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## Now is the Time

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## NOW IS THE TIME

Local histories are the foundation stones of State history. Florida, which is far behind its neighbors in the knowledge of its history, is beginning to catch up. A number of local and regional associations are organized, and some are collecting and preserving the historical material of their areas. Miami, Jacksonville, Pensacola, St. Petersburg, Palm Beach, the Manatee region, and others have collections. An important recent addition is the Tampa area with its Hillsborough County Historical Commission. There is a revival of historical effort in St. Augustine, the gem of Florida's historic past, with the collection and work of the St. Augustine Historical Society, but their efforts are largely negated by the exploitation of historical fakes for personal profit on a large scale, which reflects on the historical honesty of the whole State.

There are now three county historical commissions. Polk county led the way with their successful project, Pinellas has a commission, and now Tampa and its region have founded the:

### *Hillsborough County Historical Commission*

By a Special Act of the Florida Legislature at its last session, a "Hillsborough County Historical Commission and Museum" was created. Thus a long step was taken towards local recognition of Tampa's and the area's historical past and the collection and preservation of historical material which still remains there.

The Act provides that the ten members of the Commission be appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. These are: D. B. McKay, Horace Hackney, Mrs. Harry L. Weedon, Mrs. Roy Frierson, Mrs. J. H. Letton, Theodore Lesley, John Eskridge, G. W. Worthington, Dr. C. T. Young, with Charles H. Pent as secretary. Mrs. John Branch, who has taken a large part in its creation, is chairman.

Other provisions of the Act are: The Clerk of the County Court is, *ex-officio*, its secretary. The Commis-

sion itself may appoint a clerk for the Commission, who is to be county historian.

The expressed purposes of the Commission are to "Collect, record, and preserve historical material and data, books, pamphlets, maps, manuscripts, family histories, United States census records . . . other objects illustrative of and relating to the history of Hillsborough County and South Florida . . . narratives of early pioneers, Indian tribes and wars . . . its soldiers, schools, churches; mark locations of forts, Indian mounds or other places in Hillsborough County where historical events have occurred."

"The Clerk of the County Court shall file . . . all such historical material that the Commission may direct to be filed."

The Board of County Commissioners are authorized to pay expenses of the Commission out of the General Fund of the county not to exceed \$3,000 per annum. The Board is also authorized to furnish a repository.

The present budget of the Board does not include an appropriation for the Commission, but the collection of historical material has been undertaken under the Act, and suitable rooms will be set aside for headquarters and the preservation and display of historical material in the new county court house.

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#### HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF OSCEOLA COUNTY

On October 25 the "Historical Association of Osceola County" held its organization meeting at St. Cloud. The newest of Florida's local historical organizations elected Charles E. Hartley, president; Mrs. Elizabeth Cantrell, vice-president; Mrs. Nell Bodiford, 2nd vice-president; Mrs. Clara Meacham, secretary-treasurer; Mrs. Lillian Garrison, librarian; Clifford Tyson, Sam Story, W. G. Hankins, and Mrs. Alma Hethrington, directors.

At the meeting articles of incorporation were approved. The objectives of the society are: to discuss, collect, and preserve materials of historical interest relative to Osceola county. Dr. Charlton W. Tebeau,

President of the Florida Historical Society, conferred with and spoke before those planning the historical association in June. At the organization meeting Asst. Editor Williamson of the *Quarterly* presented some photostats of old Florida newspapers to Mr. Hartley for the Osceola historical library and spoke a few words of encouragement.

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Hillsborough and Osceola counties are late, as is every other locality in Florida, in preserving their history; but they are to be congratulated on beginning now. They will find that much of what was once around them is gone forever and the remainder is steadily disappearing.

What other community, or town, or county, will be the next one to realize the opportunity and the need for early action? Now is the time.

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#### FORT CLINCH MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

On November 16 last, a celebration was held at Fort Clinch, adjoining Fernandina, to mark the centennial of the death of General Clinch, and at which the recently organized Duncan Lamont Clinch Memorial Association received its charter.

The present fort was built one hundred years ago on the north end of Amelia Island; but the site, commanding the entrance to St. Marys river and Cumberland sound was recognized as strategic in early times, and Oglethorpe occupied it in 1736. The British erected a fort there during the American Revolution, and the Island was the center of the Patriot War troubles of 1812.

Construction of the present fort was begun in 1850; but such a project was a great undertaking in those days, and it was not completed at the outbreak of the War for Southern Independence, though occupied by the Confederate army. On the approach of a greatly superior Federal invasion force it was abandoned together with the adjacent earth-works in 1862. The fort was used

during the Spanish-American War for the concentration of troops, but was entirely abandoned later.

Rehabilitated by the Civilian Conservation Corps, for the past nine years it has been a State Park with an interesting and growing historical museum, of which J. William Decker is superintendent. With the organization of the Memorial Association its future is assured.

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#### THE HALIFAX REGION

The Ormond Village Improvement Association has published *Early Plantation of the Halifax: Concerning the Ruins*, by Edith P. Stanton. (24 p. illustrations, 1949).

Mrs. Stanton came to Ormond in 1887 and ever since has been gathering "facts and legends about the earliest days of the Halifax Country."

The region attracted a few settlers in the British period, and others during the second Spanish occupation. The soil and climate were thought to be especially adapted to the growing of sugar cane and, as would be expected, the ruins are those of sugar mills. A number of sites of the area are described both as to their settlement and what remains today: the Dun-Lawton Sugar Mill, Hernandez Point, Mount Oswald, Carrickfergus, the King's Road, Rozetta, Damietta, Bulowville, Mound Grove, San Antonio de Anacape. An account of Audubon's visit to the region in 1831 is included, and there is a summary of the now almost forgotten fighting during the Seminole War in the Halifax region. There are several full-page illustrations of the present sites.

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#### THE TERRA CEIA INDIAN MOUND

A noteworthy Indian mound on Terra Ceia Island recently given to the State by Mr. & Mrs. Karl A. Bickel and dedicated as a "State Monument," is the first archeological site to be taken over by the Florida Park Service. This is a ceremonial mound, distinguished from a burial mound, of the period beginning about the middle

of the fifteenth century and extending into the historical era.

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EDISON AND FORT MYERS

It might be suggested that the rest of his name should be included; but *George* and *Abraham* are never needed, and *Edison* anywhere means one man only. Fort Myers and Edison are so intimately connected that any mention of him in Florida means both, so even the Fort Myers might be omitted. This connection is brought out in a recent brochure *Bamboo and Sailing Ships: The Story of Thomas Alva Edison and Fort Myers, Florida* by Florence Fritz. Published by the author, Fort Myers, 1949, 52 pages, it is fully illustrated. Edison's horticultural and chemical experiments there with growing plants for their rubber content is a feature of the narrative.

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A MANATEE CENTENNIAL

The centennial of the Manatee Methodist Church was celebrated in October last, and in commemoration a brief account of the century of the church was written by Miss Eva M. Gates. This has been published by the Church as *One Hundred Years of Manatee Methodism 1849-1949* (24 pages, 25 cents) with several illustrations.