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# The Civil War in South Florida

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The Historical Association of Southern Florida

# UPDATE

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"The Stern Chase," a woodcut from a novel published in 1864. (HASK, Courtesy of the Miami-Dade Public Library negative number 1982-88-7)

## AROUND THE MUSEUM

### THAT WAS A WONDERFUL PARTY

Anyone lucky enough to have attended the recent Fellows outing at the Charles Deering estate went away with the feeling that Sherrill Britton had done it again. The weather helped, of course. It was a perfect South Florida day, with sailboats on the water, blue skies and palm trees. Under the striped tent on the lawn I hovered about the smoked salmon and caviar with enough delicate greed to qualify for at least one mortal sin, and I was not alone. There were tram rides through the forest to the Indian mound, and tours of the two houses that are joined together, the little wooden building that began life as the Richmond Inn, and the eccentric stone mansion that Charles Deering added. Ivan Rodriguez had interesting things to say about the history and architecture.

Then everyone picked up a picnic basket lined in checked gingham and gathered under the tent for lunch, to the accompaniment of baroque music and wine. It was altogether enchanting. Jim and I had to leave early for another engagement at Sanibel Island, and so missed the picnic, but we were provided with baskets to eat on the way. Feeling like Daisy and Gatsby, we drove across the state, nibbling pâté, grapes and cheese. I tell you, that's hard to beat. It's worth becoming a Fellow simply to see what Sherrill will come up with next. We've had the boat trip up the Miami River and the party at an historic Coral Gables house.

Recently I asked her where she got her ideas. She was surprisingly vague about it. Maybe the creative impulse is hard to pin down. I gathered, though, that the ideas for the parties were the result of a good deal of brainstorming with, among others, Dr. Howard Zweibel, who heads up the Fellows. "He's wonderful to work with," she said. "Completely cooperative." Like many others, I imagine, I had been inclined to think of Sherrill as The Lady Who Gives Parties. In addition to the Fellows parties there are frequent openings that we remember with nostalgic pleasure. Who can forget the Alligators reception, with real alligator to eat ( I confess I gave that a miss) and long



Sherrill Britton in her new office.

breads shaped like alligators lurking in a veritable Everglades of green fronds on the table tops? Or the chopped chicken liver and *challah* – braided Jewish bread – at the Jewish Life in America opening? Low cal it wasn't, but unforgettable.

Sherrill contemplates her reputation with a certain amount of ruefulness and resignation, because her responsibilities are numerous and challenging. In the last few months she had added chief of staff to her title, which

*(continued on page 16)*



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# Blockade Runners and Lighthouses

BY RODNEY E. DILLON, JR.

The American Civil War, one of the most momentous events in our nation's past, is seldom considered a part of southern Florida's history. Perhaps this is not surprising when one considers that at the time the war began, Florida itself had a population of only 140,424, prompting a writer for the *New York Times* to label the state "the smallest tadpole in the dirty pool of secession."

Furthermore, most of this sparse population, as well as governmental, commercial, agricultural, and financial activities, was concentrated in northern Florida. The federal census of 1860 revealed slightly over 7,000 inhabitants in the entire southern half of the peninsula. Some 2,832 of these resided in the city of Key West, a cosmopolitan shipping center physically isolated from the rest of the state, with no rail or telegraph connections to the mainland. Less than forty residents were reported along the narrow strip of sandy ridge stretching down the east coast between the Atlantic and the Everglades from Jupiter Inlet to Biscayne Bay.

Most of these hardy pioneers made their homes near the Miami River and Biscayne Bay. Although the evacuation of Fort Dallas after the Third Seminole War hurt the

Miami settlement's economy, a post office and two stores remained there in 1860.

Most of the men living nearby were employed in the production of arrowroot starch from the coontie plant and in salvaging wrecks. Two large, water-powered coontie mills in the settlement produced 300,000 pounds of starch per year, and most families owned small, hand-operated mills. Salvaging shipwrecks along the reefs was a major economic activity both on the southeast coast and in the Keys. Miami settlers also included a farmer, carpenter, brickmason, laborer, painter, tanner, physician and two slaves.

Almost all of southeastern Florida's population lay within the boundaries of Dade County, which included the Atlantic coast and adjacent Everglades south of Hillsboro Inlet, as well as the upper Keys. North of the Hillsboro lay Brevard County, while Monroe County took in most of the Keys and the west coast south of the Caloosahatchee River.

Two lighthouses, the 35-year-old beacon at Cape Florida and a new structure at Jupiter Inlet, were the only other outposts on the southeast Atlantic coast.



Fort Dallas was evacuated just before the start of the Civil War, a case of bad timing. (NASF, Negative Number X-223-1)

Fort Myers, with its handful of inhabitants, was the southernmost settlement on the Gulf coast. Inland, the Everglades and Big Cypress Swamp were virtually uninhabited. Even the Seminole Indians, decimated by warfare and removal, numbered less than 200.

Despite its isolation, mainland south Florida did not escape the political crisis which enveloped the nation in the late 1850s and early 1860s. Residents of the Miami settlement anxiously awaited any scrap of information from the outside world brought by the monthly mail schooner, **Joshua Skinner**, from Key West, by local residents returning from the Keys, by Dade County's state representative Theodore Bissell or by passing seamen and wreckers. Crucial issues between North and South were discussed vigorously in the Miami settlement as early as 1859.

On the eve of the Civil War, southeastern Florida was well outside the "Deep South," and, in fact, contained few inhabitants of southern birth or heritage. Nevertheless, most settlers appear to have supported the southern cause. In the November 7, 1860, presidential election, all sixteen votes cast in Dade County went to Vice-President John C. Breckinridge, candidate of the southern wing of the Democratic party. Breckinridge also carried Monroe County, and earned all of Brevard County's eight votes.

The victory of the Republican candidate, Abraham Lincoln, in the na-

Ordinance of Secession, and Florida became the third state to leave the Union. Neither Florida's secession nor the outbreak of war between the Union and the newly-formed Confederate States of America in April appear to have had an immediate impact on the southeast Florida mainland. At Miami, word that a war was actually underway was confirmed by the withdrawal of the **Joshua Skinner** and the end of regular mail delivery from Key West.

If southeast Floridians were not instantly swept into a flood of wartime excitement, events proceeded elsewhere with startling speed. United States troops in Key West secured Fort Taylor, the huge brick fortress guarding that island's harbor, and moved quickly and firmly to establish federal authority within the city. In Washington, President Lincoln proclaimed a blockade of the entire Confederate coastline on April 19.

During the summer and early fall, a blockade board composed of Army, Navy, and civilian officials met in the Federal capital to discuss means of effectively sealing off the southern coast. The board's third report, released on July 26, revealed that they underestimated the importance of Florida's extreme lower east coast, commenting that the area "can hardly be said to be inhabited, and is of no great consequence except as a convenient place of resort for pirates."

In a September 3 report, the board reconsidered their evaluation, this



*President Lincoln*

Papy and his family proceeded down the coast to Union-held Key West.

After a ninety-mile trip down the shore, mostly on foot, the small raiding party arrived at Cape Florida. Here, the two keepers were armed; they had sworn to defend their post to the death. By telling them that they brought news from Key West, the three Confederates tricked them into descending, and then seized them, removing the lamps and burners from the tower and destroying the lens and reflectors. The entire southeastern coast of Florida was now darkened. The three raiders promptly reported their accomplishment to Florida Governor Madison Starke Perry and Confederate Secretary of the Treasury Christopher G. Memminger.

