

South Florida History

M A G A Z I N E

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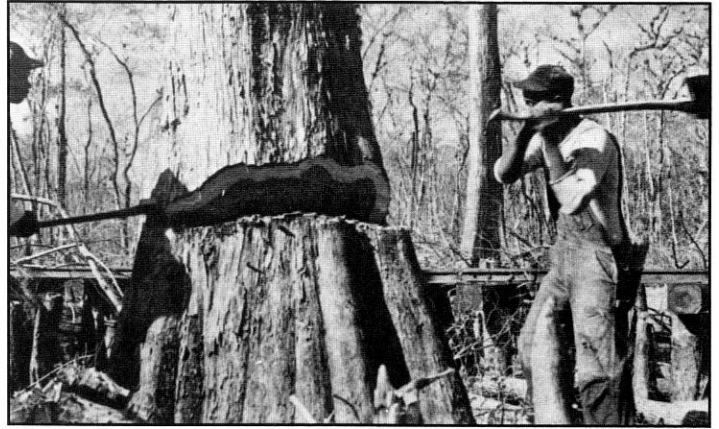
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On the Cover: Working in the nearly impenetrable swamps of the Everglades in April 1946, South Florida's Big Cypress loggers helped rank Florida as the top cypress lumber producing state in the nation during the late 1940s through the 1950s. (Courtesy of The Miami Herald Photographic Archives.)



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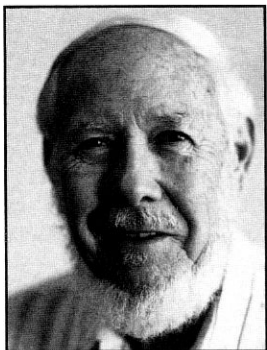
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Editor's Notes

By Stuart McIver



History repeats itself. It just doesn't always take the same form. As I write these notes, a Texas jury is hearing the trial of the followers of a 20th-century Koresh, a gun-toting madman whose demonic doctrines erupted in flames in Waco.

A century earlier, South Florida had its Koresh, but what a difference! In 1894, a kinder and gentler Koresh made his appearance on the semitropical Estero River, just south of Fort Myers. There he founded New Jerusalem, a new city which would have streets 300 yards wide, wide enough he hoped, to accommodate the ten million Koreshans he hoped to bring to his domain. He fell somewhat short of that figure. Just 200 of his 4,000 converts followed him from the midwest.

The low turnout is not surprising. He would allow, he wrote, "no bawdy houses, no tobacco shops, no distilleries, no breweries, no gambling houses, nor other forms or dens of vice." Since Koreshans did not believe in a competitive, capitalistic society, all converts had to sign over all earthly belongings to Koreshan Unity. Even worse, they had to renounce all rights to their children. Men and women lived in separate dormitories.

Some of Koresh's ideas were quite advanced. His plan called for all electrical wires to be installed underground so as not to mar the beauty of the city. A conveyor belt would transport waste products to a location 40 miles from New Jerusalem where they would be reduced to fertilizer and returned to the soil. "There will be no dumping of the public waste into rivers, bays and gulfs," Koresh proclaimed.

The Koresh of 1894 was a Chicago physician named Dr. Cyrus Teed. He picked the name because Koresh was Hebrew for Cyrus. An intense man whose hypnotic eyes "burned like live coals," Koresh enthralled many with his vision of Utopia. Those were days when Utopian communities were springing up in many parts of the country.

To Dr. Teed, the Universe was one giant cell, a hollow sphere with a circumference of 25,000 miles. Instead of living on the outside surface of the cell, earthlings, he taught, lived inside the cell with the sun, moon and stars right in there with us, only up a little higher. His teachings were put forth in a book, *Cellular Cosmogony*.

Koresh believed God was male and female combined in one entity, always referred to in his teachings as "the Goddess." He taught that the Goddess, the source of all spiritual life, had already sent six messengers to Earth: Adam, Enoch, Noah, Moses, Elijah and Jesus. The arrival of the seventh would usher in the millennium. The seventh messenger, of course, was Koresh.

The colony's governing council, the Planetary Court, consisted of seven men and seven women. Koresh was the sun. Celibacy was required of all members of the Planetary Court, but not of other members of Koreshan Unity.

Then, in December, 1908, Koresh himself created a major crisis. Although he had claimed to be immortal, Cyrus Teed at age 69 died. Convinced he would rise again, his followers kept watch over his body, that is, until Lee County health officials made it clear they would have to bury him. His body was placed in a bathtub and sealed in a brick and concrete tomb on Estero Island. In 1921, a hurricane washed his tomb away.

All of the world that Cyrus Teed made is not gone. What remains is a peaceful, beautifully landscaped reminder of a time when his followers lived peacefully on what they thought was the inside of the earth's crust. It can still be visited today as Koreshan State Historic Site, just south of Fort Myers on Tamiami Trail.

A century from now, will people visit the site of the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Texas? But then, you never know what people will visit, do you? Historical re-enactments have become popular in Florida, as elsewhere around the country. Civil and Seminole War battle sites are the scenes of reconstructed battles from bygone days. Now from Lake Weir, near Ocala, comes word of the most intriguing re-enactment of them all—a not-quite-instant replay of the 1935 shootout between the Ma Barker Gang and the FBI. Now, that opens up a whole new world of re-enactment possibilities. Gang shootouts, famous murders, daring holdups—at least that's one way to get television news to cover history.

A Call for Submissions

Editors and advisors for *South Florida History Magazine* encourage the submission of articles for consideration from seasoned historians and new writers alike. Call Natalie Brown at (305) 375-1492 for a copy of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida's Publications Style Guide or write to the Historical Museum at 101 W. Flagler St., Miami, FL 33130.

Letters from Our Readers

Dear Editors,

Thank you for the wonderful article on Dade law enforcement's first slayings [SFHM Fall 1993]. Rhett McGregor was shot and killed August 9, 1895, yet his gravestone [depicted on page 8] says he died August 12, 1905?

Montgomery
Young



Rhett McGregor in photo recently located.

Dear Mr. Young:

You've made a keen observation. Rhett McGregor was indeed shot in 1895. The story's author, Professor Bill Wilbanks, explained that the 1905 date on his tombstone reflects the date McGregor was re-interred by his nephew Angus McGregor who had the body moved from a family farm to the Miami City Cemetery.

Dear Editors,

I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the fast food article in the last issue of *South Florida History Magazine* [Fall 1992] and accompanying photos—they really took me back in time. The magazine is a pleasure to read.

Robert A. Hittel

Dear Editors,

I've just re-read my first copy of *South Florida History Magazine* and I love it, love it, love it! It brought back so many memories—I sat down and typed out mine.

I've left Miami, but so much of my life is still there. My parents, grandparents and all my aunts and uncles and great grandparents on my father's side are all buried there. I donated my family scrapbook to your museum (Wilchyk-Williams), and I just had to share these memories with you.

I look forward to my next copy!

Geraldine D. Williams

Dear Editors,

I read Rose Connett-Richards' article on James Lunnon with great interest [SFHM Fall 1992]. I was Betty Lunnon's next door neighbor from 1977 until the mid-80s, when she relocated to Central Florida.

You may not know, but she too was rather remarkable. After she retired as a librarian, she set up and consulted with library systems throughout the South Pacific. I had heard much about Mr. Lunnon from Betty, but your article was even more enlightening. I enjoyed it thoroughly.

Edward P. Guttenmacher



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Around the Galleries...



THE HISTORICAL MUSEUM
OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

Metro-Dade Cultural Center
101 West Flagler Street, Miami
(305) 375-1492

Imaging the Seminole
Mar. 4 - Apr. 10, 1994
Mar. 13, 3 p.m. — Opening Reception and Lecture by Patsy West
This exhibition looks at how the image of the Seminole Indian has been used since 1880 in different manners and for different purposes.

IMPACT VI: Women of South Florida
Mar 3 - Mar. 31, 1994
Mar. 3, 5:30 p.m. — Opening Ceremony
Awards made to 10 women of impact for 1994 with photographs by Susan Randall and Peggy Nolan.

Places in Time: Historic Landscapes and Architecture in Dade County
April 22 - July 4, 1994
Apr. 21, 6 p.m. — Opening Reception
This exhibition features 100+ platinum prints of historic sites in Dade County by architectural and fine art photographer John Gillan. The timeless images captured by Gillan are printed in the platinum process, a technique distinguished by extraordinary detailed images of high quality that will last a lifetime.

Special Events

The Distance Between Us
Mar. 27, 1994, 3-5 p.m.
A live play about Abigail and John Adams by the Cape Cod Repertory Theatre Company of Brewster, Massachusetts, co-sponsored by the University of Miami's Ring Theatre and the Historical Museum. At the museum. Free for members; non-members with paid gallery admission.

Annual Meeting
Apr. 21, 1994, 4 - 6 p.m.
Celebrating 10 years at the downtown Metro-Dade Cultural Center. Special guest speaker: Arva Moore Parks.

Springtime Harvest Festival
Apr. 30 & May 1, 1994, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Dade County Youth Fair & Expo Ctr.
Featuring more than 300 crafts booths, international farmers' market, folklife and entertainment. \$3 adults; \$1.50 children 6-12.

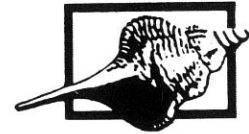
Readers' Choice presents Evelyn Meyerson, author of Miami: A Saga
May 19, 1994, 12 noon Luncheon
The soon-to-be released book will be available at the luncheon with the author. Call (305) 375-1492 for details.

General Information

Open Mon-Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Thur. til 9 p.m.; Sun. 12 noon-5 p.m.

LOXAHATCHEE MUSEUM

JUPITER, FLORIDA



Burt Reynolds Park
805 North U.S. Highway One
Jupiter, Florida 33477
(407) 747-6639

Exhibitions

By Hand on Linen: Original Architectural Drawings of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse
Jan. - Mar. 1994
An exhibition featuring 29 original detailed linen drawings of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse, the oldest standing structure in Palm Beach County. Also included are George Meade artifacts and a life-size artist's reconstruction of the view from the lighthouse gallery.

Reeling in the Years: The Sport, the Lifestyle and the Sportfishing Industry
Apr. - May 1994

A exhibition exploring saltwater and freshwater fishing, fly and bait with a focus on the national history and conservation of the area's environment. Peruse the old time tackle shop and try your hand at pulling in "the big one."

Special Events

SeaFare '94 Sixth Annual Seafood and Maritime Festival
May 22, 1994
Arts, crafts, entertainment and local seafood.

General Information

Open Tues.-Fri. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and weekends 1-4 p.m.



2300 Peck Street
Fort Myers, Florida
(813) 332-6879

Exhibitions

Lumbering in Southwest Florida
Mar. 19-May 30, 1994

Beginning Apr. 30, 1994

Old Fashioned Cooking Utensils
Vegetable Crate Labels
Embroiderers Guild Needlework

May 5 - June 30, 1994

American Sewing Guild "Shares"
50th Anniversary of Normandy
Adding It Up
Hunt and Peck
Wish You Were Here

Special Events & Classes

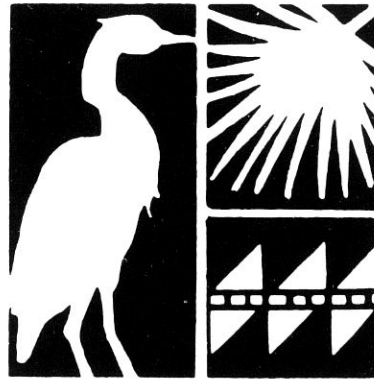
Collecting Vegetable Crate Labels,
a lecture by Charles Vavrina
Mar. 6, 1994

**Field Trip to Lion Country Safari/
Falgler Museum in Palm Beach**
Mar. 18, 1994

**Field Trip to Heritage Park/
Bellevue Biltmore, Clearwater**
Apr. 22, 1994

General Information

Open Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Sun.
1-5 p.m. Closed Sat. and major holi-
days. Admission: adults \$2.50; chil-
dren under 12 \$1.



Collier County Museum

3301 Tamiami Trail East
Naples, Florida
(813) 774-8476

General Information

The Collier County Museum explores the people, places and everyday events that have shaped Collier County's heritage—from prehistoric fossils and long vanished Indian civilizations, to the settlers and visionaries of the area's pioneering past.

The museum's four-acre historical park offers exploration through a typical Seminole Village, an archaeological laboratory, a Children's Discovery Cottage, extensive native Florida gardens, a restored swamp buggy and a 1910 steam logging locomotive.

The museum is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Admission is free.



CLEWISTON MUSEUM

112 South Commercio Street
Clewiston, Florida 33440
(813) 983-2870

Exhibitions

American Beach
Mar. 10 - June 15, 1994

A exhibition exploring the African-American community of Jacksonville Beach.

Tampa Tribune
Sept. 1 - Dec. 31, 1994

A exhibition from the Florida Museum of History.

The Logging Industry of the Big Cypress Swamp
Dec. 1-28, 1994

The Clewiston Museum, founded in 1984, is a growing museum, collecting and displaying items, large and small, important and trivial, which reflect the past of Clewiston and its surrounding area.

General Information

Open 1 to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, with seasonal adjustments. No admission fee is charged, however, donations are encouraged.

