

Excerpts from
BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA :

A SHORT HISTORY TO 1955



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JOHN M. ERIKSEN

BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA :

A Short History to 1955

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John M. Eriksen

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This book is dedicated to the memory of my mother,

Beatrice Cecelia Miller.

*Her patience and dedication to excellence in
all things provided the inspiration for the following pages.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

1. FIRST LAND/ FIRST LIFE

2. THE FIRST SPANISH PERIOD (1513-1763)

3. LOS MOSQUITOS IN THE 14th COLONY (1763-1783)

Part Two: THE SECOND SPANISH OCCUPATION OF EAST FLORIDA (1783-1821)

4. THE TERRITORIAL PERIOD (1821-1844)

5. EAST CENTRAL FLORIDA IN THE 27TH STATE (1845-1860)

Part Two: BREVARD COUNTY IN THE CONFEDERATE STATES (1860-1865)

6. A WILDERNESS INVADED The Indian River Country and Beyond (1865-1879)

7. THE GROWING FAME OF THE INDIAN RIVER COUNTRY (1880-1892)

8. THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN BREVARD (1893-1905)

9. MODERN BREVARD COUNTY: Mechanized Development (1906-1920)

10. THE BOOM YEARS (1920-1930)

11. THE BUST AND THE NEW DEAL (1931-1938)

12. THE EFFECTS OF WAR: Preparation and Support of the Mission (1939-1945)

Part Two: Peacetime Readjustment: Problems and Prospects (1946-1950)

13. THE SPACE AGE AND THE POST WAR BOOM (1950-1955)

Endnotes

Images

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Florida Historical Society originally published this manuscript 23 years ago. The FHS is normally a fine publisher of scholarly articles and books. However, in their release of this original work, *Brevard County: A History to 1955*, (1994 edition. ISBN 1-866104-00-X), errors were made.

It is not generally known that many top presses release books with errors of every possible sort: in spelling, fact, logic, and grammar.

How does this happen? A major reason is the temptation to make edits very close to the press date. This makes it impossible to go back and edit the edits. Another problem is that some editors go beyond editing and re-write or add to an author's manuscript, believing they know more than the author—sometimes they do, but sometimes they don't.

In the book world this is an old issue. For the reader, this is a reminder: always verify what you read. Never trust a sole source.

Thankfully, the problem is now solved. Enjoy reading:

Brevard County, Florida: A Short History to 1955

John M. Eriksen

Publisher

JohnEriksen.net/

The Truth Will Set You Free

2017

PREFACE

Brevard County has been without a documented history since its creation in 1855. Although several short histories have contributed to our understanding of the county's past, none has presented a strict chronological outline of the area's influential events and their relationship to U.S. and world history.

The following pages do not reflect a complete and definitive history of Brevard. What is offered is merely a skeleton of the most important events, occasionally supplemented with notes of interest and a few brief sketches of the area's more colorful personalities.

No attempt has been made to judge or interpret the acts of institutions or individuals. Information, whether negative or positive, is not intended to be judgmental, rather only a truthful and accurate reflection of the source material. Yet a judgment is necessarily made that the author cannot avoid. The material presented may be skewed by the inherent necessity to sift through records and make bold choices between what is noteworthy, accurate, and significant, and what is extraneous or false. Nevertheless, considerable effort has been made to present information with accuracy, conciseness, completeness, and relevance.

As to time, history does not begin with boundary or name changes, or political claims. It begins with the first event. Therefore, this chronology begins well before the area's first name or political shape. It begins with the formation of the county's most important asset: the land.

As to place, the area currently known as Brevard County is only a historical fragment within a formerly boundless area of lagoons, lakes, creeks and prairies. Original boundaries stretched to the middle of the state and south to Okeechobee. The county was last reduced in 1959, when a strip of oceanfront below Sebastian Inlet was granted to Indian River County in a cooperative effort to bridge the inlet. If a history were to reflect only the events within today's boundaries, it would omit much of Brevard's heritage and the conflicts that resulted from a growing population.

Since this is a chronicle, many subjects are repeated throughout the text just as the ebb and flow of their importance unfolded over the years. Many quotations have been included to enhance the reader's appreciation of the period presented. Original phrases and

spellings have been left within quotes.

The author is indebted to all those who contributed to this effort. A special debt is owed to Claire Ewertz for access to her extensive library of Brevard County manuscripts and antique books and the insight she provided on events and personalities of the 1800s. Appreciation is due to the many reference librarians throughout Brevard for their assistance, especially to the Titusville Public Library for access to the large file on Henry Titus. Philip Dye provided a rare 1856 New York Tribune editorial concerning Henry Titus in the Kansas Territory. Tracey Garbade and Joyce Dewsbury of the University of Florida's George A. Smathers Libraries provided useful materials on Brevard's pioneer families. Mary Ann Cleveland and Elaine M. Dickinson of the State Library of Florida located several pertinent WPA studies of county boundaries and maps. A rare collection of Florida's Acts of the Territorial Council was made available to the author by Ms. George McFarland of the Brevard County Law Library. Ms. Jan Crespino of the Patrick Air Force Base History Office supplied copies of studies relating to the development of the base. Paul Eugene Camp of the University of South Florida located many antique maps and interesting coastal charts from the late 1800s. Artists Nancy and Rick Dillen donated their time and talents to create illustrations that have enhanced the text.

Thanks also to Mr. Reed Kempfer for allowing the author to explore old Brevard's Jane Green Swamp, and to John Rawls, Cliff Rouse and Claire Ewertz for their expert guidance through the historic Haulover isthmus. Special thanks go to Betty Preece and Ellen Noyd of the South Brevard Historical Society and to Jim Bacchus, Diane D. Barile, Diane Bender, Bobby Bechtel, Alvin W. Parry, Mary Roberts, Cindy Wickham, for their perspectives and advice on the entire manuscript. Finally, this complex chronicle could not have been completed without hardware and software. Gratitude is extended to David Wickham for computer and printer and to Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Gynan for the necessary software. Many thanks to Scott A. Sutherland for his last-minute technical assistance and expertise.

J.M.E.

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INTRODUCTION

Brevard is one of east central Florida's oldest counties. Established in 1855 when it inherited the 1844 boundaries of old St. Lucie County, the area originally encompassed 7000 square miles, Florida's largest political subdivision. A boundless land of oaks, palms and pines flanked by a clean, pristine lagoon, the county was largely without claim or improvement at the time of its creation.

Two decades earlier, U.S. troops had pushed the remaining native Americans off the land and into the seclusion of south Florida. The Armed Occupation Act brought in a handful of settlers around Fort Pierce in the 1840s, but after a few years most had abandoned the area, fearing renegade Seminole Indians. Some had caught "gold fever" and sought claims in the expanding western territories. Without a population, old Brevard inherited no roads and the only substantial improvements in the area were a scanty dragoon trail leading to Fort Pierce and the small canal at the Haulover, part of Orange and later Volusia County until 1879.

The shallow Ulumay Lagoon of the ancient Ais, proclaimed Banana River by Mills Burnham in the 1840s, continued to be shown by mapmakers as the "East Channel." Because of a dependence on waterway transportation, Merritt Island was clearly seen as an island, bordered on the north by Banana Creek. Along its flanks, the lagoons were packed with unknown and "inexhaustible" forms of marine life, free of net and hook, just as described by James Gadsden in his 1824 survey of the new territory's east coast. Early residents traveled almost exclusively by boat. They knew the lagoon was no river but the historic misnomer, Indian River, was not dishonored. Indeed, from the 1850s until the 1950s, the whole region was known far and wide as the *Indian River Country*, and became known to invalids for its healthy climate and to wealthy sportsmen for its abundance of fish and game. Without roads or convenient inlets, the area remained almost uninhabited until after the Civil War. Prior to the war, the residents were few and far between: the Burnhams, Dummetts, Russells, Houstons, Carliles, Smiths, Feasters, Wilsons, Simmons and a scattering of cattlemen and farmers around a few inland settlements.

Forgotten for centuries, shipwrecked gold, diamonds, silver, and Chinese porcelain lay buried near the present-day McLarty Museum

south of Sebastian Inlet. Dozens of mysterious burial mounds and shell middens dotted the landscape between the lagoon and the St. Johns River. But before the mound-builders and even before the lagoon had fully formed, native Americans had made old Brevard their home. For endless centuries, Melbourne Man, Vero Man, and the Windover people stepped softly through a verdant world of natural rhythms and the land remained nature's domain. Only within the last few thousand years did the small native population begin to accumulate a record of their long existence. Their only *faux pas*, garbage middens of refuse shell and bone, would become valued as campsites by European hunters and later prized as the perfect road-building material by early county commissioners.

