

# *Search For Yesterday*

## **A History of Levy County, Florida**



### **Chapter Ten**



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# LIFE IN BRONSON

## 1920 TO EARLY THIRTIES

By Charles F. Kimble

My mother and father moved to Bronson the latter part of 1919. Shortly afterward my sister, Lillie Maud, older brother, Malcolm, and I joined them after a train trip from Georgia where we had been in safekeeping with grandparents and other kin. Jack, the youngest, was already in Bronson.

In January, 1920 we were getting acquainted and settling down in our new home known as the Fisher house. It was large enough with three bedrooms upstairs and two downstairs. There was also a parlor, bath, dining room and kitchen. The Fisher house faced east, built high off the ground, with upstairs and downstairs front porches decorated with the modest amount of gingerbread. The property contained 15 acres and included a field, garden, and front yard with a picket fence. A large water tank and plumbing were added sometime after 1900. The concrete well and outhouse were no longer in use. Other buildings included a barn with stalls and a shed. More recent buildings were a garage and one containing an electric generator with double row of storage batteries.

The age of the house was uncertain. It was generally agreed it was at least fifty years old. My parents purchased the property from Abbie I. and John S. Fisher. Records indicate these 15 acres were sold Oct. 30, 1873 by Mariah E. and John F. Jackson to Laura Buford, wife of Wm. Buford. I don't know whether the Fisher house existed at the time of this sale. It seems possible Laura Buford was a widow maybe buying a home. In this case it would seem the house existed in 1873 and could have been built by the Jacksons. In any event, Laura Buford, widow, conveyed the property to her son, Thomas, on Dec. 8th, 1881. On May 3, 1906, Thomas Buford, living in Alachua County, borrowed \$1000.00 on said 15 acres from R. D. Proctor. My belief is that the Fishers obtained the property from the Proctors.

Close neighbors included Mr. and Mrs. Miles D. Dixon. Their home was a hundred yards or so in front and to the right of our home. I believe Jess Dixon and his wife, Emma (Jones) were running a drug store, but there was Joe, Sid, Ed, and M.D. Jr. at home.

Mr. and Mrs. B. O. Smith lived some distance in front of our house in a yellow brick home. There was Beulah Mae, Horace and Lester also in the Smith home. About the same distance to the rear of our property was the home of Aunt Mandy and

Uncle Alfred Wilkerson. To our left about a hundred yards was the home of Aunt Zude and Uncle Tom Wilkerson. Ike Faircloth and his family lived near Tom Wilkerson. The Faircloth and Alfred Wilkerson homes were near what is now the intersection of Highway 27 and the road to Cedar Key.

The Seaboard Railway was very much alive when we moved to Bronson. There were passenger and freight trains. The passenger train brought the mail and generally arrived just before or right after dark. There was always a crowd milling about waiting for the mail. Most of the evening activity was on the south side of the railroad tracks. The depot was on that side also. Near the depot and parallel to the tracks was M. D. Dixon's General Store, then Darden's Store. Next was Jess Dixon's Drug Store. Then there was a building once operated as a store by Herman Wellman and then as a restaurant by Mr. Moring. Next came the Post Office. Norma Wellman was the postmistress and Frank Marshburn became Postmaster later. Beyond the Post Office there was once Stroud's Garage, but later Hatcher's Store was in about the same place. Skipping a little space there was a building once occupied by Dr. Twiggs and also Carl Wellman's Barber Shop. To the rear of this building was the Masonic Lodge. Somewhat to the rear of the drug store was a general store owned by Salem Bean. Mr. Prevatt operated a store and meat market back of the depot.

Across from the depot on the north side of the tracks was a two story brick store operated by B. O. Smith. He had groceries, dry goods, and hardware and kept funeral caskets upstairs. There was a street between Smith's store and the Bank of Levy County. Next to the bank was the Ford Agency owned by G. A. Boyd. Close by was the two story Boyd Hotel and Boarding House, over which Mrs. Boyd presided. The Boyd's three children, Turner, Louise, and Edith Margaret, were at home and attending school.

There was a road that crossed the tracks at a right angle to the depot. Going north it passed between the bank and Smith's store and by the Smith home back of the store. A short distance farther on the right side lived Blanch and Clarence Lindsey. Next to their home Mr. Lindsey operated the Coca Cola Bottling Works. At a later date he moved the plant into the defunct bank building.

Going back across the tracks on this road the



**Mr. J. P. Kimble (1877-1957) whose son, Charles, wrote part of Chapter 10. His grandmother was Betsy Fannin Kimble, granddaughter of James Fannin. The name was Fanning until the Revolutionary War. James' brother Edmund remained loyal to England and James expressed his displeasure by changing his name from Fanning to Fannin. This family is probably of the same lineage as the early pioneer Fannins of frontier Texas. The old Fisher house is in the background.**

depot was on the right, and after crossing a roadway, Prevatt's store was on the right. Continuing on this street there were several buildings. Dave Graham was on the left with a watch repair and jewelry store. And for a time, Mr. Merchant operated a store also on the left. A Dry Cleaning Plant was on this street in 1924. Other buildings were sort of abandoned.

We spent a lot of time in or near the drug store. Most drinks were a nickel, but sometimes Jess would shave the ice and add pineapple for a nice ten cent treat. Right out front we played marbles a lot. I think Max Wellman was the best shot as his thumb was powerful and shaped right. Jess got a chunk of ice from Jacksonville two or three times a week which was shipped in croker sacks and packed with sawdust. This was opened in front of the store, but near the tracks in the same place many times. The sawdust accumulated and made a good place to play. There was a period when Horace Smith and another boy, whose last name was Spillane, took over the sawdust pile at mail time with a wrestling match. They "rassled" so much that little attention was paid them, but they grunted and laughed and hollered so much that it came to be part of the evening. After the mail "run" the crowd dwindled and the "rassling" ended.

My father, J. P. Kimble, and his brother-in-law, B. B. Stokes, started the Bronson Manufacturing Company. They were joined in this enterprise by John R. Willis, Attorney, W. J. Epperson, Land Owner, C. A. Lindsey, Coca Cola Bottler, and Roman Sanchez, Farmer.

The building to house the machinery was obtained from the now inactive Otter Creek Lumber Company. Two boilers and smokestacks also came from Otter Creek. The building was primarily of heavy 12" x 12" timbers fitted and secured by long iron rod bolts. This sturdiness was required to support the shafts and pulleys for the lathes, saws, planers, and stapling machines used to make bean and lettuce hampers.

After a few successful years in making hampers it was decided to build an ice plant and cold storage. Also, a steam powered electric generator was included to provide power for the town.

Times were booming and business was good. The 15 ton ice plant was over worked and still did not fill demand. About 1926 or 1927 the electric franchise was sold to Florida Power Corporation. Forty tons was added to the capacity of the ice plant and more cold storage was built. Two 3000 horsepower electric motors powered the new compressors. The Florida boom was in full swing. I remember working overtime till 10 p.m. in the crate mill on several occasions.

More water was needed for the cooling towers of the ice plant so a new well was drilled. Down about

600 feet there was a 6 foot layer of coal penetrated. A log was kept of the well which finally reached 978 feet. I remember Alex Speer, president of Florida Power Corp., stopped by frequently and was quite interested. Also, Mr. Lummus of Miami, who was living at the Hardee Hotel thought we might strike oil. He encouraged drilling after sufficient water was obtained and I believe he voluntarily contributed to the cost. He was obtaining oil leases and people were excited.

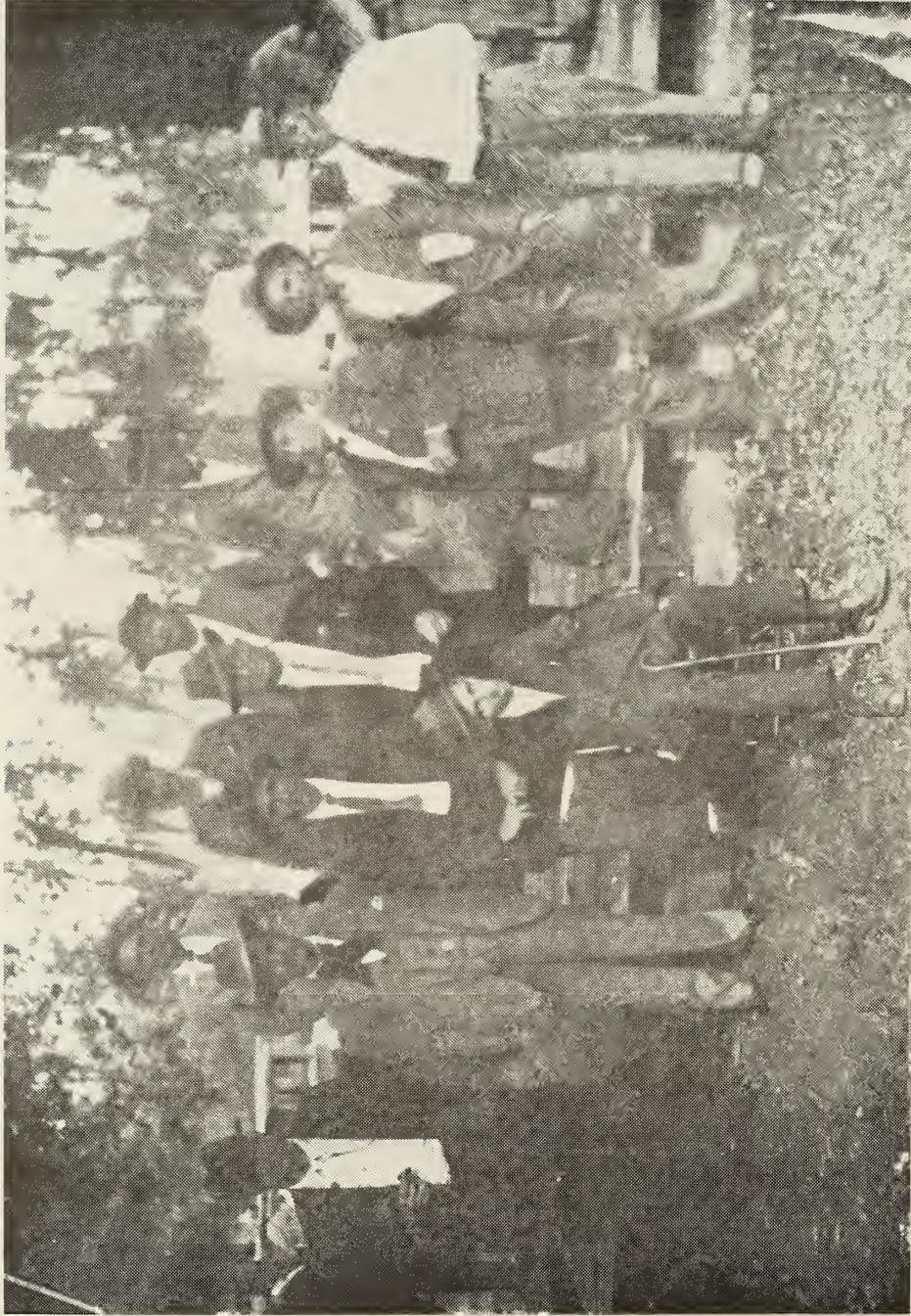
About that time gasoline showed up in the pitcher pump by Dixon's store. I remember you could pump water for a time and then the gasoline showed up. Someone always threw a match on it to emphasize the oil. Some gagster thought up this prank.

L. W. Drummond owned a turpentine still in the early 20's which was southwest of the depot and near the mill and ice plant. Later Mr. Owens was in the same business. Mr. and Mrs. G. M. Owens moved to Bronson from Yulee, Fla. Their children, Cecil and Margaret were quite young at the time. It is a coincidence that Yulee and Levy County are named for the same man.

At the time of national elections the town would come alive. This was preceded by political rallies with speeches and usually a wash pot of chicken pileau. Finally, on election night everybody congregated downtown and centered around the barber shop, drug store and post office. The news came over the depot telegraph and there was a constant coming and going of messengers. Judge Joe C. Sale had once been a telegraph operator so on election night he assisted the agent in writing the returns. The news was hotfooted to the waiting groups whose blood pressure rose and fell with each message. I am sure there were some bets and a lot of exciting conversation. Over night a graveyard would appear near the depot and the graves would have a marker of those supporting losing candidates. Some people were having a lot of fun and others consoled themselves with prospect of next election.

