

# Tequesta:

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*Tampa Bay Hotel*

# Tequesta:

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## The Tampa Bay Hotel

By JAMES W. COVINGTON

On August 20, 1885, Tampa obtained direct railroad connections with the North for the first time. Due to the excellent business acumen possessed by Connecticut-born Henry Bradley Plant, this heretofore sleepy Gulf Coast village was able to take full advantage of the bounties furnished by Mother Nature and various industries about the bay began to flourish.<sup>1</sup> Of course, Tampa had been a port since the early days of Fort Brooke, established in 1824 but a port without suitable river or railroad connections with markets cannot prosper at all.

As soon as the local and state businessmen realized what an economic boost had been provided by the railroad and bay connection, they took quick advantage of the several opportunities which had been sitting like rows of ripe corn waiting for the harvest. First on the scene were the fish and oyster companies which needed rapid transportation for their products to the markets in the East and Middle West. Next came the ice plants to supply ice for the fifty thousand pounds of fish which were daily shipped to various points. Next came Gavino Gutierrez in search of guava trees which were

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<sup>1</sup> The available accounts concerning Henry Bradley Plant include S. Walter Martin, "Henry Bradley Plant," in *Georgians in Profile* (Athens, 1959) and G. Hutchinson Smyth, *The Life of Henry Bradley Plant*, (New York, 1898). Plant laid the foundation for his fortune with the Southern Express Company business and invested part of his profits in Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida railroads. At the heyday of its power, Plant's transportation empire included thirteen railroad lines, nine steamboat and steamship lines and over twelve thousand persons were employed in this vast Plant enterprise. "Henry Bradley Plant, the King of Florida," *Success* (November, 1898).

not too plentiful but, as a result of his reports concerning Tampa, cigar factories and a town were established by Mr. Ybor. In direct consequence of all these activities the population of Tampa rose from 722 persons in 1880 to 2,375 in 1885 and 5,532 by 1890.

As economic conditions in Tampa became more favorable each year, Henry Plant who was born October 27, 1819, did not miss very many opportunities. He developed Port Tampa, some nine miles from the downtown area, as a deep water harbor. The South Florida Railroad was extended to Port Tampa and a large wharf and warehouses constructed to handle the shipping. By 1886, he had entered the local steamship business and established a line connecting Tampa, Key West and Havana. Two of the vessels in this line were the *Olivette* built by Cramp's of Philadelphia under the supervision of the captain, James McKay, Jr., and the *Mascotte*. Within a short time other lines which connected river traffic with the railroads were established on the Apalachicola, St. Johns, Chattahoochee, Flint and Manatee rivers. Port Tampa Inn, a most unique colonial style hotel, extending two thousand foot from the shoreline and where a lodger could fish from his room, was erected. Other hotels established by Plant were the Bellevue near Clearwater, the Seminole at Winter Park, the Ocala House and Hotel Kissimmee.

Although the Plant Investment Company included among other holdings an express company, a hotel chain, several thousand miles of railroad, control of Port Tampa and associated shipping facilities and steamship lines, Henry Plant was not satisfied. Henry Flagler, Plant's rival on the East Coast of Florida was even more successful in building railroads and hotels. In fact by 1888 he had erected the two million dollar Ponce de Leon at Saint Augustine: a building which when compared with the Port Tampa Inn seemed like a palace. Plant wanted to erect a better hotel than Flagler's — the express and railroad magnate thought he would out-do the Standard Oil tycoon.<sup>2</sup>

Although Plant had made his decision to build the hotel, there were others that had to be convinced that the edifice would be profitable. First obstacle was the officers of the Tampa Bay Hotel Company which included

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<sup>2</sup> The definitive biography of Henry M. Flagler in *Florida's Flagler* (Athens, 1949) by Sidney Walter Martin. Construction of the Ponce de Leon Hotel was begun December 1, 1885 and finished May 30, 1887. The building was estimated to have cost two and one half million dollars.

W. N. Conoley of Tampa, President; Dr. George Benjamin of Tampa, Vice President; and Perry Wall, Jr. of Tampa, Secretary and Treasurer. Despite the fact that all of these men were leading citizens of Tampa they opposed the erection of a costly building but finally gave their reluctant consent when Plant declared that if they did not give their approval, he would personally underwrite all of the costs of construction.<sup>3</sup> Certain members of the Board of Trade (present Chamber of Commerce) wanted the hotel to be built on the eastern side of the river, but Plant, architect James A. Wood and civic leader Thomas Jackson won over the opposition by pointing out that the hotel would look better on the other bank of the Hillsborough River.<sup>4</sup>

The next step was the selection of the site. The entire western side of the Hillsborough was still part of the Florida wilderness—complete with thick undergrowth, large oak trees, deep rooted palmettoes and wildlife of all sorts. It was a wild but not very historic part of the Florida wilderness.<sup>5</sup> A few homesteads and developments were scattered about the area. One was the William S. Spencer farm in present day Palma Ceia. Others included Spanish Town along the present Bayshore Drive, Hyde Park, a subdivision established by G. H. Platt of Chicago in 1885 and the General Jesse Carter tract. General Jesse Carter, a pioneer mail contractor, had been in charge of the state troops during the Third Seminole War in 1855-1858 and had erected a house and several smaller buildings on his holdings. One such building erected by General Carter was a school house to provide education for his daughter Josephine. Miss Louise Porter, a young teacher from Key West, was employed as teacher and other students who joined the class included the two Spencer children and five other guest students.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Tampa *Tribune*, December 19, 1922.

<sup>4</sup> Architect James A. Wood of Philadelphia, Pa. created such a favorable impression with the Tampa Bay Hotel that he was commissioned to design the DeSoto Hotel and the Hillsborough County Court House. Both were demolished by wreckers during the 1950's.

<sup>5</sup> According to the three accounts written by persons who took part in the DeSoto Expedition or talked to the survivors, no general council was held with the Indians of the Tampa Bay area.

<sup>6</sup> This school began in 1850 and was the first one to be erected west of Hillsborough River. During the period of the Tampa Bay Hotel's existence, the building served as an apothecary shop and later as a tool shed used by the Tampa Park Department. At present, it has been moved from its original site near the river to a spot near the McKay Auditorium and underwent a considerable amount of restoration and addition of a section. This "Little School Building" is maintained by the DeSoto Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. Information contributed by Virginia Sloan, Librarian, D.A.R.

In 1866, Jesse Hayden obtained this land in trade with Carter for a white horse and wagon. The fine looking animal had been most useful in pulling the Hayden possessions from Camilla, Georgia to Tampa but the Haydens needed land and Carter was most pleased with the trade.<sup>7</sup> After finding a home, Hayden established business connections in the village across the river. He and his son opened a store and a livery stable and began operating a ferry so that they could cross to their places of business and to supplement their income the ferry was made available for use by the general public. Prices charged for passage on the flatboat included: forty cents for a two horse buggy, twenty-five cents for one horse and buggy and ten cents for man and horse. Single passengers were charged five cents per person and taken in a skiff which together with the flatboat docked at the foot of present day Jackson Street. It is believed that Thomas Piper had operated a ferry from this site as early as 1846.

In 1886 and 1890 Mr. Plant had purchased tracts of land which totaled sixty acres for \$40,000 from Hayden and Mrs. Nattie S. McKay, Hayden's daughter. Hayden's wife wanted him to hold out for more money but the daughter persuaded him to accept the original offer. At the time of the first purchase the Hayden house, a two story frame building with wide verandas, was standing on the site where the lobby of the hotel building was soon to be erected.

Of course, Hayden's ferry was inadequate for the purposes of Plant's projected hotel and Plant's next step was to approach the city and county officials. If a bridge were constructed across the Hillsborough River at public expense, he offered to construct a \$200,000 hotel on the Hayden tract. The city and county officials showed their interest but it was difficult to raise the money.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the City of Tampa acquired sufficient land for the extension of Lafayette (now Kennedy) Street and a toll-free wooden draw bridge was completed by February 28, 1889. Mrs. Jessie Leonardi claimed the honor

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<sup>7</sup> Tampa *Tribune*, December 20, 1959.

<sup>8</sup> Tampa *Tribune*, January 26, 1888. In some fashion Plant acquired a tract of land from George N. Benjamin as an inducement to build the hotel. This land includes the site of present day Fort Homer W. Hesterly. Karl Grismer, *Tampa*, (St. Petersburg, 1950), 273. The two authorities of Tampa's history are D. B. McKay and Karl Grismer. Both state that Plant purchased sixty acres of land from Hayden in 1888. Yet the Tampa *Weekly Journal*, May 10, 1888, states that fifteen acres of the Hayden tract had been purchased by Plant for \$9,800 with \$1,000 down and the rest to be paid in four weeks. Perhaps Plant purchased fifteen acres at first and then found he had need of the entire sixty acres.

of being the first woman to cross it while riding in a vehicle. One third of the cost of the bridge which totaled nearly \$15,000 was borne by Hillsborough County and the City of Tampa assumed the remainder.

By May, 1888, Plant envisioned a hotel costing one million dollars or more but this canny businessman was afraid that the city taxes would be rather high. Consequently on May 10, 1888, he offered to begin construction on the hotel within thirty days if the city council guaranteed that all taxes and licenses would not exceed the sum of two hundred dollars a year.<sup>9</sup> The council agreed to this proposition and construction was begun.

By June, 1886, fifteen acres were being cleared and some building materials had been purchased. At first Plant did not attempt to erect a building that would match the Ponce de Leon in size or cost but only wanted a building worthy of his name. Of course, the hotel would be a model of efficiency with steel girders, a record number of bathrooms, beautiful landscaping and a credit to the Plant Investment Company. However, after construction was begun and Plant became enamoured with the project, plans were changed so that the Tampa Bay Hotel would equal or perhaps excel the Ponce de Leon. Everyone was pleased with the progress made during the early stages of construction and ground clearing and soon it was time to lay the cornerstone.

On July 26, 1888, the cornerstone for the Tampa Bay Hotel was laid. A holiday was declared for Tampa and more than two hundred persons crossed the river to see Mayor Herman Glogowski perform the ritual which initiates the construction of an important edifice. Music for the occasion was provided by the Tampa Silver Cornet Band. After the ceremony was concluded, some of the party retired to the shade provided by the towering oak trees where a picture was taken by J. C. Field and champagne was enjoyed.<sup>10</sup> Toasts were dedicated to the Plant Hotel Company, Tampa, Henry Plant, South Florida, the Plant Railroad System and even one was given to any person who was overlooked. It was said that some persons drank just a little bit too much and began throwing their hats into the trees, dislodging a few acorns.<sup>11</sup> However, it was good that the citizens enjoyed themselves

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<sup>9</sup> *Tampa Tribune*, May 10, 1888.

<sup>10</sup> *Tampa Tribune*, July 26, 1888. In 1963, University officials instituted a search for the cornerstone but were unable to find it.

<sup>11</sup> *Tampa Tribune*, August 3, 1847.

for a sign of distinction was being erected — a sign that would outshine at least as a symbol of Tampa the landings of De Soto and Menendez, military activities at Fort Brooke and the mounds of the long vanished Timucuan Indians.

With the ceremonies ended, the work on the hotel proceeded with all due haste. Twelve brick layers and thirty-four laborers were hired and immediately began work. Sometimes the men worked at too fast a pace and were given furloughs when they had exhausted the supply of local bricks and those sent from Cincinnati. Another furlough was granted when the steel girders sent from Pittsburgh arrived by mistake in another place five hundred miles distant. Since there was a yellow fever outbreak at Jacksonville, all building supplies coming from the North to Tampa were fumigated.<sup>12</sup> Finally, after a steady stream of materials which included bricks arriving by train from Ohio and by barge from the Hillsborough Brick Company and lime brought by boat poured into Tampa, the supply of skilled bricklayers was exhausted and it became necessary to train young local men in the profession. By January 1889, work had progressed to such an extent that one wing four stories high and five hundred and eight feet long was erected. Delighted by such progress, the builders estimated that the hotel should be open for business in January, 1890.

Plant informed architect Wood that the hotel should be made as fire and hurricane proof as possible. The changing from narrow gauge to standard gauge of the South Florida Railroad provided a rich store of rails to reinforce the concrete walls and ceilings.<sup>13</sup> Marine cable from Key West provided another bountiful supply of solid supports needed for the hotel.

As the work progressed on the stately building, the citizens of Tampa were most eager to show visitors what was taking place. In August, 1889, a group of business leaders from Chicago came to Tampa and were taken to the construction site. They were so impressed that they expressed great interest in returning when the construction was completed. On March 14, 1890, Vice President of the United States Levi Morton, his wife and three daughters visited Ybor City and the site of the hotel.<sup>14</sup> When passengers for

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<sup>12</sup> Tampa *Tribune*, August 30, 1889.

<sup>13</sup> The steel rails can be seen in the ceiling of Room 231. When it was necessary to knock out walls to enlarge a radio studio for the University, workmen found that they had an exceedingly difficult task.

<sup>14</sup> Tampa *Daily Journal*, March 14, 1890.

the Plant Line Steamers crossed the railroad bridge en route to Port Tampa on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday nights, a large bonfire was lighted so that they could see the hotel.

It was most necessary to provide a beautiful setting for the hotel and a Frenchman named Anton Fiche who was an outstanding gardener was employed to supervise all gardening activities. On one occasion Plant sent Fiche to the Bahamas where he secured a boatload of tropical plants and, of course, Plant on his return from his European trips brought many unusual trees and plants.<sup>15</sup> As the first step in preparation of the land on the proposed garden site, an area between the hotel and river was cleared and flowers and trees were transplanted in this area and elsewhere.<sup>16</sup> It was said that thousands of geraniums lined the banks of the small brook which flows into Hillsborough River. In 1892, a catalogue of fruits and flowers growing on the Tampa Bay Grounds listed more than one hundred and fifty different plants. Included in the list were twenty-two kinds of palm trees, thirteen ferns, nine kinds of cacti, three types of bananas, twelve kinds of orchids and various citrus trees including orange, lime, lemon, grapefruit, mandarin and tangerine.<sup>17</sup> It certainly was a lovely spot.

Somehow the hotel was not ready for occupancy in January, 1890. Perhaps Mrs. Plant could be blamed for she was shopping in Europe for statues, paintings, tapestries and furniture for the public rooms of the hotel and shipments did not arrive in time.<sup>18</sup> More likely it was James Wood, the architect, who was responsible for the delay. It was said that time and time again he had walls torn down when they did not suit his fancy, and specifications were repeatedly changed. As late as March 28, 1890, he departed on a trip to New York to make arrangements for the addition of buildings which included a large dining hall seating 650 persons, steam laundry, servant's

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<sup>15</sup> *Tampa Tribune*, June 21, 1959. When the hotel closed for five years after the death of Plant, Fiche developed a celery farm in Ybor City (North of Seventh Avenue and West of Thirtieth Street) and operated it for many years.

<sup>16</sup> Since it would take some time for the trees and scrubs to develop beautiful foliage, photographs taken of the hotel grounds during the first several years show it in an almost bare state.

<sup>17</sup> An original copy of this catalogue is in the Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

<sup>18</sup> Karl Grismer expresses this view in his excellent book *Tampa* (Saint Petersburg, 1950), 189.

quarters housing 275 persons, engine house, conservatory and kitchen.<sup>19</sup> In order to provide space for these buildings, additional land to the west was purchased. Since the large steam laundry planned for the hotel could not be operated at a profit if it were entirely dependent upon hotel business, Plant Investment Company officials decided that in addition to the hotel business the laundry should service the dirty linen of the Plant Steamship Line vessels.

Architect Wood observed every detail of the construction but he always was glad to see visitors and guide them about the site noting what changes were taking place. The electrical contract had been given to the Eureka Company of New York and it was planned to have two thousand lights throughout the hotel.<sup>20</sup> Electric lights and telephones were to be placed in each guest room. All window glass in the building had double thick and number one grade specifications and was imported from France. Four large steel tanks were placed on the roof to provide plumbing pressure and a two hundred feet long, fifteen feet wide and eight feet deep cistern was installed beneath the building to provide water for the hotel.<sup>21</sup> Eighty carloads of furniture arrived and were installed in rooms in the south wing.<sup>22</sup>

The people of Tampa saw a unique building arise on the river bank that once had been a wilderness. Architect Wood had planned a five hundred and eleven room structure topped by thirteen minarets, each complete with a crescent, representing the Mohammedan lunar year. It would seem that the style was Moorish but observers have pointed out that the domes and minarets are typical of the Near East rather than Spain. Certainly the building has no claim as being pure Moorish and there is at least one

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<sup>19</sup> *Tampa Tribune*, March 29, 1890. Wood had been sent by Plant to Spain to study the Moorish style of architecture and Wood followed this style in the several buildings that he planned in Tampa and elsewhere in Florida and Georgia. In his initial layout for the Tampa Bay Hotel, Wood planned that a wooden building would be suitable as a dining place for a hotel costing two hundred thousand dollars, but by 1890 he changed his mind and decided to erect a more costly dining hall connected by a long hallway to the main hotel building.

<sup>20</sup> Power for the electricity was supplied by two high speed machines and four "five hundred light dynamos" housed in a brick building some four hundred feet from the main building. *Tampa Tribune*, May 1, 1890.

<sup>21</sup> From available evidence it appears that the Tampa Bay hotel made use of other sources of water supply.

<sup>22</sup> In 1893 Plant visited Chicago and purchased a large supply of furniture. It appeared that he purchased too much and it was necessary to hold a sale to dispose of the surplus. *Tampa Tribune*, December 19, 1922.

building in Saint Augustine erected during this period which is more representative of the Moorish style.

The grounds of the hotel were indeed most impressive. At first, rustic gates made of cabbage palmetto trunks guarded the carriage and foot entrance way path but they were replaced by iron gates and a watchman's house by 1894. Near the center of the spacious lawn was erected a white stone outpost containing as weapons two old cannon taken from Fort Brooke which stood across the river. Rickshaws pulled by young Negros rather than Chinese coolies were available to carry the guests to the dining room or to the circular Mirror Pool which lay to the front of the hotel or for a spin around the mile long walk which circled the main building. To the west of the hotel was a nine-hole golf course designed by John H. Gillespie of Sarasota and Scotland.<sup>23</sup> During the early days of the hotel, Mr. Gillespie caught the attention of all newcomers with his kilts. Train tracks installed during the construction days to transport building materials were utilized to carry guests directly to the hotel doors. It was said that Mr. and Mrs. Plant (home base of operations, 586 Fifth Avenue, New York City) lived at times in a private railroad car of the Plant System which was known as "Number One Hundred" but when they visited the hotel, they lived in a suite reserved specially for them.

Entering the hotel through the main doors, guests found themselves in a rotunda, with its many chairs, divans and art objects. From the great central hall, corridors led left and right to the interior wings of the building. The northern corridor led into the solarium and a beauty shop which offered hair styling and manicuring service.

Situated in the south corridor of the first floor were rooms used for various general purposes. These included a waiting room for male and female visitors, several waiting rooms reserved for feminine visitors and writing rooms. At the entrance way to this part of the building was the ever popular ballroom where dances were held at nights and tea served at four in the afternoon.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Tampa *Tribune*, November 22, 1959.

<sup>24</sup> The south corridor leads into what is now known as the Tampa Municipal Museum, maintained by the City of Tampa. The office of the Director of the Museum may have served as Mr. Plant's residence when he and his wife stayed in Tampa. One photograph of the hotel orchestra directed by Henry Stubbleline shows the orchestra performing in the room known to-day as the Dome Theatre. Tampa *Tribune*, July 20, 1952. Until the season's business warranted moving to the Tampa Bay Hotel, Stubbleline's group gave concerts at the Port Tampa Inn. Tampa *Tribune*, December 8, 1893 and August 26, 1894.

On the level below the ground floor were located various services for the guests. In this area the gentlemen could visit a cafe, billiard room, barber shop and a drug store. The ladies could enjoy segregated shuffleboard, billiards and cafe facilities in the same floor. In addition to these services listed above, there were available in this subterranean level, needle and mineral water baths, massages and a physician.<sup>25</sup>

Mr. and Mrs. Plant made a tour of Europe in 1889 to visit the Paris Exposition and to secure suitable furniture and art objects for the public rooms in the Tampa Bay Hotel. On this European trip Plant carried the Florida exhibit for the exposition at a personal cost of \$15,000. Since Henry Plant was in his seventies, it was the younger, second wife, Mrs. Margaret Plant, who had the energy to visit the numerous antique shops that are available for those who possess wealth. Perhaps of all the objects obtained at this time, the most impressive was the 30,000 yards of red carpeting with blue dragons which had been purchased from Christie's in London. The carpet had been ordered by English royalty but rejected because of their refusal to walk on the emblematic lion figure and Plant purchased the entire consignment. It had taken eleven men with block and tackle to place in the lobby another gem imported from Europe—a lifesize bronze of Victor Hugo's Esmeralda playing with her little goat.<sup>26</sup> Some other items included: One hundred and ten carved mirrors from Florence and Venice, solid brass candelabra, a Marie Antoinette parlor from the palace at Versailles, a large majolica vase, two Indian jewel vases and various possessions owned and loved by Marie Antoinette, Louis XIV, Louis Phillippe, Napoleon, Isabella

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<sup>25</sup> Tampa *Tribune*, February 15, 1955. Prior to the opening of the Student Center in 1964 the University of Tampa utilized these billiard and shuffleboard rooms, as a cafeteria and club room area. During the early days of the hotel no lady, worthy of the title could be seen partaking of an alcoholic drink but one daring woman invaded the bar room during an odd moment and enjoyed herself and the same daring damsel ordered a drink to be sent to her room.

<sup>26</sup> This carpet may be seen on the floors of several rooms in the Tampa Municipal Museum. Probably most of the articles that were of European origin were purchased on the 1889 trip to Europe. Another trip was taken to Japan in 1897 and articles of oriental origin were purchased and placed in the Tampa Bay Hotel. After the death of Plant, his widow removed many of the art objects and throughout the years various pieces of the hotel furnishings were taken to other places which included homes in Tampa. According to D. B. McKay one lease holder removed a railroad car load of pianos and the Tampa City Hall was supplied with office furniture removed from the hotel attic. Tampa *Tribune*, November 22, 1959. The bulk of these art objects have been placed in the Tampa Municipal Museum (part of the Tampa Bay Hotel Building) and is available for inspection on Tuesdays through Saturdays during the day hours. Many of the objects have greatly increased in value since 1890 and the entire collection is a worthy credit to the City of Tampa.

and Ferdinand of Spain, Queen Elizabeth, Queen Victoria and Mary, Queen of Scots.

As a visitor entered through the main entrance way into the circular two story rotunda, he came into contact with various treasures imported from Europe. Thirteen polished marble columns supported the base of the rotunda and bronze figures were placed by each column. Life size bronze Indian maidens, in groups, served as light fixtures for illumination needed on the steps leading to the second floor.

Occupying a place of prominence in the drawing room (known to-day as the Ballroom) were a sofa and two chairs which had belonged to Marie Antoinette, four gilt chairs that had been possessed by Louis Phillippe and assorted antique and modern Spanish, French and Japanese cabinets. Along the hallways could be found antique carved Dutch and rare onyx chairs. The beautiful art collection which decorated the walls included oil paintings, water colors, and steel engravings.

In evaluating these art treasures it must be remembered that during the 1880's and 1890's many wealthy Americans visited Europe in search of paintings and tapestries to fill their houses in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia and elsewhere. Certainly a great deal of worthwhile art objects were obtained but it must be admitted that some of the so-called treasures were greatly overpriced and even of doubtful origin. Perhaps Mr. and Mrs. Plant were as fortunate as John Ringling who visited Europe sometime later and returned to Florida with numerous items of great value.

With the hotel nearing completion in 1890, the construction foremen totaled the amount of materials they had used to fashion the building. In erecting the main section alone, 7,576 barrels of shell were used, 452 carloads of brick laid and 4,041 barrels of lime used, along with 2,949 barrels of cement, 2,224 tons of steel and 69½ tons of iron. Other construction materials included 242 kegs of nails, 5,050 feet of iron cornices, 689,500 feet of lumber, 27,000 square feet of stone dressing, 30 polished granite columns and numerous tons of other miscellaneous materials.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> A picture of a 1892 construction crew may be seen in the *Tampa Tribune*, October 12, 1952. It was taken by J. C. Field who performed the same task during the cornerstone ceremonies. The total cost of the hotel probably was in the neighborhood of two million dollars. This estimate does not include half a million dollars spent on furnishings.

