there except by boat, and there wasn't any boat to go, so he walked it, swimming across the inlets.

Joe: Those people back in those days really wanted to go some place didn't they?

Jerry: Weren't too many Holiday Inns back then were there?

Joe: Isn't that remarkable? That's the days of the barefoot mail man wasn't it?

Lansing: Before that.

Jerry: My dad, somebody was trying to talk him into going to Miami and investing in a little property back in, I guess, 90's, so to speak, and dad said, "How would we go down and how long would it take?" Dr. [Grambling, 0:33:13] said, "We'll go down in our sail boat as far as Jupiter, and Jupiter we can catch on with a boat going outside into Miami. Say we stay there a couple of weeks, we could be back in three months."

Joe: Alright, those were interesting days. You know, most people don't realize that we had turpentine stills and all those sort of things in our area, didn't we?

Lansing: Yeah.

Joe: Saw mills.

Lansing: Saw mills, and turpentine stills, and of course the fishing was the basis of Eau Gallie in the early years.

Joe: You mentioned that rivers used to be very clear. Were they like some of our clear ... like Crystal [00:34:00] River now? Could you see the bottom?

Lansing: Yeah, you could see the bottom most of the time. Of course, with a north-east wind you wouldn't, but the normal south-east wind in the summer time, it was as clear, and the bottom was not cluttered up with stuff like it is now.

Jerry: One of the things that I marvel at a lot is when I was a kid growing up in the river a whole lot, up in the Merritt Island Cocoa area, we had no clams whatsoever. I know there were some down in Sebastian and from Sebastian South, but we had absolutely no clams, and now the river bottom's sort of been covered with them up there. Do you remember it that same way?

Lansing: I don't remember there being any clams then.

Jerry: That's what I'm talking about.

Lansing: I don't remember shrimp being here like they are now. I think over near Sebastian Inlet, probably brought the surf in.

Jerry: I think so. Also, the fact that Haulover Canal is open, and there's an inlet near New Smyrna makes somewhat of circulation there that they can come and go either way. It amazes me to see how many clams they bring in from the Indian

River now, and back in those days when the river was theoretically much, much cleaner, but we didn't have any clams.

Joe: Do you remember how they talk about the fluorescent light that we had the river.

Jerry: The phosphorous?

Joe: The phosphorous, and there's too much of it in the river, and all I can remember on a dark night it looked like one great candle, the entire river. Haven't you seen it like that?

Lansing: Just like it was on fire.

Joe: Like it was on fire, and you could see every fish that swam, and every crab, and everything else.

Jerry: I've not heard any explanation as to where the phosphorus went? Have you?

Lansing: I think the pollution killed it.

Jerry: Do you really?

Lansing: Yeah.

Jerry: But in those days, [00:36:00] everyone in the community that's lived here in the summer time would end up basically at night walking out on the bridges. Do you remember Lansing? Just to see the phosphorous and it was a sight to see.

Lansing: When you went out in a boat, the commotion the boat made would ...

Jerry: In the wake ...

Lansing: Light it up and you'd see the fish darting their way out.

Joe: A real professional fisherman could tell you what kind of a fish it was by the length of the fire from the phosphorus. But you know, interesting to me is that back in those days it was very, very fiery in the Indian River, Banana River, but it also was in the ocean, and it's gone there too now. I can't believe it's only the pollution. It seems to me something else happened.

Lansing: I don't know what it would be, but certainly the pollution killed it in the Indian River.

Joe: But you know as well as I do that all of our little communities, they get to dump all of their sewage into the tributaries and that sort of thing. I remember, even in our own community, Lansing, when they put on a drive to eliminate any septic tanks from going into the river. Do you remember that way back? That was 50, 60 years ago, trying to clean things. After they agreed that no one who had a septic tank could run his water or effluent into the river, then the municipalities began to dump it out in just great quantities. Now we're going through a transition period to eliminate that.

Jerry: Yeah, I think one of the other pollutants that's done a lot of damage to the river is oil and gasoline coming off of the roads. Every car that goes down the road leaves a little bit of residue. A few drops of oil here, and a little overflow of gasoline there, and all of that on that pavement has been over the last 50 years geared to run off and run into the [00:38:00] river. Now they're trying to put settlement ponds and all of this to keep it from doing that, but I think those products have done a lot of damage.

Joe: I think one of the interesting things that's happened to us when you were here, and I remember when I was a young fella, all of the tourists, if you could keep them here in May they had accomplished many things, because the mosquitos were so bad. Do you remember the drive they used to have to stay through May?

Lansing: Yeah. Everybody left that could.