After being out of school a year and a half, I entered the fifth grade in Bronson in January, 1920. My teacher, Mrs. Waring, was the principal and a good teacher, which pleasantly surprised me as I first heard of her as "Old Lady Waring". The other teacher, Miss Barnhard, was young and pretty but did not teach the fifth grade. I remember being taught by A. P. Hardee, Newell Priest, Austin Baird, Professor Newsome, Mrs. Kelly, Professor Corr and his daughter, Alice Corr, and D. E. Williams. Mr. Williams later became State Superintendent for Negro Education.

I remember many students from my Bronson school days. Some have been mentioned. Others were: J. B., Wilbur and Livingston Anderson; Frances, Martha and Russell Whidden; Haskell



At a political rally in Bronson about 50 years ago. The man seated was Tax Collector Malcom Graham. In the front row, second from left, was Congressman Lex Green, father of Circuit Court Judge Buzzy Green; fifth was Sheriff L. L. Johns, seventh was Luther W. Drummond, grandfather of Levy County State Bank President Luther Drummond.

Hardee, Carl and Otto Wellman; C. B. Prevatt, Britt Lewis, Harold Walker, Natalie Merchant; Gertrude, Ralph, Hugh and George Darden; Thelma and Charlie McCoy; Henry Coulter; Wilbur, Eleanor and Dorothy Bean; Thelma Willis, Irene Humes, Roly Winningham, Lessie Faircloth, John Dean, Roberta and Candy Laney; Mertie and Pete Jones; Frank and Lint Moring; Grace, Ruby and Perry Fugate; Ella May; Myrtle, Evans, Milton and Carroll Gilbert; Nadine, Mary Frances, Grace, B. G., Charles and Wilson Lastinger; Nellie Faircloth; Ralph and Louise Rivers; Gordon Drummonds, Mark Hopkins, John Kelly, Lamar Hilton; Frank, Fred, and Reba Fender; Henry and R. L. Smith; P. K., Stacy and Grace Rowell; Vassie and Ernest Pinson; Willie and C. J. Spencer; Leon, Emma, Jeannette, Woodrow and Bernice Edwards; My cousins: Mary, Ruth, Lillian, Bailey and Bill Stokes; In my graduating class there was Eva Gilbert, Earl Walker, Frankie Coulter, Zack Lewis, Max Wellman and Bascom Hardee, who was valedictorian. Some names escape me which I will recall later and regret omitting.

We had some nicknames, too. Some of them were Speck, Fudge, Skunk, Possum, Goose, Wampus, Zorro, Pete, Sweetback, Hatch, Toad, Newt, Old Sop, and others. Those who remember will have little difficulty in sorting them out.

Our school was a two story yellow brick building with four classrooms downstairs. Two classrooms and the auditorium were upstairs. There was convocation each morning in the auditorium. Also, the school put on plays occasionally and the P.T.A. and other meetings were held at the school. Several years the business men subscribed to enough tickets to bring Chautauqua to the school for three days of afternoon and evening performances. There were magicians, singers, dancers, yodelers, comedians, bell ringers, and a lecturer. It was a real treat at the time although I only remember one lecturer. He was William Jennings Bryan and he remained seated while speaking.

One morning after Halloween the stage curtains was raised and there was a large outhouse on stage. The curtain was immediately lowered. To this day I have wondered who put it there and how it was brought up the stairs.

Judge John R. Willis was public spirited and prominent in local and state politics. He generally spoke to us when school opened and admonished us to apply ourselves well that we might "fill the shoes" of our elders in later life. It happened that Bascom O. Hardee, a classmate, opposed Judge Willis for 1935 House of Representatives. He reminded the Judge of his former speeches by saying he was ready to "fill those shoes". He was elected.

In the early 20's the boys wore short pants till they were out of high school. I think it was 1923 when boys of all ages started wearing long pants. I went with my father to Palatka when he was arranging with Barnett Refrigeration Co., to build the ice plant and cold storage in Bronson. While in Palatka he bought my first and only pair of green long pants. I had to alternate wearing long and short pants for a time.

Kids love to get in the water and occasionally we managed to get to Blue Springs. Rides were not easy to come by and we walked the three miles sometimes. It was easier to jump in the pond known as Cow Ford back of the Wellman home. We were admonished about this without much success. Someway I managed to get malaria with its intermittent fever. I took quinine and a lot of Atabrine which would help but never seem to completely cure. The atabrine made your skin turn yellow a bit. The road to Chiefland used to leave Bronson by way of Oak Street and made a left turn just beyond the Bottling works. Right around that turn on the right side was a deep clay pit left when the road was built. We swam in that as long as we could get away with it. Our parents were opposed and finally Mr. Coulter had it filled with dirt.

Watermelon pond was a good place to swim but hard for us to reach. We walked about eight miles to it once or twice. I remember once when we had a boy scout troop that we walked out there and camped overnight. Col. Wm. E. Rivers was always friendly and helpful to the young folks and we could generally count on him for assistance. He was our scout master and camped with us on this occasion. We had supplies which included enough for supper and breakfast, with coffee, sugar and one can of condensed milk. We had our swim, built a fire and boiled some coffee. We looked everywhere for the condensed milk but finally found that Col. Rivers had opened it and drank the whole can. We didn't hold it against him but the milk would have improved the "barefoot" coffee.

In the summer I worked at the crate mill. In fact, I was water-boy at \$1.00 per day when the mill was built. Mr. Drummond had his turpentine quarters nearby and water was obtained for the quarters at the edge of a pond from a barrel buried almost completely. The bottom was out the the barrel and to some extent the water was filtered. The distance from the new mill to the water source was just a little more than a bucket of water. After each trip I was greeted with: "Water Jack, should be here, and halfway back."

After school I could pick up a little money hauling wood. We had a wagon and a horse named Billy. The machine that cut the round bottoms for the crates always left some half-moon waste wood. I got 50 cents for each load delivered in town.

Football was practically unknown to us when I entered school in Bronson. There was never a team while I was there. I suspect there was a time in the twenties when there was not a football in Bronson and possibly Levy County. About 1925 there was a basket ball court set up between the school and courthouse.

But the big deal was baseball. We played at recess, lunch time and after school. We played for sure in the summer and around the school some in the winter months. There were ball diamonds at various times all over town. In front of the school building and in the back. For various reasons we had to find new places for diamonds several times. There was a diamond to the left of what is now Highway 27 and several hundred yards to the rear of the present Baptist Church. A good one was to the right of 27 and to the left of Pennsylvania Ave., about 1000 feet back of Mrs. Coarsey's home. Also, we played for a time on Mr. Coulter's property known as the fairgrounds. And for a year or two we played at long pond near the home of Carroll Gilbert. Some afternoon games were in front of Darden's home, back of the present post office. And a very popular afternoon spot was between the Stokes home and Masonic Lodge.

During summer doldrums we would ride the freight train to Archer for ball games unannounced and ride the passenger train (with the mail) back. I think the fare was 35 cents. Archer would show up in Bronson and courtesy demanded that we round up a team. Once or twice we had to play with seven players. We often had poor equipment. One or two players had uniforms. Sometimes we were held up as the player with the bat, ball or catcher's mitt didn't show up.

I think there were eleven boys in high school. All were not baseball "nuts" so it was hard to field nine players. I was surprised in the classroom one afternoon when Russell Whidden and my teacher, Newell Priest called me to the door. They wanted to know if I could go with the high school team to play Newberry. I was in the 7th grade. I did get on base, made a run, and caught a long fly in center field, hit by Tom Rowland, later the banker in Newberry. After that, I became addicted to baseball.

I didn't play with town teams at that time but watched all the games I could. Nick West, from Otter Creek, frequently played with Bronson. He had played professional baseball and was really good. He coached a bit, sometimes pitched, but mostly played first base. He gave the team confidence and could talk up a rally. I think he was about 40 years old, but a good athlete, and was the epitome of baseball in his professional uniform.

The other players were good, too. They won a lot of games. Players I remember were: Joe and Ed Dixon; Herman and Carl Wellman; Edgar Pinner,

Milton Clapp, Luther Drummond, Wilbur Bean, George and Ed Dorsett; Newell Priest and sometimes Sid Dixon would play. His performance was excellent as he played with his right arm only. I understand his left arm was lost in a hunting accident. Try catching a ball with the right hand, shake off the glove and throw a runner out at first. He did and he could bat with one hand very well.

I remember one year that Bronson's town team toured south Florida. The tour was quite successful. Among others, my father and L. W. Drummond drove their cars to transport the players. George Dorsett drove his old Ford and became famous for his quick tire changes. I really missed that trip.

If I tried to list all of my memories of ball games in Bronson I am sure it would become boring, but let me mention a few that stand out:

Newell Priest was my seventh grade teacher. He was to play on the Bronson team against Williston in the afternoon. Before starting class that morning he said, "I want to tell you - I dreamed last night that I will knock a homerun in to-day's game". We rode to the game with him in his cut-down pickup truck. I saw him knock the home run he had dreamed about.

We had a game going in front of the school during morning recess when the Sale's home was discovered on fire. We all raced to the scene. I think Jim Turner got there first but his closer position in the outfield gave him some advantage. Some furniture and valuables were being removed, but rescue efforts were soon stopped and we saw the home destroyed.

Now all the Dixons were good ball players. However, the biggest without question was Joe. He was tall and he was big. In fact, his size and weight of about 300 pounds sometimes hampered his efforts. The ball, thrown in normal strike zone, often was difficult for him to hit. I was watching a game back of Mrs. Coarsey's when Joe came to bat. He stood six feet or better and was a right hand hitter. Joe's reach overhead was another foot or so, and when you added the length of the bat you were really getting off the ground. As sometimes happens, the pitcher threw a wild one. That ball must have been nine feet high but it was made to order for Joe Dixon. He swung upward and hit that ball solid. I can still see that ball going up to this day. Joe didn't get on base very often and hesitated till the crowd yelled, "Run Joe!" He wasn't a sprinter and was winded by the time he reached second. It was his intention to stop there, but as the ball was just coming down in some trees beyond left field he was persuaded to puff on over to 3rd base where he definitely decided to go no farther. Now you can't measure how high a ball is knocked but I am convinced Joe Dixon set the world record that day. I never expect it to be



**Ruby Faircloth McKoy (1910-1974) holding her neice, Vivian Smith Sims, 1926, at the old Hafele place along the south shore of Chunky Pond.**

challenged.

Bronson also had a good black team. One Saturday they had a game going with a visiting team when a controversial ruling was made. I don't know what it was about but both teams and a sizeable number of spectators gathered around the pitcher's box. This hassle lasted quite a while and apparently there was to be no satisfactory solution. There was one black woman still seated on the ground and left all alone by the peacemakers in midfield. With the commotion still going strong this lonely woman got up and slowly sauntered to home plate. She attracted attention of the umpire's assistants and in a high shrill voice cried, "I would holler but the town's too small, but I will say He-e-e-y HEY!" With that she walked back to her spot and the problem was settled.

There were two sections of town where most of the blacks in Bronson lived. One was near the crate mill in relatively low ground. This was Sugar Bottom. The other was north of the school and courthouse on higher ground. This was Pepper Hill.

Pennsylvania Avenue started at the railroad near the Bean residence. It proceeded southeast passing the homes of Dixons, Andersons, Stokes, Grahams, Rivers, Eppersons, Marshburns, Walkers, Owens, Hardees, Fenders, Osteens, Fugates, Gilberts, Wellmans, Merchants, Johns, Coarseys, Jones and others. Mrs. Coarsey lived in the only house of its kind in Bronson. It was not very wide and had three stories. She was originally from Pennsylvania. One afternoon she was reminiscing in Jess Dixon's Drug Store. I remember her saying that everyone on her street before the Big Freeze had come from Pennsylvania. After the freeze many of the citrus growers left Bronson for South Florida. The old Coarsey house is still standing. That Big Freeze was in 1896.

