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The Jacksonville Historical Society

Florida Historical Society
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JACKSONVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The publication of *Papers, Volume II*, by the Jacksonville Historical Society is a noteworthy event in the recent writing of Florida's history, rendered more so by the inclusion of four hand-colored, and one other, engravings of Osceola; these being the important surviving likenesses of Florida's most famous Indian. The appreciation and comment of one Florida historian—"exquisite"—will be approved and seconded by many.

The publication of Florida-and especially Jacksonville - historical material was resumed by the Society two years ago when volume one of *Papers* was issued. The two volumes include papers and addresses written for and read at their program meetings by local members and other Florida historians.

The portraits of Osceola were colored by two Jacksonville artists, Mr. and Mrs. Howard J. Ahrens, and they are accompanied by descriptions of each portrait and the artists who drew the originals, all written by Joseph E. McCarthy after much research.

The Editorial Board for this issue of *Papers* was Miss Audrey Broward, chairman, Henry H. Buckman III, P. H. Gaskins, Joseph E. McCarthy, and Miss Dena Snodgrass. The volume, of ninety-six pages, is well-printed and attractive in every way. These seven articles are included:

THE OLD CITY CEMETERY

More than anything else, our old cemeteries carry us back into the past of our own home town, and they appeal to many who feel no great interest in other history. Jacksonville has one of these in which is recorded in stone much of her history of the past one hundred years.

Mr. Philip S. May, who has long taken part in the work of the Florida Historical Society as well as that of the Jacksonville Historical Society, tells us in the leading article of *Papers* what he has been able to learn of Jacksonville's "Old City Cemetery." The plot was given to the city in 1852 by Captain Charles Willey, who

first came to Jacksonville as master of a trading schooner, and some of whose letters in 1831 are included in this issue of *Papers*. But the site apparently had been used for burials earlier. Later, Captain Willey conveyed an adjoining acre to the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Florida, the Rt. Rev. Augustine Verot.

 Jacksonville at that time, 1852, was described, says the author, as . . . a small village, containing perhaps, 400 people all told; the residences, with here and there an exception, were of wood, one story, cheaply built; three or four stores on Bay Street, rough buildings and rude fittings, were all in the business line, while a slab wharf, small and rickety, answered for vessels. A small steamboat made a weekly trip to and from Savannah, and a still smaller one ran once a week to and from Enterprise. There was not a wheeled vehicle in town, except a second-hand hearse and a dray.

 Mr. May concludes:

 "On this little tract of land . . . are situated practically all of Jacksonville's physical links with its past."

JACKSONVILLE AND NEW YORK TRADE IN 1831

 Seven letters of Charles Willey have been edited by Henry H. Buckman III. Willey was master of a schooner trading between New York and Jacksonville in 1831. He wrote three letters from Jacksonville (or St. Johns, E. F., as he dated them) and four from New York regarding his voyages and cargoes. They are of much interest and have historical value for the light they throw on this trade at that period.

 His schooner arrived at Jacksonville in October 1831 after slow sailing as far as Charleston bar, but made it from there to St. Johns bar in one day. He crossed without a pilot and without "strinken." He found there a vessel loaded with 135,000 oranges for New York, but the market was up to "a Dollar pir 100," so he went up the river to the head of Black Creek looking for cargo.

He sells his own cargo of flour, mackerel, rum, gin, potatoes, onions, pork, salt, dry goods and cider, and gives the prices received for each. He takes on 165,000 oranges for which he paid \$7.50 and 5,700 "Lammons at \$3.75 per 1,000." He takes on also "4 Pasingers at \$16."

He was twelve days to New York. "I acspeted to luse all the oranges but I did not luse enny." He sold some at \$18, but averaged less than \$12.00 per 1,000.

The schooner left New York again on December 5 with cargo and six or eight passengers ". . . we had six days passege to the Bar and we laed off and on one day and Night for a Pilot but at was so rugh that the Pilts cold not git out so I ran in the wind hedded me of and I got on the south brakkers and was obliged to heave over part of our deck lode . . . thair is a nother vessel on the Bar about 100 touns with sugar from Cuba . . ."

Captain Willey writes also of charters and insurance and other business relating to shipping. He evidently plans to take a cargo of pine lumber this trip, but the letters end here.

JACKSONVILLE AND THE ST. JOHNS

An address read before the Society at a late program meeting is included: "Ninety-six Years of Engineering Development on the St. Johns River," by Oscar G. Rawls, Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army.

In emphasizing the relation of Jacksonville to the River he writes: ". . . it may indeed be said that Jacksonville owes its existence, its early development, and much of its present commercial status to the river which passes through the city and provides its outlet to the Atlantic Ocean." Its location was determined by the width of the river which is narrower there than at any other point between Palatka and the mouth.

The early river traffic is described, with the types of steamers, the growth of commerce and what this consisted of, both northwards to Savannah and Charleston

and later to New York, and up the River to Palatka and in time farther south. The shallow bar at the mouth was a great impediment and even barrier for decades, and much of the paper is given to the deepening and straightening of the channel to the sea. The several projects for improvement are fully described, to the present one of a minimum depth of thirty-four feet from Jacksonville to the Atlantic.

HENRY B. PLANT

At the spring program meeting of 1947 Mr. John C. Blocker, historian and county attorney of Pinellas county, read a paper on Henry B. Plant. Second only to Flagler as a Florida developer, Plant first came to the State in 1853; and, like Flagler, was drawn by the climate and the illness of his wife. But there was no thought of development apparently until the 1880's, when he commenced his buying and building of railroads down the peninsula.

There is a brief sketch of Plant's life before he began his work in Florida, but most of the narrative is of the ". . . network of railroads extending over Florida, the southern part of Georgia, and sections of South Carolina and Alabama. There were fleet connections at Port Tampa with six sailings each week to Havana . . . Plant also operated steamship lines on the Chattahoochee and St. Johns rivers, and a line of small steamers connecting Tampa with St. Petersburg and Manatee River points . . . At his death he controlled twelve railway corporations with almost 2,000 miles of track."

Mr. Blocker continues: "The Tampa Bay Hotel was near the heart of H. B. Plant . . . It cost \$3,000,000," and one writer is quoted as considering it "one of the modern wonders of the world." Plant hotels were built also at Port Tampa, Punta Gorda, Fort Myers, and other Florida resort cities.

GOVERNOR DUVAL

Mr. William D. Barfield, president of the Jacksonville Historical Society, as a graduate student at Prince-

ton University, wrote his thesis for the Master's degree on Governor William P. DuVal of Florida, which is still the most extensive study of DuVal. His contribution to *Papers* is "The First Civil Governor and the Capital of Florida," in which he tells of DuVal's part in founding Tallahassee, and the first efforts to remove the Indians away from the encroaching settlers.

It is hoped that Mr. Barfield will tell us more of what he knows about our colorful first governor. But with this plea is the wish that he will reconsider his statement that "The population consisted, [Florida in 1821] with some exception, of West Indian traders, smugglers, privateersmen, Indians, runaway Negroes, and renegade white men from the original thirteen states and the eleven other states which had been admitted prior to that time,"- a statement which should not go unchallenged. How about it, President Barfield?

THE SOCIETY

Mr. Herbert Lamson, former president of the Florida Historical Society and of the Jacksonville Historical Society, recounts the activities of that Society during the past two years, with the titles of papers read at all program meetings. These show the widespread and continued interest in Jacksonville-and, indeed, in Florida-history which has always been evident there. Here also is a list of historical material donated during the biennium by numerous members and friends. These were added to the historical collection of the Society now at the Jacksonville Public Library.

A Membership Roster completes the volume.