Joe: You could shoot a canon down the middle of the road and never hit a soul.

Jerry: They used to have smudge pots in front businesses.

Joe: Oh, everybody, that was part of their home life, wasn't it Lansing? Everybody had a screen door on their house, and everybody had a mosquito brush made out of finely sliced palmetto fan tied to their screen door, and you'd better brush yourself off before you went in, or you weren't very welcome.

Jerry: And if you had the privilege of having an outdoor toilet some place, that was part of the fixture wasn't it?

Joe: Oh yes.

Lansing: When the navy came in during the war, they annihilated the mosquitos with this spray that they used, and that really made it livable in Florida. Florida really began to grow then because people realized they could stay here in the summer time.

Jerry: Joe, talking about those outside privies, the first school that I went to on Merritt Island was as Lansing [0:39:40] mentioned, they brought the school to us. There was just one room, one teacher, and I don't remember how many grades there were of us, but several. It had two outside privies: one for the girls and one for the boys. They were about 100 feet apart, about 100 out back [00:40:00] of the school, and that was all the plumbing we had.

Joe: In the early days, I remember right after the boom in the 20's, do you remember when [Love Ridge Heights, 0:40:13] was formed? They put a six-inch water main from the mainland at the end of Houston street across over to this. In those days you only paid \$2 or \$3 for unlimited quantities of water, and those people were fixing their lawns over there and had their sprinklers going. Up at the Creel [0:40:37] school, which is the old Creel school on Pineapple Av., if you wanted to turn a faucet on or something, all you could do was just have air sucking through there, because they were running the water through so fast. Do you remember that Lan? We had to pass an ordinance test to prohibit them using all of that water over there so the children could go to school.

Lansing: Put meters on.

Joe: Do you remember that? It's quite unique, and that shows you the times and what's changed in our communities.

Jerry: The original system you had no meters, you just paid and you used.

Lansing: ... in a lump sum.

Joe: They knew that, and for a couple of dollars, \$2 or \$3, you could end up ... and some of them would use up to 100,000 gallons a month. The original system, do you remember, do get water on top of the tank was that little pram system that they used to have.

Lansing: We had a ... what was the name of the [man 00:41:33]?

Joe: Couch [0:41:34]

Lansing: Couch, yeah, Couch well, there was 12-inch wells which the city had, and the well furnished the power to pump water up into the tank as well as ...

Joe: They couldn't afford electricity, so they designed this thing, Lansing was involved in that, and that's the reason I brought it up. My father, do you remember how they developed that pram system, and then water coming out of that well [00:42:00] would force its own water about 125 feet up in the air to the top of the water of the water tank, and that was the way they got it up there, didn't they?

Lansing: Yeah.

Joe: You could hear that thing beating all over town.

Jerry: Well it had a lot of pressure didn't it?

Joe: That's right, that pram system would pull enough water by the flow of that well to force it clear to the top of that water tank, and then when you had it at 125 feet up in the air, then you had about 40-50 pounds of pressure on the hydrants.

Jerry: That pram system, it was a hydraulic-type principle. A little bit of water exerting 10 pounds on a bigger amount of water gets the same result.

Joe: Indeed, and for years they went through that process.

Lansing: The insurance companies investigated Eau Gallie because of that system. They said that was nearest thing they ever saw to perpetual motion [42:59], so they gave us a good rate.

Joe: I remember that, I felt that was unique. But these are the things that help make our community tick in the south end of Brevard County. I know that people like Lansing who was here to see the great majority of this happen to us, have been most pleased, because as an example, the main route used to be for those people who come down the St. John's River to get off at Turtle Mound, at the little island at Turtle Mound, and migrate all the way into town through that area which he called Bovene and on into town. What did they used to do? They used to either walk or get them in by buggy or horse/

Lansing: Almost everybody had a horse or a mule, so they had transportation.

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Joe: That was the way they came to town, isn't that interesting? I remember out the back of Eau Gallie, we had three Japanese families there, do you remember?

Lansing: Yeah.

Joe: They were in the produce business and [00:44:00] and did an outstanding job in our community. Some of them are still in Florida.

Jerry: Are they?

Joe: One is a doctor up in Lake City, and some of them are in legal positions down around Miami. One is I think the cultural agent down in the Pahokee area or some place like that. Some others are raising tomatoes and that sort of thing up near Savannah, so they've been a great ...

Jerry: They used to bring their produce up to Cocoa and so forth. I remember them quite well.

Joe: My sister, we were talking only the other day, that she ran into someone who knew little [Omary Hardo, 00:44:40], who was the older one of those girls, and hadn't seen her for maybe 40 or 50 years, but they started corresponding together. Isn't that interesting? She's over in the west coast?