I attended Sunday school and services in the Bronson Methodist Church located just north of the high school. Brother Paul Fletcher was the minister. About a year after we moved to Bronson the church was moved next to the parsonage in its present location. My daily school routine at lunch time was to run home, vault the picket fence, eat fast and get back for an inning or two of baseball before the bell ended the hour lunch period. I was slowed down by the fascination of Pat Taylor, of Cedar Key, slowly but surely rolling the church to its new home.

Sometime later, Preacher and Mrs. Rowell moved to Bronson. He was a Methodist minister for several years and some of his children attended school in Bronson. I think Jack and Cecil worked for Ford Agency in Trenton. I was six years older than Stacy and as children do, we played in different groups. He later developed into a good

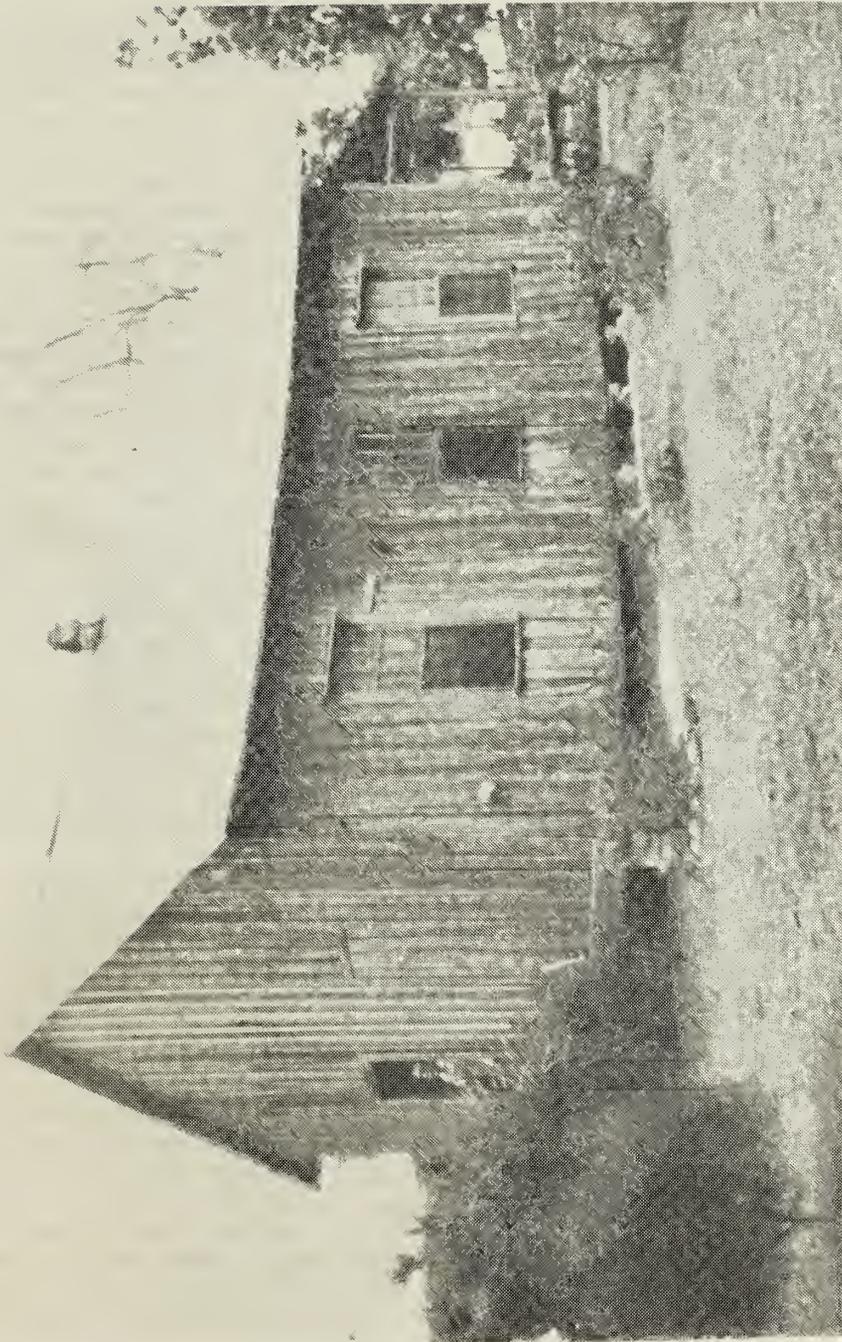
baseball catcher and through his brothers' influence got into auto financing and selling and renting cars. He talked me into the business with Olin's of Miami which brought me to Orlando in 1946. I had left Bronson when Preacher Rowell had a heart attack in the church. I understand he was carried to the Boyd hotel where he died the same night. In March 1974, Stacy died of a heart attack in Wauchula, where he was a Ford dealer. I believe he and his father are buried in Branford, Fla.

Money had to be raised for different reasons from time to time. Occasionally a box supper was promoted. The girls and ladies prepared chicken and other delicacies and decorated the boxes with fancy paper and ribbon. The boxes were auctioned to the highest bidder who then shared with those who prepared them. The auctioneer was generally Joe Sale. Someway the boys found out which box was prepared by their girl and the auctioneer seemed to know when the price was right. A dollar or maybe a dollar and a half was about all my group could bid. The husbands were always successful in bidding on boxes prepared by their wives. The price would reach two dollars but rarely two-fifty. It was exciting and got everybody down town for the evening.

Sometime in the 20's radio reached Bronson but it did not seem successful to us at first. Mack Humes probably got the first set. Anyway, by all reports, he met with more success in tuning in whatever the signals were conveying. Anything heard distinctly was considered a prize. About the same time Mr. Humes was reporting on his successes and failures with his radio another set was purchased by the Masonic Lodge. It was a large set reportedly costing over \$500.00 Some of the cost was for two of the tallest cypress poles to be found and the wire antennae stretched about a hundred feet across the top. I believe Frank Whidden was the principal backer of this project. Anyway, the set was large and was setup in the northeast corner of the hall. A lot of young folks showed up after supper to listen. Ed Dixon took charge of turning the knobs trying to tune in a station and eliminate the static. I was there many times and besides the squawks I remember one message only, "This is KDKA, Pittsburgh, PA."

Traveling shows made one night stands in Bronson. There were Wild West, Animal, and minstrel shows from time to time. The acrobats, wire walkers, and jugglers were good entertainment, especially for the kids.

The first Levy County Fair I remember was set up behind the Courthouse. I think some of the exhibits were actually in the courthouse. The shows and concessions were activated in late afternoon and in the evening. I think I lost about half of the \$50.00 saved in Gunntown before I



The Long Pond School, torn down in 1968. It was built in the Beck Settlement then moved to this location south of Long Pond about 1915. During its last years it was used as a residence. Flossie Ward Worthington started to school here in 1919 at the age of 6.

wised up to the fact that no money could be made pitching at milk bottles. It was a good lesson.

Through arrangements with Mr. Coulter, a fairground was set up on the north side of town. One permanent exhibit building was constructed. I went with Leeander Osteen and Henry Smith to put up a temporary electric line, which was fastened to insulators on pine trees. During the fair we had our pictures made, watched the balloon get filled with hot air before the ascension and ate cotton candy. There were nice exhibits of farm products and home canning but the concessions and Merry-Go-Round attracted more attention. To this day I remember both tunes played on the Merry-Go-Round. They were "Ukulele Lady" and "Let Me Call You Sweetheart." They played alternately for three days and nights. When the fair was over the same crew took down the electric line. Henry asked Leeander to let him climb the pine tree with the climbing spurs as he had never had that experience. Well, Henry got up the tree O.K. and fastened his belt around the tree, but he straightened up in his spurs causing him to lose his footing. He was held to the tree by the belt in sliding down and the gum that oozed out from the first climb slowed him down some. He was unhurt but the front of his overalls were a mess with the gum and pinebark. Leeander said he was the best exhibit at the fair.

In the early 20's Dr. and Mrs. J. W. Turner lived in a home, now occupied by Mrs. Sale, but soon moved to Cedar Key. Dr. Twiggs practiced in Bronson for a year or two. Bronson was without a doctor much of the time. Dr. Smith Turner of Williston was called on frequently and many people went to Gainesville for medical and dental services. The most tragic medical case I recall was Mrs. G. A. Boyd who was severely burned early one morning in the boarding house kitchen. It seems the gallon can usually containing kerosene had gasoline instead. Her habit was to use kerosene in starting a fire in the wood stove. The can must have exploded as she was fatally injured. She was taken to the hospital in Gainesville but the burns were too severe to be successfully treated.

Bronson High School was not accredited in 1927 but Alice Corr and D. E. Williams arranged for Bascom Hardee and me to enter the University of Florida on a probationary basis. While we were there the Bank of Levy County closed as did a lot of banks all over Florida and the nation.

The procedure at the crate mill was to manufacture and store crates all year till time for bean and lettuce harvests in South Florida. Car loads of crates were consigned to dealers who consigned them to farmers who paid for the crates when the produce was shipped. Well, one day Uncle Ben (Stokes) who kept the books for the business showed me a neat pile of returned checks which represented a year's work at the crate mill.

The checks totalled more than \$40,000.00. Oddly enough, most of the checks should have been paid as the writers has sufficient money in their accounts. It was the bankers who were guilty. Some of the checks had been purposely held more than three weeks without being honored. The banks foresaw their closing and unfairly retained any cash they could get their hands on.

The bank failures and the loss of the railroad from Archer to Cedar Key about that time stopped the manufacture of crates. In 1929 after two years at the University, my father asked me to drop out of school for a year to assist in operating the Ice and Cold Storage Plants. That depression was much bigger than one year, however, and I did not return to school.

There was a good deal of hardship for all and some suffered more than others. Money was scarce. I remember peddling ice around town and the difficulty people had in paying for it. Many owed for the ice but would pay a dollar when they could. Mr. Young, the Bank Liquidator was a good customer but also had money problems.

One act of my father's I will never forget. We had assumed a mortgage of \$40,000.00 on the Ice and Cold Storage Plant. Each month we paid \$200.00 interest without fail. Also, our power bill ran as high as \$1000.00 each month. Sometimes we drew a little money, sometimes we did not. The Florida Power Corp., held \$22,000.00 of the mortgage and \$18,000.00 was held by four local men. Alex Speer called frequently at the office and suggested one day that Florida Power foreclose and sell us the property back for \$22,000.00. This struck me as a measure that would greatly relieve the strain we were under. However, my father would have no part of it as he felt obligated to all who had invested with him. We tried to tough it out and over the years I have been proud of his decision.

Each morning I would see the Blacks from "Sugar Bottom" pass the plant. They would have a lunch pail, a shovel, and a burlap croker sack. They went to the woods and filled the sack with moss for drying and ultimate sale. The shovel was for digging gophers which they ate. After eating their lunch the pail was filled with berries. That's the way it was.

About this time a Suwannee Store was opened and operated by Charlie and Pearl Andrews. Chain stores did sell some items cheaper and the competition was a threat to the independents. There was some feeling about this but the opposition was mostly talk. The popularity of the Andrews was a big asset for the Suwannee Store.

I must mention John Peck who was a popular station agent before the railroad was abandoned. He was definitely a character although a man of considerable intelligence and ability. He could send or receive a telegram and write a bill of sale

simultaneously. For a time he and his wife lived upstairs at our house. He carried hair clippers in his pocket and on a summer evening he would sit on the porch clipping his hair and would shear one of his several cats at the same time. On hot days Mr. Peck left the depot and used a water hose at Boyd's Garage to fill his brogans. This was done several times a day. He walked around in unlaced and wet shoes. Appearances did not bother him. His head was clipped and bald on top. Sometimes flies around the depot proved irritating by landing on his head. The solution was to dab shaving cream on a telegram blank and pop it on the bald spot. I recal one day meeting him about where the Methodist Church is today. He was walking to the courthouse to deliver a telegram. However, he was lathered up and shaving along the way. He was a most interesting man.

Another street scene I saw several times was Uncle Alfred with his water bucket of money. He and Aunt Mandy sold pecans, syrup, turnips and other vegetables mostly to Blacks who had a path from Sugar Bottom back of the pond to their place. After enough nickles, dimes and quarters accumulated Uncle Alfred took the bucket to the

Bank of Levy County where Frank Osteen, cashier, would count it for deposit.