Sailing Adventures a Century Ago

by Jean S. Matheson

One hundred years ago, Margaret Ann Johnson, and her husband Willie bought a large sailboat, the "Nancy Hanks," and took a pleasure trip from their home in Cocoa, Florida, down the Indian River and up the St. Lucie River to the newly blossoming White City, Florida. Margaret tells of the adventure, opportunity and spectacular environment they encountered on their tropical journey in the Winter of 1894.

The year 1894 was pivotal for Florida. Henry Flagler was building his hotels and completing his railroad which brought visitors to South Florida by the carloads. Into this time frame sailed the *Nancy Hanks* with Margaret Johnson aboard, faithfully keeping a log of all she saw.

Margaret did not know she was recording history. She simply wrote her diary of this sailboat journey to her "dear mother," whom she promised to tell how she passed all her time. Of questionable comfort it must have been to her mother to read Margaret's self assessment of her nautical abilities: "I am not very brave, am afraid of the water and do not know how to row."

Nevertheless, Margaret began her journey on January 14, 1894.

Jan. 14 — We have started on our sailboat. It is a lovely sunshiney day. The fine hotel at Rockledge with their flags waving in the wind I thought was a fine sight. We have just passed a fine sailboat and in it was one of my old Cocoa friends, who is both beautiful and good. She waved her hand and smiled a farewell.

Jan. 15 — We had rough times. The Nancy Hanks was on her side all the time. (I had forgotten to mention the gentleman and his wife who accompanied us on our trip—A Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Cowart.) Minnie, myself and two little girls [Margaret's daughters, Pearl and Sallie] have been sick today. We hope never to experience another rough day like this.

There were other rough days ahead but there were also days of wonderment such as when the adventurous group saw the ocean for the first time.

Jan. 21 — It sounded like a mighty roar of thunder. We went up the hill with God's beautiful lamp lit (As little Pearl calls the moon) lighting our way. I stood at the foot of the hill



A sailing vessel, *The Utilus*, photographed by Commodore Ralph Munroe, typical of the era, circa 1895. (HASF 82-D)

preparing myself for the grand and magnificent sight that I knew I was going to behold. I went to the top of the hill and of all the grand and glorious sights was the ocean in full moonlight. After standing for a time viewing the wide spreading waters, we strolled along the shore gathering all varieties of shells. It will always be a day of pleasant recollections.

Margaret recorded the weather daily, a chief determinant of the quality of life on a sailboat. And, either because her mother would care or because of the implied novelty of doing it all, she also recorded her housekeeping: *We have washed and cleaned up nicely ourselves as it would be impossible to hire it done traveling all the time as we are now.*

Jan. 24 — *Minnie and I have just finished a large washing at the big spring. The clothes look so nice and white. We try to keep everything as nice and clean as I think there is nothing like cleanliness. The boys have come from their hunt [for alligator, otter, duck, squirrel] in high spirits. Two men from another boat came to us and wanted some of our little alligators. We sold them for \$2.30 apiece.*

Jan. 25 — *We set sail for the St. Lucie River. Later wind died entirely so we stopped at Sebastian. We had ordered our mail to be sent to Sebastian so I have been enjoying reading three letters from dear Mother and from Callie and one from Mrs. Straker. I have collected forty-two Columbia stamps since I have been on my trip. Cousin Callie sent me some from Texas. She writes me that she sent some of the same kind to the world's fair to decorate a room with.*

Margaret collected stamps from the 1893 World's Fair, which commemorated the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America. The fair opened in Chicago a year late due to construction delay of its main attraction, the first Ferris Wheel.

Being a newcomer to Florida, Margaret was intrigued with all the birds, and the fish and the secrets of the tropical wilderness.

Jan. 27 — *Willie brought home pelican eggs. They resemble a goose egg. They found a pelican island where there were hundreds of them. Nest and eggs were so thick on it they could hardly walk and lots of young; ever so young, they were too young to pet. They are of three colors, white and dove colored and black also. They are a strange bird. It was indeed a curiosity to us.*

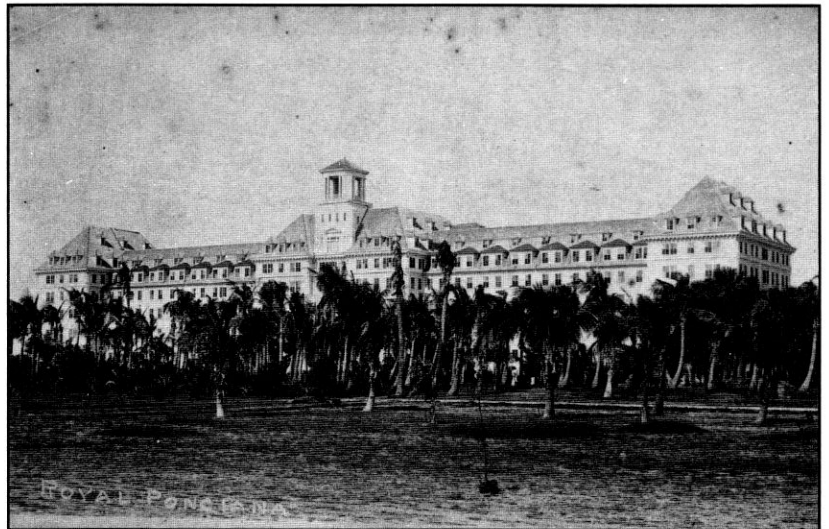
Jan. 31 — *We have concluded to set sail, all are anxious to go to Ft. Pierce as we are looking for our mail and two bushels of sweet potatoes and some*

money for our hides. . . . We have landed and of all the grand sights it was this lovely spot, tall palmettos, large live oak covered in gray moss, the finest air plants and polypody. There are three cabbage palmetto houses. One was lined inside with cheese cloth. It is an old deserted homestead. We think that everything denotes that it must have been a nice lady that lived here; old flower boxes with dead geraniums in them and nice shells around them. At the back of the house is a fine artesian well with splendid water.

Feb. 5 — *We are nearing Ft. Pierce. . . . We look at a large pineapple farm on a high hill, the sun rays in the distance shone acrossed it. At the foot of the hill stood an elegant residence, having about thirty rooms. There was a long wharf and at the end of it a boat house two stories high. There was also a Chinese pavillion and around this the wood work was beautiful. This lovely spot is the home of a wealthy Dr. Richardson who makes from the pineapple a wonderful medicine called "The Elixir of Life." We look to the west and see Ft. Pierce on a hill. There are several fine hotels. We saw a fine steam boat loaded with lumber bound for Lake Worth to finish the fine Flagler Hotel. [The Royal Poinciana Hotel in Palm Beach]*

Feb. 6 — *The boys go for some gasoline. Willie also gets him some nice shoes and Calvin gets him some pants. They tell us they have contracted to build a store for Pa. He arrived last night and is going to sell goods at Ft. Pierce.*

Feb. 7 — . . . *The boys have gotten back from their work. Pa gave them \$2.50 a day so they had some money. On their trip they saw an Indian, his little pony carrying his six shooter. Had on a long shirt and leggings. They never wear pants at all. Calvin hunted down in their parts three months last winter and knows all about them. This Indian's name is Tonni Smith. He came here to sell otter hides. Willie says he is going to get him beaded moccasins and fringed leggings.*



The Royal Poinciana Hotel, Palm Beach. (HASF x-235-1)

Feb. 10 — Today is Saturday and we are cooking and preparing for Sunday. Just before retiring we look out and see a passenger train with six coaches. They were lit up beautifully. There is a large steam boat waiting to take the passengers to the Flagler Hotel at Lake Worth. There are from one to two steam boats at the wharf loading lumber and taking passengers all the time for Lake Worth.

The next day the Royal Poinciana Hotel opened in Palm Beach with 17 guests, most of whom had traveled in their private coaches as far south as the rails would take them, Ft. Pierce, where Margaret recorded their arrival. Eventually the Royal Poinciana occupied 32 acres, proving that Henry Flagler could lure the wealthy to the wilderness.

Feb. 18 — Calvin and Minnie have concluded to stay in Ft. Pierce so we leave them and sail down the river. We are having a rough day. The wind is so high that we rock like a cradle. . . . The moon shone brightly, the wind calmed down and what a lovely time for sleeping. I am never so happy as when I can have my dear husband all alone.

Feb. 19 — Are in no hurry and are enjoying life while we can. I steer the boat for several miles as the wind was not very high as Willie is anxious for me to learn to be of some assistance to him in case of emergency. He said I did splendidly. I thought I had seen lovely scenery but nothing to compare with this around Jensen and Ancova. The foliage of the pineapples were green, purple and pink. There we saw some very fine houses with high towers and large wind mills near them and tanks to supply the houses with water for bathrooms. We then set sail down the river round Sewell's Point, reached the St Lucie River and anchored.



Jean Matheson moved to West Palm Beach, Florida, in 1961 where she and her husband—a third generation Floridian—raised their two children. Her interest in history has involved her in a number of projects and organizations. She wrote and helped produce a bicentennial TV program for the Junior League; she served for 11 years on the Board of Governors for the Historical Society of Palm Beach County; and she wrote *The*

Ties That Binds, a history of her husband's family from the Everglades to Palm Beach in the early 1900s. She moved to Stuart 2-1/2 years ago, where she began investigating the community's history and came across the diary reprinted here which is part of the collection at the Elliott Museum.

Feb. 20 — There is a beautiful scene here with high bluffs of rock and beautiful ferns and air plants growing in the palmetto trees. The water is clear as crystal. There are hundreds of small fish in it. We set sail for White City about thirty-five miles. We see some lovely residences and passed through where Flagler is having his bridge across the river on his new railroad to Lake Worth. There were two pile drivers putting down the piles for it. The river is very wide, deep and crooked. After passing the bridge the river forks and we sailed up the north one.

Willie had a hard time sailing the *Nancy Hanks* up the narrow north fork of the St Lucie River. He finally had to drop the sail, get in the rowboat and tow the sailboat. And when the wind died completely, Margaret Ann lamented, *The mosquitos are very bad!*

On February 23, 1894, after sailing a total of 70 miles they reached White City. The new town was named for the 1893 World's Fair "City of Lights," where all the buildings were painted white and brilliantly lit.

From the very beginning, Margaret liked White City and fell under the spell of its leading citizen. She wrote:

Just the kind of place I have been wanting for a long time. . . .The head man here has forty thousand dollars to build this city. . . . Colonel Myers, the owner of this city is a splendid looking man that weighs two hundred pounds. . . .I felt highly honored to have the Colonel so polite to me. He is a millionaire and I so poor and homely. He seemed to take a fancy to us all.

Feb. 25 — Hope there is a happy future in store for us. I trust after all our ups and downs in getting here. Willie sold the *Nancy Hanks* for \$125 and bought two lots. Now he will have to pay \$50 more and then they will be our very own. Willy loaned the butcher some pulleys and helped him some. He gave him the whole liver so we had a splendid supper. I sold the butcher one of my little alligators and I have only five left.

Feb. 26 — Today is my sister's birthday, who is so far away. I wonder if she has thought of me today. Oh! How I wish for Kate and Mother.

Margaret didn't write in her diary for a week. She was busy moving from the sailboat and presumably into a tent like most of the other settlers in White City. Willie was also quite busy. He dug up about 15 square feet of their land, planted onions, and began building the house, kitchen first. Margaret continued to sell little alligators, but the price had gone up. Clearly she was concerned about money.

I sold another little alligator this morning for \$2.50 and a pair of oarlocks for 85 so I have made some money. Colonel Myers has promised Willie the job of foreman in the lumber yard. If he does get it, we can soon pay the balance on our lots. Then we will be out of debt for a while. We have also bought an antique bedstead. All our furniture will be oak. I think it is so nice.

Mar. 4 — . . . Colonel Myers came up to see us this afternoon and he tells us of his lovely home in California and how lonely he is since his wife's death and how he loved her. He gave her everything a heart could wish for as long as she lived. I felt so sorry for him He is, a stately looking man. He is kind to Willie and that makes me like him very much. He has done everything for our comfort that he could.

In the last entry Margaret wrote about the people of her town and her hopes for the future.

Mar. 12 — There are so many people to come last week. They are from Nebraska. They are Danes. There are not near so many Americans as foreigners but we find them honest, kind-hearted people. Colonel Myers has brought in a large saw mill today and Willie is helping them to put it together.

He will have steady work now by the month and gets very good wages. We can soon pay for our house and lots and be even once more.

A few weeks later Colonel Myers fled into the night with the town's treasury and the dreams of its citizens. It was rumored that he hopped a train on Flagler's railroad, which had conveniently opened to the south just days before on April 2, 1894.

Margaret Johnson wrote her diary on a legal size ledger, with its horizontal and vertical lines. The diary is written on both sides of the paper in a steady hand, surprisingly so since there were many rough days aboard the *Nancy Hanks*. Very little spray got on the pages and most of the diary is quite clear. Her words are reproduced in this article exactly as written.

The inscription on the last page of Margaret's diary reads: *My diary written by [to] Mama while in Fla. Jan. 14, 1894. Given to my daughter Sallie B. Johnson, Jan. 1902.*

The diary was given to the Martin County Historical Society by the family of Sallie Johnson and is part of the society's permanent collection at the Elliott Museum.

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Fort Myers and the Civil War

by Irvin D. Solomon

Although significant to the Seminole campaigns, Fort Myers would have faded into history after its abandonment in 1858 if it were not for the Civil War. Toward the end of that bloody conflict, the post took on a new significance for both sides. Not only did the Union command brazenly reactivate this fort in the very midst of a presumed Confederate stronghold, but it staffed the fort with U.S. Colored Troops—the ultimate insult to Confederate loyalists and sympathizers.