Union officials over-reacted to the extinguishing of these two remote lights. In the North it was reported that the lighthouses had been raided by an organized body of Confederate troops from Fort Marion in St. Augustine. Concern was also expressed for the safety of the steel skeleton lighthouses at Carysfort Reef and Sombrero Key, both vital to the safety of ships passing the treacherous reefs which bordered the Keys.

An 1862 Union military report stated that the "Jupiter Inlet tower and lantern" were destroyed. In reality, the Jupiter lighthouse was used as an observation and signal tower by blockade runners as the war progressed.

**By telling them that they brought news from Key West, the three Confederates tricked them into descending, and then seized them, removing the lamps and burners from the tower and destroying the lens and reflectors.**

tional election, hurtled Florida, and the rest of the South, toward secession. So sure were secessionist state leaders of south Florida's position on the issue that they made special arrangements to insure that delegates from Monroe and Dade counties would reach Tallahassee in time to attend the secession convention scheduled for January 3, 1861.

Ironically, Dade County, now twenty-five years old, had never had the population to justify establishing a permanent county government. Therefore, Dade residents voted for and were represented at the convention by the three Monroe County delegates, all residents of Key West.

On January 10, 1861, with all south Florida delegates voting in favor, the convention approved an

time advocating a strict blockade of the lower east coast, and even recommending the military occupation of Indian Key and the mouth of the Miami River.

The reason for this change of heart appears to have been dramatic raids on the lighthouses at Jupiter and Cape Florida in August. The raiders were three pro-Confederate residents of the Indian River area - James Paine, Francis Ivy, and August Oswald Lang, the German-born assistant keeper of the Jupiter Light. The keeper of the Jupiter Light, J.F. Papy, had himself professed Confederate sympathies, but had failed to extinguish the light until confronted by his assistant and the two other raiders. The raiders removed most of the valuable lighting apparatus, and

Although Federal troops never occupied the mouth of the Miami River, the blockade of south Florida had become a reality by the end of 1861. In September, the state's southeastern coast fell under the jurisdiction of the Union Navy's South Atlantic Squadron. In February 1862, the Atlantic coast north to Cape Canaveral and the Gulf coast as far as St. Andrews Bay were placed under the supervision of the East Gulf Squadron, headquartered at Key West.

As headquarters of the blockading squadron, the site of Fort Taylor and other installations, and the natural crossroads of the Atlantic, the Gulf, and the Caribbean, Key West became a major Union Army and Navy base. By early 1862, the city was often occupied by several thousand Federal troops at a time.

The blockade had an almost immediate effect on the tiny Miami settlement, which received most of its supplies from Key West. With these supplies cut off, fishing, hunting, and turtling increased. Mariners and others who had never before farmed were forced to scratch a living from the soil, planting corn, beans, peas and sweet potatoes. Hogs and chickens were in great demand.

Michael Zahr or Sears, a native of Alsace-Lorraine who lived on Biscayne Bay about three miles north of the Miami River, took his sloop to Key West in spite of the blockade. He became something of a local hero when he returned with a load of provisions. Not long after, two other German-born settlers, Nicholas Adams and William Wagner, secured permission from Federal naval officers to obtain supplies from Key West, but strict limits were placed on the size and contents of their cargoes.

Despite these efforts, the war brought high prices and hardships to south Florida settlers. In the Miami settlement, a barrel of flour sold for \$17, a barrel of pickled pork for \$50, and homespun cotton for \$1.00 a yard. Some forty years after the war, William Wagner's daughter Rose, ten years old in 1862, described the south Florida homefront:

Unless there was a wreck, which sometimes happened, or a blockade-runner made a successful run, we had to live on fish, potatoes and pumpkins. Pine woods gophers were a luxury and only indulged in on Sundays or in case of company. For bread we would have yellow comptie, slap jacks or Johnny cakes made from homemade corn meal, and many times were

## Deserters, Evaders, Refugees

Because of its isolation, south Florida increasingly became a haven for those who wished to avoid or escape the war. One who moved south seeking solitude was August O. Lang. He had served as assistant keeper of the Jupiter lighthouse at the beginning of the war and had helped to remove the illuminating equipment from that structure. As the conflict wore on, Lang settled on Lake Worth, becoming the first white resident of present-day Palm Beach.

Although Lang has been described as a conscription evader, it appears more likely that he came to Lake Worth to escape from wartime upheaval in general and to conduct horticultural experiments with tropical plants.

If Lang was not an evader or deserter, many new arrivals to southern Florida were. In the early years of the war, many of south Florida's evaders and refugees appear to have been motivated either by genuine Union sentiment, or by the desire to remain with and provide for their families.

By the end of the war, deserters, evaders, and refugees were a more desperate lot. From throughout Florida, and other Confederate states as well, they sought sanctuary in the southern peninsula's tangled, deserted woodlands, tidal marshes, swamps, and hammocks. Here, they were joined by deserters from the Federal army and navy and an assortment of unsavory characters.

During the final year of the war, the Miami settlement increasingly fell under the control of this lawless element. The original settlers avoided these newcomers whenever possible, and the Federal blockaders apparently ignored them. Rose Wagner wrote that:

New faces could be seen almost every day in the week. Many were supposed to be spies from one side or the other. The people altogether became distrustful of each other, the refugees mostly going back in the pine woods and engaging in the manufacture of pine tar, which they could sell to the blockade-runners.

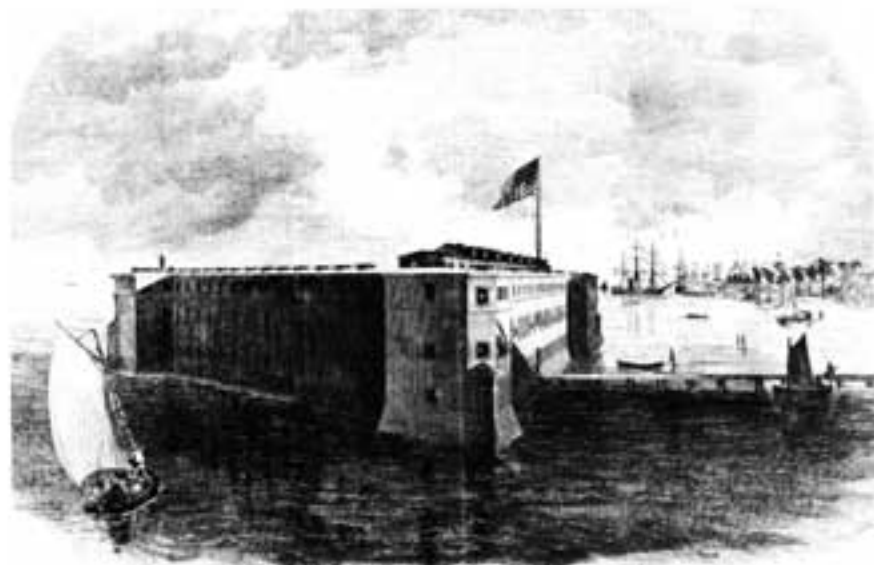
Many of the deserters banded together under the leadership of a man who called himself Major Valdez and claimed to have been a Federal officer. Valdez's group, composed of 20



*Jupiter Lighthouse, by Ralph Munroe*

(HASF Negative Number 369E Munroe gift of the Munroe family)

to 30 men, congregated at old Fort Dallas, where they were described by a fleeing Confederate refugee as ranging "from the pale Yankee to the ebony Congo, all armed; a more motley and villainous-looking crew never trod the deck of one of Captain Kidd's ships ... deserters from the army and navy of both sides, with a mixture of Spaniards and Cubans, outlaws and renegades."