In small towns, unusual arrangements occur. Like when Aunt Maud Stokes and Mrs. Rivers came down to the Ice Plant and said they wanted to be Santa Claus at the school Christmas party. I weighed about 135 pounds and was not the type. Judge Sale was the type and they were counting on him till he had business out of town. I did not want to do it, but womenfolk can be mighty persuasive. It was December but the weather was warm. Well, they tied pillows and padding on me till the Santa suit fit. I Ho-Hoed around the tree promising anything those little wide-eyed children wanted. It was hot and the whiskers got in my mouth, but I did enjoy the experience.

R. B. Childs edited the Levy County Journal. In one issue in 1931 he ran an article about Earl W. Brown, of Deland. Mr. Brown was preparing the Florida Exhibit for the coming Century of Progress to be held in Chicago in 1933. I responded to the article by writing for a job which I did get a year or so later. It has been my pleasure to return to Bronson hundreds of times over the years. I look forward to many more visits.

# HISTORY OF THE WILLISTON AIRPORT

By Ray Stoel

On the east side of Levy County approximately two (2) miles west of Marion County lies the sleepy little farming community of Williston, Florida. The population is estimated at approximately 2,100, however, 35 to 40 years ago Williston was quite a different place.

In the spring of 1942 the United States Government came into Levy County in the area of Williston, Fla., and advised the local farmers they were going to buy up their farmland to use for military purposes during the war. The land selected by the government was mostly farmland owned by families such as the Robinsons, Fugates, Clarks, Hoods, and other families who had spent most of their life developing and working the land for farming. Two of the oldest and largest land owners were R. S. Robinson and I. T. Fugate.

The government advised R. S. Robinson, who owned and operated a large dairy farm southwest of Williston, that he would have to move and relocate somewhere else. He was advised that he would be paid \$25.00 per acre with this price including all the buildings and fences on the property. I. T. Fugate was advised of the same thing which angered the farmers as most of them were already poor and to have to take the government in Federal Court in Gainesville, Fla., wanting more money for their land. The Federal Court ruled in favor of Robinson and Fugate and granted them \$27.00 per acre of land. The extra money that they were granted ended up being just enough to pay the legal fees they had encountered during the court battle. Feeling angry and disappointed with the government, Robinson moved his dairy farm about two miles away from its original location where the cheapest he could buy the land was for \$60.00 per acre. It is unknown to this writer what happened to the rest of the farmers as far as where they moved to or what became of them. The original deal was that after the Air Force finished using the Airbase, the original property owners were to be allowed to buy the property back for the same price that it had been purchased from them.

After the farmers moved construction began on the airport. The airport was to be designed to handle the big twin-engine bombers and was to have one of the largest runways in the southeastern United States. The purpose of the airport was to simulate the war zone in Europe and

it was used extensively by squadrons before they went overseas. For this reason the airport was kept fairly wooded with access to the runways from the air being kept to a minimum. While construction was underway on the main and secondary runways, portable steel runways were used. These runways were also used to simulate the emergency runways used by the allies in Europe. The only area that was cleared other than the main and secondary runway areas was the area where the temporary runways were used. The government was short on equipment at that time and they would lease tractors and other equipment from the local farmers. Local civilians were employed to build the hospital, barracks, and other structures on the airbase. Most of the work on the airbase was contracted out by the government. Day laborers were paid .75 to \$1.25 per hour with the truck drivers and dragline operators being paid anywhere from \$1.25 to \$1.75 per hour. The truck drivers and dragline operators were also paid time and a half and double time. This was good money for the local citizens who were suffering through some rather hard times.

The two main runways were initially packed with 12 inches of limerock obtained from the local limerock mines. Tractors were rented from the local farmers and used to pack the limerock down. Two tractors were rented from Henry Wilson (farmer at the time but now with the Florida Marine Patrol) of Williston, Fla., as he had recently purchased them and they had a top speed of 12 to 15 miles per hour which was needed to speed up construction. After the limerock was packed it was covered with asphalt. The main runway was 7,000 feet in length by 150 feet in width with the secondary runway being 3,000 feet in length by 150 feet wide. Both runways had access roads that had parking areas for the bombers placed sporadically along them. The aircraft was kept parked out in the open in these parking areas, however, they were partially covered by the overgrowth of the trees. The runways were built for the primary usage of B-25's, B-24's, and B-17's. A touch and go airstrip for training purposes was also constructed in a wooded area about six miles west of the airbase. Construction on the airport was modified continually by the Air Force throughout 1943 and 1944.

In 1943 the Air Force began moving aircraft, troops, and equipment onto the airbase. Squadrons of B-17's and B-25's were flown in to begin training exercises. The airbase was to be used as a training base for squadrons going overseas. It fast became known as the "Jumping Off Place." The aircraft would leave at 0600 A.M. and return after dark on the same day. Small aircraft were not allowed on the airbase except when government or Air Force officials flew in. Reconnaissance flights were flown over the Gulf of Mexico to Brownsville, Texas from the airbase 3 to 4 times a week. The mission of the flights was to destroy enemy submarines that might be in the Gulf of Mexico. Some submarines were spotted as close as two miles from land on Florida's west coast. After the squadrons received their training they proceeded overseas to the War Zone. Before leaving the airbase the big bombers were equipped with stingers (guns) in the tail section. Also being leaving the airbase the aircraft were taken out to the target range to be zeroed in. The target range was located on the spot where the Robinson Dairy had been located. The target itself was approximately 30 feet in height and approximately 30 feet deep. The target was constructed of heavy poles and boards with the interior being filled with dirt. The target still stands on the airport property to this day. The aircraft were taxied to within a quarter mile of the target, secured to the ground at which point their guns were test fired numerous times. After the target range was used for approximately six months it was condemned due to the fact that it ran parallel to and was too close to S.R. 41.

While the airbase was in operation it was a highly restricted area. Only high ranking officials or Air Force personnel were allowed on the base except for a few civilians that had prior approval. It is the understanding of this writer that one of the squadrons that trained on the base was the one headed up by James Doolittle which could be one of the reasons for the high security placed on the base. Pictures were not allowed to be taken off the base while it was in operation. The airbase had its own fire department which was operated by civilians. Guard Posts were set up at every entrance, manned 24 hours a day, and were also worked by civilians. The airbase had its own hospital which eventually was moved into Williston and used as a medical center and then a private school. Barracks were also available for all unmarried service personnel while the married personnel were allowed to live in Williston or off base. The soldiers and ground crews who lived in town were required to walk to the airbase, due to the gas shortage. Only commissioned officers were

allowed to have cars. The walk was anywhere from 2 to 4 miles.

Amunition dumps were also built on the base with most of them being built underground. The civilian fire department would have to stand by every morning at 0600 A.M. while they loaded the aircraft with the bombs. There were approximately 5,000 personnel on the base during its operation.

The soldiers and other service personnel were given the open door treatment by the citizens of Williston and Levy County. On Sundays, numerous times they were invited in to dinner and fellowship. When they would come into Williston for a little "Saturday Night Fun" little trouble was expected or found. If trouble did break out at a local bar, it became off limits to them. The City of Williston was patrolled by its one-man police force (Perry Wiggins) and also by the military police.

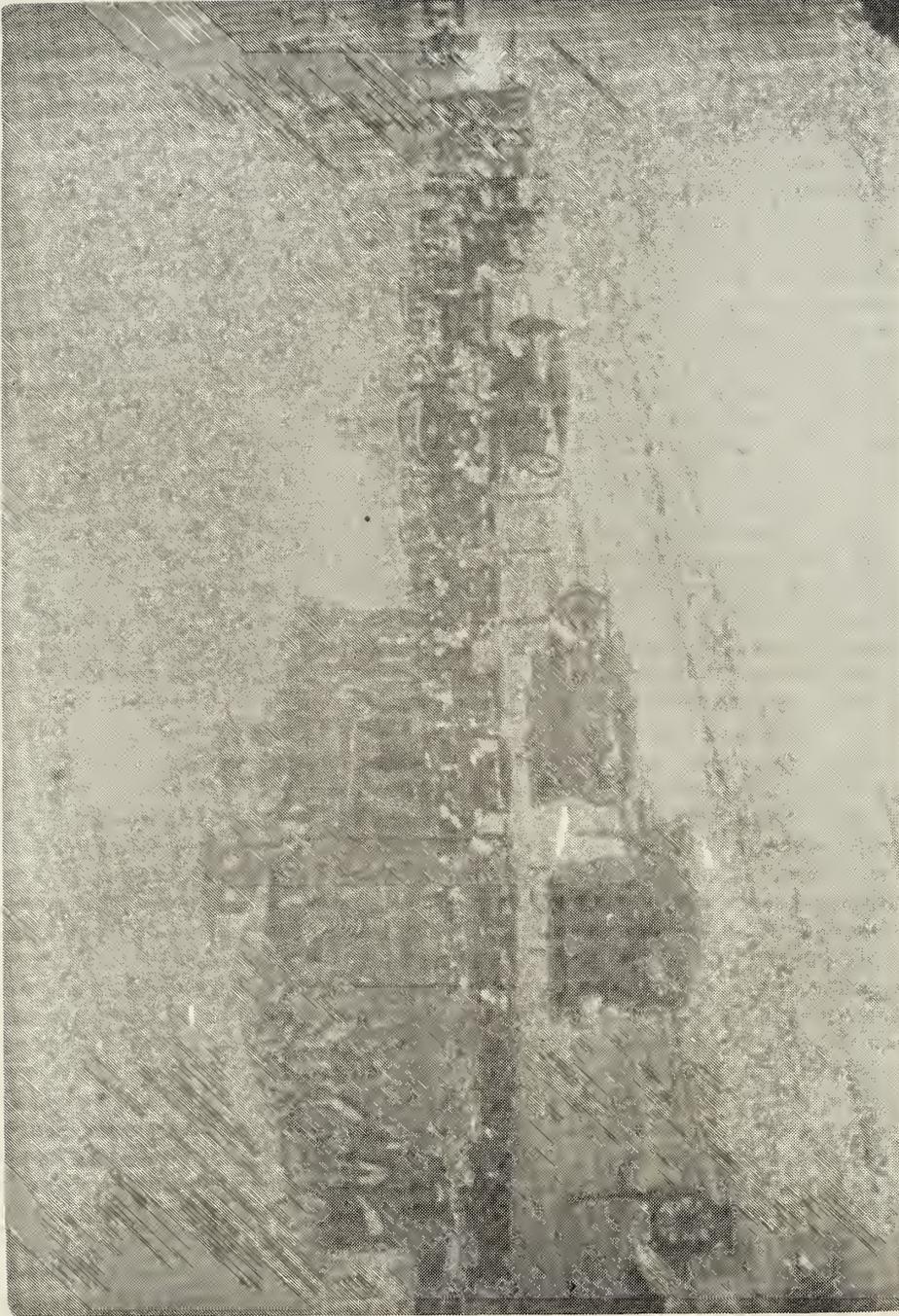
After the war was over a few of the Military personnel stayed on the base for a short period of time, however, when they left, the property was turned over to the City of Williston instead of being offered for resale to the original landowners.

The airport is still owned by the City of Williston and at the present time is being used only by small aircraft for flight training purposes. Some of the old barracks and buildings are still standing. The target area is now being used as a place for hay storage. A lot of the land has been cleared and has been leased by local farmers to use for the growing of their crops. The City of Williston is presently attempting to sell or lease part of the property in order to have an Industrial Park set up.

In the 70's a DC-3 was confiscated by the Levy County Sheriff's Department at the airport for smuggling marijuana into the country. A Corvette Club out of Gainesville use to rent the runways for the weekend and race their cars. The runways are still in fairly good shape and are still some of the largest in the area. The airport used to be a popular place for the local youngsters to go out and race their vehicles, however, it is now posted and only people having airplanes on the premises or people taking flight lessons are allowed on the property.

If you drive south out of Williston on S.R. 41, travel approximately two miles and look to your right. On the other side of the woods and the cleared farmland lies an airport that not only played a part of the history of Florida but also played a vital part in the history of the United State of America.

The writer acknowledges with appreciation, the assistance of Mr. Henry Wilson, Mr. J. W. Smith, Mr. F. W. Priest, and Mr. Raymond Robinson, all of Williston, in the research for this account.