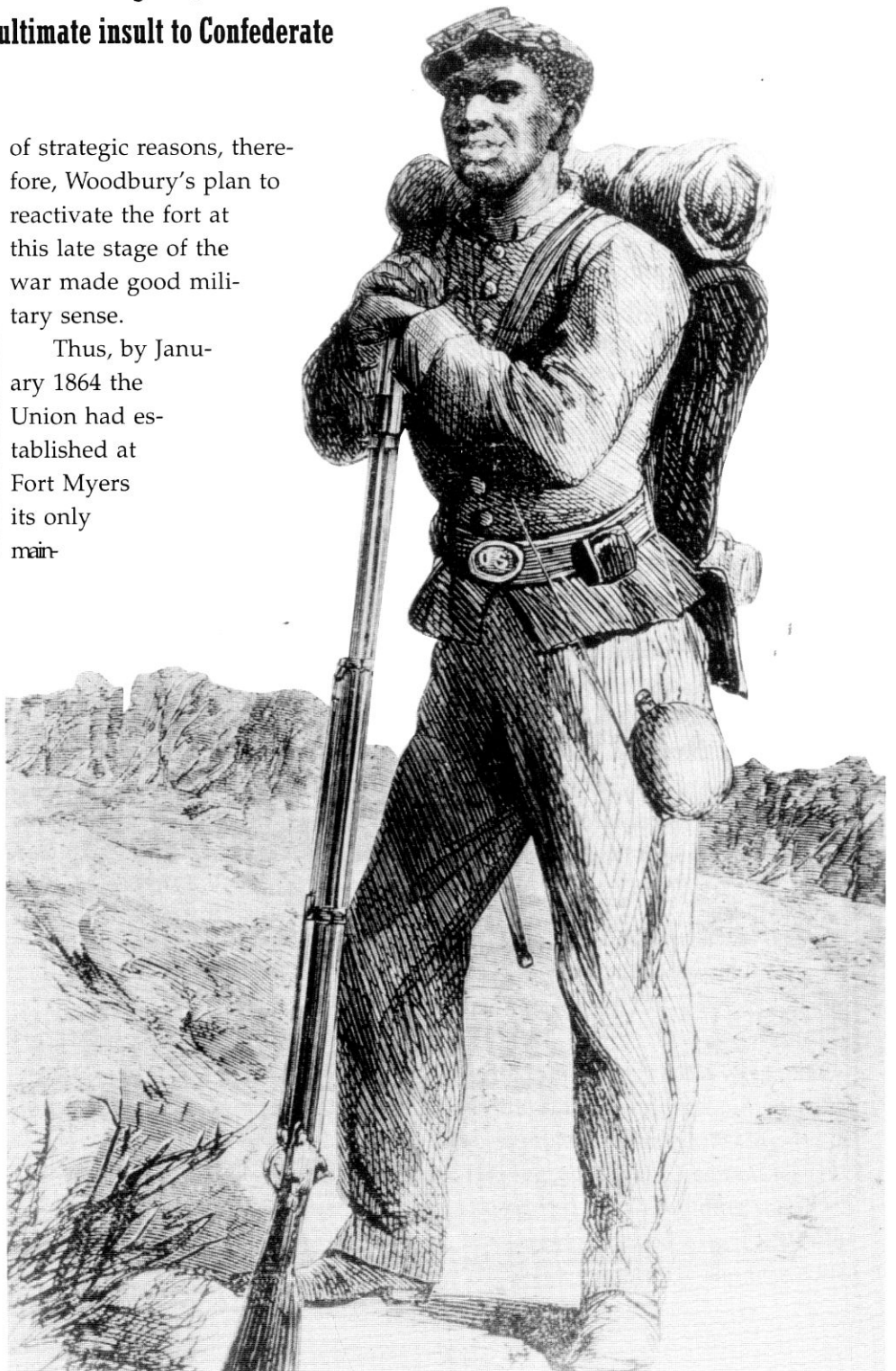
Consequently, the recommissioning of Fort Myers resulted in the largest military action of the Civil War in Southwest Florida. Moreover, it was possibly the southernmost land engagement in the entire war.

After the outbreak of the Civil War, the Confederacy chose to concentrate its efforts farther up the west coast of Florida, and thus Fort Myers remained little more than a curiosity until Federal troops moved in to reoccupy it in January 1864. At that time General D.P. Woodbury, commander of the District of Key West and the Tortugas in the Department of the Gulf, decided to reactivate Fort Myers, ostensibly as a haven for Confederate deserters and as a refuge for Union supporters, many of whom were rumored to be cattlemen of the Caloosahatchee ranges.

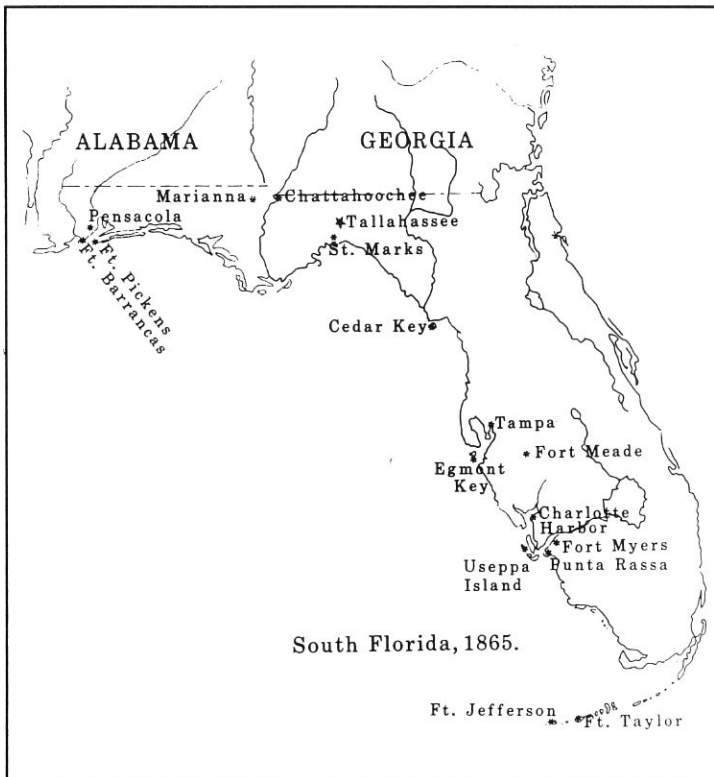
Woodbury set secondary goals of attracting escaped slaves from the small number of such in South Florida, raiding cattle from the numerous wild and domesticated herds in the area, operating regular forays into the countryside and up the coast as far as Tampa and Bay Port, and assisting the Union Navy in its blockade of the gulf coast. For a number

of strategic reasons, therefore, Woodbury's plan to reactivate the fort at this late stage of the war made good military sense.

Thus, by January 1864 the Union had established at Fort Myers its only main-



Right: Former slave serving in the U.S.C.T. (Courtesy of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the New York Public Library)



Author's map of South Florida in early 1865. (Courtesy of Irvin D. Solomon.)

land base in South Florida. Predictably, state and local Confederate officials and sympathizers were outraged at learning of Woodbury's repositioning of a small contingent of the Pennsylvania 47th Regiment to the post in early 1864. The 47th, guided by Captain Henry A. Crane, a former newspaper editor from Tampa, and the 2nd Regiment of Florida Cavalry (the former Florida Rangers), departed Punta Rassa at the mouth of the Caloosahatchee on the schooner *U.S.S. Matchless* and the steamer *U.S.S. Honduras* for the old

Charlotte Harbor and joined the other troops at Fort Myers, all of whom came under the command of Captain Richard A. Graeffe of the 47th Volunteers. This completed the establishment of what was at that time the Union's only mainland fort in Florida.

It was against this backdrop, then, that both the North and the South focused new attention on Southwest Florida. In short order the North would seek to extend its operations at Fort Myers through reinforcements and increased raids, and

the South would attempt to eliminate the Union presence through direct military action.

The fact that the Union chose to reinforce the post with black soldiers from the freshly created

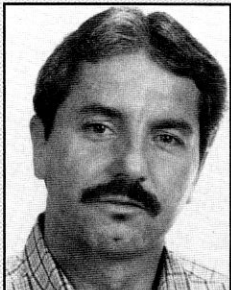
U.S. Colored Troops further aggravated the Confederate loyalists, provoking them to action with more determination and spite than had been the case heretofore.

So many raids occurred out of Fort Myers that by July 1864, the Confederates created a Cattle Guard Battalion, commonly called the "Cow Cavalry," to repulse the Union raiders. Composed primarily of South Florida cattle wranglers, the unit's nine companies soon gained Confederate "soldier status" under the command of former Georgia legislator, Major Charles J. Munnerlyn.

The Cow Cavalry generally rallied near Brooksville, but it frequently carried out raids and reconnaissance missions as far east as Lake Okeechobee and as far south as Fort Myers and Punta Rassa. This colorful unit remained the primary threat to the Union forces in South Florida until the battle of Fort Myers in February 1865. After the battle the outfit dispersed into bands of local-oriented "protection" units.

The Cow Cavalry's long-planned attack on the troublesome fort itself finally materialized in the early winter of 1865. In January, Munnerlyn received a communique ordering his soldiers to destroy the irksome post at Fort Myers. Under the command of executive officer Major William Footman, and company commanders Francis A. Hendry, John T. Lesley, and James McKay, Jr., the Confederate force of some 275 men with one field piece marched out of Tampa in early February on the 120-mile trek to Fort Myers.

The attack force, composed primarily of officers and men from the Tampa Bay and Peace River regions, planned on catching the fort's defenders off-guard through a surprise late evening or early morning attack. This would prove to be the Cow



Irvin D. Solomon ("Irv") holds a doctorate in African-American history and the history of women in America. He currently teaches African-American Studies courses at both Edison Community College and the University of South Florida at Fort Myers. Dr. Solomon has published three books and numerous articles on cultural diversity and Florida history. He currently resides in Fort Myers

but also spends a lot of time in Punta Gorda discussing Florida history with fellow historian, State Representative Vernon Peeples.

Cavalry's largest operation of the war.

For its part, the garrison at Fort Myers appeared vulnerable to attack. Numerous men were away on detachment, leaving primarily the soldiers of the 2nd USCT and certain members of the 2nd Florida (Union) Cavalry to protect the post under its newly appointed commander, Captain James Doyle of the 110th New York Volunteers, himself detached to the fort from Key West.

Furthermore, the 250 men at the fort were short of ammunition and arms; the 180 or so men of Companies D and I of the 2nd U.S. Colored Troops, for instance, held only 75 serviceable muskets. Moreover, those very same men of the USCT had just returned tired and hungry from a sustained 100-mile skirmish only two days earlier. It was against these odds, then, that the men of the Union were called on to defend the lonely

outpost in the heart of Confederate South Florida.

By the morning of February 19, the Rebel forces drew near to Fort Myers. Footman created his field command at Fort Thompson, an abandoned Indian campaign garrison about 20 miles up the Caloosahatchee from Fort Myers, from which the forces were to launch their attack upon the enemy post. Although the Confederates planned a surprise attack, it had been postponed because, as Lieutenant Frances Boggess of the Rebel forces later recalled, "on that night. . .it rained until the water was knee deep over the entire country."

Not to be totally deterred by the conditions, Footman's forces advanced down the Fort Thompson road until they encountered their first sign of the Union forces at Billy (Bowlegs) Creek, about four miles northeast of the fort. There, the Rebel forces captured four advanced pick-

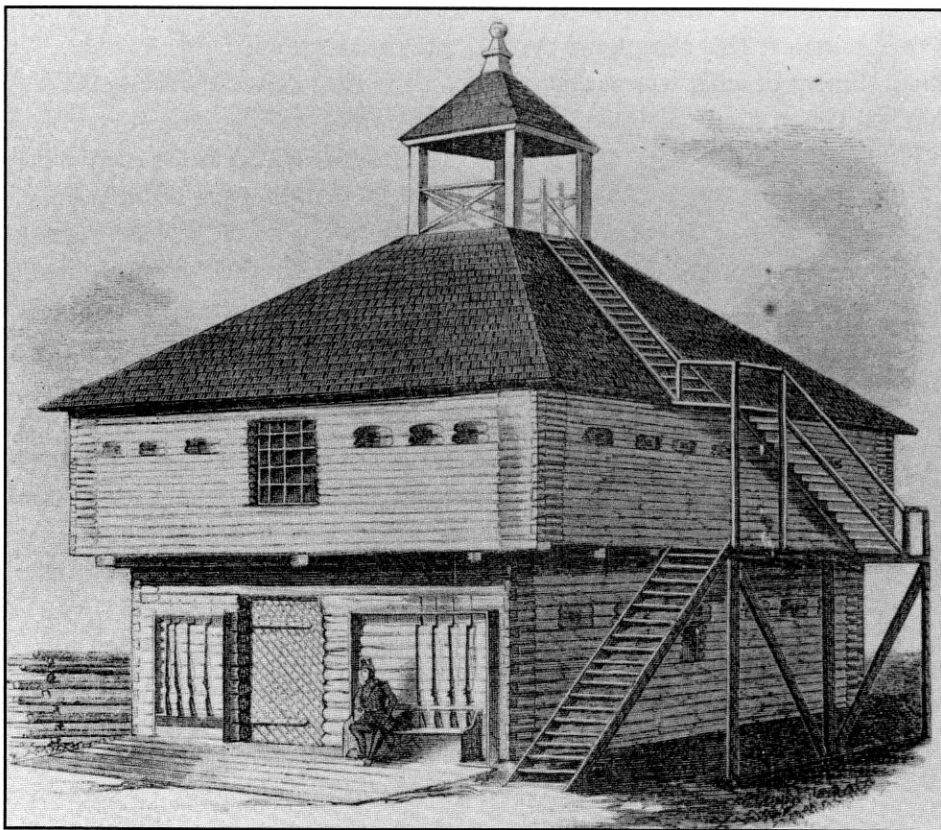
ets of the Second Florida (Union) Cavalry and rounded up a small herd of grazing cattle.