Fort Taylor in Key West served as headquarters for the Union blockading squadron; from a Harper's Weekly woodcut. (HASF Negative Number 80-232-1)

compelled to sit down to a dish of comptie starch scalded in clear water and salt with nothing else in it to help fill up. I can remember times when we had not even salt to cook with, and could not get any.

Not all south Floridians were as careful about complying with regulations as William Wagner and Nicholas Adams. Arrowroot producer George Lewis and sailor John Adams frequently ran the blockade to Nassau, sometimes returning to Miami with supplies, and other times heading for more settled Florida ports with more expensive cargoes.

With its hidden, shifting inlets and proximity to Caribbean ports, south Florida attracted more than its share of blockade runners. By the end of the conflict, 13 had been captured off Jupiter, four off the Caloosahatchee River, two each off Biscayne Bay and the Ten Thousand Islands area, one off the southern part of present-day Palm Beach County, and one off Hillsboro Inlet.

Most blockade-running vessels active off the south Florida coast were small, shallow-draft sloops, brigs, and schooners. They usually left Florida carrying a few bales of cotton or barrels of turpentine, and returned with salt, whiskey or rum, or a small collection of highly profitable luxury items.

Jupiter Inlet was a favorite destination for local blockade runners, since contraband could, with a few short overland haulovers, be transported from the inlet, via the Indian and St. Johns rivers, to more populous northern Florida. South Florida's Atlantic sea lanes were also

popular routes for blockade runners from north Florida and other Confederate ports on their way to Nassau and Havana.

By late 1862, blockade running brought Federal landing parties to southeast Florida shores. The accounts left behind by these northern visitors provide an informative look at the area. On October 24, 1862, an expedition from the gunboat **Sagamore**, patrolling the coast from the Indian River to the upper Keys, entered Jupiter Inlet in search of blockade runners. The sailors returned to their ship with fifty pumpkins, one chicken, four bushels of salt, two muskets, and one chair.

### By late 1862, blockade running brought Federal landing parties to southeast Florida shores.

Proceeding down the coast, the **Sagamore** landed a coconut-hunting party at Cape Florida on December 4. Back in the Jupiter area the following month, the **Sagamore** captured the blockade-running sloop **Julia** some six miles north of the inlet. The captain of the **Julia**, a man named Matthews, had been farming corn and potatoes at Jupiter with another man named Smith. They had been put out of business when a storm broke open a new inlet, flooding their crops.

In early January 1863, the **Sagamore** landed a group of pro-Union refugees from the Indian River area. At Jupiter Inlet, they discovered and destroyed forty-five bags of salt deposited on a conch bar, evidently by a blockade runner.

On February 7, the same group

captured more salt, two bales of cotton, a boat sail, and two casks of sperm oil at the inlet. Returning the following week, they discovered fifty-eight more bags of salt, a tool chest, sails and some of the articles removed from the lighthouse in August of 1861.

As the presence of these Florida Unionists in the Jupiter and Indian River area indicates, not all Floridians were staunch Confederates by the midpoint of the war. Although most south Floridians were initially loyal supporters of the Confederacy, isolation from the mainstream of the war, the continued Federal presence, and the rigors of frontier life complicated by wartime burdens had taken their toll on many.

By 1863, bitterness between Confederate south Floridians and their Unionist neighbors caused a good deal of tension, and in a few cases, outbreaks of violence.

Isaiah Hall of Miami, a Unionist despite his Georgia birth, served as a pilot aboard the **Sagamore** in 1862 and early 1863. His knowledge of local waters was evidently well appreciated by the northern blockaders.

Hall's "treason" aroused the anger of local Confederate sympathizers, and in January 1863, they forced his family to flee the Miami area by boat. Rescued by the **Sagamore**, Hall's wife, described as a southern lady "of brunette prettiness," and her six children were taken first to Indian River Inlet. There, according to the **Sagamore's** assistant surgeon, Walter K. Scofield, they were "living

on pork and fish when they could get no venison."

The **Sagamore's** crew raised \$50.00 to aid the Halls, and the gunboat brought them south again on February 8, landing them at New River, where they remained "under the protection of the Indians and a few whites who favored the northern cause" for the remainder of the war.

Returning to Biscayne Bay on February 18, the **Sagamore** ascended four miles up the Miami River and sent boats even further. Surgeon Scofield reported that "Boats went up six miles saw three men & two women living in the wilderness. Got sugar cane, cocoanuts, lemons, limes, potatoes & fish."

According to Rose Wagner, the reason so few inhabitants were sighted was that most had hidden.



The Union sailors visited the Wagner house and purchased chickens and vegetables with paper greenbacks, the first the Wagners had seen.

The **Sagamore's** boats returned to the Miami settlement in less than two weeks. This time, Surgeon Scofield reported, a "Dutchman came out after old newspapers having seen none in a long time. Mr. Wood, Babson went inside to see the young damsels, brought off coconuts & pigs."

Visiting the Wagner house, the sailors were informed by the family that a local merchant had refused to accept the strange Yankee greenbacks as payment for groceries. While the blockaders were there, however, the man arrived and offered to take any greenbacks the Wagners would give him.

Not all Union expeditions along the river were peaceful. On July 18, a landing party led by the **Sagamore** captain, Early English, visited the homestead of Dr. Robert Fletcher, a suspected blockade runner, and ordered him to take the oath of allegiance to the United States.

Fletcher was one of the settlement's most outspoken Confederate sympathizers, and he bravely refused. The Federal seamen told him that they would give him time to change his mind, and they continued upriver.

Soon, residents saw billows of smoke rising from the direction of George Lewis's coontie mill. A noted local blockade runner, Lewis was a south Florida native whose Bahamian grandparents had settled on New River in the 1780s. At the time of the Union raid he was away, and thus avoided capture. By the end of the year, Lewis was serving as Confederate Indian agent in the Everglades. He was captured at Fort Myers in January 1864, when the Union army occupied that settlement.

After burning Lewis's mill, the raiding party brought away "coconuts - about a cartload - also squashes, 1/2 barrel of [coontie] starch resembling arrowroot, also side saddles, crockery, books, lead pipe." On their return, they again called on Dr. Fletcher, who eagerly took the Union oath.

In addition to enforcing the blockade, Union forces landed in southeast Florida to procure lumber. The native "Dade County pine" was particularly useful for the ongoing construction of fortifications in Key West.

In early 1863, a group of 25 to 30 men from Company C of the Forty-seventh Pennsylvania Infantry, stationed at Key West, arrived on the



**U.S. Men of War capture two Confederate blockade runners in May of 1861; from a Harper's Weekly woodcut. (Florida**

Photographic Archives)

shore of Biscayne Bay to cut wood. Here they reportedly enjoyed the sunshine and outdoor activity, and encountered a group of Seminole Indians led by the "celebrated chief" Tiger Tail. The soldiers traded with Tiger Tail's braves and obtained fresh pork, venison, and fish. Although the Indians spoke little English, one of the Pennsylvanians remarked that "they can devour pork and bean soup in English as well as any other man."