An employe list of three hundred persons which included leading chefs, managers and other key personnel from outstanding hotels of the country was hired and made ready the establishment for its formal opening on February 5, 1891. Some fifteen thousand invitations which bore the legend: "Tampa Bay Hotel will be open for guests, Saturday 31, 1891, and the opening ball will take place Thursday, February 5, 1891, to which you are respectfully invited," were sent to various persons including Henry Flagler. By 8:30 P.M. guests began arriving in carriages, launches and train and, in honor of the occasion, the ladies were presented with fans and brass crumb trays and shaving mugs and ash trays were given to the men.

The events of the evening were given in excellent detail by one eyewitness:

"Mayor Glogowski officiated with Mr. and Mrs. Plant, hundreds of guests passed by them. Chinese lanterns and candles lighted the grounds. Two thousand people viewed the grand opening. The Albert Opera Company, the H. P. Stubbleline orchestra, played selections from Faust and other operas for an hour and a half. In the dining room with its huge dome, its arches on fitted pillars, its tapestries on pure white walls, were flags of all nations.<sup>28</sup> Silk damask of various hues draped the alcoves above. Food was served on Wedgewood, French porcelain, and Vienna plates. Giovanni Curreta, for fifteen years in Delmonico's and the Union Club, New York, made the pastry. Rossi, from the Manhattan Club, was baker.

Afterwards it was like a fabulous house party. With the 300 bedrooms and royal suites filled, guests slept in the turrets, in the drawing room, parlor rotunda, bunking on the tapestried couches near marble statues and French and Japanese cabinets — near the jeweled shrine that Mary, Queen of Scots, bowed her small white neck before, as she prayed for delay of execution. Ebony and rosewood chairs were moved together to accommodate a man's sleeping length. Old carved Dutch chairs, onyx chairs, were similarly coupled."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The wood carving in the stairways, ballroom and probably the beautiful work about the rotunda of the dining room was done by Ernest Augustus Oakes. *Tampa Tribune*, December 13, 1959.

<sup>29</sup> One of the tunes played on the opening night was the "Tampa Bay Hotel Gallup." A copy of this tune may be seen in the Hillsborough County Historical Commission's room in the County Courthouse. As late as 1916 one guest noted that all of the hotel employees had come from the North. Mildred McDowell *Old Seaport Towns of the South* (New York, 1917), 193-209.

As part of the opening ceremonies, a tennis tournament was arranged in which English, Canadian and American tennis stars were invited to participate. Included in the players were Grinstead and Garrett from England and Dr. Dwight Davis, the father of American lawn tennis. According to one young Englishman who took part, the tournament was not taken too seriously by him but he enjoyed dancing until midnight and then playing pool or poker and enjoying the best sherry cobbler, gin fizzes and whiskey sours that he had ever tasted.<sup>30</sup>

In April, 1891, the Tampa Bay Hotel closed its doors terminating the first season of operations. A grand total of 4,287 guests had registered during this first year. To emphasize the value of the hotel to Tampa, it became known that eighty-five hundred dollars had been expended in the local market to purchase fruit and vegetables and eighteen hundred dollars had been spent for fire wood.

By the season of 1893-94 the Tampa Bay Hotel schedule had settled to a steady routine. In order to promote more business, it was decided that the hotel should open some six weeks ahead of the previous date and the place was made ready for guests on December 4, 1893. General Manager J. H. King of the Plant Hotel System arrived from New York November 7, 1893, with his staff of waiters, clerks and twenty-seven maids to prepare the hotel for the opening date.<sup>31</sup> After much work by all concerned, the signal was given that the hotel was open — a flag was raised to the top of the staff near the engine house.

For a fee which ranged from thirty to fifty dollars a day and included food, transportation, guns and ammunition, Arthur Schleman, chief guide and John Gallie, associate, took guests to the nearby forests in Hillsborough and Manatee counties where a bountiful supply of game abounded. During the season of 1893-94 some 5,084 quail and snipe, 11 deer, 14 turkeys and 7 alligators were killed.<sup>32</sup> H. Lee Borden of the Borden Milk Company was able to bring back 73 quail and 2 doves. Since the guests were afraid of rattlesnakes, much of the shooting was done from horseback or from a buggy.

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<sup>30</sup> T. C. Bridges, *Florida to Fleet Street* (London, no date), *passim*.

<sup>31</sup> *Tampa Tribune*, December 8, 1893.

<sup>32</sup> *Tampa Tribune*, March 24, 1894. Arthur Schleman, a native of England, had been a guide in New York State and came to Tampa with Chester Chaffin of the Plant Railroad System.

In addition to the hunts in the field, the hotel sponsored a snipe shooting contest.

The earlier opening date seemed to have been a success for the following season opened one day earlier than the previous year. Much work was done in preparation for this season. The first floor was carpeted with a Juno carpet imported from Europe. The walks about the building were paved with concrete blocks instead of the clay previously used and a thirty by forty foot conservatory was erected. A Japanese pavilion was constructed near the river and its first floor contained a drugstore operated by S. B. Leonardi and Company and the upper floor served as a sitting room for the guests. Many tapestries, Persian rugs and four hundred paintings had been purchased to decorate the hotel. Most unique of the changes had been the erection of a frame building which served as Bachelors Quarters for those desiring the quiet life. Each room possessed a bath, hot and cold running water, electric lights and a call bell. Despite all of these improvements only a page and one half of guests were registered on the first day and most of them represented the Plant Investment Company.<sup>33</sup>

The Tampa Bay Casino which was constructed near the banks of the river was not ready for use until 1894. In this large auditorium guests heard top opera companies from New York City. These companies, with world recognized stars, while on their way to Cuba for winter tours, were able to stop-over for Tampa engagements. Included in the list of great artists who performed at the Tampa Bay Casino were John Drew, Ignace Paderewski, Anna Pavlova, Mrs. Fiske and Sarah Bernhardt. The "divine Sarah" came to Tampa on one of her numerous farewell tours but would not stay at the hotel because she claimed it was too drafty and used a private railway car. When movies came to the casino, a one hundred piece orchestra played during the performance of the silent "Birth of a Nation." This building served as an American Legion Hall during its final days and was destroyed by a fire on July 20, 1941. Since the hotel owned, among other vessels, a fleet of electric launches, there was located on the grounds, a boathouse for private and hotel owned craft. Recent excavations have disclosed the existence of a brick lined tunnel leading from the river banks to the hotel.

As the fame of the Tampa Bay Hotel was spread throughout the United States, many outstanding visitors came to the place and a growing number

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<sup>33</sup> Tampa *Tribune*, December 7, 1894.

of national meetings were scheduled there. In April, 1891, a naval squadron anchored in Tampa Bay and Admiral Walker and his staff were given a reception, ball and banquet by Henry Plant on Easter Monday. In 1895 Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant came to the hotel and she was honored by the U.C.V. and G.A.R. in a reception attended by a thousand persons. A reception for former Confederate general J. B. Gordon was held in the casino in December, 1896. In the season of 1897-98 a national trade association and the National Fish Congress held conventions at the hotel.<sup>34</sup>

Despite all of the attractions and beauty of the Tampa Bay Hotel, it was never more than half filled during the pre-Spanish-American War period. Soon the hotel became known as "Plant's Folly," but the old gentleman was not disturbed. He replied to all critics that he loved the place and that his special enjoyments were listening to the pipe organ and following the gardeners about on their duties.<sup>35</sup>

The Spanish-American War period saw the hotel reach a most notable place in American history and become one of the most famous hotels in the world. Henry Plant had succeeded in getting Egmont Key fortified one month before the outbreak of war by using his influence with Secretary of War Alger. On April 11, 1898, McKinley sent his war message to Congress, and the extent of Plant's power was seen when on April 13, Tampa was selected to serve as embarkation point and base of supplies for the Army. The Tampa Bay Hotel, which had closed at the end of the winter tourist season, reopened on April 21 in order to serve prospective military and civilian guests.

The Tampa Bay Hotel saw its most glorious days during this pre-embarkation period. It served as staff headquarters or as a temporary home for various dignitaries, including Clara Barton, General Joseph Wheeler, Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, General Nelson A. Miles, Colonel Leonard Wood, General Fitzhugh Lee, General William R. Shafter, Richard Harding Davis, and various newspaper correspondents and military attaches from all parts of the world.

In 1899, Henry Bradley Plant died and for some time it appeared that the Tampa Bay Hotel would be forced to close its doors permanently. The

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<sup>34</sup> *Tampa Tribune*, November 22, 1959.

<sup>35</sup> *Tampa Tribune*, February 15, 1955.

erection of other luxury hotels for tourists in Florida had caused the Tampa Bay Hotel to operate at a loss and only Plant's desire to compete with Flagler had kept the place open. During the several years that the heirs argued about the property,<sup>36</sup> the hotel remained closed most of the time, but finally in 1904 it and one hundred and fifty acres of surrounding property was sold to the City of Tampa for \$125,000.36. After the City of Tampa acquired the property, it was leased to David Lauber for \$10,000 a year and he opened the Tampa Bay Hotel for guests in January, 1906.

In order to attract visitors to the hotel, Henry Plant had erected a large exposition hall and race track in an area northeast of the main hotel building. Such an undertaking attracted good crowds and well-planned exhibits to the annual South Florida Fair held in the Exposition Hall. After the death of Plant, the fair ceased operations in the period from 1899 to 1905 and had sporadic revivals until 1916 when were initiated the annual fairs which have been very successful. After the death of Plant the fair grounds and hotel buildings have been operated as separate tracts of land.

During the period from 1906 to 1920 the Tampa Bay Hotel became the center of Tampa's social life and attracted a fair share of tourists in the December to April season. The hotel was advertised as being the only fire-proof hotel in the state and golf tournaments, fishing excursions, transportation by boat to picnics at Sulphur Springs and Ballast Point and hunts featuring duck, alligator and quail shooting were stressed as principal attractions. The list of prominent guests included such personalities as John L. Sullivan, Belmont Tiffany, Stuyvesant Fish, William Jennings Bryan, officers from Cuban, Italian, Spanish and American naval vessels, the German, Italian and Spanish ambassadors, Father Sherman, Governor Charles Magoon of Cuba and Irwin Cobb, European nobility and various state officials and

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<sup>36</sup> Although Morton Plant had accompanied his father and the second wife on a honeymoon trip to Europe, the friendship had cooled by 1899 and there was a bitter fight between step-son Morton Plant and Margaret Plant concerning the Tampa Bay Hotel.

In 1902 the Plant Estate sold the Tampa Bay Hotel to a syndicate composed of W. S. Harney, Charles Scott, Thomas Scott, and Gaston Scott for \$300,000. This group kept the hotel open for two years and in 1904 returned it. Prior to the change of ownership Mrs. Plant had been given the privilege of selecting items from the hotel and she selected various articles which were valued at \$175,000 at that time. Before returning the hotel to the Plant Estate, the Scott family selected many items which were taken to Montgomery, Alabama, Valdosta, Georgia and Mobile, Alabama. Statement written by Gaston Scott (no date) and letter of June 16, 1948, written by Grace R. Scott. Both items in files of Tampa Municipal Museum.

industrial leaders. The first Gasperilla Carnival Ball was held there in 1904. During the Plant era the Tampa Bay Hotel had been regarded as a resort for the tourists and the local citizens frequented other nearby hotels for their social activities but now the holders of the yearly leases eagerly sought local patronage. Many of the older generation in Tampa recall attending their first formal dance which took place, of course, at the hotel.

Besides Tampa social life and normal tourist activities, other events were scheduled at the hotel. During the Spring practice season, one or more major league baseball teams had their headquarters at the Tampa Bay and played their games on a pole field or race track which is the present site of the Florida State Fairgrounds. It was claimed that Babe Ruth signed his first baseball contract in the hotel lobby when he appeared as a prospective pitcher for the Boston Red Sox.

The 1920's saw the Tampa Bay Hotel rise to glory and fall to retirement. The leaseholders did not do too well during the 1910-1920 period and various persons held the contract for short intervals. After 1920, however, there was a shortage of available hotel rooms in Tampa and the Tampa Bay became a veritable "gold mine". Nearly one quarter of a million dollars was spent by leaseholder W. F. Adams and the City of Tampa to renovate the building so that it could accommodate the large number of guests. After 1926 the interest in Florida dropped rapidly and many rooms were unoccupied. By 1932 Adams was declared bankrupt and the lease reverted to the City of Tampa.

In the winter and spring of 1933 the Trustees of the University of Tampa decided to change from a two year Junior College to a four year one and to move from the Hillsborough High School Building. It appeared that the Davis Island Biscayne Apartment location would be chosen until the city officials of Tampa, realizing that this would be a good opportunity to help a worthy cause, offered the University a lease with such favorable terms that it could not be rejected. The entire building, with the exception of the south wing of the first floor which was made into a city museum for some of

the Tampa Bay Hotel furnishings, was leased to the school for ten years at a rate of a dollar a year. The Tampa Bay Hotel Building entered into an entirely new phase of activities as the main administration and classroom building of the University of Tampa.

The Tampa Bay Hotel was not destined to be just a hotel building serving good food and drinks and providing rest and relaxation for its guests. As a direct result of the Spanish-American War it acquired a place in history as one of the great American hotels. The fame acquired from the dispatches and books written by famous guests who came to the hotel at that time caused Tampa to become known throughout the world.

# The Spanish Camp Site and the 1715 Plate Fleet Wreck

By MARION CLAYTON LINK

A 300-foot strip of sandy beach and dunes between Vero Beach and Sebastian Inlet will immortalize forever the story of the Plate Fleet wreck of 1715, thanks to the generosity of Robert McLarty of Vero Beach and Atlanta, Georgia, who has recently deeded a portion of the former campsite of the Spanish survivors and salvors of the Fleet to the State of Florida for a park and museum.

Where 250 years ago nearly 1,500 terror-stricken survivors gathered following the destruction of their fleet in a violent hurricane and sought to establish themselves on this deserted, sandy shore, today nothing remains but a 15-foot height of sand dune quickly covered with vegetation.

For more than two centuries this now deserted strip of beach kept its secret. When scattered settlements began to dot the shores of the Indian River late in the last century, the last vestiges of its previous occupancy by the Spanish refugees had disappeared beneath the scrub oak, cabbage palm and cactus which still cover its steep crest.

Charles D. Higgs,<sup>1</sup> local historian, came close to discovering its presence some 25 years ago, but although he found quantities of both European and Indian artifacts buried in the site, he failed to associate it with the wreck of the Plate Fleet. His examination revealed for 500 feet along the beach in the wind and tide-eroded bluff a concentration of bones, both animal and human, iron spikes, clay pipes and a peculiar assortment of pottery sherds. On the higher land he discovered evidences of building materials — bricks of red clay, shell mortar and plaster, decorative and roofing tile and wooden stakes.

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<sup>1</sup> See "Spanish Contacts with the Ais (Indian River) Country," by Charles D. Higgs. Florida Historical Quarterly 1942, Vol. 21, pp. 25-39.

He concluded erroneously that it might have been an early Spanish settlement of Menéndez' garrison out of St. Augustine, or possibly evidences of Ponce de Leon's second landing on the Florida coast.

Several years later the same site was investigated once more by Hale G. Smith<sup>2</sup> while acting as assistant archeologist for the Florida Park Service. His deductions came somewhat closer to the truth. He wrote:<sup>2</sup> "Considering all of the data it seems very likely that the Higgs site represents materials from the Plate Fleet Wreck of 1715 and/or the pirate's hangout of the following year.

"It must also be borne in mind that Indians, possibly Ais, were associated with the site, probably drawn there by the wrecks."

He was led to this conclusion because this position agreed generally with a map of east Florida made in 1774 by Bernard Romans,<sup>3</sup> an English historian and mapmaker, which bears an interesting note at the San Sebastian River indicating that the Plate Fleet of 1715 was wrecked, in part, at that point. This is in the immediate area of the Higgs site.

Smith says, "In the year following the Plate Fleet wreck, 1716, Spanish sources mention a pirate's hangout at Palmar of Ays,<sup>4</sup> which is probably to equated with "el Palmar" shown on the Romans map and which is also in the immediate vicinity of the Higgs site."

The publication of these two papers, one in 1942 and the other in 1949, attracted little attention except among those scholars interested in the anthropological and archeological history of Florida. Any would-be treasure seekers failed to associate the significance of these surveys with the fabulous riches which must still exist in the sunken hulls offshore.

It was only after a hurricane in 1955 which carried away about 15 feet of the sand bank facing the shore and uncovered coins and other evidences of the ancient shipwrecks, that Kip Wagner, a housebuilder who lived in the

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<sup>2</sup> See "Two Archeological Sites in Brevard County, Florida" — The Higgs Site (Br 1) —by Hale G. Smith, Florida Anthropological Society Publications, U. of Fla., Gainesville 1949.

<sup>3</sup> Concise Natural History of East and West Florida and accompanying charts—Bernard Romans 1774.

<sup>4</sup> From an unpublished bibliography on the area by Charles D. Higgs.

vicinity a good share of his life, became curious as to their origin and learned the story of the lost Plate Fleet. He obtained a metal detector and started a search which led him to a re-discovery of the site. Within a half acre he turned up clusters of cannon balls, ships spikes, quantities of broken earthenware, bits of melted gold, and even a pair of cutlasses buried in the sand. A gold ring set with a large, crudely cut diamond and smaller stones was one of the most exciting finds.

His curiosity aroused as to what might lie in the offshore waters, he set out to organize a search first by plane and then by boat. Since then Kip Wagner and his associates who later joined him in forming the Real "8" Company, Inc. and obtaining leases from the state of Florida to work these areas, have located several and salvaged two of the lost Plate ships retrieving an unbelievable treasure in gold and silver coins and bullion, rare Chinese porcelains still intact, jewelry, religious medals, and a wide variety of ships' parts and equipments.

The fleet which yielded these treasures was known as the "Combined Armada of 1715." It was organized by the Spanish government at the port of Cadiz in 1713 just following the end of the War of the Spanish Succession which had caused the postponement of the regular yearly sailing of the Plate Fleet for several years. Because there were not enough Naval vessels available for the undertaking, the King had given orders to make up the balance by letting contracts to private owners. These *registros*, as they were known, were in charge of Don Antonio de Echebera y Zubiza, while Don Juan Esteban de Ubilla was designated leader of the *flota*.

During the more than two hundred years that the Spanish had been carrying the wealth of the New World to Spain, it had become the custom for the fleets to split upon reaching the western side of the Atlantic, the Galeones de Tierra Firme, or Mainland Fleet, going to Cartagena and Portobello in New Granada and Panama, and the *Flota* heading for Vera Cruz in New Spain. From the South American ports the *Galeones* would pick up shipments of gold, silver and jewels, while the *Flota* at Vera Cruz collected the gold and silver of Mexico as well as the treasures from the Orient which arrived there by muleback after a long voyage across the Pacific from Manila in the Philippines to Acapulco.

Finally rendezvousing at Havana, the combined fleets would prepare for the final voyage back to Spain, generally north through the Bahama channel

and then northeast past Bermuda to the home port. It was this final leg of the voyage which so often spelled disaster, for even though they were able to navigate the dangerous Gulf Stream, passage between the Bahamas and the reefs which bordered the Florida coast in good sailing weather, it was quite another story when the clumsy ships were caught in the violent winds and seas of a hurricane. And strangely, most sailings from Havana seemed to take place during the hurricane season from July to October.

True to form, the 1715 Combined Armada of eleven ships finally completed its preparations and set sail from Havana on July 24th. On July 30th the fleet passed the mouth of the Bahama Channel where it was overtaken by "one of those frightening air flurries that are common to the circular course of an irresistible hurricane," according to Spanish historian Fernandez Duro.<sup>5</sup>

The peak of the hurricane struck about 2 A. M. on July 31st with a violent wind from the east north east while the fleet was offshore between the St. Lucie river and Cape Canaveral. Of the eleven ships in the fleet only one survived, the French *Grifon* which had been forced to accompany the flotilla from Vera Cruz so that the fleet's whereabouts would not be betrayed to enemy ships. She was evidently far enough east to make it possible for her to keep clear of the cape.

According to Duro's report of the ten ships that were lost, *La Francesa* and *San Miguel* under Echevera disappeared completely in the high waves, while the remaining eight were crushed in the shallow waters of Palmar de Ays on Cape Canaveral. General Ubilla and possibly a thousand others died.

The *Capitana*, flagship of the Commanding General, was lost with General Ubilla and 225 persons; and the *Almiranta*,<sup>6</sup> flagship of the Admiral under Ubilla, ran aground only a stone's throw from the coast with the loss of 123 men. *Almiranta* of Echevera completely broke up with the loss of 124 men. *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*, which was captained by Don Manuel de Echevera, son of the Commander, disappeared with the loss of 135 men. *Urca de Lima* ended up in the mouth of a river but lost 35 men. *Nuestra Señora del Carmen*, which was known as *La Holandesa* under Don Antonio de Echevera was set on land and did not suffer. Two *pataches* or

<sup>5</sup> "Armada Española" by Cesareo Fernandez Duro. Madrid, 1900, Vol. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Capitana and Almiranta were names given to the flagships of the General and Admiral who were first and second in command of the fleet.

patrol vessels which completed the flotilla went down with a loss of 37. Fortunately, a section of the deck of one became detached and acted as a raft for those who survived.

Gradually the survivors rallied in an area close to where, it is thought, the *Capitana* had been driven on a bar just off the shore. From the littered beaches they gathered up planks and broken sea stores which had floated ashore and set up rude shelters. Taking charge of the tremendous task of survival on this barren shore for the fortunate ones who had escaped with their lives, the surviving admiral of the *flota*, Don Francisco Salmon, set men to digging wells for fresh water, gathering supplies and setting up a camp for the injured.

He chose Captain Sebastian Mendez of the lost *La Holandesa* to head a party which was sent to notify the Spanish settlement at St. Augustine 120 miles north of their predicament. Meanwhile a second long boat was prepared to make the long voyage back to Havana to alert the authorities there of the disaster which had overtaken the fleet.

Mendez carried a letter from the Admiral to the Governor General of St. Augustine, Don Sanfrisco de Corioles de Martinez, asking for food and clothing and tools to begin salvage of the capital ship which lay on her side just off the beach near the encampment. He wrote that the situation at the Royal Camp was very poor with the survivors eating dogs, cats, horses and the vile berries of the palmettos.

Upon his arrival at St. Augustine Mendez testified to officials there according to a deposition found in the Archives of Spain, "that although he has sailed the seas for many years and suffered through many tempests he has never seen another like it in violence, and his ship and all the rest were lost, some before and some after Palmar de Ays, at 28 degrees 10 minutes (north latitude) . . . in an area nine leagues (27 miles) from north to south." Palmar de Ays, apparently a large palm grove, was a familiar landmark to navigators along the coast.

It was two weeks after the loss of the Plate Fleet before Havana learned of the disaster. The exhausted couriers in the long boat finally reached their destination in the early hours of the morning of August 15th. A relief expedition was immediately organized by the Governor under the command of

Sergeant Juan del Hayo Solarzano with orders to aid the more than a thousand survivors and to recover as much as possible of the 14 million pesos which had gone down with the ships. It was composed of one frigate and seven sloops.

For the next few years the Spanish maintained their shoreside camp while they worked at recovering what they could of the lost treasure. Meanwhile we may be sure, all who were not needed for this tremendous task were sent back to Havana or on to St. Augustine, for the logistics of maintaining and feeding such a number of people on that isolated sandy shore was difficult. There were also the disciplinary problems of keeping order among these stranded adventurers and dealing with their attempts to conceal portions of the recovered treasure for themselves.

The authorities in St. Augustine also had to be dealt with. Florida was probably Spain's poorest province in the New World, and it was considered unpopular duty to be stationed there. With such wealth lying at their very doorstep, naturally they expected a share of it to be channeled through their own settlement. To their dismay, orders were received that all that was recovered was to be returned to Havana for reshipment to Spain.

The work of underwater salvage must have been difficult for there was little equipment available for the purpose. The salvagers soon found that most of the ships were in such shallow water close to shore that much of the time they were hampered by heavy surge, breaking seas and little visibility. Or if the vessels had gone down further off shore in deeper water, the only way of reaching the cargo was by skindiving without air or by utilizing a crude diving bell which provided an airspace underwater into which the diver could stick his head now and then and gulp a breath of air. As few of the Spaniards had any experience in handling themselves under water, they relied chiefly upon the skill of Indian divers who were brought in to do their diving for them. Duro says they worked chiefly upon the *Capitana* and *Almiranta* which lay near the shore in fairly shallow water. These ships also carried the bulk of the treasure.