Jerry: Lansing, I think of something that I remember quite well, and I was pretty young when it happened: Melbourne had a midway tourist camp, and as I remember the story, the men that built it stopped in Cocoa and was basically run out of town, nobody wanted those tin-can tourists. I can very well remember the tin-can tourist, and I know you can, that was a slogan somebody cooked up.

Lansing: They brought all their vegetables and things with them.

Jerry: They brought their food, they were farmers from up north, and they brought all their canned goods down to last them all winter, and they brought a tent to live in. They didn't spend much money. So Cocoa just about said, "Get out of town," and they did build this midway, what was it? Midway ...

Joe: Midway, it was a tremendous trailer park.

Jerry: Big trailer park.

Joe: It's still down there, part of it.

Jerry: I think that as it turned out, it was probably a great thing for Melbourne, because I know an awful lot of those people ended up being permanent citizens [00:46:00] of South Brevard County. They came down as a tin can tourist, so to speak, but they turned into being good merchants and everything else in South Brevard. It was quite a growing influence on the growth.

Lansing: An interesting thing about during the war, the Japanese, one family went back to Japan just before the war started, and the rest stayed. Do you remember [Hosayki's 0:46:30] family?

Joe: That's right.

Lansing: He's a colonel now in the US army.

Joe: Yes, that's right. The whole family, all those that stayed here, all joined the American services.

Lansing: Even the girls.

Joe: Even the girls, and they were real community people. That's right, one of them's a colonel, one's a doctor, and then they've all done a ... they were a real asset to our community.

Lansing: Yes they were.

Joe: They were in an area just about out where Wickham Rd., intersects Aurora Rd. now.

Jerry: Around about that same time Merritt Island had two or three Italian families come in that were quite agriculturally minded. Their ancestors are still on Merritt Island: the [Crisafullis 00:47:09], and the [Garofalo 00:47:14], and [Palachios 00:47:18]

Joe: In that boom of the early 20's, that's when we began to get fancy hotels up and down this east coast. Of course you had the big Indian River Hotel in Cocoa, and the Brevard Hotel, which is up there. In our own area we had ... what was it called? The Oleander's in the beginning?

Lansing: Yeah.

Joe: It's down on the end of the ...

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Lansing: Harbor city.

Joe: Harbor city I think it was originally.

Lansing: Built by a group of public securities citizens [?], thought we needed to have a hotel, so they built the Oleanders.

Joe: Lansing, back when you were say 20 [00:48:00] or 30 and were living here, what did you do for recreation? Your family?

Lansing: Well, there was the river and the ocean, I guess we had tennis courts, we had some recreation.

Joe: Baseball was quite a ...

Lansing: Oh yeah ...

Joe: [inaudible], to go the baseball games. I know Cocoa and Melbourne used to have some pretty hot ball games.

Landing: Eau Gallie and Sebastian had good games.

Joe: Every little community in those days, Cocoa was probably the biggest leader, but all these communities had their own ball teams. Do you remember that? Every one of them. They had some wonderful competitions. In those days when we began to have night softball and all that sort of thing, and every community began to move from the hard ball to the lighted soft ball team area.

Jerry: That basically put the town team type baseball out, because so many more people could participate in the soft ball.

Joe: Actually you know when we talk about the series that we've had, this is like the fourth meeting, of the early times which you three people remember, I wasn't living here then, in the short time that we've changed that much, what do you think's going to happen in another forty years? With Florida is supposed to be the fourth most popular state, and you wonder what's going to happen to all the things that you all talk about.

Jerry: Well I personally think, and I imagine Lansing feels a lot like I do, we haven't really seen any real growth yet, because the future with all of the people who want to come to Florida, and all of the things that we're able to do here in this

country now compared to what they can do some other places, the growth is going [00:50:00] to be unbelievable. With the space age, as it's going to move into the programs that they have, it's going to be very difficult for which some of us old timers 50 years from now to try to readjust, wouldn't it be?

Joe: Well it would be hard for our parents to come back and do what we've done. What there is now, I think the only thing in the world that's constant is change. We're going to keep on changing gradually all the time.

Jerry: But just think what a wonderful time in the world history it's been to live in this time, because a hundred years ago, as an example, they had nothing but sail boats as really to go, and then they invented steam, and then came the steam trains and the steam ships, and then we had automobiles and airplanes, and medicine, and TV's and radios, and all of these other things, and now we're into the space age. All of this has been done in the lifespan of we four fellas sitting here. Just think how lucky we are that we've been able to live in an era when more things have been accomplished than in the entire history of civilization.