By 1900 much of the U.S. had already been transformed by man's inventions: fire, irrigation canals, and steam-driven machinery. But the industrial revolution bypassed Brevard. Overlooked in a world of change until the dawn of the twentieth century, the county finally welcomed the developers and speculators riding the iron horse in search of new land and opportunity. Suddenly, intensive fishing and hunting, new roads and ditches, drainage canals, lands cleared and fertilized for agriculture, experiments with exotic plants, and the dredging for inlets, causeways, parks, and mosquito control caused indelible alterations to the environment. In the relatively brief 50 years between 1900 and 1950, the seemingly timeless balance of the county's ecosystems had been tipped to serve man. The county's resources begged for respect and intelligent management during the post war boom.

However, increasing restrictions seemed to encroach on fundamental rights. New game laws made criminals of Florida's old crackers. Hunting and fishing, first necessity, then sport, were Florida's oldest business and the American way of life in the 1800s. The survival skills of hunting in the Florida woods were passed from father to son. Early laws encouraged the practice, creating bounties on certain animals. An 1832 Territorial Act awarded a bounty for the destruction of any "wolf, bear, tiger, or panther." In 1841 the Council specifically targeted wolves in an "Act To Encourage The Destroying of Wolves," which paid citizens four dollars per scalp. The Florida black wolf, once a subspecies of the red wolf, is now extinct. Charles Pierce tells of the Indian River Country in the 1870s and 80s, when "it was the height of every would-be-hunter's ambition to kill a deer and among the boys,...this feat was the crowning glory of their young lives."

Even so, by 1900 the county realized that the free-for-all was over. Since the mid-1890s, manatee captures were allowed only in the interest of science and only with a county permit. Other restrictions followed in the county that unknowingly held the highest diversity of marine life in North America, starting with President Roosevelt's dedication of the nation's first wildlife sanctuary. Three-acre *Pelican Island* became that sanctuary in 1903. The event seemed to symbolize the end of old Brevard and the beginning of a new era--the story of man's sudden impact on the timeless cycles of nature.

It is often asked, "Why is today's Brevard so long and unwieldy? Why is the county seat so far north?" The answer is Indian River. It was the lengthy lagoon that was the heart of the Indian River Country. The narrow fishery provided food for the ancients and the later pioneers. It harbored, protected, and cooled the first communities along the western shore. It supported rich hammock land for the developing orange industry and served as an avenue for communication, supplies, and northbound produce that funneled through Titusville.

Since 1855, the county gradually lost the bulk of its less populated western and southern territories that once included the areas of today's St. Lucie, Okeechobee, Martin, Indian River and parts of Highlands, Palm Beach and Polk Counties. But these were given up without much concern. Separated by the ocean prairie, marsh and river, the last western Brevardians struggled to organize their County of Osceola in 1887. The split significantly narrowed the county and it has since been committed to the old **Indian River Country**, the original heart of old Brevard that we know today as Brevard County.

1 - FIRST LAND / FIRST LIFE

The shelly dunes of Brevard County ramble along a splintered remnant of the ancient continent of Gondwanaland. The existence of this former land will be affirmed on no map, although its turf is well-grounded in scientific theory. Far below the high ridges of central Florida lie sandstone and marine fossils that form the prehistoric cornerstone of Florida. Across the Atlantic, northwestern Africa rests on the same rock. Once common ground, the early Florida and African bedrock were split roughly 245 million years before present (MYBP) when Gondwanaland began to break up and drift south. The shifting land divided the super continent of Pangaea and gave birth to the Atlantic Ocean.

As the continents divided, a small sliver of the African mass lingered. About 25 million years later (220 MYBP) this remnant became established as Florida's underwater peninsula, fusing with the primeval American continent along Georgia's "Brunswick gravity anomaly." Geologists have shown that early Florida rock and its fossil record bear more resemblance to African geological history than to that of North America.

Florida remained submerged during the next 195 million years while Pangaea continued to divide along the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. Dinosaurs and other reptilians evolved without interruption, carried by the shifting crustal plates. Then suddenly, most of the largest reptiles disappeared, allowing mammals to gain prominence around 65 MYBP. One of the earliest mammals to inhabit underwater Brevard was the sea cow. The existence of this manatee-like creature, *Protosiren*, has been detected from carbonate deposits of 45 MYBP.

First Land

About 25 million years ago, a narrow central Florida peninsula emerged to support plant and animal life that already existed on the North American continent. Brevard was a shallow ocean floor at this point until the last ice age helped to lower sea levels. Freezing ice caps gradually drew water from Brevard's flooded terrain. As recently as 20,000 years ago, extensive polar ice caps continued to beget land, creating a peninsula twice its current width. Brevard's current beachfront existed as a sprawling hinterland of scrub and marsh, miles

from the highest tides. Over the last ten thousand years, melting icecaps flooded the peninsula and gradually produced the Brevard County coastline and lagoon systems of today. Although there have been numerous ice ages over hundreds of millions of years, the recent emergence of man during this present activity has limited our reference to the period as *the ice age*.

This entire timeline of millions of years is based on prevailing scientific view, however it is important to remember that this is one scientific theory. There is another point of view gaining attention with facts to support a much different, briefer timeline.¹

Early man adapted to the cold snap with a nomadic quest for meat and warm fur. Soon the first Siberian hunters wandered into North America. Radiocarbon dates of various ancient tools indicate that between 40,000 and 20,000 years ago, a sporadic progression of nomad hunters began to traverse an ancient land bridge known as Beringia.² Named for the much-later (1728) explorations of the Dane, Vitus Bering, the area, exposed by low seas, was once a broad chilly pasture in the area of the present Bering Strait. Large mammals had been crossing ice age bridges like Beringia for millions of years.

The first Americans survived exclusively on the huge bison, mammoth, giant sloth and similar animals. While in pursuit of their prey, they inadvertently entered North America. After thousands of years of roaming, some descendants of these Asian nomads reached central Florida.³

Florida's First Snowbirds

Scientists are certain that people have been in central Florida for thousands of years, possibly as early as 12,000 years ago when the first of these ancient nomads arrived.

Evidence indicates that the first Floridians were not a timid people, huddling within their flimsy thatched shelters. These aborigines spent their days tracking the dwindling megafauna that still existed on the peninsula. The fact that they were well-organized and efficient hunters has been offered as a partial explanation for the many extinctions that occurred upon their arrival in Florida. *Pleistocene overkill* is the term used by archaeologists to describe early man's organized, aggressive killing of only the largest mammals. Science can only speculate on the other factors that contributed to the extinction of these large beasts, such as the Pleistocene camel and Florida's huge sabercat, smilodon.⁴

Since 1916, archaeologists have known about Vero Man and other

skeletal remains of early central Floridians. Many discoveries occurred during the drainage and road-building projects of the early twenties, when human bones were found mixed with bones of extinct megafauna, such as the giant sloth and mastodon.

One important find followed the creation of the Crane Creek Drainage District of 1922. Workers discovered human bones while extending a drainage ditch west of Crane Creek. Scientists worked the site between 1923 and 1926. What became known as Melbourne Man was their evidence that early people lived in the area of the present Melbourne Golf Course about 6,000 years ago. Since most of these early sites offered so little clear, undisturbed evidence, the conclusions of researchers on "what, when, or how" involved a fair amount of guesswork.⁵

Our best knowledge of some of these early people is from an ancient burial site south of Titusville. Located within a housing development called Windover Farms is a prehistoric cemetery. Due to the decline of large grazing herds, early Floridians became more stationary. The Windover site is an example of some of the first permanent Brevardians. Occupied for at least 1000 years between 8000 and 7000 years ago, the ancient cemetery was discovered by the developer, EKS, Inc. The site was extensively worked from 1982 through 1986 by archaeologists from Florida State University.

Dr. Glen Doran and others found that these early Brevardians did not bury their dead in mounds as later Indians preferred. They did just the opposite. The deceased were prepared with wrappings and placed in ponds. Where the water was deep, stakes were used to fasten them to the bottom. Scientists believe the practice was unique, occurring only in central and south Florida. For the Windover people, the ritual turned out to be a perfect memorial.

During the 1980s, after 75 centuries, the Windover site yielded one of the largest and best preserved samples of skeletal specimens and artifacts from that age to be found in North America. Some of the specimens contain the oldest known human cell structure and DNA. The remains of about 172 individuals were removed from the site, many with portions of brain tissue intact.

This archaeological bonanza also supplied scientists with many artifacts, such as carved manatee and deer bones, stone knives, and the oldest and largest collection of woven materials in the Americas.⁶ Tools made from manatee ribs and sharks teeth were uncovered, indicating that these people may have hunted and fished in the developing lagoon area to the east. The natural abundance of their hammock home allowed them time to develop many styles of weaving. They

also had the time to care for their disabled; spina bifida was found in 21% of one set of skeletal samples.