According to Rose Wagner, the sergeant's "brutal nature" and drunkenness "nearly caused a tragedy" in the Wagner home. In consequence he was demoted. The two young Confederates, probably deserters, were released.

In other parts of south Florida, most notably the west coast river valleys and the Lake Okeechobee region, supplying cattle to the Confederate armies was a major wartime activity. This was particularly true

**"Boats went up six miles, saw three men & two women living in the wilderness. Got sugar cane, coconuts, lemons, limes, potatoes & fish."**

Nearly a year later, on January 22, 1864, a quartermaster schooner and twenty soldiers from Key West arrived at the bay to pick up timber being cut for them there under the direction of former state legislator Theodore Bissell. Apparently Bissell's early support for secession did not deter him from profiting at the expense of the northern army.

Rose Wagner also recalled the arrival of a brig from New York at the Miami River at one point during the war. The privately-owned brig had been granted permission to land by the Union navy, and had contracted with a local man to obtain lumber for railroad cross-ties. Among the woodcutters hired were two young men in Confederate uniforms. When their presence was reported to the Union blockaders, a landing party commanded by an army sergeant was dispatched to arrest them.

after the fall of Vicksburg in July of 1863 cut off the supply of beef from Texas.

Although southern Florida's cattle ranges were concentrated west and north of Lake Okeechobee, where Confederate guerrillas fought to protect the herds from Union troops and their refugee allies, some activity was reported in the southeastern section of the state as well.

While procuring lumber at Biscayne Bay in 1863, the Pennsylvania troops "speculated in the cattle business," depriving guerrillas of horses and cattle stolen from local citizens. A refugee named Green drove a herd of cattle in from upstate, offering the animals for sale to the inhabitants. The captain of a New York timber brig ordered a group of soldiers to shoot the cattle instead and divide the meat among the people who wanted it. Rose Wagner remem-



Blockade Runners, from *A History of Florida*, by Caroline Mays Brevard, 1904 (HASF negative number 81-93-6)

bered that "there was none wasted."

Slowly and quietly, the War Between the States trickled to a close on the south Florida frontier. The Confederacy had never gained a military foothold in the region, and the southern sympathy which had once motivated the small civilian population had been stifled, not so much by force of arms as by attrition.

To the north and west of Lake

Okeechobee, Confederate guerrillas kept up a spirited struggle to protect their homesteads and valuable cattle herds, but even these brave efforts were in vain. An attempt by the Confederate "Cattle Guard" to dislodge the Federals from Fort Myers in February, 1865, was unsuccessful, and the Confederates retreated back to central Florida after a day of inconclusive fighting.

By the spring of 1865, the war in

south Florida was, for all intents and purposes, over. Rumors that Confederate armies in Virginia and the Carolinas had surrendered and the conflict had ended filtered into the region from time to time.

Soon the lower east coast became the scene of much excitement as an escape route for high-ranking Confederate officials. When Richmond fell to General Grant's army on April 2, Jefferson Davis and his cabinet



John C. Breckinridge  
(NASF Negative Number 1976-148-1)

## A Famous Fugitive

Ironically, it was the isolated southeast Florida coast, bypassed by the great battles and military campaigns, that formed the setting for one of the final episodes in the short history of the Confederate States of America. In late May of 1865, Confederate Secretary of War John C. Breckinridge and five companions traveled overland across northern Florida, bound for the Indian River. Next they sailed south in a small lifeboat. On the night of June 3, they passed the darkened shadow of the Jupiter lighthouse.

Further down the coast, on June 5, they were accosted by a United States transport, but escaped detection by posing as wreckers, hunters and fishermen. The following day, on the shores of what is today Palm Beach County, the ragged little band rested and traded ammunition for food with a group of Seminole Indians.

Later, near New River Inlet, the fugitives encountered a sailboat

manned by three armed and suspicious-looking men, probably deserters. Deciding that they would need a more seaworthy vessel to reach safety in Cuba or the Bahamas, the Breckinridge party forced the strangers, at gunpoint, to exchange boats with them.

Strong winds foiled several efforts to strike out for the Bahamas, and Breckinridge and his companions were forced to hug the shore as far south as Biscayne Bay.

Stopping at the mouth of the Miami River to obtain provisions, the fleeing Confederates engaged in some uneasy trading with Major Valdez's guerrilla band at Fort Dallas. At one point the encounter degenerated into an exchange of gunfire. The Confederates were prepared to leave empty-handed, but eventually they were able to dicker for supplies and continue their journey. Leaving the coast of Florida on June 8, they arrived in Cuba two days later.

began a long flight south, hoping to evade capture. Federal officials feared that the fugitive Confederate president might attempt to reach Florida, travel along the coast to Biscayne Bay, and then escape from the country by sea.

Accordingly, on May 2, 1865, two Union boat expeditions were sent from Key West to Cape Florida. The following day, another expedition was ordered to hold Key Biscayne and guard Bear's Cut and other passages into the open sea. Wrote Rose Wagner, "the pine woods were full of Yankees," attempting to intercept Davis.

President Davis never reached south Florida. He was captured by a Federal cavalry patrol in Georgia on May 10, the same day that all Confederate forces in Florida were formally surrendered at Tallahassee. Word that the war in Florida had at last ended reached the Miami settlement soon afterwards. It was greeted with a sense of gratitude and relief.

"At last the news came that the war was over," wrote Rose Wagner, "and no history in the world was ever able to record another like it in its every feature, and I pray to God that its like will never occur again."

In other parts of south Florida, news did not travel so quickly. August Lang at Lake Worth was unaware that peace had come until the fall of 1866, when he was visited by

Michael Sears and his son George, on their way from Biscayne Bay to the Indian River. Lang asked how the war was progressing, and was surprised to learn that it had been over for more than a year.

The years immediately following the Civil War saw the return of a slow, settled pattern of life on the south Florida frontier. While Key West and the Indian River region both experienced a good deal of growth in the late 1860s, Dade County's population in 1870 numbered a scant eighty-five, only two more than recorded ten years earlier.

For this reason, the area was, for the most part, able to escape the legacy of violence and hatred which Reconstruction left on much of the South. Like the war itself, Reconstruction did not bypass south Florida entirely. In fact Dade County gained its own "carpetbag" political boss and its share of political controversy.

As the war faded into the past, visitors and new settlers trickled into the region. Some envisioned spectacular possibilities for the beautiful tropical land. In 1867, Dade's "carpetbagger," William H. Gleason, wrote: "Biscayne Bay is so beautiful and healthful that it must one day become the resort of the invalid, the tourist, and the lover of adventure."

At about the same time, several schemes were launched to establish northern colonists and even newly-

freed slaves in the area, where they could grow tropical fruit. Although these plans never matured, the presence of an established population and connections to the more settled Keys made the Miami settlement a relatively active frontier village throughout the late nineteenth century.

Elsewhere in southeast Florida, the lighthouses at Cape Florida and Jupiter were reilluminated in 1866, and, in the early 1870s, permanent settlers began congregating on the shores of Lake Worth.

The arrival of new settlers in the postwar years brought a new era in south Florida's history, an era that saw the establishment of Houses of Refuge for shipwreck victims along the coast, "Barefoot Mailmen" treading the beach, and, before the century was over, roads and railroads. As new settlers came into south Florida and changed the face of the land, the region's unique and colorful Civil War history had been virtually forgotten.