The Confederate forces later boasted that this action took place without shots being fired (this is impossible to substantiate) and thus inspired them mightily for the upcoming "glorious" attack on the fort proper.

On the morning of February 20, Footman's aroused men approached Fort Myers and sighted a 2nd USCT laundry detail at an outpost wash pond. Seizing this opportunity for a preliminary victory, the Confederate forces swiftly fired upon the men, killing five enlisted troopers, including one black private, Charles Sanders, who refused to surrender. Although the Rebels celebrated this second minor engagement, in the process they also lost the hoped for element of surprise.

Dissuaded from his original plan as a result of the early engagements and his now rain-soaked ammunition, Footman hastily decided to demand surrender of the fort. Footman would later claim that the presence of women and children at the fort convinced him not to attack directly; however, the loss of the element of surprise and Footman's own history of vacillation in the face of fire probably more accurately accounted for this action.

Thus, brazenly but not altogether convincingly, Footman's courier approached the fort and demanded a Union surrender within the half hour. Doyle's intermediary, Captain Bartholf of the 2nd USCT, waited barely five minutes in delivering the Union response: "No surrender under no circumstances." The Rebel force now found itself in the tenuous position of having to save face by attacking an alerted and fortified post manned



Blockhouse at Fort Myers, published in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Magazine*, October 2, 1858. (Courtesy of Irvin D. Solomon.)

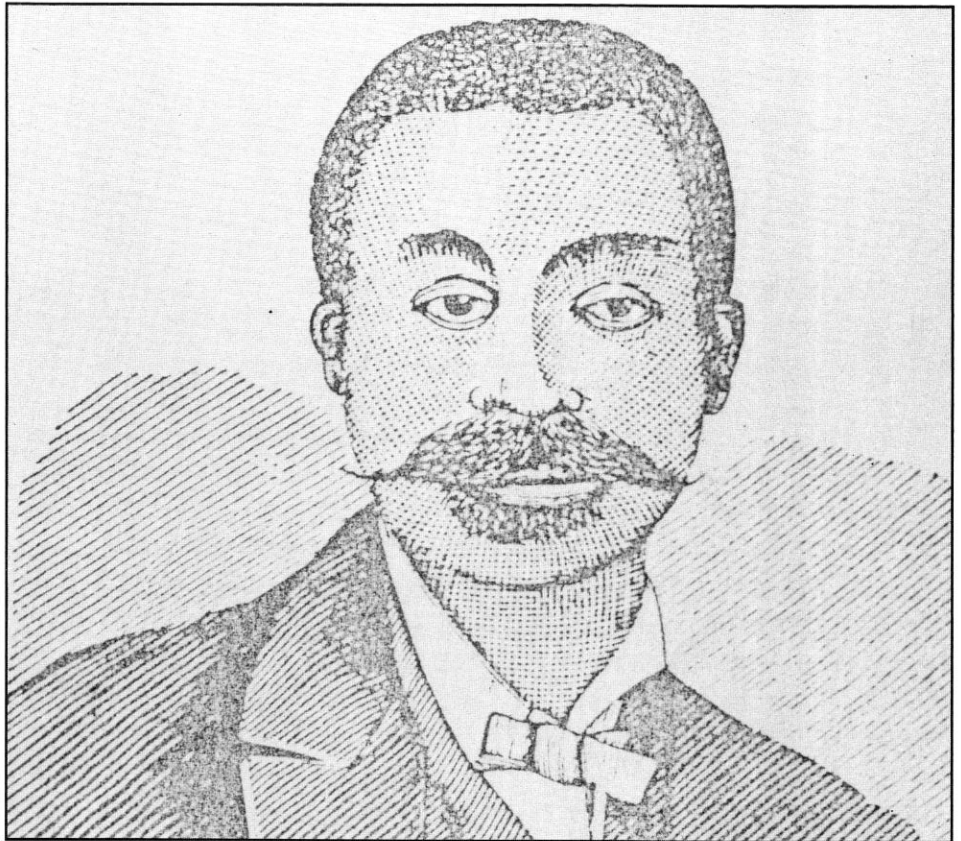
by a determined garrison of both white and black Union forces.

Left with no honorable alternative, Footman fired on the Union garrison at 1:10 in the afternoon. The ensuing battle ranged in a crescent shape around the fort's perimeter and pivoted strategically on the accurate firepower of the federal cannon, which were manned by men from the 2nd USCT.

The Confederates attempted to silence the Union cannon with 20 or so volleys of their own, none of which caused damage to the Union troops. The day-long battle resulted in perhaps 40 Confederate casualties and four Union losses. Additionally, the Rebels captured a number of black troops and seriously wounded John Wallace, a former slave, who would later gain fame as a Florida State legislator and as presumed author of the reconstruction classic, *Carpetbag Rule in Florida*.

By nightfall Footman's troops conceded defeat and withdrew through the swamps. Lieutenant Boggess recalled, "it was as if nothing was accomplished" before our forces "resumed their march home." Another member of Footman's band, James McKay, Jr., commented after the retreat: "We returned to Fort Meade the most worn out and dilapidated looking set of soldiers you ever saw. . . ."

Thus ended possibly the southernmost land battle of the Civil War. Whereas only days earlier the Confederates had dreamed of a glorious victory over the Union interlopers, the Rebels now had only a handful of prisoners, several hundred head of scrawny cattle, and a bedraggled force to show for their efforts. In reality, this military engagement at Fort Myers simply verified Union superiority in South Florida, a condition that remained until the war's end.



John Wallace, ex-slave wounded at the battle of Fort Myers, and also presumed author of the reconstruction classic, *Carpetbag Rule in Florida*. (Courtesy of Irvin D. Solomon)

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THE VISUAL RECORD

GIANTS
OF THE
SWAMP

THE STORY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA'S
LOGGING INDUSTRY



By Cesar A. Becerra

Some the most important histories in Florida surround our state's earliest industries. During the building of Florida, five major industries were king at one time or another; all however, have since come to pass.

After the Spaniards abandoned their pursuit of gold in Florida, they set their sights on fish, which became Florida's first commercial enterprise.

Phosphate mining, another major Florida industry thriving around the turn of the century, is still going strong today, although the work of environmentalists makes its future seem bleak.

Hungry caterpillars and boll weevils brought down Florida's long-time staple cotton industry, thriving in the days before synthetic fabrics.

And in the deep swamps of northern Florida, one can still find the remains of indigo vats, once one of Florida's most profitable farm crops.

But by far, the state's most lucrative and vital enterprise was lumber. Most of Florida's early towns were built around lumber operations generating revenue largely from hauling logs and turpentine from the forest. It has been estimated that Florida had well over 27 million acres of old-growth forests before the arrival of the Europeans.

Although a good portion of Florida's timber could be found along major rivers and coastal areas, the vast majority of the forests remained in the interior swamplands, which for years would prove to be inaccessible. And so explorers and pioneers alike began logging the higher and drier north Florida timberlands, working their way down the peninsula, until they reached the Big Cypress Swamp of South Florida in the 1920s.

THE EARLY YEARS

Contrary to popular belief, the Spaniards did find gold in north Florida in the year 1743. The unsuspected cargo was yellow pine; two masts, each 84 feet long, were shipped from Pensacola to Havana to await the expertise of their master: the local sawyer. Years of frustration were over with the riches of the "New World" found at last; however, the riches ended up as plank roads, masts, tar and turpentine—not all that alluring to Spain.

Years before, in the year 1513, Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León spent months sailing Florida's coasts in his quest for the Fountain of Youth. His search for the water that "make owld men yong agayne" was in vain and he failed to realize that the Florida waterways were indeed the giver of eternal life. To trees like the bald cypress, years of growing in water meant years of protection from the elements, thus its nickname: "The Wood Eternal."

When the British came in 1763, attitudes and beliefs about the southern forest changed. Unlike the Spaniards, Florida's newest residents saw the opportunity to commercialize the area's vast timber resources. In addition to exporting cattle, salt, myrtle wax and fish, the bustling port at Pensacola exported pine and cedar lumber, shingles, staves and pitch. It has been estimated that by the year 1782 50,000 barrels of tar, rosin, pitch and turpentine were being extracted every year from the areas surrounding the St. Johns and St. Mary's rivers.

By the time Florida became a state in 1845, only 15 million acres of virgin forests remained out of the state's original 27 million acres. With the help of railroads and pullboats (vessels that pulled timber from the banks of rivers by use of a steam-powered winch), old-growth timber was quickly disappearing. By the turn of the century most northern forests were almost completely logged out. Naturally, the industry looked south.

Previous page: A giant bald cypress tree crashes onto the floor of the Fakahatchee Strand inside the Big Cypress Swamp of southwest Florida. Loggers chopped, sawed, and hauled for 14 to 16 hours a day, making \$15 dollars per day during the mid-1940s. Orthodox logging operations with tractors and trucks did not venture here—it was all brute strength operating under conditions northern loggers seldom experienced. The large tree on the left had been "girdled," a process in which the tree is cut into completely around the base to let the water seep out for easier transportation. On the right is a logger with an 8-foot crosscut saw. The blur in the photo is the giant tree hitting the swamp floor. (Courtesy of University of Miami's Richter Library).



Timber scouts in the Big Cypress region of South Florida measure a Bald Cypress in the early 1930s. Bald Cypress, *Taxodium*, is the second most commercially valuable timber species to be logged. These giants of the swamp can measure up to 25 feet in diameter and tower as high as 150 feet into the air. Core samples taken from these trees revealed that they are well over 600 years old. (Courtesy of Audubon Society)





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Big Cypress loggers defie rattlesnakes, gators and treacherous terrain to bring out the "wood eternal." Here workers are seen going to work. After a wake-up call from the 5:00 a.m. whistle and a two-hour train ride to the timber head, they still hike about three miles to the day's destination. With them are their axes, wedges and their cross-cut saws which the locals called "Old Gatortooth." (Courtesy of The Miami Herald Photographic Archives)



Two Big Cypress loggers stand waist deep in a cypress strand to top off a cypress tree. They use the axes as leverage so that they stay relatively stable in the muck and marl that keeps giving way to their weight. (Courtesy of Miami Herald Photographic Archives)

STEAM AND THUNDER IN THE TIMBER

It was assumed that logging the southern half of the peninsula would continue just as it had in the northern half. That might have been the case around Central Florida, but the notion was quickly abandoned as loggers reached the Big Cypress swamp region of southern Florida. Poor infrastructure, deeper swamps and a change of vegetation would prove that logging in this region was in a league of its own.

As more and more railroads moved to South Florida, more logging operations moved away from the rivers and turned to rail for hauling logs. There was a time when one could find a big sawmill every few miles along nearly every railroad in South Florida. There was no doubt

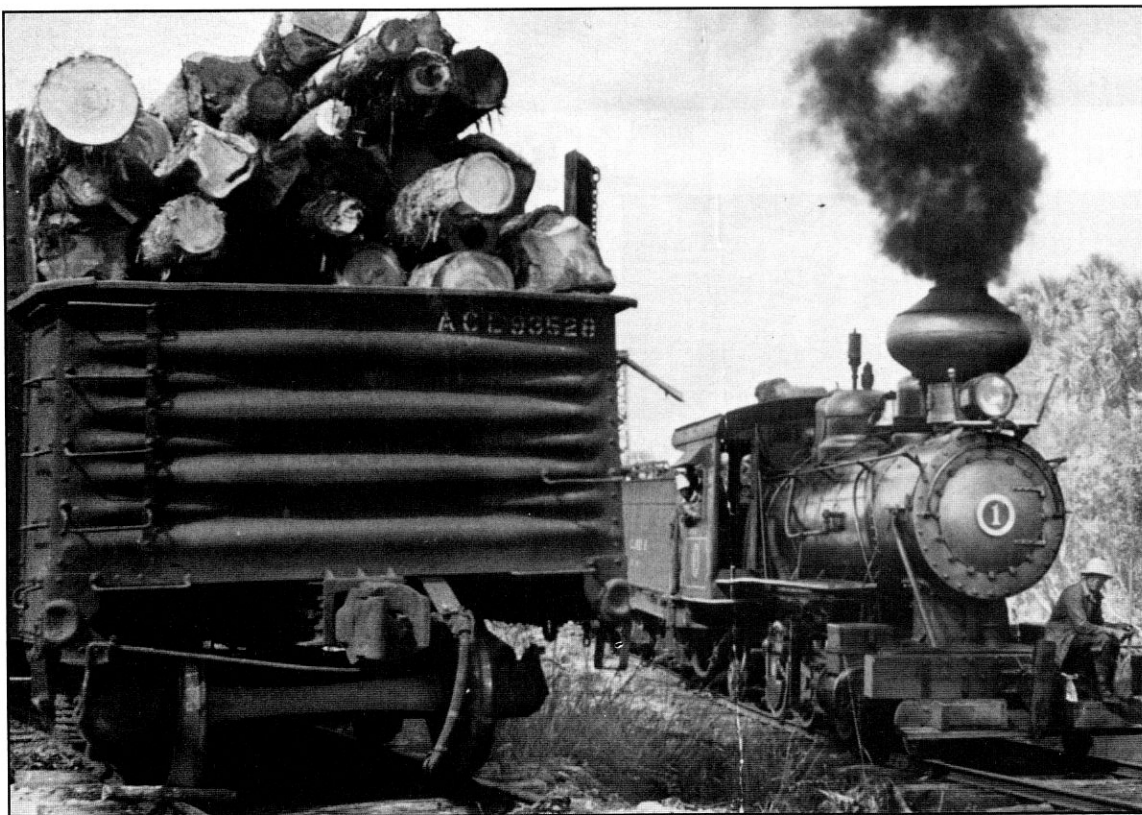


The average time it took to place just one mile of track generally was one to two months, assuming a

feet of water. Add to that the possibility of tracks becoming washed out by water flow or the fire box on a

steam-powered locomotive being extinguished by waist-deep water, and it becomes evident that logging in South Florida was not easy!