Researchers also unearthed spears with points carved from chert. Chert is a fine-grained variety of mineral quartz, also known as flint rock. This rock was used for axes, knives, and spear tips only, since the bow and arrow was not yet in use. Since chert is most commonly found in western and northern Florida, it is likely that the Windover people had trading partners and may have traveled inland. While the distant ancestors of these people may have seen or hunted the few remaining large prehistoric beasts of central Florida, Windover men of 5500 B.C. were left with only small game along with fishing and gathering for subsistence. The Windover people lived in the Titusville area and used the same burial ritual for 1000 years. Their burial pond is now on the National Register of Historic Sites and is protected from further disturbance.⁷

The Atlantic had been flooding the lowlands during this period and as the Indian River Lagoon formed, the rising estuary attracted diverse marine life. Soon small Stone Age communities developed along its new shores. Without advanced tools or agricultural skills, they remained on the fringe of the new Stone Age for thousands of years. Probably not until about 1000 B.C. did distinct tribes develop with skilled bowmen and not until 800 A.D. was there some dependence on crops by inland natives.⁸

The First Fishermen

During the 2500 years prior to the arrival of Europeans, these "Indians" living near the Mosquito and Indian River Lagoons developed into the distinct tribes of *Timucua*, *Ais*, and *Jeaga*. Until the early 1900s, the Brevard area was littered with dozens of their shell middens. The middens were the remains of oysters, clams, and other seafood that were eaten and discarded by these early people. Middens along the eastern lagoon marked the location of long-established wintertime villages. Numerous middens could also be found along the upper St. Johns River. Altogether, early archaeologists in the area between the St. Johns and the Indian River Lagoon have discovered the remains of well over 100 middens. Burial mounds and shell middens were the only legacy of the many centuries of *Ais* occupation. But intruding newcomers had no interest in *Ais* history, except to dig occasionally into the mounds looking for treasure.

In 1766, the famous explorers John and William Bartram did not know who to thank when they found the only apparent dry refuge in what is now northwest Brevard County: Baxter Mound. The mound, a former shell

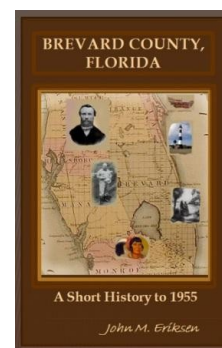
midden, was only a small rocky hammock lying just above the water. In 1838, a more prominent midden on the western shore of Lake Winder served to elevate Fort Taylor during the Second Seminole Indian War. One of the more interesting middens, known as Gleason Mound, was located just east of the southern tip of Merritt Island. The Indian Harbour midden was said to be at least fifty feet wide and as much as eighty feet in height. East of the midden was a long causeway passing through a lake and wetlands to a large burial mound. Most of these mounds and middens were removed to construct early shell roads. Much of the material was removed between 1895 and 1920 to build the county's main thoroughfare, designated as the *Dixie Highway* in 1915.⁹

The most famous midden eluded the Dixie Highway frenzy and still exists at the remote Turtle Mound exhibit within Apollo Beach State Park in Volusia County. Known on early maps as Sorrochos or Mount Tucker, this midden was an important landmark for early Spanish navigators, reminding them to steer northeast at this point. (Apollo Beach Park is on A1A, south of New Smyrna Beach.)

Turtle Mound served as the southern boundary of the Timucua people and the Jeaga occupied the area south of the St. Lucie River. Between these two were the Ais. Brevard's Indian River Lagoon, originally Rio d' Ais, was known to the first Spanish explorers as the Province of the Ais.¹⁰

The Ais dominated the lagoon from Banana Creek on north Merritt Island to their capital town near Riomar at Vero Beach. The capital had various names, but was commonly known as Ais. Feared as the seat of the most powerful chief on the east coast, it was a center of fierce resistance to the European newcomers. No European power was able to conquer the Ais tribe. The Spanish tried to enslave them, slaughter them, convert them, and then cajole them with gifts. In the end, dirty rat-infested ships brought the only gifts the Ais could not resist: the chronic diseases of urban Europe.

End of Chapter One. Get the full version [here](#).



7 - THE GROWING FAME OF THE INDIAN RIVER COUNTRY (1880-1892) [BACK TO TOC](#)

During the winter of 1879 and 1880, the Florida State Commissioner of Immigration, Seth French, led a small party on an official tour of south Florida. The record of his survey is stark evidence of the change that has occurred in our natural resources during the last 115 years. Commencing with the territory below Lake Jessup, these men observed thousands of cattle grazing on the rich vegetation. Along the St. Johns they witnessed hundreds of storks, cranes, curlews, pelicans, and herons of various colors. The men were impressed by the millions of ducks of various species that they observed along the St. Johns River in north Brevard County.

The party stopped at Salt Lake to wait for the mule train that would take them to Titusville. While at the lake, five men caught about forty-five large fish within thirty minutes, while others in the party shot ducks and loaded them into small boats. When the hack line from Titusville arrived, French and his party met a company of sportsmen who were returning from Indian River. Included in their cargo were "about eighty monster sea-green turtles, on their way to the leading hotels of the North."

The observations made by French were not unique. The first clerk of the city of Titusville, Robert Ranson, noted that "in those days, much grass was growing in the river from one end to the other and it was a common thing to see great rafts of ducks, 500 acres in extent, packed as close as they could swim. Green turtle and manatee were plentiful and both made good meat while turtle eggs were easily picked up on the beaches from May to August."¹

After reaching Titusville, the French party explored the peninsula north of Merritt's Island (now the Kennedy Space Center) and found "without much looking, bears, deer, cougars, wild-cats, panthers, and the wily lynx." While at the Titus Hotel, these guests had their choice of "oysters, clams, fish, shark-steaks, turtle-steaks, along with many strange and familiar fruits and vegetables."

The next day a few of the party boarded a yacht and visited a sugar plantation on Banana Creek. The owner was County Commission chairman Perry Wager. The official visitors were guided to the cane fields

through a hammock of "gigantic oaks, magnolias and wild orange trees." Wager did not live on the island and complained of bears and deer chewing on his unattended crop.

The chairman's two-story home was located on Titusville's riverfront. Today it sits at the east end of South Street. One of the oldest homes in the county, it was once home to Wager's piano business and headquarters for his newspaper, *The Florida Star*. First published in New Smyrna in 1877, the *Star* was the first paper south of St. Augustine. (The *East Coast Advocate*, briefly known as the *Indian River Advocate*, was established in 1890 and merged with the *Star* as the *Star-Advocate* in 1920.) On the third day, a yacht trip was made to the place of Captain W. H. Sharpe, "a very agreeable gentleman from Georgia, with a Yankee wife."²

The First Indian River Steamboats

The settlers that came to homestead along the Indian River during the 1860s and 1870s depended on their sailboats for supplies and outside contacts. By 1880, though, the population had grown enough to allow steamboat operators to profit from the increased demand for transportation.

Although the first American steamboat was built and tested by Robert Fulton in 1807, few steamers appeared on the Indian River Lagoon until 1880s. The earliest paddle boats were the Seminole War troop steamers of the late 1830s. Depending on high tide, the shallow-draft boats navigated over the dangerous bars of the Indian River Inlet opposite Fort Pierce. After the Civil War, Henry Titus tried to maneuver through the historic cut, but wrecked his overloaded steamer there in 1867.

Many low-hulled riverboats began business on Indian River in the 1880s. Skilled captains piloted their boats through the inlets at Fort Pierce or St. Lucie and began servicing the new residents and merchants. They carried passengers and tourists, hauled supplies and mail, and catered to sportsmen seeking the beauty and resources of the pristine inland sea.

In his book, *Steamboating on the Indian River*, Fred Hopwood states that "the golden steamboat era came between the years 1880 and 1899 when over 25 steamboat companies set up business on the Indian River and brought dozens of steamers to Brevard County." The steamers serviced the entire lagoon, 135 miles, from Haulover to Jupiter. The Indian River Steamboat Company advertised the following schedule: "leaving Titusville daily at 6:00 a.m., arriving at Melbourne at 1 p.m. Leave Melbourne at 1 p.m., arriving at Jupiter at 8 a.m. next

morning."³

It is difficult to imagine the endless palm and mangrove shoreline of the lagoon of one hundred years ago. An early resident captured the scene with this early description of a paddleboat trip along the inland seashore:

*"Titusville, the embarking point for Indian River...is a modest little Southern town, having very fair accommodations for visitors, but little to interest them. Indeed it is not until the steamboat reaches Cocoa and Rockledge...that the scenery begins to disclose its beauty and its charms. The rich and fertile hammocks on either side cleared here and there for the orange, lemon, and banana; the graceful cabbage-palms, and the varied and brilliant coloring of the gardens, all combine to give the keynote to the panorama about to be unrolled to the gaze of traveller. Cocoa is a pretty and thriving little town, connected to Rockledge by a charming bit of roadway along the river's edge. If Titusville is left in the afternoon, night has fallen ere the steamboat reaches Eau Gallie or Melbourne, the only settlements of any size or importance to be passed until it arrives at Jupiter; but if it be moon light, the distinct, quiet, soft beauty of the scenery, the balmy air, the diamond-sparkling of the placid water, and the myriad phosphorescent flashes of its denizens keep the stranger on the deck until the stretches of the Indian River Narrows are entered...."*⁴

The steamboats contributed significantly to the development of eastern Brevard. They hauled finished lumber into the area for homes and transported the region's crops to northern markets. The riverboats, both the fancy corporate-owned vessels and the smaller family boats, added romance and excitement to the shoreline. Churning back and forth with regularity, the stern and side-wheelers seemed to transform the lagoon into a provincial lake, solidifying the region into a common riverfront neighborhood.