**Rodney Dillon**, special projects coordinator for the Broward County Historical Commission, is working on a book on the Civil War in South Florida. His Civil War articles have appeared in the **Florida Historical Quarterly**, **Tampa Bay History** and **New River News**.

# In the Land of Cotton



**Henry Choice Price**

(Lent by Elizabeth DuBose Price Breeze)  
(NASF Negative Number 1986-138-1)

**BY ELIZABETH DuBOSE PRICE BREEZE**

More has been learned of Henry Choice Price. He was first introduced in "Memories of the Marion," *Update*, February 1980, an article about a hotel he had built in Miami.

Henry had come to Miami from Marion County. The exact date isn't known, but, according to family tradition, he had the Marion built in 1905. It was a small hotel at North-east Third Street within the first block from Biscayne Bay. This was before the bay was filled in to create a park.

At that time Henry had already realized a long life as a planter and was approximately seventy years old. The Great Freeze of the mid-1890s had wiped out his livelihood and his life style.

He had been in Marion County since 1855, some fifty years, having come with his family when he was seventeen from Newton County, Georgia. His father, Zacheus (or "Zachas"), a cotton planter, educated his sons at Emory, which was just "across the vale" in Oxford from their home. All four sons and three daughters earlier had attended Gordon Institute in Barnesville, Georgia.

Zacheus was of the sixth American generation of Prices, Henry, the seventh. Their first ancestor to come to this country was Edward Price, who emigrated with William Penn and settled in the Welsh Tract, an area near Philadelphia. Edward and his wife, Mabley, were from Merion-

ethshire, near Bala in Wales.

Henry and his family, after moving to Florida, looked back on their last years in Georgia as "the gay 1840s." They flourished in Florida too, but there was much visiting with relatives in Georgia.

When this story begins, Henry and a younger brother were farming three miles from Micanopy on a part of their father's plantation. The details were revealed recently (1982) on discovery of a packet of family papers. Grandfather Price was a very private person and in his lifetime would not have been pleased that his granddaughter would publicly divulge chapters of his life. I only hope that with the passage of more time he would have seen in perspective how his story adds to the general picture of bygone life in Florida.

The packet was marked "Cotton Papers" and was found in an old trunk of my father's, unopened for decades, but dutifully preserved by a late brother of mine in Fort Pierce, Florida. It included affidavits, receipts, bills, cotton brokers' reports, and family letters. One is labeled, in my grandfather's hand, "Unfinished Sketch of Events up to and including the Seizure of the Cotton," and signed "H.C.P." for Henry Choice Price. Below this, in my father's hand and written years later, is "Provides Data that may be Useful in Preparing Claim." The latter is initialed "C.M.P." for Carleton Mickson Price.

The preamble of Henry's account reads, "For the benefit of those to whom it may concern I will mention incidents connected with my life during the period of 1862 and 1863." It was his hope that he would be compensated by the federal government for cotton that had been confiscated from him by a federal general on a raid down the east coast of Florida in 1864. But he was not. He died in 1916 still disappointed and so my father pursued the suit up to as late as 1934. At that time a bill was introduced in the U.S. Senate to lift the statute of limitations on seized Confederate property, and flutterings of hope were raised again. When the bill failed, the claims were laid to rest in the old trunk.

Grandfather was a very real person to me in my early childhood. In fact, he and my beloved stepgrandmother raised me from the age of two. They were the center of my happy universe. He died at eighty-four when I was nine. Reading his "Sketch" transformed him for me from a loving old gentleman into an active young man of twenty-three, a farmer, a soldier, a blockade runner,

one might almost say, a derring-do figure.

The earliest letter in the packet, dated June 1857 from Tampa, is to Henry from his oldest brother, Dr. John Wesley Price, then 34. Perhaps John was in the military because he describes an opportunity: "if you will come into Service as a 1st Lieutenant bringing 40 men with you to be in Ocala on the 20th of July, ready for organization, thence to Tampa to be mustered into Service. I do not wish to say anything to influence you." However, he adds, "Wages are good, about \$800. for 6 months, privates \$173 . . . 6 months is not long. George [younger 21-year-old brother] has just landed here from home. All well, has gold plenty."

Spicily he confides, "I have been pocketing some of Uncle Sam's money and hope to get \$1,000 more before long." (Dr. J. W. Price was a first lieutenant in the Seminole Indian Wars in Florida and later a captain in the Florida Militia, CSA.)

Henry's Sketch begins, "George and I were farming in partnership in 1860 on a part of my father's plantation and keeping bachelors' hall. In May 1861 my brother joined the B.W. Powell Company of Volunteers of Micanopy, was mustered into the Confederate Service and went to Pensacola. In July I joined the Marion Dragoons, a cavalry company, organized at Flemington, William Owens, Capt., and went to Fernandina as Orderly Sergeant for one year."

He adds, "Before leaving I appointed my brother Dr. John Wesley Price, my agent in the management of any personal outside business that might arise. My father agreed to superintend and advise the negroes in the management of the crops, etc."

Henry had not been in the cavalry more than five or six months when typhoid broke out in the camp and he came down with the fever. For several years he had had 'chronic liver complaint' and the fever on top of his already delicate health made Captain Owens decide to send him home where he could get better care. He was in bed two months, "part of the time very low."

A change of climate was prescribed. He went to Atlanta and was treated by Dr. Willis Westmoreland, Surgeon General of the Western Army. The doctor felt his patient could best be used to procure citrus which was much needed by his

(continued on page 13)

**Elizabeth DuBose Price Breeze** writes about her grandfather's Florida experiences during the Civil War.



Frank Shutts

BY NIXON SMILEY

Frank Shutts had three meetings with Henry Flagler before the founder of Miami died in 1913. Each meeting had a profound influence on Shutts' life. The first meeting brought him to Miami. The second resulted in his becoming a newspaper publisher.

Soon after moving to Miami, Shutts received a visit by the owners of the **Miami Morning News-Record**, Frank B. Stoneman, editor, and A.L. LaSalle, printer. Stoneman and LaSalle had come to Miami from Orlando in 1903 to establish a newspaper. They met with success until the recession of 1907 when, as a result of over-extending themselves, they fell on hard times. Now facing the wrath of creditors because they were unable to pay their bills, they sought the help of Shutts, whose handling of the affairs of the defunct Fort Dallas Bank had won him great respect as a bankruptcy expert. At their request, Shutts did the necessary legal work to protect their paper temporarily from creditors and took over as receiver.

Shutts discovered that the paper owed more than its owners could hope to repay, that there was no solution except to find a buyer or to dissolve the firm, sell off the assets, and divide the proceeds among the creditors.

Shutts also discovered that Flagler was the leading creditor. This need not have been any surprise. From the time of Miami's founding in 1896, Flagler had been quick to lend money to businessmen, bankers, newspaper publishers, and especially to farmers. He had funded the **Miami Metropolis**, the city's first newspaper, which eventually be-

## For Shutts, Flagler Meetings Had Impact

came **The Miami News**. But by 1910 the **Metropolis** had turned on Flagler and instead of supporting him, it excoriated him and the Flagler System.