Small scale logging in the Big Cypress region started around 1900, when several small sawmills located near the coast began cutting our native slash pine. By the late 1920s eight small mills were operating in the area and were beginning to harvest cypress along new roadways like the Tamiami Trail. When the Atlantic



that the "iron horse" made transporting logs out of the swamp quicker than hauling logs out by oxen, but nobody said it would be easier.

bridge didn't have to be built to cross a cypress pond. During the rainy season it was not unusual for most of the line to be covered by one or two

Coast Line Railroad reached Everglades City in 1928, it set the stage for the last great push for old-growth timber in the United States. Hardy

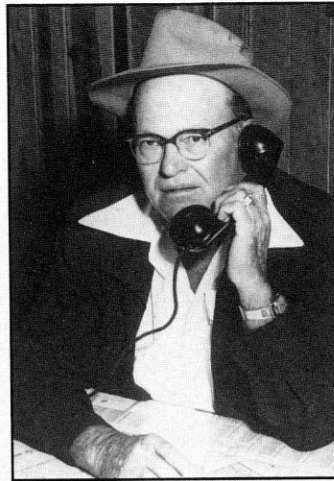
loggers and timber kings who ignored the skeptics that cried, "You can't get those trees out of that swamp," were determined to make their mark in what was known as America's "Last Frontier."

Top Left: When a logger was asked how many miles of rail ran out into the swamp he answered, "Twenty-seven miles of rail ran out into those woods—and 20 of them were underwater!" Sometimes as much as two to three feet of water ran over the railroad lines, some cypress ponds were even deeper and would threaten to put out the fire in the boiler. In this photo the railroad "speeder" carrying supplies to the loggers at the timber head seems to be floating on the surface of the water. In the background hardwood hammocks can be seen giving the scene a nautical look, early 1940s. (Courtesy of Bill Smith Collection)

Lower Left: The Lee Tidewater Company's Locomotive #1 stands ready on the main line to pick up a batch of logs off of a spur line in the Fakahatchee Strand of the Big Cypress Swamp. The smoke emanating from the engine's "cabbage head" type smoke-stack is pitch black because of the high levels of resin found in the native pine which was used to fuel the boilers. (Courtesy of The Miami Herald Photographic Archives)

Right: National Audubon Society Warden Hank Bennett surveys a giant bald cypress tree in the newly formed Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary of Southwest Florida. Corkscrew Swamp was protected in 1956 from loggers in order to preserve America's last virgin/old growth cypress trees. Some of these trees tower 150 feet into the air and have girths of more than 25 feet. (HASF 1986-47-1821344)





THAT MAN JONES

One of the most ambitious loggers in Florida history was C.J. Jones, who began cutting railroad ties at a very young age. From his sawmill in Jerome, Florida, which burned down in 1957, he would be responsible for supplying lumber for the production of PT Boats in World War II, and the rebuilding of Europe after that war. His Jerome mill would also become the largest sawmill in the southeastern United States, producing over 100,000 board feet of finished lumber daily.

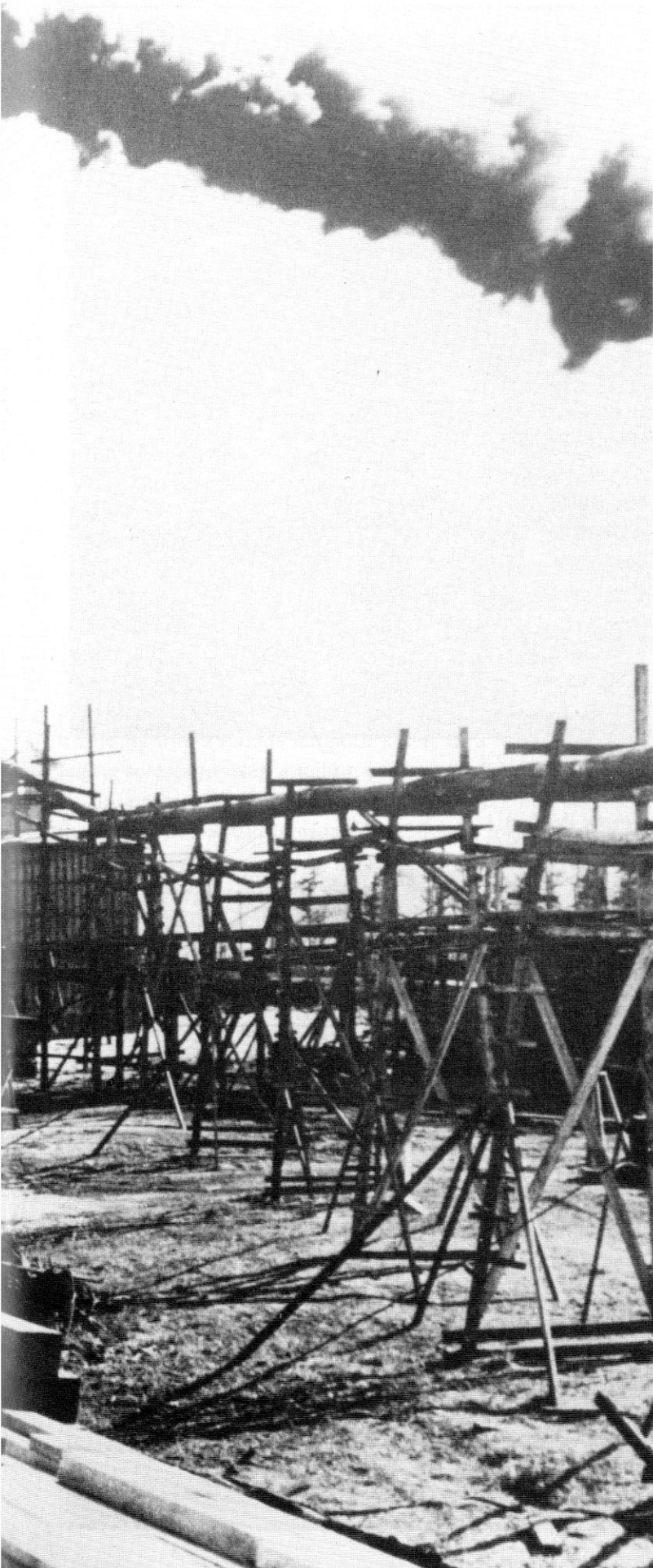
C.J. Jones also chose to keep using steam-powered locomotives as part of his workforce well into the late 1950s. This was unique because it was time in our nation's history when most steam-powered locomotives were sitting idle in museums or carrying tourists around amusement parks. In Jerome they could be found hard at work hauling tons of timber over more than 150 miles of railway and tram roads in South Florida. Because some of those locomotives dated back to the early 1900s, South Florida became a living museum to these dinosaurs of the industrial age.

The Jerome mill pictured here in 1955 was at that time the largest steam-powered sawmill in the southeastern United States. It opened in 1940, cutting about five to 10 thousand board feet of lumber a day. By 1956, it was cutting a whopping 100,000 board feet. The Jerome mill was unique in that all cutting, planning and shipping took place on site daily for more 15 years. Most other sawmills in the area only lasted three to five years. (Courtesy of C.J. Jones Jr. and Gwendolyn J. Tate)

Top Inset: This crude circular "wheel" saw was used in the C.J. Jones Lumber Company's operation in conjunction with one of the company's two portable sawmills in Hendry County. The wheel saw was powered by a small diesel engine and was used to pre-cut timber into specific sizes before the log was placed under the main saw for final cutting. No safety devices were on this saw—its operator probably prayed for his safety. (Courtesy of Bob Byrd, Alico Company)

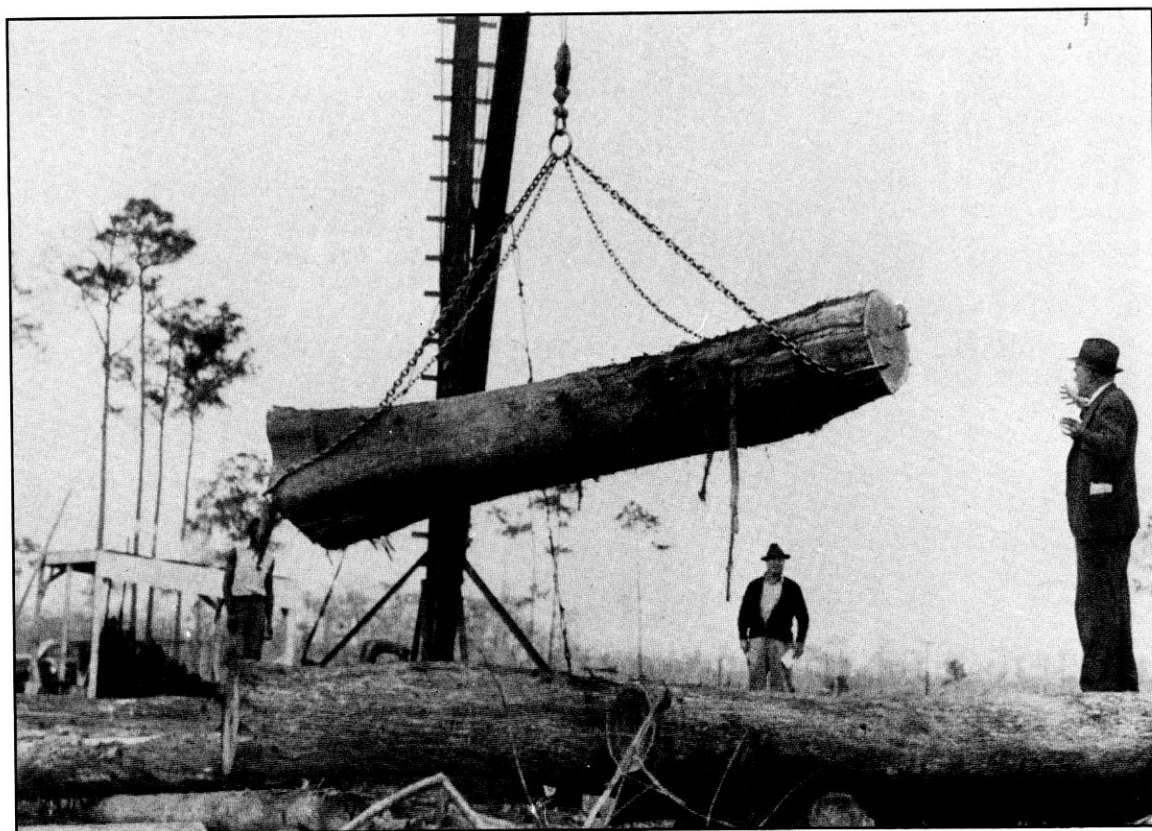
Bottom Inset: Though state laws concerning forestry practices were passed in the late 1920s many loggers in remote areas of the state such as South Florida were still "clear-cutting" with no regard for the re-growth of these areas. One of the first logging operations to abide by state law was the C.J. Jones Lumber Company. Shown here is one of the logging trucks the company owned. On the side door is the company's logo: "I prefer to log in managed timber." (Courtesy of Bob Byrd, Alico Company)

Right Inset: C.J. Jones, Florida's biggest logger.



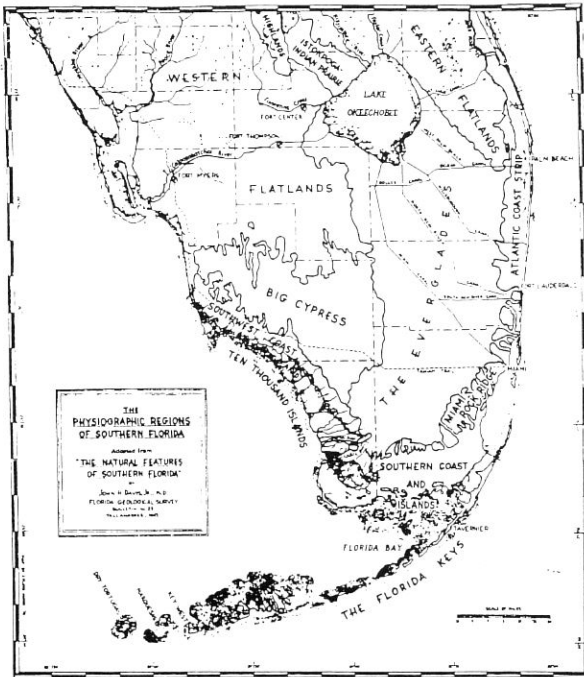


At a time in history (1956) when most steam-powered locomotives were considered a thing of the past, they could still be found hard at work hauling lumber to nearby sawmills. Some of these locomotives were built before the turn of the century. (Courtesy of Miami Herald Photographic Archives)



A cypress log is raised onto a railroad flat car for transportation to a nearby sawmill in the Big Cypress Swamp. The rot-proof lumber from these giant trees was used for the production of PT boats, stadium seats, packing crates, building material and pickle barrels. (Courtesy of Miami Herald Photographic Archives)

NOT IN YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY



The Big Cypress Swamp in 1945. (Courtesy of the Collier County Soil Conservation Service)

Little has been written about the logging history of Florida in general. Most of the documentation has centered on north Florida, despite the fact that South Florida helped rank Florida as one of the top lumber producing states in the country.