From about 1870 to the turn of the century, this river neighborhood held an annual festival known as the *May Day* picnic. The affair was a chance for settlers to exchange ideas, talk politics, and show off a variety of locally grown produce. The pioneers gathered at a distinctive snow-white crescent beach known as Russell Point (later Oleander Point). The hobnob featured a variety of games, the most important of which was a fiercely competitive sailboat race. Motivation for this pioneer contest was not based so much on pride or sailing skills as it was in each man's desire to control the crowning *May Day* event. The winner of the race had the privilege of selecting the *May Day* Queen from among the many young ladies attending the

yearly festival.

One of the participants, Charles Pierce, describes May Day in his book, *Pioneer Life in Southeast Florida*. Although Pierce was from the Lake Worth area, he writes of a time when the riverside picnic, midway between Cocoa and Rockledge, was the social event of the year on Florida's east coast. It has been said that the gala brought the young people of the area together and that many marriage vows were exchanged as a result. Oleander Point was the home of the Brevard Hotel from 1924 until its recent destruction.⁵

The Governor's College

This hubbub of Indian River activity may have convinced Henry and Sarah Gleason that Eau Gallie's shoreline held more potential than their isolated Biscayne Country homestead (now North Miami). Actually, the Gleasons had nothing to lose by moving. After sixteen years in Dade County, the legality of their homestead was being seriously challenged. The Lt. Governor had originally settled at the old military post, Fort Dallas, in 1866. The fort had been vacant since the Civil War and Gleason had never negotiated a purchase from the out-of-state owners. After a Key West physician purchased the fort, the Gleasons moved in with the William H. Hunt family.

Gleason then selected a homestead near Little River. The area had been surveyed for homesteads in 1845, as had many areas in the state. However, since that date, the Little River plot had practically doubled as a result of accumulated shoals and land-building mangroves. The former Wisconsin surveyor had indeed chosen his homestead wisely. The quarter-section plot had grown to well over 300 acres since the 1845 survey. The new homestead eventually drew the attention of a north Florida judge, whose son also claimed some of Gleason's expanded shoreline. In 1882, with a cloud over his title and the death of his friend William Hunt, Gleason decided to sever his tenure of south Florida forever.

The Governor, as he was now called, moved his wife and two teenage sons to the unused campus of Eau Gallie's Agricultural College during 1882 and 1883. He immediately began a sawmill and boat building business. The Gleasons took control of the old college building, living there until they became established. By 1884, Henry and Sara had recorded their village plat of Eau Gallie and began selling lots in the new town, however not without more difficulty.⁶ Although the empty college building had served as a night's shelter for many new arrivals coming to the Indian River Country, word of the Gleason's use of the building suddenly aroused the envy of former political rivals

in Tallahassee.

The Florida State Agricultural College filed to foreclose on William Gleason's tenuous claim to the vacant, but not abandoned college building. After several years of litigation, the Trustees of the college were able to negotiate a settlement. Gleason's "donated" west Eau Gallie acreage was returned to him and, in exchange, the governor agreed to pay \$2000 for the small college building and campus.⁷ Gleason and his sons converted the building into the prosperous Hotel Granada during the 1890s. It served the typical tourists of the day, sportsmen seeking fish and game. The two-story coquina hotel was destroyed by fire in 1902. The charred building seemed to symbolize the end of an era which coincided with the death of the Lt. Governor the same year.

A Tropical Trunk Line

The Indian River's growing steamboat business did not *fully* boom until a suitable port was developed to reach the northern markets. Henry Titus did not live to see Sand Point develop into that port. A few years after the Colonel's death, the county's first railway opened north Brevard to a flood of commerce. Late in 1885, the *Jacksonville, Tampa and Key West Railroad* completed track to Titusville, connecting Brevard to Enterprise and a network of north Florida railroads. Titusville became a much more important port, catering to a multitude of steamers and the transportation needs of the entire lower east coast.

Steamboats were manufactured in northern states and brought south along the east coast or the Mississippi River. As an example, Captain Richard Paddison piloted his steamer, the *Santa Lucia*, west on the Ohio River, south on the Mississippi, around Cape Florida and into the Indian River Inlet in 1887. The same year, a wider Haulover Canal was completed about a mile north of the old cut. The first steamer to pass into the North Indian River Lagoon was appropriately named the *Haulover*.⁸

Many new boats began business, but not all were wanted. An editorial from the *East Coast Advocate* of November 21, 1890 complains that "the J.,T. & K.W. Railway. Co., by reason of their extreme discrimination in favor of their pet steamboat line, have succeeded in driving freight that should come over their road to another route...we have a line of steamers not wedded to the present railroad system, which would be glad, after the unjust treatment they have received at its hands, to give every pound of their freight to any competing railway...."

This private transportation system of train and steamboat was known as the Tropical Trunk Line. Ironically, Henry M. Flagler, a man with a financial interest in the fledgling rail and "pet steamboat" line, would in a few years eliminate its dominance and in the process eliminate a good portion of the steamboat business on the Indian River.⁹

The Wild West

Flagler's new east coast railroad would not reach Titusville until mid-January 1893. However, in the decade prior to the rail baron's arrival, several interesting and important events had occurred to the west.

Western Brevard was widely known for its cattle industry during the 1880s. But other trades were soon discovered. A well-known writer of boys' stories, Kirk Monroe, sought real life adventures for his stories in *Harper's Young People* and *American Boy*, and decided to try his skill in Brevard's newest occupation: alligator hunting. Using a small canoe during the early eighties, Monroe explored Brevard's southwestern boundary, the Kissimmee River north of Lake Okeechobee. He met Frank Lefils who was then the most successful alligator man in south Florida. The two men entered the swamps north of Okeechobee and within one week they captured and skinned 120 alligators. Monroe noted that in just one month in 1891, "over ten thousand alligator hides were delivered to one trader in south Florida as the result of that month's hunt."¹¹ The men were most likely trespassing on the lands of Hamilton Disston, who had a land improvement contract with the state for 4,000,000 acres in southwest Florida.

In 1883, a few years after Monroe's explorations, the first steamboat managed to penetrate Brevard's remote western bound by following the Disston-dredged Caloosahatche River to Lake Okeechobee and then north along the twisted Kissimmee.¹⁰ The once pristine river was now open to the plume, catfish, and gator trade. Steamers began moving between Lake Okeechobee and Kissimmee's Lake Tohopekaliga, Brevard's northwesternmost point.

Western Brevard continued to be removed from the politics of the Indian River throughout the late 1880s. The only community in southwestern Brevard was Fort Drum. In 1884 Fort Drum, having its own public meeting place at the "Drum Creek Schoolhouse," became the new voting precinct for south Brevard. Reportedly, the Florida school system was well organized by 1873, however no reports from Brevard County were received in Tallahassee that year and few records remain of school activities in Brevard from 1885 to 1900. Tantie, the only

other community in southwest Brevard, did not become established until 1902. Brevard commissioners established a voting precinct in Tantie in 1904. Named for the local schoolteacher, the town later became known as Okeechobee, the county seat of Okeechobee County.¹²

In 1884 the Indian River Commissioners attempted to unite east and west Brevard, proclaiming the path between Hogg's store, near old Ft. Pierce, and Bassville to be a public road. This route, currently along the route of the Sunshine State Parkway from Ft. Pierce to St. Cloud, is not evident on the 1885 Le Baron map of Brevard. The only possible route between the two settlements seems to have been a trail from Ft. Pierce through Ft. Drum to the Kissimmee River. Again in January of 1887, Brevard commissioners granted a meager \$125 for road repair and construction from Fort Drum to the former seat at Lake View. However, by May of 1887 community leaders in Kissimmee City took charge of their own affairs when they received a state charter to organize their new County of Osceola.

The new county was formed from a small southern portion of Orange County and all of Brevard County west of the line dividing ranges thirty-four and thirty-five. This line remains as the boundary between southwestern Brevard County and Osceola County.

The New Inlet

At about the same time as Monroe's visit to western Brevard, a retired Methodist minister, Thomas New, settled in eastern Brevard near the Sebastian River. The minister was from Detroit and not accustomed to being without mail service. Through his efforts, the post office of New Haven was authorized with New serving as the first postmaster. Soon after his arrival, New became one of the first to visualize the benefits of an inlet near Sebastian. He convinced friends to dig an inlet just south of the current inlet sometime around 1883. Once dug, tide-driven sand quickly covered their accomplishment. New's attempt to open the county's second man-made inlet was designated on some early maps as News Cut.¹³ (The county's first attempt was the inlet at St. Lucie, also known as Gilbert's Bar, completed by the Indian River Colony in 1844). The efforts of New inspired another property owner to link lagoon and sea.