By August 1716 the first shipment of the recovered wealth had arrived safely in Cadiz. In all, the salvors succeeded in recovering for the Crown about four million pesos, "...but it was observed, in view of the almost

sudden increment of currency circulation that the corsairs did not care whether the public treasury benefited or not.”<sup>7</sup>

Surprisingly, it had not taken long for news of the shipwreck to travel to all the ports of that then remote part of the world. Soon after the first rescue ships arrived from Havana, even while the Spaniards were diving upon the stranded vessels, (like the earlier time in 1687 when Capt. William Phips of Boston worked at recovering the treasure of a Spanish Plate ship on the Silver Shoals), small sailing craft appeared from nowhere to dive upon the outlying wrecks to salvage whatever they could reach. The Spanish salvors however after a few unsuccessful forays, gave up trying to drive off these petty pilferers. They were too busy with the aid of the Indian divers recovering and storing the wealth of the galleons they were working on.

There was little difference between pirate and privateer in those days when England, Spain and France were in almost constant struggle. By 1716 the war of the Spanish Succession had been over more than three years, yet the pirate Henry Jennings,<sup>8</sup> who had carried a patent from Jamaica to act as a privateer during the war, still terrorized the seas from Jamaica, his former headquarters, to the northernmost part of the Bahamas from his base at the pirate stronghold of New Providence.

Waiting until the Spaniards had labored for months to accumulate a storehouse full of the sunken treasure, Jennings gathered together a small fleet of two brigs and three long ships and with 300 men set out to attack the Spanish settlement and secure the treasure. His informers had already told him that the hoard was guarded by two commissaries and a detachment of about 60 soldiers, and that most of the encampment would be dispersed at the various diving locations. So it was not difficult to surprise the Spanish, kill or scare away the guardians of the storehouse, and make off with the 340,000 pesos it contained.

A series of small raids and the increasing difficulty of reaching the remaining treasure now locked in inaccessible parts of the lost ships which were rapidly breaking up in the succession of storms which followed year after year finally brought an end to the official recovery efforts. It is thought

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<sup>7</sup> “History of the Island of Cuba” by Don Jacobo de la Pezuela.

<sup>8</sup> “A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates” published 8 years after the event.

about one-half of the treasure was salvaged. No doubt for many years thereafter, the bones of whatever wrecks could be reached would continue to be picked and repicked from hundreds of small craft.

After the eastern shore of Florida became more settled late in the following century, it became commonplace for miles along the beaches to pick up coins and other small objects from the sunken treasure fleet which had by that time disappeared completely beneath the surface of the sea. The finders had little idea from whence they came. For, on the shore where the Spanish camp had stood, the storehouse which protected the treasure and the crude barracks and other shelters had gradually fallen apart and disappeared beneath the ever encroaching sand and jungle growth. Even the wells which had been sunk and lined with wooden hogsheads joined with pitch vanished beneath the accumulation of detritus.

For years the outer dunes built higher as the southeast prevailing winds swept in from the sea. Then would come another hurricane whose raging waves tore into the beaches gouging out great areas of the sandy bank, spreading both sand and the artifacts it covered thinly over the wasted beach.

I drove out A-1-A from Vero Beach toward Sebastian Inlet to see for myself the location of the Spanish camp. I found it 15 miles north, where the barrier beach was so narrow that the road clung to the inner western edge close to the waters of the Indian River. I had been told that because of the narrowness of the beach at this particular point, Indians, and later white settlers had used it as a haulover for boats between the two bodies of water. A shallow ditch and then a gradual upward grade led to the top of the sand bluff between me and the sea. It was thickly covered with palmetto, sea grape, yucca and cabbage palm.

To reach the sea I had to pick my way along a crude path pitted here and there with almost overgrown excavations where thoughtless treasure hunters in recent years had slashed and dug at the thickly rooted undergrowth in their searches for the remains of the Spanish camp. In places I could see that a bulldozer had been used. A blast of wind and a whirl of sand met me at the top. Rows of white breakers roared in upon the beach below, and just offshore several hundred yards to the southeast a yellow buoy bobbed marking the last resting place of the *Capitana* which was said to have carried three and a half million in silver. To my right was the Higgs site, and some

yards to my left was the 300-foot stretch that Mr. McLarty had presented to the State.

This was the beach where Kip Wagner<sup>9</sup> had made his first discovery of coins from the 1715 wrecks. Since then he had located and gone on to salvage the ballast-strewn remains of General Ubilla's flagship which lay parallel to the shore directly in front of me beneath the frothing surf. He had recovered a wealth of coins and bullion, precious porcelain from China and choice pieces of jewelry—a treasure trove which had rewarded its finders with more than a million dollars in present day values.

According to Florida State law, 25 per cent of any treasure trove must become the property of the State, and it is this priceless collection which will provide the first displays in the interpretive museum which the State plans to build on the McLarty site. The exhibits will also include a sampling of the artifacts previously uncovered on the Spanish campsite as well as those which will undoubtedly be found in the course of further excavations.

Carl J. Clausen, marine archeologist for the State Board of Antiquities, who was instrumental in arousing Mr. McLarty's interest in contributing the shore property, was delegated to begin a preliminary survey in August 1966 for the Florida State Museum which included the clearing and mapping of the property and preparations for excavation. Using standard archeological procedures, he plans to develop the cultural history of the site. It is his belief that the property donated by Mr. McLarty encompasses a large segment of the north end of the 1715 camps. The south end or Higgs site which was studied scientifically in the 1940's by both Charles Higgs and Dr. Hale Smith, is presently owned by a number of people, and will not be a part of the State Memorial park.

Mr. Clausen became associated with recovery efforts of the lost treasure ships in 1964 when he was assigned by the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund as a diving archeologist to accompany a salvage group under search and salvage lease No. 1329. The wreck which turned out to be one of the 1715 Fleet was located about three nautical miles south of Fort Pierce Inlet. He has published an account of the salvage of this wreck<sup>10</sup> which he

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<sup>9</sup> "Drowned Galleons off Florida Yield Spanish Gold" by Kip Wagner, *National Geographic*, January 1965.

<sup>10</sup> "A 1715 Spanish Treasure Ship," by Carl J. Clausen, *Contributions of the Florida State Museum, Soc. Sc. No. 12, U. of Fla. Gainesville* 1965.

believes to be one of the five vessels of the *Flota* under the command of the General Don Esteban de Ubilla which was loaded at Vera Cruz.

Since that time Mr. Clausen has been closely associated with the fast changing developments within the State including the creation of the Board of Antiquities by the Florida Legislature which was designated to take over supervision of the salvage operations from the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund.

# King of the Crackers

By LAWRENCE E. WILL

You folks, of course, know all about those western cowpokes from seeing them on your TV screen. You know how they spent their days chasing badmen in the hills and rescuing pretty damsels in distress and shooting up the Red Dog Saloon. They didn't scarcely have time, it seems, to do much riding herd. Now you'd never learn it between commercials, but right here in Okeechobee Land we've had our cowboys too, though they didn't dress so fancy or operate just like those western guys, but they were tending their cattle here long before Jim Bowie ever whetted a knife or Bat Masterson conked a desperado, and not only that, Florida cowboys are still working at their trade on those same old ranges that their grand pappies rode, and they are raising up their own boys to keep the good work going on.

Where their first cows came from is most anybody's guess. The departing Spaniards left some. Quite likely some were left behind when English settlers skipped out to the Bahamas after Spain took over Florida a second time, and we know that the Seminoles had cattle which they had to abandon or which were stolen from them in the Indian wars. Anyway, plenty of cattle were roaming wild when the first settlers migrated down to this part of the state. Many a man got his start by catching a wild horse or two and then rounding up those loose cows. As far back as the Civil War big herds were ranging on the Arcadia prairies and they helped keep the Confederacy in meat. The biggest stock raiser at that time was Jacob Summerlin, the King of the Crackers.

Some of Summerlin's cowmen were described by Colonel George F. Thompson, who had been sent here right after the war to arrange for homesteading the newly freed negroes. He visited a camp on Pease Creek (near Arcadia) where these cow hunters lived in log houses built a couple of feet above the ground, and which had neither windows nor chinking in the cracks. Their diet, so he said, was pork fried until it was like tough hide, cornbread tasting like baked sawdust, "Haiti potatoes" boiled till they were

mostly water, and with everything, an ample supply of grease. Yet in spite of their repulsive diet he had to admit that these drovers were as active and hardy a class of men as could be found in any northern clime, "not like most lazy southerners". Their cattle, he said, were small, netting 500 or 600 pounds, and when sold in a batch they brought only \$6 a head, though an extra fine one might sell for \$14 to \$18. At that time some were being shipped to Savannah or Charleston, but most were sold in Havana.

From those early days right on down till Flagler built his railroad to Key West, cattle raising on the north and west sides of Lake Okeechobee didn't change much till recent years. Cattlemen didn't have to own their land. The whole wide world was there for them to use. The cattle roamed the prairies, woods and swamps, wild as any deer. Although the cattlemen would ride the range and knew each cow at sight, yet they didn't have much work to do till time for the big drive in the spring. Then each owner, or maybe six or a dozen together with all their cow hands, would start on the roundup and the drive, which would last for several weeks. With wild whoops and hurrahs the riders would set out from their starting camps, while their supplies followed in two wheeled carts pulled by a yoke or two of oxen. Mules were no good for this, since they couldn't stand those pesky flies and mosquitoes as the oxen could, besides their small hooves got stuck in boggy places. Each man's equipment was nothing much but a mosquito bar, a blanket and a slicker, and of course, a rifle or shotgun, for after the dried beef and biscuits which the women had prepared had been used up, the cowmen got their meat by hunting game.

These rangers were called "cow hunters" for that's exactly what they were. Every man, with his short handled, 18 foot whip or "drag," and his well trained "catch dog", would scour the swamps, palmetto thickets and piney woods, rounding up each scattered cow and steer and herd them to the nearest pen. This drag was the main tool of the cow hunter's trade. He could wrap it around the neck of a running calf, or with a rifle-like crack that could be heard for miles, kill a horsefly on an ox's rump and never put a blister on the hide. It was from their skill with these noisy whips that the cowmen got the name of "Crackers." A catch dog was a mongrel with some bull dog strain which had been trained to rout a cow from the densest brush, then hold her until the ranger could take over. He was a cow hunter's most necessary helper. He was, that is, until the screw worm came to Florida. Then every scratch in a cow's hide was quickly filled with squirming maggots, so now the poor catch dog has done lost his job.

The drive began on that part of the range farthest from the final shipping point. The first day or two would be spent in rounding up all cattle in that vicinity, which were put into a log fenced "holding pen" of a half acre or so in extent. Here each calf was cut and marked and branded with its proper owner's brand, for herds were usually mixed. Cows, calves and bulls then were turned loose. Steers or "beef cattle" meanwhile were "minded" by a few riders to prevent them from straying. On the following day these steers were moved on to the next holding pen, a day's drive, some ten or fifteen miles further on, where a new batch of cattle were hunted from the woods and the process repeated. After all cattle had been rounded up the herd might number from a few hundred to a couple of thousand head.

These were then driven to the shipping point, Tampa or Ft. Pierce. In the early days of the Cuban market, the cattle had been driven to Punta Gorda for shipment. Later they were driven further south, the Caloosahatchee River being forded at Ft. Thompson, near LaBelle, and the drive continued along the river to its mouth, at Punta Rassa. Here the animals would be loaded onto the waiting schooner or steamship for Havana.

The loading, once started, kept right on even into the night. By the flickering light of bonfires and lighted torches, bearded, big hatted riders drove the cattle, a dozen at a time, down the long high-boarded runway and wharf amidst whoops and shouts, the clattering of hooves, the bellowing of cattle, the barking of dogs and the pistol-shot cracking of drags, while more bawling steers kept pouring from the darkness of the backwoods. That must have been a sight to see.

When the ship returned from Havana it would be met by settlers from as far as Bassenger, Ft. Mead or Ft. Drum with their oxcarts to load up with supplies from civilization. The cattlemen were paid in Spanish gold, usually one dubloon, worth \$15.60, for each steer. A peck or more of these shining coins might be stuffed in saddle bags and left carelessly around until the owner was ready to start home. Dr. Lykes once was paid with an Octagon soap box plumb full of gold. He guarded it by spreading his saddle blanket on top and using it for a pillow that night. As one old cowman told me not so long ago, "Everybody used gold money in them days, but there wasn't much of anything that you could buy, excusing flour and sugar and coffee. People left their money laying around in cigar boxes or corn sacks or tied up in some old shirt sleeve. Most every baby's rattle was some gold dubloons

in a sody tin. Thar was a heap of men who'd put their brand on other people's calves but hit seemed like thar weren't nobody so sorry as to steal that gold. Hit's agin the law to own no gold now, but I reckon thar's some folks who've got some hid away till yet."

One of those old time cattle barons and the first one to run his cattle south of the Caloosahatchee, was Francis Asbury Hendry, who had come to Ft. Myers in 1868, then moved to Ft. Thompson up the river. In the 1880's, when a man with only 1000 head wasn't scarcely rated as a cattle man, Hendry and his family were considered to be the biggest owners in the state. He had first come to Ft. Myers as a dispatch bearer during the Indian war. In the Civil War he was a Confederate captain. In later years he served in both the Senate and the House of the State Legislature and was on the first Board of County Commissioners, but he also worked to get the county divided later on, though he didn't live to see Hendry County named for himself.

Another cowman who was getting his start at the same time as Hendry was Dr. Howell T. Lykes, who had married the daughter of Captain James McKay, Sr., of blockade running fame. His seven sons, under the name of Lykes Brothers, now own 300,000 acres of pasture and citrus land, to say nothing of their 54 ocean going steam ships.

One of the most famous of those old cattle barons was Ziba King, who stood six feet six, weighed 225 pounds, could out-eat any competition and was unbeatable at poker. He was quite a man. Born in Georgia in 1838, he came to Tampa thirty years later, then moved to Ft. Ogden where he ran a store and began to accumulate some cattle. In 1900, of the 452,000 head of cattle in Florida, he owned 50,000 himself. Besides being an official in three banks, he had, like Hendry, served in both the House and Senate in the Legislature, and too, he'd been a county judge. Once when the school board had been unable to pay the teachers, he paid them off himself, all in Spanish gold.

But the first, and for a long time the biggest, of all the big cattlemen was Jacob Summerlin, a Cracker to be sure, in fact he was known far and wide as King of the Crackers, a title of which he was right smart proud. He bragged that he could ride a horse and crack a whip when he was only seven years old, and that he had been the first white child born in Florida after it became U. S. territory. That had been in 1821, in Alachua County, right

on the Indian border. As a boy he was friendly with Osceola and other Seminoles, but that didn't prevent him from almost being ambushed a couple of times by his old time friends after hostilities began. As early as 1859 he began to ship cattle to Cuba and before the war broke out he already had shipped thousands of head. Then he agreed to furnish the Confederacy with badly needed beef, hides and tallow by delivering 600 head a week during the months from April to August, by driving them from the Arcadia prairies to the railhead at Baldwin up near the Georgia line, a trip of forty days. After two years of this he decided on a better way to help the cause. Teaming up with Captain James McKay and his son Captain James, Jr., he began to ship again to Cuba. These cattle were smuggled through the Union blockade by the McKays in their steamers SCOTTISH CHIEF and SALVOR and their sailing brig HUNTRESS. The Yankees finally burned the SCOTTISH CHIEF, captured the SALVOR and imprisoned Captain McKay and his son Donald, but Summerlin kept on exporting beef. In Cuba his \$8 steers now brought \$25 to \$30 in gold with which he bought wheat, flour, bacon, sugar, salt and tobacco for the hungry soldiers and the folks back home. Yet after the war old Jake was not as rich as he might have been, for a good share of his money was in Confederate bills, and besides the cattle market then was "shot." However, it came to life again during the Cuban Ten Year Rebellion from 1868 to 1878. Summerlin had been shipping cattle from his 800 foot pier at Punta Gorda, but now he moved and built a pier at Punta Rassa, at the Caloosahatchee River's mouth where there was not a crying thing to be seen but a government warehouse at the end of the submarine telegraph cable to Cuba. A newspaper writer, here in 1883, described Punta Rassa as "a desolate, wind swept cape, which, with its neighboring island (Sanibel) form a very good harbor. It would seem," he says, "that nobody would live on such a spot from choice, but here, in this desert-like place, in that ugly old building, with only the bare necessities of life around him, lives one of the richest men in Florida, who could, if he would, live in princely style anywhere in the state. Owning, as he does, the wharf at Punta Rassa and 1000 acres of land adjacent, houses and orange groves elsewhere, and tens of thousands of head of cattle, I could not realize that the little old man I found next morning engaged in cutting up a slaughtered beef, was the King of the Crackers, whose name is known throughout Florida and Cuba."

Jake Summerlin was uneducated, but that didn't prevent him from contributing land and money to start Summerlin Institute in Bartow. He already had donated money for the erection of a court house in Orlando, partly to

prevent General Sanford from moving the county seat to his own town. Summerlin also helped lay out the water route from the head of the Caloosahatchee to connect it with Lake Okeechobee. When Hamilton Disston wanted to open the river to the lake he got those old cattlemen, Captain Hendry and Jake Summerlin, who knew that country better than most anybody, to lay out the best route through the lakes and marshes that lay between. Partly at his own expense, Summerlin got together a party and led it himself from Ft. Thompson to Lake Hicpochee. Although he then was about sixty years old, he and Hendry waded through sawgrass in waist deep water, taking three or four hours to advance each mile, sleeping in an open boat and it plumb full of hungry mosquitoes, to set up tall flags for guiding Captain Menge's dredge as it dug the canal that we are still using till this day.

Summerlin used to be a mystery to those Cubans, for although to do business with them, he had to bribe them from the highest right on down the line, yet they couldn't cheat him, he wouldn't gamble and he never drank, and his wealth sure didn't go to his head. All his life he lived, dressed, acted and talked just like his poorest cow hunters. He bragged that for twenty years he'd never worn a coat and he didn't even break that rule at the dedication of his Summerlin Institute, although he did go so far as to put on shoes. "I'm just a plain old sun baked Florida Cracker" he used to say.

It seems as if most of those old cattlemen, regardless of their wealth, were plumb satisfied to live just as they had done when they used to ride the range. There was Joe Peeples in recent years, who would drive in a beat up Ford from LaBelle to Tallahassee to sit in the legislative halls in his rumpled clothes smoking a corncob pipe, although his estate was appraised at a million dollars. That was just the way of a Cracker cowman, but I don't reckon there was any man who could beat the record of old Joe Bowers of Indiantown. He had come from North Carolina to the Bartow-Wauchula area, but when the freeze in 1895 killed all his orange trees, he moved clear over to the Seminole settlement at what's now called Indiantown, the first white man who ever lived there. He camped among the Seminoles, hunted with them, got adopted into their tribe and took to wearing a long tailed, striped shirt just like a blooming redskin. After awhile Joe bought 80 acres in a hammock and planted out some citrus trees, eleven varieties before he got through. Those trees now are sixty years old but they still bear fruit as good as ever, better than some of the newer groves out there, so folks tell me.

Joe built himself a 12 x 16 board-and-batten store there in his grove where he traded with the Indians. He even owned a dairy and had the biggest herd of range cows in that part of the country, yet Joe loved best to roam the woods hunting and looking after his cow critters. He'd sooner sleep under a mosquito bar beneath a cypress tree than in bed in his palmetto shack at home.

Now Joe Bowers was blamed near 70 years of age when he got a new idea in his head. He'd tried his hand at most everything else, so now, he allowed, he'd try his luck at getting married. He picked a right pretty local girl only sixteen years of age to be his blushing bride. The wedding, there in his grove, attended by half a thousand bug eyed people, was a grand success. During the ceremony, Joe, just so he'd feel right natural, sat on a horse, and of course, the bride and the preacher did the same. And then, the rest of that day and all the next, Joe entertained his guests with tall tales of hunting in the woods and kept all hands well supplied with ample drinking liquor.

To be sure, Joe didn't expect his bride to be content to housekeep in his old palmetto shack, so nearby he built a house of red stained logs. It had a roof of tin, a porch across the front, glass windows, and to top it all, a real sure enough bathroom with running water and everything complete. Most any woman would have been right pleased to have a house like this, under old spreading oaks, among those fragrant orange trees, and with a loving husband rich as all get out, but this young girl, it seems, was just too hard to please. They only lived together for about a year and right soon afterwards old Joe Bowers up and died. Before he went he told a friend "There's no fool like an old fool!" I reckon he meant himself.

Those old range riding, cow hunting cattle barons are about all gone by now. I reckon about the last one left is old Jim Durrance up Bassenger way. He lives four miles back in the woods in a frame, dog-trot house which once had a coat of paint. There's not a wire of any kind running to his home. He can't see no good in having electric lights, and if somebody wants to talk to him, why what's to keep them from driving out? The road's not too bad. Looking at Jim Durrance's stocky figure and his almost unwrinkled florid face, even in spite of his shock of snowy hair and great white curled up moustache, you'd swear he'd never lived the 86 years he claims.

He can remember when only three men ran cattle in these parts, from Lake Okeechobee slam up to Canoe Creek near Orlando. One's range was from

the St. Johns River to Ft. Drum, another claimed all from there to the Kissimmee and the third all west of that, although it didn't take long for others to come in. That was when range wars started, and some men got shot and killed. Jim Durrance had first lived at Crewesville in Hardy County, near the head of Fisheating Creek marsh, where he had an orange grove. But, he said, his neighbors would steal his oranges while he was off cow hunting, and so he got married and moved to Bassenger. "We were both orphans," he said, "and so we had to work." He had taken part in many a drive to "Pinty Rosso", crossing the Caloosahatchee at Ft. Thompson until the rapids had been dredged out, after that the herds swam across at LaBelle where large "swimming pens" had been built on each side of the river to hold the cattle during the crossing.

I was talking to a man who knew him well. "That Mr. Durrance seems to be a mighty clever hearted man," I said, "but it's a shame that poor old man has to work so hard. There he was, on one of the hottest days in June, out in his pasture working on a fence and his wife told me he'd been grubbing some palmettoes the day before."

"Mr. Durrance is a right fine man," my friend replied. "If anybody gets in a jam all they need to do is to ask him, and he'll help them out, but don't start getting too sorry for that 'poor old man'. He isn't worth thousands of dollars. He's worth hundreds of thousands. He owns all this land hereabouts, twenty-one square miles of it, and every mile is stocked with cattle. But Jim Durrance doesn't care for money and the things that it will buy. He's lived that plain way all his life, and that's just the way he likes to live."

Well, there's plenty of things in this world that are better than money, though it most generally takes money to get them. Anyway, you'll have to give credit to those old time cowmen, the King of the Crackers and all the rest, they knew how to be happy though rich.

# Jose Del Rio Cosa

By JACK D. L. HOLMES\*

Of the numerous, unheralded reconnoitering voyages made by Spaniards along the coast of East Florida during the second half of the eighteenth century, few exceed in interest that of Lieutenant of warship José del Río Cosa in 1787. His remarkable observations and judicious predictions for the future of Florida as a producer of naval stores make the document more than just an historical curiosity.

From the documents in the naval and war archives of El Viso del Marqués,<sup>1</sup> it appears there were two naval officers of similar name.<sup>2</sup> The explorer of East Florida was apparently José Antonio del Río Cosa, born in the Santoña mountains of Santander. After enlisting in the marine guards in October, 1773, he trained on land until 1775, when he went to sea. On June 22, 1775, he was commissioned ensign of a warship and he joined the ill-fated Spanish expedition against Algiers led by the redoubtable Conde, Alexandro O'Reilly. In May, 1776, he sailed on the frigate *Dorotea* in a fleet from El Ferrol to Havana, where he was attached to the naval base from July 2, 1776. Following his promotion to lieutenant of frigate on May 27, 1780, he fought in the naval expeditions of the young Conde, Bernardo de Gálvez, against Mobile (1780) and Pensacola (1781). He won his braids as lieutenant of warship in 1783 or 1784 and was commissioned captain of frigate in 1794, partly as a reward for his services during the 1787 expedition

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<sup>1</sup> The Archivo Museo Álvaro Bazán Marina de Guerra. Its director, Admiral Julio F. Guillén, was very helpful in securing copies of documents relative to José del Río Cosa. For comments on this rarely-consulted naval archive, see E. J. Burrus, S.J., "An Introduction to Bibliographical Tools in Spanish Archives and Manuscript Collections Relating to Hispanic America," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XXXV, No. 4 (November, 1955), 472-73, 482.