The opening of the new school in Williston with the whole building draped in bunting, apparently following a parade. The date is unknown but the cars suggest 1920, give or take a couple of years.

# GULF HAMMOCK, THE TOWN

By Carol Swaggerty Snider

Gulf Hammock in 1926 was a thriving city with industry, medical complexes, and shopping facilities. Today it is a small community with a post office and a Shop 'N Go. But we are proud of our past and the ways in which it shaped Levy County's growth. In many memories Gulf Hammock is still a boom town. Famous people stayed in our hotels, noted doctors healed the sick, well known clergy presided over the church here. By 1846 Gulf Hammock was established with population and a sugar plantation while some communities were still in birth pangs.

The dates this history deals with are 1913 through the 1960's. So many events take place, there is so much everyday life that is interesting that it would take up fifty pages. The following is a condensed account of the everyday life of Gulf Hammock.

Gulf Hammock was originally a settlement consisting of store and post office, a small general store owned by Mr. Cassidy, and Gulf Hammock School. This settlement was located in the area of the present John Yearty residence. In 1913, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad was built and wishing to be near the line the town moved sites. In 1916, the name was changed to GunnTown to commendate a citizen, Mr. Gunn, who started the crate factory, the central industry. In 1926, the name was changed back to the original Gulf Hammock.

In 1926, Dr. E. W. Grove, famed for his chill tonic, teamed with the Dowling Brothers, Will and James, to buy Gulf Hammock from Mr. Gunn and various other small land owners. The holdings were 132,000 acres of timber whose boundaries were the trestle in Cedar Key, up Suwannee River near Chiefland, then south through Otter Creek to the Withlacoochee River. The entire west coast of Levy County from Cedar Key to Hodges Island in Yankeetown was within the boundaries.

In 1929 after the death of the famous Dr. Grove, Grove-Dowling went bankrupt and in 1930 the holdings were bought by Paterson-McInnis. They bought the original acreage, crate mill (started by Gunn), a saw mill and planing mill (among the largest in the south at that time) which Grove-Dowling built, many company built homes, church buildings, hotels, hospital, schools, commissary, equipment including railroads and its locomotive and cars. The company owned everything and employed approximately 750 people out of a population of 1,500 in Gulf Hammock in the year 1929.

There were groups of workers who lived near the work sites in the logging woods. Rail reached out to these sites where they lived in small houses so that steam cranes could lift the houses into flatbeds and move them by rail to new sites to follow the uncut timber. The Commissary had a small branch that was in a railroad car located at the logging site. Mr. Frank Bullock managed the woods commissary for many years. Mr. Irving from Otter Creek sold a box car of ice in block form to the company to be used at the wood site each week.

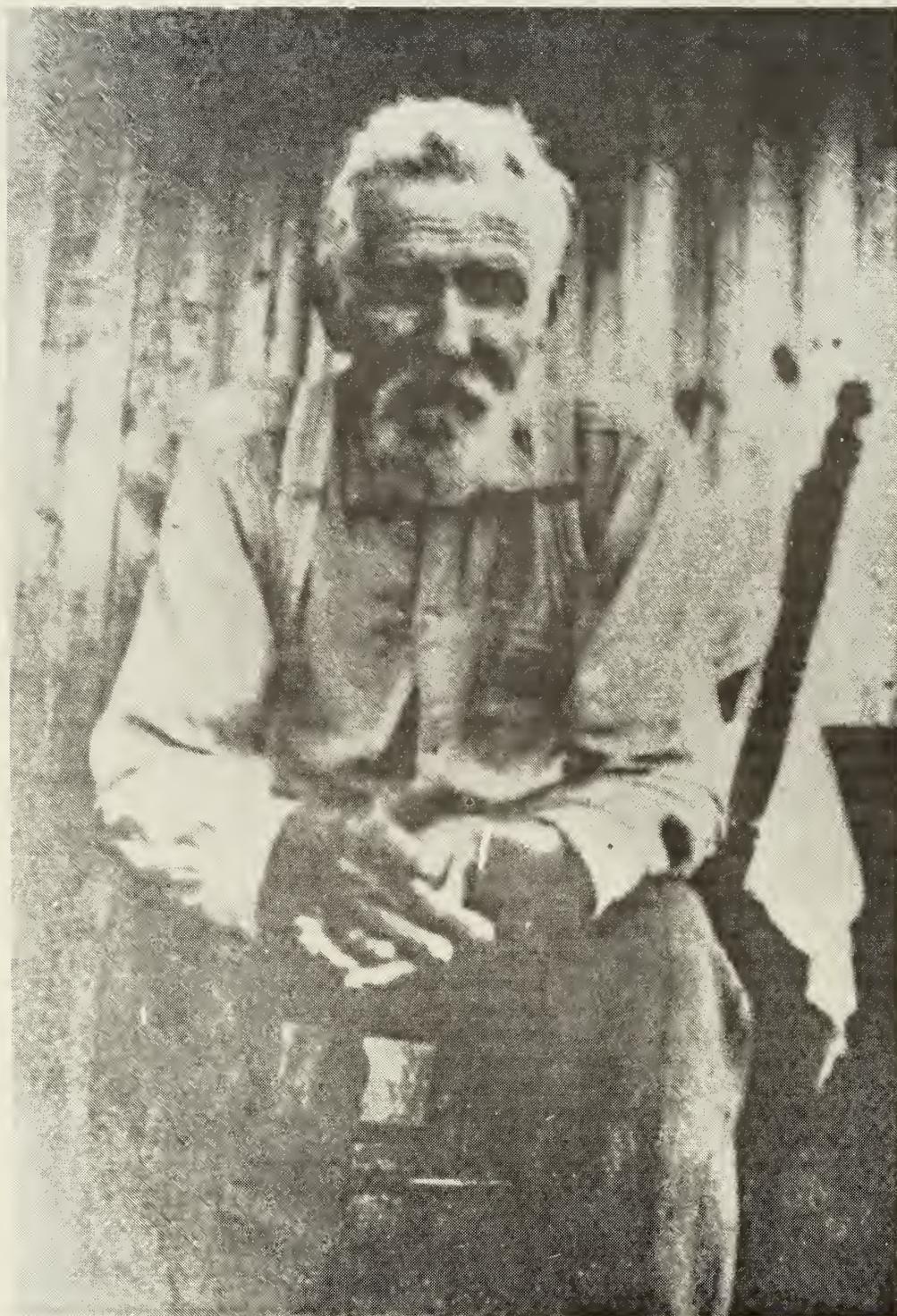
Employees or residents could rent company houses for \$2.00 per room. If for instance it was a 2 room house the rent was \$4.00 per month. There were several boarding houses or choice of hotels. The Orange Blossom Inn had room and board for the cost of \$32.00 per month in 1929. By 1934 it had risen to \$39.99 per month.

Gulf Hammock had many quarters where the black population lived in company houses. They had their own schools and churches. The blacks pledged 10 cents per week to the Benevolent Society which was a program instigated by the company to have funds to pay funeral expenses for blacks. A coffin would cost \$15.00 at Commissary and the family would lay the deceased out for burial.

There were no white cemeteries in Gulf Hammock, most white people were shipped by train to Bronson to be buried in the cemetery there or the deceased was sent to relatives elsewhere.

The schools were located in the church buildings and supported 125 children (white) from grades 1-8. High School children went to Bronson on private contracted "buses" usually trucks with wooden benches built in the back. There were 5 teachers in the white school and 2 teachers in the black schools. If Levy County was short on funds to pay teacher salaries the company subsidized 2 teachers' salaries for the white school. Following is a partial list of teachers who taught at the Gulf Hammock School: Esther Howard, Inez Hardee (Kulp), Herman Smith, Alice Sistrunk Cobb, Cherry Meeks Turner, Joyce Meeks Bullock, Eleanor Beans Robins, L. H. Howell, Opal Bevell (music), Elizabeth Braggs, Marie Shelly, Margaret Barnett, Gladys Russell.

Gulf Hammock had a complete medical program. The hospital was segregated with five private rooms and wards for whites, two private rooms and a ward for the blacks. The hospital and doctor took care of everyday accidents from mill



**Zackary T. Smallwood (1847-1919), buried in the Wekiva Springs Cemetery, Gulf Hammock. Four graves are left, all the other have been destroyed.**

and wood work and appendectomies, tonsillec-tomies, gall stone operations, and maternity. The doctor was employed by the company, but was allowed to practice medicine to people other than employees and charge fees. The company paid him to take care of patients employed in its work. The doctor's practice was widespread including Chiefland and Trenton areas. Maternity fees totaled \$35.00. The doctors made house calls for \$4.00 a visit. The first public health clinic in Levy County was in Gulf Hammock at this time under the head of Dr. K. R. Cammack, a surgeon. Gulf Hammock's first doctor was Dr. Gavin who established a park between the hospital and the Commissary. Dr. L. S. Lafitte followed him and was famous nationwide for his patent of "Red Wonder" for treatment of malaria. Malaria was one of the chief reasons for sickness in the company's employees at this time, keeping as many as half the labor force ill. There were trains or company cars that would bring injured and sick in to the hospital from the various camps in the logging woods. The doctors hired registered nurses that came from out of state to work with them in the Gulf Hammock. A few of them were: Edna Earl Richardson (Bordeaux), Blanche Buckelew, Jo Lottie Kitrell, Estelle Thomas, and Tommy Jones.

The white church was non-denominational. The company paid the preacher; the tithe was taken from the laborers wages each week from the amount they pledged. The company also designated certain jobs for the preacher among which were refereeing ball games, scout master, and chaperoning dances for young people. In 1929, Reverend Beaty was pastor followed by Edgar Pendergrass (now a Methodist Bishop), and Gene Zimmerman (Methodist official), and Reverend Martin, a Baptist.

The Commissary was a 150 foot by 300 foot building in the heart of town that stocked any article needed. People from Chiefland, Bronson, Otter Creek, and Morriston areas shopped here. You could buy medicines, clothes, food items, hardware, plows, even a coffin. You could get paid for the week's work, mail a letter, buy a banana split, and try on the latest styles of clothing all in the same building. In the drugs section was a pharmacist, among who were Dr. J. D. Franklin, Doc. Youngblood, and Doc. Black. The company bookkeepers, pay master, and officials were located in offices in this building as well as the

vault.

Within the town limits of Gulf Hammock and surrounding it were many private landowners and farmers; among this group were the Watkins, Smallwoods, Boyds, and Baldrees. But everyone's life was directly or indirectly dependent on the company. If you didn't work or pay the rent you didn't stay in their houses. If you needed an advance on your salary you were paid in babbit, a nickname taken from the babbit-aluminum from which the coins were made. You got your advance in babbit coins from the cashier in the Commissary and could spend it anywhere in the county except the post office or the Tax Collector's office. The town's electricity was supplied by the company which had hugh boilers using wood to make steam to generate the electricity. If the fuel was low at 11:00 p.m. the lights would dim three times and you had one half hour to prepare for no lights until 4:00 a.m. The residents employed by the company did not pay for electricity. If you were dating your sweetheart you went to the Commissary for a soda or walked around the loop on first street. On Sundays after church you played baseball on the town diamond or relaxed with friends on the porch of the Orange Blossom Inn in the swing.

Many people in Levy County came to Gulf Hammock to purchase their cars. The Ford Dealership was owned by Grove-Dowling and went out of business at the same time. The dealership was attached to the garage where cars were serviced and gas sold. The garage was managed by Tommy Loftin at the time of the Ford Dealership. Mr. J. T. (Hoot) Hutson bought a Ford from the dealership in Gulf Hammock at this time.

The barber shop was located on a board road which lead to the sawmill. The shop was a two-chair, two-barber shop. Some of the barbers were S. G. Green, E. A. Aycocck, and Warren May.

In approximately 1926 Grove-Dowling built the depot for the Atlantic Coastline Railroad. For years it had only been a platform. The railroad allowed the Company to build the depot according to their own plans, then the Company painted the depot yellow trimmed in white which were their colors. The Western Union was located in the depot and a Railroad agent ran the office. There were only two phones in Gulf Hammock, one in the depot and the other in the sales office of the Company.