David Peter Gibson came to Sebastian in 1880. In 1886 he and some others invested their labor in what became known as Gibson's Cut. Gibson enticed a group of speculators to dig a wide ravine east of Sebastian. The ditch was promptly leveled by combination of wind, tide, and sand, and never completed. Although his "cut" was not functional, the failed inlet is shown on the official 1885 Brevard

County map very near the location of the current inlet. Gibson originally settled on the Sebastian River with his wife and sons, but later practiced polygamy in a six-sided blockhouse perched at the end of his pier, "uninterrupted by local authorities."¹⁴

These attempts to dig inlets demonstrated concern for the Indian River fishery. Legislators passed a law to protect Florida's food fish in 1879 and Brevard's commissioners were concerned as well. They found it necessary to appoint a "fish bailiff" to guard the Indian River Inlet in August of 1882. A multitude of fishing fleets around the inlet seemed to be depleting the food fish from Brevard's lagoon. And the lack of inlets to the exploited northern lagoon did nothing to help the situation. North Brevardians wanted to ensure that the fish could enter the inlet and migrate north without interference from commercial fishermen. This problem was evident even before one of the first notable local fish businesses was started by Titusville's George W. Scobie in 1885.¹⁵

By 1880 the small settlement started by Richard W. Goode on Crane Creek had grown large enough to warrant its own post office. It was named Melbourne for the hometown of an entertaining new resident from Australia, C. J. Hector. Hector became an enterprising investor, hotel and store owner, and county commissioner. Businessmen like Hector, profiting from the trade of locals and tourists, eagerly stressed the need for good transportation. With the encouragement of these merchants, roads developed along the Indian River to reach the steamboat stops.

The steamboats gradually reduced the need for every settler to sail for supplies and provided shop and hotel owners with new customers. Increased steamboat traffic created the need for long wharfs along the river and new roads to access the wharfs. Due to the very shallow shoreline, some locations required over 1000 feet of decking to reach deep water. Obviously, not every family on the lagoon could afford to have their own wharf.

This resulted in a demand for roads along the lagoon and bridges over the numerous creeks so that residents could reach the wharfs. For example, in September of 1883, the County ordered a road to be marked out from Goat Creek to Turkey Creek. Three years later a bridge was approved for Goat Creek. In 1886, a road was marked out from Banana Creek to the Haulover Canal, an early path along today's State Road 3. The following year a committee was appointed to "mark and layout road from steamboat wharf to county road south of Crane Creek."

In late 1888 plans were made to build a road from Ft. Pierce to the

county's southern boundary, the St. Lucie River. This southern stretch of riverfront was completely homesteaded by 1887, according to John Hawks.¹⁶ The county's piecemeal road projects gradually came together to form the first continuous county thoroughfare, a soggy, meandering shell road completed in 1911.

A Settled Land

Affluence and contentment peaked on the Indian River in the late 1880s. The reed and mangrove-fringed lagoon harbored more than enough fish, game, and produce to please both settlers and tourists of the period. Casting from boats or palmetto wharfs, fishermen netted their profits daily. Not far away, select lands were carefully cultivated to produce handsome yields in the tropical crops of orange, pineapple, and banana. Northern money was invested in new hotels, and patrons began venturing south to their favorite winter resorts via the Tropical Trunk Line. This was an era where compliments far outweighed complaints, where the land had not yet been invaded by progress, nor trampled by the careless masses. To many it was a paradise of balanced growth and uninterrupted prosperity, a harmonious partnership between man and nature. The high times may be sensed in the following recollections of Emma Hardee, a daughter of Gardner Hardee:

"In 1888 my father was elected to the State Senate and then became a time of open house. People came from up and down the river, sure of a welcome and good food. I think that was the happiest time of his life. He was prosperous, his [Rockledge] groves were bearing and the store room was full of food. There were bags of coffee which had to be parched on a wood stove and ground in a hand mill, barrels of flour, hominy meal, and boxes of salt pork. A dozen hams were hanging on the wall. There was plenty of money and Negroes to do the work and a big house to entertain his guests in."

More homage to this idyllic land was reported by Titusville's *The Florida Star* of November 22, 1888:

"Boarding the steamer Georgiana at Titusville, of which courteous Captain Paddison is master, we land...at Courtney, so named in honor of the noble mayor of Charleston...to the north lies...the residence of Mr. J.H. Sams, our present efficient and popular superintendent of schools. He owns eight hundred orange trees, two hundred bearing pine-apples, and has a beautiful home commanding a fine view of the river. Some idea of the fishing to be had in this place may be gathered from the fact that...he has taken with one drawing of a one hundred foot seine 2,200 mullet weighing over three tons...on another occasion he took 1,700 fish at one haul...We spent the night with E.P.

Porcher, formerly of South Carolina...Mr. Porcher is taking care of the valuable property of his father-in-law, Professor W.H. Peck, of literary fame...Mr. W.R. Sanders has eight hundred trees, three hundred bearing. Mr. Tom Sanders has a fine hammock grove and last year shipped nearly 1500 boxes of oranges...his house is the social rendezvous for young people...with his cordial hospitality and two charming daughters who play the piano. We pass the sawmill of Mr. LaRoche which has a capacity of 6000 feet per day, and is now turning out lumber for the new dock called Indianola Landing...and the Melbourne Wharf. Mr. J.R. Carter, has a grove together with 500 guavas, which he considers more profitable than orange growing having sold \$600 worth from sixty trees. Mr. Nevins, formerly of New York City, expects to open the Merritt House, a beautiful 3-story, 22-room hotel, in January."

A broader description of the county's growing communities was completed by Dr. John Hawks for his 1887 publication, *The East Coast of Florida*. Naturally, Hawks includes a report on his development venture, Hawks Park (today's Edgewater). His second tour covers the county's communities from La Grange to Eden, a range of about 115 miles.

The small community of La Grange was situated in the rolling hills north of Titusville and was said to have a post office and store. La Grange was well-known for its church, claimed to be the first on the east coast between New Smyrna and Key West. The east coast's earliest log church is gone, however an early clapboard church still stands on the original site. Titusville's main attractions were two hotels, two saloons and a lumber yard. The town had a population of about 400 residents and hosted a school-house and the *Indian River Star* newspaper.

City Point, Merritt, and Georgiana were mentioned as having post offices. City Point's population was about 300, including grove owners Spratt, Dixon, Saunders, Sharpe and Hardee. Georgiana was composed of an industrious and educated Christian population, producing pineapples, oranges, and vegetables. Twenty-four of these island homesteaders recorded their plat of the Georgiana Settlement in 1889. The early subdivision, five miles below today's highway 520, was divided into narrow strips from the Indian River to the Banana River.

A foot path (today's Old Settlement Road) was opened along the Indian River to connect the post office and riverboat landing. Many years later, a onetime Georgiana resident, Phebe Black, reminisced of her early years on Indian River. Her husband, a Methodist minister, sailed the lagoon and held prayer meetings, collecting tithes at the various

communities. He gave thanks to God for delivering his family from their earlier trials and tribulations on Turkey Creek. Along its shores, Black had cleared the wrong homestead, dreaded clouds over his leaky palmetto roof, and on one sad day, watched alligators chew off his dog's head.¹⁷

Hawks predicted that Cocoa and Rock Ledge would consolidate to become one place. He noted that the Rock Ledge landing at Lake Florence was not used as much since the J.T. & K.W. railroad started service to Titusville. However, he stated that "steamers will run from Sanford to the landing back of Cocoa and Rock Ledge in winter for the accommodation of sportsmen and tourists." Rock Ledge was said to have two schools, churches, stores, and 40 groves.

Not much was thought of Cocoa's chance for growth, except as an extension of Rock Ledge. The most likely beginning of Brevard's central city was the establishment or remodeling of a general store by Benjamin and Columbus Willard in 1882 at the east end of today's Willard Street. The site was said to be chosen for its access to deep water. The Willards had been on the lagoon since at least 1869 and greeted newcomer Robert Dixon, who arrived from Kentucky that year. The Willard store and the deep water landing attracted other merchants. By 1887 Hawks counted six stores in Cocoa and depicted the onset of a distinct community.

The route from Rockledge to the St. Johns was serviced by a stage, no doubt the work of Hiram Smith Williams, master coachbuilder from New Jersey and a founding settler of Rockledge.

Williams stood out among Brevard's recent influx of northern intellectuals. A seasoned poet and school teacher, he was an excellent writer and expressed his theatrical talents in Alabama until called for military service. Surprisingly, he served four long years for the Confederate cause. After the war, he opened a carriage business. Unhappy with the new order under Reconstruction, Williams moved to the isolated Indian River. With the help of his brother and a few neighbors, he began a new business growing oranges along the untamed shores of today's Rockledge in 1874.¹⁸

By 1887, Rock Ledge was already a well-known resort with several famous hotels: The Plaza, Rockledge Hotel, and Hotel Indian River. Hawks claimed that the "Indian River Hotel" was the largest on the entire river. However, the Indian River Hotel was in Titusville and Hawks probably meant the larger *Hotel Indian River* in Rockledge.

