

1949

## Tequesta: The Journal of the Historical Association of Southern Florida

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## TEQUESTA 1948

*Tequesta: The Journal of the Historical Association of Southern Florida*, has appeared since our last number. It is issued annually and this is number eight. Throughout it is on the high level of former issues—and more, this is the best number yet.

The last three issues have been under the direction of Dr. Charlton W. Tebeau as editor, and his policy has been to confine the articles to subjects of South Florida interest, the result is that the history of that region is steadily being written and published.

### *Jacob Housman*

The first article is a narrative of Jacob Housman of Indian Key. Dr. Dorothy Dodd has brought together all printed as well as archive material that can be found and has made a story largely from court records and similar authentic sources which is a unique chapter in Florida's history.

Housman arrived in the region after "wrecking" had become a system of semi-piracy. He certainly did nothing to raise the level of its respectability, but fitted right into the picture and became the number one example of efficiency in seizing and keeping most of the cargoes of vessels wrecked between Biscayne bay and Key West. He took over an island, Indian Key, from some squatters and for a dozen or so years was dictator of the coast, defying both civil and military authorities on occasion. He transformed a barren rock into a "miniature Eden" evidently from his wrecking profits and lived there a law unto himself. Having been instrumental in the creation of Dade county, he brought the county seat to Indian Key, and all the county officials were in his employ. By degrees the law caught up with him, and when the island was devastated by an Indian attack in 1840, he was done for.

### *Thomas E. Will*

"Thomas E. Will, Twentieth Century Pioneer" by Dr. J. E. Dovell of the University of Florida, is the first

full account of the work of that foremost early reclainer and developer of the Everglades. It is written by one who had made a study of Dr. Will's work in connection with the author's researches on all phases of the Everglades and its problems.

Before he was attracted by the possibilities of Everglades reclamation, Will had made his mark in conservation, particularly in forest resources. That was in 1910. From then until he died in 1937, Dr. Will gave his mind and his heart and what money he had to Everglades development. They were years of great expectations, still higher hopes, and almost continuous disappointments, with some bitter frustration; which more often than not is the reward of the pioneer. But when U. S. road twenty-seven through South Bay to Fort Lauderdale and Miami, named by resolution of the Florida Legislature "The Thomas E. Will Memorial Highway," was opened to a flood of traffic in 1941, this was abundant evidence of a dream coming true.

#### *South Florida, 1870-1890*

W. T. Cash, Florida state librarian, brings together scores of little-known facts in his "The Lower East Coast, 1870-1890" during the period when settlements were beginning. Growth is shown by comparison of population and property assessments - and what a wilderness was the coast from Brevard county to Key West in 1870! Apparently there wasn't a church nor a school until Key West was reached.

The most important of the land grants and settlers of an earlier period are noted: John Egan of 1808 and his son James of 1821 on the present Miami river, Douglas Dummitt and his pioneer orange grove of 1830 on Merritt's Island ; Richard Fitzpatrick of 1827, and the able and energetic but unfortunate Dr. Perrine of Indian Key.

The beginnings of railroad building are recorded; and there are quotations from the narratives of travelers, especially from F. T. Townshend's "Wild Life in

Florida" published in London in 1875, and Ralph M. Munroe in "The Commodore's Story" by Munroe and Gilpin. H. T. Titus became a resident and developer, and Titusville was for long the terminus of the railroad slowly making its way down the coast.

Politics, which is the author's particular interest-as it is of many historians - comes into the picture, for in many pioneer communities with their infant governments that seems to be a more important subject than crops. There are some inside stories of the famous, and infamous, election of 1876, and of that of 1878 in Brevard which was held "without any attention to law."

The early newspapers of the region are noted, of which many began publication and died in infancy, though a few were long-lived, as the *Titusville Star* established in 1880 which is still published.

There is much on the Key West of that era, which during most of the time was the largest city in Florida, and even in 1890 had a larger population than Jacksonville.

The numerous sources listed make a good bibliography of the region.

### *Urban Geography, Miami*

"Miami: A Study in Urban Geography" by Millicent Todd Bingham, as "a type study" says the editor "of the location and growth of a city as influenced by its location is a spectacular example in urban geography . . . was written in French by a student of the University of Grenoble and published by that institution . . . To the European audience it was a startling thought that a small settlement could have grown into a metropolis in the brief space of thirty-five years."

All features of the geography of the region are summarized: structure, climate, vegetation of the natural regions, animals, Indians ; and then the city itself: site, growth, industry and commerce, agriculture, and tourist trade. In this study by a specialist we have an accurate picture of southeastern Florida of 1930.

*The Bahama Channel*

"Discovery of the Bahama Channel" by Dr. Robert S. Chamberlain is a scholarly investigation of the reasons for the use of this waterway between Florida and the Bahamas. Spain in the sixteenth century was one of the greatest empires the world has known. This empire was built on the subjugation of the New World and the seizure of its accumulated wealth. There were two reasons for our St. Augustine: to hold back the other European nations encroaching on that empire from the north, and to protect the stolen treasure on its way to Spain. When the Bahama Channel was found to be the most practicable route of the treasure ships, St. Augustine came into being.