<sup>2</sup> The *other* naval officer, José del Río Cossa [*sic*], was born in Madrid in 1758. He began his services in the Marine Guards on January 25, 1777. Married in 1810, he was a Knight in the Order of Santiago. He died in 1817. Hoja del Servicios, Archivo Museo Álvaro Bazán, Sección de Indiferente.

to East Florida. He had once served as second-in-command of the first detachment of the third fleet, from April 19, 1783, and as captain of the first detachment of the twelfth squadron from December 6, 1784.<sup>3</sup>

Among his naval commands were the schooner *Elizabeth*, the sloop *Santa Teresa*, and the frigate *Amphitrite*. He served as sub-inspector of the naval school in Havana and later as interim-commander of the Havana Arsenal and adjutant to the commander. During his land duty he was also attached to the Hydrographic Commission and charged with the drawing of various plans and charts. Among his best were those of the Mosquito Coast and of Florida's East Coast, which accompanied his reconnaissance and report of 1787.<sup>4</sup>

There is one reference to his having engaged in the contraband trade between Jamaica, Trinidad and Havana. During the *pesquisa* of Juan Manuel de Cagigal and Lieutenant-Colonel Francisco de Miranda in 1783, Ensign of warship José del Río, commandant of the Cuban coast guard, was imprisoned on charges of defrauding the Royal Treasury.<sup>5</sup> It is possible this was the other José del Río Cossa, but at any rate, the explorer of Florida continued in command of the schooner *Elizabeth* until the end of September, 1804, and on October 24, 1804, he died in Havana.<sup>6</sup>

The genesis of the 1787 Florida reconnaissance goes back to a royal order of June 4, 1786, when the Royal Official of Cuba, Francisco Javier de Morales, was ordered to sponsor an expedition to East Florida to determine the feasibility of developing the timber and naval stores industries in the Peninsula for the Havana Naval Arsenals.<sup>7</sup>

Lieutenant del Río Cosa's expedition was made in the schooner *San Bruno* during the summer of 1787. When he returned to Havana he received

<sup>3</sup> Service Sheets of José del Río Cosa, and José Antonio Río de la Cossa, in *ibid.* Because of certain identity of dates, these service records probably refer to the same naval officer.

<sup>4</sup> The chart was sent from Havana to Spain in August, 1787, carefully packed in a wooden case in care of Pedro Argain, commander of the hooker *Santa Rita*. Francisco Javier de Morales to Antonio Valdés, Havana, August 14, 1787, in *ibid.* The map is now in the Museo Naval (Madrid), Carpeta VI, Sección A, No. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Juan Antonio de Uruñuela to Francisco de Borja, Marqués de Camachos (Comandante general de Marina), Havana, October 4, 1783, Archivo Museo Álvaro Bazán, Indiferente.

<sup>6</sup> Service sheet of José del Río Cosa.

<sup>7</sup> Morales to Valdés, August 14, 1787.

the congratulations and praise of his superiors. The governor of Florida, Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes, whose own efforts to persuade royal officials to encourage Florida industry had met with considerable indifference,<sup>8</sup> wrote about the young naval officer's accomplishments, "It would be unjust not to tell you of the favorable concept which this good officer has earned in my sight. As a matter of fact, since his arrival he has never stopped dedicating himself with activity and ardour to the exact performance of the obligations which Your Excellency, in a wise choice, has seen fit to trust to his charge."<sup>9</sup>

*Observations corresponding to the measures for re-establishing East Florida in a flourishing state during the present Spanish government and advantages which may be derived from its products, particularly the making of pitch and lumber, as interesting as useful to a maritime nation.*<sup>10</sup>

The confidence placed in me by the commanding general of the port of Havana,<sup>11</sup> in having chosen me for the most exact and detailed reconnaissance of the forests, qualities of timber, pitch, and examination of the ports of St. Augustine, St. John's, and St. Mary's, in keeping with the Royal Order following the description of East Florida made by the settler, Francisco Felipe Fatio,<sup>11A</sup> in which he proposes the advantages which will accrue to the

<sup>8</sup> Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes y Velasco (1720-1820?) served as governor of East Florida, 1784-1790. Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Zéspedes in East Florida, 1784-1790* (Coral Gables, 1963). On May 12, 1787, he made his own report and description of East Florida, which is printed in Arthur Preston Whitaker (ed. & trans.), *Documents Relating to the Commercial Policy of Spain in the Floridas, with Incidental Reference to Louisiana* (Deland, 1931), 49-61.

<sup>9</sup> Zéspedes to Morales, San Agustín de la Florida, July 16, 1787, Archivo Museo Álvaro Bazán, Indiferente.

<sup>10</sup> The report is a copy of the original, dated Havana, August 6, 1787, and accompanies an *expediente* of September 17, 1790, sent first to the Secretary of the Indies and then to the Secretary of the Treasury (*Hacienda*). It is in *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Francisco Javier de Morales.

<sup>11A</sup> Francis Philip Fatio, an early pioneer planter of East Florida, was considered "a man of consequence" whose connections with the firm of Panton, Leslie & Co. aided in the trade with the Indians. He was said to be "enthusiastically in the Spanish interest, not only by words but by deeds, supplying the ordinary rations to the detachments stationed on the banks of the St. Johns River..." His loyalty oath and memorial to remain in Florida, dated 1784 and 1785 respectively, are in Joseph Byrne Lockey, *East Florida, 1783-1785, a File of Documents Assembled, and Many of Them Translated*, ed. by John W. Caughy (Berkeley, 1949), 204-05, 464. See also references in *ibid.*, 12, 461. Fatio's description of East Florida referred to is dated St. Augustine, March 18, 1785, and is in *ibid.*, 479-82. His later report of November 17, 1790, written in Havana, is in Whitaker (ed. & trans.), *Documents Relating to the Commercial Policy of Spain*, 124-38.

nation in the development and extraction of timber and pitch; have imbued me with a true patriotic spirit, and as a result of the great confidence which I have enjoyed, to give various essays concerning East Florida which, with the most careful attention, I have been able to acquire during the time of my reconnoitering task and projection of the maps loaned me some time ago.

East Florida is located between the latitude of 25 degrees, which at the southernmost point of the mainland is called Punta Lancha, and the latitude of 30 degrees 43 minutes where the "Bridge of St. Mary's" is located, confining the river of this name which runs to the West-Northwest with Georgia, and serves as the dividing line with the United States of America, and in the longitude of 393 degrees 36 minutes from the Meridian of Tenerife. Its peninsular shape is formed on the eastern side in a North-South direction from the "Cabeza de los Mártires" to "Cabo Cañaveral," and from this place it runs to St. Mary's port to the North-Northwest.

We may find on this coast the ports of Matanzas, St. Augustine, and the rivers St. John's, Nassau, and St. Mary's; this last-named (which has three sand banks forming bars at its entrance, as all those of this Coast do) is the most advantageous, for admitting 30- to 40-cannon frigates, and is even suited to warships of 60 guns during high tide. Its size and shelter from all winds make it the most desirable and deserving of the attention of our wise government.

The Nassau Bar, located in latitude 30 degrees and 28 minutes, presents three large sand bars which make its entry difficult, and it is subject to continual shifting because of the ebb and flow which moves the sand, thus making a change in the opening and closing of the mouths.

That of St. John's, which is formed by two bars in the latitude of 30 degrees and 20 minutes, is more regular, and it is reasonable to suppose that it has had little alteration from the time I explored it, inasmuch as the physical cause which is noted in the direction of the river, course of its waters, and shape of its entrance, somewhat narrow, shall always preserve its current in the turn which it forms and will not allow the sands to shift from one place to another.

That of St. Augustine (in the latitude of 29 degrees 53 minutes) is today the most interesting for being the capital of all trade carried on in the

Province. It has at its entrance six bars which form several channels, and are of such impermanency that not even the entrance pilots are certain of their location: no ship, no matter how small (which are those which ordinarily visit this port), can enter or leave without delaying its schedule three or four days, and sometimes more, for it is at the mercy of (as numerous examples show) the formidable sea raised by the winds from the first and second quadrants.

Matanzas, which is located in latitude 29 degrees 37 minutes, offers at the present secure entry to all ships which draw between eight and nine and one-half feet. The two bars, which can be seen, are formed by the intersection with an islet called Peñón, which runs from the North to the S.E., and the other, called Barretón, to the West, has little water. I am content to call attention to the example furnished by the Generals in the late war who attempted to surprise St. Augustine by entering by Matanzas with their ships through the channel, while the troops landed in the cove.

In the geographic chart which I have drawn there are notes corresponding to said ports for the clearest understanding of what I explored with all the interest of a sailor, not failing to include the trivial sights, resolution of triangles and shapes.

The West Coast runs Northeast to Apalache. Although Charles Bay and Tampa, or Holy Ghost Bay, are located there, I have no comment on them since I have not visited them.<sup>12</sup>

The land is generally flat and dotted with pines of excellent quality, live-oak, oak, walnut, ash, *darias*,<sup>13</sup> sabine,<sup>14</sup> mulberry, *liquidambar*,<sup>15</sup> poplar, *cascas*,<sup>16</sup> laurel, and other trees of lesser stature, among which are included the one called *fajima*,<sup>17</sup> the seed from which by heating and washing, pro-

<sup>12</sup> For explorations of the west coast of Florida and Tampa Bay in particular, see Jack D. L. Holmes, "Two Spanish Expeditions to West Florida, 1783-1793," *Tequesta*, XXV (1965), 97-107.

<sup>13</sup> The manuscript reads *Barías*. This is probably the tree *Cordia geras canthoides*.

<sup>14</sup> *Juniperus* L.

<sup>15</sup> *Liquidambar styraciflua*, L.

<sup>16</sup> *Cinnamodendron axilare*.

<sup>17</sup> Probably the wax myrtle or bay-berry tree from which myrtle wax was obtained for the manufacture of candles: *Myrica cerifera*. Comments on its use in Louisiana and West Florida are in Captain Phillip Pittman, *The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi*. . . (London, 1770), 23; and James Alexander Robertson (ed.), *Louisiana under the Rule of Spain, France, and the United States, 1785-1807* (2 vols.; Cleveland, 1911), 1, 158.

duces green wax in considerable quantities. The land is irrigated by a number of rivers and creeks of excellent water.

Excellent quality products which are most easily produced for the sustenance of the settlers are corn, rice, rye, barley, and all kinds of garden stuff and vegetables, and there is even one odd man who raises wheat, but it is of poor quality.<sup>18</sup>

The same fruit trees which are found throughout Europe are also found here, but not of the same quality.

I have examined different mushrooms and forest roots which are good to eat and of sufficient nutrition. The natives told me they were called *Ache*,<sup>19</sup> which has the same use as the bitter yucca,<sup>20</sup> and gives them the same benefit. In the preparation, flour cakes are made from the root, and they have better substance and juice than the cassava which is made in many parts of America. There are in abundance roots of *Itamo*, *chitubo*, sassafrass, viper root,<sup>21</sup> and *chirras*, as well as grasses of *contralomblices*, *chumafina*, penny-royal,<sup>22</sup> snake-root,<sup>23</sup> swallow-wort,<sup>24</sup> *penalope*, and house-leek,<sup>25</sup> along with many of botanical interest. Indigo also abounds of a very good quality, although not as good as that of Guatemala.<sup>26</sup> There is also tobacco, the seed for which (as I have been informed) came from Havana, and during my inspection I found what seemed to me to be very good and of large leaf.<sup>27</sup>

The situation of modern Florida in point of commerce offers an epoch of the greatest happiness. The lack of recourse to England and the separa-

<sup>18</sup> On the failure of wheat in the lower areas of Louisiana and the Floridas, see Jack D. L. Holmes (ed.), *Documentos inéditos para la historia de la Luisiana, 1792-1810* (Madrid, 1963), 153, note.

<sup>19</sup> Possibly the sweet potato or yam: genus *Dioscorea*.

<sup>20</sup> The manuscript reads *yuca agria*.

<sup>21</sup> *Scorzonera hispanica*.

<sup>22</sup> *Mentha pulegium*.

<sup>23</sup> *Aristolochia serpentaria*.

<sup>24</sup> *Chelidonium majus*.

<sup>25</sup> *Sempervivum*.

<sup>26</sup> Indigo was a flourishing industry between 1770 and 1790 in Spanish Louisiana and the two Floridas. See Bernard Romans, *History of East and West Florida* (New York, 1775), 134-39; Jack D. L. Holmes, "Robert Ross' Plan for an English Invasion of Louisiana in 1782," *Louisiana History*, V, No. 2 (Spring, 1964), 166; and Holmes (ed.), *Documentos de Luisiana*, 155 note.

<sup>27</sup> On tobacco in Louisiana and the Floridas, see *ibid.*, and Jack D. L. Holmes, *Gayoso* (Baton Rouge, 1965), 90-99.

tion of her American colonies in this area, gave rise to an increased development in that Province (of which it is still capable), and which originated in the repeated incursions of the Americans against the Tories. These faithful vassals, deprived of their possessions and without subsistence in a people whose enthusiasm for liberty caused them to break the most sacred bonds, touching on anarchy, forced them to abandon their homes and they came in large groups to seek secure domicile in Florida. Suddenly the Province was filled with laboring hands accustomed to continual industry with such advantage and success in the production of crops, that at the end of the war they were counted at more than three thousand families, existing upon the benefits of construction timber, lumber for masts, and resin with such success, that upon the delivery of the Province to our Sovereign, those on the St. John's and St. Mary's Rivers and Port of St. Augustine, were producing 50,000 barrels of pitch. At this painful wound, becoming preoccupied with being expatriates, by the simple process of coming under Spanish rule, their emigration continued to the islands of Providence and Abacu, and to Georgia, where they never stopped thinking of their blessed Florida. They desired to be admitted under our domination, as has been practiced for some (conditionally until His Majesty resolves the question), and some have come, and I know from faithful subjects that at the moment when our Sovereign permits them land grants in this Province with the right to work timber and produce pitch, at least 1,000 inhabitants of Georgia and the Bahama Islands will arrive and in a short time they will form a progressive population, and they could become prosperous if only they enjoyed the free export of their pitch to ports in Spain and America with the same advantage as their experience demonstrated during the time of English rule.

The climate, which is of no less importance in determining active labor, is the most healthy in all America. Its location on the Globe enables it to enjoy a moderate temperature, and neither the rigors of cold nor heat interferes with the worker in his labor. Of no less advantage is the transportation of the products of their industry over very flat roads and rivers to the mouths of the St. John's, St. Mary's, and Port of St. Augustine.

The Indians, today more than ever, are in favor of the mild and benevolent character of our Government and the generosity with which the governor and captain general of that Province, Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes, acting in the name of our August Catholic Monarch, offers new triumphs for Religion and an interesting commerce by no means equivocal. The small villages or

towns which they have formed are preferable to the barbarism and evil ways of their former life when they had no other home than that offered by chance on the hunt. Their formation of ties to a Town can become political, civil and commercial. One finds perfect safety in their villages in the trade and contracts with all the formality of good faith. Many among them have formed plantations where they cultivate the land and raise livestock with some of the slaves they purchased in St. Augustine and Georgia during the time of British rule. This "new look" has brought them to a very lucrative dependency upon our commerce. The goods which they presently need can be supplied by us in exchange for skins and cattle, although it is currently done by the House of Panton, Leslie and Company,<sup>28</sup> which brings goods from London. It would be very desirable to have a Spanish member of the firm for his instruction regarding the trade with Indians, so that in the future he might serve as the founder of a company organized by Spaniards, thus freeing us by this means from the suspicion of having separated the Indians from the friendship of the Spaniards.

#### TREATISE ON LUMBER<sup>29</sup>

Although at the outset of my reflections I related in general the advantages which that Province offers the State in the matter of construction lumber and masts, it is not so extensive as to embrace our Royal Navy, for although it is certain that from the environs of St. Augustine to the St. John's River, including the territory on its banks (which I have examined with the greatest care, while drawing its plan at the same time), there are large stands of pine, live-oak, sabine, and oak, with the facility of most convenient transportation, either by dragging or by water; they are not as suited due to the lack (which with the greatest disappointment I have seen) of height and breadth which I have generally noted in both kinds of masts and construction timber. I have not confined myself to one or two inspections; I have made numerous ones at various places where information from Francisco Felipe Fatio and

<sup>28</sup> The firm of William Panton, Thomas Forbes, and John Leslie was the leading economic power in Louisiana and the Floridas following the American Revolution. See Zéspedes to Gonzalo Zamorano, St. Augustine, October 2, 1786, in Duvon C. Corbitt (ed.), "Papers Relating to the Georgia-Florida Frontier, 1784-1800," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, XXI, No. 2 (June, 1937), 185; Marie Taylor Greenslade, "William Panton," *Florida Historical Society Quarterly*, XIV, No. 2 (October, 1935), 107-29.

<sup>29</sup> Descriptions of the timber trees of the area are found in Francis Harper (ed.), *The Travels of William Bartram* (New Haven, 1958), *passim*; and with particular reference to the use of timber for ships, George H. V. (Victor) Collot, *A Journey in North America* . . . (2 vols. and atlas; Paris, 1826; reprinted Florence, Italy, 1924), II, 151-58.

several planters on the same banks where they bordered the river, together with my system of asking them if in the neighborhood they had heard of or had seen very large timbers, to which they replied generally that they were very good, and, passing in their company to the site which they pointed out, I was further informed. By viewing myself, and by taking the knowledge of the carpenter overseer who accompanied me, it was sufficient to show their uselessness, and to reinforce our calculations, I took the geometric measurements of many pines which seemed to be outstanding, so that I can assure the Superior Government that I have found only one, which was 75 feet high and 18 to 20 inches in diameter, in a location one league distant to the south of Picalata.<sup>30</sup> The rest, from the plantation called Leslie, to the entrance of the river, are from 30 to 35 feet high; their thickness is irregular, being from 10, 12, and 16 inches, and from said thicket to the Laguna Valdés<sup>31</sup> they are smaller and the cane very slender, which I attribute to the effect of the sweet water in the area, since it is not salty, and I have observed that the ones further north and on the sea coast are much thicker.

From the forests of live-oak which I have inspected, many of them are found (particularly on Talbot Island, the fork, and Hill's plantation) suitable of producing shaped timber such as yard-arms;<sup>32</sup> seconds and thirds of a trunk are good for warships of 60 cannon because the girth is narrow and can form masts only for packet-boats and other small craft. This is not sufficient to establish a royal tree-felling operation because its usefulness would be soon ended since the timber-stands are small, and it would not repay the treasury for the initial investment, which is considerable for similar establishments. In addition, I have found many of the trees rotten in their trunks.

There is not the least doubt that if this most vital branch of commerce is attached to the present activities of our Merchant Marine (without which it cannot survive) and given the ease with which this Province can supply them in sizes for Packet-boats and brigantines, in truth it would soon achieve increased interest by conducting them to the ports of Spain, succeeding by this means in ending delays with ships of the Havana trade and the

<sup>30</sup> For the location of Picolata, see John M. Goggin, "Fort Pupo: a Spanish Frontier Outpost," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXX, No. 2 (October 1951), 139.

<sup>31</sup> Said to be seven leagues long and four leagues wide, this is the point named George by the English. Two rivers feed the lagoon—the Valdés and Morales—and connect a beautiful island located at the mouth of the lagoon. Minutae to the *expediente* of José del Río Cosa, Archivo Museo Álvaro Bazán, Indiferente.

<sup>32</sup> They were also suitable for futtocks: *ibid.*

hope of return, for with the sale of their goods, they could easily furnish cargoes at Port St. Mary's or on the St. John's River, where they could furnish timber of all qualities and uses of more advantage to them. At the present time it is not so convenient. As for the value of the timber, a cubic foot in rough state is 2 bits, 1 dozen superficial feet of pine boards bought at St. John's River, 18 dollars and 75 cents, and at 30, the same number bought at St. Augustine due to the cost of transportation there by land and sea. The barrel staves of white oak without bark for pipes<sup>33</sup> at 25 or 30 feet the thousand; for a hogshead, 20 or 25; and for quarter-casks and barrels, 16 or 20. Those of water oak, red oak, cypress or sabine are worth less because of the quality of the wood. For a thousand staves, bottoms will require 250 pieces, worth about half the price of the latter.

The boards of ash or pine are worth six and one-quarter cents at the rate of nine and one-half cents per foot.

This account is so brief because today only one planter on the St. John's River is producing them, and supply and demand roughly determine the value, for without an alternative or competitor, there can be no just price placed on the goods.

I know that the English during the last war had taken from the St. Mary's and St. John's Rivers timber of large size, to solve their absolute necessity of avoiding damage, in maintaining their ships in this place, they were forced to penetrate the interior with difficulty and some cost for many miles to secure a single frigate or warship mast, which they found by luck, and thus avoided a return trip to Europe.

#### TREATISE ON PITCH<sup>34</sup>

The satisfaction which I have felt in seeing the abundance of pitch that can be easily produced in the vast, spread-out forests of pine, compen-

<sup>33</sup> The pipe or *pipa* was a large barrel containing two hogs-heads or 105 gallons. The pipe varied in size from the Canary Islands to Seville.

<sup>34</sup> Regarding the pitch pine, Francis Baily wrote, "These pines are of the species which is called by the inhabitants 'pitch pine,' and grow to an *enormous height and vast size*: they are bare of branches to near their tops; so that in travelling through them they appear like a grove of large masts, which has a very curious effect. In several places near the lake we saw the signs of persons having been there to make pitch, tar, turpentine, &c., from these trees: these articles they take to New Orleans, and turn to a good account." Francis Baily, "*Journal of a Tour in Unsettled Parts of North America in 1796 & 1797* (London, 1856), 346.

sate in part for my disappointment in the lack of floor timbers and construction lumber. The account presented by Francisco Felipe Fatio is not in the least equivocal in this matter. The simple view and the same prevalence of pine trees over many miles in extension assure sufficiently the great extraction which was made during the time of English rule of so valuable a substance. I have been in no plantation (although abandoned) which did not disclose (although in ruins) pitch factories, which attest to the richness and abundance of an activity in which the present continuation of the maritime powers and the political situation require more attention than usual.

Permit me to draw a parallel. The English did not begin to realize the value of the Province until the year 1776, when they began to benefit from their products with the greatest success. Suddenly they saw on the river banks and islands a multitude of settlers, which by the end of the war amounted to more than 12,000 persons. This large population, devoted to the manufacture of lumber and pitch, made such a success in their activities, that in addition to the quantity shipped from the St. John's and St. Mary's rivers, there were ready to export at the cession of the Province 50,000 barrels, at increased prices due to the war. At the present time you can see only shadows of what had been: there is only one Spanish settler who has developed the process along the bank of the St. John's adjacent to San Nicholas. The rest — Leslie,<sup>34A</sup> Fatio, Pengre, Clark, Doctor Len, Boneli, etc. — as you can see by my charts, work no more than is necessary to keep body and soul together, in spite of which, the zeal of Governor Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes has encouraged them to more active labor, and it is hoped in this year that the settlers Pengre,<sup>34B</sup> Fatio and Hill will be able to produce between 1,000 and 1,500 barrels.

The current values of the small quantities of pitch produced in this Province on the St. John's and St. Mary's Rivers are the barrel of pitch

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<sup>34A</sup> John Leslie, a native of Scotland, came to South Carolina and Savannah before he moved to St. Augustine and joined the firm of Panton, Leslie and Thomas Forbes. He died about 1803. Robert Leslie, another member of the firm, who also lived in St. Augustine, died in 1798. Greenslade, "William Panton," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, October, 1935, 107-29; Whitaker (ed. & trans.), *Documents Relating to the Commercial Policy of Spain*, 243; John Francis Hamtramck Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State* (Jackson, 1880), 132-33 note.

<sup>34B</sup> William Pengree, owner of the plantation "Laurel Grove", had left East Florida during the British evacuation following the American Revolution and settled in Camden County, Georgia, but Creek hostilities persuaded him to return to his plantation in 1786 with his wife, child, and forty-eight slaves. Tanner, *Zéspedes*, 130.

containing 8 *arrobas* net-weight, 3 dollars;<sup>35</sup> that of black tar, 3; that of yellow, 3½, and resin, 5 dollars; this leads me to compute that the barrel of tar and pitch delivered in Havana could sell for approximately 5 dollars, the same, more or less, as that shipped from New Orleans.<sup>36</sup> It is certain that they are cheaper when brought from Charleston, where they are purchased in the four categories for about 11 and 12 reals, and charging only 8 to 10 for carrying charges. When brought from St. Augustine to Havana, they fetch from 14 to 16.

This branch of commerce being established for the ports of Spain, it is impossible to determine (in addition to making too little pitch) a fixed point for the costs of transportation, there being no standard for freight charges. Should His Majesty wish to encourage the production by conferring privileges to those who manufacture it and to those who buy it, it would be possible to set a legal rate moderate enough to destroy the pitch trade of the Baltic.