Eau Gallie is recounted as the town that "should have been named *Gleason*," as the author gleans the accomplishments of his friend:

the onetime home of the State Agricultural College, a platted town with post office, store, and saw mill, and the site of the proposed canal from Lake Washington to the Indian River. Although the canal was never completed, it is interesting that as late as September 1890, the *East Coast Advocate* reported that the canal was "about to be realized in the near future."

Almost two miles from the southern end of Merritt's Island, the site of Tropic was said to have a post-office lot and nothing else but "a fine view" of the Banana and Indian Rivers. Hawks neglected to mention that Tropic was noted for its excellent citrus, bananas, pineapples, and coconuts. Jim Stewart, an early settler of Tropic, made occasional trips to the Bahamas, bringing tropical plants that thrived on the island above today's Dragon Head.

Hawks describes Melbourne and Malabar as having a store or two and a couple of hotels. The Melbourne wharves were estimated to be a quarter of a mile long, a necessity due to the shallow water. Malabar, situated on a high ridge, was known to have an abundance of bear and deer. Spanish for "bad bar," Malabar is shown on some old Florida maps as a cape jutting slightly into the Atlantic. The infamous bar actually extends from a cape on the lagoon's west shore.

Just south of the bar, Tillman's wharf marked the mouth of Turkey Creek. John Tillman had come from Georgia and by the late 1880s was operating a profitable orange and banana grove on the north shore of the creek. Tillman developed the most notable banana grove on the Indian River. The locals made use of the Tillman wharf as a steamboat stop and the entire region eventually became known as Tillman. (The name was formally changed in the 1920s when the community applied for a charter as the city of Palm Bay.)

The author sailed by Micco's chief landmark, "a post-office 16 miles south of Eau Gallie." It seems that Hawks did not know that Frank Smith, the assemblyman he met in 1869 at old Fort Pierce, was the first prominent settler in Micco in 1877.¹⁹

Hawks was quite impressed with Sebastian. The river was described as very beautiful and navigable for seven miles. The area had a post office, boarding house, general store, and a school with 25 pupils. Prices for land parcels ranged from \$10 to \$150, according to location. The name of NewHaven had been changed back to the historic name of Sebastian by the new postmaster, Sylvanus Kitching in 1884. The English immigrant moved to east Florida along with three brothers. Walter Kitching is best known for his association with S.F. Travis of Cocoa.

In 1887 the pair launched one of the best known floating department stores on the Indian River. They routinely sailed the sloop, Merchant, from Cocoa to Jupiter, stocked with canned goods, drugs, clothing, building materials and the latest pioneer prattle. Travis later established a store in Cocoa. Today it is perhaps the oldest existing family business in Brevard. Kitching chose Stuart as his headquarters, opening his first store there in 1895.

The next stop, Narrows, was established in 1880 by its postmaster, L.B. Dawson. Narrows was located south of today's Wabasso, just north of John's Island. It is mentioned simply for its post office. It had been a voting precinct since 1883 and was the site of a life saving station at Bethal Creek. The area was named for the narrow width of the lagoon near today's Vero Beach.

Perhaps this stretch of the estuary became filled with sand due to an ancient inlet which most likely caused the islands at the western end of Bethal Creek. In his book, *Grant, Florida: The First 100 Years*, Fred Hopwood quotes a local pioneer, confirming that a narrow remnant of this inlet still existed in the late 1880s and was the source of salt water for nearby oyster beds. John Hawks also claims that Narrows was "the oyster region" of Indian River.

The life saving station at Narrows was known as the Bethal Creek House of Refuge. It was one of several oceanside refuge houses which were constructed along Florida's east coast between 1875 and 1885. A second refuge was located east of Turkey Creek, south of today's Spessard Holland Park. North of the Cape, the county hosted another refuge at Pepper Haulover, the Chester Shoals House of Refuge. Built in 1885, it was located about two miles north of the *False Cape*. Much later, the Chester Shoals site served as a U.S. Coast Guard Station. The special care taken to construct these houses was reported in the October 7, 1885 issue of the *Florida Star*:

"fifteen miles north of Cape Canaveral lighthouse...it is situated on a mound of yellow sand...the foundations of the buildings are placed upon mud-sills, four feet under the ground, and each of the upright posts supporting the sills are braced each way from the mud-sills, besides being strapped and bolted with iron at both ends. The piazza extends on three sides of the main building, the north side being occupied by an ample kitchen and a large brick chimney. Near the kitchen is the cistern which is made of boiler iron, submerged on a level with the soil, 20 feet wide and 12 feet deep, which is capable of holding rain-water enough for all occasions of drought. The framework of the buildings are first covered diagonally with matched sheathing, then with tarred felting and afterwards covered diagonally

with matched sheathing, then with tarred felting and afterward covered with novelty weather boarding...the roof is treated in the same manner and then covered with white cedar shingles. The nails are all galvanized, the locks, window screen, etc., are brass, and every precaution against rust is taken...."

The county's southernmost refuge, the Gilbert's Bar House of Refuge, hovered over a coast long feared by sailors. Erupting along a five-mile strip of beach, the St. Lucie Rocks created a jagged shoreline of sharp, convoluted pinnacles. Not the usual coquina, these rough rocks of calcareous sandstone are the byproduct of worms. Now in Martin County, the house at Gilbert's Bar is open to the public and is the only fully restored refuge in Florida.²⁰

The last three communities listed in Hawks tour of Brevard County were St. Lucie, Eden, and Waveland. St. Lucie is mentioned favorably as "a pleasantly located village on the west bank of the Indian River...it has a post-office, a store, and a first-class hotel and a school of 30 pupils." Hawks noted that "the entire bluff from Capron to St. Lucie River is settled up."

The post office at Waveland marked Brevard's southern boundary. Much of the area was described as "a dense semi-tropical forest." The main industry was said to be "making orange groves and raising pine apples and garden vegetables for the northern markets." Today the area is known by its original name, Sewalls Point. The point consists of the peninsula between the St. Lucie River and the Indian River Lagoon.

Unfortunately, Hawks does not mention whether the inlets at St. Lucie and Jupiter were open or closed. The inlet at St. Lucie was normally closed and seldom navigable when open, hence the name *Gilbert's Bar*. Twenty miles to the south, the Jupiter inlet was navigable when it happened to be open. Even though the most well-known inlet during most of the 1800s was the shallow *Indian River Inlet*, the famous inlet was not mentioned in an early review of the county's inlets in the *Indian River Advocate*.²¹

An 1892 edition of the paper stated that Brevard's lagoon had only one inlet: the cut at St. Lucie (man-made in the fall of 1892). The only exception was Jupiter Inlet in north Dade County. Both had a depth of about four or five feet. It seems that the Indian River Inlet had become so filled with sand that it was impassable by the 1890s.²²

Since Hawks was a developer, a primary purpose for his writing was to attract buyers to Hawks Park (today's Edgewater). One of the east coast's biggest attractions was the "recreation" it provided and Hawks devoted a chapter to the subject to inform the sportsmen of the north

of the seemingly endless varieties of fish, mammals, and birds thriving in the Indian River Lagoon ecosystem. Some are now extinct or endangered, but in 1887 Hawks wrote that there was "a variety of game, if that is what is wanted, and the most exacting sportsman may be satisfied."²³

The Killing Must Stop

During the 1880s, many others besides Hawks wrote books and pamphlets to promote the county's recreational advantages. The books charmed hunters. Fashionable hotels thrived on their seasonal visits. However, the balance between economic growth and natural resources would soon falter under this impact from northern sportsmen.

Curious bird-watchers known as ornithologists wanted to preserve soon-to-be extinct species. One who may have made the greatest contribution to reversing the rampant killing was Frank M. Chapman. In 1889 Chapman heard of the scarcity of many Florida birds and decided to visit Brevard County. After reaching Titusville, he took a steamer to a remote lodge east of Micco.

The area was a true wilderness and perfect for making observations. Chapman described Micco as two clearings "hewn out the surrounding hammock-one a post office, the other a telegraph office and home of the Signal Service man." Scientists had been making observations and collecting Florida's specimens for exhibits in universities and museums for the last twenty years. The beach east of Micco had become a haven for some of these men due to the good hunting and the hospitality of the Latham family.

The specimen hunters of the north stayed at Oak Lodge, a boarding house operated by Ma Latham. The lodge was so remote in 1889 that it was possible to "shoot Panthers, Bears, Deer, Wildcats, etc., from one's windows." The Latham household became Chapman's field laboratory from which he made daily trips into the surrounding country, collecting various mammals, ducks and a few of the last Carolina parakeets.

The animals were preserved and sent to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. On one occasion, while Chapman was returning to New York, he happened to meet some of his colleagues in Gainesville. On mentioning his good luck in capturing a number of Carolina Parakeets, ducks, and muskrats, "they cursed themselves outright for not going further south." He wrote that "next winter they all want to go to Oak Lodge." The Latham's lodge was near the west end of today's Aquarina Boulevard in Sunnyland Beach.