Joe: But then you wonder how are we going to take care of the populace with our water or sewage disposal, utilities or road networks. We've got some big problems coming up.

Jerry: That is correct.

Lansing: Those things, I think will fit into the change just like everything else. I naturally worry about gasoline: what's going to happen when the gasoline gives out? But I'm sure that by the time it gives out, we'll have invented something to take its place.

Joe: I think today it's just a matter of time till we've seen the last of great big semi's hauling tankers full of gas. I'm talking about the next 25 years. There'll be some new concept. I read only a day or two ago where in Australia, the General Motors have developed that solar car that runs 2,500 kms at 43 miles an hour, [00:52:00] and I read this only the last two or three days. Just think of that. This thing was from the energy jet, sun sails generating the power for this automobile.

Jerry: There'll be a solution, and it won't happen until it's needed. Somebody asked me back quite a few years ago when we were having the gasoline shortage, "Why in the world hasn't somebody come up with a substitute for gasoline?" I said, "As

long as gasoline ..." and it was then, and has been for a number of years ...
"selling for 29 cents a gallon," I said, "As long as it's that cheap, why do you want to substitute?" Nobody could make anything that could afford 29 cents.

Joe: But just think what Lansing's been has been able to do in all of those years when he came into our community, as he said, the mode of transportation was a sail boat on the river, and they thought that was the ultimate in those days. From that has been all this development in our community, and it's just been good in many respects, and it has its short comings but I know that all of the connections you had and the areas in which you helped developed in Brevard County, especially here in the south end, it's been a revelation for you, because he helped motivate all the things that made our community tick as it has in the past. He won't tell you this, but without him, we would not have been able to have many of the things that we have here in the south end of the Brevard County.

Lansing: Speaking of recreation, to get to beach we had to go in a row boat across the river and then follow a trail through the palmettos, and then over across savannas to get to the beach. It was quite an ordeal to go the beach.

Joe: Who [00:54:00] dedicated that little 16 foot strip that you're talking about to go to the beach in the early days that was in all the maps and plat, do you know? That says you'd get on here, you'd cross over to the east side of the river, then you walked down that little path all the way over to the beach. Remember that?

Lansing: I don't remember the 16 feet.

Joe: Well it's still in there.

Lansing: It wasn't past there.

Joe: It's still in there.

Lansing: Is it?

Jerry: That's right, and I can think of is how if you wanted to go there for a picnic in those days, you carried with you, didn't you, anything ...

Lansing: Yeah, you carried everything with you.

Jerry: Well we had to come down the Indian River and go around the point of Merritt Island and then back up to get to Oceanus, which was south of Cocoa ...

Joe: Yeah, that was a nice little narrow spot.

Jerry: Oceanus was just about the north gate of Patrick Air Force Base now.

Joe: I know what I wanted to ask you today. We've been talking about all of this erosion and everything else on the beaches, and they hauled all of this sand in and they get all excited when it leaves again. What's your concept of what it's done in the past?

Lansing: Well that it comes and goes: the ocean takes it away, and the ocean brings it back, so there's nothing to worry about, just let it go.

Jerry: Don't get all excited.

Lansing: All of those sand dunes in Cape Canaveral, down Melbourne Beach and in the Atlantic, it's ridiculous.

Joe: And the next year it's all back to Cape Canaveral isn't it?

Lansing: Yeah.

Jerry: It circulates.

Speaker 1: Well we have less than a minute, and I know you two gentlemen have known Lansing for a long time. Lansing, we'd really like to thank you for taking time out of your day and coming over and helping make this recording that is going to be available to the public in years to come about the history of Brevard County. Certainly, you've told us many things that I've never even heard of, and reminded these two younger fellas of some things that probably they didn't think about. We really [00:56:00] appreciate you being with us. Joe, do you have any ...

Joe: No, it's been wonderful, because I've been a friend and known Lansing Gleason for many, many years, and I'm just delighted we had an opportunity to have him here today so we could get a real background of what happened in the beginning.

Speaker 1: And Jerry?

Jerry: I feel exactly as Joe said. I've known Lansing, really known of him as far back as I can remember really, and known who he was and what a great job he was doing

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down here. I've heard people say, "Well, he made a lot of money out of it," I yes he did, but thank goodness there was somebody interested in making money, and would do some of these things that would make everything else grow. Without somebody being motivated, nothing happens.

Speaker 1: Lansing, again, we thank you very much.

Lansing: Ok, good to be with you.

Jerry: That's one of the things that has always just annoyed me ...