The profits obtained in this commerce, which ought to be handled on a reciprocal basis directly with the Peninsula, will go beyond these two branches of which I treat, resulting in an increase in trade, not only for the traders of our ports, but for these settlers, and the Royal Treasury will no longer suffer the expense of restricting trade, and contraband with the American Colonies, nor will it be necessary to keep these settlers as dependants of the Royal Treasury.<sup>37</sup>

There is nothing more just for the prompt development of this Province than the piety of our August Sovereign, whose munificence may place all the products of this Province on the free list for a period of years, particularly the two activities of manufacturing lumber and resin for the new settlers. Moreover, the permission to export to the ports of Europe and

<sup>35</sup> The manuscript reads *alquitrán*, which is a species of pitch containing a mixture of tar, grease, resin and oil. The *arroba* was a Spanish measure equal to 25.36 pounds. J. Villasana Haggard, *Handbook for Translators of Spanish Historical Documents* (Austin, 1941), 72.

<sup>36</sup> Baily noted this trade from New Orleans. See *supra*, note 34.

<sup>37</sup> The search for free trade in Louisiana and the Floridas is explored in Whitaker (ed. & trans.), *Documents Relating to the Commercial Policy of Spain*; and Jack D. L. Holmes, "Some Economic Problems of Spanish Governors in Louisiana," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XLII (November, 1962), 521-43. For an earlier attempt (1758-1760) to link Florida's production of naval stores with the annual subsidy, see John Jay TePaske, *The Governorship of Spanish Florida, 1700-1763* (Durham, 1964), 107.

America, which is a similar dispensation, would stimulate active trade and foreigners will suffer an inevitable decline in both areas, and there is no doubt that they will suffer from not being able to penetrate our colonies, since this Province is sufficient to supply tar to our Royal Navy and Merchant Marine, and to all Europe, without increasing the working hands.

For the present there are no other ports but St. Mary's, the Nassau Bar, and St. John's, and no shelter for ships in case of accident or lack of supplies; for in addition to requiring a pilot for their entry, if they succeed, they find themselves at a deserted spot without the means to provide for their needs. Although it is certain that in the first and last there are two small detachments, these have no more than the necessary supplies which are sent to them monthly from St. Augustine on a regular basis for the members of its garrison. Along the same line, carpenters and calkers, if available, command high wages, in addition to the cost of having to transport them to said places from St. Augustine.

My interests in the Nation, if I have had the glory of having fulfilled the King's orders, will be my reward.

*An extract of the answers which I have had from the settlers, Mr. William Pengre and Theophilus Hill, in the contract house of the tar shipwrights, which serves as a supplement to the treatise on pitch.*

“In answer, I reply that I have at present 220 barrels of turpentine, each barrel containing 25 gallons (the gallon holds 4 small wine bottles, rather more than less); I do not know the weight nor can I weigh them; I can sell each barrel for 5 dollars. This number will be increased by the middle of next November to at least 500 barrels, but I have not yet begun with tar or pitch since once I have harvested my crop of rice and corn, I can easily undertake both forms of pitch or either of the two, as soon as his excellency the Governor encourages me to do it. I had considerable interest in shipping the said quantity of turpentine next winter for Cadiz, where they inform me the barrel is worth — this kind as well as tar and pitch — three pounds sterling; I cannot say with accuracy what quantity of the said pitch I can prepare hastily by Christmas, but I think that 400 of pitch and 100 of tar, on terms equal to the turpentine, and 1,200 of all kinds at equal prices in the course of the next year. I know that the prices are cheaper in the United States because of the usual development by the Motherland, as well as for

the reason that its settlements are older than this one, but I believe that it will be a short while only before it will languish there due to the lack of export and because they are applying themselves to more remunerative tasks. In the last war we sold a barrel of turpentine for 8 hard dollars. I would be happy to be most equitable in the price in order to make secure the foundation of commerce.

“Laurel Grove, July, 1787.”

#### REPLY OF HILL

“Humbly offers his opinion that naval stores, such as tar, pitch and turpentine, can be found in great abundance in this Province, and it is very certain that with the few hands that can leave the cultivation of their land, they can deliver at the landing of North River from 6 to 700 barrels of pitch and 300 of tar during the forthcoming year. As for the turpentine, its gathering depends in large degree on the season, whether it is rainy or dry, so that it seems to me that in an average year, we can collect some 200 barrels. As for making the barrels and delivering any of the indicated articles in good condition, he will submit it to the decision of any intelligent subject. The prices for said articles are as follows: pitch, 2 dollars fifty cents the barrel; turpentine and tar, 4 dollars the barrel, each one containing  $32\frac{1}{2}$  gallons (the gallon is of four wine bottles rather more than less) or 260 pounds English net weight.

“St. Augustine, July 11, 1787.”

#### NOTE

The gallon is equal, with small difference, to 8 Spanish pounds,<sup>38</sup> so that the barrel of Pengre is of 8 *arrobas*, and that of Hill of  $10\frac{1}{3}$ . The excess in the difference of the total conforms to that which is generally sold in small quantities, as I have stated previously.

Laurel Grove is on my plan; the plantation of Pengre and the level of the North River point is that of San Diego.

Havana, August 6, 1787.

JOSÉ DEL RÍO

<sup>38</sup> The Spanish pound was equal to 1.0142642 English pounds. Villasana Haggard, *Handbook*, 79.

# Kissimmee Steamboating

By EDWARD A. MUELLER

The drainage and cultivation of the Everglades is now a well known and respected accomplishment but over eight and a half decades ago it was decidedly a different proposition. This narrative purports to hark back to those frontier days when the first successful drainage projects for the Everglades (overflowed lands of South Florida as they were once known) were conceived and to relate the early dredge and steamboating days that evolved.

In the late 1870's and early 1880's, Hamilton Disston, a Philadelphia blue-blood and scion of a hard-working tool-making family, Henry Disston and Sons, was seeking a way to diversify his investments and increase his fortunes in doing so. In finding what he thought was a suitable investment, he rescued the State of Florida from a precarious pecuniary pickle and helped to foster settlement in south-central Florida. Some 27 years old at the time and not satisfied to confine his activities to the making of the excellent tools that the family turned out (Disston saws felled the forests of the Northwest), Disston became the largest private land owner in the United States by buying four million acres of land in South Florida!

In the early 1880's the State of Florida owned some 14 to 20 million acres of submerged lands (depending on how it was measured) which were managed by the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund; however, several millions of worthless bonds were held and the Fund was in virtual receivership. At the time of Disston's advent upon the scene, in sheer desperation, the Fund had commissioned agents out scouring the highways and by-ways trying to sell land at some 25 cents the acre. Even Europe was canvassed by these desperate men. The chief obstacle to sales was that court cases had stipulated that such land sales were to be strictly for cash, and most buyers could offer only a modicum of currency and wanted to use credit to finance the balance.

A court order in 1880 finally forced the Internal Improvement Fund to either get some cash to get itself in a state of solvency or to lose its control of

the millions of acres of land. A buyer of a large tract (and with cash) had to be found in a hurry.

On February 26, 1881, Disston made his first deal which ultimately led to the opening of the overflowed lands and also the start of steamboating in the area. The State contracted with Disston to drain the overflowed lands in return for which *half* of the reclaimed land would be his. However, due to the court rules and a cloud of impending litigation, a clear title could not be given on the land. The newly elected Governor of Florida, William D. Bloxham, in a widely disputed decision, having surveyed both the Fund's and Disston's position, took matters under his wing and persuaded Disston to purchase some four million acres of land at the going rate of 25 cents an acre. This sale was consummated in May 1881 and the Internal Improvement Fund, by thus netting a million dollars, was able to pay off its debts, assume a solvent position and deal in lands forever after.

Disston made an arrangement with an Englishman, Sir Edward Reed to sell two million acres to him and Sir Edward paid some \$500,00 to the Internal Improvement Fund direct. Disston, with the help of some Philadelphia financiers, kept the remaining two million acres and started to develop his holdings. At the time of the sale, Disston was the largest private land owner in the United States and also had the dubious distinction of being the world's largest land holder of worthless (supposedly) submerged land. To move the task along, Disston set up several corporations with himself on the list of officers of each in a different capacity and started to work over his acquisitions. Some of these Disston dominated companies were the Florida Land and Improvement Company (Disston was President), the Kissimmee Land Company (Disston as Vice-President), and the Atlantic and Gulf Coast Canal and Okeechobee Land Company (Disston was Treasurer).<sup>1</sup>

Disston was by no means the first person to propose draining the Everglades but he was somewhat successful at it whereas predecessors were unable to get the project off the ground (perhaps more appropriately, out of the swamps.) One of the first proposals to drain the Everglades was made in 1847 by the Honorable James D. Wescott. His proposal was based on reports emanating from the Second Seminole Indian War, a sort of a by-product by

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<sup>1</sup> Advertisement in 1882 pamphlet, "Florida, A Brief Description and How to Reach There" by South Georgia, Florida, Savannah and Western RR.

General W. S. Harney and General Thomas S. Jesup.<sup>2</sup> Harney had explored a portion of the Everglades in vengeful quest of the warlike Seminoles, narrowly escaping with his life on one occasion and Jesup had scouted the Kissimmee River Valley and also that of the Peace Creek to the west. Ironically, two lakes on the St. John's River are named after these generals but little if anything in the Kissimmee area is.

Walcott's proposal was recommended by Buckingham Smith to the Secretary of the Treasury as being practical and upon the strength of this backing and some confirmatory accounts by Army and Navy officers, Congress by an Act on August 12, 1848, granted the overflowed lands of the State of Florida for reclamation.

However, the Seminole Indians again took to the warpath and enlivened affairs in South Florida so it was not for another 10 years that active operations could get underway, this time to be stymied by the wartime conditions imposed by the Civil War. After hostilities ceased, population slowly entered the area and transportation and drainage activities came to the fore.

The great river transportation system afforded by the St. Johns brought settlers to the fringes of interior Florida but a railroad was needed to carry them to the Kissimmee area from whence the river and lake system to the south could be utilized especially in conjunction with the drainage schemes.

In 1878 and 1879, the South Florida Railroad was being formed to run between Sanford on the St. John's River to the Gulf Coast. Starting in December 1879 and finishing in December 1880, the railroad reached Orlando. After that it was extended to Kissimmee, reaching there on March 21, 1883 (the opening day of business). Although there still was not a rail connection between Jacksonville and Sanford, there were steamboats and the business boomed as never before carrying tourists and settlers southward. In 1886, the missing link was finally completed between Jacksonville and Sanford and the St. John's River steamboat fortunes immediately were at their lowest.<sup>3</sup>

Henry B. Plant bought into the South Florida Railroad in May 1883 and it ultimately became a part of the Plant system. One of his first projects was

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<sup>2</sup> Harney, Will Wallace, "The Drainage of the Everglades" — *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, Vol. LXVIII — Dec. 1883 - May 1884.

<sup>3</sup> George W. Pettengill, Jr. — "Bulletin 86 — The Story of the Florida Railroads — 1834-1903" — July 1952 (Railway and Locomotive Historical Society, Inc. Harvard Business School, pages 75-78).

to connect Kissimmee with Tampa. He built a three-foot gauge, 74 mile railroad linking these two key points in six months time, finishing only two days before his charter was to expire.<sup>4</sup>

The drainage possibilities were also being explored during this era of railroad expansion. In 1879, the enterprising James M. Kreamer, prominent civil engineer of the day and later chief engineer of Disston's drainage activities undertook a thorough and practical survey of the Kissimmee and Peace Creek valleys and the Lake Okeechobee watershed. This was in accordance with a state charter and his work was in part based on prior work performed by the U. S. Topographical Corps and interested canal, railway, and steamboat companies. The area that overflowed was estimated by Kreamer to consist of some 10,000 square miles which was larger in size than the combined areas of New Jersey, Delaware, and Connecticut with Rhode Island thrown in for good measure.<sup>5</sup>

The solution to the drainage problem was to relieve these many square miles of the surplus water accumulated during the May to September rainy season or so the primitive knowledge available at the time reasoned. The rainy season produced some 44½ inches of water on the average and the solution was to use the natural waterways that were available by dredging them so they could carry the water adequately to the Gulf and Atlantic Coasts in addition constructing additional canals as would be required to carry the water away. The topography and relative elevations of the chain of lakes and rivers that makes up the Kissimmee valley is such that each area can be done successively using a system of terraces, each semi-independent of the other. The differences in elevation were thought to be slight enough that few if any locks would be needed to control stream depth and regulate drainage.

A first logical step in the drainage projects had to be that of linking up the various waterways in the area. In addition to the drainage benefits, communication by steamboat would then be possible. Getting Lake Okeechobee connected to the Gulf via the Caloosahatchee River would be of primary importance. Although there was a connection (loosely defined) of sorts between Lake Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee, it was of such a nature that only canoes or light craft could make the passage from one to

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 76-77.

<sup>5</sup> Harney, *op. cit.* pp. 598, 599.

the other. As early as Seminole War days, white men had effected the passage but only with canoes. No steamboat ever penetrated Lake Okeechobee's vastness until Disston's engineering feats had been performed.<sup>6</sup>

Two other drainage link-ups had to be made. One of these would serve to join Lake Tohopekaliga to the Kissimmee River and thus ultimately to Lake Okeechobee and the other would be to connect Lake Okeechobee to the St. Lucie River and thence to the Atlantic.

A description of the Okeechobee-Caloosahatchee work was made by Will Wallace Harney, son of General Harney, who was the Kissimmee newspaper editor; (In December of 1882) "The axmen had penetrated the fringe of custard apple and revealed through the opening the welcoming pillar of smoke of the dredge. A canal 22 feet wide having an average fall of one foot per mile connects Okeechobee to Lake Hickpochee and this is connected to Lake Flirt by a second canal through the soft chalk rim of the outer basin. Curiously, Captain Menge, engineer of the dredge found there the remains of an old cut of the Spaniards showing that the project of Gov. Wescott's was not the first."

"South of Ft. Thompson is the beautiful current of the Caloosahatchee River flowing between high banks terraced in the characteristic manner of the topography. This feature peculiar to all river valleys, illustrates the manner the grand trowels of nature have built up the watershed of South Florida. Here in the soft marl and loam are exhibited everywhere the escarpments seen in the harsh features of parallel roads in the geology of more northern latitudes."<sup>7</sup>

As far as is known, four dredges were used by Disston's forces for the drainage work. At least three of these were built at Kissimmee it is believed. Harney has left an account of what the dredges looked like which is presented (slightly paraphrased) as follows:

"(The dredges) were (built from a) patent by (Allan) and were (of) the continuous ladder principle. (They consist of) a chain of buckets, suspended about forty feet in the air from an upright. There is another forty foot arm extended horizontally from the foot of the upright and the chain of

<sup>6</sup> The Everglades News, Canal Point, Fla. — June 1, 1945.

<sup>7</sup> Harney, *op. cit.*, pp. 604.

buckets is drawn over an incline to its top. The whole affair has a resemblance to the figure 4, having a short foot resting on the bow or front of the hull. There is a chain of buckets that goes over the A shaped part of the 4. The chain of buckets revolves over the drum and sink their scoops into the soft ooze and muck and ascend over the incline over the top of the 4 where they are met by a washer from a hose or pump, and, as each bucket falls over the incline it gives a jerk and its contents are discharged on a sluice gate at right angles to the keel and extending beyond the edge of the cutting and thus on the edge of the canal, thus forming its own levee as it moves along. The long arm swings on the stem of the 4 as it moves from side to side and is controlled by levers so that each bucket sinks beyond the previous one and it digs or cuts a swath 37 feet similar to the way that a mower swings a scythe.”

“A tow rope over a drum attached to a stake is set for the width and edge of the cutting and of course the progress is controlled by means of levers. You can just picture the thing in motion, the huge crane swinging, the timbers groaning, the clang, whine, and rattle of the iron and steel, the steam engine coughing as it does its job, and the men in the muck and ooze, shouting, laughing, hollering, then the commands ringing forth, the constant stream of black ooze as it pours over the top of the sluices and as the derrick proceeds, on behind it, the clean cut edges of the Canal. And the dredge itself is a scow type hull, sort of a stern wheel steamboat and has a narrow cabin with a smithy and also quarters for the men.”<sup>s</sup>

No record of any names for the dredges has come to light. Dredge No. 1 worked the lower drainage project, connecting Lake Okeechobee with the Caloosahatchee River. Completion of this dredging would link up the Florida West Coast with the Lake.

Dredge No. 2 was completed at Kissimmee in early summer of 1882. This dredge made the three mile cut between Lake Tohopekaliga and East Lake Tohopekaliga. An 1885 report of the work states: “The work of constructing this canal was commenced in January of 1883 and on January 1, 1884, No. 2 was distant from Lake Tohopekaliga four thousand, six hundred feet. The Boat, completing the cut as she proceeded, and cutting her own floatage necessitated the constructing of five dams in order to obviate exces-

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<sup>s</sup> Ibid, p. 601.

sive depth of excavation. The first dam was constructed during the latter part of February; dams were also built in May and July."

"From August 18th to September 2nd, the dredge crew, reinforced by other labor was employed in constructing the last dam near East Tohopekaliga Lake. The canal was completed September 22nd. . . . On November 22nd, the last dams on line of canal were cut, and vent given to the waters of the lake. A number of visitors assembled to witness the interesting event. The first rush of the waters carried away the last vestige of the dams and accumulations in the canal, and the velocity of current established was sufficient to scour out the softer strata composing the bed of the canal, to a depth of several feet below the line of excavation. . . . During the first thirty days, the lake surface fell thirty-six inches. . . . Lake East Tohopekaliga, formerly surrounded by Cypress and marsh margins, has developed a beautiful wide sand beach, the bordering lands are elevated and marshes changed to rich meadow lands."<sup>9</sup>

Dredge No. 3 appears to have been the largest Disston dredge and was of the suction type unlike Nos. 1 and 2 which were of the dipper type. She was the most complete in her appointments and was under the command of Captain Ben Brown. It was she that made the difficult Southport cut due south from Lake Tohopekaliga to Lake Cypress through four tough miles. During steamboating days the cut was one of the worst passages to traverse due to the tendency for solid deposits to form in the shape of bars at either end of the canal near the lakes.

The third major cut was to be a canal, 120 feet wide, ten feet deep, and having a fall of one foot per mile to connect from Cahoney Bay on Lake Okeechobee to the St. Lucie River, and, of course, thence to the Atlantic. This prodigious undertaking for that day would be capable of lowering the area of water some four feet a season! This ambitious undertaking was not to get completed during Disston's lifetime, however.

Dredge No. 4 appears to have been of the snag boat type and she was fitted out with tackle for hoisting and clearing out trees, snags, and logs. She was under the command of Captain V. P. Keller.

Dredging as done in those bygone days was exhausting demanding work, tough on both men and craft. It is thought that all of the dredges were

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<sup>9</sup> Aultman, "When Kissimmee Was Young."

abandoned somewhere in the area after their working days were over. At least one was left in the Lake Hart canal easterly of St. Cloud many years ago and rotted away. In addition to the principal linkages made to get a waterway established for drainage and steamboating, the dredges linked up all of the auxiliary lakes and secondary streams that they could get to to form semi-integrated drainage systems; the Kissimmee River was also streamlined by cutting off many of the numerous bends.

Certainly the completion of the railroad to Kissimmee, and the Disston activities opened up the area and allowed for a multitude of steamboats to operate, many of which were built at Kissimmee, but before this frenzied activity, there was at least one small steamboat operating on Lake Tohopekaliga.

This first small steamboat was the MARY BELLE, owned by Major J. A. Allen who had earned his majority in the Civil War. A school teacher in Kentucky before coming to the area, Allen was an owner of one of the three sawmills that were in operation in early 1882. He built a house of logs possibly in 1879 on Paradise Island, then known as Jernigan's Island and named after one Aaron Jernigan who also gave his name to the first settlement at what is now Orlando. This home was built by Henry Matthews of logs cut on the mainland, hand-peeled by a draw-knife, hauled out to the lake, and ferried to the island. The MARY BELLE was a small sternwheeler, some 11 and a half tons, 47 feet long, 10 feet wide, and three and one half feet deep. She was operating in 1882 according to advertisements of the day:<sup>10</sup>

“Excursions to the great Lake Okeechobee, Fla.—The steamer Mary Bell, plying on the waters of Lake Tohopekaliga, and the Kissimmee River, will be held in readiness during the Fall and Winter of 1882 to accommodate excursion parties to the great *Lake Okeechobee* (sic). For terms address J H Allen, Agent, Kissimmee City, Orange Co. Fla.”

MARY BELLE (BELL) carried more than tourists, however. At a later time, John Pearce (Pearse) was operating her and had tied up at Grape Hammock to deliver goods to one Bill Willingham, an outlaw and desperado at the press of the day put it. Willingham provoked a quarrel with Pearce and drew a knife, upon which Pearce and two members of his crew, Jack

<sup>10</sup> Advertisement in 1882 pamphlet, “Florida, A Brief Description and How to Reach There” — by South Georgia, Florida, Savannah and Western RR.

Rooney and Bill Daughtry, overpowered him and tied him securely. Pearce then carried him via ox team to Orlando and delivered him to the minions of the law. MARY BELLE proceeded southerly to Bassinger where she accidentally or purposely sank (some say by her crew for fear of reprisals by Willingham's gang) and was apparently never raised. By all odds, she could not have been much of a steamboat, having to be built and operated under some rather trying frontier conditions.

Major Allen removed to Orlando some time before 1885 and supposedly went back to Kentucky and thence to the state of Washington where he was said to have been a rich man. His father came back to Kissimmee and took up residence on the orange grove property of his son and ran a ferry boat in the area, drowning in 1892. One of the captains of MARY BELLE was Tom Bass, Sr.

The Disston activities required a small fleet of steamboats to keep the dredging and land-selling operations going. At least four such steamboats are known to have been used in conjunction with Disston's doings. The shipyards at Kissimmee located along the Kissimmee City lake shore built these four vessels. In those days, the shore had the appearance of a beach with perhaps four piers fingering their way into Lake Tohopekaliga. One was Major Allen's dock located near his sawmill, another and longer dock jutted out in front of the famed Tropical Hotel and the third was just south of that, probably being owned by the Bass family. The fourth was the Okeechobee dock, later referred to as Johnson's dock (after Clay Johnson.) The shipyards were located adjacent to this dock, near present Hughey and Vernon streets.

In 1882, Bunk Tyson was the foreman, having employees at one time or another such as Jack Vaughan, Sol Aultman, T. O. Wichard of Dawson, Georgia, and Jud Sharp of the Partin settlement. Bunk Tyson superintended or had a part in the building of almost all steamboats at Kissimmee. A Captain Cochran of the Disston company was the engineer in charge for some time, and Captain Rufus Rose who was Disston's resident engineer had something to say about the shipbuilding business also. The Disston commissary was nearby and many of the key Disston personnel, including Rose, Keller, and Clay Johnson had homes in the vicinity.

The four Disston craft were the OKEECHOBEE, the ARBUCKLE, the GERTRUDE, and the ROSALIE. Government records list the OKEECHOBEE

as being built in 1884 at Kissimmee as a stern wheeler of some 37 tons. Her dimensions were 88 feet, length, 17 feet, width, and 3.4 feet deep (dimensions for steamboats given hereinafter as 88 x 17 x 3.4).<sup>11</sup> The ARBUCKLE was a sidewheel vessel of about eight gross tons, some 35 x 10 x ?. She ended up in the Lake Hart Canal with one of the Disston dredges and was left to rot. Nothing seems to be known of the GERTRUDE except that she was a dredge tender.

A fragmentary account written in 1885 of the building of the ROSALIE and the OKEECHOBEE comes to us as follows:<sup>12</sup> "For the purpose of securing a more expeditious service in supplying our (Disston) dredges and forces operating at points remote from Kissimmee and also to provide the officials of the Company prompt and speedy services in reaching our works, and for the purposes of reconnaissance, it was determined to construct a steam launch, capable of carrying needed supplies and affording accommodations for a party of ten, the "Rosalie" was built at Kissimmee, completed in September (1884), at once placed in commission and has been a valuable aid ever since. She is forty feet long; ten feet beam; stern wheel; upright boiler; Westinghouse engine. Speed about seven miles per hour. She handles remarkably well on the tortuous reaches of the river. On several trips south, we never experienced any difficulties in navigating this boat from Kissimmee to the Gulf....

"The steamboat, "Okeechobee", has been constantly employed during the year, . . . in conveying supplies to the dredge boats and in making almost daily trips to the scene of operations with parties desiring to inspect the reclaimed lands, and the sugar plantation established at Southport, on soil, which was until recently, permanently covered with three feet of water."

Government records list the ROSALIE as being of some 15 tons and 41 x 13 x 3.5. Her owners are listed as R. E. Rose until May, 1886 and the Atlantic and Gulf Canal and Okeechobee Construction Company to June 25, 1893, when she sprang a leak and sank. For many years afterward her bones could be seen in a canal near Lake Flirt. Her masters of record during her career were Captain Rose, Michael (Mike) Grogan, and Howell Sasser.