While contemplating the **News-Record's** financial debacle, Shutts got an idea. Since Flagler was the chief creditor, he should take possession of the **News-Record**, put a sympathetic editor in charge, and answer the caustic criticism of the **Metropolis**. Confident his idea would be accepted, Shutts hastened to see Flagler. But Flagler wasn't interested. He expected criticism. He cared little about what the **Metropolis** had to say.

Shutts was stung. He had not expected Flagler's cold attitude. As he prepared to depart, he was unable to hide his disappointment, which Flagler noted.

"Mr. Shutts," said Flagler in the tone of one to whom a new thought has occurred, "if you want to publish the newspaper yourself, then I might consider acquiring it."

Shutts agreed, although he had not thought of himself as a publisher. Flagler directed Shutts to pay off the other creditors, settle with Stoneman and LaSalle, and reorganize the paper as a Flagler System company.

Reorganizing the paper under the name of **The Miami Herald**, Shutts began publishing on December 1, 1910, with himself as publisher and Frank B. Stoneman as editor. Employing an able business manager and an experienced news editor, as well as subscribing to the services of the Associated Press, Shutts soon began to give the **Metropolis** competition.

Then Shutts got a major break. News of the Titanic's sinking reached Miami late in the evening of April 15, 1912, and next morning **The Miami Herald** had the complete, exclusive story as transmitted over Western Union wires by the Associated Press. The paper's circulation soared past 2,000 in the days ahead, overwhelming its competitor in circulation and advertising. So well did **The Herald** do that Shutts bought a new Franklin automobile and employed a chauffeur, adding both to the paper's expenses.

When Flagler discovered this, he ordered Shutts to remove both from **The Herald's** account books. Shutts tried to explain that he not only re-

quired a car in connection with the paper's business and promotion, but needed a chauffeur because he was unable to drive.

"Then we are at an impasse," snapped Flagler, who was unaccustomed to have underlings challenge his decisions.

"No, sir," replied Shutts. "With your permission, I would like to buy **The Miami Herald**."

Flagler was agreeable. He sold the paper to Shutts for what he had in it, \$29,000. Shutts paid \$10,000 down and signed a note for the \$19,000 balance.

This story, with recollections of his childhood, his education, law practice, courtship and marriage, together with his encounters with Flagler, Shutts related to John D. Pennekamp, **Miami Herald** editor, during a 1931 trip to Tallahassee in the publisher's chauffeur-driven car.

Although Shutts had acquired a gold mine, it would be a costly one to develop. He constantly had to buy new equipment and expand his newspaper's space and staff to meet growing circulation demands. Shutts was to remain in debt for the next quarter-century, until he sold **The Herald** in 1937 to John S. and James L. Knight of Akron.

Shutts' indebtedness did not prevent him from living well. He belonged to the best clubs, and he and his wife moved in Miami's high society. Although the Shutts avoided ostentation, he spent lavishly to entertain friends, and especially to make friends. The home Shutts built at 1438 S. Bayshore Drive was not luxurious, but was adequate. Having never learned to adjust to Miami's summers, Shutts bought a second home in the Berkshire Mountains.

Originally, Shutts & Bowen offices were located in Burdines Department Store Building, near the Flagler St.-Miami Ave. intersection. In 1923 the firm, having outgrown its old quarters, moved to the new First National Bank Building, at the northeast corner of E. Flagler St. and First Ave. By now Shutts was one of Miami's "movers and shakers." He was known as Colonel Shutts. Governor Carey Hardee had made him an

Part 2 of the Frank Shutts story continues, written by **Nixon Smiley**, noted Florida author and long-time staff writer for Shutts' newspaper.



Early staff members of the Miami Herald. Seated from left; Frank Shutts, fourth from left; Judge Stoneman. Standing from left; Oscar Conklin, Harry Huston, fifth from left; Judge Hill. (HASE, gift of the Miami Herald negative number 1982-88-7)

honorary colonel on his staff.

It would seem that Colonel Shutts had reached the pinnacle of success. His income for 1923 was \$51,993.24, a considerable amount of money at that time. But the Florida land boom was gathering speed. Miami's population, 30,000 in 1920, topped 100,000 in 1924, and in 1925 soared to 177,000. The business of Shutts & Bowen had grown so much by 1925 that two floors were required to house the profusion of lawyers and staff.

Shutts spent mornings at his law offices and afternoons at his newspaper, then located at the southwest corner of S. Miami Ave. and Second St. And his services were particularly needed at *The Herald*, which had grown so fast that production facilities and staff were being constantly overwhelmed by increasing circulation and advertising.

During 1925 *The Herald* set a world record with 42.5 million lines of advertising, 12 million more lines than any other newspaper had ever carried in a year. With his overworked presses running day and night, Shutts ordered construction of a four-story mechanical building which, with new presses and other new equipment, would cost more than a million dollars.

Shutts' influence in Miami's affairs had begun upon his arrival in Miami and never ceased until he sold *The Herald* and retired from the public's view. He induced Carl Fisher to make his first investments in Miami

Beach. His newspaper launched the idea of a cross-state highway that became the Tamiami Trail. He promoted the improvement of the Miami harbor and the cutting of a deep ship's channel directly to the ocean through Government Cut. Spoil from the dredging was used to build the county causeway between Miami and Miami Beach. He negotiated the purchase of Miami's Bayfront Park property from the Flagler System. He induced S. Davies Warfield, president of Seaboard Airline, to extend his railroad to Miami.

Probably no newspaper ever devoted more space to the promotion of its own city than did *The Herald* while Shutts was publisher. Virtually every day a story about an important visitor - college president, industrialist, author, politician, diplomat, sportsman - appeared on the front page, along with a photograph. Invariably the visitor had something good to say about Miami. One of Shutts' achievements was the creation of Hialeah Park Race Course. Although most of the credit must go to Joseph M. Smoot, it was Shutts who introduced him to the right people, including James Bright, who furnished a site. Shutts also brought in businessmen who helped arrange the financing and the building of a racetrack and grandstand.

The opening of Hialeah Park was perhaps the beacon event signaling the beginning of the mad period of the boom. Five thousand spectators

had been expected for the opening on Jan. 15, 1925, but 17,000 showed up. Miami would be like that for the next year as new thousands arrived with pockets bulging with money to speculate in real estate. Shutts himself became involved in land speculation, a mistake that almost ruined him.

So great was the boom fever that within 18 months in 1925-26 Miami acquired a skyline. But as the end of 1925 approached, the boom was subsiding, and by the summer of 1926 only the more optimistic could believe it would continue. These hopes were blasted on the night of Sept. 17-18, 1926, when Miami was hit by the greatest hurricane in its history.

Although severely hurt by the recession that followed, Shutts & Bowen was able to cut back on manpower and office space. But while Shutts could reduce his newspaper staff as circulation and advertising plummeted, he was stuck with his new million dollar mechanical building. Having lost his shirt in boom-time speculation, Shutts now faced unyielding creditors whom he was unable to pay. Without friends who came to his rescue, Shutts probably would have lost *The Miami Herald*. Richard K. LeBlond, wealthy Cincinnati capitalist, lent him \$750,000. Borrowing lesser sums from other friends, Shutts survived.

Then came the Depression of the 1930s. Both Shutts & Bowen and

The Herald were shattered financially. Shutts received only \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year from his law firm, while earnings from The Herald were insufficient to pay the interest on his many loans, much less the principal. Shutts' friends could have forced him into bankruptcy and taken The Herald from him. That they did not pressure him says a lot for Shutts' ability to keep the friends he had made.