During the next ten years, Chapman traveled extensively and became a recognized expert in his field. In 1898 he was married and could think of no better place to honeymoon than at the Latham's place. His bride assisted him in preparing specimens, including the rare (now extinct) Dusky Seaside Sparrow. The newlyweds sailed the lagoon in an old sloop and became interested in the Brown Pelicans that were nesting south of Sebastian on Pelican Island. Chapman said that the island was "by far the most fascinating place it has ever been my fortune to see in the world of birds."

The naturalist knew that Florida had no laws to protect these pelicans. An 1891 law was created to protect some plume birds, but it did not include pelicans. From his years of experience, Chapman realized that quill-hunters were capable of wiping out these birds--numbering many thousands--within a few short days.

It worried Chapman that the pelicans had no other breeding area on Florida's east coast. This early observation that Pelican Island was a special breeding ground for pelicans was affirmed by the naturalist, Winthrop Packard in his 1910 publication, *Florida Trails*. Packard stated that:

"...those [pelicans] of the East Coast begin their mating and flock to the single rookery, which is the nesting place of all East Coast pelicans, in November. Just below the twenty-eighth parallel of latitude there is in a sheltered bay in the Indian River a low, sandy island about three acres in extent. Here all East Coast pelicans breed, and have done so since man has known the Indian River."

Breeding grounds notwithstanding, there were a number of pelican islands well before the quill hunters arrived, and long before Chapman and Winthrop visited the lagoon. The Big Pelican, also known as Munyon's Island, was located on Lake Worth and known for its pelicans during the 1870s. Another "pelican island" east of Port Orange was described by John Hawks in the decade following the Civil War.

These and other islands hidden behind Florida's barrier beaches were once home to countless thousands of pelicans. However, back in the 1870s the east coast was scoured by commercial plume hunters, such as the notorious Jesse Malden. Apparently, the small Pelican Island east of Sebastian was overlooked. Another Pelican Island was known to be in the Thousand Islands during the 1880s. That island was designated on maps as late as the 1930s, prior to the dredging and filling projects undertaken by the City of Cocoa Beach. A third Pelican Island was shown on county maps until the development of Port Canaveral. Today that island is covered by dredged fill and a treatment plant southwest

of the port.

A fourth island, hidden near the south end of Mosquito Lagoon, survived the relentless hunters, sportsmen, and developers. The pelicans had found the perfect seclusion and safety needed to raise their young and were not exposed until just prior to World War II. In 1939, the *Titusville Star-Advocate* reported that a twenty-acre island, "dubbed Pelican Island by local people," contained about 2000 nests and 5000 birds "in various stages of development, such as building nests, hatching eggs and learning to fly."

It was these island haunts that attracted early hunters like Malden. It was known that the most beautiful plumes could be taken without effort while the pelicans were tending their nests. The birds were easy targets as they hovered over their nestlings. Once shot, the valuable plumes were collected and the bodies tossed aside for watchful vultures. Some of the birds may have been dissected for their throat bags which were crafted into tobacco pouches. The wingless young and fledglings, of no value to the quill hunters, were left to starve.

Chapman was disgusted with this destruction of Florida's wildlife and appealed to a friend in Washington. In 1903, after meeting with Chapman, President Theodore Roosevelt signed an executive order to make Brevard County's *Pelican Island* the first wildlife sanctuary in the United States. The President appointed a Sebastian resident, Paul Kroegel, to be the nation's first wildlife refuge warden. The 39 year-old Kroegel later became a county commissioner of St. Lucie County in 1905.

The new commissioner continued to protect the pelicans in an era when game wardens were occasionally shot for enforcing the new game laws. Today the refuge island, including Paul's Island and Roosevelt Island, (now in Indian River County) are all part of nearly 90,000,000 acres managed by the United States National Wildlife Refuge System—a system to preserve wildlife with no parallel on earth.²⁴

The rapid growth of the Indian River Country before the turn of the century is evident from records that reflect the creation of additional voting precincts. By the late eighties, Shiloh, Allenhurst, Narrows, Drum Creek, Rockledge, Malabar, Eden, and Otter Creek all were large enough to warrant this status.

During the 1890s, a prominent newspaper of the day, Titusville's *East Coast Advocate*, claimed to serve all of east Florida from Oak Hill to Miami. The newspaper headed all issues with the forty-four communities in the growing Indian River Country and beyond. Some of the

communities listed were:

AURANTIA	FT. PIERCE	NARROWS	PALM BEACH
ANKONA	HEARTLAND	INDIANOLA	SHARPES
BRANTLEY	GEORGIANA	ROCKLEDGE	MERRITTS
COQUINA	LA GRANGE	MIMS	COCOA
COURTNEY	HEATH	HYPOLUXO	MIAMI
CLIFTON	HARDEEVILLE	MELBOURNE	OAK HILL
CITY POINT	ENOS	SEBASTIAN	ORCHID
CANAVERAL	EAU GALLIE	TROPIC	TILLMAN

Amid these mushrooming communities, northern sportsmen continued to stalk the county's fish and game. Brevard's abundant wildlife was augmented each winter by great flocks of northern fowl that arrived via an ancient flyway to rest in the seclusion of the Canaveral marsh. For years, the word had been spreading. Up the J.T. & K.W. rails to Enterprise, then steaming north on the St. Johns, the county's reputation for good hunting was reaching the crowded North. The good news was received by a sophisticated set of sportsmen and soon a vast amount of Canaveral marsh was purchased for the forthcoming visitors. Today, their former headquarters, the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, is one of the few seemingly untouched and undeveloped natural terrains in Brevard County. It may be largely undeveloped, however it was not untouched.

In October of 1890, as if to introduce Brevard County to the decade known as the gay nineties, the Canaveral Club was established by a few wealthy graduates of Harvard University. The young alumni formed a trust to create Brevard's first private country club for the rich and famous. The November 28, 1890 issue of the *East Coast Advocate* introduced its readers to the new club as follows:

"It embraces many bayous, creeks, ponds, peninsulas and islands, and will prove one of the very best selections that could have been made for the purpose for which it is intended—a game preserve, particularly for duck shooting. The Club is composed of some of the most solid young men of Boston, several of them being millionaires. The corporation will be very exclusive—in fact is so already; the membership fee is \$5,000...."

The bluebloods purchased nearly 18,000 acres of Cape Canaveral and the peninsula north of Merritt's Island "at the average price of about one dollar per acre."²⁵ Plans to construct appropriate quarters were not hindered by any lack of money. The main lodge was three stories tall with twenty rooms for members and guests. The club featured a large dining room, a wine cellar and a trophy room, and plenty of storage for arms and ammunition. In the distance, more modest outbuildings provided shelter for butlers and maids. The private grounds were graced with a swimming pool, and at the water's edge, the shallow-draft steam yacht, *Canaveral*, awaited the hunter's call.

Atop the lodge, there was a spectacular view of both ocean and wildlife that flocked to the surrounding marsh. Still *off limits*, the site is now home to NASA's launch-pad 39A.

A New Inlet Or Another Railroad?

In the few years before the arrival of Flagler's railroad, many Brevard businessmen were talking up the advantages of man-made inlets to the lagoon. An inlet would attract more fish and create opportunities for more trade. It might even encourage the construction of a port for the county.

A recent discovery on Florida's west coast did much to arouse interest in a new inlet for Eau Gallie. Phosphate rock was unearthed west of Tampa by Brevard's surveyor, Francis Le Baron. It was obvious that a convenient east coast port would be needed for Florida's new phosphate business. William Gleason was quick to submit his plan to make Eau Gallie the "largest city in the state" by cutting an inlet just south of Merritt Island, along a route parallel with today's State Road 518.²⁶

But north Brevardians thought that the Eau Gallie inlet idea was too impractical. They proposed to serve the new industry with a tram line and pier at Canaveral. They claimed that the bight at Canaveral was the most convenient point on the east coast for a harbor to export phosphate. They sent a private lobbyist to New York to push the Canaveral project. County commissioners thought the idea over and, two years later, appropriated \$300 for a county representative to lobby the cause in the nation's capitol. However, the proposal lost momentum when talk of a new railroad began to circulate in Titusville. The port idea remained alive in Cocoa for the next fifty years, but only in discussions and official resolutions to Tallahassee and Washington.²⁷

As the new century approached, Brevard was still sorely lacking in transportation improvements. The county was far behind the nation's 1869 feat of linking east with west with the first transcontinental

railroad. In Brevard County between 1869 and 1892, the transportation needs of the inland citizens were served by the 1838 Hernandez Trail and the ruts and roots of partially completed wagon roads. There was only one man with the drive, desire, and financial ability to "risk" his time on the needed improvements to Brevard's hinterland of scrub and swamp.