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<sup>11</sup> Steamboat measurements derived from vessel registration data provided by U. S. Archives, Washington, D. C. — also from unpublished Federal Writers Project, Feb. 1937 "The Kissimmee River" P. K. Yonge Library-University of Florida, Gainesville.

<sup>12</sup> Aultman, *op. cit.*, pp. 25, 26.

Government records list the OKEECHOBEE as having had Rose, Ed Douglas, and Howell Sasser as masters. Her official owners were the Atlantic and Gulf Coast Canal and Okeechobee Land Company from May 1884 to May 1886 and after that, William Cannon of Kissimmee had an interest together with the Company until January 1888 when the vessel was wrecked and became a hulk.

Disston had a foundry and machine shop established in conjunction with the ship yards to form the metal parts needed in steamboats although most of the engines and boiler came from elsewhere. Certainly in the 1880's, the sawmills were whirring away, and pine lumber was being supplied in plenteous quantities for the steamboats, hotels and homes that were the hallmark of the bustling, growing Kissimmee.

A song about the dredge workers written by Captain J. H. "Jake" Ahearn who was associated with the South Florida Railroad as it reached Kissimmee, sung to the tune of "Scotch Lassie Jean" goes as follows:

#### THE OKEECHOBEE DREDGE BOYS

Down in Orange County, in the town of Kiss-im-mee,  
 That's where the Okeechobee Dredge Boys dwell,  
 And if you strike the town, when the sun has just gone down,  
 You will know them by Jeff Branscom's awful yell.  
 They work both day and night, that is, when they're not tight,  
 For 'tis Capt. Rose who likes his pork and beans,  
 And then their next best man, Billy Buster Dillingham,  
 Is the boy who beat Ab Johnson on three queens.  
 They have the big sun-flower, the cranky John Huffbaur,  
 And Edwards with whom he can't agree,  
 Feather-bed Depew, with little Johnnie, too,  
 And the kid who likes to row across the sea.

#### CHORUS

The Dredge will soon be done, the men will then be gone,  
 And some to jail will go away;  
 But you can bet your life, there will be no care and strife,  
 If the Okeechobee Dredge boys get their pay.  
 But then, I near forgot, the worst one in the lot;  
 The cook and Mr. Wilson, they are two,  
 Jack the Irish guide, with Maxwell who's cross-eyed,  
 And Johnny Mann who wears a twelve-inch shoe;  
 There's Mcintosh and Jack, they both are coffin-black,

And McMillan who tries to beat his board,  
The little "midget" Freeman, it was fun to hear him scream  
When John Driscoll poked his eye because he snored.

The Dredge will soon be done, the gang will then be gone,  
And I don't think I'll stay here very long;  
So while you're all away, you won't forget, I pray,  
You will remember "Yorky" and his song.<sup>13</sup>

Disston needed a right hand man to assist him in his endeavors and a 34 year old chemist and steamboat captain from New Orleans, Rufus Edward Rose, was summoned. For five years before coming with Disston, Rose had been superintendent of the Louisiana Reclamation Company which was reclaiming peat and muck lands in the Mississippi Delta.<sup>14</sup> For the first five years he was in Florida, a period of 1881 to 1886, Rose was superintendent of the Disston Everglade Drainage Company. About that time some of Disston's sugar crops were coming of age so a sugar mill was started at St. Cloud and Rose was appointed as superintendent of the Disston-St. Cloud Sugar Company.

Rose was born in New Orleans, March 19, 1847, the son of Alfred James and Albina Stanhope Rose. He attended the public schools of the day and went on to higher education but the Civil War interrupted his studies at Dolbear Technical and Commercial College where he was interested in pharmaceutical and chemical studies. Rose served with distinction in supply and naval forces on the Federal side, his father being captain of the gunboat, DIANA, and Rose had acquired knowledge of navigation and engineering from him. After the conflict Rose was a captain of steamboats on the Mississippi and Red Rivers and also assisted in the establishment of the first artificial ice plant in New Orleans. He also designed and erected many sugar mills in Louisiana and just prior to coming with Disston was engaged in land reclamation.

Evidently one of Captain Rose's tasks was concerned with some of the layout and planning of Kissimmee. He did not forget his relatives in doing this for we find the names of streets such as Ruby (his wife), Rose, Mabbett (his brother-in-law), Clay and Amory (the last two after Clay Johnson and his

<sup>13</sup> Aultman \_\_\_\_\_, "When Kissimmee Was Young" — pages 26, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Information on Rose largely derived from, "Obituary of Captain Rufus Edward Rose, August 1932 (reprint from "Journal of the Association of Official Agricultural Chemists."

son, Amory, brother-in-law and nephew, respectively). A street was also named after Captain Brack, a steamboat owner and one of the first County Commissioners. Another street was named after Colonel J. A. Aderhold, a prominent Civil War figure and early mayor of Kissimmee.

The little pioneer settlement of Allendale became Kissimmee City on March 24, 1883, as the result of an election held that day. There were only some 36 qualified voters within the then corporate limits and a two-thirds majority was required for incorporation. Tom Bass was the first Mayor and David Bass was the first Marshal. There supposedly had been an earlier election in January in which Captain Rose was elected Mayor but this election was declared invalid because too many people living outside the corporate limits voted and the two-thirds majority had not been met. There is some suspicion that some opposition to the incorporation developed because the mayoral candidate was an outsider and many thought that a native should be selected. However, Captain Rose was elected Chairman of the first Board of County Commissioners when Osceola County was created by an act of the Legislature on May 2, 1887, being formed from part of Orange County.

After 1886, Rose was connected with the Florida East Coast Railroad Company as land agent and agriculturist. He also had a prominent part in developing some of the phosphate deposits in Florida. In 1901 he was appointed State Chemist of Florida in the Agricultural Department and held that post for 30 years until his death in 1931. Rose was most zealous in securing legislation that ensured that Florida citrus when marketed would be properly matured. He also authored all of the agricultural control laws enacted during his tenure, a rather impressive and interesting career to be sure.

Disston's Drainage Company was in existence until 1894 although the first operations in the early 1880's formed the bulk of the work insofar as establishing channels for steamboats were concerned. James M. Kreamer, Chief Engineer and General Superintendent glowingly reported in February of 1885 that due to the construction of 40 miles of canals (at a cost of \$250,000), 360 miles of inland waterway navigable by shallow draft steamboats were a reality. Over one million acres of land had been permanently drained according to Kreamer (disputed by his opponents and political factions in the state) and the next goal was to be the drainage of seven million more acres!

The enticement of settlers, selling of land and all similar types of operations were business operations of Disston and agricultural pursuits such as sugar cane and fruit tree growing were also carried on. The first tract of land was planted in cane in February 1884 and successfully harvested in season. Never successful by present day standards and hardly so by the criteria of the day, the operation did produce enough crops to indicate that sugar cane could be successfully grown and perhaps with a profit in the overflowed lands after they had been drained. A modern sugar mill built in the late 1880's in St. Cloud lasted until 1901 when it was sold to Mexican operators. Lifting of federal subsidies on cane raising and cane borers introduced inadvertently from Cuba contributed to the demise of sugar cane growing and milling in the area.

Disston's last drainage efforts before his untimely death in 1896 at 52 years of age were designed to link up the lakes and streams northeasterly of East Lake Tohopekaliga with that lake, a task not completed in his time.

The national panic of 1893 had already started putting the skids under Disston's Florida empire as the Disston Land Company had been forced at that time to mortgage its holding to a Philadelphia banking concern. Disston's family did not appear to take a financial interest in Hamilton's ventures and did little or nothing to rescue him. The mortgage was for two million dollars and five years afterward the remaining two million acres of Disston land were sold for \$70,000 to satisfy the mortgage holders. Several land companies still operated in the Disston area in the 1920's and a very few scattered descendants of these still remain.

It is interesting to speculate as to just what effect the Disston activities had upon the state. Certainly Disston could not have made much if any money on his efforts. They served to open up the country sooner than would have been the case otherwise. The drainage systems are still in use today although greatly enlarged and modified. After Disston, it was not until the turn of the century and the advent of the Army Engineers and Flood Control Districts upon the scene that further drainage efforts went forward.

Steamboat activities in the mid-eighties increased as the dredging activities linked up the waterways and provided a reasonable good passage to Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee and then to the Gulf Coast. One of these early steamboat arrivals was the largest steamboat ever to touch at Kissimmee

but she didn't stay long. She was the BERTHA LEE and her brief meteoric Florida career is still told some 85 years later.<sup>15</sup>

BERTHA LEE had started life as a staid and plain midwesterner, being built in Portsmouth, Ohio in 1879. She was officially registered as a two deck sternwheeled steamboat of 121 tons gross, dimensions, 130 x 21 x 3.8 and official number, 3096. She seems to have plied the Ohio River on local service being owned by a consortium of Kentuckians for most of her midwest career. Just prior to her entry on the Florida scene she was employed by the Louisville and Evansville Mail Company for 15 months, evidently on a mail service run between these two cities.

In the summer of 1883, Ed Douglas of Kissimmee, acting for the Kissimmee, Okeechobee, and Gulf Stream Navigation Company was shopping around for a steamboat in the Ohio Valley. He bought the BERTHA LEE because he needed a boat for the influx of tourists to Kissimmee and she appeared to be "small" when viewed alongside other Ohio River behemoths in addition to being a "bargain."

Douglas had been managing the Tropical Hotel in Kissimmee and business was booming. A steamboat was urgently needed there so Douglas after his purchase was faced with the task of getting her back to Kissimmee. The route was via the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and then the more hazardous run from New Orleans around the Gulf of Mexico, hugging the shore and hoping that strong winds and high seas would not materialize. Among the hands recruited for the trip was John Gottwallis, a carpenter. John had been on steamboats on the Green River in Kentucky previously. At New Orleans, Douglas further recruited one Benjamin Franklin Hall, Jr. for the remainder of the trip to Kissimmee. Since Hall and his son were destined to play prominent roles in Florida steamboating, a few details are perhaps appropriate.

Hall's father, Benjamin Franklin Hall, was of Irish descent, born in the 1820's and died when he was 96. He was a Quaker and lived around Lynn, Massachusetts and later moved to Pittsburgh and Williamstown, West Virginia. The lure of the river caught him and he became a steamboat captain on the Pittsburgh to New Orleans coal trade. During the Civil War he was on a

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<sup>15</sup> Information on Benjamin Franklin Hall, Jr. and his steamboats derived from Captain Ed Hall of Houston, Texas — also from newspaper writings of Lawrence Will of Belle Glade.

gunboat during the river campaigns and on one occasion had the wheel house shot up by Confederate forces, one fragment going through his hat. Later on, he suffered a bad foot and ankle injury and retired from the river, settling in Marietta, Ohio.

Prior to coming to Florida, Hall and his father had been on the CHARLES BROWN, a large iron hulled steamboat specializing in hauling barges of coal to New Orleans from the Pittsburgh area. Bored with such a monotonous job, Hall transferred to the BIG SUNFLOWER and was a night pilot on the New Orleans to Port Eads run where the Mississippi meets the sea. Hall was shifted later to the day run and the story is told that he was bewildered by the strange route as he had seen it only at night and accordingly had to learn the river pilotage over for the day voyages. The BIG SUNFLOWER later ran to Pensacola carrying railroad supplies for the Louisville and Nashville Railroad and Hall went with her. When the BERTHA LEE came along and needed another hand, Hall signed up, being footloose and fancy free and wanting to visit Florida. Neither Hall nor anyone on board was familiar with the navigational problems on the Caloosahatchee or Kissimmee Rivers (very few people in the world were at that time) so an attempt was made to enlist the services of Captain Lawrence Jennings of Kissimmee who had journeyed to Ft. Myers by sailboat and was looking for a way home but not as official captain or pilot. Jennings allowed he wouldn't want to be responsible but would help to get her there.

At any rate, Douglas, Hall, Gottwallis, Jennings, and company, took on a cargo of grain from New Orleans and continued their voyage on September 20, 1883. It took a week to get to the entrance of Lake Okeechobee, it being rather difficult to get a 130 foot boat drawing almost four feet of water up the narrow and crooked Caloosahatchee, past Ft. Thompson, shallow and grass-filled Lake Flirt, Bonnet Lake, Reedy Canal and the like. Just as she neared the lake, Three Mile Canal really hung her up and a small earthen dam was constructed, the extra water being impounded and subsequently released, serving to help her on her way. Only three cords of wood were left so everyone turned to and cut fuel as the BERTHA LEE tied up at Observation Island. Then came the easy trip across Lake Okeechobee to the mouth of the Kissimmee River. In those days, the river was a snake's dream of heaven, being a crooked combination of narrow channels, sharp bends, cut-offs, dead rivers, and zig-zags in confounding numbers. Anything larger than a rowboat had pretty tough going.

The BERTHA LEE finally got to Kissimmee City but not without literally cutting her own way at times across some of the sharper bends and using her paddlewheel to generate enough current to cause a scouring action and thus clear a short channel. Usually the steamboat would turn around, reversing direction and use her stern wheel to help clear the way, the process being known as fanning. After 15 heartbreaking toilsome days of beating up the Kissimmee, the BERTHA LEE had to dispatch a rowboat to Kissimmee as supplies were very low, due to the extreme length of the extraordinary voyage. After a week they returned with provisions just as the crew were on their uppers. The BERTHA LEE finally emerged triumphant at Kissimmee after a month and a half of very arduous voyaging from Ft. Myers. This undoubtedly was the most severe trip for any vessel on the Kissimmee River. Hall must have liked the area despite his rough introduction to it for most of the rest of his life was spent there.

After her trials and tribulations, it was extremely galling to find that the BERTHA LEE was not the outstanding success that it was thought she should be and evidently she was used only briefly around Lake Tohopekaliga for moonlight excursions and trips to the islands in the lake.

Some of the idleness of BERTHA LEE coupled with the moonlight excursions evidently produced some results for two of her crew used their spare time wisely to spark a couple of sisters from Kissimmee and it ended up that Ben Hall and John Gottwallis were married to two sisters that they had met on a moonlight excursion. It was a double wedding ceremony with the Reverend T. G. Bell of Kissimmee tying the knot.

While the BERTHA LEE was less than a complete success at Kissimmee, the St. John's River was in need of steamboats and Douglas and his company, needing money, decided to take her there to see if she could earn her keep. So in the fall of 1884, probably in September, the BERTHA LEE was back in Ft. Myers getting ready to go around the Florida Keys to Jacksonville. However, she had a lot of debts, her crew had not been paid for quite a spell so she was auctioned off to settle accounts. Captain Hall had about the most due of anyone and he managed to get control of her using Tom Bass to help finance him in this endeavor.

The BERTHA LEE did not get to the St. John's River, however. A need for a steamboat developed on the Suwanee River and that is where Hall took her. She ran from Cedar Keys to Branford, hauling passengers, supplies,

and naval stores. After this venture she moved on to the Apalachicola and Chattahoochee Rivers. Captain Hall had picked up a cotton charter at a good rate from the Whiteside's cotton brokerage firm of Columbus, Georgia who were in the business of steamboating cotton from Columbus to Apalachicola and a railroad was giving them stiff competition. After several successful runs, the BERTHA LEE was wrecked while under the pilot's guidance (Captain Blanchard) in the notorious Moccasin Bend cut off. The sad part of the story is that Captain Hall had just finished spending some \$10,000 in a needed overhaul and the BERTHA LEE accordingly represented his life's savings. He went back to Kissimmee, clerked in a hotel there at night and eventually got enough of a stake to commence building, buying and running *smaller* steamboats on the Kissimmee River.

"A Capital ship for an ocean trip was the walloping window blind." Kissimmee's versions of Robert Louis Stevenson's rainy weather invention for a child were the SPRAY and the COLONIST, which were unlikely craft for any kind of a trip.<sup>16</sup>

SPRAY'S owners evidently were rather ashamed of her because she was never documented. She supposedly was about 40 feet long and perhaps some 10 feet wide. She may have been the second non-Disston craft built at Kissimmee. Arch Bass and Captain W. J. Brack probably were her owners. She was a sidewheeler and while wide at the guards had a rather narrow hull which gave her a bad habit of listing precariously to one side or the other. Clay Johnson and his family supposedly lived on her for a short spell when they first arrived in Kissimmee. She couldn't carry enough cargo to make her profitable. It is thought that perhaps Frank King and Paul Gibson tried her out on the Kissimmee River run, rather unsuccessfully no doubt. Due to her lack of capability and a bad boiler to boot, she was beached at Kissimmee, the COLONIST was beached alongside her and both burned in 1893.

The COLONIST was another Frank King and Paul Gibson craft. Built at Kissimmee in 1885, she was a small 16-2/3 tons (45 x 13.7 x 3.5). She was named for the English colony at Narcoosee and operated between there and Kissimmee until the Sugar Belt Railroad was built between these points. She was also used to tow logs and haul lumber for a sawmill owner at Edgewater. She was a real mixed up affair, having a sawmill boiler, and a one

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<sup>16</sup> Information on SPRAY and COLONIST from Capt. Ed Hall.

cylinder engine to run her sternwheel. She was not even equipped with a reverse gear to go with her single shaft so a twist belt was employed for this purpose. Link chains connected her sternwheel to the shaft via sprockets and linkage. She was always breaking down usually snapping her chains which then tumbled overboard. King and Gibson evidently put up with this nonsense for two and a half years from May 1886 to January 1889 when Captain Ben F. Hall, Jr. bought her. He tried her out on the river run but she was quite useless there so he laid her up on the beach at Kissimmee where she burned. Hall must have got her at a pretty low price to even take her and was probably fairly well down on his luck after the loss of the BERTHA LEE.

Another early largely unknown boat was the NARCOOSEE. She was either built at Narcosee in 1884 or 1885 or in Kissimmee. Thomas Bass was her master when she first applied for vessel documentation (as 106 tons in 1885) but for some reason her number was reassigned to another craft in New York and her registration never completely put through.

The NARCOOSEE definitely existed as it is known that Captain Ben Hall's brother-in-law, John Gottwallis, was engineer on her for a spell. She may have been owned by the British colony at Narcosee but apparently these feeble recollections are all that is known.

Not all of the boats that plied the Kissimmee and its adjacent waters were local products. A demure lady from Massachusetts is our next entrant on the scene. The SADIE of Salem, Massachusetts, usually known as SADIE OF SALEM appeared in late 1887. The SADIE had been built in 1886 and was 61.7 x 14.8 x 4.9, 19 net tons. After spending the first 14 months of her existence in Salem, one of her owners, Albert S. Kinsman teamed up with Frank King and she was around Kissimmee until May 1891 or so. Kinsman had a sugar cane farm near Southport and had to haul cane to Disston's mill at St. Cloud so he used the SADIE for this task. Not a fast boat, the voyage to Florida was arduously lengthy for the SADIE as she had to use salt water for her boilers after running out of fresh. She was of little practical use in the area due to her depth and being a propeller tug, could not "fan" her way out of a tight corner as a sternwheeled vessel could. Frank King was her captain during most of her Kissimmee existence, however at the outset she was skippered briefly by Ben Hall.

In May of 1891 Burton E. Coe of Tampa bought the SADIE, renaming her the CLARK in the process and she became a tug in the Tampa area until October 1897 when she was finally officially abandoned. King and Coe

alternated as her captains during most of the Tampa period. When taking her to Tampa, a submerged tree was hit and a propellor blade broke off. Frank King and Paul Gibson made a replacement out of wood and took her under this jury repair to Tampa, there being no reasonable way to get a spare propellor in the interior of Florida on short notice.

As sportsmen and land seekers came to the area, suitable boats were constructed to take them around. One of these was the FLORIDELPHIA, a rather large 85 foot, two decked sternwheeler. She proved to be too large for the area and could not always run in periods of low water. She was built at Kissimmee under the auspices of the Floridelphia Steamship Company and finished in December of 1887 but ran only through two tourist seasons before she was sold to a Latin American concern in May 1889. The FLORIDELPHIA ran most of the time to Kramer Island in Lake Kissimmee where the company attempted to build a tourist town but the venture failed. The FLORIDELPHIA later went to Los Angeles after the Panama Canal opened. Mike Grogan was her captain while she was in Kissimmee. Mike had arrived with the Disston people and was on many of the Kissimmee area boats.

Another unusual boat was the TALLULAH later named the REINDEER. She was first owned by the Gilberts although financed by Charley Carson of Kissimmee who probably took a mortgage on her. Charley was a groceryman most of the time but occasionally used some of his capital to take a fling at steamboating, usually ending up owning the boat when payments fell due. The TALLULAH was named after the Gilbert brothers' only sister and built in 1891 and was 33 feet long. J. C. Stratford, an Englishman bought her and ran her until the summer of 1901 when she was abandoned. The story goes that he gave up his English citizenship and a healthy retirement pension to become a pilot on her. She ran locally around Lake Tohopekaliga as a party boat and ferry to Stratford Islands.

Interestingly enough, there were two steamboats named HAMILTON DISSTON. The first of these undoubtedly never saw Lake Tohopekaliga as it drew too much water to ever have penetrated to Kissimmee. Government records also indicate that it was based in East Coast waters throughout its life. However some accounts have placed it in Kissimmee<sup>17</sup> (which indicates that steamboat history is not as easy to verify as might appear.)

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<sup>17</sup> Notes on file at Rollins College Library, Winter Park, Fla., also "The Kissimmee River" — steamboat accounts are always subject to mistake and these two err on this craft.

The second HAMILTON DISSTON was a much smaller sternwheel craft of some 11.8 tons. Only 48.6 x 14.2 x 3.2 she was built in 1890. She had an iron or steel hull, the sections of which were cut out at Philadelphia and later assembled at Kissimmee where her wooden upper works were built and attached.

She was built as a party and pleasure boat but was rather a complete flop. She had a wide deck housing compared to her rather narrow hull (four foot overhang) and had an open forward deck. Even in only moderate swells she would take on water over her bow. She had a rather limited freeboard and this in addition to making her relatively unseaworthy allowed for little cargo capacity. She was a cabin boat, however, and once had the distinction of carrying Thomas A. Edison. Edison selected her for a journey to Ft. Myers where he had a winter home but the poor old HAMILTON DISSTON got stuck in the Southport canal and Edison, despairing of getting to Ft. Myers in the craft went aboard the TALLULAH going in the opposite direction back to Kissimmee and continued his journey by railroad. By and large, HAMILTON DISSTON was a case of too much house on too little hull and most of her life was spent at the dock.

Mike Grogan was her master of record from May 1890 to June 1898 when she officially went out of service (she was probably abandoned several years before but the records were not brought up to date). She was sold to Herb Fleming who owned Fleming Island in Lake Tohopekaliga. He towed her over there, jacked her up and used her as a storehouse. One time Mike Grogan was piloting her at night and he came upon a lagoon at a sharp bend of the Kissimmee River. Mike was not too well acquainted with the lower end of the river, and couldn't find the main river channel because trees had hidden the reflection of the water. Mike took off in the lagoon, got nowhere and accordingly dropped anchor to wait for daylight. At daybreak he was anchored at the gap he had entered. It was afterwards known as "Grogan's Lake gap."

The OCTAVIA, a sternwheeler, was built in Kissimmee in 1891. A 15 ton vessel she was 55 feet long and was a freighter for E. J. Brown. He had her for over a year from May 1892 to July 1893. Paul Gibson next took over and evidently moved her to Tampa. After being there for a few years towing and lumber hauling she went to Cedar Keys and perhaps the Suwanee. Lukens Gulf Cypress Company owned her for a spell before selling her to

the Tilghman Cypress Company in 1911. She was probably not around too long after that although she was not officially abandoned until 1931. Paul Gibson was one of the better old time pilots of Kissimmee steamboat days. Other well known captains with the OCTAVIA were Robert Stapleton and Dan McQueen, famed pilots of the Suwanee River and Cedar Keys area.

The CITY OF ATHENS, named for the Georgia homeplace of Herb Fleming and his father who sponsored the craft, was built in Kissimmee in 1890 and 1891. She was 23 tons, 65 x 16 x 3.7 and was a two decked stern-wheeled vessel. Ad Gilbert owned her and ran her until sometime in the 90's when she burned at Ft. Thompson on the Caloosahatchee River probably from a fire caused by hot ashes from her own furnaces. She had originally run to Basinger (also known as Bassenger and Bassinger and not to be confused with Fort Basinger) but Gilbert had transferred her to the Ft. Myers run. According to Ad Gilbert her remains were purchased by Captain Fred Menge and she was resurrected. She ran on the Caloosahatchee for several more years. However this period of Menge ownership is not reflected in government records. Captain Hendry, after her demise, took the stern wheel and used it to pump water to his orange grove. The current of the river would activate the buckets and they would rotate causing water to be lifted from the river to a trough leading to his grove. The wheel was set in the river in the line of the water current and special tin plates fitted to the buckets. (The blades of paddle wheels are termed buckets.)