So barren were the historical files on this subject that the majority of information came from aging pioneers who well remember the difficulty of logging the

pine and cypress out of impenetrable swamps. . . and the dangers of intruding into a female alligator's den, or a water moccasin's privacy, or failing to escape from a falling cypress tree.

In a rare 1955 article, the *Saturday Evening Post* described logging in the swamps of South Florida "the toughest logging job in America, if not the world." There probably isn't one logger still alive today who would disagree with this statement!

Cesar A. Becerra is a senior studying American History at Florida International University. He has worked for the past five years as a historical interpreter at the Barnacle State Historic Site, Indian Key State Historic Site and the Charles Deering Estate. In summer 1993 he was commissioned by the Big Cypress National Preserve and the Student Conservation Association to research one of South Florida's most undocumented histories: The Logging History of the Big Cypress Swamp. He is shown to the right looking out of the window of one the Big Cypress Swamp's last logging shacks in Copeland.

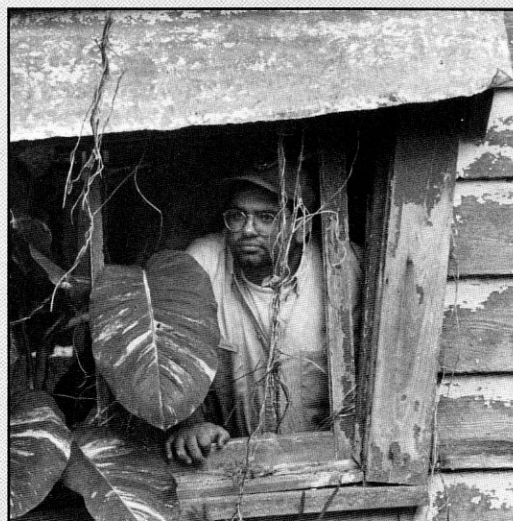


Photo by Cindy Seip, 1993.

Becerra's exhibit entitled, "Jerome: Lost, Found/ A Photographic Essay on South Florida's Last Great Sawmill," will be traveling to institutions around the state throughout 1994. (See schedule to right.)

Jerome: Lost, Found.

The Story of South Florida's Last Great Sawmill
A Photographic Exhibition
by Cesar A. Becerra

1994 EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

January 31—February 17

Borders Book Store, Miami
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February 18—February 20

Florida Railroad Days, Fort Myers
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February 21—March 18

Railroad Museum of South Florida, Fort Myers
(813) 332-7245

March 19—April 30

Historical Museum of Fort Myers, Fort Myers
(813) 332-6879

May 1—May 17

The Big Cypress National Preserve, Ochopee
(813) 695-4111

May 18—May 22

Florida Historical Society Annual Meeting
at Sheraton Harbor Hotel, Fort Myers
(813) 337-0300

May 23—May 27

Cypress Elementary School, Miami
(305) 271-1611

May 28—June 30

Florida International University Library, Miami
(305) 348-2470

July 1—July 31

Historical Museum of Southern Florida, Miami
(305) 375-1492

August 1—August 31

Photographic Gallery of Clyde & Nikki Butcher,
Ochopee
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September 1—September 30

Labelle Heritage Museum, Labelle
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October 1—October 31

Historical Museum of Collier County, Naples
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Alva Museum, Alva
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December 1—December 28

Clewiston Historical Museum, Clewiston
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December 29—January 5, 1995

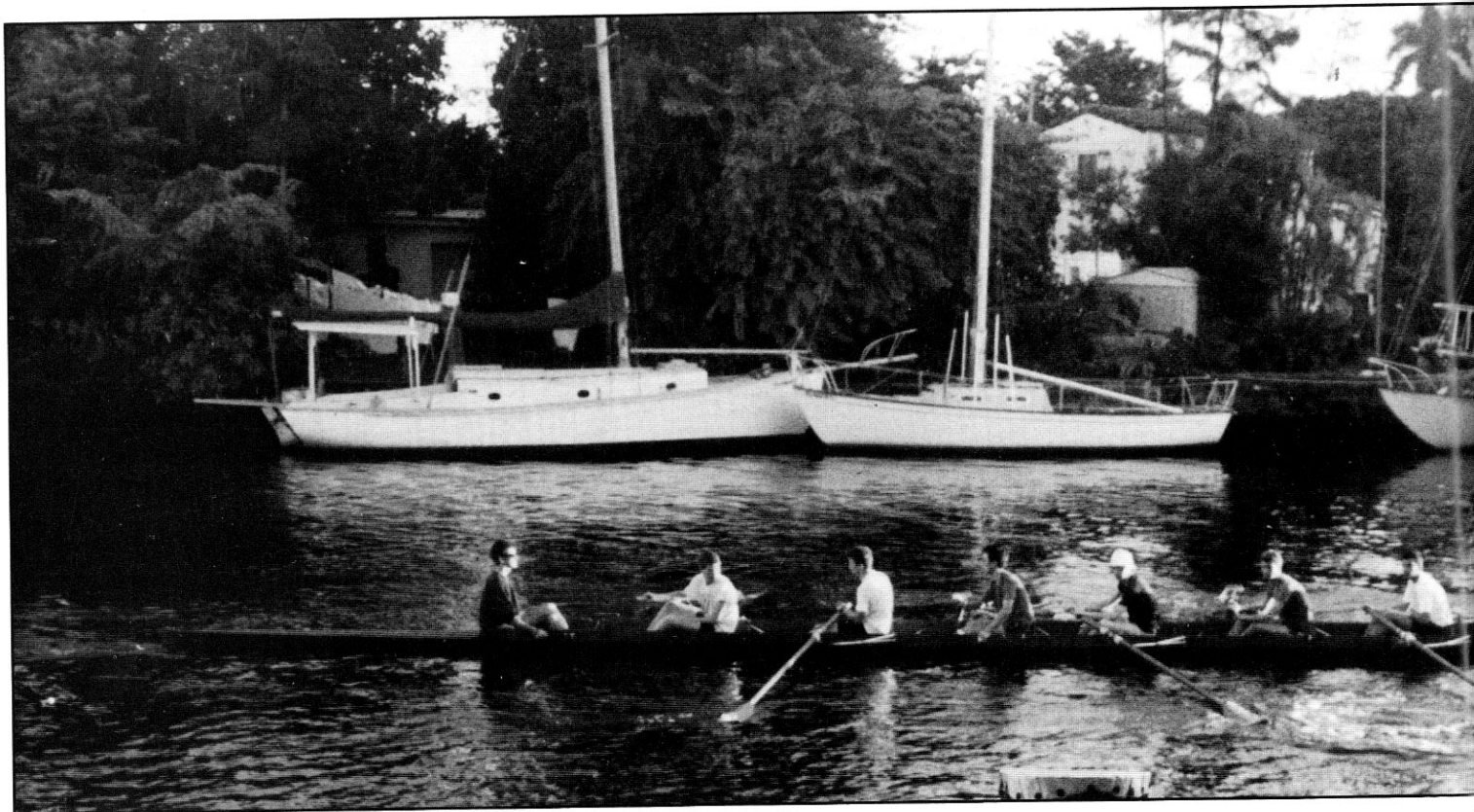
Everglades Lumber Company, Miami
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Serenity, Emergency & Curiosity

Incidents of Life on the Miami River

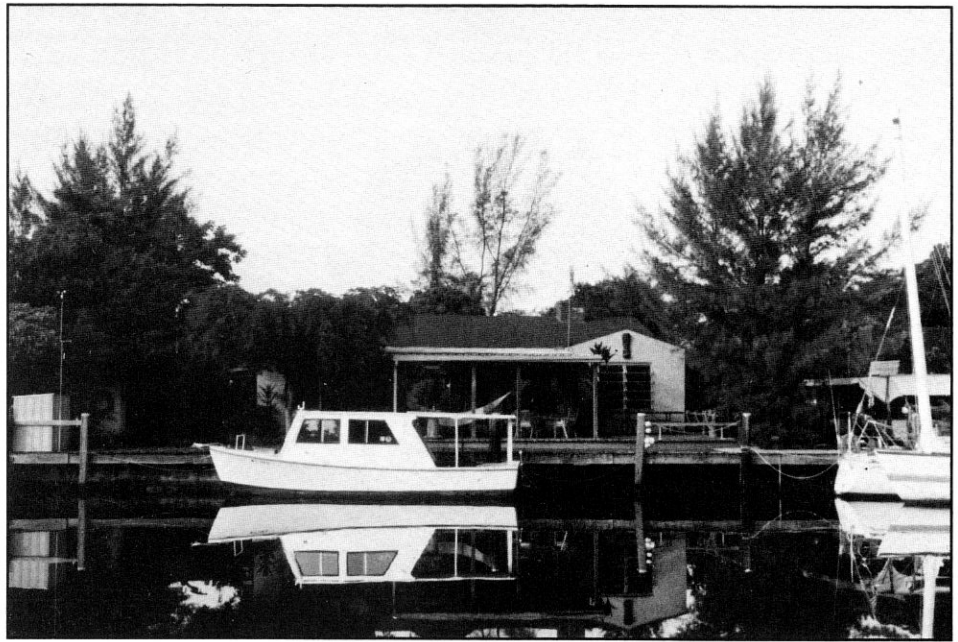
by Donald C. Gaby

Don Gaby's book, *The Miami River and Its Tributaries*, published in fall 1993, chronicles the people, places and events marking the river's history, from prehistoric times to today. This article of Don's personal experiences on the river was written just for *South Florida History Magazine*, to tell the stories not found in the history book. . .



We called our new home “Canal Cottage,” because it was not actually on the Miami River, but rather on the Miami Canal. Many people, even old-timers, didn’t know the difference, and everyone seemed to call the canal the river. In any case, it was just up from where the canal joins the river and only a few blocks from where the “falls” or rapids of the Miami River once marked its headwaters and the eastern edge of the Everglades.

We had moved from Coconut Grove in 1978, where we thought we had the perfect retirement home and a home for our sailboat at the Coconut Grove Sailing Club. But a new job with the National Environmental Satellite Service, whose most important customer in Florida was the National Hurricane Center, meant we needed a secure place for the boat so I’d be free in the event of a hurricane emergency. Several years were spent looking, but we finally found a new



home where we could keep a boat safe at our own dock. Some might not forgive our switching to a “stink pot” powerboat.

Besides 118 feet of deep water dockage, we had a house from which every room enjoyed a view of the river/canal. We even had a 1733 Spanish cannon to guard the front yard.

Natural Wonders

We’ve seen more wildlife at our home on the river than in two previous homes in unincorporated Dade County and in Coconut Grove. Besides the usual birds that were attracted to our feeder in the Grove, there were a green heron who made his home near the bridge approach, an osprey who liked to perch on a neighbor’s sailboat mast while awaiting dinner, skimmers who worked the surface, ducks both domestic and wild, and many others.