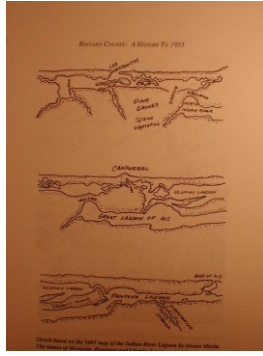
Henry Morrison Flagler took few chances. In 1892, Florida allowed railroad builders 3840 acres for every mile of track constructed.²⁸ Mr. Flagler needed no calculator to figure his profits. In the past, he had developed and improved existing railroads. Now he became a railroad builder, laying new track south from Daytona. In 1893, Florida legislators increased the land allowance to 8000 acres for each mile of track. Flagler could not stop. His railroad would fire Brevard's economy, boost land values, and open opportunities for fishermen and farmers. Citrus and the expanding pineapple crops would become profitable freight on the new railroad. The new line would bring many conveniences and faster medical service. Left in the past would be the remote pioneer life of self-sufficiency and the almost total dependence on water transportation.

The tracks of the *Jacksonville, St. Augustine, and Indian River Railway* would reach Titusville by January 1893 and by June, Gleason's Eau Gallie would welcome the iron horse. At year's end Fort Pierce would be in sight. It would not be long before the Indian River Country would lose its reputation as a remote and romantic refuge of tranquil wharfs, sloops, and steamers. No longer would it be an ideal, isolated retreat, a faraway wild place that a wealthy few with hired guides would seek out to pursue winter's wildlife. With this second railroad approaching the county, the lagoon would be bypassed for other attractions to the south.

It has been said that the railroad marked the end of the steamboat era, however many boats continued to ply the lagoon from the Haulover to Jupiter. At least 25 Indian River steamboat companies came into existence after 1893.²⁹ Besides passengers; many carried general freight, mail, building supplies, and the area's agricultural products. It was, though, the end of the golden era of steamboats.

Proponents of the new age of mechanization would soon ride Flagler's railroad, announcing the beginning of modern Brevard County.

End of excerpts. Get the full version [here](#).



ENDNOTES

[BACK TO TOC](#)

CHAPTER ONE

1. David S. Webb, "Historical Biogeography," Chapter 4 in Ronald L. Myers, et. al., (eds.) *Ecosystems of Florida*. 70-100; Walt Brown, *In the Beginning: Compelling Evidence for Creation and the Flood*. 2008; John F. Ashton, *In Six Days: Why Fifty Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation*. 2001.
2. Brennan, *Beginner's Guide to Archaeology*.
3. *The Random House Encyclopedia*, 656-657.
4. Robin C. Brown, *Florida's Fossils*, 167; Robert Anderson, *Florida Wilderness*, 37, 57.
5. Rouse, "Vero and Melbourne Man: A Cultural and Chronological Interpretation" in *The New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 12, Series 2, 1950, 220-221; Rouse, *A Survey of Indian River Archeology*, 153-154.
6. Glen H. Doran, et. al., "Radiometric Chronology of the Archaic Windover Archaeological Site," *The Florida Anthropologist*, Vol. 41, No. 3, Sept. 1988, 365-373.
7. Barbara Doran, "Discovering Florida's Ancient Hunter-Gatherers" *Florida Wildlife*, Vol. 41, No. 2, Mar. 1987, 23-29.
8. Virginia P. Brown and Laurella Owens, *The World of the Southern Indians*, Chapter 1.
9. Rouse, 110-113, 139, 199 (*A Survey of Indian River Archeology*); Mr. Joe H. Wickham, personal communication.
10. Ibid, 272. This section of Rouses's book (*Indian River Archaeology*) contains an article the Charles D. Higgs, "The Derrotero of Alvaro Mexia, 1605." The Ais province included all coastal and lagoonal area from Canaveral to St. Lucie Inlet. The name "Ais" has various spellings, e.g., Ays, Ys, Is. It is thought to have been derived from the word, "issi," that the Spaniards learned from Timicuan living near St. Augustine. Issi meant "mother" and was associated with the giver of life: the river. With the Spanish article "la," it would have been "L'issi. Dropping the L, it came to be pronounced "ah-ees."

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. The French trip was documented by George M. Barbour in his 1882 publication, *Florida For Tourists, Invalids and Settlers*. Ranson's memories of 1885 on the Indian River are recorded in his *Memoir of Captain Mills Olcott Burnham*, 13.
2. G.M. Barbour, 30-39.
3. This is typical of the many advertisements of the Indian River Steamboat Company. This schedule was taken from the *East Coast Advocate*, December 5, 1890.
4. "Indian River," *Indian River Advocate*, Jan. 22, 1892, p. 4.
5. Pierce, *Pioneer Life in Southeast Florida*, 201; Hopwood, (Steamboating) 44; Magruder, *Young Pioneers In Florida*, 31.
6. Cresse, 113; Gleason's plat of Eau Gallie is maintained by the Brevard County Clerk of the County Court (Land Records) as "The Village Plat of Eau Gallie" dated Jan. 21, 1884.
7. Evidence of the State's suit is recorded in an antique ledger held by the Clerk of the Court. Refer to the case, *Florida Agricultural College v. Sara G. Gleason and W.H. Gleason, Bill to Foreclose Mortgage, 1886-1889*; The "\$2000" payment is reflected in "R.E. Sold, *East Coast Advocate*, Aug. 28, 1891, p. 4 with the following: "Florida Agricultural College to WHH Gleason, college building and lot at Eau Gallie, \$2000."
8. Hellier, *Indian River: Florida's Treasure Coast*, 64; Hopwood, *Steamboating*, 9.
9. Akin, *Flagler: Rockefeller Partner and Florida Baron*, 140-141.
10. Leonard, *The Florida Adventures of Kirk Monroe*, 78-85; Hanna, A.J., et al., *Lake Okeechobee*, 95, 173-175.
11. Leonard, 180.
12. General Index To County Commissioner's Minutes, Subject: Election Precincts; Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida*, 118, (For school records: refer to subject heading "schools" in the Commissioner's Minutes); Hanna, et al., *Lake Okeechobee*, 188-189.
13. George Keyes, "Thomas New," 33-34 in Sebastian River Area Historical Society (Publisher) *Tales of Sebastian*.
14. Cora S. Sadler, "David Peter Gibson," 29-32 in George Keyes (ed) *Tales of Sebastian*.
15. Horton, 13; For fish bailiff refer to County Commissioner's Minutes, Subject: Fishing (Book A, Page 116, Item 2); "George W. Scobie Passes Away," *Titusville Star-Advocate*, Jan. 28, 1936, p.1.

16. Early records of county roads may be found under "public roads opened" in the County Commissioners Minutes; Hawks, 97.
17. Phebe Black wrote of her experiences on the Indian River during the 1870s and 1880s in a short paper, *Florida Fifty Year Ago*, which was loaned to the author by Ms. Claire Ewertz.
18. Caron, *One-Hundred Years of Rockledge*, 5; A short biography of Williams is found in *This War So Horrible: The Civil War Diary of Hiram Smith Williams*, edited by Lewis N. Wynne and Robert A. Taylor; the Willard brothers' store is mentioned in the papers of Nancy Jane Dixon and Lilla Sanders filed by the S. Brevard Historical Society.
19. Hellier, 22. Hellier claims that Captain Frank Smith settled Micco in 1877. John Hawks visited Smith near old Fort Pierce in 1869 when Smith operated a store and post office, acted as Clerk of the Court, and represented Brevard County in the Florida Assembly.
20. Hutchinson, *History of Martin County*, 55-56, For information on early life saving stations, refer to chapter entitled "House of Refuge"; Mohammad N. Almasi, "The Importance of Inlets and Sea Level in the Development of Hutchinson Island and the Indian River Lagoon, Florida," *Proceedings of the Indian River Resources Symposium*, 10.
21. Hellier, 10.
22. "Indian River," *Indian River Advocate*, Jan. 22, 1892, p. 4.
23. Descriptions of the county's early communities are found in the first-hand accounts of the authors: Hellier, 19-23. Hawks, 93-98,130;
24. Austin, *Frank M. Chapman in Florida*, 55-58, 69,70, 73,74,140,142,143; Grove, *Wild Lands for Wildlife: America's National Refuges*, 16-18; Concerning the Pelican Islands: "Protect Our Pelicans," *Indian River Advocate*, Apr. 27, 1894, p.5; "Protect The Pelicans," *Indian River Advocate*, May 24, 1895, p.4; Packard, *Florida Trails*, 132; Pierce, 137; Jahoda, (River of the Golden Ibis), 189; "Pelicans Nesting By Thousands On Island," *Titusville Star-Advocate*, Aug.4, 1939, p.1; The Pelican Islands of the past may be found on La Baron's 1885 map of Brevard County, WPA maps of the 1930s, and U.S. Geological Survey maps of the late 1940s and early 1950s.
25. General Index to County Commissioner's Minutes, Subject: Election Precincts; Horton, p.20-21; "The Canaveral Club," *East Coast Advocate*, November 28, 1890, p. 4; Cresse, 155.
27. The Commissioner's Minutes lists the various port discussions from 1893 to 1939 under "Canaveral Harbor; Phosphate Shipments Via Canaveral," *East Coast Advocate*, Oct. 2, 1891, p. 4; "Canaveral Certainties," *Indian River Advocate*, December 11, 1891, p. 4.
28. Akin, 141.
29. Hopwood, (*Steamboating*) 46.

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