The Gilberts were an interesting steamboating family and their lives were interwoven one way or another with the water. Seven brothers and one sister, all of the boys had some interest in boats and a boat was named after their little sister, TALLULAH. All were born near Athens, Georgia at Magnolia Farms. James, called J. B. or Jim was the oldest, followed by Sam, (S.A.), Edward A. (Ned), Addison (Ad) William (Bill), Alpheus D. (Al), George, and Mary Tallulah. Sam married a daughter of the Morgans who controlled the Morgan cattle company at Basinger. Jim and Ad had captains' licenses, Ad and Will were engineers and George and Al were deck hands.

The Gilberts' father had a mania for tinkering and inventing and among other things developed an ice cream freezer. He never made much money at this but evidently had a lot of fun. He finally went into the broom business, putting up a factory, using children to pick the long narrow Florida grasses that the brooms were made from.

Jim and Ad started working on the Disston dredges and Ad was the fireman on the CINCINNATI and when Clay Johnson bought her, stayed on and got his engineer's license. Will Gilbert was on Menge's GREY EAGLE for many years but left her and came to Kissimmee on a visit. While there, Captain Ed Hall, son of Benjamin Franklin Hall, Jr., introduced him to *his girl*, Flora Cates. Well, before one could say, "stern wheeled steamboat", Will and Flora were married. Will was also a Morse code telegrapher and stayed on in Kissimmee to work at the railroad depot. George and Al, who were deck hands, drifted out of the boat business, Al going to Jacksonville and entering the florist business. George married Hardy Lanier's daughter from Basinger and eventually moved to Zephyr Hills where he bought the Coca Cola bottling works.

The last and largest of the Gilbert boats (after the TALLULAH and the CITY OF ATHENS) was the BASSINGER. Sam or Jim Gilbert built her probably with the help of Morgan family money in financing her. She was some 87.5 tons gross, 62 net. Her dimensions were 66.7 x 7.3 x 2.8 and she was built in 1899. Her speed was about 12 miles per hour. Her crew consisted of the captain, usually Jim Gilbert, who also acted as pilot, an engineer, fireman, cook, and two deck hands. The BASSINGER usually made one round trip to Basinger a week, leaving on Tuesday and getting back to Kissimmee on Saturday night, spending two nights on the river.

The BASSINGER almost never got into service. She was being fitted out on her launching cradle in Kissimmee. Her stern wheel and engines were in the after end and her boiler was forward to balance the weight. To hold the craft together and equalize the strain it was both customary and necessary to use "hog chains" which served to act as a type of truss and keep the boat together. These are supported and kept in place by vertical or slanting posts. As it happened these hog chain posts were in place but the chains were not aboard her at the time a hurricane struck in the area. This storm with its heavy wind and extra high water floated the BASSINGER off her cradle and into the lake. When they got her back to put on her hog chains and finish her up, her hull had already sagged (termed "hogged") and she could not be completely straightened out in the normal manner. To compensate for the hogging an extra amount of sheer was placed in the hull using the hog chains so she journeyed through life with unusual lines. Gilberts owned her from December 1889 to August 1902 when she went to Punta Gorda for about eight months, probably as a replacement for a burned out tug boat there. She was finally destroyed by fire in Charlotte Harbor in March, 1903.

At any one time during the last decade and a half of the nineteenth century and the first decade and a half of the twentieth, there might be at least three steamboat lines running in competition with one another on the river for the scant carrying and tourist trades. Besides the Gilberts, the two best known of these competitors were Clay Johnson and Benjamin F. Hall, Jr.

Captain Hall after his misfortunes with the *BERTHA LEE* gradually got back into steamboating. His main successes were scored with three unique craft, all named *NAOMA*. The first two of these *NAOMAS* were never documented and consequently details from government archives records are not available. *NAOMA* No. 3 was documented, however. Hall named his craft after the biblical name of Naomi but thought that people would think that the "i" of Naomi stood for the numeral "1" so he slightly altered the name to Naoma. The period of the *NAOMAS* probably covered about 15 years starting with the first one built around 1892. She was a sidewheeler and was on the Basinger to Kissimmee run. She had a 4 x 5 upright engine with bevel gears, the shaft was down below, chains were run to the shaft on deck via wheels and chain drive and connected to a pinion that in turn connected to the side wheels. She was about 40 feet long and about 10 feet wide with an open front deck, a pilot house and covered space to the stern of the craft. She was around some five or six years and was run by Captain Hall and his first son, Benjamin F. Hall, III. However, she proved to be too small for her trade.

Captain Benjamin Hall, Jr. had a son by his first marriage (before the Kissimmee one) who was named after him, just as he had been named for his father. He married a second time in Kissimmee and his child by this marriage was named Edward H. Hall after Captain Hall's brother. Ed's story is covered elsewhere in this narrative but both he and his father suffered an irreparable loss when Benjamin Franklin, III ran away at the age of 18. As young Benjamin grew up he had not been made aware that his stepmother was not his real mother and when some schoolmates taunted him with this he took up stakes and left home. He had been heard to say that he wanted to mine gold in Alaska but where he went is largely conjecture as he was not effectively traced. Ed Hall in later voyaging years attempted to run down rumors but the search was in vain.

The *NAOMA* No. 2 was a rather versatile craft being both a sidewheeler and sternwheeler. Most likely she was built in 1897 in Tampa, starting life as a sidewheeler using the engines of *NAOMA* No. 1. The Halls had a

remarkable facility for adaptation and resourceful use of steamboat machinery to both build and keep their vessels running. The NAOMA No. 2's job in Tampa was to haul barges of building materials for a generating station being built in the Sulphur Springs area. A very low clearance was needed as a street car bridge lay athwart the river between the source of supplies and the station. Accordingly, the NAOMA No. 2 was equipped with a hinged pilot house and smoke stack which were lowered to go under the bridge. The entire arrangement was practical and ingenious and points out the versatility of steamboat men in general and the Halls in particular. The Halls arranged the stack to lay forward when lowered, the whistle being permanently fastened to the boiler deck. The pilot house floor was fastened to the deck and the four sides of the housing were hinged to the floor and laid out horizontally on all four sides when lowered. The top was canvas on a skeleton frame and was taken off and laid on deck. The pilot wheel was hinged on the bottom and also laid on the deck. Even with all of this ingenuity, the Halls still had to wait for low tide before getting under the steel trolley bridge. This was certainly steamboating under adverse circumstances.

After the generating station was completed, the NAOMA No. 2 came back to Kissimmee taking a 40 x 10 barge with her. When she arrived there she was changed into a sternwheeler and put on the run to Basinger. The side wheel engine equipment was not wasted, however, as Hall sold it to W. A. Roebuck of Kissimmee who had a sailboat of the "sharpie" type named IRENE that he converted to a steamboat and renamed it CITY OF BASINGER.

Ben Hall had a set of engines made in Tampa for the NAOMA No. 2 so she could be converted to a stern wheeler and put on the run to Basinger. She proved too fast as a sternwheeler and being too small for the run had to tow a barge to carry enough cargo. The trade shifted to the bringing back of fish from Lake Okeechobee and the barging proved unhandy. One can imagine going upstream on the narrow crooked Kissimmee loaded with a barge of fish and trying to beat the clock before the fish spoiled! Finally after some four or five years and also due to the competition, the NAOMA No. 2 was given up. In 1900 Clay Johnson had come out with his LILLIE and in order to meet the LILLIE, Captain Hall built the NAOMA No. 3 in 1901 in Kissimmee. Captain Hall's brother, Ed, had come down from Ohio to spend the winter and with the help of Bunk Tyson and Ed Hall's uncle, Jack King, the Halls got the NAOMA No. 3 built.

According to government records, the NAOMA No. 3 was 55.4 x 12.2 x 2.4, and of 49 gross tons, and 31 net (later reduced to 12.43, and 10 tons, respectively in 1905). She was a stern wheeler. The NAOMA No. 3 was somewhat like the LILLIE except that instead of having the wheelhouse on the cabin roof as the LILLIE had, the NAOMA had her wheelhouse on the boiler deck but raised three feet higher than the cabin roof which extended all the way aft. This raising of the wheelhouse enabled the pilot to see the water immediately behind the boat when backing down. And, of course, backing down the channel was a frequent necessity on the Kissimmee River when a vessel was often in reverse gear, trying to fan a channelway during low water periods.

The NAOMA No. 3 was skippered by Captain Ben Hall, Jr. with Captain Ed Hall as engineer until the end of 1907 when she was laid up. She was finally officially abandoned in 1914. Captain Ed Hall took the engine and boilers in that year from her and went to Okeechobee City to try and rework the gasoline engined SERENA VICTORIA into a steam sternwheeler using the NAOMA No. 3 gear. However, before he was finished with this interesting conversion, the railroad came to Okeechobee City and the project was abandoned and the SERENA VICTORIA never finished.

The NAOMA No. 3 carried some notable passengers in her day. Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, a steamboat captain on the St. John's River in his younger days and a famed filibuster using his THREE FRIENDS in helping to supply arms to Cuba rebels, based some of his campaign for governor on the issue of draining the Everglades which, of course, had been neglected since the cessation of the Disston activities. He took an inspection trip before election of the Lake Okeechobee area on the NAOMA No. 3. After his election as governor he returned bringing many state officials with him and made another trip in the NAOMA. On this occasion Key Johnson was engineer and Ed Hall was also along. Needing fuel when they reached Taylor Creek [connecting stream of water between Okeechobee City (Tantie) and Lake Okeechobee], and finding none immediately available, Governor Broward took off his coat and swung an axe with the rest of the crew as they cut wood.

The NAOMA No. 3 also had Thomas Edison and his family for a ten day hunting and fishing trip around Lake Okeechobee and up to Fisheating Creek and on another occasion, the Chrysler automotive family. The NAOMA No. 3 was also the first boat to haul fish from Lake Okeechobee to Kissimmee

for the W. B. Makinson Fish Company and also the only regular freight and passenger boat to Tantie.

Kissimmee steamboat machinery had as many lives as a Tampa alley cat. The NAOMA No. 2's side wheel engine had gone into the IRENE and she was renamed the CITY OF BASSINGER. Cal Buckles ran her after W. A. Roebuck was finished with her. She carried freight and was a generally unsatisfactory craft, being around only a short time. After the CITY OF BASSINGER's demise, the old NAOMA's engines found their way to the RUTHIE which was a small gasoline propellor craft built by Hardy Lanier. He sold the RUTHIE to Roebuck who tried the side wheel installation but she was quite small and not much of a factor.

In 1906 the SUCCESS was built at Kissimmee. She was completed early in the year and was 56 x 14.5 x 2.7. Originally she was of 31 gross tons, 19 net. She burned at the dock in Ft. Myers in October 1907 and was rebuilt in mid-1908 as a larger vessel, 61 x 15.8 x 2.3, 67 gross tons, 43 net, and with two decks.

With the advent of artificial ice plans in Florida and better rail service to the north, a good fishing business developed around Lake Okeechobee, fish usually being caught there and rapidly shipped by boat to Kissimmee and other points that served Lake Okeechobee and thence to other destinations by rail. As time passed, the fish transportation by boat shifted from Kissimmee to the Caloosahatchee River route to Ft. Myers.

Although the SUCCESS was not primarily a Kissimmee River craft she was built at Kissimmee and served on the river for some of her life so her story is included here. She was built by Captain Tom Bass, Jr. and Bronson for the fish business and ran to Kissimmee from the Lake. Later she took fish to Ft. Myers from the Lake. When she burned in 1907 she was loaded with fish (what a smelly fire that must have been!). Bass had her a short time thereafter but in December 1908, he lost her as she was sold at auction to help repay her debts. Kinzie Brothers bought her and put her on a route to Sanibel and Captiva Islands from Punta Gorda.

Captain Hall (Ed) was on her when she burned and recalls a trip she made from the Lake to Ft. Myers after her rebuilding. The water was exceptionally low and Captain Ed Hall had to fan a channel with his stern wheel

to get across Lake Bonnet. This took some three days and meanwhile the ice melted! Buzzards started hovering overhead, the fish, of course, spoiled and things looked pretty tough. Captain Hall had no choice except to dump the eleven tons of fish he had aboard over the side and get on down the river. At the time of her sale, Hall had some \$380 owed to him in back pay (which he received from the auction proceeds) so things were in pretty bad shape.

Kinzie Brothers also rebuilt the SUCCESS in a unique way by splitting her down the middle and widening her. They placed larger engines and a water tube boiler in her. She towed shell barges to Ft. Myers for road work as well as being on the route to Sanibel and Captiva Islands. Kinzies used her until 1921 when she was sold to the Ben Johnson Dredging Company of Jacksonville. They had a dredging contract on Fisheating Creek and the Lake and used the SUCCESS to haul oil for their dredges. After this contract was over, Dave Ireland of Ft. Myers owned her as did the Gulf Transportation Company until the end of 1924 when she was sold to Harmon Raulerson of Okeechobee City who owned her and used her on a drawbridge project across the Kissimmee River and also to run tomatoes to Ft. Myers during the winter truck farming season.

The SUCCESS's last owner was the John Ringling estate and she was used to help haul materials for a causeway being put in from Sarasota to Siesta Key. As she was pretty well past her working days she was supposedly sunk in a cove near the causeway after the project was finished. Government records list her as being finally abandoned in 1933 but there is a possibility that her last Captain, Earl Murray, raised her and used her around Fort Denaud on the Caloosahatchee where he lived. If this was the case, she is supposed to have finally sunk there.

The last vessel that the Halls constructed was the CORONA. At that time (1908) they were living at Alva, Florida and she was accordingly built there. She was a steam stern wheeler, 57 x 10.6 x 3. She was active until at least 1915 and perhaps thereafter. An interesting tale connected with her building stems from the fact that she was built on a river bank very close to the water and after her topsides were placed aboard, the rays of the sun as they were reflected back by the water literally baked the one side of her. The topside planks shrunk accordingly and large cracks developed. The Halls filled these up by driving cedar shingles into them, wedging them in

place and sawing them off flush. She kept them in her all of her life, the Halls employing a salt box inside the hull to try and keep the moisture content uniform and therefore prevent the shingles from excessive expansion and contraction. The other side of the hull away from the water was completely normal.

Halls kept the CORONA until after World War I when they sold her to the Menge interests. She was originally built for a mail run on the Caloosahatchee to LaBelle on the Lake, Ben Hall having got the government contract away from Menges for a period of at least one year. After losing the mail contract, however, Halls ran her to Coffee Mill Hammock to service a turpentine still. CORONA was supplied with engines from the LEONORA (which Hall had bought for \$100) and had a tube type boiler capable of 200 lbs. pressure.

So ends the account of the Hall efforts with steamboats on the Kissimmee. Another craft about which little is known except for the government documents was the J. M. KREAMER, named after Disston's civil engineer. She was a small 33 x 13 x 2 vessel built in 1894. She was abandoned in 1901 and had been owned by Mike Grogan for two years and by J. W. Watson, a Kissimmee lawyer. Jim Gilbert was a captain on her for a short period in 1895 and for most of 1896. The KREAMER was probably a small private boat not on any particular route. Around the turn of the century the waterfront of Kissimmee was lined with abandoned boats and the KREAMER was probably one of these.

The JUANITA made her debut in 1905. She was built by the Mobley Brothers, W. C. and F. M. at Kissimmee. She was a stern wheeled vessel, 46 x 15 x 2.4 and carried goods to Basinger and intermediate landings from Kissimmee, being primarily a freight vessel. One time while she was loaded with a batch of shingles, bolts of calico, and the like she had an unusual misfortune. She was overloaded with her well paying cargo, even to the point of having shingles stacked on the forward deck. She drew down pretty heavy in the water and soon it entered some of her well dried upper seams, and the JUANITA, unbeknownst to the Mobleys, was taking on a great deal of water. At one point in the river, the captain had to put her rudder hard over to effect a sudden change of course and in so doing the water in the hull ran to one side and she listed heavily and dumped part of her cargo of shingles overboard. Of course losing this weight helped tilt the craft the

other way in a counter action and she turned over and sank losing most of the rest of her cargo in so doing. Mobleys finally raised her but eventually lost her in the process due to the heavy financial burdens brought about by the loss. She continued after her raising in the fish carrying business. Government records indicate that her career ended by her being wrecked in December, 1912 while another version is that Clay Johnson bought her, using her hull for a barge. In any event her engine went to the LUCY B, the last Kissimmee steamboat.

And now, the story of Clay Johnson and his steamboats. Captain Rose couldn't do the job by himself for the Disston interests so he invited his brother-in-law, Clay Johnson, to leave his New Orleans home and join him. Johnson later became rather renowned in the Kissimmee area for steamboating and other activities but was just another 32 year old young father at the time he came to Kissimmee.<sup>18</sup>

Clay was born on November 5, 1850, in or around Springfield, Illinois. He was the oldest of seven children of Colonel A. K. Johnson who had been a leader of Illinois Volunteers in the Civil War. After the conflict the family moved to Louisiana where Clay, like many others from the north, became more southern than the native southerners. He enjoyed the gay, colorful New Orleans life and especially its dances. Sometime between waltzes he took time off to marry Lillie Augusta Rose whose family was of French descent but southern in manner. In Louisiana he grew sugar cane and was proficient with sugar milling machinery. In 1892 he removed to the Kissimmee area, his family following in 1883 and started working in the shipyards, helping to build the Disston dredges and their supply boats.

Clay Johnson, especially in later life, bore a remarkable resemblance to Samuel Clemens, the Mark Twain of literary fame. Johnson, with his sun tanned face, blue eyes, and white hair and beard, was a great admirer of the ex-Mississippi River pilot and was highly delighted when people remarked on the resemblance.

Clay was one of those perennial people who love life and enjoy it to the fullest. Stories are told that he would delay the return of one of his steam-

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<sup>18</sup> Information on Clay Johnson, his steamboats and activities largely provided by Mrs. Mary Steffee Degtoff, granddaughter of Clay Johnson, now in Agana, Guam — also from Captain Hall and many newspaper accounts.

boats just to play a fiddle at a dance or frolic. He acted as an errand runner for the people who lived on the river and in addition to the more prosaic errands, once even got a marriage license for a young lady, perhaps not too unusual except that when he came by again she asked that he take it back and get her another one with a different name; it's a possibility that women change their minds.

Clay was a warm-hearted generous man and if he had collected all the bills owed him, could have retired a wealthy man. He was good at mechanical things and was a tinkerer with machinery. He was one of the first people in Kissimmee to own an automobile, a 1910 Ford. He loved to drive at high speed and bounce over the bumpy roads that were the wont in Kissimmee in those days. His grandchild, Mrs. Mary Steffee Degtoff, recalls riding in a later Model T, hanging on for dear life and bouncing around; being a hero to his grandchildren, Clay acted as a sort of chaperon on social trips of the day. He had several cars and loaned them out so more people could go along and support the basketball team or whatever the function at hand was. On one such trip that Mrs. Degtoff remembers, one of Clay's cars got stuck in the mud and Clay spent all night helping to extricate it, never getting discouraged but exhibiting the patience, cheerfulness and encouragement that when formerly applied to steamboats helped design and build them and successfully operate them without serious accidents.

Clay was not without his faults, being especially noted for his profanity and seeming lack of respect for the Deity. Of course, remarkable ability at the art of profanity was part and parcel of steamboating and Clay was probably no worse than others of his time. The story is told that on one occasion a squall came up as Clay was crossing a lake towing a barge. The barge broke loose from the steamboat and drifted toward a lee shore. On this occasion, Clay shook his fist at the heavens, let loose an especially juicy lot of choice epithets and then perhaps threw a handful of change into the teeth of the gale to pay off the water gods and change his luck. Such blasphemy must have tempted the Almighty but there is no record that a heaven-sent bolt of lightning ever was dispatched to settle the issue.

Captain Johnson built one of the first homes in Kissimmee on the Lake near the ship yards. After his dredge building days, Johnson seemed to be in charge of transportation operations of the Disstons and was not commercially active on the river as early as Captain Hall and the Gilbert and Bass boys were.

The MAMIE LOWN was probably Clay John's first steamboat. She was a small sidewheeler about 28 x 8. She was never officially documented but the story goes that she and her sister, the SHIPMAN, came to the area about the same time from the midwest, perhaps Chicago or Wisconsin. A group of sportsmen decided they would be just the thing for hunting and fishing trips and they were for a spell but eventually Captain Johnson wound up with the MAMIE LOWN and Captain Hall with the SHIPMAN. Hall operated the SHIPMAN for a period but she was not much of a success due to her small size.

Captain Johnson landed a contract to tow barges carrying muck from the dredged canals to the railroad at Kissimmee for further hauling to the site of the famed Tampa Bay Hotel in Tampa, then under construction. The dredged muck had been deposited as spoil on the canal banks and, of course, was a very fertile material so some entrepreneur found a way to get a profit out of it and also enabled Captain Johnson to enter the hauling business using the MAMIE LOWN.

Of course, the MAMIE LOWN was scarcely large enough to be of much effective use so Johnson looked elsewhere, although his next craft was not large by any standards. She was the CINCINNATI, a product of Chicago, built in 1889. She was 34.6 x 9.9 x 3.4 and was a sternwheeled craft. Originally owned by a Cincinnati man (hence her name), James Ritty, from December 1889 to March 1892 she was finally owned in her last days by Clay until December 1893. Clay had been her captain from the beginning and continued of course, after he had purchased her. Ritty owned a lumber mill in the area and used the CINCINNATI for lumber hauling. She may also have been used as a party boat by hunters and fishermen and perhaps some towing. All in all, the CINCINNATI was a pretty neat little boat, had a nicely rounded model hull and a good 5 foot by 20 inch engine. However, her hull got in rather bad condition so Clay built another less aesthetic hull for her engines and she emerged as the ROSE ADA.

The ROSE ADA (two words and not to be confused with the later ROSEADA), had a flat bottomed scow type of hull. She emerged as a 38 ton, 54.3 x 16.3 x 2 stern wheeler, not a gracious looking boat either by any standards but one well suited for her trade. Clay Johnson, her owner and master for all of her life finally completed her and she was documented on December

30, 1893. Interestingly enough, he named her after his two daughters, Rose and Ada (Ada was the middle name of Bertie, the second daughter). She was placed on the Kissimmee to Basinger run and was running almost eight years before the same fate of the CINCINNATI overtook her, her engines were taken out and a new hull built and then the engines were reinstalled.

The latest reincarnation was appellated ROSEADA (one word) and in size and shape she was similar to her predecessor, however, being a little longer and narrower, at 57' x 14.7 x 3.3. The ROSEADA was completed in the very last days of December 1901 and she lasted until the late 1920's although she was not too active the last few years of her life.

Clay Johnson's son, "little Clay", as he was known to distinguish him from his father, was in command of the ROSEADA for a spell but George Steffee [who married Ada, (Bertie)] was captain for most of her career on the Kissimmee River run to Basinger. In her later days she ran on the upper lakes and finally in 1928, a hurricane drove her ashore at Kissimmee and she was abandoned. In between about 1917 to 1920 she operated around Lake Okeechobee and in the 1920's was in the service of the Kissimmee Island Cattle Company, commonly known as "Kicco" and hauled supplies for them.

Just before the ROSEADA was built, (perhaps a better term is reassembled) Clay completed his prettiest vessel, the LILLIE. Named after his wife, the LILLIE was a trim little one decked vessel some 64.67 gross tons, 55 net, 60 x 17.5 x 2.8. Not only was she Clay's favorite but Captain Ed Hall who ran her in the Lake Okeechobee vegetable trade around World War I called her the nicest little stern wheeler, bar none, that he had ever been in and he should know.

The LILLIE was designed for passenger carrying and chartering for hunting and fishing. Business for many years was good, the Johnsons running her on the Kissimmee River to Basinger. She was Clay's pride and joy. Around World War I she had her cabins removed and was used to haul produce barges in the Lake Okeechobee vegetable trade and oranges in season.

The LILLIE ran for many years but in the summer of 1926, Clay Johnson sold her to his son-in-law, Elonzo (Lon) Dann of Miami who had married Rose. He changed her to a house boat and kept her around for many years until she was converted to a barge and used for hauling vegetables around Lake Okeechobee.

Clay's last and biggest steamboat was the OSCEOLA. She was built in Kissimmee in 1910 being first documented in October of that year. She was 87 gross tons, 54 net and was 74.6 x 21.1 x 3.6. Designed as a freight boat primarily, she ran on the river run most of her days. She finally was sunk in the Palm Beach Canal at Fort Worth when Clay ran her into a dock.