Winter was always heralded by large flights of sea gulls flying up the river in the early morning and back down the river in late afternoon. Manatees were common, often a

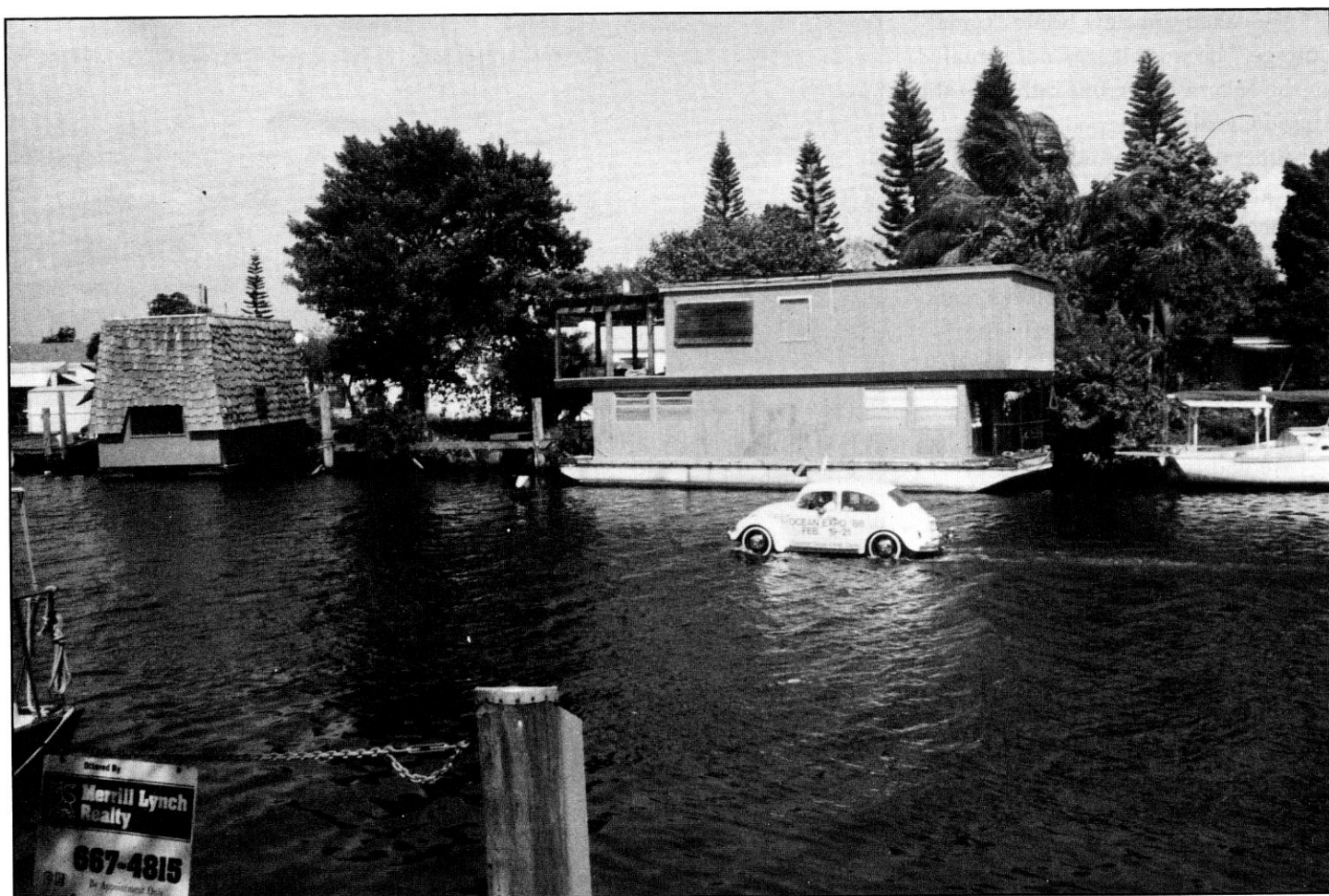
mother with calf, once a group of five. They are shy creatures, and usually quick to dive. Turtles, and once a huge iguana, passed our way.

Among the fishes, mullet and drum were most common, but tarpon, snook, snapper, needlefish, and even barracuda have been seen. On shore, the ubiquitous possum, raccoons, and squirrels joined their friends, the land crabs. An old rat, crippled with rheumatism, was a friend below the dock until he no longer could come up at night.

One day we received a visit at our home by ecologist and author Anne LaBastille, daughter of Irma LaBastille, a cultivated lady of spunk and daring known on the river as Kate Thornhill. Anne, accomplished in her own right as the author of several books and holder of a Cornell doctorate, had come to see the “caves” of the Miami River.

These caves, formerly referred to as tunnels, the Seminole Caves or Pirate’s Cove, were the site of a variety of activities. The tunnels were a location for Hollywood’s 1922 *Robinson Crusoe* film. They were the





site for fraternity initiation rites and at one time, a Japanese-style sunken garden was located nearby.

Accompanied by her constant companion, a huge German Shepard dog named Major, Anne was ready to see these "wonders" of nature. We used her canoe and I got in first. Then Major, without invitation, leaped from our cruiser into the canoe, precarious enough without an enormous four-legged beast. I thought surely we'd both tumble into the river. But Major had obviously done it many times before, like an expert seaman.

Anne sat in the bow as we paddled down the river to the caves property, then and now owned by the Miccosukee Indian Tribe. Their guard dog was smaller, and didn't protest as we stepped ashore to visit

and satisfy Anne's curiosity.

(The caves actually began as "solution holes" in the tropical hardwood hammock on the ridge. They were artificially enlarged to caves in the early 1920s.)

An Uncertain Death

My wife Elly and I grew up in South Florida and never lived in a house with air conditioning. We preferred to sleep with the windows open to enjoy the night air and to hear the birds in the early morning. One night shortly after midnight, Elly heard something she had never heard before—someone faintly calling, "Help me, help me." I searched the opposite shore with a powerful flashlight while Elly called the police.

When the police arrived, one

officer stayed on the south shore while I joined the other on the north side. With the police car's blue light turning, we explored the backyards of several homes where the occupants were obviously oblivious to what we heard outside. Dogs barked loudly while the air-conditioners whirred and their owners slept.

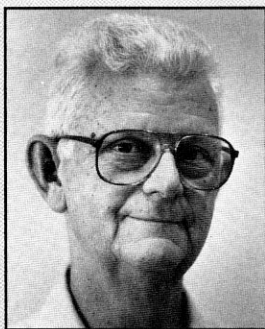
Clinging to the side of a houseboat the officer found an old woman. Tired of life, she had walked to the 27th Avenue bridge from the Musa Isle Senior Citizens Center, then leaped off the bridge to end it all. Evidently she changed her mind after hitting the water or on the way down. When pulled from the water by the police officer apparently she was still undecided. Her first question was, "Why didn't you leave me there?"

River Racers

Canoeists are not unusual on the river. Singly or in groups, often just exploring but sometimes racing, they come up from Biscayne Bay to beyond the river where the Tamiami Canal borders Mel Reese Golf Course, a beautiful stretch with shady trees on the south bank. For races, Elly would often prepare "Gaby Punch," a blend of tropical fruit juices with the most important ingredient being guava nectar. The first one or two racers, hot and sweaty, would usually press on, since they had a chance to win. Others gladly pulled over to our boat for a cool, refreshing glass of tropical punch. It was a treat on both sides.

One day we were surprised to see a racing shell come flying by the house. Later they stopped to talk. It was a team from Georgetown University, visiting Miami on vacation. Clearly they didn't prefer the usual tourist attractions. Other racing teams in shells have passed on occasion.

We were even more surprised on another occasion to see a Volkswagen automobile driving up the river. We'd heard that the bug's big tires made her buoyant, but had never seen it for ourselves.



Representing the fourth generation of his family calling Miami home, Don Gaby was born in Arizona, but grew up in South Dade, attending all 12 years at Redland Farmlife School. He served as a U.S. Air Force weather officer, an aviation weather forecaster for American Airlines, and in Miami he worked for the National Weather

Service and the National Environmental Satellite Service. He conducts historical research, with his latest book on the history of the Miami River published by the Historical Museum of Southern Florida and available through the museum book store, (305) 375-1492. (196 pages, 110 photographs, \$9.95 plus tax.)

Close Calamities

Fire! As we looked at our neighbor's small boatyard, we could see smoke pouring from a large yacht at his dock. I raced to get my fire extinguisher and handed it over as others called the Fire Department and brought hoses. The fire truck soon arrived at N.W. 18th Terrace, but on the wrong side of the river! When the truck finally arrived at the boat yard and extended its hose, the hose burst. Other fire trucks behind the first one could not get closer because of the narrow street. Fortunately, the fire was put out with yard hoses before great damage was done. The fire had started in the engine room.

One morning, having only glanced down the river, I pulled out from our dock to see a heavy steel salvage boat, *Seaker*, approaching. She was towing a boat up the port side of the river—one might say the wrong side—and headed straight for me. I should have reversed back into my space, but thought I could clear my neighbor's boats and get back toward the south shore before she reached me. It was a poor judgment!

Just before we could turn out of the way, *Seaker*, never slowing or altering course in the slightest, struck us on the port bow. Elly, who had

just cast off the bow line, was fortunately firmly gripping the rail along the top of the cabin. Her feet flew out from under her as the boat was bounced toward the shore. Embarrassed, but without injury to Elly, we pressed on down the river.

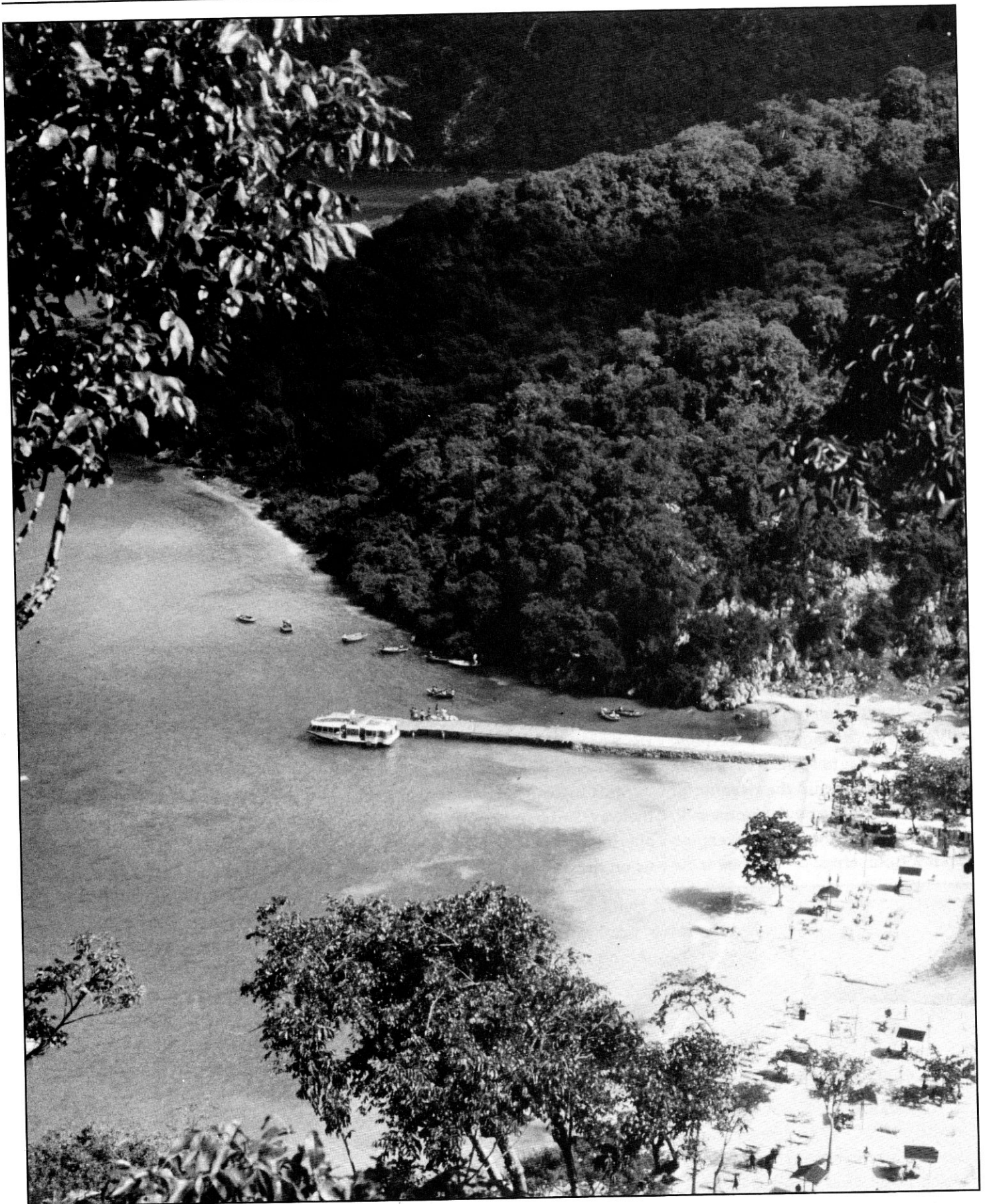
Our diesel-powered cruiser, a 27-foot Lindsey Offshore, was designed as a work boat with heavy fiberglass construction, but built for us with a long cabin and the engine mounted in the cockpit with a V-drive. Despite the heavy blow, the hull damage was very minimal.

What They Don't Know...

We confess to being fanatics for good drinking water. We distilled our own as long as we had a house.

Often ignorant people will comment about the "filthy Miami River." It may not be clean, but in some ways it beats city water. To make that point, I took a gallon of water from about 18 inches below the surface of the river and reduced it to one quart by distillation. Then I took a gallon of our tap water from the Metro-Dade Water and Sewer Authority and reduced it to one quart by distillation. At meetings I'll sometimes ask others to pick the river water. They invariably point to the dark colored water with some sediment in one jar while the almost-clear water in the other jar contains what was taken from the river.

Plans call for dredging the Miami River and Canal to remove the accumulated sediment of 60 years; that is, making it 15-feet deep and clean from bank to bank. When that is done, we'll once again easily see the bottom and observe all of the marine life that the river contains. That should spur renewed efforts to control any future contamination, and Miamians will again enjoy the beautiful asset that is our river.



A typical Caribbean beach waiting for the cruise passenger to discover it. (HASF, gift of Arthur Chapman)

The Happy Ships

The History of Commodore Cruise Line

by Arthur E. Chapman

Some people today find themselves dreaming of the rich ambiance of yesterday's luxury passenger liners—ships where a passenger could enjoy not only large comfortable staterooms but a level of service that placed one in an especially charming way of life...

Overall, the level of service on the high seas became a tradition of excellence, a tradition, sadly, maintained by only a few lines today. One line that has is Commodore Cruise Line.