The writer acknowledges with appreciation, the collaboration of Mr. John Yearty of Gulf Hammock in the writing of this account.



Lucius Parks Smallwood (1884-1907), son of Zackary Taylor Smallwood, Gulf Hammock. The artificial leg he wore was a popular type in his day. The vehicle was probably a 1934 Chevrolet. The hole at the bottom of the radiator grille was for inserting a hand crank in case the battery failed.

# THE PIONEER CARTERS

By William Patrick Carter (1862-1944)

William P. Carter, Baptist minister, moved from South Carolina to Mississippi about 1810. He married Mary Hill Robertson, daughter of the Rev. Norvell Robertson (his autobiography is in the Mississippi College Library at Clinton). William P. had a brother, Pinckney, sisters Mary (married Richard McClemore) and Katie (married a Griffin). William P. Was a state senator in Mississippi sometime before 1850. Norvell Robertson was one of the organizers of the Mississippi State Baptist Convention and the first pastor of the First Baptist Church of Meridan, Mississippi.

Norvell Robertson Carter (1833-1906), son of William P., married Isobelle Abney McGrew in Meridan in October, 1857. This is the couple that migrated to Levy County, Florida. Their children born in Mississippi were Clarke M., William P., and John L. Those born in Levyville were Sallie Isabelle, N. R. Jr., Graham and Lamar G.

W. P. Carter was born in 1862 in Mississippi and died in about 1945 in Florida. He wrote his memoirs in 1941, at the request of his grandchildren, William T. and Betty Lou Weeks. W. P.'s grandmother's husband had died of tuberculosis back in Mississippi. She must have taken a last look at his grave, knowing full well that she would never see that grave again, and then she rode five hundred miles in a wagon along the frontier trail roads to Levy County, and her hip was broken.

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We are indebted to a gracious lady for her help and kindness, Mrs. Betty Mattair of Newberry. She made the writing of the late W. P. Carter available for this series. He was her grandfather. The lineage goes like this: 1. Senator William P. Carter, South Carolina to Mississippi, 2. His son, N. R. Carter, Mississippi to Florida, 3. His son William P. Carter, the W. P. who wrote the history, 4. His daughter and 5. Her daughter, Mrs. Betty Mattair. N. R. Carter had a son, also named N. R., and a brother, Ira J. Carter. The elder N. R. also served as a state senator, from Levy County.

Norma Richards Hutson

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After the Civil War my parents decided to move by wagon train to Florida with Tampa as their destination. So my parents and my grandmother McGrew together with my mother's younger brothers sold or gave away their possessions and packed two or three wagon loads of bedding, chairs, and other necessities. A light spring wagon was prepared for my grandmother as she had a

broken hip. I think we left from my grandmother's home in Lauderdale Springs, Miss., in Feb. 1867.

I was just five years old so I don't remember that hustle and bustle of getting off. The first thing that I can recall was when we reached the Tombigbee River and had to be ferried across on flat boats pulled by hand cable. They unhooked all the mules from the wagons for safety and one mule did fall overboard. Johnny was about two and just learning to talk, and he called the river the "big awty". The next thing I recollect was arriving at Tallahassee and going into the old Capitol. The first floor was an open space with the floor littered with old guns, military belts and saddles.

Expecting to take a steamboat to Tampa from St. Marks, we went there the next day. To our great disappointment the steamer had left St. Marks just two days before and would not make a return trip for two weeks. We decided then to go on to Tampa by Wagon.

In our move from Mississippi to Florida we brought along several Indian ponies, one mare named Joe and another mare named Mary. Old Joe's colt was a stallion named Cochoma, a pacer. Old Mary's colt was Fannie. These horses had been crossed with good thoroughbreds. Before we reached the Suwannee River one day, my brother Clarke, who was just old enough to ride, was on Mary. He fell off and got one foot caught in a stirrup. Mary walked up to one of the wagons and stopped and one of the drivers, a Mr. Proctor, released him, unhurt.

We crossed the Suwannee River at Ft. Fannin and camped near the Fannin Springs. A man came to our camp that night by the name of Jim Burnett. I saw him off and on after that night for the next forty years. The next night we camped at a small hammock, about three miles from Bronson on the Levyville Road. I have seen that old pine stump many times since, where we had our campfire that night.

The next day we drove into Bronson. There we were persuaded to settle on the old Finlayson plantation, a place that had been worked by a slave owner before the Civil War. The land was good. The house was eight feet above the ground, room enough to store wagons under the house. We had no screens on the windows or doors. The only protection from mosquitoes was bars and they didn't do much good. We had to build smoke fires in pans for relief from the mosquitoes. The hammock was full of bears, deer, wild cats, coons, opossums, squirrels, etc.



Orange Street in Mont Brook, about 1900, looking west.

We had a wood rack outside the chimney on which the chickens would roost at night, but the wild cats caught them anyway. Everyone in the family had the fever, the ague, and chills. We stood it one year and then moved into the flatwoods.

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We had tried to make a crop of corn but because of the bears and deer destroying what we planted, we moved to a place three miles from Otter Creek in a southwest direction and bought a large bungalow shaped house with a porch running all the way around. This place belonged to William Meeks. The house was built of cypress board, split or rived from five-foot blocks of wood, then worked smooth with a drawing knife, as you do shingles when you shave one end thin so the next row of shingles will fit smoothly.

A crop was started and there were hogs in the woods. They came with the place. My mother had no help at all and no neighbors. A few families were in Otter Creek. One store was run by S. D. Eason. A small warehouse and a one-story hotel was run by a fat man named Mason. This hotel was later bought out by Dan Strong, a Negro, who also bought the Meeks' place from my father when we moved to Levyville. This Dan Strong was widely known for his honesty and he was a faithful friend to our family as long as he lived. He would come to see me after I moved to Gainesville and bring me fresh killed turkey or a mess of fish.

After one year at the Meeks' place, my father, having been in the mercantile business in Mississippi, accepted a clerkship with one James S. Turner of Levyville. All of us moved up there into the one room house with a fireplace in the east end. I don't remember whether my grandmother lived in her covered wagon or not, but rather think now that she did, as I don't remember seeing her in this one-room house. As soon as possible, my father built a two-room addition on the west end. My grandmother was then moved into the largest room which had a stick and clay chimney at the west end. This house had been built by Pomp Norris, a Negro, and for several years after that he did farm work for my father. He plowed an ox and had a two-wheeled cart that he came and went in. At the time, he lived near where Chiefland now stands.

About 1872-74, there was only the one store in Levyville. It was a general store, handling dry goods, hardware, groceries, salt, whiskey, and the post office. I have helped there on many Fridays, putting up bottles of whiskey in a fifty cent size and the one dollar a quart size. These were made ready for Saturday, as all the country folks came to town to bring their corn to the gristmill. On Saturday, the whole town was full of loud talking and half-drunk men. We children would sit on the

ground by our front gate watching what was going on. Mother would not let us get any nearer. I remember Fronnie Butler was there with us, and she said, "I'm not afraid, my papa can whip any man up there." The next day we boys were scouting around to see what we could find and we found a long pistol, about sixteen inches long, and the upper plate of a set of false teeth, both belonging to Garret Hudson.

A few years later, about 1874, my father owned a half interest in the store and the business was doing good, so they set out to build a larger store. This one was about 36 by 80 feet, built in a box style. The weather boarding, running up and down and nearly all the framing was of hewn timbers. The sills were hauled to the site by log carts, then with chop axes and board axes they were hewn into shape about 10 x 12 inches. I recollect Old Man Hudson with freckled skin and sandy-red hair was hewing on the sills right out in the open sun. He would take a cup of water and pour it over the wrists to "cool his blood".

When the new store was finished, Uncle John McGrew was taken in as a third partner. Then about 1876, along came my Uncle Ira Judson Carter, my father's brother from Mississippi. He bought out John McGrew's interest and then sent to Mississippi for his family. John McGrew moved to Bronson and was elected tax collector for Levy County. He later moved to Ft. Fannin and put up a store on the river bank a few feet above the new steel bridge. John McGrew was married to Antonette Parker. The McGrews were originally from Alabama.

Well, the store ran along smoothly for several years. Quite a lot of cotton was raised in this section then. I know that the Company had 300 bales of long cotton on hand at one time. It was piled out on the north end of the store. Big shelters made out of rough lumber covered it. These bales of cotton were long bales with ears at each corner to help in the handling. Those were the first days when I helped feed the gins. I earned my first money there and exchanged it for a twenty dollar gold piece, which remains with me to this day.

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Well, things took a turn and the three partners, Turner, N. R. and Ira J. divided up the stock of goods and account. My father and Uncle Ira put a partition in the old courthouse and moved their part of the goods there until they could build a new two-story store. Old Mr. Buidelman was doing the carpenter work and had a Negro employee, Ed Norris. Old Buidelman would cuss Ed everyday. One day Ed objected to this. Old Buidelman replied, "You got a mouth, ain't you?" From then on, Ed mixed it. Buidelman was a Yankee. At this time there lived on the Tomlinson place a rawboned old man named Hutchinson. The first

time Buidelman saw him, he shouted, "That damned old man was my guard in Andersonville Prison!"

After Carter and Carter built the new store, they put up a building with big platform scales to weigh wagons and cotton before unloading, then after unloading, reweigh the wagon. I was old enough to drive a mule team to Bronson everyday with a load each way, cotton bales to the railroad and merchandise back to the store.

For years before we came to Florida, J. S. Turner had handled his goods by ox teams from Palatka, that town being the nearest delivery point to Levy County. Of course this was before the railroad was turned to go through Bronson to Cedar Key. At that early date, Savannah was the nearest market. Jacksonville was only a cowford, Fernandina and Palatka were way ahead in size and business. At the time we moved to Levyville about 1870, the railroad had reached Cedar Key, and Bronson and Otter Creek had become stations and shipping points. For years afterwards, Mr. Turner kept on driving his cattle to Live Oak and shipping from there by train to Savannah. At these early dates, Cedar Key had steamers coming in from New Orleans and Galveston. Levy County received a lot of goods by these routes.

As late as 1890, John C. McGrew got his merchandise at Ft. Fannin by steamer via Cedar Key and up the Suwannee River. I well recollect the name of one or two, the Caddo Belle, the Blanche, the Crescent City. They ran up as far as Branford and probably Live Oak. The Caddo lies on the bottom of the river near Old Town.

In the spring of 1867 when my family arrived at the Old Town area, the families of the Finlaysons, Cotrells, McCartys, Chairs, Parkers and many others were living there.

Some people who lived in and around the Levyville area from 1870-1890 as I recollect them were: Dr. Hall who stayed at Mrs. Quincey's. She was a sister of Samuel Quincey, a Levy County Commissioner. Many members of the Clyatt family lived there. Jim Penner was the fireman at the gin and John Sash was the foreman. George Leitner came to preach once a month from Providence after a church was built near the old mill on the north side. Other people were Suggs Mooney, a Mrs. Stephens who later married Eli Bennefield. Jesse Everette and Jordan Saunders made crops for my father. Hiram Carver was a gentleman from Kentucky who taught school in the old courthouse. Still other names that I recollect are Horatio Spence, Dan Hagan, Cynthia Hagan, Wash Deas, Jesse White, Bud Cason, Doc. Young, Willis Fletcher, Joe Gunn, Wash Phelps, C. Studstill, and Dave Hires who married Rachel Studstill. One of their children was Mannie Studstill who was named for his grandfather, Emanuel Studstill. I

recall Jim Brock, Jerry Goldwire, Samp Bath, E. M. Tedder, Mrs. Barrow, Walter Howard, Steve Hagan, Dr. French, John Overstreet, Mose Asbell, Reve Crumpton, C. C. Doak, Ferdinand Sanchez, Mack Love, Mrs. Claywell, the Butler family, David Cannon and Betsy Cannon. Some Negro people who were good friends of our family were Pompey, Dan Strong, Jim Hall, Balam Bradley, Stepney Bradley, and Jim Bradley.

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Sporting activities were very meagre in these years 1870-77. At Christmas time, besides fire crackers, Roman candles and pin wheels, we would bore a hole in a tree or large stump, pack the hole with several inches of gun powder, then seal the hole with damp clay, inserting a small twig to form a small access to the powder. We primed it, started a fire with dry straw, then took off to await the explosion.