Another character of a boat associated with the Johnsons was the ROSEADELE. She was another home built Kissimmee product finished in the summer of 1910. Unlike most of the others she was a propeller driven boat about 50 x 150 x 1.6, 10 net tons. She was built by Lon Dann.

Dann was a blacksmith by trade but ventured into the steamboat business upon occasion. The ROSEADELE had a rather peculiar mission in life. She was used as an aid to promote settlement in Florida. It seems that Dann in conjunction with the Hunter Land Company (Harry A. Hunter), who are listed as her owners after 1913, used her to show land to prospective buyers. Originally the business attempted to get off to a start by Lon Dann hiring Captain Ed Hall to chauffeur prospective buyers to the Hunter property. It seems that Hunter got control of some of the old Disston property (at least 250,000 acres of formerly open cattle range) near Basinger and was trying to sell it largely to Canadians. Hall was driving these potential buyers from Kissimmee to see the property but after going 16 miles in 16 hours once in 1910, Dann decided to go with the ROSEADELE and got Hall to run her as Dann only had a license for boats up to 45 feet. Hall ran her for two years with George Saunders as engineer. The ROSEADELE left Kissimmee every Saturday morning with a load of Canadians and took them to either Alligator Bluff or Micco Bluff depending on which was the best for the particular kind of weather in vogue at the time. Then when the ROSEADELE arrived, a fleet of autos would meet her and take the potential buyers over the land that was for sale.

This operation finally went to the wall and the ROSEADELE was tied up. Her last captain, Marvin Goodman was her cook! He was also the crew, caretaker, and night watchman as he lived on her as she lay at dock in Kissimmee.

About the start of World War I a good market for truck vegetable crops developed and the Lake Okeechobee region not having a railroad used steamboats to get the crops to market. The ROSEADELE was purchased by Clay Johnson and he took out her engine, stripped off her upper works, closed up

her propeller tunnel, and put her on duty as a vegetable barge in Lake Okeechobee working with the LILLIE and the ROSEADA. She is rumored to still be there perhaps as a broken down barge or rotting away at a fish camp.

Another small boat was the TAMPA also called the "LITTLE TAMPA". She had a small propeller, was owned by Sol Aultman (who occasionally worked on building and financing boats) and was a party boat. She was not around Kissimmee very long and ended up doing towing work in the Ft. Myers area.

The last steamboat built at Kissimmee was the LUCY B. Never documented she was a stern wheeler about 50 x 10 x 3 and built about 1912 for Cal Buckles. For a period of about a dozen years she took care of the remaining business of freight and passengers after the Johnsons and Halls had abandoned the northern part of the run. Sometime in the mid-1920's the machinery was removed from the LUCY B and she was converted to a house boat.

This story would not be complete without paying tribute to Captain Edward H. Hall, now a frail gentleman of 82 but blessed with a fine memory of old Kissimmee's steamboating days in which he played such a prominent part. Born in Kissimmee City in 1884, he grew up on steamboats. When he was 21, he stood and passed the examinations for pilot and engineer (steam, gasoline, and diesel.) Being able to hold any position kept Captain Hall in constant employment on the Kissimmee boats until they played out before World War I. Captain Hall went to sea with the War Shipping Board then and later on in the Jacksonville and St. John's River area with many different steamboats. He also ran for one of the Atlantic coasting services to Florida.

In World War II, Captain Hall served with the Merchant Marine as a Commander and was in Normandy on D-Day. Later he served on army transports to Japan and in the Korean War. Finally, in his seventies, he "swallowed the anchor" and moved to Houston, Texas where he now lives. He is the last living person connected with Kissimmee steamboats as they were when steamboating was a way of life in south central Florida. As he tells of his experiences, his eyes light up and the 82 years slip away. It took men like Benjamin Franklin and Ed Hall to make steamboats go; when they went, so did steamboating.

## Contributors

JAMES W. COVINGTON, Professor of History at the University of Tampa, is a regular contributor of articles on Florida topics in the *Florida Anthropologist*, *The Florida Historical Quarterly* and *Tequesta*. He is co-author of a history of the University of Tampa.

JACK D. L. HOLMES, Associate Professor of History at the Birmingham Center of the University of Alabama was a contributor to *Tequesta* XXV (1965)

MARION CLAYTON (Mrs. Edwin A.) LINK has been closely associated with activities in undersea archaeology, and is the author of *Sea Diver*, an account of some of the research experiences of the Links.

EDWARD A. MUELLER, traffic engineer for the Highway Research Board, National Academy of Sciences, became interested in Florida steamboat history during his residence in Tallahassee for some eight years, as traffic engineer for the Florida State Road Department. A director of the Steamship Historical Society of America and newly appointed Editor-in-Chief of its Quarterly, *Steamboat Bill*, he is also contributing to the Florida Historical Quarterly on steamboat history and is writing a book on the subject.

LAURENCE E. WILL, Belle Glade, Florida, a contributor to *Tequesta* (1959) is the author of four books on the Lake Okeechobee region; *Okeechobee Hurricane and the Hoover Dike*, *A Cracker History of Lake Okeechobee*, *Okeechobee Boats and Skippers*, *Okeechobee Catfishing*.

## The Association's Historical Marker Program

On Saturday, February 26, 1966 at three o'clock in the afternoon, at Clinton Square, intersection of Whitehead, Greene and Front Streets in Key West, citizens and officials of Key West and Monroe County joined a delegation of officers and members of the Historical Association of Southern Florida to dedicate a marker at the homesite of Stephen R. Mallory. Colonel Mitchell D. Wolfson, a native son of Key West, delivered the dedication address. Colonel Wolfson and Admiral T. A. Christopher U.S.N., Commander Key West Force, unveiled the marker which reads:

### MALLORY HOMESITE

The home of Stephen Russell Mallory (1812-1873) stood near this site from 1839 to 1895 when it became U.S. Navy property. U.S. Senator from Florida from 1851 to 1861 and Chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee after 1853. As Secretary of the Navy in the Confederate States cabinet (1861-1865) he pioneered the use of submarines and ironclad warships in naval warfare. A son, Stephen R. Mallory, Jr. grew up in and later owned this house and also represented Florida in the United States Senate (1897-1908).

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA—1966

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA, INC.  
MIAMI, FLORIDA 33137

STATEMENT OF CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS  
FOR PERIOD 1 SEPTEMBER, 1965 THROUGH 31 AUGUST, 1966

RECEIPTS	1965	1966
DUES, Annual -----	\$ 7,604.00	\$ 8,075.00
Contributions to Museum Fund -----	5,341.99	2,939.21
Interest Earned -----	288.80	188.13
Dividends Earned on stocks -----	168.93	195.54
Sale of prior "Tequesta" issues -----	229.10	179.65
Sale of other books, novelties -----	1,432.84	2,409.24
Marker Fund Income -----	750.00	353.00
W. C. Parry Railroad Donations -----	1,320.67	1,209.07
Museum Donations -----	218.00	353.00
Brochure -----	300.00	-----
Other Income -----	849.00	614.22
Library Card File -----	152.50	-----
Miscellaneous -----	67.40	1,260.00
Inventory Ads -----	729.80	243.75
Contributions of common stocks, 14 shares -----	49.53	-----
Mortgage PLEDGE -----	-----	830.00
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS -----</b>	<b><u>\$19,502.56</u></b>	<b><u>\$18,849.81</u></b>
<b>DISBURSEMENTS</b>		
Salaries -----	\$ 5,290.00	\$ 5,720.00
Office Expense and Printing -----	1,225.43	425.14
Printing "Tequesta" annual -----	1,096.00	1,369.80
Printing NEWSLETTERS -----	400.10	224.72
Printing Other -----	582.56	1,504.00
Meetings Expense -----	168.78	356.18
Audio-Visual Expense -----	-----	-----
Marker Fund Expense -----	-----	666.70
Purchase of Books for resale -----	873.35	783.95
Building and Grounds Maintenance -----	3,701.83	2,964.73
Interest Expense -----	460.72	-----
Insurance Expense -----	323.49	325.47
Payroll Taxes -----	174.37	257.89
Mortgage—Principal -----	3,138.03	1,000.00
Florida 3% Sales -----	3.08	-----
Miscellaneous Expense -----	(76.25)	309.46
W. C. Parry R.R. Expense -----	367.70	483.95
Building Improvement -----	-----	-----
Common Stock Purchase Adjustment -----	49.53	-----
Office Furniture -----	-----	-----
<b>TOTAL DISBURSED -----</b>	<b><u>\$18,139.95</u></b>	<b><u>\$16,945.01</u></b>
<b>Net Gain (Loss) -----</b>	<b><u>1,362.61</u></b>	<b><u>1,904.80</u></b>

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF ASSOCIATION EQUITY  
AS OF 31 AUGUST, 1966

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA, INC.  
MIAMI, FLORIDA 33137

CASH	1965	1966	Difference
1st National Bank of Miami:			
Checking Account -----	\$ 1,070.31	\$ 711.71	
Savings Account -----	5,876.81	6,074.94	
Petty Cash—Museum -----	100.00	50.00	
TOTAL CASH -----	<u>\$ 7,047.12</u>	<u>\$ 6,836.65</u>	<u>(\$ 210.47)</u>
SECURITIES (At Market Value)			
Standard Oil Co. (N.J.) -----	\$ 2,339.66	\$ 2,937.68	
Continental Casualty Co. -----	603.00	798.00	
Hooker Chemical Co. -----	1,480.87	1,196.25	
Eastman Kodak Co. -----	1,266.00	1,429.50	
TOTAL STOCKS -----	<u>\$ 5,689.53</u>	<u>\$ 6,361.43</u>	<u>\$ 671.90</u>
OTHER ASSETS			
“Tequestas” on Hand (Estimated) -----	\$ 1,549.00	\$ 1,638.00	
Other Publications -----	502.67	657.42	
Utility Deposit -----	50.00	50.00	
Office Supplies -----	335.80	322.24	
TOTAL OTHER ASSETS -----	<u>\$ 2,437.47</u>	<u>\$ 2,667.66</u>	<u>\$ 230.19</u>
FIXED ASSETS AT COST			
Museum Property:			
LAND -----	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	
BUILDING -----	34,705.44	34,705.44	
BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS -----			
FURNISHINGS & EQUIPMENT -----	2,953.79	2,953.79	
TOTAL -----	<u>\$52,659.23</u>	<u>\$52,659.23</u>	
Less Balance Due on Mortgage -----	15,000.00	14,000.00	
MUSEUM EQUITY (Net) -----	<u>37,659.23</u>	<u>38,659.23</u>	
TOTAL FIXED ASSETS -----	<u>\$37,659.23</u>	<u>\$38,659.23</u>	<u>\$1,000.00</u>
TOTAL ASSETS -----	<u>\$52,833.35</u>	<u>\$54,168.29</u>	
LIABILITIES			
Federal Income Tax Withheld -----	\$ 140.59	\$ 166.16	\$ 25.57
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION EQUITY -----	<u>\$52,692.76</u>	<u>\$54,358.87</u>	<u>\$1,666.05</u>

## LIST OF MEMBERS

EXPLANATORY NOTE: *The Association provides several classes of membership. "Sustaining" members who pay five dollars a year make up the basic membership. For those who wish to contribute more for the promotion of the Association's work the other classes of membership provide the opportunity, and the publication of their names in the proper category of membership is a means of recognition. "Patrons" pay ten dollars a year, "Donors" pay twenty-five dollars a year, "Contributors" pay fifty dollars a year, "Sponsors" pay one hundred dollars a year, and "Benefactors" pay two hundred and fifty or more dollars a year.*

*This printed roster is made up of the names of those persons and institutions that have paid dues in 1965, or in 1966 before September 30 when this material must go to the press. Those joining after this date in 1966 will have their names included in the 1967 roster. The symbol \*\* indicates founding member and the symbol \* indicates charter member.*

## Sustaining

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Abbott, John F., Miami Shores           | Berry, Mrs. Richard S., Miami          |
| Adams, Adam G., Coral Gables            | Bevis, William H., Ft. Meade           |
| Adams, Miss Anne I., Miami              | Beyer, Robert C., Williamsburg, Va.    |
| Admire, Mrs. Jack G., Coral Gables      | Bishop, Edwin G., Miami*               |
| Aldridge, Miss Daisy, Miami             | Black, Leon D., Jr., Coral Gables      |
| Alexander, David T., N. Miami Beach     | Black, Mrs. Margaret F., Coral Gables  |
| Alexander, John L., N. Miami Beach      | Blanton, Judge W. F., Miami            |
| Allen, James M., Miami                  | Blauvelt, Mrs. Arthur M., Coral Gables |
| Allen, Joe, Key West                    | Bloomberg, Robert L., Miami            |
| Allen, Stewart D., Coral Gables         | Boyd, Dr. Mark F., Tallahassee*        |
| Allison, Mrs. John D., Miami Lakes      | Bow, Mary M., Miami                    |
| Allyn, Rube, St. Petersburg             | Bowen, F. M., Miami                    |
| Altmayer, M. S., Jr., Miami             | Bozeman, R. E., Gulfport               |
| American Museum of Natural History      | Brigham, Florence S., Miami            |
| Anderson, Mrs. Nils E., Miami Beach     | Broking, Gilbert S., Miami             |
| Anderson, T. David, St. Petersburg      | Brookfield, Charles M., Miami*         |
| Arbogast, Keith, Miami                  | Brooks, J. F., Key West                |
| Archer, Marjorie Leach, Homestead       | Brooks, Marvin J., Coral Gables        |
| Arnold, Mrs. Roger W., Miami            | Brown, Daniel M., Jr., Miami           |
| Ashbaucher, Lorin F., Miami             | Brown University Library               |
| Atkins, C. Clyde, Miami                 | Bryant, Donald, Miami                  |
| Avery, George N., Big Pine Key          | Bryant, Mrs. Ruby, Miami               |
| Axelson, Ivar, Miami                    | Buchheister, Carl W., New York         |
| Baker, Mrs. John A., Miami              | Buckley, Edward S., IV, Miami Shores   |
| Baker, Sarah S., Coral Gables           | Buhler, Mrs. Paul H., Jr., Miami       |
| Bankston, Dolores, Coconut Grove        | Bullen, Ripley P., Gainesville         |
| Bankston, Jarrell M., Coconut Grove     | Bumstead, Evalyn R., Miami             |
| Barnes, Francis H., Miami               | Bumstead, John R., Miami               |
| Barry, Msgr. William, P.A., Miami Beach | Burghardt, August, Ft. Lauderdale      |
| Batcheller, Mrs. George E., Miami       | Burns, Edward B., Orlando              |
| Bates, Barbara, Coconut Grove           | Haydon Burns Library, Jacksonville     |
| Bates, Franklin W., Miami               | Burton, Mrs. Robert A., Miami*         |
| Beare, Richard, Miami                   | Bush, Frank S. Fitzgerald, Opa Locka   |
| Beare, Mrs. Richard, Miami              | Bush, James D., Jr., Miami             |
| Bennett, Richard R., Miami              | Bush, Lewis M., S. Miami               |

- Busse, Raymond J., Miami  
 Byrne, Miss Jane, Miami Beach  
 Byrd, Mrs. J. Wade, Miami  
 Calderone, Caesar, Waterbury, Conn.  
 Caldwell, Thomas P., Coral Gables\*\*  
 Caldwell, Mrs. Thomas P., Coral Gables\*\*  
 Capron, Louis, W. Palm Beach  
 Carbajo, Antonio, Miami  
 Carnine, Miss Helen W., Coral Gables  
 Carson, Mrs. Ruby Leach, Miami\*\*  
 Carter, Mrs. Geo. deLani, Coral Gables  
 Carter, Miss Harriet V., Miami  
 Carter, Kenneth W., Grosse Point Woods,  
     Michigan  
 Casey, Mrs. Helon S., Coral Gables  
 Catlow, Mrs. William R., Jr., Miami  
 Chaille, Col. Joseph H., New York  
 Chance, Michael, Naples  
 Clarke, Lynn B., Coral Gables  
 Clark, Mary Helm, Coral Gables  
 Close, Kenneth, Coral Gables  
 Cochrane, Frank, Toronto, Canada  
 Coconut Grove Library, Miami  
 Collins, Mrs. Charles M., Miami  
 Collet, Harry A., Miami  
 Comerford, Miss Nora A., Coral Gables  
 Connett, Mrs. Virginia, Coral Gables  
 Connolly, William D., Jr., Miami  
 Cook, John B., Miami  
 Cooperman, Albert B., Miami Beach  
 Copeland, Mrs. M. A., Plantation Park  
 Coral Gables Senior High School  
 Coral Gables Public Library\*  
 Corley, Miss Pauline, Miami\*\*  
 Covington, Dr. James W., Tampa  
 Craton, Michael, Ontario, Canada  
 Cravens, Miss Jacqueline, Coral Gables  
 Creel, Joe, Miami  
 Criswell, Col. Grover C.,  
     St. Petersburg Beach  
 Crivello, Carl, Miami  
 Crockett, John R., Jr., Tampa  
 Crowley, Miss Helen M., Miami Beach  
 Culpepper, Mrs. Kay M., Miami  
 Cumings, Rev. Geo. W., Venice  
 Cushman, The School, Miami\*  
 Davis, Bernard M., Miami  
 Davis, Sydney, Ft. Myers  
 DeBoe, Mrs. Mizpah Otto, Coral Gables  
 DeCarion, Mrs. G. H., Miami  
 Deen, James L., Coral Gables  
 Deen, Mrs. James L., Coral Gables  
 deLamorton, Fred, Tampa  
 Detroit Public Library  
 DiIullo, Mrs. Luedith, Downey, Calif.  
 Dodd, Miss Dorothy, Tallahassee\*  
 Dorothy, Mrs. Caroline, Coral Gables\*  
 Douglas, Marjory S., Coconut Grove\*\*
- Doyle, Miss Pauline, Miami Beach  
 Dressler, Philip, Ft. Lauderdale  
 Dunaway, Mrs. Carl Ellis, Miami\*  
 Duncan, Marvin L., Miami  
 Dunn, Hampton, Tampa  
 DuPree, Mrs. Thomas O'Hagan, C. Gables  
 Elder, Dr. S. F., Miami\*  
 Erickson, Hilmer E., Miami Shores  
 Estocapio, Don, Miami  
 Everglades Natural History Association  
 Fenn, Abbott T., Fitchburg, Mass.  
 Ferendino, Susan R., Miami  
 Fisher, A. A., Jr., Miami Shores  
 Fisher, E. H., Miami  
 Fite, Robert H., Miami  
 Fitzgerald, Dr. Joseph H., Miami  
 Fitzgerald, Willard L., Jr., C. Gables  
 Henry M. Flagler Elementary School,  
     Miami  
 Henry Morrison Flagler Museum,  
     Palm Beach  
 Fields, Robert K., Miami  
 Florida Historical Society  
 Florida Southern College, Lakeland  
 Florida State University Library  
 Flynn, Stephen J., Coral Gables  
 Foor, Mrs. Floyd M., Miami  
 Fort Lauderdale Historical Society  
 Fortner, Ed, Ocala  
 Foss, George B., Jr., St. Petersburg  
 Foster, Miss E. L., Miami Shores  
 Freeland, Mrs. William L., Miami\*\*  
 Freeling, J. S., Miami  
 Freeling, Mrs. J. S., Miami  
 Freeman, Mrs. Ethel Cutler,  
     Morristown, N. J.  
 Fritz, Miss Florence, Ft. Myers  
 Fullerton, R. C., Coral Gables  
 Fuzzard, Miss Jessie M., Miami\*  
 Gabianelli, Vincent J., Miami  
 Gaffney, Virginia, Miami  
 Glennon, Mrs. James A., Miami  
 Gocking, Anthony J., Golden Beach  
 Godfrey, Clyde, Miami  
 Goodman, Jerrold F., Miami Beach  
 Goza, William M., Clearwater  
 Grafton, Edward G., Coral Gables  
 Graves, David, Miami  
 Greenberg, Gerald, Miami Beach  
 Griswold, Oliver, Miami  
 Gross, Zade Bernard, Clearwater  
 Harllee, Ella, Washington, D.C.  
 Halstead, William L., Miami  
 Hamilton, Mrs. Warren W., Homestead  
 Hampton, Mrs. John, Sparks, Md.\*  
 Hancock, Mrs. J. T., Jacksonville  
 Harding, Col. Read B., Arcadia  
 Harllee, J. William, Miami

- Harrington, Frederick H., Hialeah  
 Hart, Mrs. Reginald, Coral Gables  
 Hartnett, Fred B., Coral Gables\*  
 Havee, Justin P., Miami\*  
 Havee, Mrs. Kathryn, Miami  
 Harvey, C. B., Key West  
 Hendry, Judge Norman, Miami  
 Henry, Mrs. Arthur N., Miami  
 Herin, Thomas D., Miami  
 Herin, Judge William A., Miami\*  
 Hernandez, Gale, Miami  
 Hialeah City Library  
 Hiers, J. B., Jr., Miami  
 Higbie, William S., Miami Shores  
 Higgins, Mrs. Donald E., Cotuit, Mass.  
 Hills, Lee, Miami  
 Hillsborough County Historical Commission  
 Hodsden, Mrs. Harry E., Miami  
 Holcomb, Lyle D., Miami  
 Holcombe, Lyle D., Jr., Miami  
 Hoyt, Mrs. M. J., Miami  
 Hubbell, Willard, Miami  
 Hughes, Russell V., Sarasota  
 Hunter, William A., Miami  
 Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.  
 Hutchinson, Mrs. Robert J., Coral Gables  
 Ingersoll, Jean, Miami  
 Jacobstain, Mrs. Helen L., Coral Gables  
 James, Mary Crofts, Miami  
 Jenkins, Wesley E., Miami  
 Jernigan, Ernest H., Ocala  
 Johnson, Robert V., Miami  
 Jones, Mrs. Mary A., Miami  
 Judson, Charles B., Miami  
 Joyce, Mrs. Hortense, Coral Gables  
 Karg, Betsy, Opa Locka  
 Karg, Kitson, Opa Locka  
 Kelleher, Phillip A., Jr., Miami  
 Kelly, Miss Angela, Miami Beach  
 Kent, Selden G., Miami  
 Kenyon, Alfred, Ft. Lauderdale  
 Kiem, Miss Iris, Miami  
 King, Sidney, Surfside  
 Kirk, C., Ft. Lauderdale  
 Kitchell, Bruce P., Jr., Miami  
 Kitchen, Mrs. Karl K., Miami  
 Klime, Burton, Miami  
 Knight, Telfair, Coral Gables  
 Knott, Judge James R., W. Palm Beach  
 Knowles, Mrs. J. H., Miami  
 Koch, Mrs. Helen E. McNn, Pittsburgh, Pa.  
 Kofoed, Jack, Miami  
 Kos, Jerome C., South Miami  
 LaCroix, Mrs. Aerial C., Miami  
 Lake Worth Public Library  
 Laxson, Dan D., Hialeah  
 Leibensperger, Miss June, Miami  
 Lemon City Library, Miami  
 Lewis, Miss Carlotta, Coral Gables  
 Limmiatis, Ernest, Miami  
 Lindsley, A. R., Miami Beach  
 Lloyd, A. F. CEC  
 Lunnon, Mrs. James, Coral Gables  
 Lyell, Mrs. Robert O., Miami  
 Lynch, Sylvester John, Sarasota\*  
 Lynch, Thomas F., Coral Gables  
 Lynch, Mrs. Thomas F., Coral Gables  
 McAdams, Mrs. Ruth, Miami  
 MacArthur, Scot, Miami Shores  
 MacDonald, Miss Barbara, Miami  
 MacDonald, Miss Betty, Miami  
 MacDonell, George N., Miami  
 Manley, Miss Marion I., Miami  
 Manning, Mrs. Wm. S., Jacksonville  
 Manucy, Albert, St. Augustine  
 Marchman, Watt P., Fremont, Ohio\*  
 Marks, Henry S., Huntsville, Ala.  
 Martin County Historical Society, Stuart  
 Martin, Melbourne L., Coral Gables  
 Martin, Mrs. Paul C., Miami  
 Morand, Louis J., Detroit, Mich.  
 Mason, Dix, Miami  
 Mason, Mrs. Joe J., Coral Gables  
 Mason, Dr. Walter Scott, S., Miami\*  
 May, Philip S., Jacksonville  
 Merrill, Ron, Hialeah  
 Merritt, Robert M., Miami  
 Mertz, John S., Miami  
 Meyer, Hank, Miami Beach  
 Miami-Dade Junior College Library  
 Miami Public Library\*  
 Miami Senior High School Library  
 Miami Springs Library  
 Mickler, Mrs. Thomas, Chuluota  
 Mileo Photo Supply Co., Coral Gables  
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