Commodore Cruise Line began operations in 1966 from the Port of Miami as a one-ship company helping to pioneer the seven-day Caribbean cruising experience. Its founder was Miami Hotelier Sanford Chobol, who began operations by chartering the *M/S Princess Leopoldina* for a two-year period. (Chobol owned two hotels on Miami Beach.) Ed Stephan served as first president of this new line (later becoming the head of Royal Caribbean Cruise Line) and under his direction Commodore quickly grew into a prestigious line with a proud name.

The *Leopoldina*, as the original ship, cruised the Caribbean on a

weekly schedule, calling on such exotic ports as St. Thomas, Curaçao, and Puerto Rico. So successful was this venture that in 1968 Commodore purchased the original "Happy Ship," the 450-passenger *M/V Boheme*. The *Boheme* sailed under German registry because German banks had arranged the financing. Not only was the ship named for the opera, but all the public rooms were named for parts, people or places from the famous performance. Built and designed in Finland, the *Boheme* quickly established itself as the number one cruise ship in the world for rate of occupancy.

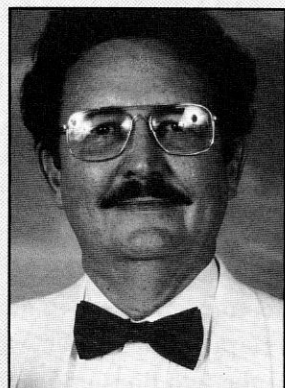
Using its reputation as a new but unique line, Commodore became the first Caribbean line to include four stops or ports of call in its seven-day cruising itinerary. It also was the first line to include such unusual ports of call as Cap Haitien in Haiti and Pu-

erto Plata, located on the historical northern coast of the Dominican Republic. So successful was this venture that Commodore realized that one ship was just not enough to meet the needs of the cruising public. So in October 1973, the *M/S Bolero* was added to its growing fleet as a transfer from the European market. Again Commodore set the pace for the rest of the industry as Mexico was included in the itinerary as a regular port of call. In 1976 the *M/S Caribe* replaced the *Bolero* and the *Bolero* was returned to European service.

The addition of the *Caribe* (originally the *Freeport*) to the Commodore fleet was significant as the vessel was specially constructed in Germany for the Caribbean trade. It had a car or cargo deck that could hold 120 full-sized passenger cars and carry 500 passengers. The *Caribe* was to service the Miami area in the winter and the Maine-Canada area in the summer, filling both ferry/cargo and passenger needs.

The Caribbean ports of call were then divided between the two ships; the *Caribe* called at Freeport, Puerto Plata, St. Thomas and San Juan. The *Boheme*, with a slightly different schedule, was assigned to call at the ports of Puerto Plata, St. Thomas, San Juan and Cap Haitien.

These ships were unique as cruise ships for they also carried cargo, an unusual mix. It was this



Arthur Chapman (also known by his middle name, Ed), is the fourth generation of a pioneering Florida family. He holds a doctorate degree in history from the University of Miami and an MBA from Florida International University. He currently teaches at both universities and is a frequent contributor to *South Florida History Magazine* and *Tequesta*. He resides in Coral Gables with his wife, Toni, and his son, John, who is the fifth generation of the family living in southern Florida.



This ship is unique as a cruise ship for it also carried cargo, an unusual mix. (HASF, gift of Arthur Chapman)

mix that helped Commodore set the pace in history again, helping the Port of Miami pioneer the use of RO RO (roll-on roll-off containerized) cargo, a basic and essential factor in cargo operations today.

The *Caribe* had been originally designed and built in Scotland for leisure and luxury cruising and much of the unusual and high quality workmanship of her construction was retained. The wide hallways and stairways, the oak and walnut carpentry and the finely detailed mahogany and teak decks were all refurbished, along with the mirrored columns, chandeliers and original oil paintings.

The *Caribe* was ultimately sold to Scandinavian World Cruise Lines, which renamed her the *Scandinavian*

Sun, joining a unique passenger/car New York to Miami ferry service that has since been discontinued. The replacement for this ship was the former *Olympia*, renamed the *Caribe I*, which began service with Commodore in the summer of 1983.

With the arrival of the *Caribe*, the *Boheme*, due to her smaller size, was transferred to the St. Petersburg cruise market. There she continued in service for several years and was ultimately sold to a private group who renamed her the *Freewind*.

In 1987 Commodore Cruise Line and its then parent company, Sally Ab, was acquired jointly by Effoa and the Johnson Line. This merger into a new corporate firm became world reknown as EffJohn International. Commodore kept its flag at

the Miami base of operations and Sally continued on with the ferry operations in the English Channel but both functioned under the ownership of EffJohn.

In 1989, EffJohn purchased the Bermuda Star Line as a direct buy out obtaining in their purchase three ships: the *Queen of Bermuda*, the *Bermuda Star* and the *Vera Cruz*. The *Vera Cruz* was then chartered out and after two years was sold to the chartering party. The other ships were renamed the *Enchanted Seas* and the *Enchanted Isle*.

But in the best tradition of Commodore, all the new ships carried only 700 to 900 passengers, preserving the intimate, informal atmosphere of the "Happy Ships." In 1990 EffJohn merged the two lines under

Book Reviews

By Stuart McIver

Totch: a Life in the Everglades. By Loren G. "Totch" Brown. Foreword by Peter Matthiessen. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. 269 pages. Hardback, \$29.95; paperback, \$16.95.

"Dad had set up a still nearby, and he was making moonshine and selling it to the natives of the area," writes Totch Brown. "Remember, in the Depression you did what you had to do."

To some extent, that sums up the life of Loren G. "Totch" Brown. "You did what you had to do," if you lived off the land in the primitive, cash-poor world of the Everglades and the Ten Thousand Islands.

Among the things Totch "had to do" were gator hunting, commercial fishing, crabbing, poaching, movie acting, singing, songwriting, serving with heroism in the European Theater in World War II, and pot smuggling. An impressive resume.

Totch was born on Chokoloskee Island in 1920. His strange nickname, a corruption of the word "Tots," was inherited from the man for whom he was named. Brown's grandfather was the famous trader and newspaper

columnist, Charles G. McKinney, a contemporary of Ed Watson, the menacing outlaw gunned down at Chokoloskee by neighbors tired of being frightened to death of him. The 1920 murder was the subject of Peter Matthiessen's novel, *Killing Mr. Watson*. Matthiessen, a longtime friend of Brown's, wrote the foreword to *Totch*.

Totch's tale, well-illustrated by historical and family photos, ranges from the west coast of Florida to Flamingo, to Key Largo, to the Last Chance Bar in the Homestead/Florida City area, to Georgia's Okefenokee Swamp, and finally to the drug scene in Colombia.

Luckily for us, Totch Brown, who wrote this book without ever having read one, is a born story-teller. In our age of glitz and high-tech, he makes his Old Florida come to life for us.

Vic Knight's Florida. By Victor M. Knight. Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Company. 236 pages. Hardback, \$16.95.

Like Totch Brown, Victor Knight is both a Florida native and a storyteller. A fifth generation Floridian, born in St. Petersburg, Knight can

also point to a varied but decidedly different resume. He plays horn in his own big band, owns Florida radio stations (as many as four at one time), produces a nationally syndicated Big Band radio show from his studio at WDBF in Delray Beach and in his spare time writes books about his Florida.

His subject matter stretches from discovery to today's Miami Bayside and the territory he covers reaches from the Keys to the Panhandle, the home of his ancestors. He deals with such far ranging subjects as the early Spanish period, later problems with water, the Boom, and also throws in insightful anecdotes about such varied figures as Henry Flagler and Irlo Bronson (if you've been to Disney World, you've probably ridden on his highway).

Illustrated with historic photos, the book is not heavy on photos—for a good reason. His publisher, Dr. Milburn Calhoun, of New Orleans, told him: "I don't want to do a picture book. Your strength is storytelling." The stories are breezy, often funny, but along the way the reader gets a good lesson in Florida history.

Book Reviews continued on page 34

the Commodore Flag with three ships: the *Caribe*, the *Enchanted Seas* and the *Enchanted Isle*.

It was Dean Hoffmeister (president twice and now president of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau) who originated the concept of "theme cruises" that quickly became a mainstay of the Commodore fleet. Under the direction of President Ove Nordqvist (president three times) this concept

was expanded and received strong management support. Once again, Commodore set the pace for the entire industry, which now commonly offers such theme cruises.

EffJohn was seeking an upscale market and acquired the Crown Cruise Line fleet in 1991, adding a whole new dimension to Commodore service. But as EffJohn was very heavily invested and committed to the Baltic Sea trade, the decision was

made in early 1993 to form a joint venture with Cunard Line. Cunard would be responsible for the marketing and sales of the newly acquired Crown ships, all the others with the exception of the *Enchanted Seas* were then sold or placed into long term charter service.

It was a long way around the Caribbean from 1968 to 1993, but Commodore still remains in place, operating a "Happy Ship" as before, with full luxury service.

Book Reviews continued from page 33

And to make sure you're paying attention, Knight throws in a few pop quizzes from time to time. For example, he wants to see if you know that a young woman who once served as a hostess and waitress at a rustic Florida Inn almost made it to the throne of England.

Ponce de Léon and the Discovery of Florida. By Douglas T. Peck. St. Paul, Minnesota: Pogo Press. 87 pages. Paperback, \$13.95.

Using the log of Juan Ponce de Léon, Douglas T. Peck retraced the Spanish conquistador's 1513 voyage to Florida in his sailing yacht, *Gooney Bird*. Peck, a retired United States Air Force pilot now living in Bradenton, contends that Ponce de Léon was not seeking the fabled "fountain of youth," but rather a large, rich island known in the early 16th century as Beniny. The explorer never found it in Florida or the Bahamas because the elusive land was probably Mayan country on the mainland of Mexico.

In his voyage, Peck follows Ponce de Léon to such Florida east coast locales as Melbourne Beach, Jupiter Inlet, Lake Worth Inlet, Key Biscayne and Key Largo; and on the west coast, Gasparilla and Sanibel Islands and San Carlos Bay near Fort Myers.

Readers of *South Florida History Magazine* will recall Peck's article in our 1992 Quincentenary issue about a similar voyage in *Gooney Bird*, retracing Columbus' journey of discovery to the New World. His conclusion was that his first landing had been, as was generally believed, at San Salvador in the Bahamas.

Though short, the book gives an interesting account of the voyages of Ponce. It is illustrated principally by line drawings done by the author.

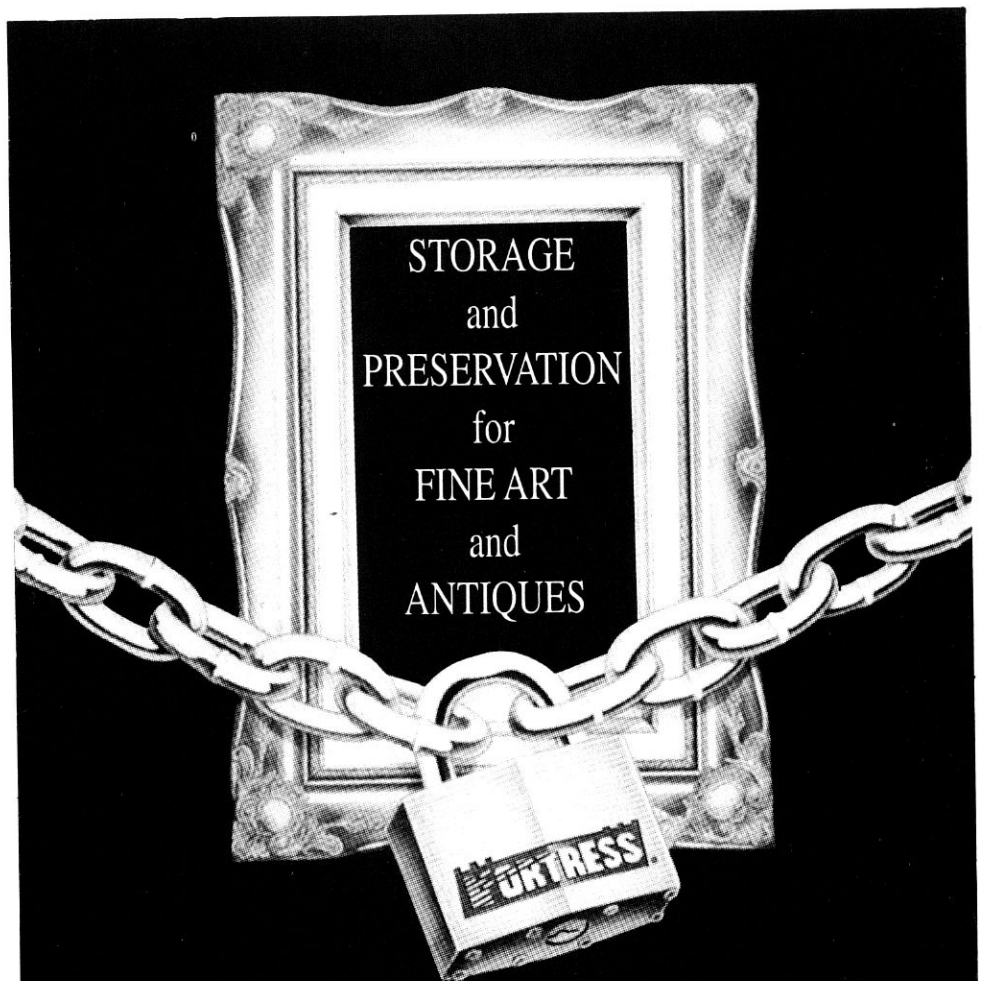
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