Shutts sought to sell The Herald, but because of its huge indebtedness, he would have to receive at least \$3 million to have a substantial amount left after paying off creditors. He was accustomed to living well, and, in the event of his death, he wanted to leave his wife and two daughters well fixed. But no one he contacted was willing to pay his price except Moses L. Annenberg, who is reported to have offered \$3.5 million for The Herald. But Shutts, who rated Annenberg with Al Capone, refused. By 1937 Shutts' debts, on which no interest had been paid for a decade, exceeded \$1.5 million. Although agreeable to sell to the Knights, he asked a higher price than the brothers felt they could afford. So the Knights' lawyer, C. Blake McDowell, sought to negotiate with Shutts' creditors. LeBlond agreed to trim \$250,000 from the \$750,000 principal Shutts owed him and to forget the interest on the entire amount. McDowell made similar deals with other creditors. The Knights took possession of The Herald on Oct. 15, 1937, after paying \$2.25 million in cash and agreeing to pay Shutts \$12,000 a year as consultant for ten years.

Shutts lived to 76, dying on Jan. 7, 1947. If in his final days he thought of his years in Miami, he must have been gratified. He had founded a law firm and a newspaper that were compared with the best in the country. And although he may never have "run" Miami, as he told a young lawyer he once had done, he contributed as much to the community as any elected to run the city - and a lot more than most.

Since Shutts' death, both of his old firms have moved. The Miami Herald now occupies a huge building facing Biscayne Bay, between MacArthur and the Venetian Causeways. Shutts & Bowen, with close to 100 attorneys, and a burgeoning practice - a far cry from the dark days of the 1930's - has offices not only in Miami at the new Edward Ball Building at 100 Chopin Plaza, but also in West Palm Beach, Orlando, Coral Gables, Lake Worth, Ocala and Ocean Reef.

## Cotton

(continued from page 10)

Western Army soldiers who were threatened with scurvy. The Surgeon General advised that Henry be discharged and when able do what he could about supplying fruit.

In time and in easy stages he went to Orange Springs and chartered the steamer **Captain Heart**, its captain and its crew. It had plied between Palatka and Silver Springs before the war.

Henry wrote: "I then made several trips to Melonville and settlements adjacent to St. John on the river, to Salt Lake, the headwaters of the St. John, crossed over to Sand Point [now called Titusville] on Indian River and down that river to Fort Capron where I found an abundance of fine lemons and limes.

"Because of the impaired condition of railroads and irregular schedules I had to accompany each lot of fruit separately and deliver them personally to Dr. Pullin [Perlieu? the writing is unclear], Medical Purveyor of the Confederate Army, of Savannah, Ga. to whom I had been directed by Dr. Westmoreland. I bought the fruit, paid all expenses, assumed all the risk and responsibility, and delivered it in person to Dr. Pullin. He paid me in Confederate."

Henry did not record how many trips he made, but kept at it for two months.

"While engaged in shipping fruit I became interested in some cargoes of goods brought into Indian River from Nassau and other islands, and exchanged for cotton. Having completed with my obligation to Dr. Westmoreland by shipping all the available fruit from the river and coast, and still not physically able to render active military service, I crossed over to Nassau and engaged in the blockade business regularly, importing such articles needed by the people and impossible to secure at home.

"I imported mostly salt and powder, the most of the salt was given to those who had come in with teams long distances from the back country where it was impossible to obtain it.

"Most of the business was carried on from Sand Point with varying success. The last cargo I exchanged for Sea Island cotton and cork."

Thus he began acquiring cotton. He had 100 bales "more or less" stored at Four Mile Creek near New Smyrna. "I was wrecked on one trip coming over the bar at Fort Capron, lost my boat and part of my cargo . . . I concluded when I came in again I would try New Smyrna as there was

more water and less danger entering the harbor."

So he bought another boat, the **Clotilda**, a 16-ton sloop, and started over again.

On his first entry from the islands into New Smyrna he landed safely, had some of his goods stolen, delivered some to his back-country carrier, and exchanged some for cotton.

"Fearing that I would be bottled up by the U.S. Blockade Fleet I took on a cargo of cotton and sailed out of port April 15th [1863], and was captured the following day on the lower coast of Florida by the **Transport SS McClellan** and towed to Key West," Henry wrote.

The ship, he said, was loaded with soldiers on their way to New Orleans.

"I was put in charge of the U.S. Marshall, placed in a good hotel and given the liberty of the city with the understanding that I remain until my trial in 2 weeks," he wrote.

"A few days before that time I learned from a friend that Col. Crane, a refugee from Tampa and detective in the service of the Federal Government, had learned who I was and reported the fact to the Federal Officer.

"It was thought by some of my friends that because of my former connection with the Confederate Army and present business of blockade running and contraband goods imported that the officer might require me to take the oath of allegiance to the U.S. . . [initial unclear] or put me in the old Fort Taylor. As I did not propose to do either I made arrangements with Capt. Griffin who was in port in command on a Nassau schooner that was to sail next day . . . I left Key West in a fishing boat smack about 2 hours before daylight the following morning and was picked at the appointed place by Capt. Griffin.

"My vessel and cargo were confiscated. Because of my capture and the increasing vigilance of the Blockade Squadron on the East I made no further attempt to run the blockade, and ended the business." A fortunate decision for his descendants.

"The cotton which I had stored at Four Mile Creek [later called Glenco] as sworn by reputable citizens living at New Smyrna, was seized by General Burney, [Burnside?] U.S. Army, in the spring of 1864 on one of his raids down the East Coast. He pressed the citizens and teams into service and had the cotton loaded onto the **SS Mary Benton** and carried off."

The value of the confiscated cotton at that time was \$4,000.

## BOOK REVIEW

### REPRINT SERIES

The Historical Association of Southern Florida has brought out a fourth edition of a major book on the early days of the Biscayne Bay region, **The Commodore's Story**, first published in 1930.

This significant book was written by Ralph M. Munroe, founding commodore of the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club, and his close friend and fellow sailing enthusiast, Vincent Gilpin.

Previously, HASF had issued a new edition of another South Florida favorite, **They All Called It Tropical**. Subtitled "True Tales of the Romantic Everglades National Park, Cape Sable, and The Florida Keys", the book was written by Charles M. Brookfield and Oliver Griswold. It was first published in 1949.

Both **The Commodore's Story** and **They All Called It Tropical** were reissued by HASF through a grant from the Knight Foundation. This grant has made it possible to make available to more South Florida readers two important, and highly readable, accounts of the region's history.

Both books can be purchased in the Indies Company store, **The Commodore's Story** for \$10.95 and **They All Called It Tropical** for \$4.95.

Instead of a 1986 review, **Update** is reprinting the review written by Grace Norman Tuttle and published by **The Miami Herald** on Nov. 30, 1930.

**The Commodore's Story**. By Ralph M. Munroe and Vincent Gilpin. (Ives Washburn. \$5.)

Commodore Ralph M. Munroe, pioneer of Coconut Grove and Miami, is the commodore whose story is referred to in the heading above. His book is a comprehensive and fascinating story of the early boating days of Biscayne Bay, Key West and pre-Flagler Miami.

Fifty years ago Commodore Munroe made his first sea trip into Biscayne Bay. He had dreamed of this part of the world for a long time, having heard it discussed and yarned about by seagoing men who congregated on Staten Island, the commodore's boyhood home.