In those days the community would have basket picnics. Some of the ladies would sell ice cream to raise church funds. We got our ice by ordering a 100 lb. block from Fernandina. The blocks of ice were shipped in sacks with sawdust all around them to prevent melting. To preserve what we didn't use, we would bury it to save it as long as possible.

Nearly everyone in those days grew peaches and very fine ones too. One day Suggs Mooney borrowed a yoke of oxen from his neighbor. He loaded the wagon with loose peaches and didn't know much about driving oxen. So when he got too close to a sink filled with water, in went the oxen and stopped to stand in the water. The wagon floated and the peaches floated all over the place. I used to grow some very fine watermelons at Levyville. They were colored like the old rattlesnake variety. They were very large melons and grew standing up on one end. They were so large that they looked like small tubs sitting around in the patch. We had several hives of bees in the yard under a fine peach tree of the clingstone variety. One year we gathered two bushels of peaches from this tree alone.

Beecher, a dark gray horse, turned out to be the best cow pony I ever had. He would drive cattle like a trained dog. If a cow turned back he would wheel, head her off, and drive her back to the bunch without being told to do so. Later, I rode Snap all the way to Tampa. He was a sorrel I bought from John Gore who lived in the Blackneck neighborhood on the old Cedar Key road. My brother Clarke and I were driving 500 head of steers through the Brooksville area when one night after we were all bedded down for the night, the cattle stampeded and I heard the pounding and roar coming my way. I climbed a pine tree and the cattle passed under me. Two days before this, we had to ford the Withlacoochee, and time after time,

we had to round the cattle up and crowd them across the river. After we crossed, the cattle were scattered everywhere but we would usually find them here and there in small bunches. There were long flat ponds through which we drove the cattle, the water being belly deep to horses and cattle. We delivered the steers ten miles this side of Tampa, having lost only two or three that had just wandered away.

My father (N. R. Carter) was a veteran of the Civil War, a 1st Lt. in Co. C of the 2nd Mississippi Volunteers in Gen. N. B. Forest's Division. He was paroled in Gainesville, Ala., May 25, 1865. He

grew in prominence as the years passed. In 1905 he represented his district in the Senate of Florida. He was a member of the Grand Lodge of Florida for 52 years. At one time he was the Grand Master of the State of Florida. His youngest son Laram Gordon Carter also attained this office in 1929. My father died at Levyville, Dec. 1, 1906. It is about fifty to fifty-six years since I moved from old Levyville. Everything has grown up in big trees since then. The only way I can tell where my house used to stand is from where the mill caved in and left a small hollow place lower than the rest of the earth.

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## JUDSON, FLORIDA

By W. P. Carter (1862-1944)

About 1881 or 1882 my Uncle Ira J. Carter sold his interest in the Carter & Carter store in Levyville to my father, N. R. Carter. Uncle Ira was then about forty years of age. He bought out Bill Epperson at Bronson and ran a big store in the old Bill Jones store building. Uncle Sid Carter, another brother who had come to Florida a little later with their mother who had now passed away at Levyville, moved to Bronson, too. He and Uncle Ira opened the law office of Carter and Carter. Aunt Lou (Mrs. Ira J.) ran a hotel in the upstairs of the store. The hotel was known as the Carter House.

Then all of a sudden Uncle Ira sold the store back to Bill Epperson and moved back to Levyville. My wife Kate and I were just married. We had bought Uncle Sid's house as he no longer had need of it after Grandma Carter-Barber died. Uncle Ira and Aunt Lou moved into the house with us for a while.

Then Uncle Ira took a fancy to build a sawmill, a store, and a gin at the Levy and Alachua County line (later to become the Gilchrist line.) He built a big log store and my brother Clarke worked with him for three or four years. Clarke became sick with TB and Uncle John McGrew's mother's brother helped Uncle Ira until he could get the sawmills and gins working. He built a good four-room house with oak blocks for supports which his family used. He also built a two-story house. The second story was to be used for a lodge room.

People already lived in and around the section where Uncle Ira located his businesses and as some semblance of a community began to appear,

he gave the village the same "Judson," which was his own middle name.

In 1889 Uncle Ira and Aunt Lou lost their older son, Charley. Uncle Ira began to spend a lot of time thinking about his troubles. Charlie was a very bright and promising young man. At one time he drove the mail from Levyville to Trenton, but now his hopes were gone with Charlie.

About this time, Dr. Clyatt built an office near where Roland's Store was. He boarded with Aunt Lou. Dr. Clyatt rode horseback and owned a bay mare named Isa, after Miss Isa Turner, niece of J. S. Turner. Dr. Clyatt had not finished medical school, so Uncle Ira let him have \$150 to finish the last term. Dr. Clyatt left the mare as security. I was there when he returned to Judson, but this time he rode a big black horse named Dexter. He sometimes drove Dexter to a two-wheeled sulky like they use with these fast trotters.

Old Man Buidelman who once lived at Levyville now sold his forty acre farm to Uncle Ira and moved to Jacksonville. The north part of the farm was a "new-ground" and planted in peas. Uncle Ira had one Elias Griffin running the farm and Griffin proved to be a lot of trouble to Uncle Ira.

One Julia Owen, widow, owned a fine farm near Trenton with two acres in a peach orchard. Peaches in this new country grew almost as big as a large coffee cup. People came there from miles around to get peaches. This Mrs. Owen was a great friend of Aunt Lou, as Mr. Wes Owen had been a big Mason and good friend to Uncle Ira. After Mr. Owen's death, Mrs. Owen married one Andrew J. Weeks, father of Wallace, Dote, Alice,



**Willie and Carrie Johnson lived between Bronson and Judson in 1885. The child in front is Hartwell. Back row, Addie, Junious, and Annie. Addie was the grandmother of Linden Lindsey, Levy County Archives member.**

Blanche, Orbie, Code, Maude and Les Weeks. This couple soon found that they had made a mistake and separated. So Mrs. Owen, as she was still called, spent a lot of her time in Judson having Uncle Ira fix her property so Mr. Weeks couldn't get any of it.

Along about this time, one Mr. Meredith came into the Trenton area and his wife happened to be Will Richardson's mother. Brother Meredith and Sister Meredith were great Baptist and would attend church at Pine Grove. They never failed to stop at Aunt Lou's to enjoy her fried chicken or chicken pie. I never saw anyone who could equal Aunt Lou making chicken pie, the crust was so crisp and brown and well-seasoned. She was a smart lady. Many times she would be up in the morning and have a chicken dressed and fried before the other family members finished getting themselves dressed.

One day, Bro. Sim Sheffield was there for dinner and while he was all bowed down saying Grace, Uncle Ira cut his eye out toward the lot and saw that hay barn was in full blaze. That broke up the Grace as well as the dinner.

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Then a family named Owens settled on forty acres north of Judson. They built a big two-story house, put up a sawmill and planer mill. This was afterwards owned by D. T. Trammel. This same Trammel finished out Uncle Ira's square topped house in Judson. Trammel was a master carpenter and plane setter. He laid the wooden sills for the engine to rest on. He had a set of augers five or six feet long to make holes through the heavy timbers and so to fasten them together with long iron rods with heads on the underside and taps to fasten them on top. The Owens had built a schoolhouse here and it was always known as the Bartram School. Soon after this there came the Holmes family from Georgia to live in the Owens' house. They brought one Dan George to Florida and Dan wrote a very beautiful Spencerian hand. One of the Holmes' girls later married Ira. J. Carter II. Her name was Pearl.

In February of 1891, the worst thing that ever happened to the family occurred. Uncle Ira had just returned from a trip to Savannah. Aunt Lou and Annie were in Gainesville awaiting his return. When they got home, all of them came down with the flu. Old Dr. Claywell was the only doctor available and before anyone realized he was so sick, Uncle Ira died right off. All the folks came up from Levyville to be with Aunt Lou and then we took his body back to Levyville for burial.

So Aunt Lou wanted Kate and me to come and live with her. We had only Louise then, as the little boys had died sometime ago. No one knew anything about his business affairs. My father was appointed administrator and he spent a lot of time

away from Levyville trying to settle up Uncle Ira's affairs. A few years before his death he had built a warehouse, almost half an acre in size, with big platform scales to weigh wagon loads of cotton. He had an office in the southeast corner and had Old Man Lightsey to build a limerock chimney of sawed lime blocks. These blocks were sawed from solid limerock out at Wolf Sink near where Norvel Hagan lives. Aunt Lou let Henry Tucker and Crawf Kidd have the mill and gins, one pair of mules and wagon and her to feed the mules for six months, all for the sum of \$100.

Sometime in the year 1894, Cousin Mollie came with her husband from Mississippi. Cousin Mollie's father was James P. Carter, a brother to my father and Uncle Ira. They came early in the spring. I remember the corn was up to a good stand and needed its first plowing. They lived in a house about 100 yards north of my house. We were then living in a small house near Aunt Lou but a little northeast. I had bought the house and five acres of land that Molly and Tom lived in from Mr. Herndon and he had bought it from Frank Swilley whose land runs down to Judson on the north. I engaged Tom Martin to help make a crop for Aunt Lou at \$16.50 a month and he find or feed himself. I recollect the first day he came to work. We hitched up Poly, a small yellow mule that Uncle Ira had bought from up at Trenton of a man named Poly Riley.

When I came to Judson to live, Uncle Ira had a sugar mill, furnace and boiler for making syrup. There was a long cypress trough and a cloth cover fastened to two stakes that were longer than the trough. At night they kept the cover on to keep out trash and insects. Early one morning they took up a boiler of syrup, eight or ten gallons, and poured it into the trough, but in the dark, they forgot to take the cover off and the syrup was running around in puddles all over the ground. Another morning, before daylight and very cold, the young man feeding the mill said that the mill was broken, it wouldn't work. Someone went to his rescue and found that the stalks of cane were frozen solid.

Luther Yancey had married Ola Doak and lived in a new house about 250 yards southwest of R. S. Tucker's store. Yancey was the fireman at the Carter mill boilers and a year or so later, drowned during a fishing trip on the Suwannee River This Yancey made a crop with me one year and he got tired before the crop was gathered and so sold out to me. I paid him partly in hogs. In those days I butchered 20 to 30 hogs a year. George Schofield put up a store at the edge of the water hole on the north side. He was the father of Relia who married Dote Weeks. We liked to have had some trouble with him because Tom Martin said he bet Scofield put sand in his sugar.

Some two years before Uncle Ira died, there

arose a great religious controversy and excitement between the Camelites and other denominations, particularly the Baptists. And so a religious debate was planned. N. A. Bailey represented the Baptists and J. H. Harding represented the opposition. They met in the great warehouse and argued all day for a whole week.

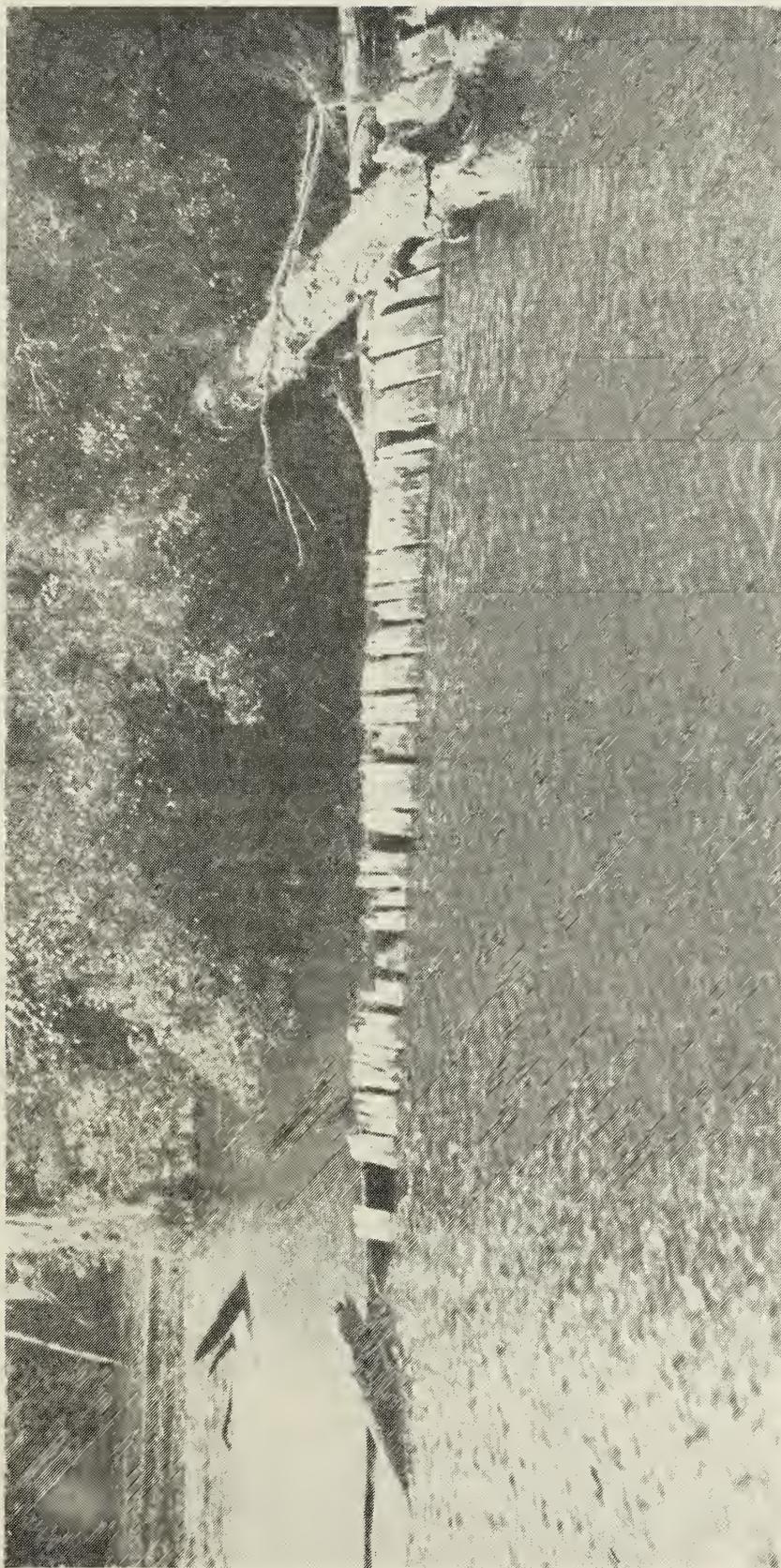
I took charge of the gins and the grist mill after I was sick so long. Aunt Lou had Mr. Todd, a good Yankee carpenter, to build some shelves in the new store under the Lodge room which was above. After I put a stock of merchandise in the store, D. G. Roland put up a store on the edge of the water hole just east of R. S. Tucker's store. Mr. Roland built a house just west of J. C. Kidd's.

One night there was a big Masonic meeting at the Judson Lodge. Robert McClellan, Marcus Endel, Sid Carter of Gainesville and many others were there. After the meeting, many of them went into the Roland store to smoke and drink. Uncle Sid came over to our house to spend the night and about 3:00 A.M. the cry of fire was heard. The Roland store was burning and it looked like my store would catch fire any minute. We got men up on the Lodge roof to throw buckets of water on the end nearest Roland's store, and my store was not damaged as to the building. But much of the merchandise was taken out and thrown around, and the contents of the safe, being unguarded in all the excitement, were short something over \$100.

The morning of the storm, my wife had everyone up early as she usually did to get the teams on the road by sunrise. The rain and the wind was so

gusty that Mr. Williams who drove my team of mules delayed hitching up the team. By 6:30 the storm was on us. We stood on the front porch and saw the wind blowing the cotton out of the gin house into the tops of the pine trees. The pine trees along the road west of Rufus Tucker's store were falling like ten pins, but the wind roared so loud we couldn't even hear the trees hit the ground. The wind was so strong now that we had to go inside and watch from the windows. We saw the old store go down and its roof and timbers went rolling off like cartwheels. About this time, part of the roof of our own house went, and we all ran for the crib, hoping to be safe there.

We got in the crib and Tom Martin tried to hold the door shut. Finally, by eleven o'clock, the storm had abated. We walked out to find the mill was partly blown away, the two-story store and Lodge building was piled in a tangled heap. Aunt Lou's house still stood and all the barns. The next day, my brothers, Johnny and Graham and a colored man named Stepney rode in from Levyville. They had ridden through open fields when they could as all fences were flat, but in the woods they had to cut their way through with axes. They then started to round up the scattered merchandise from the store. The top floor of the store was patched up and lined with canvas. I had no place to put what was worth saving so Rufus Tucker let me use a small storage house attached to his store. I built another store and remained in business until 1902, when we sold the goods to C. D. May in Newberry and then moved ourselves and possessions to Gainesville.



Wreck of a dredge barge at the upstream end of Turkey Island in the Suwannee River. The dredge was used at Fowlers Bluff in treasure hunting. It broke loose during a storm (about 1929) and ran aground here. The machinery was removed and the hull left. This picture was made about 20 years ago, but when the river is extremely low you can still see one edge of the deck sticking out.

# MORE SLOWPOKE

By S. E. Gunnell

The really old maps are notoriously unreliable sources for historical research. Physical outlines were guessed at in many instances and when one mapmaker misplaced a river, the next mapmaker would copy the first so that the same error would be perpetuated over a long period of time. The Spanish intruders gave their own names to the landmarks while the Anglo intruders tended to adopt the names already used by the native Indians.

There is a 1755 map of the Levy County area entitled Country of the Apalachees and Timooquas which contains the statement that the "Timooquas were destroyed by the Carrolinians in 1706". Anclote Key is shown and north of its location are two rivers named St. Martins and St. Pedro, both running into the Bay of Apalachee. The most likely conclusion is that this mapmaker had only the foggiest idea of Florida's west coast topography. A large river is shown going down the center of the peninsula accompanied by the explanation that "this river is unknown to geographers and is said by the Carrolinians to have several mouths on both sides of the Cape." The area around "St. Augustine" is arranged more accurately. The St. Johns River is the "St. Mattbeo or St. Juan".

Mentelle's 1798 map seems to call the Suwannee "the River St. Pedro". Either the Wacassasa or the Withlacoochee is shown as the Maran River. Vignole's 1823 map shows the Arredonda Grant, Manatee Springs, the Suwannee, Old Town. Tanner's 1823 has the Suwannee River and the Vacasausa River; however, he placed a nonexistent river between the two and has the Suwannee coming down from Alabama. In 1827 the American Atlas shows the Cedar Keys but has those islands in the mouth of the Suwannee River. Swift's 1829 map correctly locates the big island between the East Pass and West Pass but has the river flowing into the "Vacassah Bay". He used the modern spelling of Suwannee. Swift gives a choice of three names for the Withlacoochee: the Amirna, the Aminura, and the Withlocooch. Also in 1829, another map has the Suwannee flowing into the "Vacassa Bay".

The John Lee Williams map of 1837 shows an extensive canebrake across the river from Manatee Springs. About fifty years before that, William Bartram described this great canebreak but placed it several miles downstream from opposite Manatee Springs. Williams shows "an old Indian Village" at the mouth of the "Wakasassee River" on the north side. He does show the

Quithlacouche River but has Cedar Keys at the mouth of the Homosasey River. Bradford's 1842 map still has Cedar Keys at the mouth of the Withlacoochee. The towns or settlements of Cedar Key, Levyville, and Bronson are known to have been in existence at that time but this mapmaker in Boston had no way of knowing that. He does show Fort Fanning and Blodgett's Ferry across the Withlacoochee.

Bruff's 1846 map shows the western terminus of the proposed railroad as being at Cedar Keys. He also shows Fort Fanning, Fort Wakasassa, Fort Jennings, and a mysterious "Blockhouse" which seems to have been near Levyville. Bruff has at least moved Cedar Keys out of the mouth of the Suwannee River. He admitted that Levy County existed but neglected to show the county seat, Levyville. In fact, the only settlement he placed in the whole county was Clay Landing. The U.S. Coast Survey map of 1851 has the accuracy of a modern chart. Way Key, Atsena Otie, and North Key are all in place. The statement is made that Seahorse Key is the proposed site for a lighthouse. Morse's map of 1856 has Cedar Keys back at the Suwannee's mouth and Atsena Otie further up the coast from there. All he had to do was look at the earlier U.S. Coast Survey map and he could have gotten his own map right.

The U. S. Land Office map of 1883 finally has the lay of the land correctly depicted. Levy County towns shown are Cedar Keys, Rosewood, Otter Creek, Bronson, Levyville, Clay Landing, and Ft. Fanning. There were more towns and settlements in the county than that. Williston, for one. Incidentally, Newnansville (the extinct Alachua County seat) was also spelled Newmansville on the old maps; that could have been the original spelling.

The Rand McNally map of 1906 shows Sumner, Ellzey, Lennon, Otter Creek, Merediths, Albion, Eve, Lebannon (not the same place as Labannon Station), Rocky, Janney, Newtown, Double Sink, Chiefland, Judson, Raleigh, Williston, Montbrook, Morriston, Gulf Hammock, Inglis, Levyville, Bronson, and Cedar Key. There were a few more, not shown.

That was the picture of Levy County before the automobile age began, with little centers of population, trade, and commerce all over the county. Not much travel was required, not many wheels rolled, and each little settlement had its own school. A trend back to that may be in the future.



**Lessie Britt McKoy of Meredith, Florida at the ruins of a sawmill on Atsena Otie Island. In 1858, the mill was owned by her distant kinsman, Zephemiah Britt, of North Carolina. The entire island has reverted to jungle growth.**

Lukens appears on the U.S. General Land Office map in 1911. The 1914 atlas by the Florida Growers shows Wylly, Dutton's Spur, Vista, Lebannon Station, Gunnals (corruption of Dr. G. M. Gunnell's name), and Camp Spur, which was on the railroad northeast of Albion at the Alachua line.

As was stated before, old maps are not reliable. Mapmakers got their data secondhand from such sources as crude sketches by explorers, also from some tellers of tall tales. A town could appear, flourish awhile, then vanish, and finally appear on the maps long after it had ceased to exist.

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The linear generations of families seem to move in cycles instead of maintaining the economic and social stability that one might expect. Consider the case of one prominent (and hypothetical) citizen who was in his prime about a hundred years ago; he built up a thriving retail business, accumulated considerable wealth, and was widely known as an honest, compassionate, cultured gentleman who was respected and loved by everyone who knew him. Today, his descendants are crude, grubby crooks scrounging around for every potential dollar, the more dishonest the dollar the more self-satisfaction its acquisition gives them. Although this reference is to a hypothetical case, a

small amount of research would uncover numerous real life counterparts.

If that is the cycle's downswing phase, there is also the upswing. In 1870, there were some all-out peasants in Levy County, illiterate, rough, ignorant (but not stupid, there is a difference), and their horizon seemed to extend no further than the edges of the holes they dug in the earth. In a word, their prospects appeared to be the epitome to hopelessness. Over the years their descendants have clawed and fought their way up out of those holes to become some of today's best lawyers, teachers, ministers, doctors, business people, farmers, and government officials.

There seems to be little or no correlation between wealth and social status on the one hand and intelligence and strength of character on the other. Maybe affluence does breed degeneracy while the pressure of adversity has the opposite effect. If a Levy County sandspur tries to grow in dry barren sand, the little plant will sacrifice the last vestige of its substance and literally kill itself to produce just one mature seed burr in the hope that the one burr will be transported to more fertile ground for survival in the future. I do not know why the cycle occurs, I just look at the people and the sandspurs, and wonder.



**This dead tree stood alone on the left of SR 24 going into Cedar Key in the 1950's. It was painted by artists, photographed, and the thing was a symbol to the people passing by. Some saw the gnarled and grotesque limbs as a last defiant stand of old age against the sky, the wind, and the sea. Others admired it as a natural masterpiece of sculpture; they saw the random pattern, the tree whispered that true beauty is ageless and timeless, that the ultimate reality is so elusive as to be almost surrealistic. You must listen with your soul. Of course, some poor, dull clods saw only a dead tree, but they never really see anything. The tree is still there (1980) but it is now obscured by vegetation growing up around it.**





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