On Staten Island he went to the same schools attended by the sons of another commodore - the first Vanderbilt. To Biscayne bay the young Ralph M. Munroe came half a century ago with the late William Brickell, whose sloop had been in



Ralph Middleton Munroe, the founding commodore of the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club. (HASF, gift of the Munroe family, Negative Number 176-D)

difficulty off the Staten Island coast and the Munroe boy, already an accomplished sailor, went to the Miamian's assistance.

That was the beginning of his years of romance and adventure in the Florida woods and on the Florida coastal waters. Fowey light was in the process of construction. In his book he tells of a courageous rescue that he and Capt. Dick Carney, also of Coconut Grove, made in the churning waters at Fowey Rock.

Commodore Munroe made two or three trips to Coconut Grove before he came with his family to remain permanently. He knows the whole Atlantic coast as well as he does his alphabet but it is his store of information about primitive life here that is of consequence to Miamians, and the whole United States, for that matter, since every state sends visitors to this place.

Names long forgotten reappear on these pages so laden with memories, local color and picturesque facts. The commodore has been generous in the credit given to his neighbors in Coconut Grove and elsewhere, Capt. Dick Carney being a sort of hero, according to Commodore Munroe's story. The Peacocks, the Kirk Munroes, Miss MacFarlane,

Julia Tuttle, the Brickell family, Nathanael Herreshoff and a score of other familiar Miami names occur and recur in these pages until the story of a long life throbs with interest of the moment even as the pages of a daily newspaper.

From this book one learns how racing in the bay began, who planted the coconuts on these shores and on the keys, how the sponge industry was tried out in the bay, how wrecker and the wrecked maneuvered and fared, why pineapples failed as a commercial crop on key and mainland, why Florida coconuts are not used as food, how to make a good racing boat, one that will behave prettily in shallow water, something about the Seminoles, of the career of "Pahson Jones" of Caesar's Creek, of crocodiles, coontie roots, catyaws, Cat Cay, fish, panthers and a thousand things that make Commodore Munroe the envy of all who seek information and a life of maritime adventure.

Readers up and down the east coast of the United States will find in "The Commodore's Story," an account of many familiar spots. Its style is simple. Vincent Gilpin, the collaborator, has cruised Florida waters for years and knows them.





**INTO THE TRUNK**

The photograph above was given to HASF by Helen Muir, author of *Miami USA*, who says that it is a gathering of the Brothers of the Coast. The BOCs used to make forays into woods looking for marks on oak trees that would indicate where treasures had been buried by pirates early in our country's history.

This particular gathering was on a trip in north Florida and Alabama and includes Mrs. Muir's husband, lawyer William W. Muir, right, and J. Arthur Pancoast, third from

right, owner of the Pancoast Hotel. The trip was made some time in the '20s or early '30s. Hotelier Arthur Pancoast was one of the three Pancoast boys, the others being Norman and Russell.

According to Helen Muir, William Carroll, son of the late Judge Carroll, said he saw some marks of the Brothers on a house on South Bayshore Drive. Any readers who know something about the Brothers of the Coast please call the HASF office, 375-1492.



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## Around the Museum

(continued from page 2)

before the addition was director of community relations. She has overall supervision of volunteers, working closely with Dawn Hugh. The Harvest, our annual festival at the Youth Fair Grounds, is organized entirely by volunteers. Unlike other events at the Youth Fair Grounds, all the food is prepared and served by Museum volunteers. It gives Sherrill great pleasure to remember Marcia Kanner pulling the handle on the draft beer kegs for hours at a time.

Recruitment of volunteers goes on all the time, by word of mouth and by advertisements in Museum publications. Another group Sherrill oversees is the New Tequestans, composed of 10 or 12 young couples who actively seek out new members among their own friends, bringing them in through events like Meet the Museum and Southern Exposure. The job of supervising membership brings her into close association with Janis Diamond.

Among her most important responsibilities is Board Development. In the last two years the Museum has held two retreats - meetings over a couple of days, during which new trustees receive orientation, and officers, staff and board members conduct a review of the past and plan for the future. The intricate arrangements for these conferences are all in Sherrill's hands.

She works out of an immaculate little office in what I tend to think of as the bowels of the Museum, although nerve center may be more accurate. The offices are all located "down there." The crispness of her surroundings is mitigated by a tissue box covered in embroidered pale-blue gros point, and the tissue poking out of it is a matching pale blue, a fastidious and feminine touch, and in character for a woman who describes herself as detail-oriented.

Sherrill Britton has been associated with the Museum since 1975, originally as a volunteer, one of 12 recruited by Arva Parks. As a volunteer she became head of the Tequestans and then first vice-president. Several years ago she joined the staff as volunteer coordinator and Fellow Liaison. This part-time job became full time in October, 1985, when she was named director of community relations.

The Museum is only one of the organizations claiming her time and interest. For several years she has served on Leadership Miami, the group chosen by the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce from among outstanding young community leaders. She is also the first vice-president of the Junior League.

As if this weren't enough for anyone's plate, she is also the mother of two young sons: Douglas, 16, who attends Coral Gables High, and Adam, 13, a student at Carver Junior High. A couple of years ago, many of us began to notice Dr. Leonard Britton, the superintendent of schools, at a great number of Museum events. I thought it quite nice for the head of the schools to take such an interest in local history. A year and a half ago, Sherrill and Dr. Britton were married, which led me to reassess my original assumption. As the wife of a man of Dr. Britton's prominence, Sherrill has many social obligations. He, in turn, shares hers, and they both appear to thrive.

A good friend has left us to pursue a long-term ambition. Jo Southard, whose pleasant southern accent was familiar to a lot of us on the telephone, and who could be counted on at all times to be helpful, has gone back to Richmond, Virginia. I cherish one particular memory of Jo. As a transplanted northerner, I thought it would be tactful to refer to the Civil War as the War Between the States. "You mean the War of Northern Aggression," said spunky Jo. We wish her luck and happiness in Richmond, but we'll miss her.

## Letters

To the Editor:

UPDATE magazine for Nov. 1985 (p.8) mentions the Glenn Curtiss flying field during World War I as located "west of the Miami Canal and south of N.W. 36th St." (which could fit Miami Int'l Airport). UPDATE for Feb. 1986 (p. 15) provides further information by Tom Zamorano, placing it at the present "site of the Miami Springs Country Club". To clarify the matter, or add to the mystery, I'd like to provide the following information.

The Clive Jones family moved to Miami in 1921. In 1923 they founded Jones Boat Yard and proceeded to build a home on the west side of the Miami Canal near the boat yard. At that site they discovered a number of aviation artifacts including parts of an old Jenny aircraft. Neighbors told them that it had been the site of the Glenn Curtiss flying field and that the nearby boat slip was where he used to have aviation fuel delivered by barge.

From the P.K. Yonge Library of the University of Florida was obtained a Plat showing the Miami River and Canal dated 20 October 1917. Page 3 of that Plat clearly shows the Curtiss Aero School with two large and four smaller buildings where Jones Boat Yard is today. The north and south property lines ran east-west. The Jenny aircraft of that period did not require a long runway and the east-west orientation suited the prevailing wind. It seems probable that this was the true location of Glenn Curtiss's air field during WWI.

Incidentally, a copy of that Plat of 1917 was provided in March to your Research Center for their collection.

Donald C. Gaby  
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